

EIR Strategic Studies

The State Department coup against President Marcos

by Linda de Hoyos

On Feb. 25, hours after President Ferdinand Marcos had been flown from Malacanang Palace in Manila to Clark Air Field, the following exchange occurred between a senior administration official and reporters on the issue of the Philippines:

Senior administration official: "It was a tightrope we had to walk. We had to follow a very careful path of our public statements and our private actions in order to achieve the stable outcome that we sought many, many months ago. I believe this is a classical example of a policy which set goals and then dealt with a series of evolving circumstances—dealt successfully with a series of evolving circumstances—and in the end achieved what we set out to achieve."

Reporter: "So you were trying to overthrow Marcos?"

Second reporter: "Why can't we have that on the record?"

On Aug. 16, 1985, *Executive Intelligence Review* exposed the plot of U.S. Ambassador Stephen Bosworth, in collaboration with then Acting Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Fidel Ramos, to carry out a military coup against President Marcos. Although the press now claims that President Marcos stepped down on Feb. 25 because of the overwhelming pressure of "people power," the fact is that President Marcos was brought down by a military coup sponsored, directed, and aided at all points by the U.S. embassy on approved orders of the U.S. State Department.

It was not "people's power" that protected the military in the agonizing days of Feb. 22-25. The opposite is reality: A U.S.-ordered coup provided the conditions under which "people's power"—limited to the capital city of Manila—was permitted to prevail.

The coup was signaled when Corazon Aquino announced Feb. 5 on ABC's "Nightline" that she would not abide by the election results unless she were the victor. Aquino claimed she would be unable to restrain her followers. Now it is clear that Mrs. Aquino already had guarantees, if not from the

White House, certainly from Washington.

The coup began when Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile, fearing he was about to be arrested, seized the defense ministry at Camp Aguinaldo with 400 men. According to his own admission on "Nightline" on Feb. 26, Enrile placed an immediate call to Ambassador Bosworth. *EIR* has now confirmed from three different reliable sources the contents of that discussion. Enrile was asked by the ambassador, "What do you need?" Enrile replied: "We need weapons." Those weapons were then supplied.

On the afternoon of Feb. 23, the decision was made at the National Security Council meeting attended by President Reagan that the United States would officially act to force President Marcos's resignation. This position was rammed through the meeting by Secretary of State George Shultz and special envoy Philip Habib, who knew of the coup plot before he left Manila.

As a result of this meeting, the White House issued a statement, written by Shultz and approved by President Reagan, telling Marcos "to avoid an attack" on Camp Crame, to which the coup forces had moved. The White House statement then threatened: "The United States provides military assistance to the Philippine Armed Forces. . . . We cannot continue our existing military assistance if the government uses that aid against other elements of the Philippine military which enjoy substantial popular backing."

This statement, in the public record, was an effective call to the Philippines military to join the coup forces, unless they wanted to face the destruction of the military itself.

The Pentagon followed with a telephone call to every field commander in the Armed Forces of the Philippines, "asking" the officer if he would fight for Marcos. According to UPI, "Informed sources said they had been told by responsible Pentagon officials that all but one Philippine general

had been persuaded by the Americans to keep his troops off the streets as the Marcos-Aquino confrontation escalated." State Department officials also reported on Feb. 24 that they had a total profile of every field commander.

Labor Minister Blas Ople, who had come to Washington to sound out possibilities for a coalition government, informed President Marcos by phone that Reagan believed Marcos should step down. Ople, in an interview with the *Washington Post*, reported Marcos as saying: "My life and the lives of my family are threatened right here. They have bombed the palace. They have forcibly taken over the radio station." Ople said that Marcos "said it was a very curious situation, in which he is being told not to defend himself . . . by the United States."

Political environment manipulated

Between August, when the coup plot first surfaced, and the final hours of Feb. 25, the U.S. State Department, along with the media, and members of Congress led by Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.)

to create the political environment that would cover for the U.S. coup. The primary objective was not to bring in an Aquino government, but to break the Reagan commitment to Marcos. The first phase of the operation was a media campaign to convince the White House that the Philippines, if left to Marcos, would be lost to the communists. Bosworth's embassy supplied the "reports" to back up the media claims.

The tactical objective was to force Marcos to prove his mandate by calling elections. The biggest fraud perpetrated in the elections was the created perception that the Namfrel—heralded from Manila as "our eyes and ears now" and which proclaimed Aquino the early "victor"—was ever an independent "citizen's watchdog committee." A creation of the CIA in the 1950s, Namfrel received funds from the CIA throughout the election period. On Feb. 26, Namfrel chairman Jose Concepcion, a member of the board of directors of the Benigno Aquino Foundation, was named minister of trade and industry in the new Aquino government.

If democracy had ever been an issue for the United States in the Philippines, Reagan's initial Feb. 11 response of neutrality on the election results would have stuck. Mrs. Aquino would have been congratulated for a "close race." Instead, by Feb. 24, the State Department was actively studying the option of freezing all Filipino assets in the United States—as if President Marcos were a state enemy! From the State Department's point of view, President Marcos's crime was that he was a nationalist leader who threatened to block the International Monetary Fund ravaging of the Filipino economy, and challenge the authority of the Fund internationally. But President Marcos's more fundamental crime was that *by virtue of his proven loyalty to the United States*—he was an obstacle to the New Yalta treason by which the State Department has agreed with Moscow to destroy the vital security of the United States.

Chronology of the Philippines coup

by EIR's Asia Bureau

Phase one: the drive for elections

"This is not something the United States has done. This is something the Filipino people have done."

—Secretary of State George Shultz, Feb. 25

Aug. 1. A public clamor began in the media in the United States for Marcos's ouster over his failure to carry out State Department-dictated "reforms." On Aug. 1, the *Boston Globe* editorial stated: "U.S. policymakers should call Marcos's bluff. This is a case in which the hostages are expendable. A conspicuous order to the Pentagon to update its plans for relocating the Philippines bases would send a signal to both Marcos and his critics that the U.S. has learned from its mistakes. . . . Clark Field and Subic Bay are undeniably important . . . but not irreplaceable. Certainly the Philippines bases are not worth a U.S. war to sustain a discredited regime."

Aug. 2. Dimas Pundato, leader of the separatist Moro Liberation Front who is in exile in Libya, met in Washington with officials of the U.S. State Department. Pundato emerged from the meeting to announce in Washington that if President Marcos did not meet MLF demands for greater autonomy, the Moros would take up arms against the government with the New People's Army. Sources reported that another result of the meeting was State Department funding of the Moros. The State Department justified the meeting with Pundato by saying: "We have an open door policy. We talk to anyone with a responsible point of view."

Aug. 7. *New York Times* editorial called for the administration to begin "an energetic search for alternate sites" for the U.S. bases on the Philippines. "As long as Mr. Marcos believes the Americans will swallow anything to keep those bases, he can disregard America's worried attempts to press for constitutional change."

Aug. 16. *Executive Intelligence Review* released story charging that U.S. Ambassador Stephen Bosworth, along with former Ambassador William Sullivan, were plotting a military coup against President Marcos with then Acting Chief of Staff Gen. Fidel Ramos. "The timing for the final