

INTERVIEW WITH CONGRESSWOMAN IMELDA MARCOS BY NATALYA BRONZOVA

A meeting with 20th Century legend, Imelda Romualdez Marcos, is always quite an event! I wanted to learn by myself who was the real personality behind all the chatter and gossip. I was happy to find a very charming, noble, and good-natured woman of high moral standards. I found an honest person who's sole objective in life was to bring truth, good and beauty to the world!



For many centuries in world history, she will be remembered as much as Nefertiti, mother Teresa or Catherine the Great. These three women are remembered for different qualities, which Imelda all combined in her personality. Her statesmanship and global political vision got along very well with her subjugating beauty and motherly love for humanity.

Madame Marcos was always a strong patriot and adherent to her country, so the most difficult thing for her during exile was not the loss of wealth or power, but the loss of her homeland... That is the reason she wanted to go back to the Philippines as soon as she was

allowed out of the United States, despite the fact that in the Philippines, she would live under the constant danger of arrest and endless court battles. She could have chosen to safely stay in exile when all charges against her had been removed in US; nonetheless, against all common sense, she chose to return to her own country! Manila streets were full of people that came to greet her; so many people wanted to see her return, that her car took half a day to get from the airport to her Makati, normally a forty minutes drive. She had been right to return and **worthwhile to come back just for that!** The Philippines, for Imelda, is only the place on the earth where life is worth living. She promised herself that she would dedicate all her time and energy to the people; perhaps that is the reason why the Filipinos give her a standing ovation, every time she appears in public.

Imelda Marcos is a great woman. For her, nothing is impossible! She is able to think and act in extraordinary ways! **I admire her extraordinary mind and the** reaction she had when the authorities of the Philippines refused to bury Ferdinand Marcos in the officer's cemetery for the heroes of WW2. So she **arranged** a private mausoleum in his honor, right there in the Marcos family home of Batac, in the Ilocos Norte province! In her mind it was impossible not to honor the memory of her husband, who had truly been the most decorated hero of his country during the war. How many women can even think to give such an honor to their loved ones? The mausoleum of Ferdinand Marcos became one of the main attractions of the city.

I was always interested in the personality of Imelda Marcos. I wanted to understand her global vision and the secret of such a powerful personality. Western media accused her of every mortal sin, some even comparing her to Genghis Khan! I've have read about her during my childhood; I have followed her trials of the century in New York and always wondered what she felt when such accusations were directed against her? How did she continue on living? How did she survive and remain human, after

the incredible ordeals? I must admit that before I met Imelda Marcos, I was still quite influenced by the opinions of Western press. Meeting her in person was thus quite a surprise to me; she was friendly, elegant, very sociable and bearing herself with absolute dignity. She was clearly a person who had known much in her life and who understood about God and her own destiny. This is a woman who lives in harmony with her self and with the world. You understand, as you get to know her, that although many facts about her life had been cruelly twisted and turned upside down, she remained calm and firm. How many of us can boast of such understanding?

She thinks very differently than the ordinary people who judge her. And because her mind is limitless, **all her life she lived in a world of great possibilities.** She influenced the world, because she loved it and embraced it all, so the entire world belongs to her! I want to say: whether you like Imelda Marcos or not, you must be just to this great woman; you should not in any case, let the media impose on you their prejudices!

Imelda Marcos talked to me with such high energy; she is so very emotional, and her energetic hand movement, belie her 83 years of age... She is so full of life. She sat down for well over four hours, all the time keeping her back strait up! At barely a few years past 30, I am not even able to do so as well as her. One understands what true greatness is just to look at her; and she looks perfect, all the time, from dress and hairdo right down to the manicure. She is quite a high level example to set to oneself. She is a true aristocrat. She was able to buy all the treasures in the world, but their commercial value meant nothing to her! Only their beauty had any meaning to her. Today she wears "plastic" jewelry with as much elegance, as if she wore any unique diamond. She has a talent to turn everything she touches into precious and unique pieces! Who else can do this? I am ever so thankful and happy that my destiny brought me to meet this extraordinary person in my lifetime; to see her and to listen to her charged me with so much light and energy, that I felt it for weeks after, even later as I write these lines! She once said to me that from now on I could name myself a friend of Imelda Marcos; I thanked her, smiled, but thought to myself that it may be not proper to think of myself as the friend of such a great lady! I would however claim that I admire her and wish her a very long life. God bless your every day dear Madame Marcos, for all that you have given and for all that you are still giving to the people around you!



N.B.: Do you know any USSR leaders?

LM.: I visited USSR many times since 1971, so of course I knew them: Brezhnev, Khrushchev, Podgorny, Gromyko, Andropov, Gorbachev... My husband and I were at the UN meeting when Khrushchev did his famous speech, pounding his desk with a shoe! It was funny and unexpected! At the time, we were not yet First Couple; Marcos was a Congressman and I was part of the Philippine's delegation. I knew a lot about the USSR and it was very interesting to learn so much about such a large country. I liked the USSR also because my Basque ancestors had arrived in Spain from Georgia. I did visit Georgia and they were very welcoming back then.

N.B.: Then you must like Georgian wines.

I.M.: Yes, they are sweet... *(We are looking at photos of the Marcos couple at Moscow airport being greeted by Gromyko)* President Marcos and I never flew in the same plane as a couple, even when we went visiting the same country, for security reasons of course. And to take care of the children - we always had two planes. Russians were very kind to me and high officials, usually going against protocol, were always there to meet me. On our way to Moscow I usually stopped in an Arab country on the way, and most tried to get me to stay longer than allowed by protocol...

My closest friend in the USSR was Andrei Gromyko; I often asked him why he was a communist...

N.B.: I think he had no choice if he wanted to do his career in USSR...

I.M.: It seemed to me that Gromyko understood that communism had no future. He was a very wise man and once said to me: "The main weapon of 20th Century is MEDIA, because they are able to kill and destroy you for eternity: everyone believes them and vilifies you in life"... I didn't realize at the time that one day I would be the perfect example, confirming his very words! He also told me, that he believed in equality, that the people should live in the palaces that Catherine the Great and the Romanovs had built. And, you see, they killed the Romanovs because they did not care enough about their country. The communists built their empire, because so many enemies surrounded it; it needed to keep the republics together against them. Still today Russia is perceived as an enemy, because it is too powerful. Just as Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Korea raised themselves up, Russia stood up even more.

N.B.: What was your most memorable trip to Russia?

I.M.: *(Looking at a video of herself filmed in Russia)* Every time I go to Russia I need a fur coat! *(Laughing)* The last time I was in Russia it was in 1985. I brought a Saint Fatima statue to the Catholic cathedral in Moscow. I was their guest and I sang a mass with the choral! *(Madam puts a video of the event and we hear her beautiful soprano voice... She sings with such soul, as if she knew it would be her last visit as First Lady...)*

I will never forget that trip... After mass, one Russian woman, a witch, came to me and told me that very soon I would lose my glory and even my country... I was shocked to hear that... The woman added that my enemies would not be able to destroy me and that I would survive all my troubles, if only because I had brought the Saint Fatima statue to Russia and for that action, God would protect me! After that incident, I had just sat in my car to go somewhere else in Moscow when Mr. Marcos called me and announced me that serious troubles had erupted in Manila... For the first time he was not sure if he would be able to control the situation!...

N.B.: May I say how I was impressed, when I heard you singing in three languages at the 2012 Peace Awarding Night on April 1st in Manila? You were singing for me in Russian and this pleased me very much! I would like to know how you learned the Russian song? *(Mrs. Marcos sang for me the song "Solovey")*

I.M.: But of course! Every time I visited a different country, I learned a few songs in its language. I learned the Russian song I sang for you on the Peace Awarding Night, specifically for Mr. Brezhnev. I liked Russia so much, because I was their "number ONE"! For example, at Chernenko's burial, I arrived late and a long line was ahead of me: H. Kohl, M. Thatcher, Bush father, Mitterrand, Arab Sheikhs and many others... They were all waiting to give their condolences. Yet, Gromyko came to me and directed me ahead of the line, so that I could give my condolences to the Politburo members first... I was shy, only a First Lady, but he said to me: "You are a friend, and that's much more important" Then, I went straight to meet the family, before the officials, when protocol stated that we

should only address the VIPs. No matter, who was in front of me, presidents, kings, I was always treated as their "number ONE".

N.B.: Were you a friend of Muammar Gaddafi?

I.M.: Yes, he was good friend of mine! I helped in the signing of the Tripoli peace agreement in 1976 between 29 Muslim countries. We did it in four days! Some Christian countries did not like it, as well as the Vatican... But we wanted to be friends with everyone!

The first time I arrived in Libya was in 1974 with a large delegation. In those days Libya was sponsoring Muslim extremists in the Philippines and we hoped to stop it. We waited a week for Gaddafi's audience, and were not invited. Many people from our delegation left me there and flew to Rome; then, Gaddafi agreed to receive me. He said to me: "Madame Marcos, I admire your commitment to the cause of peace, why not convert to Islam?" I answered him, that I didn't know the scriptures of the Koran; so he sent me a copy, which I studied all night. I behaved with him quite simply: on next day I pointed to him different articles of the Koran and asked him he would impose them in practice. "If Islam does mean *peace*, you need to stop the bloodshed in my country. If Islam means *charity*, you must send cheap oil to the Philippines" – I told him. We need oil but we can only pay 10 dollars a barrel; and he gave it to me! That's how I arrived with one problem, but ended up solving a few others! My Missions never failed! By the way, during a trial in New York, when they asked me for 5 million dollars in bail, it was Gaddafi who offered this 5 millions; he said "I'll offer 5 million in bail, even 50 million if its needed, because Mrs. Marcos is a good person." Saddam Hussein then sent his Vice President to New York pointing out: "if there is anything we can do to help Mrs. Marcos, we will do it!"



(N.B.: I must point out that Mrs. Marcos is a very loyal friend and I will respect her even if this would be her only good quality! For example, after the assassination of Mr. Muammar Gaddafi in October 2011, as current Ilocos Sur Representative (Congresswoman), she filed a bill at the House of Representatives of the Philippines seeking to honor the late Libyan leader. The bill states: Muammar Gaddafi was killed today in a gun battle between his loyalists and Libyan revolutionaries. Colonel Gaddafi deserves honor because he is Libya's longest-serving leader. Under Gaddafi's rule, Libya had a 10.6% GDP growth! The population below the poverty line is only 7.6%, ours is 32.9%. Why did the rebels murder Gaddafi? They should be thankful for

him! I will miss Gaddafi's kindness" - Mrs. Marcos said. When reporters asked her about human rights abuses committed by Gaddafi, as well as allegations that the colonel stole close to a trillion dollars from his people. Imelda Marcos responded: "Prove it! Gaddafi has never been convicted of those crimes!")

N.B.: Were you a friend of Saddam Hussein also? (We are watching a video of Madam signing in front of Saddam...)

I.M.: Of course! Saddam was a great friend of mine! Saddam Hussein even ordered that a film be made about my visit; it was titled: "Imelda conquered Iraq". The film title shocked me! When I needed cheap oil for the Philippines, I wore my best dress and diamonds and went to sing for him, to get a better deal. Finally we became friends. I also made a deal with him to have our workers who go to Iraq to work; 10 000 Filipinos go to work there to support their families back home. Many of our citizens also went to other Arabic country after I made arrangements with their leaders. With my help, Arabic countries signed peace agreement! That is why they allowed our citizens to work in their countries. I always work for peace with every country I visit and always say: "if I can make it, anyone can make it". You see, I sang for Saddam, I came with kindness and love and I got it! Those were grand times! But after they killed him... The same with Gaddafi!

N.B.: What you can say about other leaders of the 20th Century?

I.M.: I had wonderful relations with many of the 20th Century leaders, I have no prejudices against anyone! Even the most difficult person, Mao Zedong, kissed my hand! I was the first woman, whom he kissed the hand! Later he claimed that he respected only two women on Earth: his mother and madam Imelda Marcos! Can you imagine that? I will tell you, when I knew I would be meeting someone I never read or listened to gossip about this person; I wanted to make my own impression, without prejudice! I can make my own opinion; I have my own intuition, feelings and eyes to see who a person is. So, when I met Mao, I took his hand and



touched my front with it - this is "Manu", the Filipino way of respect for elders. And Mao took my other hand and kissed it! You can see this moment on that photo on the wall; it is a very famous photograph. Some one asked him why he kissed my hand, so Mao answered: "because Madam Marcos showed me great respect and in turn I respect her!" He told me that he would follow my example and begin the Cultural Revolution! Because only culture and beauty are able to unite the country..." Mao added: "I've been watching you Mrs. Marcos. Here I am at the height of the Cultural Revolution in 1974 and you inaugurated the Cultural Center of the Philippines in 1969. Your first project as First Lady was "cultural", because only Truth, Good and Beauty can unite people! I'm learning from you Mrs. Marcos." Mao Zedong, who believed in the power of the gun, changed his mind because of me and began the Cultural Revolution! And it was the beginning of the end of the Cold War; because the Philippines were the American junior and China was communist. I also remember very well that my greatest compliment ever came from Chairman Mao, whose wife, Jiang Qing, was a friend of mine. One day she said to me, "You know, I asked Chairman Mao; why do you like Mrs. Marcos so much? Every time we talk about Mrs. Marcos, you smile. And he answered: I like Mrs. Marcos a lot, because she's so natural, and that is perfection." Can you imagine that?

N.B.: Dear Madam, I always wondered what one would feel when becoming a First Lady... Do you remember the day when you became First Lady? What it felt like?

I.M.: Well... I can tell you this... Immediately after the inauguration of President Marcos, we left for Malacañan Palace and all the staff just stood there in the front; hundred people just waiting for us. So

we went along, greeting the staff, when suddenly I heard someone say: "Wow! We have such a beautiful First Lady! Even the soles of her feet are pink!"

N.B.: That is quite a compliment!

I.M.: Yes, but I turned to my husband and said to him: "Ferdinand, I'm scared of this place, they even check the color of my heels..." And he answered to me: "Imelda, when you become president you enter history and when you reach this level you will be judged for eternity, and not only for your feet". It was a frightening place to live in, every day under the scrutinizing X-ray eyes of hundred people...

When I became First Lady, it seemed to others that I would have great power, but I didn't even have an office in Malacañan Palace at first, no budget, no salary, nothing personal of mine! I had only a bed, and even that I shared with Marcos! Of course Marcos was always rich and I never needed money; but the position of first Lady is nearly as official as that of the president. I had dozen of meetings every day; I had to organize a lot of official dinners for heads of states, politicians or members of the cultural elite. I should add that on each of those meetings I had to come in a different dress... So I become very creative: I promoted our national costumes and had shoes given to me from our local manufactures in Marikina (one of metro Manila cities) to make them good publicity.

It is true, that at this level you are judged forever, not only for the 20 years of the presidency of Ferdinand Marcos, but still today, 25 years later! And I'm sure that one thousand years from now, people will still be judging me.

N.B.: Is it true that you met the famous general, Douglas MacArthur?



I.M.: Yes, for a while he was our neighbor. Once, while I was singing in the garden he happened to pass by and was curious to see who was singing, and of course I told him it was I. He did not believe me and asked that I sing again for him, which I did. Two days later he asked me this time to sing in front of the composer Irving Berlin; so I sang for them "God bless the Philippines, the land that I love". After the song, Irving says to me: "Imelda, it is America, not Philippines!" And I answered him: "No, it is Philippines! Anyway, isn't it the same now?" In those times the Philippines and America were the same to me. It was 1944 and we were in a commonwealth with America, not an independent country yet...

Independence came in 1946. Then Irving Berlin laughed and said: "but I composed it for America". After he went to the corner and composed a new song "Heaven watches the Philippines and keep them forever free". He asked me to learn it and perform it the next day with a choral behind me, in front of all the liberation forces; there would be thousands of people! It was my first public appearance and it's the story about how this song was born.

N.B.: I've heard about the Cultural Centre that you've build?

I.M.: The Cultural Center of the Philippines on Roxas Boulevard in old Manila. And there was not even earth to build it on! It was all water there before and we had to put so much earth filling to start it.

When I become the First Lady in 1966, we'd had only 20 years of independence after nearly 400 years of Spanish colonization, followed by the Japanese occupation. In those times Manila belonged to the 10 richest families and no land was available anywhere for this project; that is why we needed to turn this seashore into land. We needed to build everything - hospitals, schools, shelters, water systems, etc... But most important of all was to return to the Philippine people a sense of their national identity, which had been lost by centuries of occupation! That is why establishing a cultural identity was the most important task of all!

In 1966, I invited John Rockefeller to participate in my center project; he came to Manila, when there was nothing to show, no hotels, no parks, no business centers... We simply stood up on Manila bay and I pointed to him the place where the Cultural Center would be; there was only water, not a speck of earth. I said to him: " the first year, we will fill the spot with earth and rocks; the second year, we will drive pile in the ground; on the third year, the building will rise and on the fourth year, the curtain will rise!" He answered me: "Madam Marcos, you are a big dreamer, it is impossible; only to fill the land will require four years". He laughed of me and refused to participate in this "crazy" project. Well, we finally built the Center, without government money! Three years later, in 1969, I invited Rockefeller to the opening ceremony of the Cultural Center, but he refused to come; I suppose that he did not want to see my words come true! Instead, from the U.S., I invited Ronald Reagan, who at the time was still Governor of California.



N.B.: Wow! What a fantastic story! How many projects like this did you achieve? (*Madam Marcos asked her assistant to hand her a big photo book with over 200 pages. She showed it to me: on every page were two photos of different projects she had achieved!*)

I.M.: These are all of my projects, to name a few: the Folk Art theatre in Manila, the Manila Opera house, the Manila Film Center, the International Convention Center, where I was yesterday, the Coconut Palace, also known as Tahanang Pilipino, the Kidney and Lungs centers, some libraries, a few museums. Not to mention the 18 main chain hotels, which were built just for the Manila film festival. I wanted to organize a film festival, but there were no hotels in Manila; so I called the owners of the world's largest hotel chains, such as the Hilton, the Hyatt and so on, to come to Manila and each build one at their expense! In two days I talked with 18 chains owner and not one refused me; each felt quite honored, that the First Lady of Philippines would ask them such a favor. 18 hotels were built in 14 month! Most of these owners have left by now and I'm no longer the First Lady, but the hotels are still working. Few people visiting them or working there today even know the true story of their origins.

So many talk about what "Imelda did", blaming me; but it must be known that, when I built my charity projects, cultural centers, hospitals or whatever, I never use government money; I always found sponsors, people interested in my projects. Of course, in the beginning it was not easy, but as I got to be known, as First Lady, people became more and more interested.

N.B.: Can you tell me about those dramatic events of 1986? The fact that you didn't fight against your rebels, which you had every right to do so, shows us that you really loved your country!

I.M.: Thank you my dear! Unfortunately people don't see things that way. It is true however that we tried to avoid blood on either side. In reality, Cory never won an election. Cory Aquino never meddled in politics, she was good housewife and their family lived in US for a long time; there is no way she could have the support of Filipino population, because our people did not know her! She entered politics because her husband was assassinated. Mr. Aquino was no competition for Marcos while he was alive; his untimely death placed his wife in power, the Americans blaming Marcos for the assassination.

But Aquino's death definitively was not in Marcos interests! I last met Noynoy two month before his assassination in New York; he was asking for my help since his family and ours were not enemies! He had problems with Filipino justice. A few years before Marcos did help him escape from prison and leave the Philippines for the US. If he would be dangerous for us or was an enemy, why would we help him?

The people, who supported Cory Aquino as President, surrounded Malacañan Palace and started shooting down at us; we were saved because I had made the building much safer. Thank God I had done that! I had changed Malacañan Palace to make it bomb-proofed; otherwise it would be dangerous for us just to be in the palace in 1986. But we didn't want to leave country in such a bad moment; the President and I wanted to stay and send our children and grandchildren outside of the country. We were ready to give our lives for our country, but the children refused to go without us. As we couldn't possibly put their lives in danger, we took a helicopter to the Clark American base, which was 40 minutes away from Manila. The Americans there told us that we are still in danger even on their base and couldn't stay there much longer. So President Marcos asked them to bring us to Ilocos, in Paoay. So they placed us in a plane, not big plane, one that we thought couldn't go so far, so we were sure we were going to Ilocos, Marcos's homeland. We knew the flight Ilocos should last about an hour, but



after two hours in the air we began to wonder. Finally, after three hours, the plane began its descent I saw an island below, but it didn't look like any of the Philippines island! I knew all of our islands, how they looked like; they were all familiar to me since I had landed in every airport in our country! I asked the American general where we are landing and he told me that it was Guam; he claimed that rebels were in Ilocos and that it was dangerous for us there. At this moment I understood they were lying to us...

N.B.: Is it true that you took with you 36 bags full of diamonds?

I.M.: Yes, 36 luggages! But the Americans confiscated all of it. They even checked the diapers of my newborn grand daughter. They said that Imelda had hidden diamonds everywhere, even in used diapers... They accused us of theft. But for Marcos's 20 years in power the total budget was 486

billions only! (Imelda opens a book holding all the information comparing Marcos spending and Aquino's family spending during their respective presidency)

Cory Aquino's budget for 6 years was 1 trillion! Today's president is Cory's son Noynoy III and his budget for 1 year is 1 trillion 800 billions! He spent in one year 4 times more money than we did in 20 years; and they called us thieves! Some will say that it is inflation, money value changes; but why did we have so little inflation in 20 years? Does this not mean stability of the country?

(She continues to flip the pages of the Marcos - Aquino "comparison" book, looking at education, health, justice and quality of life...)

And all those matters are not in Aquino's favor. Marcos did 15 referendums in 20 years. Dictators do not consult their population! He earned many war medals yet the government refuses to bury him in the officer's cemetery, so we built a mausoleum for him in his native city. I keep all these books to show the true figures; otherwise they will distort all our history! The problem is that the media can kill you before your death and for eternity. Some of the west's richest promote Cory Aquino's companies while working to destroy Marcos's! They spent billions on it. Yet here I have the accounting of Senator Edward Kennedy proving that we did not steel a penny from our country. By the way, President Marcos never believed that America betrayed us. I think he died soon after, because he could not bear to think about it. In his mind America was always a friend and his best ally! Then, suddenly they call him a dictator, put him on trial...

N.B.: How do you feel about America today; you should definitely dislike this country? They were so unjust to you.

I.M.: Oh, no, I don't feel this way! I don't think that America is an unfair country. They judge us by their standards, by their laws, from their point of view, from their culture... We come from a different part of the world, with a different culture and a different mentality! They can't possibly understand the reality we lived in and of course they can't believe us. We are from other part of the world, with different laws, different procedures and social institutions. It was like we spoke different languages. The Philippines don't even have a jury system and in America it is how they judged us. How can any American doctor or teacher understand or even imagine what is life in a third world country? What it is like to be President there, to rule the country for 20 years? Of course they followed the media opinions, those who exploited our names...

N.B.: You are a Congresswoman now and a very busy person. How do you order your usual day? For example, what time do you wake up?

I.M.: Well, this depends on what time I go to sleep. If I go to sleep at 3 AM, I will wake up at 5 or 6 in the morning. If I go to sleep at midnight then I will get up at 3 in the morning. It is more than enough, because I never get tired! I'm not stressed because my attitude to life is very positive. When I get up in the morning, I feel I have 1000 watts of energy; during the course of the day, I meet beautiful people, have beautiful conversation, witness amazing nature all day, so at night time I'm recharged up to million watts. I'm like a jet before taking off - I don't want to sleep! So I watch the world news on TV about Iran, Iraq or an economical crisis. After 10 minutes or so, I become drowsy and fall asleep - that is my sleeping pills (laughing). 2 or 3 hours later, I wake up, already thinking of the beautiful things I will do today; there is so much to do in life and so little time!

I have always worked a lot, meetings, travels! Today nothing has changed much. For example, I haven't slept for the last two nights in a row: on the first night I arrived at Ilocos at 4am and at 7am I was at the Convent Center to meet with the doctors from rural areas; there were nearly 900 of them! At

noon I was hurrying to a meeting with Barangay Kapitans; later, at 4pm, I met with 600 army high officers of various provinces. At 8pm I had another very important appointment and finally returned to our family home in Ilocos at 3am. At 5am, I took a private plane to Manila for the investiture ceremony of the 8th chancellor of the University of the Philippines in Manila, doctor Manuel B. Agulto. As honored guest I could not miss the ceremony!



N.B.: Wow, what a schedule! When do you rest to fill up with energy?

I.M.: In vehicles, planes, I sit and rest, but I am never tired! For many years I have only slept only 3 hours a day.

N.B.: What is most important in life?

I.M.: For sure it is not richness, power or beauty. To be at peace with your self and with the rest of the world, that is what is most important. When you are on the side of truth and God nothing

bad can touch you! You cannot imagine the quantity of persecutions that I have lived through, yet none ever worked.

N.B.: When I entered your home, I felt as if I had entered the Hermitage; it has the same style of decoration in greens and gold!

I.M.: *(Laughing and pointing to the wall in front of us)* By the way it is a Michelangelo. On the Madonna's two sides are paintings by Jean-Honoré Fragonard (Жан Оноре Фрагонар). *(still pointing)* That is a Picasso, there, a Pissarro and a Gauguin... The marble portrait is a David; a sculptor worked on the antic sculpture, because it had a dark spot on it. All that you see here is what's left from Malacañan Palace after we left in 1986. Our servants inside the palace saved the paintings at the time; they were poor people, who had just lost their jobs, but yet, did not think of selling any of the art works. These sculptures are Chinese soldiers; they were made in the 6th Century.

N.B.: Do you have a favorite artist or painting?

I.M.: Anything beautiful is my favorite! There is no single one, I love all the pieces.

N.B.: You have a beautiful piano, do you play it?

I.M.: A little... What I really love is the violin... I once had a Stradivari, but it was crazy...

N.B.: I have to ask you what does "kindness" mean for you, Imelda Marcos?

I.M.: Kindness is love. God created us perfect, from his own image; he did it with great love for all of us. Everything created by God is natural and perfect; that is why it is very important to live a waste less, more natural way of life, in accord with what has been granted to us. One of my favorite projects is to make everything recyclable, so we will not harm our planet as we did for the past centuries. For me, that is kindness to our common home, Earth! To follow God's way is to be kind to our planet and to each other!

N.B.: Thank you so much Madam! I never really saw so much love, appreciation and happiness as here in the Philippines. I wanted to tell to the world about! For me it is not just a country with a good climate or inexpensive service! Your people have a very special spirituality and purity in their soul! I think that is something Occidentals have to learn from you! I'm very grateful to you for this long meeting and wish you long life and prosperity.

Natalya Bronzova

Writer, artist

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