

News and Notes

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International Developments

Living in a World of Five Billion

Statistics tells us that the five billionth person would be born this year in the month of July. Even the day and time of its arrival to the world could be determined beforehand. Statistics also tells us that in the year 2000 the world will be inhabited by six billion people. But the birth of Mataj Gaspar of Yugoslavia signified more than just a figure in the data book of the world. The birth of the five billionth child implied a lot of things and raised questions such as: Can the world continue to feed its people? Can the world still provide shelter for protection from the harsh elements? Will there be sufficient supply of clothing to keep the people warm? Each child signifies a growing challenge. Can we meet these challenges? And after all is said and done, the underlying question remains: are we free from want? Are we really free?

Amid the problems and crises facing the world today, United Nations Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar welcomed the five billionth child of the world saying that "Mataj Gaspar's birth marks a new generation of peace."

Perfecting the Path to Peace

Preparations for the coming summit of the two heads of the world's superpowers, United States President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev are already underway. One area of consideration is the presence of nuclear warheads in West Germany.

The United States declared through its spokesman Secretary Caspar Weinberger that it will not "bargain away" American-controlled nuclear warheads in West Germany in seeking an arms control agreement with the Soviet Union.

But he added that the latest position that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev is expected to put forth in the arms-control offer is a significant step toward the possible resolution of the arms talks between the two superpowers. The United States is still to see all of the conditions though.

The whole world intently awaits for new measures that would fortify and perfect the path to peace.

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National Developments***Gearing up for the Opening of Congress***

The excitement of the first congressional and senatorial elections that the Filipinos had after regaining "democratic space" following years of dictatorship, enhanced the preparation of the nation for the opening of Congress. The Legislature is the co-equal, co-ordinate and co-independent branch of government, that would complete the three symbols of democracy.

The people closely watched the struggle for political power that was going on inside the caucus rooms as the proclaimed senators and congressmen campaigned among themselves for the coveted positions of the Senate presidency and House speakership. Compromises and deals were being made that would eventually lead to the resolution of the quintessential question of who was going to win the Senate presidency and the speakership of the House.

After numerous meetings, "a unanimous choice," according to Senator Rene Saguisag was made by the twenty-one proclaimed senators. They picked Senator Jovito Salonga over his close contender, Senator Neptali Gonzales and dark horse, Senator Alberto Romulo.

In a meeting held in Pasig, the elected congressmen decided over the nomination of Representatives Francisco Sumulong of Rizal, Jose Yap of Pampanga and Ramon Mitra of Palawan. Congressman Mitra won the vote for House Speakership.

With the Senate presidency and the House speakership issues resolved, nominations to the committees were then tackled leading to the preparation of the agenda. The land reform draft prepared by the Committee formed by President Aquino met widespread opposition making the issue still the most controversial one. In fact, land reform was listed among the priority issues to be addressed by the House because it was split over the issue and within ninety days, Congress vowed to enact its own version of the Land Reform Program. Senate, on the other hand, slated the review of the bases agreement between the Philippines and the United States. Senator Leticia Ramos-Shahani would be heading the study of this very critical question.

Days before the opening of Congress saw the tightening of the race for the last two slots with Santanina Rasul, Juan Ponce Enrile and Augusto Sanchez as the three close contenders. The Comelec was urged to finish the canvassing of the votes before the actual opening of Congress. Finally, the Comelec was ready to set the proclamation of Rasul and Enrile but Sanchez petitioned both the Supreme Court and Comelec. The decision was to recount the votes but it was limited to 6,000 precincts only.

Just as Metro Manila was put on red alert "to prevent any possible disruption in the inaugural session of Congress," Santanina Rasul was proclaimed Senator of the Republic.

President Aquino formally opened Congress with her 35-minute state of the nation address, her longest speech since she assumed power 17 months

ago. In her speech, the President assailed the creditor banks of the Philippines whose onerous demands were imposing great hardship and strain to the Filipino people and the national recovery program.

President Aquino's speech was not only well-applauded but was also met with wide acceptance by both the newly-elected senators and congressmen and by the whole Filipino nation. Because of this, the Philippines would be seeking better bank terms, specifically on the matter regarding the purely private debt of \$43 million by Planters Products Incorporated which the Philippines was forced to assume. The President's speech also prompted the Senate to agree to look into the \$28 billion debt problem of the country. Senator Alberto Romulo filed a bill on the foreign debt of the Philippines addressing the "iniquitous and unconscionable debt terms imposed by foreign creditors to the extreme prejudice and detriment of national development goals and economic growth." The resolution called for the formation by Congress of a special committee to oversee, review and recommend appropriate and pertinent legislations on the \$28 billion debt burden.

For his part, Speaker Mitra called for an "ethical but activist new Congress," one that would serve as a model for the whole Filipino citizenry. Senate President Salonga, on the other hand, expressed new hope for the new Congress.

With these, the legislative department seemed to be well on its way towards the performance of its law-making function in the Philippines' newly acquired "democratic space."

Agonies of August

August was an eventful month as it began with the cold-blooded killing of a Cabinet member, Department of Local Government Secretary Jaime Ferrer, the highest government official of the Aquino administration to be brutally murdered. This brought to the fore the gravity of the terrorists challenge and as one opinion-writer noted "marked the lowest point in the country's peace and order situation."

As the date of the local elections approached, government officials were faced with the question of whether or not to reset the poll date.

A factor to consider would be the local officials whose mandated term ended last June 1986. They vociferously clamored for the holding of the local elections last year but the newly-installed revolutionary government of Pres. Aquino then announced that with all the financial obligations and debt burden left by the deposed dictator, holding an election was a very expensive proposition that the government could not afford. The alternative which was the designation of Officers-In-Charge (OICs) was chosen. More than 1,500 protest cases were filed at the Ministry of Local Government. Judging from this, the move was not a very popular one. Not only did it threaten the government's political stability but it also hampered the implementation of the economic recovery program of the Aquino administration.

A pronouncement was made by the Commission on Election (Comelec) stating that with all the election protests that it was facing and the proximity of the date set by the President, it would not be able to meet the deadline for

making all the necessary preparations. In fact, according to Comelec Chairman Ramon Felipe, not only was the Comelec physically unprepared for holding local elections but it was also in need of funds.

After consultations with government officials, the President proclaimed that the country would hold the much-awaited local polls later than the previously set date of November 9, 1987. The President declared that this was necessary in order to complete the process of attaining political stability which had begun with the ratification of the New Constitution and the installation of the new bicameral legislature.

As this developed, increases in the price of oil was announced by the government. This brought about long queues in gas stations and negative reactions to this very unpopular move from the public. The oil price increase would add to the already heavy burden that the whole Filipino nation is weighed down with. It was sad to note that after the general strikes were successfully launched, the government reversed its decision by approving the rollback of prices in the midst of the growing unrest, a subtle way of admitting a mistake committed in its decision making process.

As the *Welga ng Bayan* struck its heavy blow from the left that almost caught the government off-balance, the extreme rightists were clandestinely planning a *coup d'etat* that would prove to be the bloodiest challenge to the center.

Alerted by a six-by-six truck loaded with soldiers on Gov. Forbes St. going towards the direction of Malacanang, policemen on mobile patrol were the first to see the raiding force of the rebel army led by renegade Lt. Col. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan at 1:45 in the morning of August 28. The raiders tried to penetrate through the defenses of Malacanang. Three Presidential Security Guards were killed and the President's son Benigno "Noy" Aquino III was wounded. Eighteen civilians were killed along with two media men, Robert McDonald of the Pacific Defense Reporter and Martin Castor of *Ang Pilipino Ngayon*. A number of innocent civilians were also wounded.

A nation fraught with fear of a possible military take-over woke up to a day of fire-fighting in the streets of Manila and in the TV stations of FTV-4 and Channel 13. Camp Aguinaldo was under siege as Tora-Tora planes fired at the General Headquarters setting it ablaze and giving Col. Gringo Honasan a chance to escape in a helicopter. The people were waiting impatiently for the call for a repeat performance of the historic EDSA revolution but the government troops, following strict orders from the President, herself, and from Gen. Fidel V. Ramos, were able to put the "situation under control" and by August 30, the rebel forces were neutralized.

August 28 would go down in history as a reminder that a nation that is in the process of transition from dictatorship to democracy would always be under attack by forces coming from both sides, the left and the right. Not only would this be so because of the presence of groups that are still loyal to the deposed dictator and those who advocate radical change through armed struggle but also because majority of the sectors of society have valid grievances that still remain unaddressed. The soldiers who nurtured very high expectations with the change of leadership were frustrated because they

felt that they have suffered so much under Marcos' rule where they were subjected to sub-human conditions as they fight in the battlefields of communist - infested or controlled areas and they felt that they have had enough of it. It seemed to them that their plight was not given due attention forcing them to resort to a coup attempt in order to dramatize their demands, so much so that even their constitutional vow was put aside to make way for a protest action that was not peaceful, to say the least.

A clear message was also put across: the center would not always be lucky enough to hold the fort with the ambivalence in the allegiance of the soldiers which seemed to be more to their commanding officers than to the constitution, and that the Divine Providence would not always be there to provide miraculous solutions to the problems that beset the nation. The present administration has to address such problems as corruption in government that demoralizes the administrative system, the very high level of unemployment that brings unrest not only in the countryside but in the urban centers as well, the control of social and economic institutions by the oligarchs and the glaring 70% of the country's population that is wallowing in poverty. A remedy that would cure not only the symptoms but the disease, altogether, is what this country needs and the agony brought about by the events of August serve only as a warning that time is running out!

Strengthening the Cabinet in September

The President, after meeting with cause-oriented groups, acknowledged the fact that she was remiss in her promise to give the people real voice in government. She later on announced that she was accepting the resignation of four of her Cabinet members, namely: Secretary of Foreign Affairs Salvador H. Laurel, Secretary of Finance Jaime Ongpin, Executive Secretary Joker Arroyo and Press Secretary Teodoro Locsin, Jr., persons who were close to her but with whom she had some personal and policy differences. Senator Raul Manglapus replaced Vice President Laurel as Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Many observed that this was a good choice because Senator Manglapus possessed vast and varied experiences in the area of foreign relations. Former Secretary of Public Works and Highways Vicente Jayme replaced Secretary Ongpin as head of the finance department. A low-key character in the person of Secretary Catalino Macaraig replaced the very controversial Executive Secretary Joker Arroyo and former Agence France Presse head, journalist Teodoro Benigno took the place of Teodoro Locsin, Jr.. This move was expected to pave the way for a new and different kind of leadership that the people have long been waiting for and expecting from the President.

After the President accepted the resignation tendered by Vice President Laurel as Foreign Affairs Secretary, the latter announced that he has in his possession the list of names of leftists in the government whom he was willing to name. His claim that the government is infiltrated by Communists which would "run into hundreds if the lower echelons were to be included" was based on confidential intelligence reports furnished by the military. He said that he was compelled to disclose the information because the nation is facing the "great peril" of falling into the hands of the Communists.

This stance of the Vice President further enhanced the image that he

was, wittingly or unwittingly, projecting, of a traditional politician whose overriding concern was the preservation of the status quo.

In this period in the country's history where the people are more afraid of the idea that there may not be a future or another tomorrow to look forward to because there is not enough to live on at this very moment, the red scare does not seem to frighten the people anymore.

This being the case, the Vice President would do a great service to the people whom he professed to serve if he would focus his energy and attention to the more basic questions like: Is there another alternative that the country can consider in order to solve the ever-growing unemployment problem? Are there other sources of food and production that remain untapped? What kind of economic recovery program should the government adopt in order to really attack the causes of the country's problems at their very roots?

This would be the only way in which the Vice President can improve his chances of winning if he is contemplating on running for the Presidency in 1992.

College Developments

Rebuilding through Redemocratization

"Public Administration and Redemocratization" was the theme adopted for the Third National Conference on Public Administration. This was in recognition of the road that the administration of President Corazon C. Aquino is pursuing in the light of the historic events that took place during the unprecedented and unrepeatable February Revolution. It was co-sponsored by the College of Public Administration to cap its 25th Anniversary celebration, together with the College of Public Administration Alumni Association, the Philippine Society for Public Administration, the Association of Schools of Public Administration in the Philippines and the University of the Philippines Administrative Research and Extension Services Foundation, Incorporated.

The registration and business meetings were held at the UP College of Public Administration in Padre Faura while the sessions were held at the Embassy Ballroom and Ambassador's Sala of the Holiday Inn in Pasay City last 28-30 September, 1987.

The Conference, in examining issues, problems and prospects, was divided into five panels and had the themes "New Challenge to Teaching and Research in Public Administration," "Post-Revolution Administrative Reform," "Decentralization and Local Government," "The Public Sector and Public Administration," and "The Politics and Administration of the Transition."

It proved to be a very hectic but exhilarating three-day conference for the staff, the committee members and the participants who were ushered into the presentation and discussion of very relevant and timely papers. The articles presented contain the answers to nagging questions on how the Philippines, through the present administration, is going to undertake the

process of rebuilding through redemocratization. Twenty-two papers were written by faculty members and public administration practitioners who were all authoritative and profound in their deliberation of the issues. The challenge was how to get the government to seriously implement their recommendations.

Laying the Cornerstone for Public Administration

Last September 15, the College laid the cornerstone for the new College of Public Administration building that was being built near the Institute of Small Scale Industries and the Institute of Industrial Relations in the university's Diliman campus. The building is adjacent to the Public Affairs Research and Development Center (PARDEC) building where the Publications Office, part of the Academic Program Office and part of the Center for Policy and Administrative Development Office are presently housed.

The ceremony was attended by the officials of the University headed by President Jose Abueva and Chancellor Tabujara. Both of them delivered a short message to all who were gathered during the momentous occasion. UP parish priest, Msgr. Ramon Arguelles officiated the blessing of the ceremonial cornerstone.