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## Philippines

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# Opposition promises violence in elections

by Linda de Hoyos

Under pressure from the United States, Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos has called for national presidential elections for Jan. 17, 1986. In his interviews with David Brinkley and "Nightline"'s Ted Koppel, Marcos was repeatedly asked why, if he had the support of the population that he claims, would he not call elections to prove it and, in the meantime, "restore democracy" to the Philippines. Marcos replied that first, local and regional elections are scheduled for 1986 and the presidential elections for 1987. And, given the crisis in his country, he told Koppel, his government were better off spending its time on efforts to revive the economy and quell the New People's Army insurgency. "What do you think I do around here all day," Marcos shot back, "sit around and make jokes with my cronies?"

Such arguments, however, did not blunt the pressure for holding elections immediately—despite the State Department's expressed "concern" over the problems Marcos is trying to solve. It has also been of no concern to the State Department liberals that such elections violate the Philippines constitution, which does not specify elections until 1987. By their perverted logic, Marcos should violate the laws of his country, to prove that he is democratic!

According to sources in Washington, offerings were also made to Marcos that, if he called elections, the third tranche of \$630 million in moneys from the International Monetary Fund, held by the IMF in early November because of Philippine lack of compliance with IMF conditionalities, could expect to be released. In addition, the United States would end its threats to cut off the AID's rural service aid.

There were also threats in the first week of November of a renewed devaluation of the peso, with the IMF demanding that the peso "float" further from 22 to 23 to the dollar. Other economists are predicting that the peso will soon slip to 50 to the dollar, but the government has resisted the IMF's demands. It remains to be seen whether holding off on the peso was also part of the package for the elections.

As the package has been sold to the American people through the corrupt media, the elections will give the opposition the opportunity to end the Marcos regime. To help this process, the State Department is insisting on "international observers" on the scene in the Philippines on election day, to

ensure fair elections against the KBL (New Society Party) political machine of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos. State Department spokesman Charles Redmond declared on Nov. 8, "If elections are to re-establish confidence . . . then it is essential that they be credible to the Filipino people"—a way of demanding that Marcos orchestrate his own loss.

But Marcos is unlikely to lose—an evaluation corroborated by opposition complaints that they have been caught "off guard" and need until March to prepare for a challenge to Marcos! More to the point, a poll taken in September by the Makati Businessmen's Association, an organization hostile to Marcos, showed that if snap elections were held, Marcos would win a full 56% of the vote. The leading contenders for the presidential nomination among the opposition are Corazon Aquino, widow of the slain opposition leader Benigno Aquino, and Salvador Laurel, head of the UNIDO Party. Aquino's credentials are limited to the sympathy votes she would pull for the opposition.

### Signal for civil war

Laurel has been fully backed by the State Department and comes from an old latifundista family in the Philippines, which collaborated with the Japanese during World War II. On Nov. 5, Laurel arrived in Washington to drum up campaign support. But in a press conference on Capitol Hill with Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.)

beans on the true reason why the State Department pressured Marcos into the elections. Marcos, Laurel charged, will "fix" the elections, but the Philippine people, he said, "are prepared to defend their ballots with their lives and it may end up in a violent confrontation."

*The elections are the signal for the "massive civil war" predicted by Undersecretary of Defense Richard Armitage to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Oct. 30.* The elections are the next ratchet of destabilization for the Philippines, in the State Department effort to hand this country over to Soviet domination under the New Yalta regional accords.

Aware of this danger, the announcement came from Malacanang Palace on Nov. 7 that the military would be confined to the barracks during the vote, and that plans were being drawn up to "stop all military operations" during the last five days of the campaign. The announcement said that the President hoped that, with the "voluntary segregation" of security forces, the "legitimate political opposition would refrain from violence and not come to an agreement with the communist New People's Army for their own purposes."

Such an agreement could well be in the works. Aside from the funds it raises by selling drugs grown in its territories, the NPA receives funds and backing from the powerful Philippine oligarchy that was stripped of much of its political power and its private armies when Marcos instituted martial law in 1972.