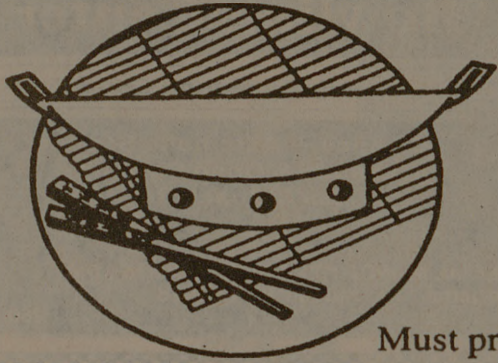


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World and Nation

Aquino orders release of 33 political prisoners

Associated Press
 MANILA, Philippines — President Corazon Aquino ordered the immediate release Thursday of 33 political prisoners, and her government announced the cases of another 400 people were being studied.
 Gen. Fidel V. Ramos, the new military chief, announced the releases after an early morning Mass.
 Human rights groups have estimated about 500 people were held under the Presidential Detention Act adopted during the 20-year rule of Ferdinand E. Marcos.
 The government-run broadcast station said Wednesday a military task force would meet during the night to prepare a list of the prisoners and said the new administration was hoping for the release of about 50 percent of them.
 Aquino said earlier Wednesday she would seek a cease-fire with communist guerrillas but not the extradition of Marcos, who was driven into exile by her "people power" revolt.
 Salvador H. Laurel, the new vice

president, had announced plans for a general political amnesty and said the insurgents are not truly communists, but people Marcos forced into fighting. There has been little guerrilla activity since the election, which they boycotted.
 Aquino, who blames Marcos for the assassination of her husband, Benigno, in 1983, told a news conference: "I have said I can be magnanimous in victory. I would like to show by example that the sooner we can forget our hurt, then the easier it will be for our country to start rebuilding from the ruins left us."
 Aquino met with 11 members of the Marcos government Wednesday, including Prime Minister Cesar Virata, and asked them to stay on until her appointees receive National Assembly approval. She also included some Marcos men in her new government.
 Aquino, 53, said a new Commission on Good Government would investigate alleged illegal transfers of wealth from the country by Marcos and his associates.
 The commission also will study

how to resolve the assassinations of her husband, while another special commission will study constitutional reform, she said.
 Laurel, interviewed on CBS News, announced plans for "a general amnesty to all political offenders."
 On ABC's "Good Morning America," he said of the guerrillas: "We need a credible government, a democratic moral order and a general amnesty. 90 percent of the people who are now fighting in the hills will lay down their arms and come home."
 "They are not communists. They are only people who were driven into fighting in the hills because of the unwanted regime of Mr. Marcos."
 The president told the news conference she would seek a cease-fire with the guerrillas, known as the New People's Army, and had been told two of their commanders might surrender to her.
 Laurel said Filipinos consider the United States their closest friend.
 He added, "We would like a positive commitment from President Reagan that he will help the Philippines during this difficult time."

NASA official denies knowledge of protests

Associated Press
 WASHINGTON — A key NASA official testified Wednesday he did not know Morton Thiokol engineers remained opposed to launching space shuttle Challenger even after their company gave its approval. He said he would have canceled the ill-fated liftoff if he had known.
 George Hardy, deputy director of NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center, said, "I believe that to suggest that flight safety was disregarded or not properly regarded on the night of Jan. 27, in my opinion, does a disservice to dedicated and committed professionals."
 The testimony received by President Reagan's shuttle investigating commission clashed sharply with that of the day before when Morton Thiokol engineers complained their opposition to launch was overruled by their company under pressure from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.
 There was testimony Morton Thiokol first opposed the launch, fearing seals on the solid-fuel booster rockets would not work after a night of sub-freezing weather. But the company reversed itself after a 10:30 p.m. caucus, despite the protests of its engineers.
 During the caucus, Thiokol managers met without their engineers present and Vice President Joe C.

Kilminster ultimately decided to sign a memo to NASA approving the launch.
 Hardy and Lawrence B. Mulloy, NASA's booster rocket manager, strongly denied they tried to force Morton Thiokol to give its approval for launch under risky conditions.
 When Mulloy was asked by Rogers whether he would have changed his mind if he had known of the continuing opposition by Thiokol engineers, he replied he would have asked Kilminster how he could recommend launch, and would have raised the same question with Hardy.
 Seven Morton Thiokol employees told the commission on Tuesday they felt pressure from Hardy and Mulloy at NASA but disagreed over whether it was normal questioning or if it reversed the space agency's traditional safety philosophy.
 Hardy testified, "Since the issue was first raised, I have wracked my brain to determine whether there was any conceivable motivation that would have made any contractor representative to feel he was under pressure from anything I said."
 He said there was none, only the customary evaluation of engineering data.
 Mulloy said, "I probe the basis for any recommendation to be sure it has a logical basis. Some might call this pressure, but I don't."

U.S. officials predict rise in aid to Philippines

Associated Press
 WASHINGTON — Encouraged by Corazon Aquino's actions during her first 24 hours as president of the Philippines, congressional and administration officials Wednesday predicted increased American aid to help her shore up the sagging economy and fight a communist-backed insurgency.
 Aquino faces enormous problems, but she appears to have taken office Tuesday with less turmoil and violence than the administration thought possible.
 The relative ease of the transition, particularly the quick switch in allegiance of the military, will be advantageous in helping combat the communist insurgency, both Pentagon and State Department officials said.
 The administration wants Aquino to determine aid needs before any is offered. But there is no doubt she will get significantly more than Ferdinand Marcos would have received had he managed to hang on as president.

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