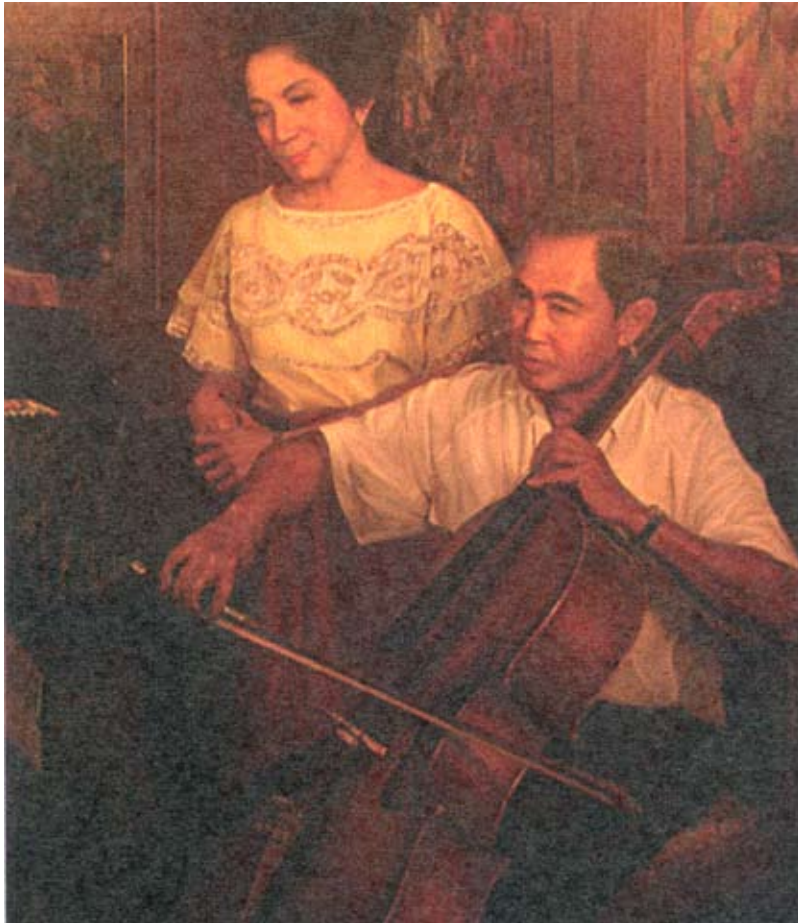

In Memoriam

Ronnie Velasco 1927-2007

Geronimo “Ronnie” Velasco, who built the Philippines’ power system, including Southeast Asia’s first nuclear power plant, while serving as the Minister of Energy and CEO of the Philippines National Oil Company during the rule of President Ferdinand Marcos from 1972 to 1986, died on July 17 at the age of 80, in San Francisco, of a heart attack. Velasco, a close friend of *EIR* and the international LaRouche movement, was not only a trailblazer for his nation, and for the developing sector generally, in the development of nuclear energy, but he also had re-emerged as a critical player in the current fight to revive nuclear energy in the Philippines. He will be missed by his nation and by his many friends around the world.

Velasco was unceremoniously dumped from his position as Philippines “Energy Czar” in 1986, when George Shultz and Paul Wolfowitz orchestrated a “regime change” military coup against the Marcos government. The immediate consequence of that imperial act was the mothballing of the completed nuclear power plant, thus destroying in one shot the potential for the Philippines to emerge as a modern industrial nation, as envisioned by the Marcos plan for 11 major indus-



Courtesy of Geronimo Velasco

Geronimo “Ronnie” Velasco, shown here with his wife Erlinda, was a trailblazer in the Philippines’ quest for economic development and nuclear energy.

trial projects. Twenty years later, in 2006, Velasco released a book, *Trailblazing: The Quest for Energy Self-Reliance* (see Mike Billington’s interview in *EIR*, May 12, 2006, at: www.larouchepub.com/eiw/public/2006/2006_10-19/2006_10-19/2006-19/pdf/45-48_619_book.pdf), which revealed both the dynamic development policies of those years, and the lies and foreign manipulation which led to the 1986 destruction of the Philippines’ potential.

In a series of discussions and an interview with *EIR* in 2006 (for on-line version, see www.larouchepub.com/eiw/public/2006/2006_30-39/2006_30-39/2006-31/pdf/65-71_631_ecovelas.pdf), Velasco explained why it took 20 years: “We did not have the political space until now. Anything we said during or after that time, we were just dismissed as ‘Marcos’ boys.’ It took us all of these years in order to get the space for the public to even listen, to hear.”

Velasco told me that he’d read the George Shultz autobiography, *Turmoil and Triumph*, and that “it was very obvious that he was the one that orchestrated the Marcos debacle. Ob-

viously, based on this book, [President Ronald] Reagan didn’t want to do it.” He also pointed to the fact that the head of the Anglo-Dutch Shell Oil operations in the Philippines, Cesar Buenaventura, joined Shultz in demanding that the nuclear plant be shuttered—much to the advantage of Royal Dutch Shell.

Velasco understood the necessary role of state industries (which goes to the heart of why he and Marcos were dumped by the rising neo-conservatives in Washington). In his book, Velasco wrote: “Unlike in a private firm, where the CEO’s principal responsibility is to keep the shareholders happy, in a government corporation our job was ultimately to promote the national interest.”

He had a deep regard for the American System and the U.S.A., where he developed his business skills as a young man, and was saddened to see the destruction of the machine-tool capacity now taking place in the United States. He told me that “the strength of America was its capability to manufacture. Nobody else could manufacture with the strength of market you have, with the strength of the quality that you could do, and in the capability that your people had. But this seems to be disappearing now.”

At the time of our discussions in 2006, Ronnie Velasco was full of humor and goodwill, but also saw little hope that his nation could get through the disastrous economic crisis now afflicting the Philippines. However, just a few weeks ago, he was an invited speaker, along

with Butch Valdes, head of the LaRouche Society of the Philippines, at an historic conference in Manila, sponsored by the Philippines Chamber of Commerce Foundation, dedicated to reviving nuclear power in the Philippines, and to the broader economic development that such a revival could facilitate. Velasco explained that the Bata’an Nuclear Plant had been shut down not for technical reasons, but from political pressure, from forces outside the nation, and called for the people present to take responsibility for exposing the myths and lies which had allowed the population to accept such an attack on their own future. Since his death, the chairman of the Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Ramon Pedrosa, has informed us that the nuclear program they intend to present to the government be dedicated in his honor.

We in the LaRouche movement saw Ronnie Velasco as a valuable force for the good, from the older generation, in the current global crisis. We will continue working to ensure that his mission is fulfilled.

—Mike Billington