

Our revitalized foreign policy

(Address of the President at the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23 June 1978)

It is a little unusual—perhaps even ironic—that 80 long years should have passed before it occurred to anyone to mark with some fitting ceremony the foundation anniversary of this important Ministry.

This modesty is uncharacteristic of those who over the years took command of this Ministry. But let it not be said that General Romulo is not the man to make up for such a shortcoming, no matter how late.

In a very real sense, you and I are the executors of the purposes that saw the birth of the first Department of Foreign Affairs under the revolutionary government of 1898. Great and sweeping changes have since visited our country and the world, yet in a fundamental way the substance of our concerns in relation to other peoples and nations remains the same as it was 80 years ago.

The revolutionary government of 1898 set forth as the urgent task of its Foreign Affairs Department the defense, protection and enhancement of the country's sovereignty and independence. It declared that what was won by struggle and revolution—the right to be a free and independent nation—must be secured through the maintenance of friendly and fruitful ties with other nations.

Today, 80 years later, those purposes stand as the bedrock of our Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Events did not prove kind to our early bid for national self-determination; success eluded the men given the task of securing national sovereignty and independence. Yet even as the tides of new colonial empires swept into our part of the world, the will to independence was never to be quenched. In time the Republic would be born again, and along with it would rise the structure of a new foreign office, more secure than its predecessor had been.

Today, as we celebrate the founding of this Ministry, we can without reservation declare that this institution, having survived its early beginnings, that it has succeeded in giving substance to national sovereignty and independence, and that it embodies what had long been the dream of our forefathers—a free nation able to hold its own in the community of independent nations.

It has been a long road that we have had to travel, and it will be remarked that not so long ago, we were not a nation in full possession of its sovereignty and independence. But however long it may have taken us, we have finally learned the lessons that attend the governance of a nation's foreign affairs, truths which, ignored and misunderstood, can erode what is vital to it, but which, when heeded and accepted as a guide, are the touchstones to success.

Guidelines from the past for the future

When considered in the full perspective of 80 years, the last six years stand out as an eventful and historic time in Philippine diplomacy. We need not indulge in a lengthy recapitulation of what has been achieved in our foreign relations. More important for us is a full and confident understanding of the main currents that have guided our foreign policy during the last six years, and which must light our journey into the future.

This is best stated in terms of the principles that underlie the actions we have taken and must continue to take:

□ First, foreign policy must reflect the conscious exercise of national independence and sovereignty on each and every issue, and each and every initiative.

The time when foreign policy decisions were dictated or conditioned by others, when we entrusted our affections or our enmities to another nation, is past. The lapses of the past may be explained by the circumstances in which we found ourselves then. But however one may explain it, we cannot belittle the ill effects upon our sovereignty as a nation. Nor can we ignore how vastly different the world has become; we inhabit today a new and critical period in international life, in which interdependence with others begins by seeking due regard to one's sovereignty and political independence.

□ Second, foreign policy must serve our national aspirations to development and progress.

Because we had erroneously regarded foreign policy as removed from domestic concerns, our



For a strong ASEAN community: President Marcos confers with Indonesian leaders.

foreign relations in the past played only a minor role in the shaping of national realities.

Today we know that foreign relations can be a tool in promoting development and national security.

To see national development as a major determinant of foreign policy is to accept the unity of our interests and purposes as a nation. When we aspire to political stability and stable relations with other nations, we promote national development. And when we advance our economic relationships with all nations, we employ diplomacy at a level where it can touch the lives of our millions.

□ Third, our foreign policy must allow us to maintain beneficial ties with all nations, regardless of ideologies.

We have put an end to the prejudices of the past that conditioned us to regard almost half of the world as a hostile camp. We have established diplomatic relations with all the Socialist countries. And we have seen the kind of mutuality and cooperation possible between states of different social systems.

□ Fourth, our foreign policy must be based on mutual respect, mutual beneficiality, and mutual regard for each and every nation's independence.

Relations between nations grow best on the basis of what they contribute to each other's development and progress. The complementarity of national outlooks is an aid in this regard, but it does not ensure equality in the relationship.

For this reason, we must continually adjust our ties with other countries so that we as a developing country can reap as much from these ties as those countries which are more developed and advanced than ours.

□ Fifth, as a reflection of the struggle of the Third World to development, our foreign policy must recognize its oneness with the movement to reform the international economic order.

There is a limit to what bilateral relations can do in advancing the national interest. Conversely, we know today that the combined strength of the developing countries represents a force for change that can result in untold benefits in terms of progress and peace among nations.

At regional level, we seek community with our Southeast Asian neighbors through the building of a strong ASEAN community. In this initiative, we have already realized the beginnings of a vital regional grouping, and if we keep at it, we will soon reap the full advantages of regionalism.

In the same spirit, we consider our identification with the Third World countries a vital aspect of our foreign policy, conducive to the construction of an equitable international economic order and to the building of a truly international human community.

Many difficulties inhere today in the bid of the developing countries for a better deal with the developed countries, but the intensity of the movement for reform can no longer be stemmed.

□ Finally, we recognize as a fundamental pillar of our foreign policy our participation, in, and support for, the objectives and the work of the United Nations.

The tasks of the nation

On the basis of these principles, we have so shaped and guided our foreign policy as to make it a truly vital part of national life today, and to earn for us a respected place in the family of nations.

What we make of our foreign policy now and in the future will surely depend on how well and how prudently we guide our foreign relations in keeping with these principles.

This is the charge of our Ministry of Foreign

Affairs as it moves on to its ninth decade.

That charge embodies a trinity of ends, broader now than those which confronted its predecessor in 1898. These are: to assert and protect the sovereignty, independence, integrity and security of the country; to contribute to the accelerated development of the nation; and to promote regional and global stability.

In the pursuit of these ends, we must take more concrete steps to make our domestic policy more responsive to such global problems as food and energy shortages, overpopulation, resource depletion and income disparity. For while the international system has a big responsibility in the quest for global order, individual states must share a significant portion of this burden. The largest part of today's global economic problems, after all, originates within states and remains within states and should therefore be remedied partly within states.

This is not to say that such problems should be less the concern of the international system. Indeed, global problems require global solutions. This is rather to emphasize that until and unless internal policy resources are available to reach... global solutions are...

Complementing this effort, we must strive to expand and intensify our relations with the outside world. We shall seek to increase our trade with all countries of the world. We shall continue to welcome and protect foreign investments as a means of boosting Filipino entrepreneurship in the creation and development of new industries.

We hope to conclude this year the negotiations of our military agreements with the United States. This should put relations between the two countries within a new framework of mutuality of understanding and respect.

We must also accelerate the pace of our economic negotiations with the United States and Japan, our two principal trading partners. In both cases, the new economic agreements should contribute to the growth of a resilient Philippine economy.

The consequences of our revitalized foreign policy open to us many new areas for exploration and study, heightening relationships that once were dormant, requiring adjustment of old and historic ties, and necessitating initiatives on our part on many fronts.

These challenges will fully test the mettle of our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and of all of you who constitute it.

The tasks of the MFA

Our web of relationships in the world today has never been as vast, as important, and as critical to the nation as it is today.

No doubt it is vastly more complex than what Mabini dared to imagine when he first commenced to organize the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1898.

But it would surely please him to note, were he living today, that this vision of a Ministry defending, promoting and enhancing national sovereignty and independence, lives and thrives in the institution that we have here, and that this institution has grown as surely as the nation it serves.

Nothing stands still, least of all the interaction and relationships of nations, and I would surely hope that long after our responsibility will have passed to other hands, there will continue to stand this Ministry of Foreign Affairs, guiding the Republic through the currents of challenge and change in the world.

Thank you and good day.