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Erap for Danding

Less than a week after Estrada assumed office, Eduardo “Danding” Cojuangco swiftly and stealthily seized San Miguel Corporation with the help of pro-Marcos officials of the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG). Two weeks later, Cojuangco’s proteges were appointed by Estrada to the board of the National Power Corporation.

The new regime is brazenly determined to reinstate the cronies of the fascist dictator Marcos at the top of the bureaucracy and big business.

What else is left of the slogan “Erap for the poor” if his first priority is to return the billions of pesos of stolen wealth to the fascist Marcos clique? If his number one concern is the economic and political rehabilitation of the family and stooges of the dead dictator?

Danding Cojuangco: Pillar of Reaction

No one is bigger than Cojuangco among Marcos’ stooges. He was part of the “Rolex 12” that planned the imposition of martial law in 1972. He is the foremost bourgeois comprador and bureaucrat capitalist who profited immensely from fascist rule. He grabbed vast tracts of land and interests in the coconut and sugar industry, food processing, timber, banking, communications and transportation and others.

Cojuangco is a despotic landlord from Tarlac. He maintains a notorious private army involved in many cases of murder and suppression of militant peasants in Central Luzon.

He fell along with Marcos in 1986. Since silently slipping back into the country, Cojuangco has become the center of reconsolidating pro-Marcos reactionaries. He immediately grouped his former accomplices and plotted their return to power. He was among those behind the attempted coup d’etat against Aquino in 1989.

Cojuangco is among the principal pillars of the reactionary ruling classes. His power pervades big business, national reactionary politics and even the AFP and PNP. He established the Grand Alliance for Democracy (GAD) and Nationalist People’s Coalition (NPC) which served as platforms for his attempts to regain state power. As number one financier, Cojuangco was the biggest winner during Estrada’s 1998 election victory. At present, he heads the ruling Laban ng Masang Pilipino (LAMP) party.

Cojuangco’s chosen stooges are at the core of Estrada’s government. Ronaldo Zamora and Orlando Mercado are his principal henchmen and agents. They have been appointed to key positions —Zamora as Executive Secretary and Mercado as Defense Secretary.

Roberto Lastimoso, appointed PNP Chief and Fernando “Gerry” Barican, designated as Estrada’s spokesman, are both Cojuangco boys. Through them, Estrada himself and other appointed officials in the military and civil bureaucracy, Cojuangco has the current reactionary regime in the palm of his hand.

Danding, the “Godfather”

Cojuangco, in fact, is Estrada’s “godfather”. It can even be said that Cojuangco is the real president because it is he who holds real power.

It is no surprise that Cojuangco lost no time in reinstating himself in San Miguel Corporation (SMC) last July 6. Right after assuming his post in Malacañang, Estrada appointed Felix de Guzman as chair of the PCGG in accordance with Cojuangco’s directive.

From 1971 to 1983, de Guzman served as taskman of Estelito Mendoza, Cojuangco’s lead counsel who is himself a former Marcos crony. De Guzman was in Cojuangco’s payroll when he was appointed to the Tarlac Regional Trial Court from 1983-86.

To preserve himself, Andres Soriano III resigned as head of SMC three days before Cojuangco was formally reinstated. Fifty one percent (51%) of SMC’s stocks and votes in the Board of Directors are controlled by the PCGG including the 20% vote held by Cojuangco through his henchman Estelito Mendoza.

In the elections held by the SMC Board of Directors last July 6, 1998, all of the PCGG representatives voted for Cojuangco.

San Miguel Cannot Quench Cojuangco’s Thirst

SMC is only the first of a long list of corporations and properties set to be repossessed by Cojuangco, the Marcoses and their stooges. Last July 24, Estrada appointed Douglas Luym, Carmelo Santiago and Jesus Pineda, all Cojuangco lapdogs, to the NAPOCOR Board of Directors. Others appointed to the board are known minions of Geronimo Velasco, former Minister of Energy under Marcos.

Also in the works is Cojuangco’s resumption of control and ownership over 250 corporations and shares sequestered by the PCGG since 1986 such as the P100- billion coco levy fund.

Cojuangco’s repossession of these properties has become certain after Zamora announced that PCGG operations will be terminated within a year. He has vowed to pursue “amicable settlements” with the Marcoses. Talk is rife within the PCGG that the “tables have been turned”.

The Estrada government is presently negotiating to settle the stolen wealth cases of the Marcoses. “Continue prosecuting”, ordered Estrada. But under the administration of newly appointed Justice Secretary Serafin Cuevas, another Marcos loyalist, the negotiations and prosecution of these cases will be nothing but farce.

The Marcoses are sure of regaining their stolen wealth. This the law shall uphold. 

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