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THE PHILIPPINE REVOLUTION OF FEBRUARY 1986:  
PERSPECTIVES ON THE PROBLEMS OF TRANSITION  
FROM DICTATORSHIP TO DEMOCRATIC SPACE

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EDGAR B. MARANAN  
*Editor*

## FOREWORD

The events that took place in Metro Manila from February 22 to 25, 1986, which culminated in the termination of the Marcos rule and the rise of Corazon C. Aquino as leader of the Filipino people, have been universally described as the most dramatic and crucial in Philippine post-war history.

Focal point of the “revolution” — others would choose to call it an “uprising” participated in by the civilian multitude in support of a military “reformist” coup — was a narrow, less-than-a-kilometer stretch of the Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, a highway which runs between two major military camps (Camp Aguinaldo and Camp Crame).

Thus, the EDSA Revolution.

For the political opposition, but especially so for the vast numbers of people who had been taking to the streets for many years before the EDSA phenomenon in protest against the rule of Marcos, the February events signalled the beginning of a new, liberating chapter in Philippine history.

More than one thousand days after EDSA, social scientists and ordinary citizens are taking stock of what the “revolution” has accomplished so far. There are growing voices of discontent and criticism, and this fact is disturbing for both the social scientist and the man on the street.

Mindful of the need to contribute to a continuing discussion on the problems and prospects faced by our country today, the Asian Center of the University of the Philippines offers this special issue of its journal, *Asian Studies*, to commemorate the historic EDSA event.

When the times become “interesting”, and quite critical, commentary is always called for, in the interest of truth and the advancement of knowledge.

AJIT SINGH RYE  
Dean, Asian Center

# A CRITIQUE OF THE AQUINO GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC PROGRAM, AND A PROPOSAL FOR AN ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

By MANUEL F. MONTES

## 1. *The Aquino Government's Economic Program*

A discussion of an alternative development program properly begins with a critique of the development program of the Aquino government. This brief critique will be based on an examination of three key aspects of the present government's program: industrialization policy, the foreign debt policy, and agrarian reform.

An overall theme that emerges from this critique is that the Aquino government, partly by choice and partly by bounds imposed by external interests, finds itself in a position of weakness, unable to decisively assert the national interest against the private and foreign interest.

### *Trade and Industrialization Policy*

This section will be characteristically brief since the Aquino government has very little by way of an industrialization program to subject to analysis.

The 1987-1992 medium-term development puts a stress on agricultural development. The program looks upon import liberalization as an indispensable policy to force an outward orientation. Any serious success in the combination of these two thrusts will reinforce the colonial pattern of trade from which the economy had a frustrated transition in the late 1940s.

As in previous episodes, the government finds it difficult to pursue these major economic thrusts to the point of endangering the entrenched economic positions built up from the colonial period. Its import liberalization program has been suspended in the sectors where the greatest degree of monopolization exists and the participation of multinational companies is significant.<sup>1</sup>

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This article is a condensed version of the author's paper entitled "Overcoming Philippine Underdevelopment" presented at the conference on "From Debt to Development" sponsored by the War on Want Foundation, 21-22 March 1988.

<sup>1</sup> To give a specific example, one firm 40 percent U.S. owned, is the sole domestic supplier of polyester fiber and has managed to effectively exempt itself from the import liberalization program.

It will be difficult for the new legislature to resist policies supportive of the creation and protection of private monopolies, as long as these are operated by the members of elite classes in joint venture with foreign capital.

This difficulty also arises from the fact that such programs can be technically justified on nationalistic grounds.

In the meantime, and in the absence of any industrialization program, the legislature finalized a tariff rationalization program as a component of the import liberalization program.

The government has exhibited a desperate demeanor in the manner of attracting foreign investments. The program appears to be an attempt to attract foreign investors on the basis of the currency financing they provide, instead of the advantages in technology and product diversification that the country might derive from their presence.

The government's stance has become self-defeating because of the debt-equity swap program that is part of its foreign debt strategy. Since the debt-equity swap program, in effect, offers a preferential exchange rate<sup>2</sup> for foreign investment, there is very little foreign investor interest outside of the debt-equity program.

However, because of the money supply implications of the debt-equity program, the government is compelled to limit the total conversion of debt to equity over each time period. Thus has the Aquino government reconstituted the system, prevailing from the colonial period, in which foreign investment enters the country through its influence<sup>3</sup> over the state, instead of on the basis of mutual economic benefit for the investor and the country.

### *Foreign Debt Strategy*

The government's debt strategy is inadequate if not submissive. The image that the Aquino government's economic managers want to project in international credit markets is that the country will pay for every cent of foreign debt that it inherited from the Marcos regime and, if it can be helped, will not borrow any more, even for the purpose of financing payments coming due.

Under this formula, the country paid out in net financial terms \$2.1 billion to the developed countries in 1987 on a commodity export level of \$5.3 billion. Under the current program, the country expects to transfer

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<sup>2</sup> With the prevailing discount rate on Philippine debt paper in the order of 50 per cent, the preferential exchange rate is about ₱40 to \$1, instead of the prevailing ₱20 to \$1.

<sup>3</sup> A proposal to auction off access to the debt-equity program will reduce the extra-economic aspect. It will, however, not solve the effect that the de facto multiple exchange rate will have on investor decisions.

outward a total of \$18.2 billion to its creditors from 1987 to 1992, or about 31 percent of merchandise exports generously projected.

The debt strategy has compelled the government to maintain steady and orderly relations with the World Bank and the IMF, the agencies that provide the country with its international credit rating. This, in spite of the unpopularity of the development approach espoused by these agencies among the Filipino elite and the Filipino masses.

The World Bank economic recovery loan in 1987 compels the Aquino government to complete import liberalization, complete the privatization program, implement a tax reform program (including the value added tax), and reform government financial institutions in exchange for budgetary financing of \$300 million.

The debt strategy compels the Aquino government to seek bilateral aid from the U.S. and Japan. In spite of the fact that the Convenor's Group<sup>4</sup> in the last few years of the anti-Marcos struggle has proposed the eventual dismantling of the U.S. bases and the fact that the next three years until 1991 provide an opportune time for the phaseout of the bases, the government's judgement has been clouded by the possibility of reconciling its meek debt strategy with the need to raise the financial resources required for economic recovery through the bases rental.

The debt strategy compels the government itself to be a major borrower in the domestic market and sustains an inappropriately high level of interest. The high rate of interest encourages commercial importing activities, where the turnaround of capital is quick.

### *Agrarian Reform Strategy*

In July 1987, President Aquino's government signed into law an incomplete land reform program which the legislature was given the task of completing. Except for improvement in administrative procedures in the reform program, the Aquino agrarian reform basically affirms the Marcos land reform program.

There will certainly be a "comprehensive"<sup>5</sup> agrarian reform code promulgated by the legislature in 1988. The United States has offered \$2 billion in budgetary financing as long as an agrarian reform code is promulgated by August 1988. The trend of the discussions in the legislature appear to be headed toward a reform program with the following features:

(1) on the justification that it would be in the interest of economic recovery, the agrarian reform program will provide generous bases for

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<sup>4</sup> See the Convenor's Statement in Schirmer and Shalom [1987], pp. 305-308. The convenor's group represented the "nontraditional politicians" with the Marcos opposition and included Corazon Aquino, Jaime Ongpin, and Senator Lorenzo Tañada.

<sup>5</sup> The terminology has become socially inescapable.



exemption from reform; it is likely that lands which are partly devoted to poultry, livestock, or aquaculture will be exempted from land reform.

(2) the agrarian reform program will provide generous payments to landowners whose properties are subjected to land reform; the most generous proposal is that of fifty percent in cash of market value upon loss of land and fifty percent in bonds.

It will be difficult for an agrarian reform program of this nature to result in a reform of a basic social deficiency of the Philippine economy. Because of the generosity of exemptions, landlords can maintain effective control by undertaking some investment, even if half-hearted, on their landholdings.

The generous payment scheme will actually rescue many landlords from bankruptcy. For example, in some sugar landholdings, production occurs in only about a third of the landholding. A fifty percent payment permits the landlord to convert the 30 percent that is still operating into its cash value, making a 20 percent gain on the remaining portion that is lying idle. He is also able to convert the remaining 50 percent of idle land into a government bond.

The envisioned land reform will be expensive and strain the government budget. Estimates of at least ₱70 billion pesos are common. The strain on the budget will increase the government's dependence on foreign sources of finance.

The nature of the cash payments will also induce strains on the economy. Since the import-propensity of landlord consumption is high, there will be significant demand on imports, pressure on the exchange rate, and domestic inflation.

## 2. *Toward an Alternative Development Strategy*

A discussion on an alternative development strategy is an exercise of hope. Here, we must identify the basis of such hope. On the basis of the foregoing, it appears we cannot locate such hopes in the Aquino government, in spite of the promise it represented in 1986.

The basis of hope is in the people's movements, which continue to increase their organizational capabilities, in the face of increasing repression and the Aquino government's peace (and order) response to the concrete manifestations of underdevelopment in local areas.<sup>6</sup>

The groups in the popular movement continue to assert and to demonstrate the proposition that the involvement of people's organizations are

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<sup>6</sup> The democratic government is responding by forming counter peoples' groups, volunteer citizens groups to control organizing efforts in slum areas and in union organizing situations. Some moderate cause oriented groups, having been compelled to resort to vote buying and the use of armed goons in recent election exercises, have unwittingly found themselves within the umbrella of this government strategy.

the indispensable element in overcoming the politico-economic obstacles to development. For these groups, who must daily confront these structural obstacles, the distinction between "tearing down" and "building up between reform and construction are artificial distinctions perceptible only in the eyes of Aquino government officials.

For example, in the face of an inadequate agrarian reform program, the popular movements have been able to implement reforms in the areas where they are sufficiently organized and can carry out land occupation and create cooperatives. As in times past, the government's rhetorical commitment to agrarian reform merely provides a skeletal framework for organizing efforts among peasant groups.

In a political situation that might be described as being suspended in between dictatorship and democracy, the continued growth of peoples' groups holds out the hope that the country might successfully complete the transition to democracy.

On the basis of the foregoing, we might describe the current Philippine economic problem as one of successfully managing a genuine economic transition.

Interventions of the peoples' groups, even when they result only in partial success, have the effect of making more difficult the sustainability of the economic system as presently constituted. For example, successes in raising wages force the issue of efficiency in supposedly "capitalist" enterprises in industry and agriculture. These interventions also build the alternative structures required by an alternative development strategy.

The question is: In whose interest will such an attempted transition be carried out? The rest of this paper will discuss the nature of this development program on the assumption that the transition is carried out

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<sup>7</sup> Based on our description of the source of the backwardness of the economy, a transition carried out in the direction of "capitalism," however that may be defined in the last two decades of the 20th century, is also a well-defined project. The interventions of the multilateral funding agencies, many of the Marcos technocrats, successive U.S. governments can be thought of as supportive of this type of transition. Based on our description of the record, in spite of the enormous effort and use of resources, there has also been little success along this path. A Philippine economy that is capable of capital accumulation and self-propelled growth would still require fundamental changes in its internal structures and external relationships.

What appears to be unaddressed in these "technocratic" approaches is that actual people must carry out development. An economic liberalization program directed toward private sector led growth will not lead to significant change if the potential private sector that can respond with enterprise is too small. Attempting to provide peasants with "competitive" prices for their produce without increasing their control over the land will not lead to capital investment in agriculture, but instead expose the same peasants to the often debilitating control of money lenders, warehouse owners, and traveling salesmen. Many of World Bank type of reforms, designed with a studious avoidance of class interest, are in effect in favor of the petty bourgeoisie against the interests of the very wealthy and the politically powerful. However, the petty bourgeoisie would be the last class to respond to the private enterprise oriented development program implicit in World Bank type of reform programs.

in the name<sup>7</sup> of the peasants, workers, petty bourgeoisie and genuine entrepreneurial businessmen of the Philippines.

Any discussion of an alternative development strategy would not only tend to be platitudinous, it will also contain a unavoidable degree of speculation, particularly since the actual situation in which it is to be implemented is unknown. Here, we are constrained to discussing main principles, with tentative details based on the currently existing situation of the economy. For this reason, the subsequent discussion should be treated equally as suggestions within an alternative development program and as suggestions for further research.

To avoid repetition in the subsequent discussion, let us first identify some important elements of the development strategy. These elements are derived from our description of the nature of Philippine underdevelopment. The alternative development program would be:

(1) Conservative and accumulative of capital

The Philippines' propensity to stagnate originates from an inadequate rate of capital reinvestment and the wasteful use of the domestic and foreign capital resources the economy has had access to. To a large extent, capital resources are remitted abroad by domestically based foreign enterprises and by members of the country's elite.

The alternative strategy will have to be directed at the dismantling of all social structures that reproduce the wastage of capital and discourage its reinvestment. For example, the situation in 1987 in which there was a net financial transfer of \$2.1 billion outward due to the debt service would be deemed a non-conservative strategy.

The alternative strategy would look upon resources used up in obtaining economic privileges, in fulfilling government regulations, in pursuit of unnecessary consumption, even if apparently necessary to maintain political power, as wasteful.

(2) Acquisitive and adaptive of technological advances

Assuming that the question of property assignments have been resolved, the process of development involves the steady implementation of small permanent advances at the level of production. At the microlevel, industrial development actually involves the continuing adaptation and installation of small improvements in products or in the manner in which products are made.

This is where a properly oriented private sector is an enormous advantage. In fact, the private sector here would include the millions of farmer families and owners of small machine shops, who must daily overcome the technical obstacles to increasing output at lowest cost.

There is a role for the state to play in the acquisition of current and expensive technology. The state can promote and finance domestic research consistent with the development program. The state's participation will avoid the multiple sale of the same technology to the country, reduce the cost of acquisition, and increase the bargaining power of the country to avoid limitations usually imposed on the acquisition of foreign technology.

The Philippine state is a complex reality. It has been directly under the control, both in "democratic" and authoritarian times, of the comprador and landlord groups. These groups have proven to have been politically, militarily, and economically dependent on foreign governments and have been unable to resist the claims of foreign capital.

In contrast to classic capitalist countries, these different interests do not coincide. We have seen, for example, how the U.S. government agenda at the end of World War II and the World Bank economic agenda at the present time threatened the interests of the domestic elite. In the case of the current World Bank agenda, even the interest of multinationals situated in the country are threatened by import liberalization. At the same time, each of these conflicting interests enjoy significant power to overthrow the families in control or to paralyze the operations of the state.

Thus, the survival of the groups that currently control the state depend heavily on their success in finding workable compromises between these conflicting interests. In the design of these compromises, the national interest (including the country's natural environment) and that of the other groups in the Philippine society are compromised.

The elasticity with which the national interest can be compromised and the capability of the disadvantaged groups to accept cutbacks in their economic condition provides the resources by which the demands of dominant groups can all be accommodated. The extent of such adjustment also damages prospects for future development.

The very fact that the state must be accountable to multiple conflicting interests is the original basis for the "democratic space" for peoples' organizations. For a reform program to be sustainable, however, the state must become genuinely accountable to the groups in whose name the proposed transition is being carried out. Based on our brief historical excursion, the state of the transition economy cannot but be one in which the peoples' organizations have significant participation.

A vibrant private sector is an important element of the mixed, transition economy. This role of the private sector is derived from a specification of the causes of Philippine underdevelopment that situates the problem not in the institution of private property per se but in the highly skewed distribution of such property. Such a specification identifies an important role for "feudalist" elements as a source of lack of dynamism in the economy.

The role of the private sector is based on two things. First, the initial economic reforms required in the construction of the transition economy will create a "private sector." Agrarian reform, the breakup of private monopolies, and the assertion of social control over foreign companies and natural monopolies will create a "private sector" as it now does not exist.

Because the term "private sector" has the negative meaning in the Philippines of being associated with big business and multinational corporations, it will be necessary to formulate a new term for the new sector. For the present purpose, a term such as "non-governmental enterprises" sector might be useful as a first attempt.

To insist that the new sector is not a "private sector" would require the alternative state to create a significant bureaucracy to meaningfully operate within this delusion.<sup>8</sup> The size of the required bureaucracy will then be in direct proportion to the extent of "privateness" of the new sector that has been created.

Such a delusion will require an inordinate amount of resources under the control of the state which might be called upon to take over failing enterprises, to change the management of "non-progressive" ones, to subsidize the operations of others.<sup>9</sup>

The present situation in which the privatization of companies inherited from the Marcos regime is being resisted by government-appointed functionaries in these companies points to the fact that a bureaucratic state is not in the interest of the majority of Filipinos.

The superiority of treating the new sector as "private" or "non-government" is that this strategy is directly derived from the specification of the nature of Philippine underdevelopment. Thus, the role of this sector is derived not from a temporary political compromise. This suggested role is also consistent with the requirements of capital reinvestment and technological progress of the economy. This is the second reason.

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<sup>8</sup> A private sector would not have a significant role if the present Philippine economy had been specified as "capitalist" or even "capitalist" but modified by adjectives as "backward", "dependent", or "peripheral."

That groups from the left advocating a socialist program happen to be the same groups that are supportive of the Aquino government is one of the paradoxes that Philippine popular movements have to contend with. The significant capability of these groups to project their proposals and keep the debate within the intellectual sphere derives from their special access to the "democratic space."

This problem weakens the capability of progressive groups to advocate realistic alternatives, based on a concrete analysis of a concrete situation, and based on the demand of the groups implementing social change. Just as in the case of social reformers from the conservative groups (whose policy proposals have already been experienced to be failures), the unrealistic proposals encourage a stance that reforms must wait upon the realization of a "change in personal values" in the population.

The controversy also creates artificial organizational divisions among progressive forces in the sense that the elements of economic programs of these groups, such as agrarian reform, do not appear to significantly differ from each other.

<sup>9</sup> The experiences under the short-lived Allende regime in Chile point to these lessons.

The assertion of the national interest over the private sector will require an accounting system that is consistent with the reforms required by the economy. Surplus generated in private economic enterprises can be classified into two types: (1) the part that arises from the internal efficiency of the enterprise and (2) that part derived from the support and the intervention of the state and from monopoly power.

The computational distinction between the two can be derived using an extension of the principles of shadow pricing. It is expected in some situations where the segregation between the two types of surplus is too costly, rules of thumb derived from the principles can be used.

That part of the surplus arising from the internal efficiency of the enterprise will be within the control of the owner of the enterprise. The limits of this control will be determined by the income taxation policies and social interventions in setting wage rates and other types of human compensation. That part of the surplus arising from state intervention should ultimately be returned to the social fund.

The suggested principle motivates state interventions that are transparent and susceptible to monitoring. For example, where only one or a few private enterprises are being supported by the state, direct local currency subsidy, instead of import control or tariff protection, would be desirable.

### *Agrarian reform*

The necessity of agrarian reform has been discussed at length in Philippine social circles. In this section, we will rely on the discussion of agrarian reform alternatives in Quisumbing [1987]. Quisumbing states:

*The reform of the existing highly skewed distribution of access to land and natural resources is perhaps the most fundamental structural reform which must be undertaken in the transition toward a mixed economy.<sup>10</sup>*

Quisumbing [1987] characterizes the past Philippine experience in land reforms as one of incomplete transitions. In fact, the existence of land reform programs encouraged the artificial parcelling of lands and the (often artificial) shift from tenant to wage labor. The prospective exemptions in the land reform proposals under the Aquino government hold out the promise of other shift into plantation type arrangements.

In the context of an alternative development program in the interest of the basic classes, agrarian reform must be directed at a fundamental reform in social relations. This means that land resettlement schemes, corporate stock ownership schemes, government enforced collectivization

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<sup>10</sup> Quisumbing [1987], p. 1.

are decidedly inferior options since these do not empower the intended beneficiaries of the agrarian reform program.

The agricultural arrangements that exist in Philippine agriculture are diverse and require that a combination of different policies — land rent appropriation, cooperativization and collectivization — would have to be part of the agrarian reform program.

Here we need to point only to some of the sources of complexities. The increasing landlessness in many areas makes it difficult to identify beneficiaries under a simple land to the tiller program. The existence of plantations already run along capitalist lines, including those owned by multinational companies, would require a separate type of reform. The inadequate capabilities of beneficiaries to plant other crops, as would be true in Negros, would require cooperativization and collectivization with state support in other areas.

The complexity of land reform highlights the fact that without peoples' organizations, Philippine society will be unable to carry out genuine agrarian reform. The necessary participation of these organizations demonstrates that intentions to carry out agrarian reform independently of these peoples' groups are self-defeating.<sup>11</sup>

### *Industrialization and trade*

In the alternative development strategy, it will be necessary for the state to play an active role in investment. If our analysis of the nature of the Philippines is correct, state intervention is necessary to lead and to "bend" investment priorities toward social requirements. The state must carry out investments on its own account for social infrastructure and for key industries in the economy.

In fact, even at the present time, the Philippine state has been playing a large role in investment. This is a role that is being necessitated by the fact that the country's so-called "private sector" has demonstrated limited internal dynamism to identify investment opportunities and to raise the risk capital to respond to these opportunities.

This lack of internal dynamism arises from the dominance of the feudal type of accumulation, which permits the reproduction of private property without the need for private reinvestment. Philippine private sector invest-

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<sup>11</sup> One remembers that during the government negotiations with the outlawed National Democratic Front (NDF), the Jesuit consultants of the government negotiating panel were advising the government to demand from the NDF panel the specifics of the NDF agrarian reform program. "How can the NDF implement land reform when there are already 56 million Filipinos and the total land area of the Philippines is only 300,000 square kilometers (about half a hectare per Filipino, including mountains and forest land)?" The Aquino government, of course, until the present writing, has not managed to construct an alternative agrarian reform program. Even if this came about, the participation of groups in the rural areas would still be critical.

ment has been largely financed by state resources, instead of from privately generated resources. These resources have been raised in the familiar ways: (1) from finances borrowed abroad by the government, (2) from finances raised abroad by the private enterprise but guaranteed by the government, (3) from tariff subsidies to private enterprises, and (4) from tax subsidies, such as BOI (Board of Investments) incentives.

Genuine agrarian reform will be necessary to reduce the alternative of low risk, high return investments in land; agrarian reform should induce some private sector dynamism. The reality of competition from the dominant industrial countries will, however, provide a cap to such dynamism. It will be necessary for the state to provide protection to the private sector. But such guaranteed protection has also been a cause of the lack of dynamism of the Philippine private sector.

It will be important for the present purpose, however, to enunciate the principles on which investment choices within an alternative development program will be made. The most important consideration that we propose is the sustained increase in domestic mass incomes. We consider this to be important for two reasons. First, it permits the internal market to provide the basis for industrialization. Second, in the final analysis, industrialization is located not in the physical machines in the economy, but in the skills of the population. Domestic income-based growth raises the educational and other resources needed in create and develop these industrial skills.

Based on this principle, and the current state of technology, some industries will permit more rapid increases in domestic incomes and skills than others. Light manufacturing industries, especially rural-based, consumer goods industries, will provide income and enjoy a ready market for their products.

#### *Foreign policy and the military bases*

The politico-military considerations are the overriding ones in the consideration of the role of the military bases in an alternative development program. These considerations, stated in the form of questions, are basically two:

(1) Does the presence of U.S. military forces and personnel circumscribe the scope for independent domestic political development because it encourages U.S. intervention? and

(2) Do the bases protect the country from external aggression?

An affirmative answer on the second question would be sufficient ground for the continued basing of U.S. forces in the country, assuming that the some reasonable degree of political and economic evolution independence of U.S. intervention were possible.



Based on present realities, however, it appears that the removal of the U.S. bases would be more in the Philippine interest. It is generally agreed that the bases do not protect the country from an identifiable foreign threat. In this case, an alternative development program would have to confront the economic effects of the withdrawal of the U.S. bases.

A thorough study of the economic aspects of the U.S. bases is not accessible to the author at the present time. This subsequent discussion will necessarily be tentative.

The U.S. bases utilize around 65,000 hectares of Philippine territory in 14 installations. Two of these bases, Clark and Subic, account for the bulk of the land area utilized. The spending associated with the bases has been estimated to represent at least 4 percent of the country's gross national product. The bases directly employ about 45,000 workers, the significant proportion of which is in the form of skilled labor. Another 25,000 people benefit from indirect employment.

The bases provide a direct economic benefit of about \$300 million every year. (Part of the accommodation received from the bases is in the form of military aid and should not be counted as part of the net economic benefit.) The calculation of net economic benefit should also discount the social costs that the presence of the bases inflict on the population in the surrounding areas.

The macroeconomic implications of the withdrawal of the U.S. bases is that the country will have to find new, and steady annual exports of at least \$500 to replace the benefit that the country currently derives from them. This is assuming that the other elements of the U.S.-Philippine economic relation can be continued even without the bases in the country.

The microeconomic adjustments will also be difficult.

The U.S. air bases at Clark provide about 3,000 hectares of non-hilly, non-mountainous land from a total of about 55,000 hectares. A plan to transfer the Manila international airport plus the military bases in the metropolitan Manila area appears to provide a more-than-adequate, self-financing adjustment program for this facility.

Except for the Subic naval facilities, which are significant, other bases facilities will also require local adjustment but the problems are much smaller since these facilities are much smaller.

The microeconomic adjustments for the Subic naval facilities will be more complicated. There are ship repair facilities in the base and the skilled Filipino personnel to man them. This would be a new industry for the country.

The immense adjustment problems suggest that the country should negotiate a treaty of withdrawal which will, on the basis of mutual benefit, provide both the time period and the resources required for adjustment.

On overall foreign policy, the suggested economic program presumes friendly and helpful relations with all nations of the world. The feasibility of the program depends on the ability of the country to draw on both the resources and the markets of the capitalist and socialist countries, as well as other Third World countries.

### *Cooperatives and popular enterprises*

As we have implied above, the construction of an alternative economy, capable of overcoming the obstacles to development, requires the empowerment of people and peoples' organizations. The development of sustainable cooperatives and popular enterprises is both a strategy of empowerment and an intervention devoted to the creation of alternative economic structures.

The element of empowerment, both as a pre-requisite and as a necessity for the sustainability of cooperatives, cannot be overemphasized. Community groups have to be capable of asserting and protecting the civil ("human") rights and the property of their members. As the government stages an apocalyptic debate over property rights of the wealthy in agrarian reform, the rights of the poor to be secure in their property and to keep their family produce for their own requirements are being violated by the government's program of forming vigilante groups in the local communities.

The element of empowerment also involves the resolution of economic inequalities and social hierarchies that exist even within the poorest strata in Philippine society.

Assuming that the issue of empowerment has been overcome, cooperatives are sustainable (1) if they make economic sense to those who participate in them, (2) if they are sufficiently financed, and (3) if they have access to the required technical support.

In the agricultural areas, the economies of scope and scale in marketing and the purchasing of inputs are the most likely entry points for cooperatives. The government must provide the legal and moral support as these cooperatives attempt to break through the oligopolized agricultural distribution system. As people gain confidence and experience in these enterprises, cooperatives in production can be expected to arise.

The inadequacy of financing and access to finance, especially in the early stages, that has plagued cooperatives suggests that the peoples' groups (and a sympathetic government) must create national, regional, district structures through which financing can be channeled and regenerated.

As people's enterprises, members of cooperatives must obtain the skill in basic accounting, in product grading, in business planning, in other economic activities that cooperatives are called upon to do. Resources to

propagate these basic economic skills must be provided to the cooperative movement.

### 3. *Elements of a Popular Medium Term Program*

While the creation of a state accountable to the majority of Filipinos is still in process, it is useful to make a short list of the immediate demands that peoples' organizations might struggle for.

On the basis of the previous discussion these elements will be:

1. A genuine agrarian reform program.
2. Reform program for natural resources.

This refers to the reform of access to mineral, forest, and aquatic resources.

3. Protection and the expansion of the incomes of workers and salaried employees.

This demand refers to the protection of union organizing efforts and bargaining rights, wage legislation, protection from inflation for workers and salaried employees.

4. Dismantling of monopolies.

5. A foreign debt strategy supportive of economic recovery and development.

This strategy will also require that any new accommodation in financing be consistent with sovereignty over the design of economic policies and programs.

6. Design and implementation of a nationalist industrialization program.

This will require tariff reform programs, government programs in science and technology, the design of appropriate systems of industrial protection. It will require an industrial incentive program that will be operated in the interest of the nation, not just in the interest of the families (and their friends in the community of domestically based multinationals) that took control of the government in 1986.

7. Regional development and autonomy.

A precondition for the unification of a fragmented Philippine economy is the effort to reduce regional disparities. In many regions, the resources required to develop local areas can be raised from the economic activities of these local areas themselves. In this case, regional development and autonomy would be the most direct means of reducing regional disparities.

8. Promotion of cooperatives and peoples' enterprises.

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# LAND REFORM: BEHIND THE RHETORIC OF AQUINO'S DAVAO PROMISES

By SABINO G. PADILLA, JR.

In 1972, an estimated 1.3 million hectares of rice and corn lands, mostly in Luzon, were worked by 900,000 tenants. About 40% were in estates larger than 50 hectares. These were owned and controlled by only 1.6% of all landowners, which meant that these landowners controlled an average of 150 hectares and 420 people.<sup>1</sup>

Faced with a growing insurgency, ex-President Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law in September 1972. One month later, he promulgated Presidential Decree (PD) No. 27, which announced "*The Emancipation of Tenants from the Bondage of the Land They Till.*" It is otherwise known as the Land Reform Law or Tenant Emancipation Act.<sup>2</sup>

PD 27 introduced the following:<sup>3</sup>

1. Operation Land Transfer — stresses the land-to-the-tiller principle; distribution of certificates of land transfer to all eligible tenant farmers on rice and corn lands.
2. Samahang Nayan — organization of potential land reform beneficiaries in the barrios into pre-cooperatives, eventually leading toward an integrated network of area-wide cooperatives servicing the various needs of its members.
3. Masagana 99 — designed to increase rice productivity by providing for the credit and input requirements of small farmers.

This law decreed that land ownership would be transferred to the tenants for rice and corn lands above 7 hectares, and that there would be leasehold arrangements for lands 7 hectares and below for other tenanted lands. This law hoped to transfer 716,520 hectares into the hands of 396,082 tenants.

PD 27 did not diminish tenancy. *Ibon Facts and Figures* reports:<sup>4</sup>

In 1980, 24.8 percent of the total farm area consisted of tenanted lands, up from the 1971 figure of 18.2 percent. Among palay and corn

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<sup>1</sup> "Land Reform Headway But . . .," *Ichthys*, December 1977, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Pres. Ferdinand E. Marcos on Agrarian Reform*, with an introduction by Conrado F. Estrella (Quezon City: Public Information Division, Ministry of Agrarian Reform, 1979), p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> "The Philippine Case: Paradigm Lost?" *Rural Monitor*, July 1977.

<sup>4</sup> "Rooting Out Inequality," p. 3. Figures came from the *Agenda for Action for the Philippine Rural Sector* (College, Laguna: Agricultural Policy and Strategy Team, University of the Philippines-Los Baños-Philippine Institute of Development Studies, October 1986).

lands, the only crops covered by the Marcos land reform program, the situation has worsened. From 1971 rates of 17.6 percent and 18.5 percent, respectively, tenancy in rice and corn farms rose to 29.4 percent and 19.6 percent in 1980.

After twenty years of his rule, Marcos had "accomplished" the following: 76,853 tenants acquired land ownership; 14,344 emancipation patents were given under Operation Land Transfer; 39,806 titles were received through direct negotiations; 7,642 patents were granted in settlements; 15,061 deeds of sale were made in landed estates; and there were 236,699 new leaseholders.<sup>5</sup>

The above 76,853 tenant beneficiaries comprise only 19.2% of tenants in rice and corn lands above 7 hectares, 3.8% of all tenants in all crop-lands, and 0.9% of the total number of landless tenants and farm workers.

In effect, Marcos did not make any headway in the solution of the land problem. This was manifested by the worsening of the rural rebellion, which grew rapidly and posed a major threat to his rule.

Marcos declared in 1980 that "If land reform fails, then the whole structure of the New Society crumbles."<sup>6</sup> These were prophetic words, and were translated into reality in February 1986.

### *The Promise*

In the 1986 presidential election, agrarian reform was one of the major campaign promises of the Aquino-Laurel tandem. In a speech in Davao City, Corazon Aquino capitalized on the failure of the Marcos land reform program. She outlined the policy she would pursue should she be elected:<sup>7</sup>

The two essential goals of land reform are greater productivity and equitable sharing of the benefits and ownership of the land. . . . [W]e will seek viable systems of land reform suited to the particular exigencies dictated not only by the quality of the soil, the nature of the produce, and the agricultural inputs demanded, but above all by the needs of the small farmers, landless workers, and communities of tribal Filipinos whose lives and whose personal dignity depend on their just share in the abundance of the land.

In addition, Aquino assured long-time settlers and share tenants that "land-to-the-tiller" will not remain an "empty slogan." The "growing number of landless workers" were promised resettlement schemes and cooperative forms of farming. As for the island of Mindanao, she stressed

<sup>5</sup> These "accomplishments" were noted in Ed Tadem, "Notes on the Philippine Agrarian Reform Issue," presented at the ARENA-TWSC-TWN International Consultation on "Democratization in the Philippines," Quezon City, 18-20 August 1986.

<sup>6</sup> "RP Land Reform: 'Most Peaceful Revolution in the World,'" *Bulletin Today*, 2 June 1980.

<sup>7</sup> "Selection 10.1: Program of Social Reform, Corazon Aquino," in *The Philippine Reader*, ed. Daniel B. Schirmer and Stephen Roskamm Shalom (Quezon City: KEN Inc., 1987), p. 339.

that conservation of forests and other natural resources should start immediately.

Not a few people felt that, with the ouster of Marcos after the February 1986 coup and Aquino's assumption to power, there was new hope for a solution to the centuries-old problem of unjust agrarian structures that fuels the current rural-based rebellion led by the National Democratic Front (NDF).

### *The Agrarian Situation*

The Aquino government inherited from the previous regime an agrarian problem with no solution in sight except for a genuine agrarian reform measure that is drastic and needs a political will to implement.

As of 1980, those involved in agriculture numbered 7 million, or 49% of those gainfully employed by major occupations, numbering a total of 14 million. They were tilling 10 million hectares of farmlands, or 1/3 of the country's total land area of 30 million hectares.<sup>8</sup> These hectares were devoted to the following:<sup>9</sup>

CROP	HECTARAGE
rice & corn	5,710,700
coconut	2,842,900
sugar	312,800
tuber, root & bulb crops	131,600
cattle	128,700
coffee	123,800
banana, pineapple & mango	116,500
citrus and vegetables	64,500
fiber crops	60,100
hog, chicken & other livestock	52,900
others	180,400

In 1985, out of 10 million agricultural labor force, there were 2 million tenants, 5 million seasonal farm workers and subsistence fishermen, 1.5 million farmer-occupants of public lands without titles and only 1.5 million owned the lands they were tilling.<sup>10</sup>

The peasants are an essential force in the Philippine economy. They produce its food, and account for two-fifths of the export earnings. As

<sup>8</sup> National Economic and Development Authority [NEDA] and National Census and Statistics Office [NCSO], *1980 Census of Population and Housing: Philippines* (Manila: NEDA and NCSO, 1983), pp. xxxii-xxxiii. All 1980 census publications to be cited henceforth have the same authors and publishers.

Those involved in agriculture also include people working in animal husbandry, fishing, and forestry. The census does not give figures for each category.

<sup>9</sup> *1980 Census of Agriculture: National Summary*, p. 28.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

consumers, they provide the government a big source of income through levies and taxes.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, from 1972 to 1986, there was an impressive agricultural growth of 3.6%, which was 24.9% of the economy's total goods and services. During the "crisis years" from 1983 to 1985, agricultural output had a modest 9% annual growth while industrial output dropped by 25%.<sup>12</sup>

### *Poverty of the Philippine Peasants*

But despite their vital contribution to the country's economy, the peasants remain one of the most exploited and economically depressed sectors in Philippine society. This is borne out by the fact that the incidence of poverty is higher in the rural areas, where one finds the peasantry, than in the urban centers.

The poverty line for the rural areas was set by the NEDA and NCSO at ₱2,066 a month, the amount needed to satisfy the nutritional requirements and other basic needs of a family of six. In these areas, 63.7% or 3.8 million families were living below the poverty line as of 1985. This is against 52.1% or 1.87 million families in the urban areas, although here the poverty threshold was ₱3,005.<sup>13</sup> Over 2.2 million families — roughly 13.4 million Filipinos — living below the poverty line are from the agricultural sector. Their average six-month family income in 1985 amounted to ₱5,151, but the average household expenditures for the same period was ₱5,931.<sup>14</sup>

Why are the peasants so poor? What problems confront the Philippine peasantry? The traditional view is that a person is poor because he is lazy. Does the peasant deserve this view?

As can already be gleaned from earlier descriptions of the Philippine peasantry, the average peasant does not have access to modern methods of production. He clears the land, plants, weeds, and harvests without the use of machines.

Since the peasant generally has no other source of income while waiting for his plants to grow, he has to take out loans from a usurer,

<sup>11</sup> *Annual Report of the Executive Director, FAB, 1982*, Annex A-3, "The Filipino Peasant Struggle for a Free, Just, Humane and Democratic Society," pp. 2 and 3. See also NEDA, *1983 Philippine Statistical Yearbook*, Chapter 5, "Agriculture," pp. 306-318.

<sup>12</sup> "Rooting Out Inequality," p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> NCSO and NEDA, as cited in Ma. Victoria Gochoco-Perez, "6 of 10 Families Poor in 1985, Government Says," *Business Day*, 17 September 1986.

<sup>14</sup> NEDA, *Low Income Group Study Project Based on 1985 Family Income and Expenditure Survey and the Socio-economic Survey of Special Groups of Families* (n.p., 1985), as cited in "Rooting Out Inequality," p. 3. This is most likely the same study reported by Ms. Ochoco-Perez.



promising to pay outrageous rates ranging from 50% to 200%. This is on top of the debts he has already contracted for production costs.

After the peasant has harvested his crop, he has the problem of bringing his produce to the market, either due to the lack of vehicles or to inadequate roads. Then a middleman comes along (usually the usurer or the landlord), and buys the produce at an extremely low price. The amount that the peasant receives will go to the payment of loans and land rent. The latter may be as much as 80% of the gross sales, even if the peasant had shouldered the production costs.

And so after the harvest, the poor peasant is left with zero balance if he is lucky, and with still unpaid loans and land rent, if he is less fortunate. It is easy to see that being in debt can become an endless oppressive cycle.

For the rural workers, poverty may be due to the seasonal nature of their work, or the very low wages they receive, or both.

Thus, it can be summed up that peasant problems are due to low incomes despite high production cost, exacerbated by the lack of reasonable credit facilities and adequate supporting infrastructure (irrigation, roads, and the like).

But the main issue is that of the question of land ownership. Most peasants do not own the land they till. They have to fork out a major portion of their harvest to their landlord, who for the most part has little or no input to the land. Furthermore, in recent years the encroachment of commercial farms has dispossessed thousands of farmers, converting them into agricultural laborers.

*Ibon Facts and Figures* reports:<sup>15</sup>

Of the 1.6 million families directly engaged in crop farming, 35 percent tilled lands of less than one hectare while five percent had farms of over five hectares. At least 43 percent were tenants of leaseholders.

The 1980 census revealed that 2.3 million individually operated farms had a total area of 2.9 million hectares, while 116,799 had 2.3 million hectares.

Among corporate farms, 2,488 small ones likewise had an average size of 1.2 hectares. In the big league, however, 722 firms held roughly 216.2 hectares each.

In 1980, two-thirds of the 19-million agricultural population were on less than a third of the country's total farm area.

*Reassuring the Peasants*

Confronted by such conditions, Aquino reiterated her promise to the

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<sup>15</sup> "Rooting Out Inequality," p. 3.

peasants a month after assuming office. Heherson Alvarez was appointed Minister of Agrarian Reform.

The April 1986 "Freedom Constitution" reiterated the 1973 constitutional provision of instituting land reform and liberating the peasants from the bondage of the soil. While reorganizing government bureaucracies and coming up with new thrusts, land reform was given some consideration by the Aquino government.

The 1986 Constitution gave emphasis to land reform with its provision that the government shall "undertake the just distribution of all agricultural lands" and implement an agrarian program.

founded on the right of farmers and regular farmworkers, who are landless, to own directly or collectively the lands they till or, in the case of other farmworkers, to receive a just share of the fruits thereof.  
[Section 4, Article XIII]

Such program, however, will be "subject to such priorities and reasonable retention limits as the Congress may prescribe, taking into account ecological, developmental, or equity considerations."

But for the rest of its first year in power, the Aquino government was thrown into the dilemma of choosing between instituting a comprehensive land reform using her broad executive powers and waiting for the Congress to pass a land reform law.

Many viewed that waiting for the legislature to decide the issue will erode any effectivity of the program. It was feared that the Congress will eventually be dominated and controlled by landlord interests.

While the government was still formulating its land policy program at a snail's pace, peasant initiatives such as land occupations and takeovers became widespread. Led by the militant Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) or Philippine Peasant Movement, a total of 48,768 hectares were seized by the peasants all over the country by the end of 1986.<sup>16</sup>

Recommendations from government institutions and non-government organizations (NGOs) with regards to land reform have not been acted upon by the new dispensation. This dilly-dallying resulted in the death of nineteen (19) KMP peasants and their sympathizers while they were demonstrating at the foot of Mendiola bridge on January 22, 1987. While demanding for a genuine land reform, they were shot at by government troopers without any warning.

The incident came to be known as the Mendiola Massacre, and prompted the government to create the Cabinet Action Committee (CAC)

<sup>16</sup> Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas [KMP], *Ulat Pampulitika sa Taong 1986* (mimeographed), p. 2. KMP chairman Jaime Tadeo was quoted as saying that a total of 70,500 hectares of land as of June 1988 have been occupied by the peasants. See 23 June 1988, *Manila Chronicle*.

on Agrarian Reform. The CAC had the task of coming up with a new agrarian reform program.

An initial draft of an executive order on the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) was drawn up in April. The program would target the transfer of 3.79 million hectares and would benefit around 2.81 million small peasants and landless agricultural workers, or about 27.6 percent of the 10.2 million workers employed in agriculture.

The program involves four phases:

Program A, to be implemented in 1987-1989, completes the Marcos land reform program in rice and corn areas, which covers 557,000 hectares.

Program B, to be implemented together with Program A, aims to distribute sequestered lands, foreclosed and forecloseable lands, idle and abandoned lands, voluntary offers and expropriated lands. It will cover some 600,000 hectares.

Program C deals with landed estates under labor administration and tenanted non-rice and non-corn areas. It covers 1,280,000 hectares and will be implemented in 1989-1992.

Program D, slated for 1987-1992 and covering some 1,350,000 hectares, deals with lands under public domain.

The draft was severely criticized by many quarters. Among them was the World Bank (WB), which sent a delegation for a two-week visit in mid-March to review the government proposal for the financing of the expanded land reform.<sup>17</sup> The May 13 report of the WB Mission assessed that the program is doomed to fail and pushed for a "more radical" plan.<sup>18</sup> Prof. Roy Prosterman, who designed the US-sponsored land reform program of South Vietnam and El Salvador called it "an unworkable program."<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, during the last days of May 1987, thirteen (13) major national peasant and rural worker organizations, including some seventy (70) NGOs involved in rural development work, formed the Congress for a People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR).<sup>20</sup> CPAR declared that the core principle of agrarian reform is

the primacy of the right of all members of the agricultural labor force . . . to own and control the land, have access to other natural resources and gain full disposition over the produce.

On July 22, after undergoing fifteen (15) revisions, the land reform blueprint finally came out as Executive Order (EO) No 299 and was signed by Aquino.

<sup>17</sup> *Malaya*, 28 February 1987.

<sup>18</sup> Serialized in *Manila Chronicle*, 23-26 June 1987.

<sup>19</sup> *Manila Chronicle*, 1 July 1987.

<sup>20</sup> *Philippine Currents*, June 1987.

Prepared barely five days before the opening of Congress, EO 299 was largely a compromise to landlord opposition to land reform. Although the intent was to at least provide the legislature with a direction on the issue, it only reiterated the constitutional provisions on land reform. However, it failed to touch on the retention limits, priorities and timetable. Furthermore, it penalizes the peasants with permanent disqualification because of premature occupation of lands. It is not surprising that CPAR immediately rejected the EO 299 as a mockery of the peasant's proposal that shows complete disregard of their plight.<sup>21</sup>

The opening of Congress added a new chapter in the search for a land reform program. Both Houses committed themselves to working for the long overdue program. The House of Representatives even promised that it would enact a law within ninety days.

Representative Bonifacio Gillego headed the 31-member Agrarian Reform Committee. Dominated largely by landlords, the committee nonetheless produced a respectable House Bill 400. Ironically, even before the bill reached the floor debates, it was severely watered down by amendments which deleted its remaining progressive features. It raised the retention limit to fourteen (14) hectares and eliminated the progressive and selective compensation scheme.

As an additional protective measure, a group of representatives led by Representatives Romeo Guanzon and Hortencia Starke in February 1988 filed House Bill 941, which has a vague timetable, sets no clear beneficiaries, and most of all exempts private lands from land reform.<sup>22</sup> The landlord's agrarian reform bill totally disregards the essence of land reform which is social justice.

In the Senate, two bills were filed separately. The bill introduced by Senator Heherson Alvarez provides a retention limit of between 7 and 24 hectares, depending on the type of cropland. It further seeks exemptions for plantations while requiring profit-sharing schemes for its workers. However, using the Alvarez formula will greatly affect the coverage of the land reform area. It will exclude 76% of ricelands, 75% of cornland, 76% of coconut lands, 31% of sugar lands, and 81% of other croplands. The bill also retains the penalty clause in EO 299 for premature occupation of lands by peasants.

Senator Agapito Aquino's version on the other hand, prohibits absentee landlordism, limits the retention limit to only three hectares, and hopes to cover at least 70% of total farmland. Looked upon as a progressive if not a liberal land measure, it does away with the EO 299 penalty clause.

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<sup>21</sup> *Manila Chronicle*, 24 July 1987.

<sup>22</sup> *Manila Chronicle*, 15 February 1988.

By March 25, the two chambers of Congress passed on second reading their final versions of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.<sup>23</sup> The Lower House approved the "diluted" HB 400 and the Upper House voted for the Alvarez bill.

After nine months, the House of Representatives had finally passed an agrarian reform measure with the passing of House Bill 400 on the third and final reading on 21 April 1988. The 13 original proponents of the bill led by Representative Gillego dissociated themselves from it, charging that the landlords had terribly emasculated it.

The following day, CPAR ended a four-day caravan, and its more than 10,000 participants converged at Liwasang Bonifacio to call for a genuine land reform program.<sup>24</sup> On the same occasion, the influential Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines released a pastoral letter exhorting the need for a "realistic" comprehensive agrarian reform program.<sup>25</sup>

A bicameral conference was called to put up a compromise bill that would satisfy both the Lower House and the Upper House. The issues of timetable, scope and retention limit were marked by heated debates. The House was firm in its position to postpone the distribution of private lands until the fourth year, while the Senate pushed for the second year of the program. After three weeks of haggling and compromises, the committee approved on June 6 an agrarian reform measure.<sup>26</sup>

Before embarking on a European tour, Aquino signed Republic Act (RA) No. 6657 or the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988 (CARL '88) into law. She said that the law was "the means by which we shall truly achieve independence."<sup>27</sup>

RA 6657 retains the scope provided for in EO 299. It aims to distribute all lands regardless of tenurial arrangement and crops, whether private or public lands. A ten-year program, CARP involves three phases. The landlords are allowed to retain five hectares and may award 3 hectares to each children.

Cardinal Jaime Sin called it "another miracle" while Amando Doronilla, *Manila Chronicle* editor, said it was "an accord of the elite." A group of 25 organizations including the Archdiocese of Manila and the Bishops-Businessmen's Conference for Human Development stated in a position paper, "despite its shortcomings, (the CARP) is the best bill at this time."<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Manila Chronicle*, 26 March 1988.

<sup>24</sup> *Manila Chronicle*, 22 April 1988.

<sup>25</sup> Serialized in the *Manila Chronicle*, 2-3 May 1988.

<sup>26</sup> *Manila Chronicle*, 7 June 1988.

<sup>27</sup> *Manila Chronicle*, 11 June 1988.

<sup>28</sup> *Manila Chronicle*, 28 June 1988.

The leftwing organizations affiliated with the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) on the other hand declared in a manifesto that "the will to break the monopoly of land ownership by a few families and free the country's vital tracts of land from foreign control is the touchstone of commitment to a genuine agrarian reform."<sup>29</sup>

On June 26, a full-page advertisement rejecting the CARP was signed by different personalities from various political groups.<sup>30</sup> They declared that the new land law

makes a mockery of social justice. It preserves society's historical prejudice against the poor and the powerless. It frustrates [the people's] aspirations for peace and progress.

CPAR, which vigorously lobbied for Representative Gillego's HB 400 and supported with reservation Senator Aquino's bill, criticized RA 6657 as "fake, pro-landlord, and deceptive." On June 26, it adopted its own version of agrarian reform and called it the People's Agrarian Reform Code (PARCODE) of 1988. A new dimension in the struggle for genuine land reform ensued when CPAR used Section 32, Article VI of the Constitution. The provision allows the people to amend, reject or enact a law through petition signing by no less than 10 percent of total registered voters. CPAR hopes to gather around 2.5 million signature in support of PARCODE to make it binding and in force.<sup>31</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The agrarian program of the Marcos regime failed dismally. It is not a remote possibility that the same fate awaits the Aquino CARP. The landlord bloc in the House, are not contented with their emasculation of the land law, is currently preparing proposed amendments particularly to exempt private commercial farms from distribution.<sup>32</sup>

A country is "usually given the chance to implement a land reform program only once," land reform "specialist" Posterman was quoted to have said. He added that the Philippines has "a great historic opportunity to tackle this basic problem" of landlessness.<sup>33</sup>

However, the Aquino government bungled the opportunity to formulate a coherent land reform policy with its vast power intact a few months after February 1986. The much discredited Marcos land reform program ironically continued to be implemented.

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<sup>29</sup> *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 25 June 1988.

<sup>30</sup> *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 26 June 1988.

<sup>31</sup> *Manila Chronicle*, 27 June 1988.

<sup>32</sup> *Manila Chronicle*, 28 June 1988.

<sup>33</sup> *Manila Chronicle*, 1 July 1988.

Gareth Porter writes that "unfortunately, the Aquino government never treated land reform as a priority issue until after the tragic deaths of KMP demonstrators on 22 January."<sup>34</sup>

Time and again the Aquino leadership gave way to landlord pressure. Like the previous regime, it has not exerted the political will to grant the long-held dream of the Filipino peasants. Failure to address this issue has eroded her popularity among the biggest sector of the Philippine population.

The main impediment to any government-sponsored land reform program is that it never really answers the central issue of rural poverty, and that is landlessness. Rather the focus has always been on the rebellion in the countryside. The government cannot seem to realize that the rebels are not the inventors of rural poverty and unrest, although they thrive on the former.

Meanwhile, the rebellion in the countryside continues to grow despite the claims of the government forces that they are winning the war.

Time may not be on the side of the Aquino government. A new political power is emerging in the countryside. The NDF-led peasants are replacing the traditional landlord-dominated political structure. Through its radical program of agrarian revolution of lowering land rent, distribution of confiscated lands of absentee landlords, cooperatives and peasant organizing the insurgents continue to expand considerably.

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<sup>34</sup> See "Counter Insurgency in the Philippines: Aquino Was Right," *S AIS* [School of Advanced International Studies] *Review* 7 (Summer-Fall 1987): 107.

# PATTERNS OF POLITICAL CHANGES AND THEIR SOCIAL IMPACT IN MINDANAO AND SULU AFTER THE FEBRUARY 1986 ELECTIONS: A PERSPECTIVE

By ARTEMIO D. PALONGPALONG

## I. Preliminary Remarks

Government administration and the dynamics of politics of Mindanao and Sulu archipelago since the ascendancy of the Aquino government two years ago appear to be going towards a certain discernible direction, affecting various ethnocultural and ethnolinguistic communities in the area, as well as political movements and political groups such as the Moro National Liberation Front, the National Democratic Front, and the Mindanao Independence Movement.

More concretely, there has been a perceptible partial circulation of political and economic elites among the Christian, hilltribe, and Muslim communities. Exceptions are those represented by some new emerging leaders who do not come from established political dynasties and powerful economic blocs.

The *lumadnons*, or highland tribes, have awakened to the socio-economic and political realities of the eighties. Their days of isolation seem to be at an end, threatened by the majority population's multi-level intrusion. Their self-sufficient economy is being transformed into a monetized one. Their cultural heritage and natural resources are undergoing commercialization.

The two best-known insurgent organizations — the Moro National Liberation Front (including the MILF and the MNLF-Reformist factions) and the National Democratic Front — have experienced intermittent and alternating truce or reconciliation, and the rise of tense relations or armed hostilities with the National Government.

The accumulated adverse impacts of these various developments and changes since early 1986 have caused a steady socio-economic stagnation, if not down-turn, in Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago. The quality of life among the Mindanaoans, Basilanons, Tausug and Samal has deteriorated, creating a fertile breeding ground of fissiparous political tendencies and social fragmentation.

Consequently, Mindanao today speaks with different and weakened voices. Its people are disunited. Its leadership is still largely ineffectual due



largely to its fragmented population. Everybody feels the need for new and effective leadership of Mindanao, as multifarious problems exist and drag down efforts to rebuild the south socially, economically and politically.

## **II. Partial Circulation of Political-Economic Elites**

Political leadership in the south has changed over the past two or three years. Erstwhile leaders under Marcos are now playing the role of oppositionists, unless they practise turncoatism.

The newly-elected or -installed leaders come basically from the same class as the present oppositionists. In an area where capitalism has made inroads long ago but minus the industrial components, the leaders who have the money, even if they were suppressed for around two decades, were the only ones who could challenge the status quo.

As illustrative examples, the developments in Sulu, Zamboanga del Sur, Agusan Provinces, and Lanao Provinces are worthy of mention.

Governor Tupay Loong of Sulu and his clan used to be identified with the past administration. So was the late Governor Mus Iquiedo. The Loongs, during the January 18, 1988 elections, became the standard bearers of PDP-Laban who battled Officer-in-Charge Indanan Ani of the United Nationalist Organization (UNIDO). Tupay Loong won as Governor, after a series of legal skirmishes that included the issue of fraudulent voters' list. Nonetheless, earlier (in May 1987) during the Congressional elections, the brother of Indanan Ani won a seat in Congress, along with the other winner, Abdusakur Tan, of the politically powerful Tan family of Jolo.

Thus, the Loongs have staged a spectacular political comeback. However, the Anis and Tans have also managed to hold on to congressional representation of the province.

Zamboanga del Sur and Pagadian City politics constitutes another excellent example of partial circulation of political and economic elites in Mindanao. For around fifteen years, the Concerned Citizens Aggrupation (CCA) leaders of this big province suffered immeasurable setbacks in the hands of the dictatorship. Harassments, election anomalies, and other forms appeared to be the chief weapons used against them. When Cory Aquino rose to power, these CCA stalwarts became the new government leaders (Officers-in-Charge) who later were elected into office during the January, 1988 elections.

In terms of socio-economic class, these newly-elected leaders come from moneyed groups (e.g., agribusiness leaders and landlord families). This is basically the same class to which the ousted leaders of Marcos belong.

There have surely been differences in principles between the two groups, as exemplified by their conflicts on the use of political authoritarianism in the country. Nonetheless both belong to the same moneyed groups.

Substantially and generally, the same pattern of political change was witnessed in Agusan. The last local elections saw the defeat of the Plaza clan, headed by Congressman Democrito Plaza. Valentina, his wife and the lady ex-Governor of Agusan del Sur, was defeated by the incumbent Governor Paredes, who is not exactly from the elite, but is an acknowledged technocrat and development management expert. Figurado, a long-time City Mayor of Butuan, along with the wife of Congressman Edelmiro Amante of Agusan del Norte (a close ally of D. O. Plaza), were defeated by the incumbent Governor Rama, one of the sons-in-law of Cagayan de Oro politician and multi-millionaire Pedro "Oloy" Roa. These Agusan political changes are incredible, considering that the Plasas were politically and financially well-entrenched for over ten years.

In Lanao province, the Dimaporos were denied the provincial base of political power. Congressman Ali Dimaporo's daughter-in-law (who is a daughter of the late, popular Governor Quibranza) lost to candidate Abalos for Governor of Lanao del Norte. The same thing happened to Ali's younger brother in Lanao del Sur. The big winners were administration candidates Abalos and Atty. Saidamen Pangarungan. Congressman Abdullah Dimaporo and Ali Dimaporo still represent these provinces in Congress. However, the local administration is no longer under their control.

The recent winners in these provinces were, by stereotype social reckoning, not popularly considered as having reached the same level of political and economic power as the Dimaporos, Alontos, Dianalans, and Lucmans. This is not to say that they are without money. Nonetheless, their being administration candidates enabled them to secure enough popularity and perhaps logistical support, which proved to be crucial factors that determined the outcome of the contests.

These examples abound throughout Mindanao, with only slight variations: those who were associated with the past regime are now playing the role of critic, fiscalizer, or plain oppositionist. Those who now hold political power and wield tremendous business and economic influence were in the ranks of the opposition against the Marcos regime.

A more intensive and geographically-focused study of the political leadership of Tandag, Surigao del Sur, was conducted by Wulfranie A. Arrubio recently. Her findings show that, over the years, the same socio-economic class has dominated the politics of this capital town.<sup>1</sup> Her findings appear to coincide with this researcher's general political observations of the south.

Whether these findings validate Pareto's original concept of circulation of elites needs further additional substantiation and more intensive studies.

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<sup>1</sup> Wulfranie A. Arrubio, "An Overview of the Nature and Pattern of Political Leadership in Tandag, Surigao del Sur", a paper read before the 8th National Conference on Local History (General Santos City: Mindanao State University, 18-20 September, 1987).

This is because the findings show some 'deviants': new leaders not connected with old rulers have been voted into power. Their individual and collective political influences, though, do not yet match those of the political and economic elites.

That these new leaders, obviously with different orientations, have surfaced at all is a welcome phenomenon. That they will develop into what some call the "modernizing elites" remains to be seen in the coming years.

### III. New Recruits into the System: Exceptions to the Circulation of Elite Theory

The newly emerging leaders, springing from non-privileged classes, have managed to get elected as senators, governors and city and town mayors in Mindanao. Mostly professionals, a number of them dedicated to certain socio-political causes, these new leaders are generally with little financial resources and un beholden to vested economic interests and political dynasties. Thus, until the opposite happens, they represent opportunities to develop more dedicated leadership and render unselfish service in the name of development. That mostly are professionals who may also be cause-oriented would mean they have potentials in leading the area towards new directions. Moreover, their recruitment into the political system could serve as an inspiration to talented and ambitious but poor young people who have dreams of becoming political leaders. Their hold on the structures of governance presents an alternative to the *rigodon* of political and economic elites.

In terms of ideology, however, these new leaders differ much; hence, they are not united.

Senator Pimentel's *Partido Demokratiko ng Pilipinas* (PDP), a left-of-center party is far different from Reuben Canoy's *Mindanao Independence Movement* (MIM). The first tends to be socialistic and nationalistic; the other, although not a formal party in the conventional sense, seeks rather discretely to gain support among both Christians and Muslims so that the independence of Mindanao could be realized. Both groups in turn differ from Homobono Adaza's *Minandao Alliance*, the strength of which is largely based in Misamis and portions of Davao.

The *Concerned Citizens Aggrupation* of Climaco, Ariosa, and Arao<sup>2</sup> has fought for several reforms. One outstanding feature of its program is to foster harmonious Muslim-Christian relations, a party plank which had served the province in good stead in the face of the uneasy and tense relations between the MNLF and the national government over the past two years.

<sup>2</sup> Climaco was City Mayor of Zamboanga City until his assassination. Ariosa is the incumbent City Mayor of Pagadian City, capital city of Zamboanga del Sur.

Nonetheless, this platform differs from either Canoy's *MIM* or any of the other Mindanao political groups.

Outside of these political groups, some of the newly emerging leaders are either members and leaders of PDP-Laban, Lakas Ng Bansa, etc., or are with the cause-oriented groups such as ATOM, BANDILA, and others.

Despite the weaknesses these new leaders may be experiencing, such as lack of proper networking and influence over economic-business organizations, lack of political clout in the traditional sense (e.g., patron-client relations, etc.), they represent the fresh hope for reforms in various areas of regional life. These areas include organizing and managing an effective and efficient bureaucracy and identifying and pushing for programs of socio-economic reconstruction of Mindanao, Basilan, and the Sulu archipelago in a manner that will upgrade the area materially (using the wealth of human and natural resources found there), and improve the life of Mindanaoans qualitatively. In the coming years, these two sets of reforms will be needed most, as more development programs financed from both domestic and external sources may be poured in the area.

#### **IV. The Role of the Cultural Communities**

The tribal communities, such as the Subanon of Zamboanga peninsula, the Manobo of Agusan and nearby areas, the Higaonon of Misamis, Camiguin and Bukidnon, the T'boli and Tiruray of Cotabato, the Mansaka, Bagobo and Bilaan of Davao, have been adversely affected by recent political developments. Occupying mostly the highlands of Mindanao, these tribal communities have been, in recent years, subjected to a lot of pressures.

Heavy migration of Christians from the Visayas and Luzon provinces have caused the natives to sell their lands to the new settlers, not knowing the full implications. For instance, the concept of ownership under the Torrens title system has not been internalized by them, while the settlers know it by heart. Forest resources, previously the natives' exclusive preserve, have been easily appropriated and exploited by more technologically- and financially-equipped business organizations owned and run by the elite among the majority population. Culturally, they have been slowly but steadily commercialized and debased — as a consequence of unplanned social interaction and development. The majority have brought with them materialistic, if not hedonistic, values. In this regard, the most pernicious are influences principally coming from leaders who possess what is called "the fast buck mentality".

In short, the cultural minorities of Mindanao, following changes in communication, transportation, and social mobility could no longer enjoy the luxury provided by the halcyon days of communal life. Worse, their rights,

privileges and wealth (communal or individual) have been trampled upon in a world that has shrunk considerably.<sup>3</sup>

The cultural communities have organized themselves, as a form of response to changes that originate outside their own communities.

For example, the Mindanao Highlanders Association, the TRICAP and Philippine Association of Cultural Communities (PACCI) — all being multi-ethnic bodies — have been actively promoting the interests of the cultural communities. In the spheres of government and politics, they have been no less active.

Some of them have risen to high positions in the government since the dawn of the Aquino era. Such agencies as the Ministry of Agriculture, the now defunct Office for Muslim Affairs and Cultural Communities (OMACC), and others have been venues of such participation.

Recent developments concerning the defunct OMACC and the newly-structured OSCC (Office for Southern Culture Communities) have unfortunately dampened the spirits of these leaders. Charges of favoritism and violation of Civil Service rules have been hurled by those who were yanked out of the payroll, following the reorganization last year. Until now, the government has not acted decisively on these issues.<sup>4</sup> The probable danger of such inaction is that some disgruntled leaders may decide to revolt and exacerbate Mindanao conflicts. Such an eventuality must be avoided since the Mindanao highlands constitute the strategic place where political initiatives and the viability of any regime in the south will be truly tested. Besides, their ancestral lands hold the true comparative advantage of the Philippines: forest, mineral, and other precious resources, which are less abundant in central and north Philippines.

The minorities have already been actively involved in the underground movement in recent years. Leaders who were tapped to develop the peace and reconciliation program of the Government since two years back have estimated that approximately thirty to forty percent of those who went to the hills and fought the government in Mindanao are minorities. Lack of socio-economic opportunities relative to the majority and having seen the

<sup>3</sup> Fr. Sean McDonagh, SSC, listed the following problems faced by cultural communities of Mindanao: land resources; timber and forest resources; terror; conflicts over land titles; differing cultural ideas about land ownership, tenure and use; mines; and others in his paper. "The Future of Tribal Filipinos", 8th National Conference on Local History (General Santos City: MSU, September, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> In a letter to the Editors of several dailies in Manila, cultural community leaders of Mindanao's various regions, represented by Datu Mahanong Perez, Atty. Joseph Banghulot, Atty. Emmanuel de Guzman, and others, dated October 12, 1987, these leaders complained against the use of "skeletal forces" in the OMACC's running of cultural community affairs, instead of renewing the expired appointment or respecting incumbent Regional Directors and other officials. The legal basis was Executive Order No. 177-A, which extended for another 120 days from May 8, 1987, the last day for reorganization of the new office provided for in Executive Order No. 177 and Executive Order No. 122-C which created the Office for Southern Cultural Communities.

brutalities of war right on their homelands, these peace-loving souls have fled and joined socio-political and even religious movements in the hope of protecting their lands and homes. In the process, they lay their own families open to retaliatory strikes by other forces. And thus, the animosities right away begin. These developments and changes ought to be managed on a top priority basis, for the sake of peace.

Beyond the above considerations, the hilltribes exhibit similar political malaise as the two other communities. An example of this is the body charged with developing the cultural communities, the (OSCC). The organization experiences a miniature circulation of elites, which change has taken place at the expense of tried and tested Mindanao leaders. That the positions being contested are largely appointive, not elective, does not diminish the personal anguish and dangers to peace. Additionally, a question may be posed, thus: "Why must the cultural communities, just newly initiated into the world of Philippine politics with all its defects and aberrations, have to follow the footsteps of their Christian and Muslim brothers in the unending and barren cycle of circulating elites and threats of national dismemberment?" The cultural integrity and unity of the hilltribes should not be made victims in the name of modernity and forced national conformity.

#### **V. Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)-National Government Conflict: Differing Concepts of Regional Autonomy**

Just as the circulation of political elites, and the rise of new leaders, hitherto never linked with business empires or political dynasties, has not so far produced social and economic upliftment of Mindanao, the revival of the National Liberation Front talks/negotiations for the establishment of regional autonomy has not yet resulted in peace. The reason for this failure: differing concepts of regional autonomy and a rather bull-headed attitude on both sides of avoiding compromises.

The National Government fielded four peace negotiators in succession over the past two years: Senator Agapito Aquino, Senator Aquilino Pimentel, Ambassador Emmanuel Pelaez, and finally Secretary of Health Alfredo Bengzon, as negotiation panel heads. Essentially, the National Government through the negotiation panel has sought to implement the Tripoli Agreement provisions. In this regard, it has followed the footsteps of the past regime, as exemplified by its avowed desire to go through "constitutional processes" in determining which provinces and cities ought to be included in the autonomous area, which was interpreted as a plebiscite or referendum to determine the majority opinion. It is noteworthy that, in 1977, when the Agreement was first implemented by then President Ferdinand E. Marcos, the provinces of Davao del Sur and Palawan were excluded presumably because of the referendum results. These places rejected the idea of establishing an area of autonomy. By following the 'traditional' approach to the problem, the Aquino Government, in effect, favors the minimalist approach (in terms

of geographic extent of area of autonomy in the south and power-and-authority sharing between it and the MNLF).

In addition, it can also be interpreted that with the Regional Consultative Council (RCC) serving as the transitory decision-making structure for the autonomous region, the permanent machinery for decision-making in the regional will be evolved. It will therefore be a new, transitory structure different from the operating regional autonomous governments in region 9 and 12.

On the other hand, the Moro National Liberation Front has differed, over the past two years, from the National Government's concept of Autonomous Region on at least three counts, namely: a) extent of territory (MNLF proposed the whole of Mindanao, Sulu, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, and Palawan); b) the extent of powers, functions, and prerogatives to be given the Regional Autonomous Government; and c) the manner by which the autonomous region will be established. The Government wants to determine the scope through a plebiscite, while the MNLF has hinted or even quite explicitly wanted that it be declared by Congress and by the Executive as such. Further, the MNLF wants the 60,000 MNLF troops to act as the regional security force, while the Government wants the power to decide which elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines will be assigned within the Region. Furthermore, in foreign affairs, MNLF wants the Autonomous Region to have concurrent powers, while the National Government wants exclusive authority in that aspect of national life. The same pattern of difference between the Government and the MNLF in power- and authority-sharing can be seen in many other areas of regional life.<sup>5</sup>

The MNLF actually swings in a pendulum-like movement between secessionism and acceptance of regional autonomy. During hostile periods, such as the time that immediately followed after the declaration of martial law in September, 1972, MNLF espouses outright secessionism from the Philippine Republic. And during times of truce, as when Cory Aquino rose to power in February, 1986, it has a tendency to accept genuine autonomy as the solution to the so-called Moro problem.

In principle, there is no big disagreement between the two parties on the need for regional autonomy, except that they could not agree on certain points. There is also much disagreement or a wide gap of views on which factor should command greater weight: historical antecedents, such as when Muslims were predominant in the south (e.g., pre-World War II) or the present realities, such as the fact that Christians have more population and that they occupy wider territory.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See the proposal of the Moro National Liberation Front to the Philippine Government Negotiations Panel, headed by Ambassador Emmanuel N. Pelaez, in 1987. See *Peace Betrayed* (MNLF-RP Negotiations, January 1-July 25, 1987), p. 12-15.

<sup>6</sup> B. R. Rodil, "Bangsa Filipino in Cotabato: A Game of Numbers? Or a Matter of Fundamental Right?", 8th National Conference on Local History (Gen. Santos; MSU, 1987).

The region was on the verge of another shooting war last March, 1988. War could have started had the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) approved full membership for the MNLF. Leaders like General Fidel Ramos and Secretary Raul Manglapus expressed similar ideas on the issue. These ideas had one common denominator: that if OIC accepted the MNLF as full member, it was tantamount to an open armed conflict between MNLF and the National Government.

Additionally, the Regional Consultative Council (RCC) is being organized, presumably to start the process of establishing regional autonomy.

The aforementioned two developments, one on the MNLF side and the other, on the part of the Government, illustrate very eloquently two pathways toward "federalism". MNLF's application for membership in the Organization of Islamic Countries may be a tactical device to secure the maximum extent of territory, authority, and powers, as a form of federal set-up for Mindanao and Sulu archipelago.

In order to strengthen the foundation of peace and economic progress, it is therefore very crucial that lasting bridges of understanding be built among Christians, Muslims, and *Lumadnons*. Not very far from that foundation is a determined effort to reach compromises on three or more areas of difference between the Government and the MNLF.

Although the Muslim problem is a different issue altogether vis-a-vis the political changes among the Christian population, the socio-economic impact of both factors are similar — that is, these have served as stumbling blocks to peace, socio-economic recovery and cultural upliftment of Mindanao.

President Aquino can still reverse the situation, given that peace is established and that enough resources are poured into the region. Her recent visit to Tawi-Tawi and Zamboanga where she offered ₱1B for development fund, is a step toward that direction. The involvement of new leaders, emerging or yet to emerge, and the three major communities constitute another step. To effectuate the second step, massive organizational and coordinative programs for change and productivity have to be pursued.

## **VI. Changes in the NDF-National Government Confrontation**

The relations between the National Government and the National Democratic Front, led by the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA), just like relations between the government and the MNLF, started on a hopeful note in 1986 but ended up in hostilities in 1987 and 1988.

During the last few years of Marcos' rule, hostilities between the central government and the NDF were at their height. The success of the CPP-



NPA's Davao experiment in urban guerrilla warfare threatened the Government in the south. If Davao City is considered the urban center, the highlands and agricultural areas of Bukidnon-Agusan-Cotabato and Davao del Norte borders and mid-portion of Zamboanga Peninsula are considered the rural areas of Mindanao. Following Maoist doctrine, Davao can be surrounded and cut off from the masses who live in rural areas and producers of staple crops and commodities.

In time, opposing forces slowed down CPP-NPA successes. The military, in tandem with rightist groups such as *Tadtad* and *Nakasaka* slowly cut off portions of territories and communities which were under CPP-NPA control. In the second and third year of the Aquino administration, especially after the electoral exercises were completed, the military establishment launched a rather strong offensive following the capture of Col. Gregorio Honasan, whose attempt at a coup d'etat was largely based on an accusation that the Government was ineffective vis-a-vis the insurgencies and that liberal democracy cannot survive under the new regime. To prove that the accusations were unfounded, the military had to hit at the revolutionaries very hard.

Today, the battlegrounds between the NDF of Mindanao and the Government have been more or less concentrated around the Mt. Malindang (Zamboanga peninsula) area, borders of Bukidnon and Misamis Oriental, highlands of Agusan and Surigao as well as the mountainous portions of Davao, Lanao and Cotabato provinces.

The restricted or more sharply-defined area of present armed hostilities are no less disturbing and costly. But it affords more breathing space for civilian populations of the unaffected places to engage in agricultural, fishing, manufacturing, commercial and other pursuits. If continued a little longer, it should increase productivity among the Christians in due time.

In effect, present changes shifted the theatre of armed conflict to the homeland of the cultural communities with all the negative ramifications.

## VII. Stunted Socio-Economic Growth

The contemporary socio-economic picture of the south may be considered a product of accumulated negative impact of political changes in the past four years, including the first two years of the Aquino regime. The exceptions to this generalization are the rise of new, dedicated leaders who come from the professional groups and the recent attempt of President Aquino to give more financial support to Region 9.<sup>7</sup> Thus for the National Government to succeed in bringing progress to the South, it has to be pre-

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<sup>7</sup> Referring to the P1B financial resources for the development of Region IX. In addition, there have been projects being implemented to develop Mindanao. See Office of Muslim Affairs, *Muslim Development: Two Years Under the Aquino Administration*, N. D.

licated on the Aquino leadership working in tandem with new leaders, aside from educational or moral and bureaucratic reforms.

Right now, it is difficult to arrest the downward trend, socially and economically speaking.

Firstly, the peace and order situation is not encouraging to investors and entrepreneur. The crime rates, for example, of regions X and XI were the worst in the country in February, 1988, averaging monthly crime rate of 65.50 and 5.38 respectively. Regions XII and IX, the two other regions of Mindanao, averaged 21.88 AMCR and 14.24 AMCR, respectively, putting them on the seventh and ninth spots.<sup>8</sup> Last year, from January to June, 1987 Regions XI and X also occupied first and second places in terms of AMCR, having respectively posted the records of 38.48 and 28.54.<sup>9</sup> The slightly increasing crime rates in the four regions of Mindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi followed the national trend. But the records of Regions X and XI have been the worst cases all over the country.

Secondly, the magnitude of poverty per one thousand families in the four regions in 1985 — Region IX, 311.7; Region X, 375.8; Region XI, 428.8; and Region XII, 280.0 — occupy roughly the middle spots (Region XII, sixth; Region X, ninth; Region IX, eleventh and Region XII, twelfth), if all 13 regions are ranked in terms of number of poor families. This is not exactly bad. But viewed in relation to total poverty threshold, which is the amount in pesos of monthly income needed to fully satisfy basic family living requirements, the four regions occupy *fourth* (Region XI), *fifth* (Region X), *eighth* (Region XII), and *tenth* (Region IX), respectively.<sup>10</sup> This means a lot of things, such as high prices of prime commodities, due to low income of the population, or lack of production and supply, or both.

Illustrating further the difficult socio-economic picture, Regions X and XI, for instance, require ₱2,388 and ₱2,262, respectively, per month per family of six members to live decent lives or fulfill basic living requirements. In the provinces of Mindanao, families with both husband and wife being public school teachers or that both are employes of public or private agencies/firms will have difficult time reaching that level of gross monthly income. And, really, how many of the Mindanaoans are employees or have incomes comparable to them?

The price indices for all four regions (collapsing price indices of food, beverages and tobacco, clothing, housing and repairs, fuel, light and water, services, and miscellaneous category), in fact, progressively increased from the last years of Marcos regime (the years 1983, 1984, and 1985) to 1986.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Quoted from An Occasional Paper dated February 17, 1988, a study made by the staff of one national office.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> National Economic and Development Authority, *Philippine Statistical Yearbook*, 1987, pp. 129-132. See also *Philippine Statistical Yearbook*, 1986.

These socio-economic problems are what the earlier-mentioned structural reforms and productivity must squarely face.

### VIII. Recapitulation and Some Recommendations

The patterns of political changes as we see it do not apply to all cultural and social groups all at the same time. Each community has its own patterns of political change, since in Mindanao each community largely functions on its own.

In terms of changes of political leadership, the three communities exhibit similar patterns: some circulation of elite has taken place.

The socio-economic impact of political changes has, so far, been characterized by stagnating, if not outright, worsening, regional economic and social life. High prices of prime commodities, constructing supplies, high incidence of poverty and crime rates in practically all four regions of Mindanao are the components of the worsening social life.

In view of these developments, there is, in general, a need to further broaden the base of social participation in political and economic life of Mindanao. The election of new leaders other than those who belong to the established political and economic elite is, in this regard, a good sign.

The present trend whereby the hilltribes' home areas have largely become the theatre of war in Mindanao is unfortunate. For this will only result in further deterioration of Mindanao's cultural communities. These cultural communities constitute the balancing factor in the region. They are the third member of a triadic relationship among Christians, Musiims and *Lumadnons*.

Moreover, in a materialist analysis, the hilltribes' homeland hold the most important resources for the entire country: mines, rivers for hydro-electric power, forest resources of all types; and that their lands are the last space for agricultural expansion, along with the seabeds, when the Philippine population grows tremendously at the next turn of the century.

As regards the Moro problem, there is a necessity to negotiate once more. The crucial points where the two parties differ — extent of territorial coverage of autonomy, power and authority sharing, and whether to start an autonomous region you need to undertake a plebiscite or you simply pass a comprehensive legislative act, — have to be studied more carefully with the end in view of arriving at acceptable solutions.

And for long-term purposes, it should be a policy of the national government to crisscross Mindanao with all types of roads, communication and maritime infrastructures in order to integrate Mindanao and Sulu further into the national body politic. But the system of governance will need a decentralization (e.g., federal set-up) policy in word and in practice.

# TOWARDS A DEMOCRATIC PEACE AND PEOPLE'S SECURITY

By FRANCISCO NEMENZO and TERESA S. ENCARNACION

## *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.

# INTERNAL ARMED CONFLICT IN THE PHILIPPINES AND THE QUEST FOR PEACE IN THE PERIOD OF DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

By EDMUNDO GARCIA

## *Armed Conflicts in the Third World*

There are relatively few studies on conflict resolution in the Third World. Given the importance of internal armed conflict in countries of the Third World, this situation would suggest that a reduction of political and military tension in diverse regions of conflict would greatly contribute to the process of global peace. At the same time, this effort would help bring about the realization of a collective aspiration for peace especially in those areas where there is a clamor for popular participation and economic development. Besides, it has become increasingly clear that wars in the Third World are generally prolonged and indecisive: Wars in the Third World seldom resolve the issues for which they were begun.

It is for these reasons that a study on the resolution of internal armed conflict in a Third World country like the Philippines becomes relevant. The origins of the conflict are historical, its nature structural and its consequences complex. Yet, precisely because the Filipino people put down a dictatorship and embarked on the path towards democratization it is worth asking how they can now best build a just society which alone makes possible the attainment of lasting peace. It is equally relevant to explore how a people can resolve their differences while respecting human rights; how a nation can achieve development while respecting the rights of minorities; how a society can ensure justice for all under the rule of law guided by a vision that will empower the majority who are powerless and poor.

The fall of authoritarian rulers in the Philippines and various countries in Latin America during the mid-1980s raised expectations that long-standing internal armed conflicts could finally be resolved and lasting peace achieved. The advent of civilian rule seemed to have brought about an end to the politics of repression and the militarization of politics that had characterized a number of Third World countries during the past three decades. The political upheavals also focused attention on the profound causes of social unrest in these countries: massive poverty, social inequality

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Condensed version of a paper presented at a peace conference in Oslo, Norway, on August 1, 1988.

and injustice, the violation of basic human and political rights, and the loss or diminution of national sovereignty.

### *Background to the Conflict*

The Philippines provides an example of a country in the Third World confronted by the challenge of protracted internal armed conflict. After an authoritarian regime was replaced by a civilian government, the elusive quest for a durable peace remains. It is, therefore, the task of this paper to explore a path that can bring about a just and lasting peace. At the same time, it probes into the possibilities of a political settlement through political negotiations as a basic approach to the resolution of internal armed conflict. To do so, concrete measures are examined to help bring about the process and realize the aspirations of a people in pursuit of a just peace.

In the Philippines, the roots of the present armed conflict can be traced to the politics of exclusion and the practice of economic exploitation that date back to the colonial period. In the aftermath of independence, successive governments failed to respond to the needs of the majority who remained poor and landless while power was effectively held by the privileged few. Agrarian unrest exploded into a serious armed challenge in Central Luzon in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Government responded with counter-insurgency warfare supported by U.S. armaments and advice. The communists suffered a setback but the roots of the problem were not thoroughly addressed. Inequality, injustice, foreign domination deepened in the intervening years. Social unrest was articulated in the parliament of the streets in the early 1970s before martial law was imposed in 1972. Declared in the name of national security, martial law destroyed democracy totally and resulted in the loss of freedom and in economic deprivation for the majority.

In February 1986, the power of the people brought down the Marcos dictatorship. This provided a new opportunity to chart a course different from that of the past.

It was a political upheaval with an unfinished agenda. Truly representative democratic structures had to be built while creating a just economic order. Addressing the needs of the majority in the period of transition was crucial if democracy and development were to be pursued side by side. It also seemed the best and surest path to peace.

The first steps taken by government reflected a firm democratic direction, and opened the possibilities for ending nearly two decades of internal armed conflict.

However, during the first two years of the new government, five major coup attempts took place engineered by military factions associated with

the deposed order or the advocates of national security. Vigilantes, a majority of whom were armed, proliferated throughout the country performing counter-insurgency work in an atmosphere of political intolerance. Human rights violations continued to take place. In the meantime, urgent social reform measures like agrarian reform were neither comprehensive nor adequate enough to meet the basic demands of the majority of peasants who worked the lands without owning them. Ironically, it was after the massacre of peasants near the foot of the bridge at Mendiola when the peace talks broke down.

### *The Process of Democratization*

The period of transition from dictatorship to democracy in the Philippines has been difficult and complex. A Constitution has been ratified, and civilian political leaders have been elected into office or taken over power; formal democratic structures have been put in place, but numerous problems still remain. Not only have internal armed conflict intensified or continued, but the attempts or the threats of military coup d'états have persisted. In part, this explains the military influence in the formulation of public policy.

Moreover, the exercise of effective and adequate political participation for the majority of the people remains difficult. Political tolerance and pluralism which characterize most working democracies have been honored more in their breach. Death squads masquerading as armed vigilantes continue to violate basic human rights, exacerbating social and ethnic conflicts. The peasants who constitute the majority in the rural areas have remained landless and poor, while the workers in the urban centers who are employed have been poorly paid. The underemployed and the jobless live side by side in mushrooming slum areas. In the meantime, cultural communities and indigenous peoples seek to protect their rights and improve their lives.

The transition to democracy is a delicate process. In fact, democracy itself is under siege from forces which seek to prevent change. Democracy cannot be consolidated unless there is economic development that is both self-reliant and equitable. And, development cannot take place unless there is peace and popular participation. Is this path a dead-end therefore? Or, are there opportunities which we can identify and possibilities we can explore to bring about a situation where democracy can be based on social justice, and development can take place in an atmosphere of a durable peace?

### *The 1986 Peace Initiatives*

Peace initiatives were taken by the newly-installed government of President Corazon Aquino at the outset of the transition from dictatorship to democracy. Not only were political prisoners released and a highly-

respected human rights committee formed, but peace talks took place leading to an unprecedented cease-fire agreement that began on 10 December 1986.<sup>1</sup> After charges of truce violations and countercharges of continued abuses committed by security and para-military forces, the initial atmosphere of confidence broke down. The killing of peasants who marched towards the presidential palace to demand the urgent implementation of land reform provoked the suspension of the short-lived peace talks as representatives of the armed resistance lamented the inability of government to control the military.

In the aftermath of the breakdown to the sixty-day cease-fire in February 1987, the Philippine government declared an all-out war while the New People's Army of the Communist Party of the Philippines escalated their offenses and brought the war into the cities. There have been numerous deaths; violations of human rights have increased, democratic space has been threatened, social and economic reforms side-tracked and made more difficult. The aspiration for peace which was universally held at the onset of the period of transition has constantly been blocked and frustrated.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law*

Nevertheless, this does not mean that there are no possibilities for taking action that can eventually bring about peace. Measures to prevent the further deterioration of the situation and the escalation of the violence can be taken. If violent conflict cannot be avoided, as in some situations they cannot, then at the very least violent behaviour can be regulated so as to create an atmosphere more conducive perhaps to subsequent political negotiation when a more opportune moment presents itself with better chances of success.

#### *Principles of Humanitarian Law*

In the first place, international humanitarian law in periods of internal armed conflict can be recognized and enforced. The 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1977 Protocol II which deals specifically with internal armed conflict provide norms for the conduct of armed combatants.

A summary of the fundamental rules of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts was formulated by the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1979:

1. Persons *hors de combat* and those who do not take a direct part in hostilities are entitled to respect for their lives and moral and

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<sup>1</sup> Dramatic peace overtures were also made to the Moro National Liberation Front in Mindanao and the Cordillera People's Liberation Army in the highlands of Northern Luzon.

<sup>2</sup> For an analysis of the sources of the situation of violence and the dilemmas of the peace process in the Philippines, confer Ed Garcia, "The Search for an Authentic Peace," *The Filipino Quest*. Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1988.



physical integrity. They shall in all circumstances be protected and treated humanely without any adverse distinctions.

2. It is forbidden to kill or injure an enemy who surrenders or who is *hors de combat*.

3. The wounded and sick shall be collected and cared for by the party to the conflict which has them in its power. Protection also covers medical personnel, establishments, transports and equipment. The emblem of the Red Cross or the Red Crescent is the sign of such protection and must be respected.

4. Captured combatants and civilians under the authority of an adverse party are entitled to respect for their lives, dignity, personal rights and convictions. They shall be protected against all acts of violence and reprisals. They shall have the right to correspond with their families and to receive relief.

5. Everyone shall be entitled to benefit from fundamental judicial guarantees. No one shall be held responsible for an act he has not committed. No one shall be subjected to physical or mental torture, corporal punishment or cruel or degrading treatment.

6. Parties to a conflict and members of their armed forces do not have an unlimited choice of methods and means of warfare. It is prohibited to employ weapons or methods of warfare of a nature to cause unnecessary losses or excessive suffering.

7. Parties to a conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants in order to spare civilian population and property. Neither the civilian population as such nor civilian persons shall be the object of attack. Attacks shall be directed solely against military objectives.<sup>3</sup>

A member of the International Court of Justice, Mohammed Bedjooui, has pointed out that the two main underlying principles of humanitarian law revolve around the distinction between combatants and non-combatants who should be spared in situations of internal armed conflict and the obligation not to cause unnecessary harm to combatants.<sup>4</sup> In countries where political polarization has resulted in bitter civil strife the victims of violence have been largely the civilian population caught in the crossfire of conflict. At the very least, the observance of humanitarian law and the rules of war will lessen the level of military and political tension thus making it less

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<sup>3</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *Fundamental Rules of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts*, cited in *Modern Wars. The Humanitarian Challenge*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>4</sup> M. Bedjaoul, "Humanitarian Law at a Time of Failing National and International Consensus," *Modern Wars. The Humanitarian Challenge*, p. 11.

difficult at some point to explore negotiated forms of resolving the conflict and addressing its sources.<sup>5</sup>

The Philippine government ratified Protocol II on 10 December 1986 which entered into force on 11 June 1987. In the meantime, the National Democratic Front has recognized the same Protocol II which it had mentioned in its initial proposal for a negotiated political settlement addressed to the Negotiating Panel of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines dated 23 December 1986.<sup>6</sup> In a subsequent letter to the independent non-governmental organization, the Coalition for Peace, it reiterated its "adherence and willingness to abide by its (Protocol II) provisions."<sup>7</sup>

### *Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions*

Although it can be argued that Protocol II cannot be deemed automatically operative since some of the requirements like the control of a significant part of the territory by the armed party opposing the government are not met by the situation from a strict literal interpretation, one can still turn to Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949. Article 3 applies to internal disturbances and tensions which have been defined as "all situations of conflict inside a nation, serious enough to give rise to significant humanitarian concerns."<sup>8</sup>

Common Article 3 in part demands that "belligerents shall leave non-combatants outside the area of operations and refrain from deliberately attacking them." Furthermore, it is based on internationally-recognized human rights principles such as "the protection of the integrity of the person, the right to life, freedom from torture and maltreatment . . . the right to a fair trial and the application of the rule of law . . ."<sup>9</sup>

The linkage of human rights and humanitarian law provides another necessary step to ensure a broad and comprehensive coverage to protect both the combatants and the entire civilian population. While humanitarian law protects parties engaged in armed conflict and individuals involved in situations of confrontation, the principles of human rights covers the whole range of basic political and civil, social and economic, cultural and collective rights of peoples.

<sup>5</sup> Ed Garcia, "The Search for an Authentic Peace," *The Filipino Quest*, pp. 262-270.

<sup>6</sup> National Democratic Front (NDF) Negotiating Panel Letter, Annex A, "A Record of the Peace Initiative," Negotiating Panel for Peace, GRP, 1987.

<sup>7</sup> "NDF Letter to the Coalition for Peace, April 1988. An interesting example of a similar initiative is the proposal from the alliance of the Frente Democratico Revolucionario and the Frente Farabundo Marti de Liberacion Nacional to the President of the Republic of El Salvador and the high command of the Armed Forces for an immediate negotiation toward a political solution to the conflict signed on 26 May 1987. Its first provision was a "proposal for a far-reaching agreement for the humanization and the reduction of the economic, social and political impact of the war."

<sup>8</sup> Asbjorn Eide, "Respect of Humanitarian Norms in International Disturbances and Tensions," *Modern War. The Humanitarian Challenge*, p. 104.

<sup>9</sup> Asbjorn Eide, *Ibid.*, p. 107.

### *Human Rights and Peace Education*

To protect human rights and enforce humanitarian law, it is necessary to embark on a campaign of human rights and peace education. Furthermore, it is essential that the task is entrusted not only to government but that it be taken up by independent non-governmental organizations, institutions and social movements. Credible national agencies that can sustain the effort, monitor the situation, enforce basic standards, and bring together a constituency committed to peace and human rights are therefore indispensable. It is commonly held that the most effective sanctions against those parties which violate human rights and humanitarian norms are public pressure and public opinion at home and abroad.

Moreover, the objective of government and those who seek to replace leaders who presently rule is to win the political allegiance and the adherence of the people. This is only possible in the long run if they pursue generally-accepted humanitarian principles and adhere to the rule of law, and thus gain the respect if not the support of their constituents.

### *People's Peace Councils*

It is for this reason that independent people's peace councils capable of monitoring the observance of human rights and humanitarian standards while willing to work for their enforcement are essential. In the case of the Philippines, credible religious leaders, academicians, professionals, and those engaged in non-governmental organizations and popular movements have been tapped to provide the people initially necessary for the task. In Bicol, the Visayas and parts of Mindanao, Church leaders and concerned citizens have come together in the task of peace-making. People's organizations have put up the Coalition for Peace to build a broader constituency for peace nationwide.

In parts of Central America, for example, the participation of the people in the peace process has taken a regional dimension. Emerging from the desire of Central Americans for peace in their countries and in the region as a whole, popular movements have come together to forge what has been called "Esquipulas de los Pueblos" (Esquipulas of the People) to put pressure on their respective governments to follow through on their 1987 Peace Accord. Four major sectors have taken the lead in advancing the peace process: the Church, the academe, the trade unions and people's organizations.<sup>10</sup> Among their major objectives is to put pressure on the Central American Presidents to meet once more and do so periodically as they had previously agreed. Another aim is to stress the importance of the international Verification and Monitoring Commission

<sup>10</sup> CRIES, "Whither Central America?," *Envio*, March 1988, p. 88. Also, Cesar Jerez, SJ and Xabier Gorostiaga, SJ, "Conference on Central America," held at Uppsala Kyrkans Hus, 27 May 1988.

without which it is difficult to "verify and monitor the fulfillment of the commitments contained" in the accord.<sup>11</sup>

To create the necessary climate wherein people respect the rule of law and the principle of political tolerance a program of human rights and peace education is essential. An education campaign undertaken by independent social movements through the mass media and in the schools and in public fora can contribute significantly to the effort. If a constituency for a just and lasting peace is to be built up then a sustained effort is necessary to raise the level of public awareness regarding the obstacles and possibilities of peace. In this manner, the priority of national policies that lead to the creation of a just society where peace is both principled and durable becomes understood and acceptable.

Seen in the context of various efforts both in the Philippines and in countries like Guatemala, El Salvador and Colombia, where ceasefire agreements broke down and peace talks between the respective governments and the armed movements collapsed, it is instructive to reflect on the role of a sustained demand made by the people and their organizations to ensure that a lasting peace prevails.

If governments or their armed forces and the armed insurgents are unwilling or incapable of sitting down to talk and negotiate or to call for even a temporary truce that can be regularly renewed, it could be the signal for those sectors whose collective voice can embody the aspirations of the majority to come forth and be heard. Public pressure that will advance the process of peace is indispensable to resolve stalemates and create breakthroughs.

At the same time, if violations of the truce or the peace accords are to be minimized then an effective mechanism or monitoring and verification must be established. Besides officially-established bodies or even mutually-acceptable national and international representatives, organized sectors of the population can come together to designate responsible and credible members of the community to form part of the people's council for peace that can create the conditions for confidence-building and the eventual construction of a durable peace. This kind of initiative can also assist the parties in conflict to transcend their respective identities and share a broader perspective that can provide a wider framework for resolving a common situation which confronts both sides.<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, in any conflict, it is the fate of the people and their common future that is at stake.

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<sup>11</sup> Esquipulas II Accord: Plan to Establish a Firm and Lasting Peace in Central America, no. 10 a., 7 April 1987.

<sup>12</sup> James A. Schallneberg, *The Science of Conflict*, p. 258: "To recognize the relativity of conflicts leads us to recognize the larger truth that both conflict and its resolution are woven into the complex fabric of human society. Conflict is part on the on-going social process wherever humans interact — and so is the resolution of conflict."

It might be worthwhile pointing out that international people's organizations and international public opinion have also played a significant part in facilitating the peace process in some situations. The International Committee of the Red Cross, Amnesty International and International Alert among others have sharpened public awareness and mobilized the International community on the consequences of social and ethnic conflicts that have erupted into violence and have put pressure on the combatants on either side to initiate negotiations and seek more rational means of resolving long-standing disputes.<sup>13</sup>

*Democratization and Popular Participation: Measures to Institutionalize the Resolution of Conflict in Society*

Internal armed resistance generally takes place when the avenues for peaceful change are either blocked or inadequate. It is invariably pursued by political forces who believe, either because of historical, ideological or practical reasons, that their objectives will best be served by force of arms. Thus, the resort to arms is perceived as the only meaningful or effective form of struggle to bring about the transformation of society or the realization of an alternative order. Marginalized or excluded from any meaningful participation in politics, they take up arms convinced that involvement in the conventional forms of political action are either ignored, repressed or, at best, consigned to irrelevance.

In the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, structural violence in most instances is the main obstacle to peace. Violence is inflicted on the majority of the people who are voiceless and poor. When people articulate their grievances and protest against the established order, they often confront violence employed by the State. When people respond with counter-violence to defend their lives and their dignity, internal armed conflict then becomes the prevalent form of resolving profound political and economic differences in society. This leads to the spiral of violence which characterizes numerous situations in Third World countries. What often prolongs a number of these conflicts is the intervention of interested foreign powers who support particular forces in order to assure their domination in the country or to maintain their so-called "sphere of influence."

Unless the people find avenues to articulate their aspirations, mobilize to realize them, and work out their own path to social transformation, it will be difficult to achieve a just and lasting peace. Unless people can recover their voice and participate in formulating decisions which affect their lives, then whatever decisions are taken will generally be flawed. Popular participation and democratization are essential if conflicts in society are to be resolved without resort to arms. Measures that will provide space

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<sup>13</sup> Confer the Annual Report of Amnesty International and the Conflict Resolution Reports of International Alert which have dealt with the internal armed conflict in Uganda, Sri Lanka and Suriname.

for a broad range of political ideas and options are basic to institutionalize the resolution of conflict in society under the rule of law and following the logic of the majority.

#### *Democratic Pluralism and Popular Participation*

Authentic democratization and the pursuit of peace, therefore, must ensure that mechanisms for popular participation and respect for diversity in ideas must become part of the political process.

In the first place, genuine democratic space must be created that would respect political differences and diversity in ideas. There can be no democracy where there is no political tolerance and no pluralism in politics. The model of a limited or restricted democracy is self-defeating. It only encourages the evolution of political dissent into armed challenge, and the deterioration of democratic values.

At the same time, authentic pluralism not only means respect for the diversity of ideas and ideologies, but also the political participation of all sectors and classes within society. It means that people must have the opportunity not only to effectively participate in formal democratic exercise but also in the construction of representative institutions in their places of work and in their communities. This means an understanding of democratic participation where power is exercised by the citizens at all levels, including within trade unions and political parties.

A unique feature of the 1987 Philippine Constitution is the recognition of the rights and role of people's organizations in the construction of a just society. Members of people's organizations were frequently labelled "subversives" during the period of the dictatorship where dissent and protest were considered suspect, a phenomenon equally experienced in various Latin American countries under military rule.

Under an authentic democracy, people's organizations must now not only be protected but also heard. In the Article on Social Justice in the 1987 Constitution, the State is mandated to create mechanisms of consultation so that people's organizations can contribute to the formulation of policy. In this manner, effective vehicles of popular participation can emerge in society.

Decentralization and the creation of autonomous regions for the country's main cultural communities, namely, the Muslim Filipinos in Mindanao and the tribal Filipinos in the Cordillera pose another serious challenge to the process of democratization and the possibilities of peace.

#### *Democratization of Media and Electoral Participation*

Another area where the aspirations of the people can be expressed is the mass media. People can speak through the radio, television and the

newspapers. However, those who generally control the mass media are the same social forces in society who wield both the economic and political power. Media reform is necessary to dismantle media monopoly. Democratization requires that the popular sectors and political parties of diverse persuasions have equal access to the mass media.

In the area of formal democratic structures, it is clear from previous electoral exercises that the return to parliamentary or legislative democracy does not automatically mean the creation of a democratic society. This process requires that in the end people effectively participate and decide. But, as the Philippine case demonstrates, if genuine representatives of the people will be elected then an overhaul of the electoral system is necessary. An effort must be made to ensure representativity in geographical and sectoral terms. Moreover, enforceable regulations are needed to make the electoral exercise a truly democratic experience and access to public office both fair and open. Otherwise, the old politics of patronage and personalities are merely reinforced.

In the long run, a strong participatory democracy is the most effective guarantee for a durable peace. It will enable people with different voices and with diverse views to discuss and debate, to resolve their conflicts through democratic deliberation and consensus, without resort to arms.

*Towards the Creation of a Just and Humane Society:  
Foundations for a Lasting Peace*

In most countries of the Third World, democratization can neither be conceived nor achieved in the long term without some form of demilitarization. Historically, the armed forces have participated in the repression of insurgent forces or the voices of dissent. This has led to the spiral of violence and counter-violence. The importance of the armed forces is justified in the name of national security, and they grow in terms of influence, size, and share in the national budget. When democratic governments inherit a traditionally-powerful military apparatus after the demise of authoritarian rule the tendency is for the military to retain their power although they may leave the political center stage. It is rare for the guardians of the old order to preside in the transition towards the new. A major stumbling-block in the return to democracy is the intransigence of the military which can exercise undue influence over the civilian government. In effect, the military shares power, influences policy and undermines the democratic principle of civilian supremacy over the military.

*Demilitarization and Democracy*

The recent coup attempts in the Philippines and in Latin America and Africa manifest this tension experienced during the period of transition. Not only is there a resistance by the military to face charges of human

rights violations committed during the previous dictatorial regimes, but human rights violations in fact continue in different forms generally associated with the counter-insurgency campaign conducted by the military. Organized or tolerated by the military, the para-military forces or armed vigilantes operating in the fashion of death squads engage in a permanent warfare that resembles a "proxy war" involving sections of the civilian population. In turn, the guerrillas escalate their operations intensifying the level of violence which affect combatants and civilians alike. Thus, the prospects for peace further diminish and recede.

If democracy is to be consolidated then a clear military policy must be conceived and enunciated to ensure civilian supremacy over the military.<sup>14</sup> If peace is to be pursued then the priority must be placed on social and economic measures to respond to the basic sources of discontent felt by the disaffected sectors of society. The threat of a coup or the virtual veto exercised by the military on national policy cannot derail the directions of a government that aspires to be democratic and hopes to build "a just and humane society."<sup>15</sup>

#### *The Process of Democratization and Civilian-based Defense*

Furthermore, it is worth exploring alternative defense options which, at the same time, can contribute to the process of democratization. In the first place, democratic governments can consider the concept of a citizens' militia composed of a small standing army primarily tasked with the external defense of the country and a trained contingent of citizens who can be mobilized within a few days in periods of emergency to defend their country.

Secondly, democratic governments especially in developing countries facing economic dilemmas can look into the feasibility of putting the primacy on civilian defense in their over-all national defense strategy. Essentially, this will require a rethinking of traditional military policy. Based on a broad perspective, the security of a country is pursued by a variety of means other than just the military. Importance is given to diplomacy and foreign policy, a self-reliant strategy of economic development

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<sup>14</sup> Ed Garcia, "The Transformation of Society," *The Filipino Quest*, p. 114. A number of measures for a coherent and comprehensive military policy are suggested, among which are the following: "reorganize the armed forces which is mandated primarily for defense against external aggression; prosecute all those charged with full responsibility in the systematic violation of human rights and with complicity in political and economic crimes; revise the education and training program of the military; the police must be put under civilian control...; create a combat-capable and combat-ready citizens' militia based on responsible and qualified members who could be called upon for active duty on short notice to supplement a small but highly-effective standing army; limit and eventually terminate contracts dealing with military assistance, aid or advice which tend to put the armed forces under foreign influence or subject to foreign control thus compromising the nation's sovereignty, non-alignment and independence."

<sup>15</sup> Preamble, 1987 Philippine Constitution.



and non-provocative defense policies that will "reduce the likelihood of military attack or other forms of external pressure."<sup>16</sup>

Not only is civilian-based defense historically-recognized as an effective form of struggle by a people using civilian means of struggle, but it also underscores the democratic and participatory character of popular civilian resistance.<sup>17</sup> Its essential strength lies in the unity and the mobilization of the people and the contradictions that it provokes on the side of the invader. It tries to exact a high political price and aims at the political attrition of the attacking force. At the same time, among the other objectives achieved by the use of civilian defense is increased self-reliance in national defense and foreign policy, the conversion of defense-related funds to productive economic uses, and the reduction of possible losses in life and property in case of aggression.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, it invariably results in a more secure future for the people in a country which places its trust not on the military means of defense which for developing nations are always limited and inadequate but on the real source of power: its own people.

*Structural Transformation: Development Based on Justice Leads to a Durable Peace*

Any long-term effort that will work towards a just and lasting resolution of internal armed conflicts must address the major issue of structural transformation to redress the situation of social and economic injustice.<sup>19</sup>

Among the urgent measures that can be taken are the following: the implementation of an authentic and comprehensive agrarian reform, the creation of employment and the protection of the workers' living standards, the protection of the rights of workers to participate in decisions which affect their lives, the overhaul of fiscal policy to favor the majority in society, and the delivery of basic social services to the majority: housing, education, medical care, and social security.

At the same time, the pursuit of a strategy of self-reliant economic development is essential so as to address among others the problem of the

<sup>16</sup> Anders Boserup and Andrew Mack, *War Without Weapons, Non-Violence in National Defense*, p. 139. Furthermore, in a study entitled, "Military Disengagement from Politics?: Incentives and Obstacles in Political Change," Claude Welch concluded that economic improvement appeared vital in the process of military disengagement from politics. This is a reiteration of the assertion that popular support for a civilian government committed to social justice and economic development is, in the last analysis, the most effective guarantee against military intervention and the best antidote to the deception of military adventures. A government assured of its people's support retains the best shield to protect democratic rule from pretenders or usurpers who would succumb to the seduction of martial rule.

<sup>17</sup> Anders Boserup and Andrew Mack, *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>18</sup> Gene Sharp, *Making Europe Unconquerable. The Potential of Civilian-based Deterrence and Defense*, p. 63.

<sup>19</sup> Ed Garcia, "Structural Violence as Obstacle to Peace," *The Filipino Quest*, pp. 179-189.

foreign debt, the question of national industrialization, the diversification of the economy and economic relations, and the primacy of the basic needs of the people and the domestic market.

Ultimately, a just and lasting peace is possible only if there is development that is both national and popular, namely, that it reaches all sectors of society. At the same time, development is best achieved in an atmosphere of peace. The task is difficult and complex, often daunting. In the Philippines, a turning point has been reached. But for those who have put their hands to the plow, there is no turning back.

# REDISCOVERING NATIONAL PURPOSE

PRESIDENT CORAZON C. AQUINO

Mister President of the Senate, Mister Speaker of the House of Representatives, Members of both Houses of Congress, the Vice-President and members of the Cabinet, the Chief Justice and the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court, Your Excellencies of the Diplomatic Corps, distinguished guests, minamahal kong mga kababayan.

In fulfillment of my pledge to uphold and defend the Constitution, I stood here last year and divested myself of the power and authority to govern this nation single-handedly. The act seemed premature to many. We had only finished laying the groundwork for recovery. The objectives of our policies had yet to be achieved; their real consequences could not be known. We had done more clearing of the rubble than building on the ruins.

We had freed the spirit of enterprise which has accounted, far more than the directions of government, for the progress of our neighbors.

We had laid with speed and care, the foundations for a stronger and broader-based democracy. We had applied the first measures for the resurrection of a virtually dead economy.

Memory will bring more vividly to mind than a recitation of statistics the devastation of our country then, the deep and sweeping poverty of the great mass of people, the trauma of a wounded nation.

Many said it was not the time for divided counsel and shared government. It was too soon to venture into the world without the protection of the extraordinary powers I had inherited, and which I had sparingly used to steer the nation to that first day of full democracy: the inauguration of the Congress of the Philippines.

I ignored these counsels of fear.

It could never be too soon for democracy. I was almost proved wrong.

One month after I stood here and sounded a call for unity, the Right made its boldest and bloodiest move against the new democracy. With characteristic treachery, it lunged in the middle of the night at the heart of the Republic. While the attack was repulsed, the August 28 coup attempt

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Full text of the State of the Nation Address to the Congress of the Philippines Meeting in Joint Session, 25 July 1988.

almost wiped out the hard-won gains of a whole year and revived the nagging doubt that this country could have any future other than turmoil.

I called on the people to gather the scattered stones of the edifice and build anew.

Despite the great losses sustained, I felt no regret that we had completely restored democracy. For I had not been called to power to achieve economic progress at the cost of the ideals of the Revolution that swept me into office.

### *To Make Democracy Work*

My mandate was not just to make a country rich, but to make democracy work: To make it work as a system of genuine popular participation. To make it meaningful to the lives of the common people by giving them jobs and justice, work with dignity, health and education, and reason to hope that the future will be better for themselves and their children.

I believed that nowhere could you find more effective cures for the ills of our country — such as the habit of oppression, the inclination to corruption, betrayal of the public interest — than in the blessings of democracy: freedom, rights; transparent dealings, and a government of the people by the people themselves.

Despite the difficulties of democracy, we would bring to the prosperous state we sought, the freedom and dignity with which we had started on February 25, 1986.

How well we have succeeded, it is my distinct pleasure and pride to report. How far we have fallen short of our needs, it is our unavoidable duty to acknowledge and rectify.

No one can deny the obvious: the economy has taken off. The economic indicators show it; the general feeling confirms it. The economy is on the move — not fitfully anymore but in firm strides on the path of sustainable growth.

GNP grew by 5.7 percent in 1987; by 7.6 percent in the first quarter of 1988. The source of this growth, on the supply side, was increased industrial activity; on the demand side, by vastly increased consumer spending. The industrial sector grew by 8 percent in 1987; by another 9.7 percent in the first quarter of 1988. Manufacturing posted the highest growth since 1981, mainly in electronics and garments. The steep rise in primary energy consumption confirms the dramatic increase in the economic activities. Oil consumption grew by 15.8 percent, and by an additional 9.2 percent this year. Our energy capabilities have begun to feel the strain — a sure sign of increased economic energy.

Unemployment dropped from 11.1 percent in the fourth quarter of 1986 to 9.5 percent in one year. One million six hundred thousand jobs had been created in 1987; well over a million of them generated by the private economy.

We have tracked this growth and found it accounted for mainly by small and medium businesses and by Filipino-Chinese entrepreneurs, sectors that made few demands on the public sector, other than to be left alone to work in the democratic economic space we have created. We are seeing people-powered capitalism in action.

### *People-Powered Capitalism*

Unavoidably, growth exacted the price of inflation, which grew from 6.9 percent in 1986 to 7.4 percent at the end of 1987. But even these figures compare somewhat favorably with a peak of 64 percent inflation in the last years of the dictatorship, when workers' real wages plunged. In sharp contrast, improvements in real wages in the past two years have enabled the working classes to cope with it. In manufacturing, workers' compensation increased by 21 percent; minimum wages of non-plantation workers — the poorest — by 23.2 percent. Real wages of government employees increased by 11.2 percent.

We do not gloss over the fact that the number of unemployed who do not partake of these gains remains significant. Still, the improvement has been marked enough to explain the drop in the number of strikes since October last year. This confirms our belief that only economic progress can produce enduring harmony in the workplace. The relative self-restraint exercised by the labor sector in allowing the economic recovery to proceed with a minimum of disruption underscores the maturity, wisdom and patriotism of the working classes and their leaders.

We lowered the duty on crude, and revised taxes on petroleum products. We rolled back prices four times. And there are at present on-going studies which we hope will result in a future reduction of the prices of petroleum products, particularly of kerosene, diesel, and LPG, on which the greater mass of our people depend.

To keep energy supply in step with the demands of economic growth, we have put energy development among our highest priorities. I shall set up an energy coordinating council, composed of the Executive Secretary and the heads of the National Power Corporation, the Office of Energy Affairs, the National Electrification Administration, and the Philippine National Oil Company, to keep track of developments in this area. This should allay fears that we may outgrow our energy capabilities and choke the economic take-off.

The 1986 Tax Reform Program has apparently worked. The increase of revenues from 10.6 to 12.2 percent of GNP reflects this.

To cut overhead and inject energy into the bureaucracy, I have directed Budget and Management to trim excess personnel from the head offices of the Departments; at the very least to put a lid on new hires of overhead items.

The Privatization Program has generated ₱11.2 billion in gross revenues. The program has proceeded less swiftly than interested parties may desire, but due care must be exercised in the disposition of assets that belong to the people. We must get the most we can for the people, in as fair and transparent a manner as possible, leaving no room for the smallest doubt about the integrity of the procedure and the people involved.

In spite of the clear guidelines I have set of transparency and open bidding, and against the urgent deadline for the privatization of certain major assets, some people still try to gain undue advantages. Let no one delude himself on that score. Those who fought with us in the campaign and revolution must remember that we fought to stop corruption of public officials and privileges to special friends. Let us not cash in on our patriotism in 1986. Let us rather be grateful to the nation and to the historical moment for the privilege we had of being heroes.

Let me return to the measures taken to spur the growth of the economy.

### *Decentralization*

The dramatic improvement in rural purchasing power was accounted for by the Community Employment and Development Program or the CEDP and, of course, by the unexpected improvement in copra prices. The regions are forging ahead. Three of them — Region IV or Southern Tagalog, Region VII, the Central Visayas, and Region XI, Eastern Mindanao — grew faster than Metro Manila. Their great potential is only waiting to be tapped by capital investments, such as roads and communications, and by the devolution of decision-making to the local level.

Thus, we have decentralized the operations of the 16 major government departments, and increased private sector representation in regional and local development councils to one-fourth. Budgets are now released directly to local governments and budget priorities are now determined in the first instance on the provincial level. An increase of revenue allotments and repeal of mandatory contributions by local units to the national government will place more resources at the disposal of the local governments.

We have given them, for the first time in history, the principal initiative in the development of their communities.

We have marked out certain pilot provinces — at present, Davao del Norte, Laguna, Negros Occidental and Tarlac — to which greater develop-

ment efforts will be directed. The idea is to see what can be accomplished by an integrated and intensive approach in a specified area, and apply the lessons learned to other provinces.

### *Debt Burden*

Great as our gains have been, we could have gone twice as fast and twice as far if we did not have one foot manacled to the Debt.

Our external debt burden must be dramatically reduced. On this I believe all Filipinos are united. It should be understood that we cannot indefinitely give more than 40 percent of the budget for total debt service. We estimate a net payment to creditors of around \$12 billion over the next five years. This is intolerable for a country whose basic needs are as acute as ours. I hope that message is clearly heard.

Yet we understand the realities of power, the vulnerabilities of the underdeveloped, and the ways of international finance. Debtors with shorter tempers who had stormed out of negotiations have been forced to return to the table, their economies having cracked under the pressure of isolation from the international system.

We must grow; yet maintain access to the international financial system. We must find ways of funding our growth without being held hostage to our debt. If we are to meet our commitments to our creditors, the bankers must first meet our financing needs.

Our debt strategy will be rooted in the recent recognition of industrial democracies that the management of the debt crisis is too important to be left to bankers. At the Toronto Summit, they singled out the Philippines as a country which needed support in its debt reduction efforts. Japanese Prime Minister Takeshita and US President Reagan argued strongly for the extension of such support.

The world economy is held back by the debt that countries such as ours carry. In 1987 there was a negative outflow of \$2.2 billion to our foreign creditors. It was blood from the veins of our economy, and took a heavy toll in missed output and lost employment. We need a transfusion to maintain our growth.

The international initiative for a consortium of donor countries to support Philippine development plans could give us that transfusion. I welcome the support of world leaders for the economic development assistance program for the Philippines. We see innovative and far-reaching debt reduction as a vital component of this international initiative.

Few countries, if any, have hewed as faithfully to the conditionalities of debt restructuring as the Philippines has. Our people have endured the most rigorous austerities, yet received no better treatment than those of

countries that resisted. Yet, even as the realities of power force us to seek a just solution to the debt problem within the international financial system, those same realities may urge us someday to find that solution anywhere we can.

### *Foreign Policy Review*

This has been a year of action on the foreign policy. In addition to hosting both the Asean summit and the Newly Restored Democracies Conference, we have made state visits to China, Switzerland, Italy, and the Vatican. These trips have been part of an active process of strengthening and extending our international friendships. Our foreign policy should promote our assets in a way that strengthens us politically, economically, and in terms of our security. Through the two conferences held here, we furthered our goal of broadening our friendships and making common cause with those who share similar circumstances to ourselves. We are even now engaged in the periodic review of one of our oldest foreign policy commitments, our hosting of the U.S. military facilities on Philippine soil.

### *New Army for Democracy*

This may be remembered as the year the insurgency was broken. For the armed Left, it has been a year of defeats and retreats; a year of propaganda by terror rather than the strategic initiative of which it had boasted. The rejection of our peace efforts restored to Government the moral basis for war.

I wish we could still pursue the path of peace. Yet until the NPA and their friends come to trust their doctrines to the ballot box rather than the armalite, Government has no choice except to defend our people with the gun.

Five members of the CPP central committee have been captured, eight regional leaders, 19 staff officers and 397 NPA regulars. More than 7,000 regulars and tens of thousands of mass activists and supporters surrendered earlier to the National Reconciliation and Development Program and AFP special operations teams. About 2,000 of the CPP/NPA were killed in action over the last year.

To all of you in this chamber today who are here because you won at the ballot box, democracy is beating back the challenge of the totalitarian Left. We are winning because we have given back to the people control of their lives and faith in the future. To that renewed hope we add the fresh vigor of a new army for democracy. Above all, we now have a future.

With the victories come responsibilities. The first is to keep open the door of reconciliation. These are our brothers and sisters but for as long as fratricide must be a national policy, this nation cannot be whole.



The second responsibility is to ensure an adequate level of security to our people. This means our Armed Forces must be supplemented by unarmed Civilian Volunteer Organizations or Bantay Bayan, and Citizen Armed Force Geographical Units. Our armies cannot be everywhere and be expected to achieve decisive victories. We need civilians to assist in defending their communities.

Yet they must do this with the same respect for human lives and disciplined restraint we expect of our soldiers in dealing with non-combatants. Let us not lose the moral edge in this conflict.

This morning I instructed the Chief of Staff to begin the process of disbanding all so-called vigilante groups in line with the Constitutional injunction against paramilitary groups. Every measure must be taken to protect the people's security against communist terrorism while the CVO and CAFGU systems are put in place.

Of equal importance as security against insurgent violence is protection against common criminality. From armed robbery to carjacking, our citizens live in intolerable uncertainty about the safety of their families and their properties. I expect the military and police to arrest, not abet, this slide into criminal anarchy taking place right under our noses. Targets will be set and I shall relieve those who fail to meet our people's expectations of peace and order.

I am conscious that history will judge the achievements of this Government and the usefulness of democracy not through the narrow perspective of the business centers in Manila, but by our success in making a better future for all Filipinos. It is in the fields and barrios, in the slums of our cities, that we will ultimately be judged. It is our duty as elected leaders of this nation to describe a vision of the future that lifts up the lives of this, the great mass of Filipinos: those whose voices are not raised in business councils, social happenings, and in the opinion pages of the newspapers.

For them we must build a future that is based not solely on issues of foreign affairs or the volatility of business confidence, however important. What is the good of international harmony if it does not put food in the mouths of hungry children? Of what value is a business confidence that is built on the suppression of the legitimate aspirations of the poor? Rather, we must have an action agenda that meets their urgent needs in a simple and direct way.

#### *Action Agenda*

That agenda is straightforward:

- \* education
- \* alleviation of poverty

\* jobs

\* and an economy that can sustain these goals

Ours is renowned as the People-Powered Democracy. As we must live by the decisions of the people, we must ensure the quality of those decisions. Provision for education in the 1989 budget is increased by more than a third — an essential investment in the future. Free high school education led to a record enrollment of 2.3 million students. Yet, we have far from achieved a universal education. Only 70 percent of our children attend elementary school; of these, only 60 percent complete it. Unless we act decisively now, we face a future of rampant functional illiteracy. Then we shall have People Without Power.

This is the real national emergency, for what is involved here is not underutilized manufacturing capacity or insufficient incentives for the rich, but the very quality of the Filipino who symbolizes the great Asian miracle: a revolution without blood, democratic restoration without tears.

The second priority is jobs. For this we must accelerate economic growth. We expect GNP to grow by 6.4 percent, and investments to pick up at a strong rate. The industrial sector is likely to grow 9 percent this year.

Central to our strategy for improving rural incomes is the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program whose highest aim, I must stress again, is not mere land redistribution, but higher productivity from the land and a higher standard of living for the farming communities that are the backbone of our nation.

I signed into law the fruit of your long efforts, the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Bill, reflecting your wide knowledge and experience of conditions in the countryside.

We are increasing the expenditure for infrastructure by 50 percent, most of it to be poured into the countryside. We expect to double our spending on water supply. ₱1.3 billion has been budgeted for school houses.

By 1992 we intend that

\* three-fourths of the entire road network will be all-weather compared to less than 50 percent at the beginning of this year.

\* 92 percent of the rural population will have clean water compared to 62 percent this year.

\* there will be enough classrooms for all children of school age.

\* a multi-purpose concrete road in each of the 46,000 barangays in the country, serving not only as a road but as a grain drying surface; a recreation area; as the first solid evidence in these difficult to reach places that here finally is a government truly their own.

Our fight against poverty includes meeting basic needs like health care. We will intensify public health programs and pursue the various drug policies that will make essential drugs more accessible and affordable.

We must achieve a viable consensus on an authentic family welfare program that is responsive both to the constitutional mandate and the challenge of a growing population.

The provision of basic services also includes making telephones available to all communities. For a country separated by geography but driven by market forces, the social and economic cost of poor communications is too high.

With your congressional leadership I have agreed on certain legislative priorities that reflect the national agenda I outlined today.

On the economic front, we must provide long delayed incentives to the sectors that have powered our recovery, particularly the small and medium enterprises.

On the peace and order front, the urgency of a national civilian police force is obvious, and is high on your agenda as well, along with measures enhancing protection of human rights. Our other priorities are improved civil service effectiveness, education, population, social justice, the environment, the establishment of an independent central monetary authority, and the issue of a metropolitan commission to assure basic services in the hub of economic activity in our country: Metro Manila.

#### *Time for Action is Now*

A more detailed list will be submitted. A common agenda should be easy to arrive at. What is more important is implementation of policy. The time for planning is over; the time for action is now. A lot has been done, but it has barely scratched the surface of the problems.

At the end of the year in which the middle class has become better off, I now say this to my department heads: Bring more of the new prosperity to the common people, produce concrete results on your department programs — or you are out. Ours was a revolution for all Filipinos. Our poor have waited long enough. No sluggard will be allowed to stall the economic take-off.

#### *Rediscovering National Purpose*

Let me sum up:

It is liberty that has brought us progress, freedom that has generated growth. It is democratic space that has brought the insurgents down. But there is another side to freedom, where abuse displaces responsibility.

We have too often descended to mutual abuse, suspicion and recrimination in our political life. Far from respecting each other's motives, we are losing the trust that held us together and gave us the strength to prevail. We are forgetting that we stood together to win this freedom that is now too often demeaned. We must find again that trust and that strength, for the task is far from complete.

That trust comes from expecting the best of each other, and equally from giving our best. Across our country, millions of Filipinos are doing that everyday: giving the sweat of their brow and the strength of their arm, above all their ingenuity and energy, to make a better future for us all. Those who stand on the pinnacles of power should be shamed by the more earnest commitments of those who labor anonymously below.

We complain of a lack of national purpose, but if we are big enough in ourselves and in our dealings with each other, we will rediscover it in ourselves and our countrymen.

It was a year when we faltered in this search; when losing faith in ourselves we listened to others, whether to those who say our nationalism is flawed or those who take it upon themselves to instruct us that our future confidence as a nation rests entirely on whether we do, or do not, keep the American facilities after 1991.

Our nationalism should stand upon a larger ground than the hectareage of the bases; it should turn on something higher than the insults of short-time journalists.

Do not let anyone dictate to us where our national pride should be. We know where it lies: In a sense of our past and a sense of our destiny; in the confidence of what we can make of this nation when we are united again by trust.

We saw what can be. A vision was born in EDSA. A vision of the future, of a people standing together, not just for four days on a highway, but on and on as a nation.

*Nakita natin kung ano ang maaaring maganap. Isang larawang diwa ang isinilang sa EDSA. Isang larawang diwa ng sambayanang nagkabuklod-buklod na nanindigan, hindi lamang sa loob ng apat na araw sa isang karaniwang lansangan . . . kundi isang bansa . . . magpakailanman.*

# THE PERSISTENCE OF CRISIS IN THE DEMOCRATIC SPACE

Notes on the Politics of Non-Structural Change  
in the Post-Marcos Period

EDGAR B. MARANAN

"We vow never again to let the patrimony of this nation lie at the feet of those noble houses that have finally shown the true face of foreign finance."

— Pres. Corazon C. Aquino, from her  
State of the Nation Address, July,  
1987.

The dictator was merely the pus: the wound  
is still there.

— Attributed to Jose Ma. Sison

## 1. *Introduction*

Since she ascended to power, President Aquino has delivered two State-of-the-Nation addresses which have been remarkable in two ways: one, they represent not so much the quintessential vision of the political neophyte who has undoubtedly enjoyed the highest esteem ever given by the masses to a political figure, as the blueprint of recovery, development, and growth devised by a new generation of technocrats and political brain-trust; and two, they project not so much the actual situation of the country two years after the downfall of Marcos, but an official interpretation of social reality which has been challenged both by those who argue for total structural change (the Communist Party of the Philippines, for one) as well as moderate critics who supported her campaign for the presidency.

By now, it is clear to the critics of the Aquino administration that the two fundamental social projects of the "EDSA People Power Revolution" of February 1986 — Democratization and Development — are in danger of grinding to a halt.

The problem of reconstruction in any developing country such as the Philippines arises from the structural nature of underdevelopment, which has deep historical roots in colonial plunder and private appropriation, and well-articulated ramifications in post-colonial elite domination and foreign control.

The thesis is by way of analogy: just as the breakaway from Spain, and the later "reacquisition" of independence from the United States, merely

indigenized and reconstituted class rule of the propertied over the propertyless in Philippine society, so did the ouster of the fascist regime of Ferdinand Marcos and the ascendancy to power of Corazon Aquino signal a new phase in elite circulation. "Fascist regime" and "ascendancy to power", terms used quite often in political analysis, are imbued with a complex of political attributes. The first was used interchangeably with "US-Marcos dictatorship", while the second evokes an ironic—even nostalgic—allusion to the great promise of "democratic space" held out by the events of February 1986. Marcos and Aquino are seen as ultimately parts, albeit critical parts, of a massive structure of social, economic, and political relations which lumbers on through the desolate landscape of Philippine history. Sometimes it breaks down, and replacement parts are in order. This rather mechanistic rendering of Philippine society cannot substitute for a more elaborate critique of the "liberal-democratic" paradigm in a neocolonial setting, of course, but the point is to underscore the logic of structures that informs the whole question of social and political change, or "liberation", in the Philippines.

## 2. *Reforms, Adjustments, and Crisis Indicators*

In her first State of the Nation address to the Philippine Congress meeting in joint session on July 27, 1987, President Aquino adverted to her "economic reform program aimed at recovery in the short and sustainable growth in the long run," which also "addressed itself to the basic problems of unemployment and underemployment, and the consequent mass poverty."

Such a program called for "comprehensive *structural reforms* of the internal economy, complemented by no less important external economic considerations."

During the last year of the Marcos administration, and in the intervening months following its downfall, there was a welter of economic analysis showing how and where the dictatorship had sown the seeds, and reaped the bitter harvest, of the economic crisis of the eighties. It was only to be expected that the incoming regime would train its denunciation of the dictatorship on the roots of the crisis, in order to come up with a viable reform program. Thus, in her first state of the nation address in 1987, President Aquino reiterated the grim statistics and characteristics of life under the dictatorship, which she was now sworn to completely reverse:

"... I was immediately called upon to deal with the dangerous combination of a severely distressed economy and a growing insurgency . . . Production had contracted by 11% for two consecutive years, bringing unemployment rates to double-digit levels. Twelve percent of the labor force, nearly 2.6 million workers, were unemployed. (And up to now, 750,000 join the labor force every year.) Real per capita income had been set back 10 years. New investments had dried up and business confidence was at an

all-time low. Interest payments on a \$26.3 billion external debt took almost half our export earnings. . . *no part of this debt benefited, or perhaps was even seriously expected to benefit, the Filipino people. Yet their posterity to the third generation and farther are expected to pay it.*

"Poverty blighted the land. Five million families (59% of the total) lived below the poverty line, as compared to 45% in 1971. Dictatorship had done nothing but make more of our people poorer.

"It also made us sicker. The prevalence of malnutrition among our young and the incidence of birth fatalities had risen at alarming rates. Infant fatalities due to pneumonia alone rose by 12% in 1984 and severe malnutrition among children rose to 21.6% in 1985. . . ."

The two basic features of her economic recovery program, she contended, were "its comprehensiveness with respect to structural reforms," and "its reliance on the private sector to carry the main burden of growth."

What, then, was to be the nature of the "structural reforms"? Referring to the notorious practice of the past regime of giving special privileges and preferential treatment to government corporations and select individuals — a practice "which enriched the few at the cost of impoverishing the many . . . distorted markets and factors of production . . . (and) bore the aspect of legitimacy" — the president enumerated the structural reforms undertaken by her government thus far: a) the abolition of monopolies and special privileges, b) the commitment to a fair and transparent trade liberalization program, c) the lifting of price controls, and d) the institution of tax reforms to shelter the poor from onerous taxes and equitably redistribute the tax burden.

The second basic feature of the program, she said, was a reaffirmation of her government's "faith in private initiative to propel and sustain our economy", and this principle in turn was premised on the proposition that "for as long as free market forces dictate the dynamics of the business environment, the private sector will respond aggressively."

A fundamental difference between the Aquino government's perception of economics and policy, and that of its critics, lies in the pivotal notion of what comprise structures. Apparently, the Aquino government construes structures in terms of economic institutions and policies which lead up to "reforms" and "adjustments" that contribute to a positive growth rate, or to the aggregate national product, or which make the country more credit-worthy to its foreign lenders. Such institutional and policy reforms and adjustments — argue the critics — do not comprehensively address the historically rooted problems such as the vast concentration of private wealth and resources in the hands of old and new oligarchs and political dynasties (including those swept into power by the February Revolution of 1986), the unfair advantage of multinationals in the exploitation of our natural resources and in the availment of long-term credit funds, and the deadly combination of widespread agrarian unrest (unsatisfactorily addressed by

the “emasculated” and “landlord-influenced” Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law, or CARL of 1987), and the foreign debt burden. (The president’s mention of this burden in her 1977 address is underscored above. The wind has blown the other way since then.)

The administration’s officially proclaimed reliance on “free market forces” is but a reflection — further argue the critics — of the controlling influence of external financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, whose “stabilization program” has consisted mainly of “structural adjustments”. Dr. Joseph Lim of the UP School of Economics, writing about the monetarist policies of the IMF, has argued that the tendency to

radically transform the entire economy to a pure model of free enterprise and capitalist development... is done without any consideration of the historical forces and institutions in the society such as the characteristics and nature of the ruling class, the size of the domestic market, and the initial distribution of wealth and resources in the society. Thus, the so-called ‘structural adjustments’ for the monetarist IMF do not refer to a real transformation of the social structures of society but simply implies deregulations and decontrol in all fields of the economy so that price “distortions” will be corrected. This includes import liberalization and tariff reductions, a lifting of exchange controls, elimination of government subsidies for basic foods, social services and private enterprises, a floating exchange rate policy, “privatization” of state enterprises, and liberalization of commodity and financial markets. In all these, free trade and “correct prices”... will rid the economy of inefficiencies...

Robin Broad of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has undertaken a similar critique of “structural adjustment” in her book *Unequal Alliance, 1979-1986: The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Philippines*.

Broad’s book is a lively chronicle of the Philippine experience, especially during the twenty-year regime of Marcos, under the dubious influence of the two financial giants of the international money-lending and debt-managing system. The author employs hard data and a highly critical perspective in demonstrating how the World Bank and the IMF — either through its direct advisory mechanisms and agents, or the Filipino technocrats and economic managers who trained under them or have sworn by their economic belief-system — instituted “structural adjustment” through the reform of existing government institutions or creation of new ones to dovetail with their model of development in the Third World, but in the process causing more harm than good to the largest sectors in society, and paving avenues towards massive graft and corruption in the highest levels of the technocrat-managed authoritarian government.

It is disturbing to note, therefore, that basically the same prescriptions for recovery, development, and growth which did not work for the past regime, and instead contributed to the economic tailspin in its last days,



have been practically adopted under the present regime, as evidenced by continuing negotiations and accommodations with the same global financial institutions. The economic philosophy propounded in the first State of the Nation address and in subsequent policy formulations of the administration comprise a negative mirror image in critic Broad's depiction of the historic failure of structural adjustment, which would run, according to the thinking of Filipino, World Bank, and IMF technocrats, along this line:

Economic growth with political stability . . . could be achieved through one fairly universal set of policy instruments: free trade and investment. Let free market forces determine prices. Guarantee that those economic sectors geared to the world market receive priority in the allocation of state resources. . . .

Broad contends:

The tragedy is that this particular brand of structural adjustment works to the benefit of the few. Recent history demonstrates that it has helped some transnational banks and corporations and a very thin stratum of transnational elites in developing countries. Structural adjustment has also been, over the past half-decade of general stagnation in world trade, a disaster for the majority of the Third World, that is, for most workers, peasants, and small entrepreneurs producing for the domestic market. Structural adjustment has retarded development in the broader, participatory and sustaining sense of the term.

Studies on socio-economic indicators of structural crisis during the first two years of the Aquino government argue that aside from "cosmetic changes" and gradualist policies, the present regime differs but slightly from the one it replaced. In May 1988, a region-based research organization, the Center for Nationalist Studies of Northern Luzon, came out with a well-researched paper entitled *The Aquino Government Beyond Rhetoric (A Philippine National Situationer)*. The study argues that "the quality of life under the previous regime remains the same to date", and proceeds to enumerate what it considers to be the main characteristics of Philippine society under the Aquino government:

1. The economy is suffering from a chronic crisis, due to the enormous foreign debt problem (which the Aquino government has chosen to deal with conservatively), the persistence of import dependence, rising inflation, widespread unemployment, underutilization of productive capacity, and uneven income distribution.

2. Poverty is widespread. Over 70 percent of Filipinos are sinking below the poverty line. Health, education, and housing needs are unmet, and deprivation in these areas is increasing. Crime rates and "moral bankruptcy" are on the upsurge.

3. Industry is stagnating because of the perpetuation of a backward agrarian-based economy, the absence of efforts to develop basic and heavy industries, and emphasis on export-led industrialization.

4. Unrest is growing in both urban and rural areas, as a consequence of government's failure, precisely, to resolve the basic, structural causes of inequity, poverty, and hunger.

5. Political repression is growing. The military has been given increased power with which to suppress social unrest.

Dr. Jose Rocamora, a Filipino scholar who is at present the Associate Director of the Transnational Institute (TNI) in the Netherlands, presented an overview of the Philippine situation in an article written for the recently concluded European Solidarity Conference for the Philippines. He points out the following facts and figures:

1. Some 30 million out of 56 million live in absolute poverty; in the past ten years, 12 million more have been added to the poverty rolls.

2. Real wages have dropped constantly since 1960. Thus, even if the GNP grows at 6% per year till the end of the century, real wages would still fall at 3% from current levels.

3. The Philippines has the highest poverty level and lowest calorie supply per capita in the entire ASEAN region. (Sometime after this article was written, an international report stated that the Philippines has been acknowledged as one of the seventh poorest nations in the world, sharing with Bangladesh the honor of being Asian representative in the not too exclusive club.)

Furthermore, Rocamora argues, while it can be said that GNP is up, unemployment is down, real wages are up and inflation remains low, what do the economic figures add up to?

It means profits for big business are up, conditions better for maybe 10% of the population. But for the majority of the people, even if we should grant that economic conditions are slightly better than in the last years of Marcos, the situation is so bad today that the real question is: are Aquino's economic policies such that there is real hope for substantial — not just marginal — improvement?

Gross national product being the conventional measure of growth in the past and present regimes, do GNP and other economic indicators assure us that the majority will be enjoying much improved living conditions? Rocamora says no, and among the reasons he gives are:

1. "Easy growth". After contraction during the last three years of Marcos, there was no place to go but up. In simple terms, much of the growth rate came from using already existing productive capacity, not building new ones...

2. GNP grew from government "pump-priming" and from increases in world market prices of Philippine exports. But government cannot indefinitely put money into the economy because of budgetary limitations from debt payments and growing military expenditures...

Rocamora argues that we cannot have an assurance of long-term improvement until the Aquino government implements key reforms in several critical areas:

1. It must reorient the economy towards the needs of the people and not the needs of foreign and local big business. Instead, economic policy . . . is now even more controlled by the IMF-WB than under Marcos, with debt policy as key (factor), considering a net outflow of US \$12 billion expected between 1987 and 1992, compounded by other prescriptions such as import liberalization and more foreign investment incentives.

2. It is now clear. There is no land reform for the millions of Filipino peasants, despite the recent parliamentary exercise on agrarian reform in Congress.

3. On labor, Aquino's policies are no better. (They are) essentially anti-labor, if we go by the standards of her war declaration on labor delivered in a speech before Filipino businessmen in October 1987.

Jaime Tadeo, who represented the *Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas* in the European Solidarity Conference, presented a strongly worded critique of the government's land reform policy, as well as its conduct of the counter-insurgency campaign in the countryside which has largely affected the impoverished rural masses. It is highly significant that the massacre of peasant marchers by military elements during a march to Malacañang in January of 1987 was an immediate cause of the breakdown in the ceasefire talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front (NDF).

Thus, this is how the peasant sector in Philippine society is faring at present, according to Tadeo's presentation:

The peasantry bears the brunt of the US-sponsored "total war policy" of the Aquino regime. In the countryside, where the armed resistance movement has struck deep roots, the peasants have become the victims of punitive and massive campaigns and vigilante attacks. These activities are aimed at terrorizing the peasant masses and destroying their legitimate organizations. KMP, as the militant center of the legal democratic peasant movement, has been singled out in a sustained campaign of terror and negative propaganda. Its membership has been continually harassed, if not massacred, its activists kidnapped and salvaged, its various offices raided and its leaders vilified and targeted for assassination.

He sounds out a warning to the government, however, that repression of the peasantry can only succeed in radicalizing more members of this sector:

Through its sustained campaign for genuine agrarian reform, the peasant movement, led by KMP, has been able to effectively expose the anti-peasant people character of the Aquino regime . . . KMP has popularized its genuine land reform program, winning the support of the peasantry as well as other sectors of the Philippine society to this alternative . . . the

campaign for open rent reduction, anti-usury struggles, and the implementation of selective land seizures, are now becoming popular methods of struggle in the countryside . . .

### 3. *Democratic Space: Contraction and Confrontation*

'Democratic space' was supposed to have been the immediate result of the ouster of the Marcos regime. It meant any of the following:

1. Individually or collectively, the people could articulate their vision of a just, peaceful, and progressive society without fear of repression, harassment, and official cynicism. This was to be made possible under a government which would encourage pluralism, popular movements, and participatory politics. Even the traditional agent of state repression, the military, had its image refurbished — it was renamed, for a time, the New Armed Forces of the Philippines (NAFP) — if only because a faction of it spearheaded the revolt against an unwieldy regime and another faction was prevailed upon not to participate in the slaughter of thousands.

2. The new helmsmen had a free hand to reform ailing institutions, redress socio-economic grievances, launch decisive programs that would alleviate poverty, and to lead the way towards translating into reality the main ideals of the Filipino people's almost two decades of struggle against the dictatorship: jobs and justice, food and freedom, land and liberation, respect and promotion of human rights, genuine national sovereignty; indeed, all summed up in democratization and development.

3. The fields of fire between the state and the forces of armed revolution would be cleared, and transformed into a venue for peace talks and possible reconciliation.

In short, the original plan was for the ever-widening expansion of the democratic space into a paradigm of liberal democracy where even radical thought would be welcome (though not allowed to pursue the vision of change through revolutionary violence), where the governors were just and lacking in self-interest, and where the economic take-off could be realized under conditions of political stability and social solidarity.

The cycle of poverty, unrest, state violence, revolutionary activity, intensified repression and deeper poverty is dramatically described by peace activist Edmundo Garcia in his book *Dawn Over Darkness: Paths To Peace in the Philippines*. In it he argues that the roots of the internal armed conflict in the Philippines are the socio-economic inequalities which are hardly offset by recent economic statistics on growth, as well as flagrant human rights violations which, during the past two years, have reached alarming proportions and can compare in magnitude with the worst excesses of the Marcos regime.

Father James Reuter, SJ, interviewed on the television production of Stanley Karnow's "In Our Image: Relations Between the Philippines and the United States", declared quite emphatically:

The word Feudalism fits Filipino society perfectly. It fits perfectly! Feudal means only a few people own the wealth, the land, the buildings, and the masses who are poor work for them in one way or another.

Poverty, the human rights situation, the failure of the peace process due largely to a highly militaristic approach to the insurgency problem, and the absence of meaningful empowerment except through personalistic electoral politics are thus the main reasons for the faltering projects of democratization and development in the Philippines.

Observers of the political process in the Philippines — having witnessed the resurgence of the bureaucratic-capitalist ills of the past (graft and corruption are said to exist on all levels, i.e., 'democratized'), the realignment and reconstitution of traditional political parties representing the interests of the elite, and the general breakdown of delivery systems to the poor which ought to have taken first priority from the very start — might well conclude that the envisioned politics of democratic space (government for the people and with the participation of the people), has simply given way to the old politics of elitism: a modicum of public service for a maximum of private gain.

With the benefit of hindsight, the critics of the Aquino government's performance during its first one thousand days in office have pointed out what possibly was President Aquino's most crucial "missed opportunity" for the translation of her anti-dictatorship campaign into concrete reality: the declaration of a sweeping agrarian reform nationwide in the early days of her "revolutionary government." At that time, she had the massive support of the masses, the middle class, and a significant faction of the country's politicians. Such a declaration should have had a more radical and immediate application than Marcos' much touted PD 27 soon after the declaration of martial law in 1973, which ended up ten years later benefiting less than 10% of its intended beneficiaries. A similar move by President Aquino at the start of her term would have had a more dramatic impact, since it would have served the purpose of rectifying the sham land reform program of Marcos.

As President Aquino's own land reform scheme has turned out, actual land transfer from the landlords to the peasants has been rendered difficult by the provisions of CARL, specially with regards the retention limits allowed the landlords and their children. A fundamental question with regards the Aquino government's willingness and ability to institute a genuine land reform program that could effect actual land transfer to a majority of Filipino peasants, has arisen: Could she have, given the class character

of her major political supporters and allies, effectively instituted a genuine land reform for the Filipino peasantry? Critics cite the "incorporation" of the 6,000-hectare Hacienda Luisita, owned by the President's family, instead of its breaking up and expropriation, as proof that the landlord class in the country is just not about to give up its position of privilege.

In some parts of the country at present, underground and legal organizations of peasants have been taking over huge tracts of land allegedly unused or abandoned by landowners. The challenge of the revolutionary left and the restive marginalized groups in the country remains to be the main source of threat against the liberal-democratic paradigm of President Aquino's constitutionalized but stagnant people power movement. Since this government has apparently not been above the grave abuse of human rights as a response to continuing protest over the decelerating pace of democratization and development, and since the insurgency appears to be still viable and resilient despite a string of political errors, it can only be expected that crisis will continue to fill up what is left of the "democratic space" created in February 1986.

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## THE TURNING POINT THAT NEVER WAS (A Military Perspective on the “February Revolution”)

By CANDIDO P. FILIO

The so-called February Revolution of 1986 — which led to the flight of President Ferdinand Marcos, after two decades of authoritarian rule, and the installation of Corazon Aquino as the new Chief Executive — was expected to be a turning point for Philippine society, including the Government as well as the military. Thus, in two years, the democratic institutions which had been destroyed by the past dictatorship have been almost completely restored. Valiant efforts are being exerted in business and the economy, in education and culture, in foreign relations and diplomacy, and in other areas of endeavor to put society on the right track towards the desired direction. The military, however, even with a year of official “renewal,” has not really turned the corner at all. Now, after another year as a “renewed” institution, one of the country’s more prominent ambassadors has called the Armed Forces of the Philippines a major “source of instability” for the Aquino Government.

### *The Pre-Marcosian Military*

Between the end of World War II and the Marcos Era, the Armed Forces of the Philippines was largely governed by the National Defense Act of 1936 — or Commonwealth Act No. 1. This law embodied the notion of an ideal — or idealized — military configuration that would make for effectiveness and efficiency. It reinforced existing concepts, norms, and standards of military policy, strategy, operations, and structure, with no place for traditional militarism.

These included the concepts of the Citizen Army, the General Staff, self-reliant defense, and territorial organization. There were also the strong mission-orientation and the strict military discipline expected of every individual officer and soldier — as well as of every military unit at all levels. Moreover, it was postulated that nobody is indispensable in the military, and corollarily, that nobody has a monopoly of military abilities; that the top ranks and position be limited only to the select few who are capable of strategic thinking and have the other qualifications for generalship; and that “the parade must move on” — nobody must be allowed “to delay the Corps” — which means rational military career programming. Thus, the promotion system was governed by the so-called Rule of Three — i.e., two for “seniority” and a third for “ability” through the mechanism of “deep selection.”

The idea of a streamlined, therefore efficacious, Armed Forces structure, was thus deeply inculcated in the minds of the post-war cadets of the Philippine Military Academy during their four years of education in Baguio. This became much clearer to me when I took the Adjutant General Officers' course at the Philippine Army School for Administration early in my military career.

Coming in the way of the "ideal" military organization, however, was the "hump" — the bunching up of officers "of all shapes and sizes" commissioned from all sources during the last war. But it could be shown both actuarially and statistically that by around 1970, we would be "over the hump" — and then the country would have a "beautiful" Armed Forces officered by PMA graduates led by the first post-war Class of 1951. This might, of course, sound elitist, but it was really something to look forward to.

The military system under the National Defense Act was good enough to meet the security needs of the country after the end of World War II. Thus, communist insurgency in Central Luzon led by the Hukbalahaps was crushed in the early Fifties when Ramon Magsaysay was the Secretary of National Defense, and this catapulted him to the Presidency in 1953.

To liquidate armed insurgency in Southern Luzon once and for all, following the Zarraga murders in 1956 in Laguna, President Magsaysay committed the entire PMA graduating class — all fifty-one of them — in the area with the very clear F<sup>4</sup> mission of *finding, fixing, fighting, and finishing* (not necessarily killing) the enemy. To be sure, the Commander-in-Chief then was not only extremely popular, but he also knew what he was doing, as he had earlier demonstrated in Central Luzon.

"The Guy" — as Magsaysay was fondly called — flushed PMA Class 1956 out of the Philippine Army School Center in Fort Bonifacio (formerly called Fort McKinley), where they were taking the usual pre-service Company Officers' Course, and sent them to the field with the simple admonition that "the best school is the jungle." The School Superintendent then, Col. Cirilo Garcia, gave the class a very inspiring talk. From him, they picked up a word which was adopted by the class as their battlecry when they joined the massive operations against the Huks in Southern Luzon — "*dibdiban*"! (This Tagalog word does not seem to have a precise translation in English — although it could mean "from the heart," "heart-to-heart," or simply "no-nonsense.").

The wisdom, sincerity, and decisiveness — as well as credibility — of President Magsaysay could only be matched by the high sense of mission on the part of every individual officer or soldier. Such mission orientation served also as antidote to human-rights violations for the "moral man in the military." Considering the enemy just as another Filipino — therefore, a brother — fighting for a cause he believed in, one was then expected to take only such actions as were both necessary and sufficient to accomplish



his mission of destroying the enemy's will to fight or seizing a vital installation. If that mission could be achieved without killing, fine — or, if he had to kill at all, it could be done with neither hatred nor cruelty.

When President Magsaysay died in March 1957 in that fateful airplane crash on Mount Manunggal in Cebu, the Hukbalahap campaigns in Southern Luzon and in the rest of the country had gained full momentum. This was in accordance with his famous left-hand/right-hand approach of “all-out friendship/all-out force.”

By the middle of the year armed insurgency all over the country was practically crushed. Philippine Army units that had been deployed in the massive anti-communist operations were pulled out and moved to Fort Magsaysay for retraining in conjunction with a reorganization of the AFP along conventional peacetime functions.

### *The Marcos Syndrome*

President Marcos won the Presidency in 1965, and immediately started his systematic destruction of the military, while fertilizing the ground for the revival and growth of armed communist insurgency in the country. There was Project *Merdeka* in 1967, exploding after the *Jabidah* massacre in 1968, which almost erupted into a war between the Philippines and Malaysia, while ushering in the secessionist movements in Mindanao.

Heavy fighting between the Government and the Moro National Liberation Front of Nur Misuari broke out in 1972 in Mindanao, while the communist New People's Army stepped up its operations in Luzon and the Visayas. With the series of destructive typhoons, killer floods, and other natural calamities, President Marcos found an excuse to declare Martial Law in September, thereby ensuring his stay in power as a virtual dictator.

Thus, instead of pursuing the original concept of the Citizen Army, Marcos expanded the Armed Forces to about four-fold and activated the paramilitary Civilian Home Defense Forces (CHDFs). Without Congress, the President promoted officers in the top ranks according to his whims, and granted temporary promotions left and right, thereby ensuring the canine loyalties of the top generals who would hold key positions in the Armed Forces.

With his curious concept of continuity and stability in the military, Marcos invented the “overstaying general” and destroyed the General Staff concept — a feat which even Adolf Hitler failed to accomplish. Moreover, he changed the laws of retirement by extending the terms of regular officers from the PMA by at least four years — thus, bloating further the “hump.”

With graft and corruption virtually tolerated in the Defense establishment, President Marcos was indeed able to infect the military with the

syndrome calculated to make the organization his tool for political and economic domination, as well as of human oppression. As Marcos's last Chief of Staff, General Ver made the finishing touches by creating the so-called Regional Unified Commands (RUCs). Unfortunately for Marcos, but fortunately for the country, there were RAM and Enrile!

### *The Aquino Syndrome*

When Corazon Aquino became AFP Commander-in-Chief in February 1986, she started imposing her own syndrome on the military — on top of Marcos's. Instead of letting the Minister of National Defense perform his function intact as her *alter ego*, she demoted Enrile to a mere "Monitor of National Defense" and acted as her own Minister. This was announced in her maiden speech on major policies on the military delivered during the PMA graduation in March in Baguio. But even with Secretary Ileta having replaced Enrile, the Defense Department remained just as irrelevant.

Moreover, the President surrounded herself with anti-military advisers — if not amateurs — who are very negative in their treatment of the Armed Forces. To cap it all, she has placed the National Security Council under a Master of Crisis Management — who competes with the Malacañang Press Office in making Presidential pronouncements on security and puts one over the Intelligence Service by divulging matters that should be treated as State secrets — rather than under a Master of Security Policy and Planning.

Under the leadership of Cory Aquino, the AFP organizational "hump" has remained just as bloated as ever. This is brought about by the mistaken belief that she must promote her own generals to neutralize those who are not hers and must have troops personally loyal to her — to the point of creating a separate "Yellow Army" as "an army within the Army." The Lady Commander-in-Chief just cannot seem to get used to the fact that the military organization belongs to the Republic — not to the President, as in the case of Marcos.

The Aquino leadership regards the Armed Forces in terms of the "military mind" stereotype — unthinking, unfeeling, and misbehaving children. Thus, President Aquino simplistically reacted to Minister Enrile as a "mere child at play" once and Colonel Honasan as "making gimmicks to get the attention of media" — rather than trying sincerely to discern the messages the two gentlemen were trying to convey. The soldiers, likewise, see Cory Aquino's frequent — sometimes surprise — appearances in the camps as one frantic mother's attempts to appease her troublesome children with lollipops.

This simplism of the Aquino leadership extends also to its interpretation of the principle of "civilian supremacy over the military." To AFP members, the principle simply says that the Commander-in-Chief is the

President, who is a civilian, and exercises command through the Secretary of National Defense, who is also a civilian. Moreover, the civilian Congress has effective control over the military through its sole prerogative to declare war, its budgetary function, and its right to pass over top promotions and appointments in the Armed Forces.

Otherwise, civilian functions over the military are limited to policy — including review — matters only. The strategic and tactical functions of military planning and management are technical in nature, and are better left to the military as they are not within the competence of civilian authorities. Thus, a prudent civilian President will not interfere with the actual conduct of military operations — let alone, allow his or her civilian “advisers” to direct military commanders. Moreover, the principle of “civilian supremacy over the military” does not mean that any lousy provincial governor can push around the military commander — not even a duty sergeant — in his area, since military personnel receive orders from and report to their immediate superiors in the chain of command only.

The simplism of the Aquino leadership has bred its indecision, as well as its incompetence, in military operations — and this has a telling effect on the anti-insurgency and anti-secessionist campaigns, which have been escalating in both qualitative and quantitative terms. The wishy-washy leadership has simply confused the troops on the frontlines — which are now everywhere — who are no longer sure whether they are to shoot, to pray, to sing, or to run — and end up being shot at, killed, and buried.

The soldier or officer under the present dispensation who is still afflicted with the Marcos and Aquino syndromes is simply confused. This is certainly to be expected when the military leadership is one big picture of fuzziness. General Ramos, Secretary Iletto, and President Aquino were, in fact, telling the plain truth when they said that the military organization was “misguided, misled”.

Many a soldier or officer now could not even be able to tell who the “enemy” is — therefore, unable to internalize the basic F<sup>4</sup> mission orientation. For instance, the current official notion of an “unarmed Citizen Army under the AFP” is a bastardization of the original Citizen Army concept — if not a contradiction in terms — and does not conform with the Constitutional provision on the “Citizen Armed Forces.”

### *The Ramos Factor*

In fairness to the civilian President Cory Aquino, the military problem, as distinguished from the national problem, should be placed squarely on the shoulders — atop those four-star boards — of Gen. Fidel Ramos who used to be the AFP Chief of Staff.

One problem with General Ramos is that the public's knowledge — more accurately, their perception — of him has largely been the product of mass media. Unfortunately, this image does not square up with the real person — let alone, with the military man in him. Ramos may be very popular among all ill-informed civilians, but he is very unpopular among well-informed military personnel. In fact, he does not enjoy at all the respect of a large segment of the officer corps — from retired generals to young lieutenants — not even of PMA cadets. Those who know the real record of the former Chief of Staff and current Defense Secretary believe that he should not have risen to the star ranks.

In the military service, the ultimate test of an officer is his performance while commanding a company, which is the smallest tactical and administrative unit, especially in combat, because this is considered to be the most difficult assignment in the field. It is very much easier for one to command a battalion — more so a larger unit — since he has a troop staff and other assistants. But a Company Commander is his own Intelligence Officer, Operations Officer, Communications Officer, Logistics Officer, Mess Officer, Training Officer, etc. He is directly responsible for the behavior, discipline, morale, welfare, etc., of his men — as well as the accomplishment of the unit's mission.

Now, what is General Ramos's record as a Company Commander? As a captain, he was once Commanding Officer of a company of the 16th Battalion Combat Team, Philippine Army, operating against the Hukbalahaps in 1956-57 in Laguna. But his command turned out to be a disaster when the unit encountered the group of the Huk Supremo, Jesus Lava. The Platoon Leader who led the fight on behalf of the beleaguered company is now a retired General and a Congressman from the South, while the Battalion Commander who "kicked" the bewildered Company Commander "upstairs" to the position of S-3 (Operations and Training Officer) is still very active in business as a retired Colonel.

Fidel's cousin, Ferdinand Marcos, was elected President in 1965. A "triumvirate" was immediately formed to call the shots in the military, consisting of Generals Ernesto Mata (later named Secretary of National Defense) and Ismael Lapus (later named Chief of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency), as well as Major Fidel Ramos (later named Presidential Assistant on Military Affairs in Malacañang). That was how the last Chief of Staff's star started to rise. However, when the critical moment came in 1981 — some 16 years later, which was presumably ample time for assessing the capabilities of the "President's Men" — Marcos chose his other relative, General Ver, as AFP Chief of Staff.

Now, what is the difference between the two Marcos relatives — Generals Ver and Ramos? Unlike their predecessor, the professional General Romeo Espino, who could work with whatever officers he would find in

their posts, Ver and Ramos must bring along their "own boys" personally loyal to them.

If General Ver had to create the so-called Regional Unified Commands (RUCs) in order to have a direct hand in the affairs at the lower levels, General Ramos had not only retained those control structures, but had also superimposed the so-called Area Unified Commands (AUCs) in order to have more handles on the Armed Forces. Like President Marcos and General Ver, the last Chief of Staff had the propensity to centralize military operational decision making, without delegating functions and authority substantively. This was the reason for outgoing Secretary Iletto's lament that operations were very centrally controlled at Camp Aguinaldo. Thus, Army and lower headquarters are practically useless — and he ought to know being a former PA Commander himself.

What was uniquely Ramos, however, was the practice of usurping the functions of his subordinates. To cite a few examples: It was the AFP Chief of Staff presiding over the Graduation Week last March in Baguio — rather than the PMA Superintendent. In Bicol, it was also the Chief of Staff supervising the Constabulary Regional Commander — rather than the PC Chief. Even simple administrative and tactical matters that are better left to company commanders had to be taken up by the AFP Chief through the mass media, as well as the multi-layered chain of command.

All these functional and organizational quirks of General Ramos — as well as those passed on undiminished by General Ver — have caused a lot of confusion and demoralization among military personnel. These have resulted in the loss of effectiveness and efficiency in AFP operations, thereby endangering the security of the country.

### *Turning the Corner*

The relationship between the former AFP Chief of Staff — now the Secretary of National Defense — and the members of the Reform-AFP Movement is a very important element in the "Ramos factor." The outset of the so-called February (1986) Revolution, when that relationship was closest, is usually described by some RAM leaders as follows: ". . . the General would not even dare lift a finger on his own. But after Enrile had taken the initiative, Ramos had no more choice than fill up the niche carved out for him in history by others."

The "Revolution" could have been a real turning point not only for Philippine society, including the Government, including the AFP, but also for General Ramos. Then, Fidel's sins of omission and commission could have all been forgiven and forgotten had he really turned the corner through a real change of heart and mind.

Even before the flight of Ferdinand Marcos as his erstwhile Commander-in-Chief and the installation of Corazon Aquino as the new

President, the new Chief of Staff had already christened the Armed Forces as “New” — the NAFP. Thus, General Ramos was already on the way to becoming the “Father of the New Armed Forces of the Philippines” — if his earlier bid for “Father of the Special Forces” had turned *kaput*, unlike General Ileta who had already established himself as “Father of the Scout Rangers.”

The problem with his innovation, however, was that, to the good General, it seemed as if the creation of a new AFP would only be a matter of inserted the word “New” — just as in the late, unlamented “New Society.” With the Marcoses, at least, there were lots of conceptualization — the writing of books — and all those other pretensions about ideological and political formations, fostering of developmental values, reorientation of the civilian bureaucracy.

But did the last Chief-of-Staff have any substantive plan for renewing the Armed Forces — aside from the repainting of buildings and vehicles, printing of new letterheads, etc.? The reading of the Bible or the Koran — as usually mentioned — is the preoccupation of a lifetime. What about something more down-to-earth? The more efficacious organizations in business and government — let alone, the military — need something more operational than the Ten Commandments.

Then, last February 1987 — around one year after the “Revolution” and the baptism of NAFP — General Ramos announced that the word “new” should be dropped because the Armed Forces was already “renewed”; he did not say “old.” That was to be followed by a massive repainting of signboards, reprinting of letterheads, etc. — all over again.

There is really a pressing need to renew and revitalize the Armed Forces organization — even this late. But who is going to take the lead? Not even General Ramos, who could indeed be the wrong man for the right job. Indeed, one from the Constabulary, which is the “bastard” in the military, is considered least qualified to lead the Armed Forces. Creating a new AFP means breaking away from certain old values and habits — those which almost sent the military completely to the dogs — and fostering new ones. Is General Ramos, as the former Chief of Staff and the present Secretary of National Defense, capable of such an reorientation?

For one thing, General Ramos could not simply shed off his “upper-classroom mentality” decades after he graduated from West Point. It is shown in his habit of calling everybody he does not like as “Mister” — Mr. Marcos, Mr. Abadilla, Mr. Honasan, etc.; this is how plebes in the Academy are addressed. It is also shown in his propensity to “ask for pushups”; this is the standard punishment for plebes. General Ramos is also hamstrung by his “colonial and colonized mentality” — but this needs no elaboration — as it is also evident in President Aquino and former Secretary Ileta.

Moreover, even in his age, the former Chief of Staff was just too pre-occupied with jumping (from airplanes) and jogging — which he pursued with almost hypochondriac zeal — to lead the other generals in the intellectual activities which are necessary for creating a new AFP. But what could really be a stumbling block to General Ramos's capability to lead in the renewal and revitalization of the AFP was his apparent inability to shed off his old ideas — especially those Marcosian concepts fostered by two decades under the dictator — to pave the way for the inculcation of new ones.

Take the “superstar mentality” — the hallmark of the Marcos Era. Because of this mentality, ex-President Marcos, as Commander-in-Chief, destroyed the General Staff concept in the military and foisted the myth that stability and continuity in the military is a function of the commander. This served as the justification for the institution of the “overstaying general.”

Like Marcos, many a commander created the self-serving myth that he was “indispensable” — in violation of the dictum that everybody is expendable in the Armed Forces, regardless of rank, even the Commander-in-Chief. To sustain that “indispensability,” the Marcosian general did not prepare any successor. He did this very easily by “exiling” every brilliant officer, who could be a threat to his position, and surrounding himself only with the mediocre. Like Marcos, he monopolized power, refused to delegate authority along with tasks, and pretended to run the organization through directives issued from the top.

Now, what about General Ramos, the ex-future “Father of the New AFP” that never was? Is he ready to give up his old Marcosian ideas and habits and replace them with new ones compatible with the needs of the times? Has he seen himself as not indispensable, and must, therefore, prepare young leaders to take his place — beforehand, not at the eleventh hour? Has he revitalized and strengthened the General Staff as the institution that provides stability and continuity in the military? Is he ready to share authority — not just responsibility — with subordinate commanders down the line? Is he ready to step down — and out — to give way to young blood? In other words, is Ramos ready to give up the Marcos syndrome? Whether we can have a New AFP — not just in name under General Ramos — depends on the answers to the foregoing questions.

To summarize, there are two main objections to the military (mis)-leadership of General Ramos — viz., his style and his politics. On the first, his management approach is largely *reactive* — if not *inactive* — where it should be *interactive*. He is, thus, perceived as the Juan in the caricature waiting for the guava to fall into his mouth. As ex-President Marcos described General Ramos in an interview for *Playboy* months ago, “he needs somebody to kick him in the butt to move” — and the cousin ought to know.

*Continuing Revolution*

Two years have passed since the so-called February Revolution of 1986. President Corazon Aquino has replaced the dictatorial Ferdinand Marcos. A new Constitution is in place. Congress has been installed, composed of duly-elected members of the Senate and of the House of Representatives. Provincial governors, city or municipal mayors, and other local officials have been popularly elected and are now performing their functions. In other words, the democratic institutions that were destroyed during the Marcos Era have been practically restored.

But aside from the restoration of these political structures — as well as the replacement of people, not necessarily for the better — what else have changed? Cronyism, dynastism, nepotism, and other insidious practices that had almost sent the country down the drain under Marcos are still very much around under Aquino — although with different participants. Graft and corruption continue to plague society. Gross ineptitude of the bureaucracy can only be compounded by the attempted deceptions in government decision making.

As a result, the hoped-for economic recovery has not taken place. The fate of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program in Congress is still unknown. The despoilation of our natural resources has continued unabated. Agricultural productivity has grown so low that the country is even importing sugar and rice, which it once exported. The low levels and the unequal distribution of income have worsened, while some sixty percent of Filipino families are living below the poverty line. The peace and order conditions have grown so bad as to affect the investment climate adversely, while mass government layoffs have worsened the unemployment and under-employment problems.

Meanwhile, armed communist insurgency operations have escalated throughout the country. The threat of armed Muslim secessionist struggles in the South has not at all abated, despite the signs of a slowdown in military operations down south (which, after all, could be the proverbial lull before the storm).

These developments have brought to the fore the issue of the capability of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Is the military now in a better position to meet those demands?

There have been replacements among the people on top of the Defense and Armed Forces organizations, but this does not mean a real change in leadership. The functional and structural anomalies which should have been corrected by reorganizing the PC/INP out of the AFP is still far from implementation.

The Americans — notably Richard Armitage, U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Affairs — have again assured President Aquino



of increased military assistance in the form of hardware for fighting insurgency. The AFP is, likewise, beefing up its strength with the recruitment of some 6,000 fresh troops.

But have the lessons of Vietnam been lost on our leaders? Winning a war is not a matter of firepower — both hardware and men — but of superior intelligence, leadership, and motivations. If the Philippine communist insurgents — as well as the Muslim separatists — have been increasing their influence, according to the Secretary of National Defense and the AFP Chief of Staff, it is because of poor intelligence, bad civil-military relations, and continuing misleadership in the government — resulting in low fighting effectiveness and efficiency. In other words, the qualitative factors are more important than the quantitative.

The Marcos syndrome has remained in the military. No de-Marcosification has taken place at the level of values, strategies, processes, and structures. This is still compounded by the Aquino syndrome. The President might have allowed General Ramos to shed his military uniform, but she cannot simply give up the Marcosian habit of extending the tours of duty of retireable officers — as in the case of General de Villa — even in violation of the Constitution.

The AFP has, therefore, remained fragmented. The Defense-military hierarchy is doing its utmost to eliminate the leaders of the Reform-AFP Movement by charging them for various crimes and assassinating them in the media. It succeeded in getting the RAM people out of the picture in the Second Anniversary celebration of the “February Revolution.”

But the ideas and ideals that triggered the original “February Revolution” and deposed ex-President Marcos cannot simply be sequestered. They have stayed alive in the hearts and minds of concerned Filipinos — not just the “disgruntled” military — no matter how insignificant their number may be. They are embodied in two messages: a “national message,” whose bottom line is *good government*, and a “military message” — a *revitalized military*. To these concerned people, the “Revolution” is far from over.

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## CORY'S PEOPLE POWER

By BENITO LIM

Almost everyone who joined the "February Revolution" (Feb. 22-25, 1986) attributed their success to "people power." Since then, close advisers of President Corazon C. Aquino have believed that she owes her presidency to "people power" and will count on its support whenever she faces intransigent forces or insurmountable problems. A faction of these advisers even argues that precisely because it is "people power" that brought her to the presidency of the Republic, President Aquino should install a "revolutionary or new constitutional government" to bring about the reforms demanded by "people power."

Exactly what is "people power" and what President Aquino can count on is not clear. Like most labels in Philippine politics, "people power" stands for a mosaic of groups and programs whose parts do not fit together neatly.

Anyone who observed closely the events of Feb. 22-25, 1986 will easily see that several forces comprise "people power" — and that at least there were five distinct vested interest groups. One consists of the various religious groups (Catholics, Protestants, Iglesia ni Cristo and Muslims) headed by the Catholic majority which have sprung up in reaction to Marcos repression during the past fourteen years. The church became the forum of dissent and for condemning Marcos violation of human rights. The second group consists of politicians from Laban and UNIDO, upper and middle class businessmen and professionals who along with their families joined the NAMFREL to insure an Aquino victory. Many members of this group joined and later bolted the Marcos administration because of personal grievances, massive corruption in the officialdom and a flagging economy. Others who just tolerated the Marcos regime found the "snap elections" an occasion to act against and eventually depose Marcos. The third force consists of military officers who had collaborated with Marcos when he declared Martial Law but rebelled later because they were disenchanted and by-passed in promotions. Another cause of disaffection with former President Marcos was his decision to convert a special group in the military into his private army. The disenchanted and embittered group organized what is known as the "reformist" group within the AFP.

The fourth group consists of the cause-oriented organizations espousing nationalistic programs whose membership is drawn from students, workers,

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farmers and left-wingers. These are people who saw in the "revolution" an opportunity to politicize the people not only about the evils of Marcos autocratic government but the dangers of imperialism, bureaucratic capitalism, warlordism and corruption in the bureaucracy. They wanted to prevent those who massed at Camp Aquinaldo and Camp Crame, EDSA, and Malacañang from becoming helpless cannon fodder of Cardinal Sin, the military rebels and the US forces.

The fifth and most powerful group, which was shielded from public eye, is the so-called "second level of American officials" in the Philippines, who orchestrated the operations — who wheeled and dealt with Filipino officials, politicians and military leaders on both sides of the political fence.

All of these diverse groups representing heterogeneous ideological lines including those without any position were united by one common goal — the removal of Marcos from office. They rallied the "other heroes": priests, nuns, students, shopkeepers, workers, peasants, housewives, drivers, hawkers, artists, performers, bureaucrats, hospitality girls and even the riff-raff of society to stage the "February revolution."

However, beyond this anti-Marcos sentiment, the aims of these groups who constitute "people power" are far from harmonious and at times oppose one another.

The US forces, of course, would like to keep the military bases beyond 1991 and to renew the "special relations" which will once again grant nationality treatment to American businessmen in the Philippines, an arrangement they enjoyed before 1974. They want to keep the concessions they exacted from ex-President Marcos when they supported his Martial Law regime such as the retention of P.D. 194 which abrogated the Rice and Corn Nationalization Law, P.D. 1942 which exempted new rice and corn lands from land reform, P.D. 704 which permits foreigners to fish in Philippine waters, P.D. 714 which neutralized RA No. 1180 Nationalizing Retail Trade, P.D. 92 and 151 which open the Philippines to foreign investments.

In addition, they will want more privileges in the exploitation of natural resources, leasing of public property, operation of public utilities, ownership and management of mass media and the establishment of US-controlled or managed educational institutions. They will act against any move to reaffirm the Supreme Court decision in the *Quasha* case which makes it illegal for Americans to own private residential lands. They will move for the repeal of General Banking Acts, the Act Regulating Foreign Business and RA No. 4848 which prohibits the export of cultural treasures.

In view of their experience with an intransigent Marcos who had absolute control over the military for some time, the US will likely press for the "professionalization of the military." According to Henry Kissinger, this means, among others, the removal of the military commander's "personal

ties to the chief of state. . .” and preventing “the military chief from exercising his monopoly of power for his own purposes.”

“Professionalization” will also permit US military and intelligence services to main its contacts and influence over the Philippine military establishment through training on “counter-insurgency operations.” The US forces hope that through these training programs they can integrate Philippine military institutions under the aegis of the CIA.

By contrast, the cause-oriented groups, such as the nationalists, want an end to US military presence in the Philippines, the removal of all laws and PDs that favor American and other foreign businesses, and an end to American influence over the AFP. The workers want the repeal of anti-union legislations, they want stricter regulations over remittance of profits by multinationals and the return of the right of workers to strike against firms that are unjust to labor. Peasants want genuine land reform, lower prices for fertilizer and pesticides, and better marketing systems.

Filipino businessmen want the repeal of all law favoring foreign business interests, specially those laws favoring American and Japanese businessmen.

The Catholic church, under the leadership of Cardinal Sin, has its own agenda. Although the battlecry is to work for a “God-centered society,” the Catholic Church not only wants a say in the appointment of key government ministers but also a share in making national policy decisions.

The Catholic church advances the position that because it initiated “people power,” its institutions are now sacrosanct. Its schools must be given government support through more loans and less taxes. Since the Marcos regime, Cardinal Sin has claimed that the Catholic Church is in the best position to administer US economic aid to the Philippines. No doubt he will reaffirm this view.

The Protestants, who cooperated closely with the Catholics during the “February revolution,” have their own agenda. Some of their goals are at cross-purposes with the Catholic church. Their aim of reducing Catholic influence and increasing their own in the Philippines has not changed. For over a decade now they have dominated radio and TV media with canned programs from their corporate centers in the U.S.A. They made substantial gains during the Marcos regime and many of their “fire-breathing” ministers made pilgrimages to Malacañang and extolled Marcos for the support they received from him. Like their Catholic counterparts, the Protestants want government support for their institutions and above all, they are also interested in wielding political power.

For most of the latter part of martial law years, the military’s problem was how to bring about moral regeneration within its ranks and the building

of a credible image before the Filipino public. It instituted a series of seminar programs called *Tanglaw* (acronym for Tanod at Gabay ng Lahi at Watawat, and is a Tagalog word which means "guiding light.") These were said to have been painstakingly organized to neutralize the general view that the military was the most blatant abuser of human rights and one of the most corrupt agencies of the Marcos government. But the coup d'état of Enrile and Ramos which led to the bloodless "February Revolution" restored some sheen to the military's tarnished image. There was great expectation that Ramos, being a genuine professional, would cleanse the military completely of its "rascals, scalawags and torturers."

However, as the military was "reorganized" and consolidated, many people who joined the "February Revolution" were disappointed if not disgusted outright. They complained that many of the promoted officers were the same "rascals, scalawags and torturers" during the Marcos regime, except that now they have put on the "reformist uniform."

Legitimization and public acceptance are not the only goals of the military. In fact, image refurbishing is only incidental to its larger goal of supervising and administering the state. The collective experience of sharing sovereignty with ex-President Marcos have convinced many of them that they can rule the Republic more efficiently than the civilians. The view that the military is subordinate to civilian authority is anathema to many line officers today. What has inhibited the military from imposing a military junta after the "February Revolution" is the knowledge of US desire to make the Philippines a showcase of democratic and constitutional government in Southeast Asia.

Whatever were the differences they have among themselves, "people power" therefore is a collage of disparate interests whose followers were outraged by the Marcos dictatorship. What bound all them together was the enemy, Ferdinand E. Marcos and Company.

The question is what will hold them now that Marcos has been banished. Examining the phenomenon closely Kissinger observed:

"Even with democratic impetus, it is highly likely that when the immediate euphoria has worn off, disparate tendencies will begin to contest for primacy. The history of revolutions teaches that the coalition of resentments which united the opposition disintegrates once the status quo is overthrown."

No doubt the major victors of the "February Revolution" are the vested interest groups. The major spoils go to the Americans. President Aquino already expressed her desire to strengthen our "special relations" with the US — this means the Americans can keep all concessions they had extracted from Marcos and could get some more. Vice President Laurel already announced that the military bases can remain until 1991. The most amazing

aspect of American victory is that they invested so little in their "unfocused harassment" and won so much.

The next biggest winner is the military. Besides acquiring a new sheen for its tarnished image, it managed to keep its power intact. Many people believe that it is the only organized bureaucracy today. Some even believe that it has the capability to stage another coup d'etat, although Minister Enrile and Gen. Ramos have made repeated statements that they believe in "civilian supremacy."

The Catholic church is another big winner. Besides President Aquino, Cardinal Sin, no doubt, is the other superstar. He and Ambassador Bosworth are the newly elevated king-makers. Not only did they succeed in discouraging the presidential ambitions of Salvador Laurel and in building support for Cory Aquino, but they also had a hand in the selection of some cabinet members and other high government officials. Definitely Cardinal Sin's opinions matter in the shaping of political decisions.

The cause-oriented groups are not certain about their gains. Some of their leaders are now in key government ministries. The question is how long will President Aquino side with them against the other vested interest groups. Some observers believe that they have already extracted the maximum concession from President Aquino in the release of all political detainees.

No doubt the vested-interests groups are the key beneficiaries of the "February Revolution." Those people whom they manipulated to become cannon fodder of their revolution are still awaiting the fruits of their victory. A letter writer complained to the editor of a major daily that: "President Aquino's people are talking about a revolutionary government; all I am asking is when can the government lower the prices of basic commodities." A caller to a radio station said: "Minister Quisumbing is interested about God-centered education; I am interested in whether she will lower tuition fees and whether schools will provide better educational facilities for my children."

Only two months have elapsed and already the communication lines of those who forged "people power" are no longer on the same wave length. This makes hollow President Aquino's marching orders: "If anyone in government does not listen to you, bring it to my attention through the structures to be set up for the purpose. If your concerns are just, they will be acted on."

Many people want to know what President Aquino will do with the "balimbings", those people who shifted loyalties to the new regime when the old one collapsed. In its derogatory sense, "balimbing" means "opportunist," although the word is also used euphemistically to mean "reconciliation." The gravest question about the "balimbings" is whether those who

committed abuses and other excesses, particularly violation of human rights, will be forgiven for the sake of peace and reconciliation. The other side of the problem is fulfillment of one of the key campaign issues of President Aquino — “Justice for Ninoy, Justice for All!” Will those who suffered under the previous regime find redress?

Many of President Aquino’s appointments and announcements are now the object of serious criticisms from among her own avid supporters. Fortunately many of these criticisms are, for now, directed against her appointees. Nonetheless, the fact is, disenchantment may slowly seep in.

It is these disturbing developments that led observers to raise doubts on whether President Aquino can turn to “people power” for support whenever she needs them. Can she draw on its continuous support without serving the interests of the majority who comprise “people power” in return?

President Aquino seemed aware of this problem when she gave her “marching orders” during a thanksgiving mass to celebrate her victory at the Luneta. Her orders show what the Aquino administration believes, in apparently more idealistic moments, and how this belief is consistent with its perception of what government is all about: keeping the government tuned to the voice of the people.

But who or what groups speak for the people, President Aquino did not say. Equally important is the question of who or what groups will man the listening posts of President Aquino. Will they be the representatives of the vested interest groups which are already securely ensconced in her cabinet? Or is she going to set up another independent bureaucratic structure to make sure that the voice of the majority of our people will be heard?

The transposition of serving the needs of vested interests to serving the needs of the people is fraught with difficulty and uncertainty. This early, the contours of a cordon sanitaire are already shaping up — when it materializes she may find her government viewed as simply a new political elite, documenting Pareto’s view that revolutions can only bring about the “circulation of elites”, and her commitment to help the poor as little more than a rhetorical device for ambitions of powerful hungry men.

The important step required in the transportation of “people power” into people’s power requires a fundamental commitment of government to a common program that can both serve our people and our national interests.

This means domestic policies are needed that would move toward building a broad-based, inclusive government. Vested interests should not take precedence over public interests. The fact is, at this point, vested interest groups are already influencing the policy directions of the Aquino government. What President Aquino can do to redirect this state of affairs — to commit government to public interest — is an open question. But if she wants to count on the people’s support whenever she faces difficult problems and enemy forces, she must resolve this problem soon.

## **Book Review**

Gareth Porter, *The Politics of Counterinsurgency in the Philippines: Military and Political Options* (Philippine Studies Occasional Paper No. 9), Center for Philippine Studies, University of Hawaii, 1987.

Walden Bello, *Creating the Third Force: U.S.-Sponsored Low Intensity Conflict in the Philippines* (Food First Development Series), The Institute for Food and Development, San Francisco, CA, 1987.

One of the most enduring received wisdoms which the events of February 1986 engendered is the alleged discredit which befell the radical Left as a consequence of its having boycotted the snap election. True enough, the ascension into power of Mrs. Aquino simultaneously ushered in an unprecedented period of reflux and ebb for the CPP-NPA-NDF and allied mass organizations, popularly perceived in the wake of EDSA as having been swept aside, like the Marcos dictatorship, to an ignominious end. Two extremist troublemakers meeting the same fate at the hands of an enraged "moderate" citizenry: the image is reassuring to the centrist *parti pris* of the Aquino presidency. It also fits in with the Reagan administration's policy of support for "newly restored democracies" in the Third World. This neatly "dialectical" view, however, cannot account for the persistence of the armed insurgency and *a fortiori*, the existence, long after the much-vaunted "revolution", of the basic socio-economic problems on which the NPA insurgency feeds.

One of these problems which EDSA has precisely helped to exacerbate is the politicization of the Philippine military. For Mrs. Aquino's ascension to power was impossible without the U.S.-backed army's last-minute mutiny against the Marcos-Ver dictatorship, and the "new" AFP has not missed an occasion ever since to make reminders, alternately crude or subtle, about the precariousness of her claim to civilian supremacy. The administration's repeated moves to appease the military in pursuit of what it thinks is an even-handed policy have encouraged the RAM, theoretically outlawed but still existing *de facto*, in its drive to "complete" the "EDSA revolution." This works to the detriment, of course, of the non-violent myth of EDSA. In the meantime the armed insurgency has continued to benefit from the contradictions between civilian authority and the army which seem to be the legacy of the denouement of the events of February 1986.



Two works that distinguish themselves from the plethoric outflow of accounts and exegeses of the events of February 1986 are Gareth Porter's monograph and Walden Bello's slim-sized book, both of which appeared a year later. Both are careful to avoid falling into the double trap of joining in the simple-minded adulation of the AFP, the RAM and the "heroes of EDSA" that characterize most other contemporary publications; and pronouncing a (premature) post-mortem on the radical Left. This wariness serves them all the better as the configuration of the post-EDSA political situation has so far tended to highlight the worsening of the problem of the politicized Philippine military. (For a reader like this reviewer who came to read *Politics of Counterinsurgency and Creating the Third Force* only in mid-1988, there is no question that in the main their respective discussions of the troubled relations between civilian and military authorities have remained highly cogent in spite of the vicissitudes of the post-EDSA fallout.)

Porter argues that it is too late in the day to eliminate the NPA by military force. There must be a reassessment of orthodox counterinsurgency policy, which stresses the military component. He also hints that the insurgents may be amenable to a shift in tactics away from the armed struggle, and contends that an "incorporation" approach that will make the insurgents feel that they have a stake in the maintenance of Mrs. Aquino's reformist policy just might do the trick. "Making them an offer they can't refuse" is definitely an innovative way of devalorizing the armed struggle and channeling the insurgents' energies into constructive nation-building activity, and Porter's sincerity in contributing to a peaceful settlement cannot be gainsaid. The problem lies in his over-optimistic assumptions about two of the major actors in the Philippine drama: the armed forces and the U.S. government.

Specifically, Porter's "incorporation" approach consists of land reform plus a policy of involving the insurgents in a number of collaborative measures: the government and the NDF could put up a common front on certain issues like Right-wing opposition parties; or the NDF could disarm Right-wing fanatics and the CHDFs. At this point the issue of outdated judgment just might be raised against Porter. His monograph was completed before the 22 January 1987 massacre of KMP peasants in the vicinity of the presidential palace; the incident served as a pretext for the NDF to call off the peace talks and to accuse the government of bad faith. This would explain Porter's optimism at least in part, but his idea of "incorporation" seems to take for granted either (1) the government armed forces' willingness to let their prerogatives be handed over to the NPA, or (2) the nihil obstat of the armed forces' American backers, advisers and suppliers. This is not to mention the dubious capability of the civilian authorities to continue extracting concessions from the military establishment after the first few months of Mrs. Aquino's assumption into office. Whether before or after the Mendiola Bridge massacre, neither the armed

forces nor the U.S. government were particularly noted for their enthusiasm for the notion of empowering the armed insurgents in their respective guerilla fronts, and rightly so. This disabused reflection alludes not only to the ideological motivations of the insurgents' leadership — of course they have their ideology to look after — but also to the deeply-rooted anti-communism, abetted by the U.S. government, of the AFP. Both factors militate against the utopian premises of the "incorporation" strategy.

But does Porter really need to be so informed? He himself acknowledges (p. 74) that Mrs. Aquino has been outmaneuvered by the U.S.-backed army, and that she has not been getting the proper support from Washington (pp. 132-143). Some questions might then pertinently be posed: is the Porter study beamed to the right (sympathetic, receptive) audience? What results can its recommendations realistically hope to achieve?

The last chapter on "U.S. Policy and Counterinsurgency" offers several valuable insights, unavailable elsewhere, into official U.S. reflexes vis-a-vis the Aquino administration's handling (or mishandling) of the insurgency. Here Porter makes the telling allegation that the Reagan administration was willing to go along with Manila's initiative to negotiate with the NDF "only on the assumption that Aquino would return within a reasonable period of time to put more emphasis on a combined counterinsurgency strategy within which the AFP would be allowed free rein to fight" (p. 141). As it turned out, the ceasefire-negotiations period drew to a predictably unfruitful conclusion on 22 January 1987. But long before that date, the momentum of RAM's trajectory had already placed it on a collision course with Mrs. Aquino's reformist ideas. To this day, the RAM factor continues to weigh significantly in the making of decisions crucial to the regime and to the nation at large. How Porter could have, in these conditions, presumed to offer advice of a nature to "soften" the insurgents *while* keeping the AFP and its American backers at bay strains the imagination. This is not to mention Mrs. Aquino's celebrated aversion to unsolicited advice. In the end, Porter's voice comes through clearer on Washington's wavelength than on Manila's; but one might very well wonder if the American policymakers are that receptive to an all-carrots, no-stick approach where its application in the country harboring the last US bases in Southeast Asia is concerned. In the process Porter might be sending wrong signals to all parties concerned, not the least of which would be the Philippine radical Left.

Written much later in 1987, *Creating the Third Force* is less prone to projecting rosy visions of a negotiated peace. The harsh realities of a protracted struggle overdetermined by the imperatives of American hegemony and security are acknowledged, but so are the objectively counter-revolutionary possibilities of a moderate "Third Force." Interestingly, on the question of the Huks' decline Bello echoes Porter's contention that the

insurgents were first defeated politically before they were incapacitated militarily: hence the importance, for the future of the Left movement, of drawing the correct lessons from the political setback for the Left that Mrs. Aquino's victory represented.

But what is the "Third Force" in the first place, and why is it important to the counter-insurgency schemes of a post-Marcos regime? Bello seems satisfied with the definition provided by the neoconservative journalist and essayist Charles Krauthammer: *viz.*, "a democratic alternative to a pro-American despot on the one hand and communist insurgencies on the other" (p. 12). This definition is tendentious and misleading; the famous "Third Force" can be just as pro-American as the despot in power, if not more so. In fact, a pro-American despot who remains indefinitely in power is in the long run more dangerous for U.S. interests than someone who is perceived as less pro-American: public opinion eventually comes to identify U.S. policy as identical to cynicism, dictator-coddling, etc., and the downfall of the U.S. in that country accompanies that of the dictator (as in Iran and in Nicaragua). Unless, of course, an EDSA-type operation succeeds, whereby pro-American contender ousts pro-American dictator thanks to combination of mutiny of pro-American army plus uprising led by pro-American upper-class opposition, thereby saving the day for the U.S. (After Ronald Reagan began, on 23 February 1986, to change his tune on the conduct of the snap election, did Mrs. Aquino have any more reason to resent the U.S. government's position?) One might also question Krauthammer's conceptualization in this manner: once installed in power, does not the so-called "Third Force" tend to become the *de facto* "First Force" which it has replaced, in the sense that it more willingly assumes the mantle of anti-communism as a reflex of State self-defense?

Bello argues that the "Third Force" strategy was first elaborated during Ramon Magsaysay's anti-Huk campaign; significantly, its prime mover, the CIA operative Edward Lansdale, had a background as an advertising man who could in his new Philippine assignment make the *impression* of socio-political reform count more than the substance of it. For instance, the Magsaysay-sponsored EDCOR scored a major propaganda coup against the hard-core insurgents by building the image of "even dedicated Huks . . . abandoning the armed struggle and enlisting in the government program" (p. 14); yet EDCOR remained essentially a paper project. Combined with the two other prongs of Lansdale's strategy: military reform and "civic action", and innovations in military tactics, the basic "Third Force" approach became a textbook case for successful counter-insurgency. (However, Bello does not deal with the U.S. strategists' failure in South Vietnam to promote and impose Gen. Duong Van Minh and other "neutralists" as a "third alternative" to the Ky-Thieu regimes and the National Front for Liberation during the 1968-1975 period; the lessons there seems to be that the Lansdale strategy is not necessarily of universal applicability.)

Three decades later the "Third Force", incarnated in Mrs. Aquino, was again triumphant in the Philippines ("at least temporarily", adds Bello). Was there a Lansdale in the wings, concocting novel PR schemes to disarm and demoralize the NPA? Bello hints at no such thing. Rather he puts the accent on the various ways through which the radical Left objectively exposed itself to the devastating effects of the Cory Aquino phenomenon, and incidentally makes several references to the "war weariness" of the population at large. However, a resurgence of the revolutionary Left's initiative is not ruled out: four factors which Bello cites are the dismal prospects of the Aquino regime's version of agrarian reform; the country's huge indebtedness to exploitative foreign financial institutions; the undisciplined and professional nature of the AFP; and the high-level quality of the insurgents as a political force. Provided it makes the right moves, of course.

Bello bolsters his argument by marshalling data on the U.S. military commitment to the AFP (armaments, materiel, etc.). But for his analysis of the "Third Force" strategy alone — the first time it has been treated in the context of Low Intensity Conflict as the latter is carried out in this country, to the best of one's recollection — Bello's work is must reading, and not just for students of Philippine politics and social movements.

ARMANDO MALAY, JR.

## ERRATA

Cover page . . . . . Vol. XXV-XXVI

p. 1 4th paragraph 1st line . . . . . the 1987-1992 medium-term development  
*program puts*

p. 4 8th paragraph 3rd line . . . . . popular *movement*

p. 11 last paragraph 3rd line . . . . . that some reasonable degree of political  
and economic evolution *independent* of US intervention were possible

p. 12 5th paragraph 3rd line . . . . . annual exports of at least \$500 *million*

p. 13 6th paragraph 1st line . . . . . In the *agricultural* areas

p. 22 2nd paragraph 11th line . . . . . Program D, slated for 1987-1992

p. 24 7th paragraph 1st line . . . . . Amando *Doronila*

p. 28 3rd paragraph 2nd line . . . . . are worthy *to mention*

p. 30 4th paragraph 6th line . . . . . Mindanao could be *realized*

p. 31 5th paragraph 12th line . . . . . coming from leaders who *possess*

p. 33 1st paragraph 3rd line . . . . . *Office for Southern Cultural  
Communities (OSCC)*.

p. 39 5th paragraph 3rd line . . . . . Our paper tries to *examine* the

p. 40 6th line . . . . . it accords those whose *ideas*

p. 43 should be p. 44 and p. 44 should be p. 43

p. 45 6th line . . . . . AFP units went *berserk* in Lupao and elsewhere

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