

## Ferdinand Marcos's republican principles

*In a speech delivered to the National Defense College on July 18, President Marcos declared that the Philippines would not go the way of Iran and Nicaragua. People who say that, especially Americans, he said, who "do not take into account the fact that the national leadership is composed of men who do not run away . . . do not just take a plane and go off to Miami or run off to another place and give up power. The leadership of your country is not made of such weak stock. We will defend our principles to the death. Our articles of faith are known, and we will defend them to the last breath of life."*

*In his 1983 book, An Ideology for Filipinos, Marcos enunciated those principles. Here are excerpts from the opening chapters:*

Internalization of the democratic revolution starts at the base of the nation—with the common people—inspiring and compelling those in the upper ranks to do likewise, so that a symbiotic relationship, as it were, occurs among the various levels of society, making the task of nation-building truly a national concern. . . .

The egalitarian ideal . . . urges those persons who occupy positions of power and responsibility—in government or the private sector—to treat equally every individual in the society. In short, the egalitarian ideal provides the moral basis for public and private transactions.

Needless to say, the egalitarian ideal has a related presupposition about the nature of man. It assumes that each human being (disallowing individuals with natural or congenital disabilities) has the same potential as another to develop himself, and thus to achieve the full measure of his humanity. What prevents a man from achieving his full potential is precisely an institutional arrangement that denies him, but not others, those opportunities that would enable him to realize himself.

Obviously, the egalitarian ideal cannot stand by itself. It needs additional support, for the principle of equality can be met even without bothering with certain other values that are among the basic entitlements of every human being. For

instance, we can all be equal in degradation and poverty: but such equality is meaningless. This is why the commitment to an egalitarian polity should rest upon the broader ideal of humanism. . . .

To serve the ends of man—that is the ultimate justification of all social institutions.

The Western philosophical tradition locates man's uniqueness in his rationality: It defines man as a rational animal. The idea of man does not necessarily lead to the philosophy of humanism, for the concept of rationality could be construed mechanistically: as a movement of thought that follows a set of inflexible principles. The Cartesian conception of reason is mechanistic in this sense. For it regards thinking as something that can be pursued only in one way: beginning with clear and distinct notions, the mind moves forward, step by step, following only the dictates of logic. What Cartesianism overlooks is that element of creativity so essential to the concept of human rationality. The recognition of man's creativity, or that impulse to create new forms and new modes of coping with the demands of reality, has tremendous implications—not only for a philosophy of man but also for social policy and thus for ideology.

In a sense, we can regard the history of civilization as the history of human creativity. The so-called scientific revolutions represent man's disengagement from traditional modes of thinking. . . .

The humanistic thrust of our ideology precisely takes into account the fact that apart from being rational, in the Cartesian sense of the term, man has a gift of creativity that expresses itself not only in his art but also in his science and social institutions. This creativity is what makes man truly human. In fact, it seems more appropriate to define man *not* as a rational animal but as a creative being.

The humanistic principle directs our egalitarian commitment. We are not seeking to equalize opportunities for our people merely for the sake of abstract equality. We are doing so to unleash the creative potential of every Filipino.

. . . No ideology can serve as a basis of transformation unless it commits itself to the rights of man. It is unfortunate, though perfectly understandable, that in the context of our political experience the concern for human rights has always been a concern for "political" rights: the right to free speech, of assembly, and so on. Observers of our political process will, no doubt, suppose that for our people political rights are primordial. A review of our political history immediately suggests this. . . .

A question that relates to this is whether *in fact* our people are as much concerned with political rights as those who have made it their business to profess them. Is it possible that the question of political rights looms large only in the minds of a small sector of the national community—those who use the issue of political rights for purposes of gaining power—but that for the masses of Filipinos themselves, the primordial concern is the economic right to survive with dignity?"

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### Contents

#### Part 1:

### The Soviets Have Already Declared War on the U.S.A.

- 1.1 The Two Qualitative Facets Of Soviet Strategic Mobilization Under the Operational Ogarkov Plan
- 1.2 Soviet Doctrine on the War-Economy
- 1.3 Soviet Conclusions from World War II
- 1.4 The 'Maximum Option' of the Ogarkov Plan: Winning Thermonuclear War
- 1.5 The Soviet Military Command for World War III

#### Part 2:

### Soviet Imperial Motives

- 2.1 Soviet Imperial World-Domination by the 1990s?
- 2.2 The History of the Soviet Imperial Tradition
- 2.3 Imperial Soviet Russia and the Chaldean-Byzantine Model of Empire
- 2.4 The Andropov Dynasty: 'Stalin's Children'

#### Part 3:

### Soviet Imperial Objectives

- 3.1 Redrawing the Political Map of the World
- 3.2 The Northern Flank
- 3.3 The Imminent Knockout of NATO's Southern Flank
- 3.4 Germany—the Key to Europe
- 3.5 The Socialist International-Comintern 'Popular Front'
- 3.6 Syria and Israel Within the Soviet Strategic Sphere
- 3.7 China vs. Japan and Vietnam, Under Soviet Strategic Hegemony
- 3.8 The Anglo-American Liberal Establishment and Its Penetration by Soviet Intelligence

#### Part 4:

### The Build-Up of Soviet Absolute Superiority

- 4.1 The Soviet Military Build-Up's Two-Fold Role
- 4.2 Active Defense: The Soviet 'Star Wars' Program
- 4.3 Passive Defense: Survival After War
- 4.4 The Build-Up of the Soviet War Economy
- 4.5 The U.S. and Soviet Economies Since MAD
- 4.6 What Are 'Acceptable Losses' for the Russian Command in a Global Nuclear War?
- 4.7 The Religious Factor: Call to Arms for 'Holy War'

#### Part 5:

### Soviet Strategic Sabotage and Assassination Programs

- 5.1 Andropov's Rise in the KGB: Warsaw Pact Enters International Drugs-and-Terrorism Business
- 5.2 Soviet Surrogates Provide 48 Months of Prewar Assassination and Sabotage

#### Part 6:

### The Soviet Plan of Attack

#### Part 7:

### Keys to U.S.A. and NATO Counter-Strategy

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