

## EIR Feature

# The Philippines: Corazon Aquino's first 100 days

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President Corazon Aquino's first 100 days in office have passed, and, in a recent *Pravda* article, Philippines Minister of Information Raul Locsin and presidential spokesman Rene Saguisag offered their evaluations.

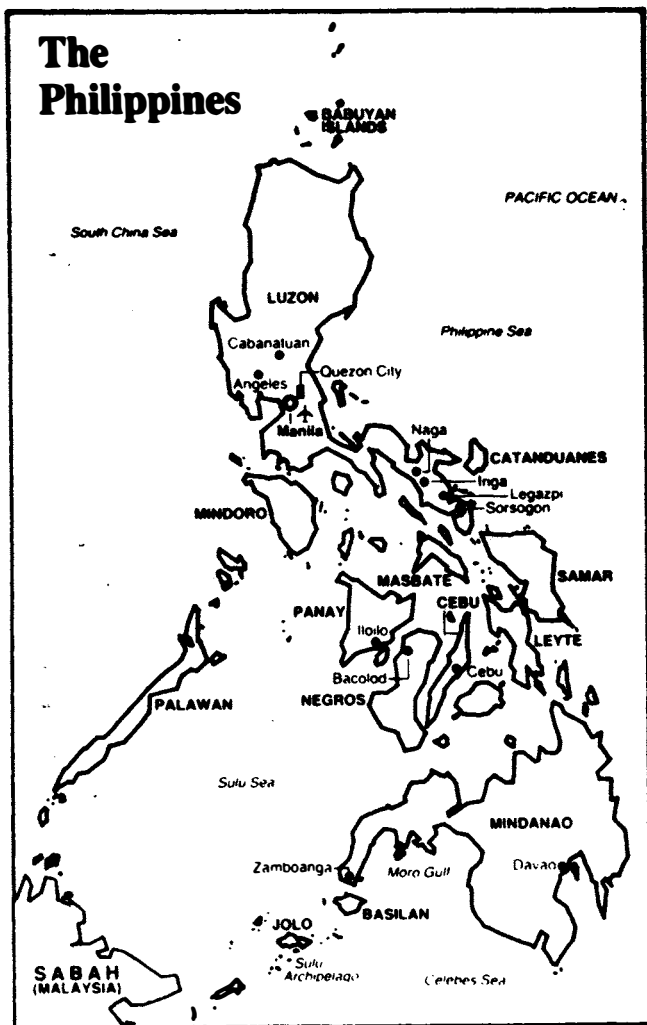
"We strove not to generate vain expectations," said Locsin. "Aquino warned that the Filipinos would have to make sacrifices even after the overthrow of the dictatorship. She did promise, however, that the administration would share them with the people." (How, Locsin did not say.)

"It is impossible to expect too much from us too soon," added Saguisag. "The important point is that the people should feel the main change: Aquino sincerely wishes to put an end to abuses of power. After all, injustice is even more difficult to accept than poverty." (Note that Saguisag is a member of the generally poverty-stricken legal profession.)

Such facile nonsense may even disappoint *Pravda* readers, who are not usually spoiled by an abundance of reliable information—or perhaps they will simply find it a boringly familiar refrain.

We would be more willing to heed Aquino government spokesmen's pleas to "Give us more time," if in our judgment the economic and security policies of the first 100 days had any realistic chance of succeeding or if they even so much as pointed in the right direction. They demonstrably do not. As *EIR* analysts develop in more detail below, the economic policies of Finance Minister Jaime Ongpin and Central Bank Governor José Fernandez represent an unbroken continuity with the previous Virata/Fernandez policies of compliance with International Monetary Fund prescriptions at the expense of the welfare of the nation. Internal security policy meanwhile is based on blatant misevaluation of the nature of the New People's Army/Communist Party, leaving the ill-equipped and underfunded (New) Armed Forces of the Philippines (NAFP) in purely defensive and untenable positions, as offers of amnesty and negotiations continue to fail to bring the NPA "down from the hills." Such policies hold no promise other than continuing economic hardship and military defeat at the hands of terrorist insurgents.

Even granting the best of intentions to Mrs. Aquino herself, it is our prognosis



that the policies of her appointed cabinet officers (and self-appointed Jesuit advisers) must of necessity further the erosion of political stability. As the largely Manila-based "people power" euphoria finally dissipates, increasingly violent political factionalism in the armed forces and civilian sector will at the same time work against early re-establishment of constitutional democracy.

We repeatedly forecast and warned against the present turn of events. It requires no great gift of foresight to predict the economic policy course to be chosen by a finance minister whose former business associates include some of the most notorious organized crime-linked figures in the United States, or the security policy insisted on by former close associates of pro-terrorist "human rights" lawyer Ramsey Clark, the former U.S. attorney general.

### Soviet collective security

But we derive no satisfaction from our accuracy. A politically stable and economically healthy Philippine republic is an essential U.S. Asia-Pacific ally.

This is true not only in the narrow military sense of the

security of the U.S. bases at Subic Bay and Clark Field 700 miles across the South China Sea from the Soviet build-up at Danang and Cam Ranh Bay. The Soviet political and military leadership is not stupid. They will not simply push the narrow line of removal of U.S. bases. That task can be left to local agitation by the likes of Sen. José Diokno and others. Political and economic chaos in Manila provides them with the broader strategic opening of breaking another Pacific ally out of strategic alignment with the United States. Left to its own devices, the Philippines would then be invited to enter into discussions and arrangements for collective, regional security agreements, and begin to see the advantage of mutually beneficial build-up of economic, cultural, and scientific ties. Such arrangements, "ensuring the security of Asia, are of vital importance to the Soviet Union, a major Asian power," stated Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov to the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1986.

How vital and timely the Soviet Union considers its new Asia foreign-policy initiatives, adopted at the 27th Congress, is underlined by the unprecedented Asian shuttle diplomacy

offensive conducted this spring by former Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Kapitsa, which would put Henry Kissinger to shame. Soviet analysis and objectives are spelled out in *Far Eastern Affairs*, the authoritative journal of the Institute of the Far East of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, edited by Kapitsa and V. A. Arkhipov. We will quote from the *Far Eastern Affairs* (2/1986) document summaries of the 27th Congress proceedings and an accompanying article on "A Comprehensive Approach to the Problem of Asian Security" by Prof. I. Kovalenko, which outline Soviet policy.

According to the report on the 27th Congress:

"People in the Asian countries are increasingly conscious of the fact that peace and stability on the continent cannot be secured by a strategy aimed at confrontation and intensive militarization. Evaluating the situation in that part of the world, mention must be made of the critical view taken by the ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] countries of the U.S. plans for a so-called Pacific Community whereby the United States obviously intends to become a sort of 'manager' of the military and economic policies of the world's most densely populated continent. The ASEAN countries fear, for example, that the Community might undermine the role of their organization. Nor are they delighted by the prospect of becoming dependent on the U.S.A. and Japan first economically and then also politically and militarily.

"In view of the Soviet Union, if there is to be lasting peace and security in Asia, the countries in the region should not split up into military, political or economic blocs, but should mobilize all their efforts to combat the war danger. . . .

"It is commonly acknowledged that the question of peace and stability in Asia cannot be settled overnight. It is a long-term job that will program from phase to phase, moving carefully from bilateral or multilateral accords already or still to be concluded to more extensive agreements, with a gradual consolidation of stability in the region."

And from Kovalenko's article:

"The pulse of life of the Asian continent is felt throughout our planet. The turbulent developments in Asia have been attracting the attention of all those who favor the consolidation of peace and security of nations."

Among the points listed as encompassed by Soviet policy toward the region, Kovalenko cites:

"*Eighth*. Inadmissibility of creating new and expanding the already existing blocs in the Asia-Pacific region and the elimination of foreign bases there. The existence of military-political blocs and close groupings, as well as military bases on foreign territories is a crucial source of tension. That is why the world democratic public maintains that such blocs should be disbanded and the bases eliminated. . . .

"*Ninth*. Creation of peace zones and nuclear-free zones in different areas of Asia, the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. The creation of peace zones and nuclear-free zones in differ-

ent geographic regions presents an efficient form of struggle against the nuclear arms race. . . .

"*Tenth*. Mikhail Gorbachov . . . mentioned the need for carrying out confidence-building measures in the military and political fields among the actions aimed at ensuring a beneficial situation for the realization of Asian security. . . .

"Mikhail Gorbachov's statement emphasizes: 'The implementation of our program would radically change the situation in Asia . . . and would elevate the security in that region onto a qualitatively new level.'"

Despite the bureaucratic double-talk, what is clear from these quotes is that the Soviet Union, a great Asian power unlike the distant United States, claims the right to be surrounded by friendly or at least non-aligned nations, and is implementing policy to effect such an outcome. Offering lucrative trade deals to ASEAN countries hurt by U.S. import restrictions is part of the policy; continuing the military build-up in Indochina and Northeast Asia is the other side of the coin.

How does the Philippine situation fit into this picture? Soviet "peaceful co-existence" policy does not require that governments moving toward such an arrangement subscribe to the "socialist system." The existence and growing vitality of "progressive democratic forces" pushing governments in the proper direction are all that is required.

The Philippine situation certainly looks promising from that standpoint. Amnesty for previously jailed communist and terrorist leaders has strengthened the hard core of the civilian left, creating new opportunities for direct Soviet inputs. Groups advocating the removal of U.S. bases are now re-launching their campaign, with a demonstration over the July 4 weekend in front of the U.S. embassy in Manila. They were joined by 17 members of Mrs. Aquino's 50-member constitutional commission, who demanded the inclusion of a clause banning all foreign military bases in the preamble of the constitution.

Also on July 4, Philippine Deputy Foreign Minister José Ingles said that a move to declare Southeast Asia a nuclear-free zone will be on top of the agenda of the ASEAN summit in Manila next year. Ingles said that senior officials are now studying a treaty providing for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region. A similar move by New Zealand just led to U.S. withdrawal from the ANZUS military pact in the South Pacific.

There is yet no positive evidence of Soviet deep involvement in the NPA insurgency, but certainly Soviet political leaders and covert operations specialists are evaluating the opportunities that present themselves as the Aquino government tries to talk the insurgents "down from the hills" at a time when their strength and level of operations are increasing at an unprecedented rate. In Mindanao, the NPA is now operating in close to battalion-size (300-400) units, and is holding territory on a previously unrealized scale. Fifty to sixty percent of Philippine armed-forces fighting strength is

now concentrated on Mindanao, but is politically hamstrung and pinned down in fixed, defensive positions.

While the Soviet Union has a clearly articulated Southeast Asia policy and is being presented with ample opportunities for its implementation, what in the meantime are the analysis and policy objectives of the Reagan administration and of congressional leaders who had such a large hand in the Manila February Revolution and such expectations for it? Part of the answer is contained in a June 3 statement by Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Richard Armitage, before the U.S. Foreign Relations Committee:

"Despite anticipations to the contrary, the departure of Mr. Marcos did not with one stroke solve the problems of the Philippines. There was no immediate infusion of foreign capital to buoy the economy; the insurgents did not give up their arms and 'come down from the hills'; and despite the emergence of a popular government, the democratic process awaits definition by a new constitution. . . .

"In response to President Aquino's reconciliation efforts, the CPP [Communist Party of the Philippines] has indicated its intention to remain outside the democratic process. Except in rare instances, the NPA has refused to lay down its arms and is avoiding negotiations for a nationwide ceasefire. Far from embracing the new government, the communists are exploiting the NAFP's defensive posture by reorganizing, regrouping, and recovering from its election setback for the clear purpose of reinvigorating the insurgency. In fact, while the NAFP remains in defensive position, the NPA attacks and continues the *agaw armas* (arms grabbing) campaign.

"The CPP and NPA did indeed suffer a substantial political defeat when they decided to boycott the election. But they have also achieved some substantial military gains, seizing more than 300 weapons during the confusion of the transition and killing more than 800 soldiers and civilians since the accession of the Aquino government. In fact, there were over 200 violent incidents in March alone, and it is accurate to state that NPA assaults have become more aggressive than ever. The anticipated surrender of large numbers of NPA forces has yet to occur, and CPP political cadre are exploiting the complicated process of transferring authority at the local level. The NPA remains a serious threat to the Philippine government, with a strength of more than 22,500 armed troops and 15,000 support personnel. . . .

"I must also point out, Mr. Chairman, that the Aquino government has reduced Philippine defense expenditures. A pay raise announced in March has yet to be implemented, and the 1986 defense budget has been cut by almost 14%, with further cuts anticipated in the months ahead. Under such circumstances, we can not expect an immediate and complete eradication of corruption and human rights abuses. . . .

"And lastly, but by no means inconsequentially, the military situation is serious and getting worse, with the communists enjoying the initiative and assuming de facto control

in areas where government influence has been eroded over the years. We sincerely hope that President Aquino's offer of a ceasefire and an amnesty is ultimately accepted in good faith by the communists. As a general proposition, we support any program that would reduce bloodshed and eliminate the prospect of Filipinos killing each other. However, the continuing brutal attacks by the NPA and CPP's continuing adherence to the doctrine of armed struggle, leave little doubt in our minds that, at the end of the day, military action will be required to defeat the insurgency."

This is the same Mr. Armitage who on Oct. 30, 1985, before the same Senate committee, stated that barring dramatic change (that is, removal of President Marcos and leading military figures), we could face a situation of strategic stalemate in the next three to five years between the NPA and the government, and who, along with then Assistant Secretary of State for Far East Asian and Pacific Affairs Paul Wolfowitz, charted and implemented the Reagan administration's policy which produced the current state of affairs. As a Japanese friend in Washington commented on reading Armitage's June 3 statement: "If he were a Japanese official, he would have done the only honorable thing after delivering his testimony—*seppuku*" (ceremonial suicide to cleanse his reputation).

The final twist in Armitage's testimony is his admonishment that "the Aquino government must recognize the vital necessity of integrating economic, military, and social programs into a comprehensive framework which will defeat the NPA/ CPP." That is true enough, but Armitage might ask himself how the Aquino government is to carry out such an imperative, when the United States, led by Secretary of State Shultz, is demanding that the Philippines adhere to the IMF-dictated destruction of the Philippine economy. Has it not occurred to Armitage et al. that if such policies of economic disintegration were able to bring down the Marcos government, the same policies will make it impossible for the Aquino government to secure political stability? And, has it not occurred to them that the consequences of this failure could well be the realization of Armitage's warnings?

Or has it occurred to them? The February Revolution and the unfolding events in the Philippines cohere with the designs of the Guam Doctrine of Henry Kissinger and his co-thinkers for the strategic withdrawal of the United States from the Pacific theatre. In 1977, this policy for the Philippines was asserted by New Yalta strategist George Kennan: "The original justification for the maintenance of the Philippines bases has now been extensively undermined. The American response to the situation that now exists should be, surely, the immediate, complete, resolute, and wordless withdrawal of the facilities and equipment they contain, leaving to the Philippine government the real estate and only that."

It would appear that the Philippines, America's sister republic in the Pacific, has been sacrificed to the Soviet right to be surrounded by friendly or non-aligned nations.