

LaRouche's Allies Drive Philippines Nuclear Renaissance

by Mike Billington

The Philippines was the first Southeast Asian nation to build a nuclear power plant, which was completed and ready to turn on in 1986. It was precisely at that point that the godfather of today's "neo-conservative" imperial faction, then-Secretary of State George Shultz, working with his Assistant Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, orchestrated the overthrow of Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos, and with him, the nuclear plant and the 11 great industrial projects which would have been fired by the nuclear capacity. The nation descended into a downward economic spiral which is now spinning out of control.

Yet, over the past months, a group of Philippine business leaders and scholars has launched a campaign for the nation to regain its lost leadership in the region, starting with a fight to return to nuclear power. On July 6, the Philippines Chamber of Congress Foundation sponsored a forum titled "Nuclear Energy—The Answer to Global Competitiveness for the Philippines." Among the featured speakers were: Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla; former energy czar under President Marcos, Geronimo "Ronnie" Velasco, who built the original nuclear facility in Bataan; and Antonio "Butch" Valdes, the head of the Philippines LaRouche Society (PLS), which is affiliated with the worldwide movement led by U.S. economist and statesman Lyndon LaRouche. In fact, the revival of nuclear power in the Philippines can only be understood as part of the global renaissance of nuclear energy, which has been sparked by LaRouche and his collaborators.

The events which led the Chamber of Commerce Foundation to hold such a nuclear forum in the first place reveals a great deal about politics in the Philippines—and in Washington, where policies in the Philippines are usually formulated, especially since 1986. The Philippine Nuclear Research Association's director, Dr. Alumanda Dela Rosa, organized a seminar-workshop on nuclear power on June 20,



Longtime leader of the Philippines LaRouche Society, Antonio "Butch" Valdes (standing, far left), and Ramon Pedrosa, director of the Philippines Chamber of Commerce (sitting, third from left), are leading a renaissance of nuclear power in that nation.

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inviting nuclear experts from the Philippines and Japan. PLS leader Valdes contacted Dr. Dela Rosa, and, after explaining what he could contribute regarding the international nuclear renaissance, was invited to attend the conference. The Chamber of Commerce Foundation director Ramon Pedrosa, a proponent of a crash nuclear program, was also invited.

However, a few days later, both Valdes and Pedrosa were dis-invited. The fact that the infamous asset of the American neo-cons, former President Fidel Ramos (also the local controller of the 1986 coup against Marcos), has declared that nuclear energy shall not be considered again in the Philippines until after 2020 at the earliest, could well be a clue to who had intervened to pull the invitations of the most outspoken pro-nuclear forces.

The effort backfired on the saboteurs. Five members of the Philippines LaRouche Youth Movement, joined by three older supporters, attended the event despite the dis-invita-

tion. Although identified and prevented from entering—the organizers are well known in Manila due to their interventions to expose the global warming hoax at numerous brainwashing sessions sponsored by Al Gore and his minions—the youth distributed *EIR* material outside the conference, rebutting the anti-nuclear myths, and presenting the optimism that a nuclear renaissance would provide for the Philippines and the world.

Midway through the conference, the youth met Energy Secretary Lotilla and his Undersecretary Mar Salazar, and presented them with the packets of *EIR* material. After a lively discussion and a review of the literature, Salazar asked why the LYM organizers were not inside. When hearing the story, he promptly marched the entire group to the registration table, announcing, “These fellows are my guests!” The afternoon workshops thus became highly charged discussions of the real crisis in the world today, and of the need for leadership in launching a nuclear-based transformation of the world economy.

As a follow-up, the Chamber of Commerce Foundation decided to call its own conference, and use it as a forum to prepare a nuclear energy development proposal to the government, as the center of a national reconstruction policy—the conference on July 6 referenced above.

The Kennebunkport Agreement

Butch Valdes began his presentation to the Chamber’s conference by quoting LaRouche, that nuclear energy is today’s equivalent of the “fire of Prometheus”—the Greek god who was nailed to a rock by Zeus for the crime of providing mankind with the knowledge of fire (i.e., science). “In light of what is generally perceived as an ongoing global financial system collapse,” said Valdes, “and the escalating threats of another global war, resulting from Zeus’ policies, it is heartening to note that there are still leaders around the world possessing ‘Promethian’ virtues of compassion and courage, determined to do what is right, initiating programs for the good of all, and the vision of a better world for the coming generations. It is in this context that we propose to reintroduce you to nuclear power, the way towards peace and prosperity.” He emphasized the leadership role demanded by history of those present, to take this opportunity to turn the world away from a new dark age and towards a new Renaissance.

After the event, Valdes noted the importance for their mission of the historic agreement reached just days earlier by Presidents Putin and Bush, at their meeting at the Bush family home in Kennebunkport, Maine, to make nuclear technology available to developing countries. If this pledge is realized, Valdes said, then, “for the first time in four decades of continuous deterioration, the world’s developing countries are presented with a ray of hope. It is every citizen’s duty to acknowledge and endorse the full implementation of the

Joint Declaration if we are to avoid political and economic disintegration.”

Another historic aspect of this forum was the presence of Ronnie Velasco, who was responsible for the dramatic transformation of the energy capacities of the Philippines during his tenure as Energy Secretary during the Marcos years, from 1972-86. His speech marked both a return of the Marcos vision to today’s Philippines, and a recognition by those present, many of whom had been leading participants in the “people’s power” revolt against Marcos—a revolt inspired and manipulated by the enemies of the Philippines in Washington—that it was time to acknowledge the horrible disaster imposed on their nation by the events of 1986.

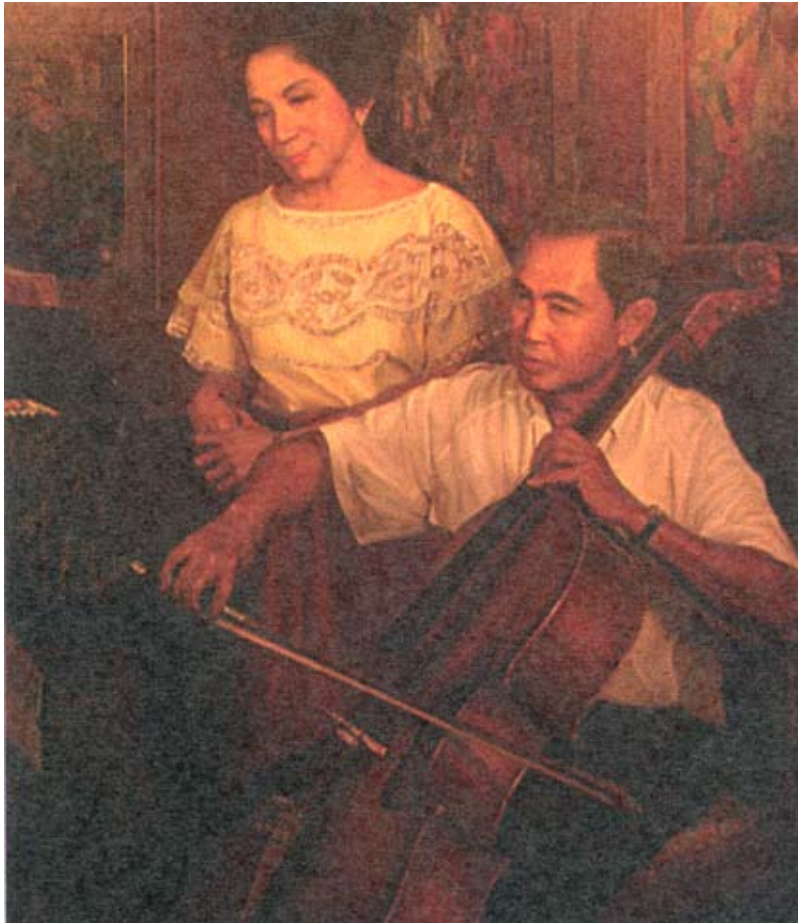
Sadly, Ronnie Velasco died of a heart attack just a few days after this event (see “In Memoriam,” following this article). Pedrosa has subsequently announced that the Chamber of Commerce Foundation’s nuclear proposal will be prepared in Velasco’s honor.

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