

# TOWARDS A DEMOCRATIC PEACE AND PEOPLE'S SECURITY

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## *Introduction*

When used in defining the functions of the state, "peace" and "security" often connote the function of preserving the existing social system. Since the armed forces are the state's principal apparatus of coercion, "peace" and "security" are invoked to argue for expansion of the military and suppression of dissent. In the Philippine context, they also serve to justify the continuing American presence because the most conservative sections of the Filipino elite, uncertain of their own strength, regard the US bases as the ultimate buffer to revolution.

While acknowledging the rights of a state to defend itself, democratic theory also recognizes the right of its citizens to protest and influence public policies. Hence, the constitutions of states that claim to be democratic typically designate a sphere of freedom (as in a bill of rights) within which radical groups may fight for change without running into conflict with the state.

For as long as critics of the prevailing order are weak, they are tolerated. The British Bobbies patrolling London's Hyde Park on Sunday afternoons play deaf while crackpots call for dethroning Queen Elizabeth and lining up all policemen against the wall. Even autocrats like Batista of Cuba and Somoza of Nicaragua treated the orthodox communists with velvet gloves while running after the Fidelistas and Sandinistas with hammer and tongs. On the other hand, avowedly democratic regimes may be tempted to trample upon constitutional rights (as the British are doing in Northern Ireland) when a radical movement develops into a serious political force.

Whether routinely performed by homicidal despots or resorted to by beleaguered democrats, repression provokes extra-constitutional resistance, including armed struggle. When the initial application of state terrorism fails to quell the resistance, the military ceases to be a force for peace. As human rights violations multiply, a contradiction emerges between the requirements of state security and the security of the people.

This is not a hypothetical problem to us Filipinos. We experienced it under Marcos, and it is recurring under Mrs. Aquino. Our paper tries to examine the contradiction between state security and people's security as

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it unfolded in contemporary Philippine history. The first part which focuses on the Marcos period asks whether authoritarianism is indeed the most effective means to save the *status quo*. The second part dealing with the Aquino period inquires into the possibility of achieving peace with democracy, considering that the ultimate test of a state's democratic character is the freedom it accords those whose ideas and activities are uncongenial to the system.

### *Peace and Security under the Dictatorship*

Marcos invoked "peace" and "security" when he declared martial law. He claimed that a state of civil war made it necessary to employ emergency measures. But this alone would not suffice to justify the suspension of electoral processes, the abolition of Congress and the assumption of absolute power by the chief executive. Marcos thus appended the argument that drastic social reforms were required to weed out the roots of disorder. Since it was dominated by "the profligate rich," Congress could not be expected to pass any progressive legislation. "To save the republic and reform society," all powers must reside in the President.

Marcos thus proceeded to establish what he called "constitutional authoritarianism." By suspending elections and knocking down the representative structures, he in effect disenfranchised the bourgeoisie as a class, while taking upon himself the task of preserving the bourgeois social system.

Freed from the obligation of wheeling and dealing with various factions of the ruling class, Marcos had to create a new power base of his own. He tried winning over the politically backward elements of the masses with a land reform program and a labor code. At the same time, he protected the prevailing social system and constantly affirmed his devotion to free enterprise and his abiding commitment to "special relations" with the US.

Visionaries and demagogues are distinguished for inventing simple solutions for complex problems. But even a combination of sincerity, power and political will on the part of a visionary ruler will not guarantee attainment of his noble aims. As Machiavelli warned, statecraft requires the skill (*virtu*) at grappling with unpredictable and uncontrollable circumstances (*fortuna*). His aides may have less than sublime motivations, and the people for whose benefit he designed these may be unwilling to pay the unexpected costs.

The real props of the Marcos regime were not the grassroots organizations but the military and the technocracy. Martial law witnessed the phenomenal expansion of the AFP. But the AFP's combat capability was not significantly enhanced inasmuch as most of the newly assembled AFP units were assigned to police, intelligence and administrative work; in other

words, the AFP under Marcos was more preoccupied with controlling the civilian population than fighting armed adversaries.

### *Resistance to Dictatorship*

The closure of all democratic spaces removed any possibility of bringing about change by peaceful means. Marcos wielded absolute power with the assistance of the military and the technocracy as well as the support of US imperialism. But instead of achieving peace and security, authoritarianism produced greater instability. The NPA grew in membership, firepower and mass support. According to an AFP source, the NPA expanded at the phenomenal rate of 49% to 50% per annum. In the last year of Marcos, its growth rate reached a peak of 57%. Twenty-two percent of the 41,630 barangays were euphemistically described by the AFP as rebel-influenced.

Driven underground by the indiscriminate repressiveness of the martial law regime, non-communist groups also took up arms. For example, the Gerilyang Anak-Pawis sa Kalunsuran of the Philippine Liberation Movement, the Sandigan Army of the Social Democrats, the Light-a-Fire Movement, and the April 6 Liberation Movement which claimed responsibility for the bomb explosions in 1980. But the CPP, with a clandestine network already in place and being the most experienced in underground operations, was most prepared to harness the mounting popular unrest. It penetrated or forged tactical alliances with organizations of varied ideological persuasions and in various sectors of society. A united front of such breadth would have been unthinkable without martial law.

Martial law also provoked the Bangsa Moro people to unleash a full-scale war. At one point, the MNLF — better armed and better trained — surpassed the NPA as a fighting force. Other ethnic minorities like the Kalingas and the Tingguian became increasingly restive as the development projects of Marcos threatened their traditional way of life. The Catholic church itself, the ancient bulwark of reaction, was not spared by the winds of change. Even the business community began to sound radical noises. The ageing politicians also regained their composure.

But it was the assassination of Ninoy Aquino that roused these opposition forces in a nationwide outpouring of anguish and anger. Anti-government demonstrations became so massive and demonstrators became so defiant that Marcos could no longer enforce his will or make good his threats without committing genocide while the whole world was watching.

Despite his growing impotence, Marcos could have stayed in power had the military remained intact and loyal to him. But the popular upsurge affected the military as well. An anti-Marcos faction had been developing within the professional officer corps. Again it was Ninoy's death and the people's response that inspired them to take more audacious steps. In

February 1985 they formally organized themselves into the Reform the AFP Movement (RAM) and in September of that year they planned a *coup d'etat*. Their aim was not to establish democracy but to install a military-civilian *junta* presumably headed by Enrile.

These plans were held in abeyance when Marcos called for snap elections. As the nation was thrown deep in turmoil by brazen electoral frauds and a civil disobedience campaign, the RAM boys decided to push through with the original plans. Unfortunately for them, Ver discovered the plot before preparations could be completed. This unexpected turn of events forced them to abandon the *coup* in favor of a defensive strategy of camping out and resisting arrest while hoping that the RAM officers in the field would send reinforcements. Only one unit came all the way from Cotabato and it was subdued by loyalist troops upon landing at the Manila airport. It was therefore the people's intervention that was decisive, breaking the morale of the loyalists and inducing massive defections.

### *The Aftermath of EDSA*

The EDSA Revolution was only half a revolution; it was also half a *coup*. Thereafter the people's organizations sought to finish the unfinished revolution while the "politicians in uniform" sought to finish their unfinished *coup*. In the first nine months under Mrs. Aquino the Philippines stood at a historical crossroads. No intellectually honest political analyst at that time could say for certain in what direction the country was moving.

All anti-Marcos forces, except the national democrats, were represented in the government assembled by the new President. With different reasons for opposing the dictatorship and divergent ideas of what to put in its place, this "rainbow coalition" could not function as a team. Various agencies worked at cross purposes, unable to agree on a coherent program.

In the name of national reconciliation, Aquino released all political prisoners in a list prepared by Task Force Detainees, ignoring objections of the military establishment. This gesture of goodwill paved the way for peace. Fr. Balweg's Cordillera People's Liberation Army (CPLA) was the quickest to respond, followed by Nur Misuari's Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and Hashim Salamat's Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Torn by an internal debate on the election boycott policy, the CPP-NPA-NDF could not give a positive response until August 1986.

But, paranoid about communism, the RAM boys were from the start hostile to the idea of seeking a political solution to the insurgency problem. They held on to the Cold War doctrine that one cannot negotiate with the communists. Their alienation from the government deepened as Mrs. Aquino excluded them from the negotiation process. They felt they deserved a greater share in the exercise of power because of the role they played in the overthrow of Marcos. Presumably on the advice of Joker

to grasp the meaning of the new situation. They downplayed the significance of the February upheaval, insisting that nothing has changed. As *Ang Bayan* put it, "the events of last February 1986 did not alter the nature of the fundamental contradictions in Philippine society, i.e., between US imperialism and the local reactionary class on the one hand and the broad masses of the Filipino people on the other."

It is true that, like the February 1917 Revolution in Russia, our own February Revolution did not resolve any "fundamental contradiction." But failure to see a change in the correlation of forces blinded the hardliners in the CPP leadership to the possibility of advancing the forces which alone could resolve these "fundamental contradictions," opportunities of developing the revolutionary process from February to October. Thus, instead of availing of the peace talks to strengthen the progressive elements in the Aquino government and isolating the die-hard militarists, the NDF panel raised unrealistic demands which played into the hands of the latter.

Of course, the AFP hawks were not just watching passively in the sidelines. In many parts of the country AFP units acted in a manner that were clearly meant to provoke the NPA during the ceasefire. All this generated an atmosphere of mutual distrust, and the government panel did little to diffuse it.

Guingona as chief negotiator insisted that the new Constitution be the framework for negotiations. Naturally, the NDF panel found this unduly restrictive. Rebels are rebels precisely because they reject the legal system. How would Tito Guingona have felt had Satur Ocampo insisted on binding the government to the NDF's Twelve-Point Program as a precondition for peace?

Pepe Diokno in his deathbed was more intellectually alive than the hale and healthy negotiators. He came up with an astute formula for breaking the impasse: adopt a couple of shibboleths to achieve maximum flexibility and get on with the discussions on concrete and substantive issues. Who would disagree with "Jobs and Justice, Food and Freedom"? The hardest of the hardliners and the hawkiest of the hawks were taken aback. To reject it was like rejecting motherhood. With the framework question out of the way, Pepe urged them to proceed.

But Tito Guingona with his legalistic mind did not get the cue. He virtually sealed the fate of peace by demanding for precise definitions. "Jobs" and "food" are pretty straightforward, but philosophers throughout the ages have debated endlessly on the meanings of "justice" and "freedom." It was patently absurd to resolve these philosophical issues within the 60-day ceasefire period.

It needed only the slightest provocation to terminate the peace process. This was provided by disloyal military and police elements who greeted

Arroyo, the Executive Secretary, the President distanced herself even from Enrile, her own Minister of National Defense.

Meanwhile, contradictions developed among the civilians in the Aquino government. The president's decision to discard the 1973 Constitution and dissolve the *Batasang Pambansa*, the PCHR's investigation of human rights abuses, the PCGG's determined exercise of sequestration powers and Bobbit Sanchez's pro-labor policies aroused strong criticisms from the Rightwing of the "rainbow coalition." It became increasingly difficult to evade fundamental issues. The President could no longer continue to vacillate and temporize as rival factions in her government engaged in a vicious power play.

Disarray in the civilian leadership gave encouragement to the RAM boys. In July they tricked Arturo Tolentino and the Marcos loyalists into staging the Manila Hotel farce. Their purpose then was not yet to oust Aquino but simply to convey the message to her that she needs the military to survive in office. When this failed to arrest what they perceived as a steady drift to the Left, they connived with Enrile to grab power. Fidel Ramos came to the President's rescue.

The abortive "God Save the Queen" project led to the ouster of Enrile and began Ramos's rise in the power structure. Ramos obtained by a show of fidelity what the RAM boys could not obtain by a *coup*. Ramos got the frightened and grateful Mrs. Aquino to purge from the cabinet the staunchly anti-militarist ministers: Aquilino Pimentel and Augusto Sanchez. More importantly, Ramos persuaded her to adopt a counter-insurgency program that is so comprehensive as to give the military a decisive voice in all aspects of government.

### *Collapse of the Peace Talks*

Peace, no matter how fragile, would have given the new government a chance to reestablish civilian supremacy, to institute reforms in the AFP. It would have created the appropriate condition for cutting it down in size and cleaning it of disloyal and politicized elements. But this did not happen. Perhaps it could not have happened because, in the first place, Mrs. Aquino had no clear idea of what reforms to institute other than reshuffling the men at the top. In the second place, the peace talks were doomed from the start because the RAM boys and even the Ramos faction were determined to sabotage them. The collapse of the negotiations triggered, instead, the resumption of civil war and a swerve to the Right by the Aquino government.

The hawkish attitude of the military had its counterpart in the hardline posture of the CPP leadership. Even as they quietly phased out their official adherence to Mao Zedong Thought, the lingering influence of Mao's simplistic formulae made it difficult for the hardliners in the CPP leadership

a peasant march in Mendiola with a hail of bullets, instantly killing several participants. The NDF panel returned to the underground, the ceasefire period came to a close, and the angel of peace unsheathed "the sword of war." The bloodbath resumed. Mrs. Aquino had to rely on a military which she does not control. Unreformed and still undisciplined, AFP units went berserk in Lupao and elsewhere.

Having had a taste of power, the politicized soldiers are never again comfortable in the barracks. Attempts of President Aquino to endear herself to them by talking like a marmonger and raising their salaries only added incentives for mischief. Troops loyal to Marcos tried a clumsy *coup* a few days after the Mendiola massacre, giving rise to the suspicion that the shots at Jimmy Tadeo were really aimed at Cory Aquino. In August 1987 the RAM boys, mischievous as ever, tried to depose the President they helped install. All these failed. The Aquino government survived. But the real winner was Gen. Ramos and his "constitutionalist" faction in the armed forces.

Democratic peace and people's security seemed to be within reach soon after EDSA. But once the military through Ramos regained its overwhelming influence in Malacañang, the hopes for democratic peace and people's security receded to the realm of quixotic dreams.

### *A Question of Sovereignty and Survival*

The spirit of EDSA is reflected in the 1987 Constitution. Two of its provisions have a direct bearing on "peace" and "security", i.e., the policy of freedom from nuclear weapons and the policy on foreign military bases. The latter mandates that after the expiration of the current executive agreement in 1991, the US will not be allowed to maintain bases, troops and facilities without a treaty duly ratified by 2/3 of the Senate or by national referendum. Implementation of both policies, however, would alter the long standing "special relations" of the Philippines to the US.

These have already aroused a heated debate on national security and economic recovery. One position articulated by Ramos himself is that we must seek shelter under the US nuclear umbrella, otherwise we would have to spend much more for defense. Exponents of this view also point out that the US bases would lose their military value if they are inhibited from harboring nuclear delivery equipment and storing nuclear devices.

Another position was propounded in a joint paper by David Sycip, Carolina Hernandez and Narciso Reyes. While conceding that nuclear weapons and foreign bases are not vital to Philippine security, they are important to our economic recovery. If we can get the Americans to pay a rental of at least \$1 billion a year and open up the bases markets to Filipino enterprises and corporations, the Sycip group suggests that the current agree-

ment may be extended for another five years, renewable two more times (or a total of 15 years from 1991).

A third position is that the bases make a mockery of our sovereignty and pose a threat to our survival so they must be dismantled by 1991, even if the Americans offer a good price. Far from providing security, the bases are a magnet for nuclear attack. They increase the chances of our getting drawn into a war that only serves American, not Filipino interests. Exponents of this position view the bases as instruments for US intervention in other countries' affairs, including our own. Refuting the argument that the bases are the ultimate defense for democracy, they recall that the U.S. supported the shattering of the "showcase of American democracy in Asia," lest Marcos make trouble for their bases or his fall would destabilize the environment for the bases.

If the US was unable to protect the Philippines in 1942, what reason is there to expect greater success in this age of nuclear weapons and inter-continental missiles? Considering that the nuclear weapons now possessed by the US and USSR are more than sufficient to destroy the planet Earth, defense is meaningless in case of total war. The only hope for survival of humankind (not just the Filipinos) is peace, complete nuclear disarmament. But do we contribute to the global campaign for nuclear disarmament by allowing one of the nuclear powers to maintain bases and store nuclear devices in our country?

It has been argued, however, that nuclear war can be averted through mutual deterrence, by maintaining a balance of power. Expulsion of the US bases here would tilt that balance in favor of the Russians who are already entrenched in Cam Ranh Bay. Such a rash action on the part of the Philippines would raise the danger of nuclear war because, if undeterred, the Russians might seek to expand their sphere of influence and the only way for the Americans to stop their aggressive thrust would be to use their nuclear weapons.

The balance of power theory no longer makes sense in this day and age. But assuming its continuing validity, what ought to be balanced are not bases in various parts of the world but nuclear weapons lodged in the territories of the superpowers. The Soviet Union can be smashed by missiles launched from mainland USA, and *vice versa*. In other words, foreign bases are not needed to maintain a world balance of power.

Assuming further that their presence in Southeast Asia is essential for a regional balance of power, would it not be more sensible to work for mutual and simultaneous withdrawal of the US from the Philippines and the USSR from Vietnam? Mikhail Gorbachev expressed Soviet readiness for this at Vladivostok. Would it not be the better course of wisdom for the Philippines to pressure its ally to respond positively to this constructive suggestion instead of acting like a pawn?

While the importance of Subic and Clark for Philippine security is highlighted for the benefit of the Filipinos, that is hardly mentioned when Pentagon and State Department spokesmen appear before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Their specific function in American global strategy since their humiliating defeat in Vietnam is to back up the strategic base in Diego Garcia.

In the 1973 oil crisis the West European countries, all members of NATO responded to Arab threats of oil embargo by denying overflight privileges to US military aircraft bound for the Middle East. This persuaded the American strategists of the necessity to establish a military presence in the Indian Ocean, thereby enhancing its capability for intervention not only in the Middle East but also in Eastern Africa and West and South Asia. For this purpose the US built up a base in the island of Diego Garcia. The trouble, however, is that Diego Garcia is too small to serve as a stand-alone base. To be viable as springboard for intervention, there have to be large back up bases on the other side of the US mainland. That is now the function of the US bases in the Philippines.

Since these bases are located on our soil, we cannot escape getting entangled should a "limited nuclear war" erupt anywhere in the vast operational zone of the 7th Fleet and 13th Air Force. Diego Garcia is the hub of this operational zone. As noted earlier, its principal task is to enhance the US capacity for intervention in this "arc of crisis" where lie most of the danger points in the world today: South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, the Horn of Africa, the Middle East, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and, of course, the whole of Southeast Asia. The US bases in Subic and Clark therefore create tremendous risks for our people's security.

The question we must ask ourselves is whether it makes sense to be drawn into such conflicts with countries we know little about, against peoples with whom we have no grudge, to defend interests which are not ours. These countries in themselves lack the nuclear-tipped missiles to smother the fleshpots of Angeles and Olongapo, but let us not for a moment forget that US intervention in any of these countries would invite counter-measures by the Soviet Union. Does it serve our people's interest to expose them to such a dire prospect?

The ultimate test of a nation's sovereignty is its capacity to choose its enemies and its friends. With their bases in our country, the Americans can make enemies for us and earn the enmity of those we wish to befriend.