



SECOND TRIP: When President Noynoy Aquino visits the United States Sept. 18-21, he will have a chance to ask directly from those who know what ever happened to the American investments that were promised him the last time he was there.

This time around, we hope the Hydra in the Palace will be more subdued in trumpeting the economic benefits the President might garner in this expedition, how many hot dogs he ate off a Nuyok sidewalk stand, and how many minutes he held on to President Barack Obama in their meeting.

The President was invited by President Obama for the Sept. 20 launching of the Open Government Partnership in New York.

This is a multilateral initiative to “secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance.”

It is not final yet, but the President might also attend the WB-IMF annual meetings in Washington Sept. 23-25.

Observers are watching if President Aquino's recent warm meeting with his Chinese counterpart Hu Jintao and the Cojuangco scion's tracing his Chinese ancestral roots had affected Mr. Obama's regard for the visitor from Manila.

OMNI THIS TIME: Media colleagues in New York tell us that President Aquino wants to be consistent in shunning the luxurious Waldorf-Astoria on Park Avenue where visiting past presidents were invariably booked.

President Aquino has chosen to stay at the Omni Berkshire Place, a 4.5-star property at 21 East 52nd Street in the Midtown East-Grand Central neighborhood, also close to St. Patrick's Cathedral and the Rockefeller Center.

The Omni website says this season's per-night rate for its Berkshire Suite 1 King Bed is \$424++.

Over at Waldorf, the cheapest guestroom this time of year is \$619 per night. Expenses would soar if one takes a presidential suite.

The travel consultant of the President should advise him that all 396 guestrooms in the 21-floor Omni are non-smoking.

A trace of cigarette smoke might trigger the sensors and land him in the evening news.

USE U.N. FORUM: Until Sunday, our source at the Empire State was saying that no meeting has been set with the Filipino community, a de regueur item in the itinerary of Philippine presidents journeying to America.

Also, they have not been able to ascertain if the President wants to read a speech before the United Nations — and risk again facing a sparse audience in the cavernous UN assembly hall.

If he has the nerve for it, President Aquino could catch some headlines by using the UN forum to lash at China's expansionist belligerence in the West Philippine Sea (aka South China Sea).

On Sept. 19, President Aquino will be conferred an honorary doctorate by Fordham, the Jesuit University of New York.

Past Philippine presidents had been similarly given doctorates by the 170-year-old Catholic school, except for Manuel Roxas, Ferdinand Marcos and Erap Estrada.

BIRTH CONTROL: My interest in the Reproductive Health debate had waned, but I was pumped with adrenalin when no less than Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile, with Sen. Vicente Sotto not far behind, stood to oppose passage of birth control measures.

Sponsors of RH bills lose points when they lose their cool while replying to searching questions on the abortive effects of birth control pills that the RH bill wants to distribute to unwitting users at great cost to taxpayers.

Maternal deaths and poverty cannot justify killing a helpless fertilized ovum (already a human life as recognized by the Constitution) desperately clinging for survival in the womb's lining made inhospitable by abortifacient pills.

If a mother could die in childbirth — a possibility even in normal cases — why blame in advance an innocent fetus and terminate it?

Why blame the unborn (that did not ask for existence in the first place) for his family's poverty resulting in large part from government failure to provide opportunities for jobs, education, health care and the decent amenities of normal life?

OVERCROWDING: Some people drive by a squatter section and see grimy kids in the streets.

They then conclude that there are just too many of us and that those who are still unborn should not be allowed to come into the world.

The seeming overpopulation is more of a case of uneven distribution.

The country's population density shows that there is still ample room and resources for more people.

Scattered overcrowding is traceable to the government's failure to create and spread opportunities and services so people do not flock to urban centers on the mistaken belief that only the cities can provide for life's necessities.

Taking the line of least resistance, or because it does not know any better, the Aquino

Administration goes along with the multi-billion-peso lobby and pushes the RH bills.

FALSE CLAIMS: Proponents of the RH bill claim that our population growth rate will increase exponentially without a birth control law.

This is not borne out by the facts.

Data of the government itself show that the projected average annual population growth rate actually has been declining even without an RH law.

Based on the trend as analyzed in 2007 by the National Statistics Office, the growth rate was and is projected to be 1.81 percent from 2010 to 2015, 1.64 percent from 2015 to 2020, and 1.46 percent for 2020 to 2025.

The same NSO study debunks the other claim that the average Filipino household size is 10 or more and will increase without an RH law.

On the contrary, data show that the average household size has been declining even without an RH law.

The household size in 2007 was 4.8 persons, lower than the average household size of 5.0 persons in 2000.

The National Capital Region had the lowest average household size of 4.4 persons.

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