

the statement issued by the opposition Liberal Party that "With this action of the regime . . . it may well have made civil strife in the country . . . irreversible."

Aquino murder: a time-bomb

The signing of the IMF letter of intent coincides with the most serious moment in the Philippines' political fortunes since the assassination of Aquino. By the end of this month, the official commission headed by former Court of Appeals justice Corazon Agrava has pledged to release its report on the Aquino murder. The country is rife with rumors that the five-person commission is torn over whether to pin the murder on a military conspiracy reaching up to and including Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Fabian Ver, a relative and long-time companion of President Marcos.

Commission head Agrava is rumored to be the only naysayer, choosing only to link the conspiracy to Brig. Gen. Luther Custodio, chief of the Aviation Security Command assigned to protect Aquino at the Manila International Airport. General Ver is Custodio's commanding officer.

The political storm around the commission report is spinning off secondary and tertiary scandals, all circumstantially linking the military and political allies of President Marcos to the murder. Opposition leaders such as Jose Diokno, buddy of Khomeini backers Ramsey Clark and Richard Falk and head of the Anti-Bases Coalition, which is committed to ousting the U.S. military presence from the Philippines and ending the "U.S.-Marcos dictatorship," have the taste of blood and are moving in for the kill. Diokno has stated the obvious, charging that General Ver could not have acted "on his own without instructions from higher up."

One such scandal involving the leading Marcos "crony," coconut magnate Eduardo Cojuangco, erupted Oct. 16 as the attorney for the family of Aquino's alleged assassin, Rolando Galman, was arrested in connection with a \$6 million libel suit. Last July attorney Lupino Lazaro charged that Cojuangco, also first cousin to Aquino's widow, was tied to the Aquino murder. Lazaro has refused to pay \$90 bail so as to pressure the Agrava commission to release its findings. The libel suit promises to become a major media event because other defendants include a reporter, editor and vice-president of one of Manila's leading papers, *Bulletin Today*.

The Aquino scandal has brought to the surface dangerous fissures in both the political and military base of President Marcos, fissures that will require careful handling if the Philippines is not to become the next Iran. But political stability will never be achieved until the self-feeding economic and financial crisis imposed by the IMF is addressed. On its own, the Philippines cannot solve that crisis. It must become part of an effort between developing sector nations, the United States and Western Europe to overhaul the international monetary system. Such a proposal, independent Democratic president candidate Lyndon LaRouche has written in his "Operation Juárez" policy paper. That document is known to be under close study throughout the Philippines.

Medicine

The current status of AIDS research

by John Grauerholz, M.D.

In April of this year, the National Cancer Institute in the United States and the Louis Pasteur Institute in Paris announced results indicating that the cause of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) had been found. The French scientists isolated a virus, the Lymphadenopathy Associated Virus (LAV), from a tumor in an AIDS patient in January 1983, and subsequently isolated the same virus from other patients. Dr. Robert Gallo, of the National Cancer Institute, subsequently identified a virus, known as HTLV-3, in blood and tissue of AIDS patients.

Both viruses are members of a group known as retroviruses, and recent testing indicates they are closely related, if not identical. Retro-viruses are unique in not having their own genetic material (DNA); they utilize an enzyme, reverse transcriptase, which causes infected cells to reproduce the virus from their own DNA.

Gallo had pioneered work on these viruses, which are known to attack T-cells, the immune cells the lack of which is the underlying defect in AIDS patients. He had initially documented that a related virus, HTLV-1 (Human T-cell Lymphoma—Leukemia Virus), was responsible for human T-cell leukemia, the first proven virus-caused cancer in humans.

Since that time, National Cancer Institute scientists have developed techniques for growing large quantities of the virus, and have developed a test for detecting evidence of exposure to the virus in blood. The government is beginning to collect blood samples from 200,000 regular blood donors in four cities with high numbers of AIDS cases. The four cities are New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Miami.

After testing, some donors with positive results and some with negative results will be asked to participate in a study to determine the significance of the test results. Donors with positive results will be informed, and offered additional test-

ing to determine if their immune system is working.

Recipients of blood from these donors will also be asked to participate. No blood from positive donors will be used for transfusion once the test is commercially available. The Center for Disease Control is now evaluating the risk of getting AIDS from transfusions. Of 6,332 cases of AIDS as of Oct. 15, 1984, only 73 have been acquired from transfused blood. This is out of a total of 4,000,000 Americans who receive blood or blood products each year.

More recently, the Sept. 10 *New York Times* reported that scientists in California had cloned the entire genetic material of the suspected AIDS virus. This would allow for the possibility of producing virus products without the risks of using live viruses.

While the identification of the virus represents a significant step forward, problems still remain. It is uncertain that a person carrying the virus will necessarily transmit it or come down with AIDS him- or herself. There have been cases in which a recipient came down with AIDS and died, while the donor was alive and asymptomatic.

Supporting evidence for a virus as the cause of AIDS comes from a study of 58 suspected cases in babies or young children. One-fifth of these children had received tainted blood transfusions, and the others had at least one parent in a high risk group; one baby's mother had died of AIDS. Apparently some of these infections were acquired in the uterus.

Since no family member of an AIDS patient has come down with the disease in the absence of sexual contact or blood transfer, the epidemiology is similar to Hepatitis B. There is no evidence of spread by casual contact in the United States, in spite of a recent report that the virus has been detected in the saliva of some people at high risk of developing the disease. Interestingly, the virus has not been detected in the saliva of AIDS victims.

Dr. Arthur Ammann, an immunologist at the University of California at San Francisco, raised a number of issues about the single-virus theory in a recent letter to the *Journal of the American Medical Association* excerpted below:

"Some persons with AIDS lack anti-body or detectable virus, and some at high risk have anti-body or detectable virus, but not AIDS. If infection with a single viral agent is the only cause of AIDS, it is difficult to explain why some blood-product recipients die of AIDS while the donor remains relatively healthy for three or more years following blood donation. Furthermore, if a single agent were responsible for AIDS, then the syndrome should have existed prior to the beginning of the epidemic in 1981."

One possibility is that the virus is a newly emerged organism. "Then one must ask why AIDS is confined to a selected population of persons at risk and has not been reported in medical workers involved in the management of patients with AIDS. The latter observations suggest that a single agent by itself is not capable of causing AIDS, but that other factors, such as additional viral infection or pre-existing

immuno-suppression, are prerequisite for the development of AIDS."

In the Oct. 19, 1984 issue of *Science*, medical researchers reported finding the AIDS virus in the semen of an apparently healthy homosexual man who had sexual contact in 1982 with another man who subsequently developed the disease. At a Boston press conference on Oct. 18, 1984, Dr. Martin Hirsch of the Massachusetts General Hospital said the AIDS virus is most likely transmitted by anal intercourse. This is consistent with work done a few years ago by Dr. Chandra Prakash of Ohio State University in which he reported the development of tumors resembling Kaposi's sarcoma, a rare tumor frequently found in AIDS patients, in homosexual hogs. The incidence of the tumors correlated with the total volume of semen the hog received by anal intercourse. Among homosexual men, the incidence of AIDS correlated with high numbers of contacts, generally 700 to 1,000 or more different partners.

It is in this context that one must view the recent furor in San Francisco when the director of public health ordered the closing of 14 public bathhouses which encourage anonymous and multiple sexual contacts. Militant homosexual leaders contend that closure of the baths—with such picturesque names as Animals, Boot Camp, Savage Theater, and The Slot—is an act of discrimination against gays and an attack on gay rights.

Commissioner Silverman reached his decision because "we now have solid evidence that AIDS is a sexually transmitted disease—often spread by people who are unaware they are carrying the virus." He added: "Make no mistake about it—these 14 establishments are not fostering gay liberation. They are fostering disease and death." At least six of the establishments, on advice of their attorneys, remained open in defiance of the order.

Mayor Diane Feinstein is backing Silverman's action, and the homosexual community is sharply split, with the Harvey Milk Gay Democratic Club and the city's only homosexual legislator supporting the closure, and Concerned Republicans for Individual Rights opposing it. Dr. Seth Charney, speaking for a pro-homosexual physicians group, said the order is not "based on any scientific evidence."

While these edifying debates continue, the number of cases in the United States has reached 6,332 as of Oct. 15, 1984, of whom 2,944, and essentially all of those diagnosed before 1982, have died. In Western Europe, the number of cases has nearly doubled over the last year, while in sub-Saharan African countries, such as Zaire, it is estimated that the incidence may be 10- to 20-times higher than the United States. While the indigenous European cases occur in the same homosexual and intravenous-drug-user groups as in the United States, the African cases are occurring among non-homosexual, non-drug-using inhabitants who are immuno-suppressed by IMF-induced malnutrition and collapse of sanitary infrastructure.