

Project Democracy imposes IMF dictator on the Philippines

by Linda de Hoyos

Under the banner of “democracy,” Philippine President Corazon Aquino, with the full weight of the United States behind her, May 11 perpetrated the worst case of national election vote fraud ever witnessed in the country. At 8 p.m. on the evening of May 11, *before even a single vote was counted*, presidential press secretary Teodoro Benigno announced that the Aquino slate for the new Senate had carried out a near “clean sweep” in an unprecedented “landslide.” This “news” went out to the international press and Philippine radio throughout the next 24 hours, with less than .03% of the vote counted.

As of May 16, one candidate of the slate for the opposing Grand Alliance for Democracy had made it onto the lists. Seven other GAD candidates, considered by a consensus of the Philippine media as “shoo-ins” for a seat in the Senate, did not win. As Liberal Party leader and GAD candidate Eva Kalaw put it: “I fought Marcos for 17 years, but I have never seen anything like this.”

Answered Benigno: “Cory could no more steal votes from the people than Queen Elizabeth could steal money from her chambermaid.”

In reality, the election result was the imposition on the Philippines of a dictator who has already sold out the Philippines to the demands of the International Monetary Fund and the creditor banks. In a lurid display of gunboat diplomacy, the United States moved 20,000 U.S. Marines from Okinawa, Japan, to Subic Bay, Philippines, and placed all military personnel on alert in case of “trouble in Manila.”

The fraud was coordinated by the agencies of the U.S. Project Democracy, including the National Republican Institute of International Affairs, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, and the Center for Democracy, which sent “observer teams” to the country for the elections. All these organizations have hailed the elections as the “cleanest in Philippine history.” Twelve countries sent observers to the elections, but only the U.S. embassy has congratulated Mrs. Aquino.

The election results may have credibility in the United States, but not in the Philippines, reports our special correspondent from Manila. On May 12, the day after the elections, 20,000 people gathered at the small plaza outside the Manila Cathedral to protest the vote. Even if we are conser-

vative, GAD chairman Vicente Puyat told the crowd, “a full 40% of the Filipino people were disenfranchised in this election.” GAD candidate Abul Alonto, a Muslim from Mindanao, one of the opposition’s strongholds, stated that the “entire island of Mindanao has been disenfranchised. If we’re going to be disenfranchised in this way, it means war. It is outrageous and we will not stand for it.” Former Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile warned the government that the failed election would bring “untold misery and turmoil to our country for some time to come.”

The next day, nearly 1 million people gathered on the Edsa highway in front of the military’s Camp Aguinaldo and Camp Crame—scene of the mass “people’s power” protests that brought down Ferdinand Marcos in February 1986. The crowd brought together not only the GAD, but loyalists of Marcos’s KBL, and also adherents to the left. “There is no time for talk,” stated Enrile. “We were pushed up against the wall. We are not calling for a recount. We are calling for a new Edsa II Revolution.”

Even the *Washington Post*, which on May 12 hailed the election as Aquino’s greatest accomplishment and consolidation of her rule, was forced to admit on May 15 that “the opposition’s sharp attack on the election’s integrity—coming before even 1/2 of 1% of the votes had been counted—appeared to suggest that despite her popularity Aquino still faces formidable obstacles in consolidating her rule.”

Incredible fraud

As *EIR* warned last week, the fraud was perpetrated with the aid of an international press blackout throughout the campaign against the Grand Alliance. Stated Benigno in answer to nationwide protests against the failed election: “Even the media agrees that the May 11 polls were one of the cleanest and most peaceful in our history.”

Not the *Philippine* media. On May 14, leading columnist Luis Beltran endorsed the GAD protests, stating that he was forced to do so by the “fantastic statistical improbabilities” produced in the results so far:

- In Pampanga, GAD chairman and Pampanga “favorite son” Vicente Puyat came in #35 for the senate race.
- In Cebu, GAD candidate Rene Espina, who has been a governor of that province and consistently led the Senate

vote in Cebu where he was in the Marcos camp or opposing it, came in #33 in Cebu.

- GAD candidate Jose Almendras, who has never lost a single election in his home city of Davao, came in 25th. Almendras further noted that in his own precinct, he and his family voted for him, yet the Namfrel vote tally registered 0 votes for him.

- In Bicol, Francisco Tatad, an information minister under Marcos who left the administration in protest and has also never lost an election, placed 23rd in his own province.

- Joseph Estrada, the only GAD candidate to make it into the Senate, placed #17 in his own municipality, even though he has been a six-term mayor in the city.

These results are statistically impossible, stated Beltran. "Why should this be the first time in our history—even during the Marcos era—that the opposition has been so roundly defeated in such a way?"

Full dictatorship

The GAD ticket was minimally expected to come in with 8 seats out of the 24 in the Senate, given the known vote-getting power of many of its candidates, although the GAD itself projected a 40-50% GAD vote. One week before the elections, the U.S. embassy projected 4-5 seats for the GAD in the elections. This would have constituted "credible" fraud in the election results. Why the near-total shutout of the opposition? Why the *incredible* fraud?

The answer is the necessity for President Aquino and the coterie of cronies and leftists around her to retain the capacity to exert dictatorial power over government policy, especially economic policy.

The international media projection of an "issueless campaign" and a campaign of personalities, with Aquino on one side and Marcos loyalists on the other, was a fabrication. GAD chairman Vicente Puyat led a campaign against the International Monetary Fund and the sell-out debt rescheduling agreement of Finance Minister Jaime Ongpin. Not only did the country's leading press come behind him, but *even Aquino slate candidates found it impossible to defend Ongpin openly in electoral debate*. Former Aquino Resources Minister Jaime Merceda, in a televised debate with Puyat May 8, said he had protested Ongpin's deals while he was in the Aquino cabinet.

As the *Los Angeles Times* pointed out on May 9, the new constitution gives the Senate a strong hand in policy-making. The presence of only 4-5 opposition members in the Senate would have turned the Senate into an independent institution in its own right. However, under that condition, it is likely that the protest against the IMF coming from the GAD senators would have split the ranks of Aquino's own people, producing a constitutional crisis in short order. Behind the GAD is the overwhelming sentiment in the country against the IMF—the cry that brought down Marcos was "Down with the U.S.-IMF dictatorship."

Now, through gross election fraud, Aquino has turned the Senate into a rubber-stamp body for her own pro-IMF, pro-bank, pro-corruption policies. If the election is upheld and not nullified, the Senate will be rendered 100% impotent by virtue of its members' complicity in the fraud. A new IMF dictatorship, far more severe and operating with the backing of U.S. Marines, is in power.

How the fraud was carried out

The fraud operation itself also showed the "heavy hand" now operating in the Philippines, behind the saintly smile of the brainwashed Mrs. Aquino.

The fraud was carried out by Jaime Ferrer, the Minister of Local Governments. As a long-time known asset of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Ferrer cut his teeth coordinating the fraud in the 1950s on behalf of the CIA that put Raul Magsaysay in the presidency.

The local officials in the Philippines—such as mayors—were all summarily appointed in the aftermath of the February 1986 revolution by Malacanang Palace, replacing the duly elected officials that had served under Marcos. A month before the elections, Ferrer announced that any officials who did not campaign for the Aquino ticket would be dismissed. As projected by the new constitution, local elections were to have been held on August 24, in which the appointed officials would have to stand for election. Given the hatred for these appointees throughout the country, many would be expected to lose. A week before the elections, Ferrer announced that the August 24 elections were "indefinitely postponed." As late as May 15, Ferrer announced that any local official who did not get out the vote for Cory would be relieved of his post. Large sums of money "from outside agencies" also were passed into the hands of the local officials.

On May 11, the ballot boxes throughout the country were passed from the precincts—numbering 200 voters or less—to the local officials when the official tally sheets for counting did not arrive at the precincts due to a national "printing delay." Ferrer's appointed stooges are now sitting on the vote. No votes have been passed as yet to Comelec, the government election commission for counting.

The "clean sweep" for Aquino will not solve her problems. The absentee military and government votes that have been counted show a 100% victory for the GAD in the first 12 Senate seats, with Enrile leading the count. In Manila, Filipinos are in a state of shock and bewilderment over the shut-out of the opposition.

The stakes for the Philippines are very high. Unless the Aquino-IMF policy is exchanged for the program of independent national recovery put forward by the GAD, there is no hope for the Philippines to stave off the mounting insurgency of the New People's Army, which continues to thrive off destitution. Aquino's wanton flouting of the democratic process has now brought the Philippines a giant step closer to all-out civil war.