

Asia fights the policy of 'constructive disengagement'

by Linda de Hoyos

In January of 1985, Henry Kissinger traveled to Bangkok, Thailand, to meet with official and private leaders of Thai policy making. One of his main purposes, as related by a leading technocrat of the Thai National Economic and Social Development Board, was to assure that the great project for a Kra Canal in southern Thailand—a project revived by the *EIR* and the Fusion Energy Foundation in 1983—would be put “back

the intervening two years, despite devaluations of the Thai currency imposed by Kissinger's Wharton Schooled friends in government and despite attempted coups and destabilizations, a growing consensus is emerging in Thailand for the construction of the Kra Canal.

As Thailand's leading daily, the *Bangkok Post*, stated in an editorial on Dec. 18, 1986 entitled “The Kra Canal: More than a Good Idea”: “Interest in building a major waterway connecting the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Thailand on the narrow strip of the Kra Isthmus was revived last week. It gained added impetus when [Army Chief of Staff] General Chaovalit voiced his support for it. . . . The reality is that the waterway would definitely benefit Thailand and if properly managed would also be of great use to Malaysia and Singapore. . . . Where prosperity reigns, experience has proven it would automatically solve any social problems that might exist. Indeed, the Kra Canal would firmly establish Thailand on the world map. Like the Suez and Panama waterways, ours would have at least as much economic and political significance, and possibly more. With the era of the Pacific just around the corner, a bold and far-reaching decision must be taken.”

The *Bangkok Post* endorsement of the Kra Canal Project reflects the consensus emerging from the government of Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanond, Thailand's financial community, and the military. Thailand, surveying the combined economic, military, and social pressures on the Southeast Asian nations, has determined, as Gen. Saiyud Kerdpol (ret.) stated in a Thai television interview Dec. 17: “If we are prosperous economically, that is our national security.”

This has been the secret of the strength of the countries

of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the construction of the Kra Canal was first proposed as a major feature of the U.S.-sponsored SEATO (Southeast Asian Treaty Organization) in the 1950s. But with this exception, throughout Asia, this fundamental principle has been repudiated in American foreign policy, with disastrous results.

Case in point: the Philippines

In 1986, the deterioration of this sister republic of the United States represents the future not only of the ASEAN countries, but of all of Asia, if the basic principle stated by General Kerdpol is not revived and acted upon with boldness and determination. In February, the United States directed a military coup against its longstanding friend and ally, President Ferdinand Marcos. *EIR* had exposed the coup in August of 1985, thereby delaying the process. But by February, two and a half weeks after hastily called national elections, Marcos was overthrown by a combination of a U.S.-directed coup led by Army Chief of Staff Fidel Ramos and Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile, and Aquino's controller, the Theology of Liberation Ayatollah, Cardinal Jaime Sin. According to the hacks at the State Department, the removal of the corrupt Marcos regime would mollify the 16,000-strong communist insurgent New People's Army and “the rebels would come down from the hills.” The last nine months have proven this to be a delusion, as *EIR* alone among the U.S. press warned.

As implied by General Saiyud's statement of the necessity for development as the key to national security, the primary cause for the insurgency has been the deteriorating Philippine economy. The United States, in the Philippines as in the rest of the underdeveloped sector, backed up International Monetary Fund conditionalities. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the Philippines qualified as a Newly Industrialized Country (NIC in World Bank parlance). From 1984-86, under IMF conditions, the Philippines fell backwards into negative growth rates and the economy collapsed to levels not seen since 1946, after four years of Japanese occupation. Throughout the provinces and in the barrios of Manila, malnutrition among children is as high as 70%.

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Ferdinand Marcos fell because he rejected the warnings of American statesman Lyndon LaRouche, that repudiation of the IMF and embarking upon an emergency national economic development program was the only possible way his government and his nation might survive. Despite his own admonishments that his downfall would lead to disintegration and the NPA takeover of his country, until the last moments of his tenure at Malacanang Palace, Marcos clung to the illusion that President Ronald Reagan would not let his government fall.

No matter what the public statements coming from neighboring Asian governments, the U.S. conduct toward the Philippines in 1986 is viewed as one of the most blatant displays of interference in the internal political affairs of a friendly nation. Washington publicly warned Marcos on Feb. 22 that if he attempted to defend himself and his government against the military coup then in progress, the United States would cut all military aid to Manila. This was but the public manifestation of U.S. diplomatic manhandling of the crisis in the Philippines. From Washington, the crisis was managed by the "208 Committee," including State Department Asian hands Undersecretary of State Michael Armacost and Research and Policy Planning Chief Morton Abramowitz, whose antics in Bangkok had brought down another friend of the United States in 1980, Gen. Kriangsak Chamonan.

The replacement of Ferdinand Marcos with Corazon Aquino, the first lady of the Spanish and Chinese-originated oligarchical families that were at war with Marcos for over a decade, has ushered anti-American, pro-NPA elements right into Malacanang Palace, in an untenable alliance with the Philippine Armed Forces. The economic-financial establishment, however, remains exactly the same as it was under Marcos. IMF-imposed José Fernandez was immediately reappointed Aquino's central bank chief, to serve with new Finance Minister Jaime Ongpin of Benguet Mining. Both are linked to Dope, Inc.'s Maurice Greenberg and Phil-Am Life. While Aquino rests her case on the "power of the people" and "democracy," the economic destruction of the population continues, as if no change had ever occurred at Malacanang. The tenure of Ongpin and Fernandez, as the *Wall Street Journal* indicated in an editorial Dec. 12, is the guarantee of Washington's continued support for Aquino.

This full support continues, despite the fact that the NPA's escalating military strength has revealed the reality of the Aquino regime—a transitory phase in the Philippines' takeover by the NPA and its disintegration into ethnically defined fiefdoms at war with each other.

Washington quashed the effort of Defense Minister Enrile (now replaced by Gen. Rafael Iletto) to take power and permit the armed forces to bring the country under control. Enrile was deemed too prone to independence. As Marcos was before him, Enrile was informed by U.S. Ambassador Stephen Bosworth, a Kissinger protégé, that if he attempted a coup against Aquino, he would find himself and the Phil-

ippines "cut loose" from the United States. Special Envoy Philip Habib, who had conducted Reagan's "fact-finding mission" in February, secretly arrived in Manila Dec. 12 to underscore the point.

As Ray Cline, of the CIA and the Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies who was also in Manila in early December, defined it, the U.S. policy toward its allies in Asia is "*constructive disengagement*."

The U.S. orchestrated removal of Marcos, the campaigns to similarly destabilize the Chun Doo Hwan government in the Republic of Korea and the Suharto government in Indonesia (where "208 Committee"'s Paul Wolfowitz is now installed as U.S. ambassador) are part of the final realization of the Kissinger Guam Doctrine of 1969 for the strategic retreat of the United States from the Pacific Basin.

In its campaign to overthrow Marcos, the State Department was able to gain the consensus of the intelligence community, including the Pentagon. Although Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger has stated his unequivocal defense commitment to U.S. allies in Asia—from Pakistan to Japan—the policy of disengagement for the purposes of the New Yalta deal with the Soviet Union, continues to be policy at the State Department and its allies in the "invisible government." This is the underlying policy commitment behind the demands in all the U.S. press—whether liberal or "conservative"—that the United States should prepare to remove its strategic military bases from the Philippines if that's what it would take to force Marcos out. The myth was perpetrated in the pages of the press that U.S. defense needs for the region could be easily serviced from some other location, perhaps Palau or Guam or Hawaii. The fact that this would cede the strategic waterway of the South China Sea to the Soviet Pacific Fleet now positioned at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam was not discussed. From the standpoint of the strategic positioning of the United States and its allies, the policy of "constructive disengagement" is a disaster.

For the victim-ally, as the case of the Philippines proves, the policy of "constructive disengagement" continues to be a contradiction in terms.

The Vladivostok doctrine

Against this backdrop of the United States' demonstrated lack of commitment to its allies with the "February Revolution" in Manila, enter Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachov. Gorbachov chose Vladivostok in Siberia to deliver his first answer to President Reagan's July reaffirmation of his administration's commitment to the Strategic Defense Initiative.

Gorbachov, taking off from the 27th Congress of the Soviet party in February, expanded on the theme that Russia is an "Asian power." Gorbachov's speech would become known as the "Vladivostok doctrine." First and foremost, the Soviet party chief announced the Kremlin's commitment to a Sino-Soviet rapprochement, although his blandishments on

overcoming the "three obstacles" to full ties defined by the People's Republic of China—removal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, removal of Soviet troops and missiles from the Sino-Soviet border, and removal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea—have so far come to naught.

But the Sino-Soviet rapprochement, Gorbachov indicated, is to be but one piece of an overall "Asian Collective Security" arrangement, that would involve the U.S.S.R., the P.R.C., and the United States in a grand design to maintain top-down imperial control over the smaller nations of this vast continent. The cover for this operation is the creation of "nuclear-free zones"—including on the Korean peninsula—and other "confidence-building measures." Diplomatically, the Soviets have met with little success, with the exception of the South Pacific, where the Social Democratic governments of Australia and New Zealand have done the Soviets' work for them.

In India, Gorbachov received the equivalent of stern rebukes from the Indian press for the Soviet presence in Afghanistan—an unprecedented occurrence in Indo-Soviet relations. Unimpressed with Gorbachov diplomacy, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi reaffirmed India's commitment to non-alignment, and rejected the offers of a leading role in organizing the "Asian Collective Security Pact." Although the Indian government sees eye to eye with the Soviet Union on its opposition to the Strategic Defense Initiative, Mr. Gandhi made clear, on bilateral issues, there is growing discontent in New Delhi.

The Soviet presence in Afghanistan is creating a serious problem in Pakistan, and hence a serious problem for India. Privately, leading Indian officials will concur that despite their own problems with the government of Pakistani President Zia ul-Haq, particularly over Pakistan's aid to Sikh terrorists in Indian Punjab, the territorial integrity of Pakistan is seen as India's own front line of defense against the encroaching Russian empire. Soviet efforts to force the disintegration of Pakistan, with Soviet-sponsored separatist insurgencies in Baluchistan, Sind, and the Northwest Frontier Province, are not viewed with favor in New Delhi.

In Thailand, as in other Asean countries, the Soviets have attempted to take advantage of the vacuum created by U.S. unreliability. Increased trade has been one form of bait. While the United States has put a brake on agricultural and industrial imports from Thailand, the Soviets have offered to buy Thai rice and other products and also held their first major Soviet trade exhibition in Bangkok this November. Moscow is also attempting to make itself the key arbiter in the Indochina conflict, placing pressure on Vietnam to come to terms with China over the future of Kampuchea.

However, the Thais, as in Malaysia and Indonesia, are not fooled by Soviet overtures. Support and aid for the domestic communist parties, it is known, continue to come from Moscow. More dangerous, under Moscow's direction, the communist parties in the region are carrying out a "dual

strategy" as put forward by Philippines Communist Party founder Jose Ma Sison, who was released in February from eight years' imprisonment by the Aquino government. In the Philippines, armed struggle is to be carried out in parallel with communist penetration of the existing political structures. In the Philippines, NPA has given the insurgency, which is active in two-thirds of the country's provinces and controls one-fourth of the country, a new-found respectability. The participation in the NPA and allied fronts in the upcoming February referendum for the draft constitution could be a crucial factor in the outcome of the vote.

In Thailand, General Chaovalit warned in November that the communists, who have emerged from jungle-fighting under a government amnesty program, have concentrated on penetrating the political parties. Up to 23 former members of the Communist Party of Thailand are now in Parliament, he warned. The former CPT members concentrate on organizing labor and anti-industrial upsurges. In July, the CPT, in combination with environmentalists with ties to the World Wildlife Fund, organized riots that resulted in the total destruction of a tantalum production plant on the island of Phuket.

The Soviet perspective is a Sino-Soviet condominium over the Asian continent, with subsidiary control exerted by partners from the West. Therefore, from Pakistan through India, through Southeast Asia, and into South Korea, insurgent networks enjoy protection and aid from all three sources, in the battle against the integrity of the targeted country and government.

The poles of opposition to the scenarios of destruction for the Asian rim countries are:

India. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has invited Peruvian President Alan García to be the guest of honor for Republic Day on Jan. 26, in a reaffirmation of India's role in the fight for the sovereignty and rights of all nations against the International Monetary Fund;

Thailand. Faced with a deepening economic crisis, the leaders of Thailand, the only country of Asia that managed to avoid colonialization in the 19th century aside from Japan, are turning to the Kra Canal project as the pathway into full industrialization;

Japan. In the last year, Japan's leaders have concentrated on acquiring the financial and economic leverage to force through policies of development as the alternative to deflationary global economic collapse. The underlying policy is straightforward: Japan and the advanced sector countries can only save their own economies by developing and industrializing the economies of the underdeveloped sector, as Japanese support for the construction of the Kra Canal and a second Panama Canal indicates.

It is from these locations that actions on behalf of national political and economic sovereignty have been taken, by which the strategic disaster portended by the deterioration of the Philippines might be averted.