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East Asia Biweekly Review

21 March 1978

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This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the East Asia/Pacific Division, Office of Regional and Political Analysis, with occasional contributions from other offices within the National Foreign Assessment Center. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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The Philippine Parliamentary Elections at Midpoint

With parliamentary elections less than three weeks away, there has been a dramatic rise in the level of public interest in the prospects for the opposition slate of candidates in the Manila area--particularly former Senator Benigno Aquino's chances of winning a seat in the new national assembly.

Although assured of an electoral victory, Marcos is concerned over private polls suggesting that Aquino is consistently among the top two or three votegetters in Manila. Only Mrs. Marcos appears to be ahead of him at this reading.

President Marcos, who took over personal direction of the government party's campaign in Manila, has thus far remained aloof from all of the controversy and debate surrounding Aquino's campaign. Shrewdly playing the statesman's role--spotlighted by last week's visit of Chinese Vice Premier Li Hsien-nien--Marcos has opted to let Defense Secretary Enrile carry the burden of the government's attack against Aquino.

Campaigning from his prison cell, Aquino was permitted to appear on a 90-minute "Face the Nation" televised interview on 10 March during which he responded to Enrile's charges concerning alleged CIA and Communist connections. Aquino's interviewers were clearly out-classed and found few if any weak spots in his version of events. Indeed, his performance--respectful of Marcos and moderate in his criticism of martial law--was by most accounts highly effective.

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The opposition slate in Manila led by Aquino has shifted its campaign rallies from college campuses to working-class neighborhoods and has attracted increasingly

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large crowds. With Aquino's active entry into the campaign fray, the opposition in Manila now appears to have a strong chance of winning a number of the 21 seats at stake in the metropolitan area. Any effort by Marcos to silence Aquino at this point would probably gain even more popular sympathy for the opposition.

Marcos may now feel that he has gone some way in attempting to shed an image as a dictator who brooks no opposition. However, the Philippine President may also now realize that it will be increasingly difficult for the government slate to defeat Aquino without some fairly obvious dishonesty--and it may be equally difficult to deny him his seat in the legislature if he wins the election. Marcos has publicly hedged any guarantees regarding Aquino by asserting that whether the former senator would be allowed to sit in the new legislature if elected was a matter for the courts to decide.

Against this background, it seems likely that the campaign in Manila will become even more intense and polemical in the final days before the 7 April elections, with Marcos doing everything possible to discredit Aquino and hopefully limiting the government's losses in Manila.
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Australia: Accord on Uranium

Prospects are improving for an accord between the Liberal-Country government and the opposition-supported labor movement that could end the national debate over exploiting Australia's uranium, one-fifth of known world reserves. The Fraser government's agreement to work with the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) in formulating nonproliferation safeguards on exported uranium could remove the last political constraints to Australia's becoming a major supplier. Even with a political accommodation, however, production problems will delay Australia's reaching its export potential.

The powerful labor federation last month endorsed the resumption of uranium mining and sales on condition that the government consult with it on controls against use in nuclear weapons. A positive government response was not at all certain, given the ingrained adversary relationship between all Liberal-Country governments and the Labor Party - supported trade union movement. Cooperation between the government and the ACTU, whose president--Bob Hawke--is also president of the Labor Party, reflects a shared recognition of the importance uranium earnings could have in reviving Australia's troubled economy.

Concern over contributing to nuclear proliferation has slowed implementation of Prime Minister Fraser's decision of last August to lift the predecessor Labor government's ban on uranium mining and export. Leftists in the Labor Party and the trade union movement played upon popular misgivings, although Hawke and then party parliamentary leader Whitlam saw the economic promise of uranium. These divisions within the Labor Party, plus the Liberal-Country government's reading of public unease, held each side back from making uranium an issue in the national election campaign last fall.

The ACTU's conditional endorsement of mining last month was a signal victory of Hawke over labor union

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leftists, and the government's willingness to discuss safeguards will help him win out over the diehards. Even though there is little love lost between Hawke and Fraser, Hawke echoed government arguments that uranium jobs could ease record unemployment, and he pointed out that opposition was centered in leftist-led unions not involved in uranium production.

The flouting last month by railway and dock workers of their leaders' bans on handling uranium shipments suggested a growing understanding among workers of the economic benefits of uranium production. This month, leftwing Melbourne labor leaders--vociferous and occasionally violent foes of uranium development--were given a sharp rebuke when Melbourne longshoremen backed the ACTU's uranium decision by a 3 to 1 vote.

With the trend toward greater public acceptance of uranium mining, the government probably can make a convincing case that contracts with foreign buyers will contain strong safeguards over use of the uranium. Bureaucratic sluggishness and claims by aborigines on lands where new mines may be opened remain major stumbling blocks, however. Deputy Prime Minister Anthony warned two weeks ago that Australia may default on one-fourth of its export commitments through the mid-1980s.
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Japan: Selected Chronology

- 21 February Former Japanese Agriculture-Forestry Minister Zenko Suzuki visits New Zealand for talks with Prime Minister Muldoon and Deputy Prime Minister Talboys regarding New Zealand's desire to increase exports of dairy products to Japan. (U)
- 22-27 February Five members of the Liberal Democratic Party, led by Ichiro Yamanouchi, fly to Seoul at the invitation of the ruling Korean Democratic Party. (U)
- 23 February Taro Miyamoto, a member of the Central Committee of the Japan Communist Party (JCP), arrives in Hanoi as the JCP's resident representative. (U)
- Tomohiko Kobayashi, Deputy Director General of the UN Bureau, is appointed Assistant Secretary of the OECD. He will be replaced at the UN by Atsuhiko Yatabe, Minister at the Japanese Embassy in Vienna. (U)
- 27 February-1 March Denmark's Foreign Minister Knud Borge Andersen arrives for talks with government officials on ways to reduce Japan's trade surplus with the European Community. (U)
- 4 March Kiyoaki Kukuchi, the new Japanese Ambassador to Singapore, presents his credentials. (U)
- 9-19 March Minoru Masuda, Vice Minister for International Affairs of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, joins a Japanese trade mission, led by Yoshizo

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9-19 March Ikeda, President of Mitsui and Co., to participate in talks in Washington with US Government officials. (U)

10-18 March A five-member Komeito mission, led by Secretary General Junya Yano, leaves for Peking for a goodwill visit. This is Yano's first visit to China. (U)

12-15 March Takashi Tajima, director of the Foreign Ministry's China Division, visits Peking for consultations with Japanese Ambassador Sato regarding the resumption of negotiations on a Japan-China treaty of peace and friendship. (U)

13 March Toshikazu Maeda, the Japanese Ambassador in Kabul, presents his credentials. (U)

13-19 March Todor Zhivkov, President of the State Council of Bulgaria, accompanied by Foreign Minister Petur Mladenov, visits Japan. (U)

14-22 March J. Douglas Anthony, Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for National Resources and Overseas Trade, visits Tokyo to discuss economic and trade ties. (U)

14 March The Japan Socialist Party opens its congress to discuss the party program for 1978. (U)

15-16 March Deputy US Defense Secretary Charles Duncan visits Tokyo. (U)

16 March Carlos J. Valdes, newly appointed Philippine Ambassador to Japan, presents his credentials. (U)

22-30 March Colonel Atsushi Shiam, a member of the Intelligence Division of the Ground Self-Defense Force (SDF), is scheduled to

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22-30 March visit the Japanese defense attache in Peking. This is the first visit to China of an active duty SDF officer. (U)

28 March A 19-member Chinese economic mission, led by Lin Hu-chia, Vice Chairman of the Shanghai Municipal Revolutionary Committee, is scheduled to visit Tokyo to discuss applying Japan's technology to China's new modernization program and further developing bilateral trade. (U)

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