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Richard [Dick] Holbrooke interviewed by Richard Rusk and Thomas J. Schoenbaum

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HOLBROOKE: --a kind of personal symmetry for me in the whole relationship. He was Secretary of State when Ferdinand [Edralin] Marcos was already President of the country. That's how long Ferdinand Marcos has been President of the Philippines. Marcos has now been President of the Philippines for twenty of the country's forty years as an independent nation. Clearly, one way or the other, that long year in Philippine history is coming to an end. I don't think there is much question about the fact that Marcos will not be around too much longer, although it may seem inconceivable to those Filipinos who have lived under his rule for a whole generation or more by now. The question in my mind is not whether Marcos will leave, because I take that as given, but how he will leave, when he will leave, and most importantly, what will come next. Will there be a leadership in Manila which will deal with the country's enormous problems or will the country fall apart still further? Will the opposition, which has united itself in a tenuous fashion around opposition to Marcos, fall apart as soon as Marcos is gone? These are very serious questions and they are complicated by the specific events which have led us to this remarkable election which is going to take place Friday. It really shows the unique quality of the Philippines that you have an election in a country which is widely regarded as run by a person many people call a dictator, and yet this dictator is fighting for his life in an election which he could theoretically lose. Although I feel it's fairly unlikely that he'd allow himself to lose an election in which he controls the electoral process. I think, in one sense, the American press is misleading a lot of people who have not thought much about the Philippines up until now by letting the American public think that this is an election like an American election and that if Marcos wins, he's won, that's it. I think, in my view, the situation in the Philippines only begins to reach the critical phase after this election. Let's skip a lot of background for now, although we can go into it when we have question-answer period. Let's just talk about what might happen this Friday and what might happen after this Friday, and above all, what American interests are in the region. Because I speak to you today as an American, and I think the responsibility for Americans is to think of our own interests. That doesn't mean we have to follow a policy which is against the interests of other people, but we have to think in terms of what is best for our own nation.

There are really basically only three possible outcomes on Friday in my view. Corazon Aquino can win the election; Marcos can win a fair election; or Marcos can win a tainted election or election widely perceived to be corrupt. My personal view of the chances of those three outcomes are Aquino has about a ten percent chance of winning. Marcos, his chance of winning an honest election in my view is about zero. I do not believe that the Philippine people would support Marcos in a free election any longer. Therefore, by elimination you know that I think it's about a ninety percent probability that Marcos will contrive to win the election through his control of the process. That isn't to say that it's totally impossible that Corazon Aquino would win, but very unlikely. Now, for those of you who haven't studied Philippine electoral law lately, let me tell you something quite astonishing which is that there is an independent vote for the

president and the vice-president, and indeed the election law is written so that you could substitute one candidate for another up to noon of election day. So in theory, people could vote at nine or ten in the morning for a Marcos-[Arturo] Tolentino ticket and by the time the vote's counted, they voted for Marcos and somebody else. This has led a lot of Filipinos to suspect that he will substitute his wife sometime around eleven o'clock in the morning on Friday as his running mate. I don't think he'll do that. I think it is suicidal for him. She is not an acceptable running mate and both of them know it no matter how much she would hope that it isn't true. However, given the split balloting situation, it is not at all inconceivable that he could allow [Jose Paciano] Laurel, who is Mrs. Aquino's running mate, to win victory for the vice-presidency. It's not at all impossible. And if he does that, it would be, in my view, very much in keeping with his normal, traditional style of outguessing the opposition, keeping everyone off balance. It is well known that Laurel and Aquino don't like each other and it's reasonable to assume that if Laurel becomes the vice-president that it would split the opposition. He would certainly accept. Furthermore, there's a very unusual and unique relationship between Ferdinand Marcos and Laurel. Laurel's father was Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in 1940. Marcos was indicted, tried, and convicted of murder of the politician who was running against his father in the local election. This man was shot through the head with a .22 rifle and Marcos happened to be a sharp shooter with a .22 rifle. And he got convicted and he was sentenced to death. That conviction was reversed on appeal by the Supreme Court of the Philippines and [Jose Paciano] Laurel Sr., the father, was Chief Justice at that time. And Laurel Sr. then went on to become president of the provisional Philippine republic government which was the Japanese puppet government of the 1940s. So he was a collaborator with the Japanese.

But after the war, [Douglas] MacArthur, who knew Laurel from before the war, restored Laurel and did not punish him. And Marcos then became President at a later date of the Jose Laurel Foundation and has often spoken very warmly of Laurel. Indeed, he owes his life to Laurel in the most literal sense. So it's not impossible for him to make a deal with the son, particularly since they united in the integral (unintelligible). And that would, as I said, split the opposition. The problem with that scenario, indeed the problem with all scenarios, is Mrs. [Imelda Romualdez] Marcos. The reason there's been no vice-president in the Philippines for a decade now is that Imelda would not allow a vice-president to exist if it can't be her. And since it can't be her, she didn't want anyone. Her theory has always been, if her husband falls from health or whatever, that she will seize power. That possibility is receding very quickly because one way or another, there will be a vice-president next week: either Tolentino or Laurel. Tolentino is seventy-five years old and she certainly would prefer Tolentino to Laurel; but either way, she will be a little more distant from her dream of taking over. Well, as I said, those are the three choices. Now let's look at American policy. Let me start by stressing what the American national interest is in the Philippines, because to discuss a policy one has to start with the sense of what are our interests. Obviously, Philippines is of critical importance to the U.S. [United States]. I mean, you could hardly tell this group here since by its very size I assume it's the entire group of University of Georgia that cares about the Philippines and therefore knows something about the Philippines. But, by virtue of history, economic interests, strategic interests, political interests there are very substantial blood ties between our two countries and they are probably unique. There are other countries with strong blood ties but there's no other country which combines all of the attributes of the Philippines in regard to the U.S.

The tremendous sacrifice the Philippine people made for the United States in the forties, the large number of Filipino-Americans growing very rapidly particularly in Hawaii and California but scattered throughout the country, the economic ties make it a unique relationship. The bases make it strategically important. The economic relationship is important, but frankly it should not be over-stressed. We can live without the Philippines economically. The Philippines, however, would be hard put to live without us economically. It would have put them in position of considerable subservience to the Japanese and that's something the Filipinos don't want. Now, the two bases at Clark and Subic are of enormous importance to the United States. I negotiated those agreements with Marcos personally in 1978 after a negotiations had collapsed in 1975-76 under [Henry Alfred] Kissinger and [Gerald Rudolph] Ford [Jr.]. And we gave some thought at that time to what would happen if we couldn't reach an agreement with the Filipinos to extend the base agreements. A lot of people would say--there's an article in the *New York Times* last week--that you could move the bases to Guam or Palau or the Marshall Islands. It doesn't really add up. You can create a base in the Marshalls or Guam or Palau, but it won't be the same base. Congress will never appropriate enough money to give you the kind of deepwater-drydock facilities that exist in Subic which would cost three, four, five, six billion dollars. And in the era of Graham Rudman, nobody is going to appropriate that kind of money. Secondly, in terms of a value of the bases, particularly for airplanes, you're four hours further from Korea, four hours further from the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. It just doesn't have that strategic value. Third, if you leave the base in the Philippines, which are our forward positions in the Western Pacific, the political impact on the Southeast Asian nations, the members of ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations]; Thailand; Indonesia; Singapore; Malaysia; the Philippines itself; Burnan; the impact on Korea, the impact on the People's Republic of China and Taiwan would just be enormous. It would have an effect on the United States perception in the region which would be irreversible. So we have to start by saying that like it or not, departure from Clarke and Subic changes American foreign policy in East Asia permanently. And to voluntarily leave those bases is a very serious problem for us. This does not, however, give Marcos a leverage over the United States in a negotiation. Marcos needs us to stay in those bases just as badly as we need to stay there. So people who ask me--and this question comes up over and over again--"Can Marcos call our bluff on the bases?" simply do not understand Marcos' strengths and weaknesses. He cannot be perceived as weak on the bases. It's just not possible. He can't be President of the Philippines that presides over the country.

Indeed, I don't think Aquino can be either. I don't see any Philippine leader asking us to leave the bases. They might change the status a little in a cosmetic way. We did that with Marcos in '78, but not in a fundamental way. Our second interest is to encourage the Filipinos to deal with the growing communist insurgency, the New People's Honor [NPA]. That is not a joke and it's not an invention of conservatives. There is a growing communist threat, guerrilla threat, in the Philippines. It's the only serious guerrilla threat left in Asia of the classic Vietcong, Chinese communist, Mao Tse-tung style. Now there are low level insurgences still in Thailand, Malaysia. There's an entrenched communist party in northeast Burma which has been there forever and will probably remain forever. But this is the only real potentially dangerous communist guerrilla movement left in the region. It is not as potent, nor do I think it's likely to become as potent, as the Vietcong for the very simple reason, the Philippines being an island state, the communists do not have access to sanctuary and they cannot get endless resupply from a friendly neighbor such as North Vietnam or China. However, (unintelligible) the last few years in the Philippines based

primarily on their exploitation of the opportunity offered them by the waning popularity of the Marcos regime. And so my second criteria for American strategic interests in the area is to encourage a Philippine government that can deal with the communist insurgency- This does not mean send U.S. ground troops to the Philippines, nor does it mean a heavy military advisory effort, both of which would prove to be rather ineffective in Indochina. It does, however, mean that we ought to seek to encourage a government which can do the kinds of things which are necessary to deal with the communists.

We can get back to that in a minute in more detail if you want. The third criteria for American's interest in the area is in the financial area. The Philippines has a twenty-five billion dollar debt while the rest of East Asia's economies have marched forward dramatically, so dramatically that that is the most impressive part of the world in terms of economic growth in the last fifteen years. The Philippines has turned from one of Asia's most promising countries into its most declining. If you had told American foreign policy makers in 1945 or '48, or even '50, that Japan would be where it is today and the Philippines where it is today, people wouldn't have believed it. Today we all take it for granted. If you'd told people as recently as 1960 or '65 that Korea would have outdistanced the Philippines, no one would have believed it. This is something which all of you now take for granted, but I want to stress that it runs exactly counter to our memories and perceptions and expectations of the countries of that region, and it is a great tragedy. The Filipinos with education and skills are leaving the country as fast as they can get out. Money is fleeing the country at a most unbelievable rate. Estimates reach as high as ten billion dollars of capital in flight since Benigno Aquino was murdered in August of 1983, and it is imperative that the next government deal with the debt problem. Now I would hazard a prediction that any government that succeeds Marcos will get a favorable hearing from the international banking community for rescheduling the debt. But this will have to aweigh in order the transition and the establishment of a more stable government in Manila. So those are the American interests: bases; assisting and dealing with the communists; dealing with the economic crisis. All of these I would subsume under the general umbrella of the Philippines becoming again a stable part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Now can any of that happen under Ferdinand Marcos? I would submit to you it can't, that in the twenty-first year of his rule, he's finished. He's sick, as I said earlier, probably dying, trying to hold on to power on a day-to-day basis, incapable any more of a vision or leadership skills which once distinguished him. Because whether you like Marcos or not, he is, or at least was, an extremely impressive man. And all of those attributes which so dazzled American policy makers in the sixties and seventies are gone. He's just grasping at straws now, trying to survive on a day-to-day basis. Having outlined the strategic objectives for the U.S. and the three possible outcomes on Friday brings us logically to the most critical question of all from an American point of view, which is what should the United States do about the Philippines? Here I think it's interesting to know the [Ronald Wilson] Reagan Administration is following a relatively enlightened policy. And I speak now as a card-carrying Democrat who ran U.S. policy toward the Philippines for four years. When George [Herbert Walker] Bush went to Manila in the summer of 1981 and made his fatuous remarks to Mr. Marcos, I was as appalled as anybody. I can't imagine anybody, regardless of whether they like Bush or not--well particularly if they like Bush--they must have been profoundly embarrassed to see the man they like and support say things so completely ludicrous. However, in the four years since Bush's trip, and really in the last

year, the Reagan Administration has done a very significant turnaround. As recently as October of '84, in Reagan's second debate with [Walter Frederick] Mondale in Kansas City, Reagan said the choice in Manila was between Marcos and the communists. That is no longer the Administration position. On the contrary, senior Administration officials have testified publicly before Congress that Marcos' continued power is beneficial to the communists and that his departure, although they always stress, and rightly so, in an orderly way, is critical to dealing with the problem in Manila. So my criticism of the Administration is going to be very, very muted.

I might have some tactical differences with them on a day-to-day basis on how they proceeded, but you have those with your closest friends in the government on an ordinary basis in any case. The basic decision of the Administration was to distance themselves from Marcos since the summer of last year. That is a stunning event. And the interesting thing is that a lot of people, particularly liberals, don't realize this is what is happening. I run into people all the time who call themselves liberals who are criticizing Reagan for supporting Marcos. And I say to them, "But you don't understand. Reagan isn't supporting Marcos anymore." He has allowed his administration to distance itself from Marcos. Don't misunderstand me, Reagan is not trying to bring Marcos down, nor should he. But the Reagan Administration, starting with Senator [Paul Dominique] Laxalt's trip last summer, has taken a very detached position. When Reagan issued his statement on Friday calling for free and fair elections, he went on to say that if they are free and fair we'll give extra aid to the Philippines, but if they are not it will hurt the aid effort. Marcos immediately went on television in Manila and said this statement was supportive of Marcos. That was clever on Marcos' part, but that was not what the statement really said. The statement was really a warning to Ferdinand Marcos that if an election is stolen, as everyone in Washington thinks it's going to be, that it will have a very adverse effect on our ability, or the Administration's ability to get aid for the Philippines. On the other hand, having said that I'm basically in agreement with what the Administration's done, let me say also that they have a hell of a dilemma in their hands, starting this weekend. They're likely to confront Marcos reelected, widespread charges of cheating, Marcos in power in the presidential palace, the opposition in an uproar calling the United States to abandon Marcos, possible street demonstrations. An argument will immediately break out in the opposition over whether to go into the street or continue to use parliamentary means. The United States government will of course tell the opposition to stay off the streets and use parliamentary means, but there will be a tremendous temptation on the part of the opposition to go into the streets. There is a far left group supporting Corazon Aquino and a moderate group supporting her. There are people supporting her who are very conservative businessmen who think that Marcos' continued rule is bad for business. They're not going to want to have riots in the streets. So the dilemma for the United States will be very real. If I have one partial criticism of the Administration, which I would not want to make publicly--this is off the--there are no journalists here I take it?

RICHARD RUSK: Just the tape recorder.

HOLBROOKE: Well, the tape recorder is for you. The only reason I don't want to say it publicly is that I just don't feel it's fair to my colleagues since the people running the policy in the U.S. government include three of the key policy makers who were my deputies. And I don't like to criticize them publicly because they're both close friends and they worked for me and it's not

fair to them because they're having their own internal problems. But I think that we should have done a little more to say to Mrs. Aquino, perhaps with money, that we were supportive of them, because they have no money at all. This is not a central issue. I think that the *New York Times* article last week correctly portrayed the Administration's distance from Marcos. In summation, let me say that the most critical thing for you all to understand about the Philippines right now is that Marcos¹ departure is essential to deal with the problems of the country. But his departure does not solve any of those problems, it only removes him as an obstacle for dealing with them. And of course, when I say Marcos I really mean Mrs. Marcos at least as much as I mean him. He is the best thing going for the communists in terms of their recruiting. He and his cronies are robbing the country blind and they are encouraging capital flight and a brain drain. They make no effort to build up the political structure of the country. And yet when he departs, his successors will face all of these problems with no solutions. And perhaps in this war he's made a lot of internal divisions. So we shouldn't be very sanguine about the future in the Philippines. In the short run, there's going to be a lot of chaos. But it can be done. The U.S. should give considerable aid to the next regime. We should assist, if necessary, an orderly transition. In my view, we should do whatever we can to prevent Marcos from being personally punished. I know that he or his wife may be implicated in Aquino's murder, but I think in terms of dealing with the problems of the Philippines, retribution against Marcos or an attempt to kill him would not be in his interest. Excuse me, it wouldn't be in the country's interest. It won't be in his interest I guess. (laughter) But I don't think that we should do anything to encourage his final overthrow. That puts me somewhere between the liberals and the conservatives on that issue, but I have some respect for Marcos and what he tried to do for his country in an earlier era. More importantly than that, I don't think any useful purpose is served by a situation in which there is a blood-letting right at the onset of the transition of as historic importance as this one. Now, since this is a very small group, Tom, I would just suggest that we have a very informal discussion for whatever amount of time is left. And also, if you want to ask about questions other than the Philippines--China or Korea--I'd be happy to discuss that too.

RICHARD RUSK: I'm sorry, but as a person here who hardly knows anything about the Philippines: you talked about Marcos' control on the electoral process. Could you talk more about that? Is it different than we might expect in this country?

HOLBROOKE: Everyone always makes the analogy for obvious reasons but--

RICHARD RUSK: (unintelligible)

HOLBROOKE: Both. My guess is that he can't buy enough votes anymore. He'll have to just create votes out of thin air. I don't think he can win by just buying votes, but there hasn't been a real election in the Philippines in a long, long time. The entire government is controlled by his people and unless the organization has fallen apart, he ought to be able to find enough votes to win. We'll see. The thing which is astonishing is what a tremendous ground swell of support Corazon Aquino is provoking. There are obviously, despite my cynicism of standing here and telling you that Marcos can't lose, obviously millions of Filipinos are hoping otherwise because they're coming out in huge numbers for this woman whose appearances are not even announced on television and radio. It's word of mouth. So something is going on.

RICHARD RUSK: You can find ninety percent or eighty percent chunks will be returned one way or another. We're not talking about a transition, we're talking about a situation of the Marcos power if he lives. What will the United States do? I know that we have a seventeen-member delegation going over there to watch over the election, members of Congress. Even though the Philippines did become independent in '46, I guess we still feel our Congress needs to go over there. But I mean, they go over there and they watch this election and it's rigged and he gets in by eighty percent, and then what do we do?

HOLBROOKE: Well, as I said, then the end game begins. If Marcos wins a rigged election, as I'm assuming he will, then the process begins in departing in less (unintelligible) way. And one way or another, I think he's doomed. His kidneys may give out and the problem will solve itself. He may get killed, which is very undesirable but not inconceivable. The army may come to him and say, "You've ruled long enough. And in the name of God, it's time for you to go. And take your wife and your money with you." He may just look around like so many other people (unintelligible) and realize the game is up. Men in this situation almost never stay until the end. The Shah [Mohammed Reza Pahlavi] did not. [Anastasio] Somoza did not. [Ngo Dinh] Diem tried to get out, but only in the last minute. [Rafael Leonidas] Trujillo was killed. [Fulgencio y Zaldiver] Batista got out. Most of these people don't leave until the very end. I think one way or another he will be--the situation will turn against him so rapidly.

RICHARD RUSK: And therefore, we (unintelligible) supply (unintelligible) and wait for--

HOLBROOKE: Well, it's a dilemma. The U.S. should position itself so that its departure is understood by everyone to be something we are not opposed to. At the same time, I have great misgivings about the United States being the vehicle which brings him down. I think that potentially puts blood on our hands, as happened in Saigon, November first--

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