
The State Department

Plotting the fall of an American ally

by Linda de Hoyos

The on-the-ground operations for the overthrow of President Marcos are being directed out of the U.S. embassy in Manila under Ambassador Stephen Bosworth, who was trained by Henry Kissinger's National Security Council. The timing for the final move against Marcos is projected in 8 to 9 months, or will be timed with Marcos's promised reinstatement of Chief of Staff of the Philippine Armed Forces Fabian Ver, upon his expected acquittal on charges for complicity in the assassination of Benigno Aquino. "If Ver returns as chief of staff, that would be the kiss of death," says one State Department operative.

Bosworth now meets up to two hours every day with Acting Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Fidel Ramos, a West Point graduate whom the United States is attempting to groom as a leader of a new civilian-military junta despite his loyalty to President Marcos. According to State Department plans, Ramos would come to power with a young officers' reform movement, called "We Belong," as his power base in the military. "We Belong" is composed largely of post-1971 Philippine Military Academy graduates, as opposed to the ROTC graduate component of the officer corps around Ver.

"We are providing the public support" for the young officers' group, says State Department desk officer John Maisto. "We deal with them, but it is not that we're going out slapping a U.S. label on them, because that's the last thing they need." However, it is known that along with Bosworth, William Sullivan, now head of the patrician American Assembly operating out of Columbia University, is working directly with the young officers' movement to create a coup potential against Marcos. Since at least 1983, Sullivan has been pushing for a total halt to all U.S. military aid to the Philippines. Sullivan says that his greatest fear is not the Soviet-backed New People's Army (NPA), which he does "not think all that important," but a civil war arising out of the split in the Army. Yet, that is exactly what he and the embassy are promoting.

The State Department has hardened the lines of a long-standing difference between Ramos and Ver on how to best deal with the NPA. The formation of "We Belong" and the developing fissure in the military fostered by the State De-

partment, can only weaken the Army precisely at a point when morale, due to depletion of materiel and equipment, is low and when the Army has yet to deal effectively with the growing NPA. Sullivan is hastening the very result he claims he fears.

The precedent for this operation is the deployment of NATO Gen. Robert Huyser to Iran in late 1978. Huyser worked to neutralize the Iranian Army precisely at the point that their resolute action was required against the forces out to bring down the Shah.

In addition to daily meetings with General Ramos, four more political officers have been brought into the embassy in the recent period to coordinate operations with the anti-Marcos opposition. Since Aquino's assassination, the State Department has been grooming the opposition to the Marcos government. According to desk officer Maisto, "One-third of the parliament, the opposition, is taking a very active, very positive role. They're keeping the government on its toes. They're making life miserable for them. They're not, well, uh, they're making life *difficult* for the government."

The signal that the State Department was actively working for Marcos's removal was the October 1983 decision barring President Reagan's scheduled trip to Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Instead of the President going to Manila, Cardinal Jaime Sin was brought to Washington. Philippines opposition leader Salvador Laurel was also brought to the United States, where he was hosted on Capitol Hill and at the State Department. The Laurels are one of the old oligarchical families of the Philippines, the oligarchy Marcos took on when he came to power in 1965. Laurel is promoted as a pro-U.S. moderate, but his trip to New York in March 1984 was sponsored by Ramsey Clark's Fund for New Priorities, which along with Iran veteran, Princeton University professor Richard Falk, built the Anti-Bases Coalition faction in the opposition.

In July of this year, Laurel called for a referendum on the bases, saying that he is against the bases because "they diminish national sovereignty." In July of this year, Laurel conferred with Richard Armitage at the Pentagon.

When Sin came again to Washington in June 1985, he held meetings with Reagan, Vice-President George Bush, and State Department officials. Sin publishes the violently anti-Marcos daily *Veritas* and is the hero of the Catholic-dominated National Democratic Front, the electoral arm of the NPA. More than any other figure, it is Sin, a Chinese Jesuit, who has given credibility to the opposition.

The kind of process the State Department is attempting to set loose in the Philippines is demonstrated by the case of opposition leader Jovito Salonga. In January, the State Department sent Salonga and 15 other opposition leaders back to Manila from self-imposed exile. The State Department issued dire warnings to the Marcos government that their safety must be guaranteed. No sooner had Salonga arrived in Manila than he began attacking the United States. In a speech

on Feb. 24 in Manila, Salonga hit at the presence of the bases and declared that U.S. military aid only acted to increase "repression and abuses." "It is the irony of ironies that the very Filipinos who fully embraced the American concepts of freedom will be the ones who will be cut down by American weapons supplied on credit to a dictator. . . . All the weapons the Marcos regime is acquiring will be used against Filipino freedom fighters [the NPA—ed.] the dictatorship."

The shortest route to the State Department's favor, it would appear, is to be as violently anti-American as possible. On Aug. 2, the State Department took this policy to an extreme, when it met in Washington with Dimas Pundato, chairman of the executive council of the Muslim separatist Moro Liberation Front. A State Department spokesman explained to the press that "we maintain an open door policy. We will talk to anyone with a responsible point of view." Pundato emerged from the meeting to issue threats that if Marcos did not grant Moro demands for autonomy, his group would take up arms alongside the NPA. When not in Washington, Pundato resides in Tripoli, Libya, where his movement is funded by Soviet-backed terrorist-dictator Muammar Qaddafi.

The economic screws

In an interview on July 11, President Marcos gave his assessment that "in the long term, the political situation will undoubtedly depend on the economic situation. Because we must combat the rebellion with two weapons—the military grip and economic development." Through the IMF and the World Bank, the State Department has taken the opposite track: dismantling the country's productive economy. Even aside from the austerity dictates of the World Bank and the Fund, the United States has acted unilaterally to dry up the Philippines economic supply line.

In the summer of 1984, then U.S. Treasury Secretary Don Regan blocked a \$150 million World Bank agricultural loan to the Philippines because, according to desk officer Maisto, "there was not sufficient conditionality in the loan." The United States insisted that before any money was dispatched to the Marcos government, the monopolies over the sugar and coconut industries would first have to be taken apart to make way for a "free enterprise economy." "The Bank didn't specify sufficiently well-defined reform," said Maisto. "We're trying to target our economic assistance, so that it helps break down the vested structures of the economic system. It helps the Filipinos dismantle the monopoly capitalist system that they have. . . . The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are targeting their assistance, and we have an awful lot of input into the IMF and the World Bank to deal with the agricultural monopolies of sugar and coconut."

Direct food war has also been applied against the Philippines. On July 16, Sen. John Melcher reported that the State

Department had interfered to stop United States grain sales to the Philippines. State was claiming, the senator noted, that the Philippines was unfairly receiving favored credit terms and lower prices. The U. S. also demanded that Marcos change wheat milling and flour distribution procedures, but even when these were effected, the State Department balked, demanding that the Filipino government have no involvement in the deals (59 out of 60 countries purchase U. S. wheat through government agencies). At this point, Marcos finally registered his complaints against this policy, and in that, in combination with complaints from the United Wheatgrowers Association, forced the sale through.

The State Department has targeted military assistance to the Philippines in the same manner. In April 1985, Peter MacPherson, head of the Agency for International Development, Sen. Thomas Kerry of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, along with Ambassador Bosworth, delivered ultimatums to Malacanang Palace. Kerry told Marcos: Unless you come forward on promises of economic and political reforms, "you're going to see a Congress . . . that is going to be more restive and less willing to be patient." The week before, Rep. Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.) had been in Manila with the identical line.

On May 14, the Senate passed a non-binding resolution specifying that future aid to the Philippines would depend on whether "Marcos makes sufficient progress in helping to restore democracy."

On July 11, the House passed an aid bill that cut down military aid by 75% and specified that at least 20% of the economic aid to the country would go through the Catholic Church, as per the demands of Cardinal Sin when he was in Washington in June.

The decrease in the military aid represented a direct violation of the 1981 treaty. From Manila, Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile charged the United States with "virtual blackmail and blatant interference" into Philippine internal affairs. "The U.S. Congress," he said, "has no business dictating the terms of the agreement or altering it unilaterally." Although the aid was restored to 80% levels by the House-Senate conference, President Marcos immediately formed a commission to review the terms of the bases treaty, a clear warning to the United States.

Both on the ground and from its blackmail conditionalities on money flows into the Philippines, the State Department is carrying out a policy that will force the removal of the bases. This policy was stated explicitly in a *Boston Globe* editorial Aug. 1: "U.S. policy makers should call Marcos's bluff. This is a case in which the hostages [that is, the bases] are expendable. A conspicuous order to the Pentagon to update its plans for relocating the Philippine bases would send a signal to both Marcos and his critics. . . . Clark Field and Subic Bay are undeniably important . . . but they are not irreplaceable. . . . Certainly the Philippine bases are not worth a U.S. war to sustain a discredited regime."