SOVEREIGNTY DEMOCRACY AND SURVIVAL

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SOVEREIGNTY, DEMOCRACY AND SURVIVAL: THE GLOBAL DIMENSION*

These are troubled times. We Filipinos are living from one crisis to another, and yet many of us are not even conscious of the roots of our national predicament. We respond with our hearts and act courageously against injustice. One can be proud of the Filipino for this. Unfortunately, few of us see in our mind's eye a specific injustice or oppression as a consequence of the larger injustice and oppression of our nation.

The tragic incidents of the past weeks have convulsed the emotions of many and have agitated them to seek release for their pent-up feelings. While these may be signs of a social awakening, there still seems to be a lack of appreciation of the basic issues that have spawned the tragedies of the recent past. There is a cry for change, but an understanding of the basic cause is generally remote in the attitude of those who are now involved in various actions.

For instance, the announcement of the cancellation of Mr. Reagan's stop-over was greeted with sorrow in pro-government circles and glee in some anti-government quarters. Expressions of gratitude to Reagan marked the celebration of his non-coming. This indeed is a blatant manifestation of colonial-mindedness on both sides. Regardless of his plans to come or not, awakened

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sectors should demonstrate against and condemn Reagan's nuclear brinkmanship, his interventions in Latin America, the Middle East and Africa. Those who would glamorize Reagan just because his decision coincided with their desires, betray the value they still place on the imprimatur of the Great White Father. One must remember that Reagan's decision had nothing to do with human rights. He decided on the basis of his perceptions of American interests and the possible effects of a visit on his own electoral chances. If the cancellation of his visit is viewed as a distancing of the US from Marcos, it must be seen as a purely opportunistic move by a country which was a principal supporter and beneficiary of martial law. No apparent change of heart should be allowed to erase that fact. The time to analyze issues must immediately succeed the period of mourning and the expressions of shock and protest.

Your conference theme is indeed very appropriate for these critical times when the nation is experiencing a tremendous demand for change. If this change is not to be a mere replacement of one face by another, our people must be constantly reminded that the basic problems of our country stem from the fact that we are neither sovereign nor free; that we are victims of neo-colonial oppression, and that the severe constraints we feel in the exercise of our democratic rights are largely the result of the need to maintain suitable conditions for the continued prosperity of external exploitative forces. These forces are well entrenched in the existing power structures of our society. To top it all, even our very survival as a people is at stake, because the nuclear madness which has become part and parcel of the strategy and tactics of imperial forces has been transported to our shores via the US bases and the Bataan nuclear plant.

Historical Roots of the Cold Wars

It is correct to focus our attention on these very visible signs of imperialist disregard for our most fundamental human right: the right to life. However, we must not take them in isolation because they are merely the logical effects of global trends which have held, not only the Philippines, but also the rest of the so-called Free World hostage for decades. To understand what is happening to us nationally, it is necessary to provide an international perspective.

Imperialism is a global phenomenon; so is the arms race involving both nuclear and conventional weapons. The threat to life, the negation and erosion of sovereignty and democracy, are not felt exclusively in the Philippines but also in many other parts of the Third World. It follows that the struggle of all peace- and freedom-loving peoples is likewise international and must be

closely interlinked by a common understanding of the nature of the most pressing problems of our times.

A historical inquiry is necessary in order to bring into focus the motives and the goals of those who have initiated the New Cold War with all the dangers that this implies for all mankind.

The nuclear madness had its ominous beginnings when the United States dropped her atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, murdering hundreds of thousands of people in an exercise that was not even necessary to effect the surrender of Japan. Japan was already prostrate; it had earlier sent surrender feelers through Moscow. The dropping of the atom bombs were not military acts ending the second world war; they were political acts signalling the start of the first Cold War. Stalin had promised his wartime allies, Britain and the US, that three months after the victory in Europe, the Soviet Union would be ready to enter the Pacific war against Japan. VE Day was May 8. Hiroshima was bombed on August 6, two days before the Russian deadline. Japan's immediate surrender to Gen. MacArthur precluded a joint occupation of Japan which would have given the Soviets a say in occupation policies as they had in Germany.

By dropping the bomb, the US was serving notice to friend and foe alike that she not only possessed this awesome power, but also the willingness to use it to defend her interests. In fact, only three months after Hiroshima, the US drew up contingency plans for the atomic bombing of the Soviet Union. Since then, Washington has explicitly threatened to use nuclear weapons on more than 20 occasions — during the Korean War, against China in the 1950s, Guatemala in 1954, Cuba in 1962 and Vietnam in 1954, the late 1960s, and 1972. This was the military dimension of her hegemony, for during the war she had already laid down the foundations for her economic supremacy at the Bretton Woods conference which saw the birth of the IMF and the World Bank.

Then as now, what the US wanted was unfettered access to the economic resources especially of the weaker countries and unquestioned suzerainty over her west European rivals by virtue of her established military superiority.

The emphasis on arms development in American policy has led to the enormous growth of the armaments industry and the inevitable rise of an extremely powerful military-industrial complex. This monster, which eats up billions of dollars in both investments and profits, has been fed by a series of expensive wars in Korea, the Middle East, Indochina, Southern Africa, and now Central America. The Cold War of the 1950s and the 1960s was planned and propagated by US militarist circles in order to justify the production of newer and more advanced weapons of mass destruction.

In a capitalist state, arms production has an economic dimension as well as a politico-military one. Weapons are produced for profit, just like cars and TV sets. Powerful corporations engaged in defense production cultivate Defense Department officials to get defense contracts. Retired military men are employed by such corporations for their military contacts. Profit rates on arms production are 10 to 100 times greater than profit rates in other fields. Overpricing on government contracts is not uncommon. Recently, a Congressional investigation found out that the Pentagon had paid $110 for a tiny electrical part worth only 4 cents.

From Deterrence to Credible Use

The United States is the only nation that ever used the bomb. She enjoyed an absolute monopoly of this weapon until 1949 when the Soviet Union developed her own bomb. However, US nuclear power was so overwhelming that for all practical purposes she continued to enjoy nuclear monopoly until the 1960s and superiority until the 1970s. During this period, the United States pursued the policy of deterrence as an excuse for continued nuclear build-up. This build-up was supposed to discourage or deter the Soviets from entertaining any idea of a first strike. Until 1966, the Soviet Union did not have any real capability to reach the American continent while the US could target any part of the Soviet Union.

It was not until the late 60's and early 70's that the USSR acquired the capability for large scale nuclear retaliation. Yet during this period the US had been introducing new technology in nuclear warfare such as nuclear-missile submarines, MIRV's, cruise missiles and the neutron bomb. Whenever the military wanted bigger appropriations, all they needed to do, as Rear Admiral Larocque said, was "scare the pants off the American public" by saying that the Soviets had surpassed the US so that the American public would "lean on Congress to provide the money for new weapons." Thus, after the "bomber gap" there was the "missile gap" both of which were later found to be false. By then, new military appropriations had already been secured. The logic of American arms policy has always been to preserve her superior military and political power. Therefore, her negotiating posture is based not on the prevention of the development of new weapons for mass destruction, but on the development of new weapons in order to avert a situation of parity.

By the end of the 70's, the Soviets attained rough nuclear parity with the United States. At the same time, inter-imperialist rivalries intensified, with Japan and the Western European countries taking giant economic strides during the postwar period and demanding roles equivalent to their actual power. American

hegemony over the capitalist world was being challenged. Western European countries have had disputes with the US over trade, currency policies, policies toward the Third World and towards the socialist bloc.

The most disturbing trend, however, was the upsurge of liberation movements in many parts of the Third World, not a few of which have emerged victorious during the last three decades. The most telling blows to imperialism were the recent ones dealt by Indochina, Iran, Angola, Mozambique and Nicaragua, not only because these dramatized the shrinking sphere of imperialist exploitation and influence but also because they damaged US prestige all over the world. They made the US look like a "helpless giant."

This is the international background for the American decision. Given these disturbing trends, the United States had to unleash a new Cold War in the late 1970s, a strategic offensive which has assumed alarming proportions during the openly right-wing administration of Ronald Reagan. This offensive actually reflects a skein of multiple contradictions which impinge on American nuclear and overall foreign policy.

The conflict between the two opposing social systems — capitalist and socialist — is not a simple one limited to confrontation between East and West. Since rough nuclear parity between the United States and the Soviet Union is acknowledged by responsible sources in the East and West, we must conclude that the Americans aim to disturb the balance once more by the planned deployment in Western Europe of new and highly sophisticated Cruise and Pershing missiles — both first strike weapons. Pressure from the arms industry, which has invested huge sums of money in the manufacture of these super-efficient weapons of mass destruction, is surely one of the factors behind America's decision.

Nuclear arms and delivery systems development as a result of the loss of nuclear monopoly are geared no longer to deterrence but to the readiness of the US to fight a limited or protracted nuclear war, including a space war, according to Reagan. With Washington's prestige and power over her allies and the Third World on the wane, the leaders of the US are trying to recapture the power that once was buttressed by monopoly of the bomb. The hawks believe that such power can be achieved by convincing the world that the US is ready and willing to use nuclear weapons to protect her worldwide interests. And this willingness to use nuclear weapons means not only use *in response* to a nuclear attack but willingness to use nuclear weapons *first* — in other words, a first strike.

No wonder Reagan is adamantly opposed to making a no-first-strike pledge as the Soviets have already done. Such a pledge

would destroy the credibility of its nuclear blackmail. It is significant to note that the US cast the only dissenting vote in the UN in December 1982 on a resolution endorsing a treaty to outlaw nuclear weapons. This is the meaning of the collision course which Reagan is pursuing at the present time.

Nuclear Blackmail

Increasing tensions with the Soviet Union reaps dividends for the US in another sense. An atmosphere of military confrontation would ensure her hegemony over her capitalist rivals, Japan and the EEC, and thereby oblige them to make economic accommodations, considering that the US bears the primary burden of "military protection" of the so-called Free World. In a very real sense, the deployment of Pershing 2 and Cruise Missiles in NATO countries will cause them to lose control over their own defense policies. These missiles will be controlled solely by the American military and launched only with permission of the White House. The "double key system", which refers to the nominal joint command which now characterizes NATO, will yield to the "single key system" which gives America the ultimate authority to launch these missiles against the Soviet Union. In a way, this is an American preventive action against the growing ties between Western Europe and the Soviet Union, a tendency which might result in the eventual detachment of Western European defense systems from the American global infrastructure.

The United States is using the Cold War not only to keep the advanced capitalist states in tow but also to keep Third World countries which are important sources of strategic materials in line. Nuclear blackmail and renewed anti-Sovietism are being used to pressure developing states to remain within the imperialist orbit and to justify suppression of national liberation movements through outright intervention. Third World initiatives towards independence and social progress are immediately attributed to Soviet influence and not to internal causative factors. We should not be surprised if in the future, events in the Philippines will also be attributed to Soviet machinations, far-fetched as this may be. The Cold-War psychosis lays the basis for the deployment of counter-revolutionary forces that will restore or reinforce traditional imperialist controls, as is happening now in Central America.

Interventionist Aims

It is in the Third World that wars have occurred, and these wars are immediately translated into US-Soviet confrontation. These wars, however, stem mainly from the exploitation and oppression of the peoples concerned by imperialist forces and their

allies among the local elites. Unlike the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s when the US could still destroy national liberation movements and independent governments in Indonesia, Ghana, Congo, Guatemala, Chile, etc. almost at will, the late 1970s and early 1980s have witnessed changes in the objective relationship of forces in the Third World. The walls of containment could no longer hold against the determined assult of revolutionary forces.

Under such circumstances, America's big stick must play a more prominent role, directly or indirectly. Thus in Nicaragua and El Salvador, US military advisers now work hand in hand with mercenaries. In the Middle East, US aims are achieved through Israel, and in Southern Africa, through the racist Pretoria regime. Out-and-out US control and support of blatantly fascist governments in the Third World are the main factors in the erosion of sovereignty and democracy, and the violation of human rights on a mass scale. Wholesale extermination of people is being done on a daily basis in many developing states through imperialist-inspired genocidal campaigns, routinized torture and sudden uprooting of families. The fact that the racist and fascist regimes in South Africa and Israel have the capability to produce nuclear weapons, thanks to US assistance, can only drive chills down the spines of even the most sober political analysts.

I would like to return to what I said earlier about the New Cold War as a ploy of the United States in consolidating its control over the Third World. While ostensibly the target is the Soviet Union, the deployment of warships and submarines all over the world betrays the interventionist aims of the US. By the mid-60's the US Navy had 36 Polaris and Poseidon submarines. Former Pres. Carter said in 1979 that just one Poseidon had the "ability to destroy every large and medium sized city in the Soviet Union." Why then has it been necessary to add nine extra-sized submarines, each of which would carry 24 Trident-2 missiles? There is no reason for American ships to be scattered all over the world unless their purpose is to exhibit American might and to make Third World countries see that American interventionist intentions are backed by real naval forces.

The Rapid Deployment Force is another case in point. This is clearly intended for interventionist forays into Third World countries. It is not necessary for reaching Soviet targets. The same is true for American military bases which today ring the world.

Misallocation of Resources

The New Cold War and the fast escalating arms race involving both nuclear and conventional weapons have affected not only those Third World countries which have somehow been involved in some 130 military conflicts that have occurred since

World War II but also those robbed of development opportunities because of the criminal misallocation to military expenditures of their scarce resources. Seventy-five percent of arms imports are absorbed by developing states which have to spend huge sums for defense against the imaginary external threat or against their own discontented peoples. Last year, the ASEAN nations spent more than $8 billion on defense, triple what they spent in 1975. This build-up is encouraged by the Reagan administration which sent an urgent message to all US Ambassadors instructing them to give every assistance to arms dealers.

According to the State Department: "Arms sales will no longer be regarded as something evil that has to be curbed." After all, why should arms sales be evil if they bring in billions of dollars in profits?

When we consider that only a fraction of the 700 to 800 billion dollars spent for armaments every year could wipe out starvation, malnutrition, illiteracy, unemployment and a host of infectious diseases in no time at all, we realize how criminal the arms sales are. We must not forget that the arms race benefits certain interest groups that are near the center of power in Washington. Arms spending, the new militarism, is the result of constant lobbying by the so-called "iron triangle" — Congress, the Pentagon and the arms industries. Long before the detention of American hostages in Iran, the events in Afghanistan, Salt-II already failed to get Congressional support. Reagan's ascension to the White House was the culmination of "new right" trends in American society — trends carefully nurtured by the war-mongers who profit from huge budgetary outlays for the military.

The saber-rattling stance of the US, however, has only served to consolidate and speed up the development of contrary forces not only at home but also in Western Europe and Japan. The international peace movement has reached gigantic proportions, galvanized by the threat of nuclear annihilation made all the more palpable by America's seeming willingness to launch "limited nuclear wars" — on somebody else's soil, of course. In the Third World, US-style gunboat diplomacy, blatant arm-twisting and propping up of repressive regimes only serve to fuel national liberation movements, especially in Latin America and Southern Africa. Some which have experienced temporary setbacks, like the PLO in Lebanon, are still carrying on despite the draconian obstacles thrown along their paths.

Crisis of US Nuclear Industry

The Philippines, being a long-time client state of the US, has virtually surrendered control of its economy to the World Bank-IMF combine and the transnational corporations behind the latter. Economic planning is now virtually monopolized by

Western oriented technocrats beholden to imperialist financial institutions while key economic sectors have fallen into or remain in foreign hands.

In the vital energy sector, the extent of foreign influence is readily seen in the way the nuclear plant project in Bataan has been railroaded despite the strenuous objections of concerned citizens and knowledgeable sources. The dangers posed by this plant sitting on a patently unsafe area prone to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are too obvious to require further comment. The fact that after all the delays, this plant has turned out to be one of the most expensive in the world, is apparently of no moment to the country's decision makers. The fact that the Philippines has many alternative sources of energy — hydro-electric, geothermal, solar, etc. — makes it so inappropriate if not totally senseless to import a very dangerous even if so highly sophisticated Western technology.

The one who is profiting most from this scandalous deal is the Westinghouse Corp., a transnational trying to foist its products on hapless developing countries in the wake of effective anti-nuclear protests which dramatically reduced its sales in the advanced capitalist states. The US nuclear industry is in crisis. It is in vital need of markets. The nuclear industry makes use of the US Export-Import Bank to facilitate its sales of nuclear reactors to Third World countries. This bank which promotes US exports by giving low interest loans to foreign countries buying US products has allocated billions of its funds to "help" Third World countries buy nuclear reactors. Loans for reactor exports have gone to Korea, Taiwan, Brazil and the Philippines. Perhaps, an account of the Korean experience with Westinghouse will give us some insights into the Westinghouse deal in the Philippines.

Eximbank allocated $2.5 billion of American taxpayers' money to South Korea to finance the Westinghouse installation of nuclear plants. The State Department and the American embassy in Seoul pressured the Korean government to buy American nuclear plants. The US ambassador even cabled the State Department to pass on to Westinghouse economic intelligence regarding a British corporation's rival offer. When asked about the Westinghouse relationship with the US embassy in Seoul, a Westinghouse executive said, "that's been the greatest of all embassies around the world supporting business."

Another thing that must be borne in mind is the fact that under the present administration of Ronald Reagan, sales of nuclear technology have been taking place in violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act of 1978. Already, many countries have nuclear capability, thus seriously endangering world peace should such states be able to produce their bombs and use these to settle conflicts with their neighbors.

Sovereignty and Democracy Eroded

The economic programs implemented in the Philippines by the instruments of imperialism have bred more poverty, unemployment and suffering for the masses and large sections of the middle class. They have also driven local entrepreneurs oriented to the home market into bankruptcy. The sole beneficiaries of these programs are foreign investors and a narrow sector of Filipino exporters. With the repeated devaluation of the peso, increased taxation, spiralling inflation and other economic woes, discontent among the people finds fertile ground. Symptoms of political instability, anathema to foreign interests, become a fact of life, provoking repressive measures from the state and wholesale violations of democratic rights. The loss of economic sovereignty assumes another face: the erosion of democracy.

Sovereignty and democracy in the world order now being managed by the trilateral centers of capitalism — the US, the EEC and Japan — are concepts which have undergone a fundamental change. This can easily be deduced from the ideas propagated by the imperial brain trust of the US, the Council of Foreign relations, which in conjunction with the Trilateral Commission is planning for the future of multinational corporate capitalism in a world that is confronted with challenges from both East and South. Former National Security Adviser Z. Brezsinski said at a meeting of the Trilateral Commission in 1975 in Tokyo: "The main axis of conflict at most international conferences today is not between the western world and the communist world but between the advanced countries and the developing countries." This is the reason why the Council of Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission are heavily stressing the themes of "interdependence", "mutuality of interests" and "cooperation". In the very practice of the governments represented by the centers of capitalist power, the sovereignty of Third World governments is derogated either through political pressure, economic limitations imposed by multilateral institutions, outright military interventions and the installation of bases that form part and parcel of the national security of the United States.

The sovereignties of small nations are subsumed under the greater sovereignty of the so-called "protector" of the "free-world." For the maintenance of this type of world order, the democratic rights of citizens of client nations have to be circumscribed within the limits of the operations of the imperial powers.

In this light, the role of the US bases takes on an added significance. Not only do they serve American strategic interests in the region but they also ensure the maintenance of the transnational economic stranglehold on the Philippines. They may be expected to intervene directly or indirectly in case US domination over the country or the region is strongly challenged by anti-imperialist forces.

The new Cold War is put to good use by both the US and the Philippine government in justifying the presence of the bases. The imagined Soviet threat must be met and American power must be buttressed as a "counterweight," even if the Filipino people must pay with their lives. More than two decades ago, Claro M. Recto correctly characterized the bases as magnets which would attract enemy missiles. This is more frighteningly true now that the presence of nuclear weapons in these bases has been established, despite the refusal of US authorities to confirm or deny this fact. If we want the Philippines to remain on the map, we must strive to make it a nuclear-weapons-free zone by removing the US bases and thus ourselves out of the range of fire.

Tasks For Survival

The threat to our national survival as previously explained, is very much related to our loss of sovereignty and the erosion of democracy. Therefore, the struggle for our most fundamental right to life, for the independence of our country, for the freedom and happiness of our people, is an indivisible one. It is also necessarily broad-based, cutting across sectarian lines in order to gather diverse forces into a strong anti-imperialist front. Since everyone, regardless of political orientation, is a potential victim of a nuclear holocaust, this alone should impel different groups to cooperate with one another and move together on an issue which calls for united, militant action. But always, the basis of unity must be anti-imperialism, because the origin of the dangers we fear, the root cause of our most basic problems, must be exposed to all and fought in all spheres.

Peace groups must work hard to put a stop to the arms race. As a major and initial demand, peace groups must require from the US a statement of a "no first strike" similar to that given by the Soviet Union in 1980 in the United Nations. This should immediately be followed by a nuclear freeze, and a stop to the development of new weapons. After this, negotiations on the destruction of nuclear arms and general disarmament can be conducted. The present posture of the United States in refusing to make a no first strike pledge must be condemned.

We must derive some encouragement from the fact that despite the apparent unity of the United States and Western European states, we see fissures in this coalition because of the differences in the objective perceptions of the two regarding the Soviet Union. There are already many countries in Europe that are attempting to disentangle themselves from an East-West confron-

tation. Movements for nuclear free zones are active in many countries. Peace groups are busy trying to prevent the installation of new American missiles. This refusal to receive American "protection" may eventually become a central factor as European nations realize that between them and the Soviet Union there are no problems which cannot be solved by non-military means. These peace movements will constitute a strong pressure against the arms race.

Each country, therefore, must strive to rid itself of nuclear weapons and foreign bases as its particular contribution to world peace.

Each oppressed nation must struggle to free itself from the yoke of neocolonialism and finally defeat it.

All the forces in the world who are for peace and freedom must work together to bring about general disarmament.

They must work for the rechanneling of the huge resources spent on the arms race to the provision of the most pressing needs of the most needy countries.

They must work for the liberation of peoples from structures which continue to hinder their development and trigger acute social conflicts.

The price of failure is total annihilation.