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# A STUDY OF PEACEFUL REVOLUTION: THE PHILIPPINES, 1986

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*This exposition of the events leading to Corazon Aquino's accession to power in the Philippines examines several common aspects of revolutionary movements. Janet L. Sawin analyzes the overthrow of Marcos and the relatively peaceful manner with which it occurred through an analysis of the leadership, organization, ideology, and tactics of the players.*

At 9:05 p.m. on the 25th of February 1986, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos departed Malacanang Palace for the final time in a US Air Force helicopter. Although later he claimed that he was forcibly carried from the Palace and lifted into the helicopter, Marcos left of his own accord. For the first time since he began his political career, Marcos was forced to admit defeat; a defeat, in large part, of his own making.

The Philippine Revolution of 1986 that deposed Marcos lasted seventy-five hours, from Saturday the 22nd of February to the following Tuesday. It was a unique event that evolved and succeeded because of a coalition of mismatched forces of civil society, the Church, and the military, united only by the desire for freedom and the hatred of one man. While the specific elements that led to the overthrow of Ferdinand Marcos are unparalleled, there are some recurrent elements and common aspects of strategy which appear among diverse experiences of revolution.

The Philippine Revolution has been classified as a "revolution without guerrillas" — a mass political mobilization, with no military or guerrilla component. In order for such a revolution to succeed, the military must remain on the sidelines, the government must feel threatened, and international attention and pressure must be focused upon the situation. Each of these qualifications holds true, to a great extent, in the Philippine experience.

The Philippine Revolution was a remarkable demonstration of the power people hold, even without weapons, if each is willing to take command and responsibility over their own will and authority. The Philippine experience did not support Ted Gurr's theories of frustration-aggression and intensity of conflict.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), Chapter 8. This theory implies that a revolution will necessarily become increasingly intense, violent, and drawn out if it is to succeed. Despite high levels of frustration with Marcos' regime, and a transfer of

Yet, while the Philippine Revolution was nearly bloodless — only 16 people died during the course of the four day struggle — it was not truly a revolution without guerrillas (for the military was far from the side lines), nor was it entirely spontaneous (in fact, guerrillas launched the revolution), and Marcos was hardly the man to thank for the lack of bloodletting (despite the widely-held belief in the West that this was the case). The Philippine Revolution of 1986 was not, in many ways, what it appeared to be. A study of the strategic elements and players of this revolution will reveal this, while also illustrating why this revolution of 'People Power' was successful in toppling the government of Ferdinand Marcos with minimal violence.

What is it that makes people choose to rebel? For indeed, it is a choice, and one might more happily and safely decide to stay at home. Barbara Salert explains that theories of revolutionary participation are:

framed within one of two major perspectives: the psychological and the rational. The psychological orientation focuses on the frustrations that cause people to deviate from their normal routine and rebel against the existing political order.... The basic contention of the rational-choice explanation is that people participate in revolutionary movements because they derive some personal gain.<sup>2</sup>

There must be governmental and or societal ills creating an overriding sense among individuals that they have something to gain, or at least nothing to lose, by choosing to rebel.

A number of preconditions must exist for people to commit their lives in defiance of their government. These could include a variety of economic, political, societal, and psychological factors. Yet, these factors alone do not trigger a revolution without accelerators. Accelerators are events that occur at a specific point in time and bring together individuals with shared values or ideologies.<sup>3</sup> All these requirements were present in the Philippines by early February 1986. And while they were influenced by numerous other factors, the most significant causes can be traced through the twenty-one years of Marcos' presidency.

Ferdinand Marcos was elected the sixth president of the Philippines in 1965. He was widely acknowledged as a brilliant political leader, and many viewed the Philippine nation as a model of Third World success. Since its independence in 1946, the Philippines had revitalized political, civil service, and military institutions with help from the United States. Moreover, the government had successfully crushed the communist insurgency. Average economic growth rates exceeded all others in South East Asia, Taiwan and South Korea. Democratic institutions were stable and peace was maintained with a military total-

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capabilities from Marcos to the rebel side, the revolution remained relatively peaceful.

2. Barbara Salert, *Revolutions and Revolutionaries*. (New York: Elsevier, 1976), 24.

3. Thomas H. Greene, *Comparative Revolutionary Movements: Search for Theory and Justice*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1984), 167.

ling 60,000 personnel, even as the population grew by more than 33 percent.<sup>4</sup> Only Japan was politically more stable.

The reversals that followed cannot be blamed entirely on Marcos; they were also due in part to the mixing of democracy with historical legacy, Philippine culture, and other forces. Injustice and crime overwhelmed the judiciary, the removal of corrupt and incompetent civil servants was resisted, and the Congress dragged its feet on land reform. At the same time, Marcos did little to overcome these problems. By the late 1960s, corruption prevented the implementation of sound policies, civil unrest grew, and economic growth began to slow, allowing several neighboring countries to surpass the Philippines.

In the early 1970s, faced with constitutional prohibition of another term in office and the prospect of handing over the presidency to his arch-enemy, Senator Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, Marcos initiated a constitutional convention with the assistance of intelligence chief General Ver to make the US-imposed constitution 'more suited' to his own nation. In 1972 he declared martial law under a plan drawn up by Juan Ponce Enrile, his defense chief. His excuse to close associates was that he needed time to institute drastic reforms; he warned everyone else of a massive communist conspiracy, and staged several attacks to make it appear that Manila itself was threatened. At the time, there were actually no more than 800 communist guerrillas in the Philippines.<sup>5</sup>

For a while Marcos' policies were successful as wide-ranging reforms stimulated the economy and quieted dissent. However, by the early 1980s, the reform drive had stagnated and then reversed. The issue of land ownership was deferred, and the landed oligarchy was replaced by an oligarchy of Marcos' industrialist cronies. Personal patronage to Marcos became the criterion of success, impoverishing the middle class and the already poor. Although foreign investment increased rapidly in the region during this period, the Philippines became the least favored investment site in Pacific Asia. It was certainly no help that martial law became for Marcos a means to "shatter some of his strongest opponents and divert assets to strengthen both his and his wife Imelda's support bases,"<sup>6</sup> by weakening old factions and strengthening those of Marcos' cronies.

With the cyclical world economic downturn in 1981, political-economic crisis erupted in the Philippines. The country suffered a 42 percent deterioration in its terms of trade and the coconut oil market collapsed, affecting more than a third of the Philippine population.<sup>7</sup> A series of manufacturing firm failures among Marcos' cronies required a 5 billion peso bailout,<sup>8</sup> while foreign debt continued to increase and the capital-output ratio rose substantially. Other

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4. William H. Overholt, "The Rise and Fall of Ferdinand Marcos," in *Asian Survey* November 1986), 1138.

5. *Ibid.*, 1140.

6. Daniel Druckman and Justin Green, *Political Stability in the Philippines: Framework and Analysis*. (University of Denver, Monograph Series in World Affairs, Graduate School of International Studies, , 1986), 19.

7. Overholt, 1149.

8. *Ibid.*, 1150.

nations in the region, such as South Korea, experienced similar crises, but they were able to rebound because of healthy institutional structures which the Philippines lacked.

At the same time, regional and ethnic tensions grew because favored areas such as Manila received heavy investments while those of Marcos' rivals were systematically exploited and starved. The Communist insurgency had regained strength — what in 1967 was a band of 167 novices, expanded to 800 by 1972, and had reached a force of 5,000 to 10,000 well-trained men by 1980.<sup>9</sup> The Philippine military had become ineffectual and corrupt as its size increased from 60,000 to more than 200,000,<sup>10</sup> with key promotions based on political patronage rather than ability, and the most sensitive command positions going to Marcos' friends and relatives. In addition, martial law had side-tracked the nation's most able officers, most of whom were called to Manila to enforce Marcos' policies.

In response to mounting pressures, Marcos lifted martial law in January 1981. He also revised the constitution, for the ninth time, in yet another effort to ensure that he would have no competitors. In June of that year he held the first presidential election since 1969.

For the first time ever, democratic forces joined with leftists and Communists against Marcos and boycotted the elections. Despite the boycott, Marcos convinced 62 percent of the population to vote and he won with 86 percent,<sup>11</sup> leading most Filipinos to believe that the democratic opposition had no power or influence. The combination of economic hardship, military brutality, and impotence of the democratic center convinced many that only violence could depose Marcos. It also pushed more people into cooperation with the Communists and the New People's Army (NPA). As teachers and students, members of the middle and business classes, and respected clergymen from Protestant and Catholic churches joined the radical left, "the NPA may have developed the most highly educated leadership on the history of guerrilla warfare."<sup>12</sup>

By early 1983, both the Catholic hierarchy and the core of the Philippine business community had shifted from passive discontent to active opposition; "the core of the Philippine elite now actively opposed Marcos."<sup>13</sup> In addition, the economy continued its decline. Between December of 1982 and the following July, official reserves fell \$1.4 billion.<sup>14</sup> The nation was already in the midst of political, economic, and moral crisis when Ninoy Aquino flew home after three years in exile to rally opposition against Marcos in the upcoming National Assembly elections.

Ninoy Aquino was admired as a tough, effective, honest man with charisma and a strong sense of mission. He aimed to revive democratic principles, to

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9. *Ibid.*, 1147.

10. *Ibid.*, 1146.

11. William E. Kline, "The Fall of Marcos." (Case Study, Kennedy School of Government (C16-88-868.0), Harvard University, Cambridge, MA., 1988), 8.

12. Overholt, 1152.

13. *Ibid.*, 1153.

14. *Ibid.*

rebuild the Philippine economy, and to distribute wealth more equitably. Ferdinand and Imelda, who viewed him as a tremendous threat to their power, sent Ninoy numerous warnings that certain 'elements' might try to kill him if he returned.

On August 21, 1983, Ninoy Aquino was assassinated at Manila Airport as he stepped off the plane. The government blamed his death on a single, unidentified killer, hinting that only the Communists would benefit from such action. The middle class acting in disbelief, turned against the president and people from all sectors joined together in an unprecedented outpouring of anti-Marcos sentiment. Even the U.S. intelligence community concluded that "the assassination, while it may not have been ordered by Marcos, who was known to be incapacitated, was probably carried out by the Philippine army on his behalf and almost certainly at the direction of [General] Ver."<sup>15</sup>

The United States continued its support for the president, believing that only Marcos could solve the nation's problems. The democratic opposition, although it grew larger and broader-based, "remained militarily impotent, politically divided, and utterly devoid of a persuasive program for economic revival and social justice."<sup>16</sup> Yet, the assassination was a major turning point in that it focused attention on the preexisting crises, broadened opposition to Marcos — his support-base declined by 15 percent<sup>17</sup> — and drew people into the streets in protest.

From this point onward, things only deteriorated for Marcos, as "powerful trends... transformed the...stalemate by destroying all but the outer shell of the regime."<sup>18</sup> In the May 1984 National Assembly elections the United Nationalist Democratic organization (UNIDO) won almost one-third of the contested seats, a defeat for Marcos' New Society Movement (KBL). Five months later, in October, General Ver was indicted for his involvement in a high-level military conspiracy to kill Ninoy Aquino. Marcos became more isolated as top officials resigned and military forces ceased to support him and the government lost unity as Marcos' health declined. This lack of unity immobilized the government so that it could deal with neither the financial crisis nor the Communists.<sup>19</sup> During this time, members of the democratic opposition became better organized and held more demonstrations in spite of legal, financial, and physical threats against them. Marcos was losing his legitimacy, and people's fear of reprisal was eroding as the regime failed to respond to their protests. Marcos' sole base of support was the United States government, where divisions in Congress and Reagan's personal friendship with Marcos kept the U.S. committed to Marcos' regime. Yet even this began to change in 1985.

While U.S. friendship remained static, the economic crisis grew more severe.

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15. Kline, 6.

16. Overholt, 1158.

17. Druckman and Green, 93.

18. Overholt, 1158.

19. In November 1985, Larry Nicksch, Asia Specialist for the Congressional Research Service, noted that the NPA had grown dramatically from a force of 7,500 armed regulars in mid-1983 to 16,500 by October 1985. (Kline, 7)

Economic adversity, caused by the widening division between the poor majority and the small group of wealthy Filipinos made up primarily of Marcos' cronies became even more of an issue. What Gurr calls 'relative deprivation' also played an important role. Economic growth and rising expectations of the early 1960s were followed by a dramatic decline which the government seemed incapable of reversing. In October 1983, the peso was devalued 21 percent against the dollar, and by an additional 22 percent in June of 1984. During the years 1984 and 1985, real per capita GNP had decreased more than 15 percent.<sup>20</sup> By 1986, three-quarters of the Philippine population — including many of the well-educated — had to survive on income below the poverty line of \$1,000 per year.<sup>21</sup> As they sapped their nation and her people dry, Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos extracted \$10 billion from US and Philippine pockets, roughly three times the Philippines' annual GNP. Psychologically, these economic failures were even more difficult to face because neighboring economies continued to expand during this period.

Filipinos experienced increasing frustrations due to the inefficiency and corruption of Marcos' government which failed to meet their needs. As Charles Tilly has written, when the 'fit' between political institutions and a nation's social situation is poor, people become dissatisfied and resentful. Marcos was too concerned with maintaining his power and position to be concerned about the health and welfare of his nation. During the course of martial law in particular, Marcos relied more and more heavily upon the military to maintain control, subsequently giving military elites greater political influence.

Such trends further alienated him from the Philippine people and lessened his legitimacy. Filipinos sensed that their ideas, needs and concerns played less and less of a role in government. Marcos had robbed them of the institutions that previously had assured political order and societal stability. According to Overholt,

Marcos took over a society with far more highly developed governmental, business, and military institutions than those that existed anywhere else in developing Asia, with the possible exception of Malaysia. But, by crippling the institutions and turning them into instruments of patronage, he deprived Philippine society of its skeleton. The Marcos policy of deinstitutionalization cast into doubt the future forms of business ownership, economic structure, military leadership, civil management, and law.<sup>22</sup>

The Philippine nation was ripe for revolution. It was lacking only one thing: "the final, or sufficient cause ... some ingredient, usually contributed by fortune, which deprives the elite of its chief weapon for enforcing social behavior, or

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20. Kline, 7.

21. Bryan Johnson, *The Four Days of Courage: The Untold Story of the People Who Brought Marcos Down*. (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 23.

22. Overholt, 1149.

which leads a group of revolutionaries to believe that they have the means to deprive the elite of its weapons of coercion."<sup>23</sup> Chalmers Johnson calls this final cause the accelerator, which, in the case of the Philippines, was the February 7th presidential election.

As a result of United States pressure, Marcos announced on November 3, 1985 his decision to hold snap elections while appearing on the David Brinkley Show, televised when most of his countrymen were asleep — "one more indication that Marcos was out of touch with or contemptuous of his own people."<sup>24</sup> The elections were officially announced on December 1st, the same day General Ver was acquitted from charges of his involvement in Ninoy Aquino's assassination. Few Filipinos did not suspect that Marcos had a hand in Ver's acquittal. Corazon Aquino announced her candidacy the following day.

Elections in the Philippines are always rife with corruption and violence. But they are not always in full view of the international community; nor is the corruption always as one-sided as it was during the February 7th elections. Eight days later, on February 15, the government Committee on Elections (COMELEC) reported a Marcos victory. That same day Aquino declared that she had won, demanding that Marcos hand power over to her. "If he did not, she would call on the people to demonstrate or to join her in passive resistance until he complied."<sup>25</sup> The next day, Aquino staged a rally at which she called on the Filipino people to join her in resisting the Marcos government. From that point on, the crisis rapidly evolved into the Philippine Revolution.

### Strategic Elements and Assets of the Philippine Revolution

All forms of war involve political and military aspects. Low intensity conflict differs from conventional warfare because insurgent groups compete against forces that are always militarily superior. Thus, political aspects are necessarily the most important in this form of conflict, and non-military instruments of power play a central role in the struggle.

Andre Beaufre first began serious study of the strategies of indirect and unconventional conflict. Although such means had existed for centuries, the military aspects of war had dominated strategic thinking and experience from at least the time of Napoleon. Beaufre pointed out additional ways, besides the dominance of political factors, in which low intensity conflict (LIC) differs from direct and conventional war. In LIC, the role of ideas and ideology is far more important, since one of the most crucial objectives is political legitimacy. Rebels must generally be able to take a long-term view, and to modify and adapt as situations change. Also essential is what Liddell Hart termed "integration of the instruments of power", including economic, military, psychological, political, and informational aspects.

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23. Michael Freeman, "Theories of Revolution," in *British Journal of Political Science* (1972), 347.

24. Kline, 21.

25. Carl H. Lande, ed., *Rebuilding a Nation: Philippine Challenges and American Policy*. (The Washington Institute Press, Washington, D.C., 1987), 23.

The Philippine Revolution is in many ways the ultimate in low intensity conflicts. While the military as an institution played a vital role, the course of the four day struggle was determined almost entirely by psychological, political, informational, and other non-military forces. And, although this revolution was not completely devoid of guerrillas, the course of events that led to Marcos' downfall shares many similarities with non-guerrilla insurgencies.

Whereas it can take guerrilla forces years to create a sense of crisis or to overthrow a government, political unrest has a contagious effect enabling it to evolve far more quickly. "Governments can be toppled in a matter of weeks, and countries can become paralyzed overnight."<sup>26</sup> Political unrest is often more successful because it can hit directly at the heart of a government. The nature of such conflict is more volatile and can "change directions and intensity more rapidly than guerrilla wars, making it difficult to measure 'progress' by either side... A point of no return can be reached at which no matter what measures a government takes, the situation and the political landscape have been irrevocably changed."<sup>27</sup> "This new form of revolution... can put a government on the defensive, does not employ violence as an instrument, and is not characterized by the kind of detailed and structured organizational characteristics of those employing revolutionary warfare."<sup>28</sup> Political unrest often tends to be less ideological, since it focuses on immediate issues which reduce the need for an overarching ideology to unite people and define the revolution.

In spite of these differences, the strategic elements of LIC, whether revolution or terrorism, with guerrillas or without, are vital to the success of such a struggle. These elements include leadership, organization, ideology (which may include a religious element), and tactics. The ultimate objective of these combined elements of strategy is to gain political legitimacy and the means with which to govern.

### Leadership

"Revolutionary leadership... is primarily situational. A situation of crisis — whether political, military, social, economic, or psychological — catapults the leaders into prominence and provides them with a ready and willing following."<sup>29</sup> Leaders tend to be well-educated, and to come from the elite elements of society, including the military, bureaucratic or intellectual classes. Revolutionary leaders "highlight grievances and injustices, undermine the legitimacy and morale of the ruling regime, mobilize the masses to the cause, and lend dignity to revolutionary action."<sup>30</sup> It is essential that they be considered legitimate by

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26. Jeffrey D. Simon, "Revolutions Without Guerrillas." (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, March 1989 [#R-3683-RC]), 5.

27. *Ibid.*, 6.

28. Richard H. Shultz, "Doctrine and Forces for Low-Intensity Conflict," in *The US Army in the 1990s*, ed. Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr. and Richard Shultz. (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1991), 126.

29. Mostafa Rejai and Kay Phillips, *Leaders of Revolution*. (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1979), 56

30. *Ibid.*, 59.

their followers. "Legitimacy... may be defined as a type of support that derives not from force or its threat but from the values held by the individual (group) formulating, influencing, and being affected by political ends."<sup>31</sup> The 'rebels' of the Philippine Revolution were guided and inspired by a number of figures, the most important of whom were Corazon Aquino, Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile, Military Deputy Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General Fidel Ramos, and Archbishop of Manila Jaime Cardinal Sin.

It was Cory Aquino who could be considered the 'Founder'; the charismatic 'larger than life' figure, the 'lender of dignity'. A leader "does not implant new ideas as much as (s)he summarizes them in an especially coherent and appealing way; (s)he simplifies complexity."<sup>32</sup> Aquino was the symbolic player who simplified and embodied all that Filipinos hoped to retrieve from their past and longed to establish for their future. Her husband, Ninoy, had been admired by most of his countrymen. He became a martyr to the poor through his death, and it was solely through their marriage that Cory Aquino attained her role in the revolution.

Although it was Cory Aquino who ran for political office and who called the people to join her in civil disobedience at a rally on February 16, one could propose that it was Enrile who acted as political motivator during the crisis. In the midst of the revolution, Enrile created an alternative civilian government with Cory Aquino and Salvador Laurel as legislators, Ramos as chief of staff, and himself as defense minister. Early in the crisis, he initiated the meeting at Camp Aguinaldo from which he and Ramos broadcast their resignations on February 22. Enrile declared that the elections were fraudulent; Enrile himself had a hand in Marcos' cheating. He revealed that the attempt on his life in 1972 was faked in order to enable Marcos to declare martial law, and that Ninoy Aquino's assassination was carried out with 'orders from above'. To a great extent, Enrile and Ramos were believed and trusted because they laid out their own wrongs. Moreover, in helping to erode Marcos' legitimacy while increasing their own, they became heroes and admired leaders of civilians and those in the armed forces. While they did not specifically support Cory Aquino from the beginning, they believed that whomever the people wanted "as representative of their will must be respected."<sup>33</sup>

Fidel Ramos had long been considered a leader by those in the military who regarded him as an honest and God-fearing general. Ramos was the quiet force who seemed to spend many of the crisis hours in the background. He had delegated tactics, intelligence, logistics, and finances to others at the beginning of the revolution in order to concentrate on his own strength — psychological operations. Ramos is "the Philippine military's acknowledged master of decep-

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31. Druckman and Green, 60.

32. Green, 69.

33. Johnson, 72. (Bryan Johnson is a Canadian journalist, married to a Filipino. He was in Manila for two months before the 1986 election and for several months thereafter. He carried out three months of intensive interviews with nearly ninety key players on both sides of the revolution, many of whom he met with three or four times. This book is the result of those interviews.)

tion and illusion,"<sup>34</sup> and it was these vital skills that helped turn the tide in the revolution. In addition, his defection proved to be a significant factor in the decision of many in the military to defy Marcos.

A revolutionary leader is "one who offers the people salvation in the form of safety or identity or ritual."<sup>35</sup> Whereas Cory Aquino could offer a sense of identity to the people, and Enrile and Ramos came to represent safety, only Cardinal Sin could give the Filipinos all three aspects of leadership. He saw himself as the leader of a battle. Indeed, he was. To Filipinos, Cory Aquino was the embodiment of Ninoy; but the Cardinal was the embodiment of God. After the election of February 7, Cardinal Sin visited NAMFREL headquarters where he advised people to have patience for God would enable the good to triumph over evil. His words and composure gave strength to those around him. After Enrile and Ramos announced their resignations, Cardinal Sin knew these men were the answers to his prayers, and urged Filipinos to support them and pray for a peaceful resolution. Cardinal Sin was behind much of the force of 'People Power'. As Butz Aquino, Ninoy's brother and leader of the August Twenty-One Movement (ATOM) — formed after Ninoy's death in order to help depose the Marcos government, explained:

Hundreds would have gone to Aguinaldo that [first] night [of the revolution], even if the Cardinal had expressly forbidden it. But his official seal of approval unleashed the thousands of undecided, including vast hordes of the non-political faithful who had even ignored Cory Aquino's gigantic election rallies.<sup>36</sup>

The role that the Church — the nuns and priests — played throughout the struggle was a direct result of the near universal admiration for Cardinal Sin and his message.

### Organization

In revolution, organization provides the means for mobilizing, integrating and maintaining the factions that compose a coalition. Organization provides a social mechanism for the internalization process, contains the command structure and develops functional specializations to ensure survival and advance the organization's goals. Although "the spontaneity of revolutions without guerrillas and their contagion effect throughout a country allow such movements to proceed at times without a strong organizational base,"<sup>37</sup> organization remains a significant element of any strategy.

The Philippine Revolution actually had no less than three separate organizational structures: the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM), the Enrile-

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34. *Ibid*, 171.

35. Rejai and Phillips, 56.

36. Johnson, 82.

37. Simon, 8.

Ramos coalition of the armed forces, and the Catholic Church. Each organization represented one or more factions involved in the Philippine Revolution.

It was the unification of various factions under the aforementioned leaders that made the Philippine Revolution possible. As Huntington explained, "one social group can be responsible for a coup, a riot, or a revolt, but only a combination of groups can produce a revolution...."<sup>38</sup> Those who flooded the streets of Manila to rally around Cory Aquino, and to defend Enrile and Ramos in Camp Aguinaldo, were men, women, and children, young and old. They included the disenfranchised middle class, the professional and business elites, students, people of the Church. These were the people who made up 'People Power'.

The military organization was the Philippine Revolution's swing factor. The armed forces are always significant in such a crisis because of their overwhelming firepower. While they could not have succeeded politically without the other factions, and indeed might not have overcome Marcos at all, the armed forces were perhaps the single most critical organization. This is not to imply that the military was a single homogenized force. Within the rebels' military organization, there were several subcommands which represented factions inside the military itself. Enrile and Ramos began with a support base of only about 250 men, the majority of whom were members of RAM, founded by Gregorio Honasan. Honasan and other soldiers first met to discuss their grievances in 1982. Three years later they announced the formation of RAM, denouncing the ways of the military elite and making a "solemn vow to renounce violence and never to support any coup attempt."<sup>39</sup> Early on they sought out leaders among their superiors and openly protested for better rights and treatment. Because of the pervasive hatred for Marcos within the rank and file of the armed forces, there was little need for recruiting or maintaining troops. The group received massive support throughout the officer corps right from the beginning.<sup>40</sup> Joining RAM gave these idealistic individuals a sense of pride in themselves and their military. Still, many officers sympathetic to their cause considered them "naive dreamers courting disaster. Others dismissed them as an outgrowth of Enrile's transparent political ambitions."<sup>41</sup> Some even considered RAM a hoax to show America that Marcos tolerated dissent.

RAM members soon realized that their visibility made them sitting ducks, and while RAM did not go into hiding and membership continued to grow as Marcos' legitimacy declined, RAM became a silent, apparently minimal force within the greater ranks of the Philippine military. As time went by, the inner core of RAM dropped away and covertly prepared independent plans for a coup d'etat. Although the leadership denied it up until the day of the revolution itself, the organization's primary goal was the overthrow of the Marcos regime: RAM saw a coup as the only way to institute reform in both the military and

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38. Zimmermann, 321.

39. Johnson, 34.

40. *Ibid*, 36.

41. *Ibid*, 37.

government. The organization continued to recruit people as needed, keeping them compartmentalized so that few members knew more of the coup plan than their own part.

The Enrile–Ramos coalition was the second military organization and grew from the personal loyalty and admiration felt for both Enrile and Ramos. Both men had cultivated political support as the election crisis developed, but the rapidity of events gave them little time to prepare an organizational structure. Enrile was the coalition's nominal leader and drew most of the mass support, while Ramos became the coalition's chief of psychological operations and drew support from the military ranks. Both delegated various tasks to others as the crisis unfolded, and their subordinates actively recruited other commanders to join the opposition. Once again, it was frustration with Marcos and Ver, and admiration for Ramos, the 'squeaky-clean West Pointer', that won over many who had never considered joining RAM. Yet even this recruitment and 'transfer' of loyalties did not begin until a few days into the revolution. To a great extent, Enrile's and Ramos' organization and tactics were spontaneous.

Despite the coalition's *ad hoc* organizational nature, it collected a great number of men from within Marcos' military. Except for the senior leadership, the vast majority of military forces resented Marcos' government. The civilian side had its opposition organizations as well, the most visible was the Catholic church. The church had assumed this posture even before the revolution, as the National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) and 'swat teams' of nuns and priests were the only organized, coherent opposition groups during the elections. The existence of groups such as NAMFREL facilitated a sense of unity and obligation which was invaluable as the Philippine Revolution began. It was the men and women of the Church who formed the "backbone of People Power."

Civilian 'soldiers' also took part, including — Urban Armed Warriors (SMK) — which consisted of men and women trained in the countryside who had been deployed throughout the nation to watch the polls on election day. Cory Aquino's brother, Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, set up the "Yellow Army" during the crisis to combat a private pro-Marcos force directed by their cousin from Tarlac province.

There were other faction-based organizations who opposed Marcos, including the urban and rural poor, members of the Moro National Liberation Front, and the Communists — who opposed Marcos but did not take part in the revolution. Most of the poor stayed home, believing themselves powerless to effect any change. The MNLF was too far away to have participated in the events in Manila. The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), joined by most groups under its influence, boycotted the February elections believing it all "a meaningless contest between two 'bourgeois' candidates which Marcos would win in any case."<sup>42</sup>

What of Cory Aquino's role in these efforts? The leader of 'People Power'

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42. Lande, 36.

actually played a minimal role in the revolution itself. She was in Cebu until Sunday, the day after Enrile and Ramos broke with Marcos, when she returned to Manila and spent most of the remaining days in hiding. It was Cory Aquino's campaigning before the election, her "Talk to Cory" shows on Radio Veritas and the rallies she held thereafter that brought people to the streets to support her after the revolution began.

The greatest challenge lay in keeping the unarmed people out in the streets, face to face with Marcos' military and armored personnel carriers. To a great extent, what kept the members of 'People Power' from fleeing the face of danger was their hatred for Marcos, their devout spiritual faith, the strength that came from numbers, and a rising perception that Marcos would not or could not respond. These feelings formed the ideology of the Philippine Revolution.

### Ideology

Ideology is the means by which leaders mobilize and unite the numerous and often diverse factions that compose a revolutionary coalition. A successful revolutionary ideology must identify and articulate society's problems in an understandable way, propose that existing institutions cannot solve those ills, and undermine confidence and morale in the current regime while at the same time offering promise for the future. As Gene Sharp explains, there are at least seven blocks preventing people from 'noncooperating' with their governments: habit, fear of sanctions, self-interest, indifference, feelings of moral obligation, identification with the wielder of power, and absence of self-confidence.

The function of ideology in the Philippine Revolution was to remove these blocks in order to mobilize the people in nonviolent action. By the middle of February 1986, many of these obstacles had already been overcome. Marcos had lost much of his legitimacy in the eyes of his countrymen, and the majority of Filipinos believed that his government, its officials, and its institutions needed to be replaced. The troops of 'People Power' had little time to face the issue of sacrificing life for freedom, and fortunately few were ever in a position to make this choice. However, an ideology which could unite the various factions of 'People Power' was absent.

Often, the most powerful ideologies are the simplest. Initially the concept of 'People Power' was one of the main forces that brought people into the streets, and then brought them together. Centuries of seeing their rights and freedoms trampled by the Spaniards, the Americans, and finally by Marcos had led the Philippine people to see themselves as cowards, not victims. 'People Power' enabled them to throw off this shackle of fear. In doing so, Filipinos discovered the theory of nonviolence: that "all power — personal, institutional, social, political or economic — depends ultimately upon the obedience, consent and/or cooperation of those over whom the power is wielded."<sup>43</sup> Reinforcing and supplementing the wave of unity and anti-Marcos feeling which swept the

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43. Albert, 12.

populace was another system of belief, one that had existed in the Philippines far longer than Ferdinand Marcos. This was Roman Catholicism.

### Religion and God in Revolution

In the Philippines, "Roman Catholicism hangs in the air like humidity."<sup>44</sup> Historically, the Church has been a force for change in the Philippines and a channel for expressing discontent. Although American colonial rule brought a separation of Church and State early in this century, religious themes have played a major role in all aspects of Philippine life since the Spaniards introduced Christianity in the sixteenth century. Religion remains one of the most important aspects of Philippine life, embedded in the nation's culture.

Unlike Liberation Theology in Latin America, church activism in the Philippines did not grow out of a concern that societal and economic problems could threaten the Church's existence. The survival of the Philippine Church has never been an issue. Indeed, far from a progressive, anti-government institution, the Philippine Church is fairly conservative. Additionally, it represents one of the few things that most Filipinos hold in common — more than 90 percent of the population is Catholic, including Marcos and most of his cronies and top officials.

The Church's involvement in state affairs became more apparent after the imposition of martial law in 1972, "beginning with protests by the Cardinal against the arrest of politically active members of the clergy, moving to increasingly broad criticism of other policies of the regime, and after Benigno Aquino's assassination, to open appeals to the president to step down."<sup>45</sup> Yet its criticisms were fairly subtle, noticeable only because all other powerful voices were pro-Marcos. Cardinal Sin constantly stressed that the Church should only outline the *morality* of politics, to guide people, and to urge restraint from violence. While many believed that his words and actions were not forceful enough, Cardinal Sin was opposed to activism in the Church in order to keep some influence over the president.

In fact, until the Revolution itself, the Marcoses viewed Cardinal Sin as a trusted advisor. The Church was one of the few institutions that Marcos permitted to survive intact, perhaps because it has not generally been considered a major political force in Philippine society. Marcos could never have imagined that the Church, led by the Cardinal, would become one of the major factors in his political demise.

Before the elections, the Church fielded people to oversee the proceedings, established a non-partisan radio station and an independent newspaper (all others were controlled by Marcos), and sheltered enemies of the government.

Yet it was not until the eruption of 'People Power' that the Church showed its true strength, both as a formal institution and as a source of faith for each

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44. *Ibid*, 124.

45. Lande, 19.

individual involved. During the four day revolution, nuns and priests became the sources of order, food, and support in the lines of battle.

The role the Philippine Church played in the Revolution transcended the actions of the nuns and priests, for the Church was most important as an inspiration to the people. While religion was not the primary unifying factor of the revolution, it gave people the spiritual courage to stand up against Marcos and his tanks. Many believed that God would enable the people to triumph. General Ramos later stated that all events were God's will; those who played a key role in the revolution were merely "instruments of the Divine Director."<sup>46</sup> Aquino went so far as to say; "I believe that God actually came down and walked among us during those four days. There is no other explanation for what happened."<sup>47</sup>

### Tactics

During the four days of the Philippine Revolution, the most important and effective tactics were psychological and informational. Combined with the rebels' leadership, organization, and ideology, they were the forces that toppled Marcos. As with the element of organization, the use and development of tactics varied by factions.

'People Power' itself, the masses of Filipinos who flooded the streets and held off Marcos' tanks, had no true strategy. Actions were essentially spontaneous. If there was any strategy at all, it was in the act of women and children approaching the soldiers, confident that the troops would not open fire and would listen to their appeals for democracy. When the tank engines started, the people moved in closer. Thousands filled the streets, to the extent that nothing and no one could get through.

Likewise, the Church also had no explicit strategy. Priests and nuns spoke with the soldiers, asking them to consider their own consciences. They tried to put doubt in the soldiers' minds as to whether Marcos had the legal authority to order them forward.

This was not the case for either the Enrile-Ramos coalition or RAM whose members were adept at strategic planning and knew that only failure could result without it. It was the plotting and tactics of RAM that led to the revolution itself, even if they were not the only causes for its success.

### RAM's Tactics and Coup Plot

By the time of the elections in February, RAM had been planning a coup for more than a year. The main plotters were Gringo Honasan, Eduardo Kapunan, and Lt.-Colonel Victor Batac, all of whom were members of Enrile's elite security group and experienced in fighting Communist insurgents in Mindanao

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46. *Ibid*, 78.

47. *Ibid*, 274.

and northern Luzon. In many ways, RAM's planning and actions combined aspects of guerrilla warfare — such as the placement of bases in rugged terrain, self-sufficiency, concentration of mobility, awareness of the need to gain and maintain popular support, and execution of a coup d'état.

In order to hide their plans from Marcos and Ver, RAM members had conducted a massive disinformation campaign for more than a year, appearing to struggle for survival. Aware that they would need public sympathy for strength and support, RAM lied to the press, telling the world it had no devious intentions, in order not to frighten the Philippine people or to alienate those who were opposed to a coup on principle. "The Reformists painted President Marcos as the aggressor and themselves as peaceful defenders."<sup>48</sup> When the coup plot was uncovered no one believed Marcos' story; Filipinos and the world believed the members of RAM instead.

Meanwhile, RAM members were busy assessing the loyalties of men in the military and studying the Palace defenses, recruiting contacts from the inside. They built and tested fire-bombs in the northern Sierra Madre mountains, assembled radio monitors to enable them to listen in on Malacanang, and secretly devised their plan to overthrow the Marcos regime. Although they did not want a bloody coup, they feared there would be no choice.

RAM's plan for the coup d'état demonstrates the group's sophistication and determination to oust Marcos. At 9:00 p.m. on a Saturday night, one group would attack the Palace with incendiary bombs while another would head to Villamor Air Base to capture the key military airfield where there would already be teams of soldiers flown in from Enrile's home province. Smaller teams would take over the government's television network and other media outlets. By dawn they would surround and cut off the Palace, announcing the formation of a new ruling civilian council that would include people like Cory Aquino and Cardinal Sin. At all costs, Marcos and his family would be captured alive to answer for their crimes.<sup>49</sup>

In October of 1985 RAM decided to stage the coup that December. When Marcos announced the snap elections, however, the Reformists decided to postpone the coup in the hope that honest elections would take place. RAM began a program called *Kamalayan '86* (Awareness) to raise consciousness and counter old trends in the military of conducting election abuses and lies. *Kamalayan* was also a mobilization exercise: a ploy to make contacts around the Philippines, spread disinformation, and gain the support of the other military units and civilian opposition groups.<sup>50</sup> During the *Kamalayan* program, RAM's comments for public consumption created an image of weakness and moderation that instilled the Marcos regime with a false sense of security. Thus, Marcos discounted or ignored RAM's activities, giving the organization free rein to spread its views and prepare operations should the need arise.

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48. *Ibid.*, 28.

49. *Ibid.*, 40-44. (All details about the coup plot, etc. are from this book. Few other books, if any, that cover this aspect of the revolution have been published in the United States.)

50. *Ibid.*, 45.

RAM remained inconspicuous during the elections. It wasn't until afterwards, after the corruption and Marcos' own lies, that RAM reset the coup date for Sunday, February 23. Unfortunately for RAM, at the same time General Ver was planning "Operation Everlasting" to lock away Marcos' main opponents on Caballo Island, off the coast of Manila. He had intended to stage a mock coup attempt as an excuse to arrest Enrile, Ramos, and RAM's leading officers and on Saturday afternoon the Palace security was tightened and troops began arriving from the provinces. As a result, RAM initially decided to hold off the revolt. When several RAM members learned that Marcos was aware of their plans and of Enrile's involvement in them, the rebels moved into action. Their only options now were to disperse to the hills or make a stand at Camp Aguinaldo and improvise their way through, using the relevant parts of their previous plan. Suddenly the RAM plot had merged with what became the Enrile-Ramos coalition. From then on, both groups were so interlinked — and interlinked with the 'People Power' movement as well — that it is difficult to separate RAM's tactics from those of Enrile and Ramos.

### Enter Enrile and Ramos

Four hours after Enrile and Ramos broadcast their resignations from Aguinaldo, telling the press that they were at the military camp only to avoid unwarranted arrest, Marcos announced that they had not resigned. Instead, he said, they had been involved in a plot to overthrow the government. Ironically, few Filipinos believed Marcos, thanks to RAM's propaganda campaign and Marcos' declining legitimacy.

Throughout the four day revolution, propaganda and disinformation continued to be critical for the rebel side. If Enrile and Ramos had any tactical strategy for the military, it was only to avoid military confrontation while collecting men and armaments from the Marcos forces. Once the military rebels gained air superiority, they switched to offensive tactics to intimidate troops at the Palace with their air strength. As a result of the fact that the rebels began the struggle with relatively few troops or armaments, their weapons had to come from other sources.

Bluffing became a major tool: Enrile had access to both US Ambassador Bosworth and General Ver, and called them numerous times to 'warn' that civilians and foreign press would be the first killed if he and Ramos were attacked.<sup>51</sup> Throughout the Revolution, Enrile also continuously refused to talk with Marcos. Keeping him ignorant was a psychological tactic which led Marcos and Ver to make several gross miscalculations. Having seen Vietnam's Tet Offensive, Ramos knew how important psychological aspects were in such a battle. Ramos followed a formula which he dubbed "SCAME": Source (which must have credibility); Content (which must be as truthful as possible); Audience (the target group — although Ramos usually spoke to civilians, often he

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51. Enrile moved to join Ramos soon after the revolt began so that they could consolidate their forces.

was actually targeting the Loyalist troops); Medium (the means by which to transmit the messages); and Effect (choosing the desired effect and working backwards).<sup>52</sup>

It was the radio that became the rebels' primary defensive — and offensive — weapon. Ramos tried every medium possible, but it was radio that proved most effective. As he later explained,

...I knew the informational side would be vital — perhaps even more crucial than hardware or weaponry. We were trying to avoid a shooting war. So what did that leave? Obviously a media war. And that was an area where we had a chance. At the beginning, we had the credibility, but Marcos had far more outlets.<sup>53</sup>

### The Role of the Media

After Ninoy Aquino's assassination in 1983, the only radio station to voice even muted defiance of Marcos was Radio Veritas, also known as the "Station of Truth and Love". Aside from the Church, only the Marcoses, technocrats, and business leaders — all cronies of Marcos — had access to the rest of the Philippine media. After the elections, Veritas began broadcasting nightly "Talk to Cory" shows and planned to air her February 16 rally. Due to government pressure, however, it was never broadcast. Once the revolution began, Veritas became the rebels' means by which to communicate, gather intelligence, disperse disinformation, recruit volunteers, and supply those people with prayer, motivation, encouragement and strength. "A particular oddity of the Philippine uprising was its near-total lack of secrecy,"<sup>54</sup> at least from the rebels' standpoint.

Veritas managed to survive until Sunday night (February 23), calling people to the streets for what outwardly appeared to be a spontaneous revolt. As Bryan Johnson writes "there are still those, including Enrile, who claim that the revolt was a spur-of-the-moment move ... But no one who listened closely to Radio Veritas can be among them. As early as Thursday afternoon, forty-eight hours before the February 22 breakaway, Veritas began broadcasting veiled hints that something was afoot."<sup>55</sup> Thus, even before the Reformists' revolt, the radio had become a primary weapon against Marcos. RAM's spokesman dropped enough hints to Veritas and opposition papers to keep them at Camp Aguinaldo so that media coverage could begin whenever necessary. And although General Ver later ordered forces to destroy the Veritas office, these orders were never carried out; the soldiers went home to join the rebellion and other troops moved in to protect the station. Radio Veritas had become a major player in the revolution.

On Sunday night the station's main transmitter was destroyed by the hitmen of Eduardo Cojuangco's private army.<sup>56</sup> Veritas survived only a few hours

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52. Johnson, 172.

53. *Ibid*, 171.

54. *Ibid*, 140.

55. *Ibid*, 180.

longer on backup transmitters. Then suddenly, all was deadly silent. The human barricades began to crumble, endangering the rebellion, until a military controlled radio station began to broadcast. "When Radio Bandido finally went on the air at 12:05 a.m., it was as if someone had suddenly thrown the light switch attached to People Power,"<sup>57</sup> and within minutes it had become Ramos' main battle weapon.

In this war it was media, not arms and control of territories, that determined the outcome of each battle. As the rebels acquired more media control, they gained more legitimacy, and grew in numbers. By Monday afternoon, with the help of RAM, 'People Power' had ascended to television by seizing control of Marcos' former propaganda channel, and the tide had turned to the rebels' side. That same afternoon, the remaining Loyalist troops withdrew inside Malacanang's walls.

### Marcos and Ver: Blundering Duo

The story of the Philippine people's success is not complete without the tale of Marcos' and Ver's tactical failures. How did they manage to begin Saturday, February 22 with thousands of experienced and well-armed forces of the Philippine military who were accustomed to killing and were ready to fight; a plan to lock away Marcos' prime opponents (some of whom had already been arrested); numerous armored personnel carriers, jeeps, Sikorsky helicopters, armored trucks and other hardware that was "ideal for spraying human beings with bullets,"<sup>58</sup> and to end the revolution seventy-five hours later with barely their lives?

This failure was not entirely the fault of Marcos and Ver. Historically, the military has been a force of repression in the Philippines and was viewed as a pawn of the elite. Factionalism and inter-service rivalries also existed before Marcos because of differences in education, language, and regional background. But Marcos only exacerbated such problems.

Philippine culture also contributed to the problem; Philippine society is built upon the *utang na loob* system, or 'debt of honor/gratitude'. This system of debts, favors and honor rests upon the importance of allies, and it guides all social behavior. *Utang na loob* increases the size of many Filipinos' biological families by continuously drawing in additional 'relatives', binding new ties that last for life. The Philippine military was, and continues to be, teetering upon a "weak command structure ... [dominated by] secret cliques and personal loyal-

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56. Although he is a first cousin of Cory Aquino, Eduardo 'Danding' Cojuangco was very pro-Marcos. He was considered Ferdinand's "#1 crony" and the country's most powerful warlord. Cojuangco "controlled the Philippine brewing and bottling industry, owned half the island of Palawan and a fleet of personal jets...." His army consisted of more than 3,000 Israeli trained and equipped mercenaries, based in Tarlac province. (Johnson, 182 and 248) 'Danding' was one of the three top contenders in the 1992 presidential election.

57. *Ibid*, 186.

58. *Ibid*, 152.

ties that overlap and supersede the military chain of command. In moments of crisis ... the informal command structure controls behavior."<sup>59</sup> This system and its consequences played a critical role in the revolution.

Yet even without the military's historical and cultural aspects that entered into this crisis, it is difficult to imagine that Marcos and Ver could have succeeded when one considers their actions in areas which they controlled. From the beginning, uncertainties about rebels and overconfidence about the loyalty of the armed forces made Ver hold his forces back when they could have easily defeated the rebels.

General Ver had overestimated the rebels from the outset, hesitating over the slightest move when an all-out attack of combined forces would have wiped out the Enrile-Ramos forces. Ver had chosen to make a series of tentative forays against the enemy, husbanding the main body in defense of the Palace, as if terrified of an impending attack.<sup>60</sup>

Clearly, Enrile's and Ramos's efforts to keep Ver and Marcos in the dark were effective. As Honasan later said, "the essence of an effective security system is actually information. Guns are just, you know, cosmetics."<sup>61</sup> Knowledge is power, and Ver and Marcos were granted little. The rebels had no grand strategy, but Marcos did not either and thought that the rebels did. Marcos' forces delayed moving to gain more information when they easily could have triumphed; as a result, they grew weaker while the rebels strengthened their position, forces and support.

There were other weaknesses, too. Unlike Enrile's and Ramos's forces, Marcos' troops began with heavy equipment, U.S.-built aircraft, and tanks. But the tanks had poor peripheral vision and no infantry support. And while the troops may have been battle-hardened, not all of their commanding officers were. One of the top generals, Artemio Tadiar, had held a diplomatic post in London for fifteen years and was hardly prepared for war. On the second day of the revolt, fellow Filipinos and friends implored him not to shoot; he finally called back his troops and their armored personnel carriers.

Perhaps most important is the fact that there was no leadership. 'People Power' had Cory Aquino, Enrile and Ramos, Cardinal Sin and others. But the Marcos troops received only orders regarding desired results with no instructions of methods or plans. Marcos wanted to control all operations from Malacanang, and thus the generals' hands were tied.

Atop all of these problems came an almost universal hatred among the military toward Marcos and Ver. This resentment was combined with immense respect for Ramos, and a concern for fellow countrymen and their lives. It is not thanks to Marcos that the revolution was virtually bloodless, despite the claims

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59. *Ibid.*, 106.

60. Johnson, 222.

61. *Ibid.*, 65.

of his disinformation campaign. "The Philippine revolt was 'peaceful' only because the near maniacal orders of Malacanang Palace were disobeyed. And that mutiny grew in large part from the sheer, sickening killing power of the weapons available."<sup>62</sup> Even his most loyal officers turned against Marcos and refused to fire.

Colonel Braulio Balbas was one of those unsung heroes. He and his men were in position to destroy all of Camp Crame and thereby end the revolution on Monday the 24th. Initially, Balbas, a Marine officer, refused to follow the orders because they came to him via an Army general. When he learned that the orders were from Marcos, Balbas still refused, despite the knowledge that he could be jailed or shot for his inaction.<sup>63</sup>

One of the most significant defections involved the U.S.-built Sikorsky helicopters: "the Sikorskys were absolutely pivotal, the single element that could ensure Camp Crame's survival. By peaceful agreement or by blood on the tarmac, RAM had to get control of them."<sup>64</sup> RAM had been assured that the 15th Strike Wing was on its side, and the pilots continued routine flights as part of their deception that they were Loyalists. As it turned out, by the morning of Monday, February 24, Colonel Antonio Sotelo had already decided to defect with his men and helicopters to the rebel side. This move was the turning point in the revolution, again resulting from the pervasive hatred for Ver and Marcos and concern for fellow Filipinos. By Monday night, General Tadiar and his forces had elected to play only a defensive role for Marcos; the Philippine Military Academy voted to side with the rebels — the vote was 91 to 8 for Ramos over Ver and Marcos.<sup>65</sup>

By the end of the Revolution, even Marcos' personal pilots had disappeared, dissolving his hopes of fleeing to his home province and protracting the crisis into a longer, bloodier civil war. Instead, stripped of all legitimacy by the loss of his military power, he fled to the United States. Throughout the entire crisis, he had thought nothing of his people's concerns, their fears or needs. Unlike the Reformists who saw the Philippine people as allies, Marcos and Ver viewed them as the enemy.

### Outside Factors: International Forces, the United States

Marcos had invited people of the world to "come and see our democracy at work," and come they had; the country was soon flooded with two international observer groups and more than 1,500 representatives of foreign media, many of whom stayed on throughout the ensuing weeks. The night Marcos left Malacanang, Loyalists accused foreign reporters of being "the cause of all this trouble."<sup>66</sup> This was an overstatement, but foreign press did become the rebels'

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62. *Ibid*, 148.

63. *Ibid*, 201.

64. *Ibid*, 160.

65. *Ibid*, 222.

66. *Ibid*, 255.

link to the outside world and an added source of support. They amplified events by communicating the stirring events of the Philippine Revolution; it was harder for Marcos to use force when the whole world was watching. Combined with this was a growing perception that the world was entering a period of international cooperation which may have led Marcos to fear that international powers would bring pressure to bear against him, with the United States as leader.

United States interest in the Philippines dates back to the end of the Spanish-American war. Americans have often called the Philippines the US 'window of democracy in Asia', and to support its interests there, the US has poured large amounts of aid and investment into the country. By 1985, US economic interests in the Philippines included more than \$2 billion in direct investment and \$4 billion in total annual trade; nearly half of the nation's \$26 billion debt was owed to American banks.<sup>67</sup> Thus, the United States had a vested interest in maintaining stability in the Philippines.

Indeed, United States pressure had been the impetus for the election which touched off the Philippine Revolution. By 1984, the US government finally began to rethink its long-standing support for Marcos, and in mid-1985, the Reagan Administration instituted a new Philippine policy.<sup>68</sup> As Richard Armitage then the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs explained, the purpose was to give Marcos a choice:

media war in Manila. Then in early February Senator Richard Lugar left for the Philippines with a congressional delegation, and returned to denounce the elections as fraudulent. Yet, President Reagan would not believe the extent of Marcos' abuses, and sent Philip Habib on a mission to recommend that Aquino admit defeat!<sup>70</sup> The Administration came around at last with help from Lugar, but it took the Enrile-Ramos press conference for the White House to admit publicly that "these statements strongly reinforce our concerns that the recent presidential elections were marred by fraud, perpetrated overwhelmingly by the ruling party, so extreme as to undermine the credibility and legitimacy of the election...."<sup>71</sup>

Throughout this period, the U.S. government was aware of RAM's plans and tried to discourage a premature coup, fearing that most senior officers would side with Marcos. The U.S. motive was maintenance of good relations with both sides in order to be allied with the victorious party. Understandably, RAM was outraged when the story was later revealed.

On Sunday, February 23, Ambassador Bosworth read to Marcos the first official statement from Washington: it expressed concerns that the elections were fraudulent and called for non-violence. Early Monday, President Reagan threatened to cut off all military aid if Marcos used heavy weapons against the rebels, adding that "attempts to prolong the life of the present regime by violence are futile. A solution to this crisis can only be achieved through a peaceful transition to a new government."<sup>72</sup> That evening Secretary of State George Shultz telephoned Marcos to express the Administration's belief that Marcos had lost the election and the battle with Enrile and Ramos, and that only his resignation could avoid a civil war.<sup>73</sup>

During the crisis, the United States knew all that was happening thanks to its own intelligence and calls coming into the US Embassy from all sides. For the Reformists, contact with the United States was critical in order to be sure that their position was known and understood. When Enrile made his stand at Camp Aguinaldo, one of his first phone calls was to Ambassador Bosworth. "US support was so vital that, even before going to Aguinaldo, the minister had called his close friend Rene Cayetano and ordered him to Bosworth's house."<sup>74</sup> The rebels anxiously awaited signs of which road the United States would take: "psychologically, every one of us [rebel soldiers] was waiting to see which way the US would jump. If they backed our faction the other would have no chance. None." But as Col. Honasan said, "the United States wouldn't touch us with anything.... They wanted to be sure of the outcome. Now they want to take the

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70. Johnson, 95. Johnson writes that "US Embassy insiders now say that Habib was actually sent to coax Mrs. Aquino into accepting defeat. In the Reagan plan, she was to play an 'advisory' role in a compromise government, then run for president six years later." Habib left Manila on February 22, "at exactly the moment Juan Ponce Enrile and his colonels made their stand at Camp Aguinaldo." Needless to say, Aquino was outraged.

71. Kline, 29.

72. Kline, 30.

73. Johnson, 233.

74. *Ibid.*, 96.

credit and create their own version of what happened."<sup>75</sup>

Despite similar complaints by other rebels that the United States dragged its feet, Loyalists have blamed the United States for doing too much to end Marcos' rule. Perhaps the United States was successful in finding the middle road. Jeffrey Simon writes that "the US efforts to bring about change in the leadership of the Philippines... succeeded because they were characterized by 'quiet diplomacy' which did not evolve into a US-Marcos... confrontation.... The United States made it apparent to the authoritarian rulers that change was necessary to ensure the stability of the country."<sup>76</sup> And with the US government remaining somewhat in the background, Filipinos could know and believe that they had accomplished a peaceful revolution independent of outside forces. Thus, Corazon Aquino came to office with the blessing and support of the majority of Filipinos, and the international community. Unfortunately, the United States did not continue to aid the democratization process during Aquino's presidency.

### Aquino's Government: Challenges, Successes, and Failures

To begin a revolution is very difficult. To sustain it is even more difficult. To win it is almost impossible. But once you have won, then your troubles really begin.<sup>77</sup>

One month after Marcos' departure, Aquino suspended the 1973 Constitution, dissolving the National Assembly, and established a provisional constitution anchored in a bill of rights. Among other things, this "Freedom Constitution", as Cory called it, increased the taxing powers of local governments, gave some autonomy to Muslim and tribal regions, and reaffirmed separation of Church and State.

Initially, Aquino profited from economic privatization and the general prosperity of the Asian region, bringing rapid growth and stability to the Philippines for nearly three years. In early 1987 the nation voted in its new constitution and appeared to be rising out of the Marcos legacy. However, the transcendental qualities that helped carry Aquino into power soon passed, taking with them Aquino's ability to lead. This failing, combined with a series of natural disasters, and the Gulf crisis of 1990-1991, began to wipe away her earlier advances.

As Ninoy Aquino said a few months before his assassination, "the one who comes after Marcos is the one to pity.... That will be an impossible job. After Marcos, the country will be ungovernable."<sup>78</sup> Ninoy's analysis was correct. "Having deflated the balloon, Cory Aquino moved into an organizational vacuum. Her new regime had vast public support, but it did not have a unified

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75. *Ibid*, 241.

76. Simon, 18.

77. Greene, 82, from Gido Pontecorvo's film, *The Battle of Algiers*.

78. Johnson, 272.

executive leadership or effective institutions, such as a reliable military, a unified national political party, or competent civil administration."<sup>79</sup> The broad coalition of factions that came together to overthrow Marcos' regime was incapable of preserving its unity to help Cory lead effectively. And "the qualities demonstrated by President Aquino in uniting the country — decency, trust, and forgiveness — were not as useful in governing the country."<sup>80</sup>

Military factions proved to be one of Aquino's greatest challenges. Marcos had been in Hawaii fewer than nine months when the first coup attempt threatened to overthrow Cory's new government. The soldiers' role in the downfall of Marcos led many in the military to view themselves as "coequal partner(s) with the civilians in government affairs and finally as the ultimate guardian of the state."<sup>81</sup> Perhaps it is not surprising that Honasan, Kapunan, and Enrile were all involved in the November 1986 coup plot, and that RAM members have led every attempt thereafter. As Thomas Greene illustrates, as violence begets violence, so does coup beget coup. "That a coup has not succeeded is a function of the military's inherent weakness as a professional organization."<sup>82</sup> The military still lacks internal legitimacy and organizational integrity, and at times of crisis there continue to be uncertainties regarding who or what should receive a soldier's loyalties.<sup>83</sup>

Such actions and problems raised concerns about the still unanswered role of the military in Philippine society. Once again, the public became suspicious and fearful of the military. "Rather than contributing to greater unity and stability, the military, with its many coups and plots of coups, encourages instability and represses the people it is supposed to serve and protect."<sup>84</sup>

RAM has continued to be an influential force that rises and falls on Honasan's fortunes, but it has been outflanked by the Young Officers Union (YOU), a group of "younger, more idealistic, less senior and more committed soldiers, with the rank of major or below."<sup>85</sup> YOU desires radical change, having an indoctrination process similar to that of the Communists. "Indeed by October of 1990, YOU claimed already to be forging tactical alliances with Communists to unseat President Aquino."<sup>86</sup>

These problems with and within the military reflected Aquino's difficulties with other sectors of the Philippine society. While factions in the military are inclined to distrust democratic institutions, the elite have pushed for a return to the pre-martial law system, which they once manipulated to their own benefit. The urban and rural poor experienced few changes under Aquino's

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79. Overholt, 1163.

80. "The Philippines and the United States." (The Asia Society, New York, 1986), 9.

81. Kessler, 134.

82. *Ibid*, 135.

83. If anyone maintains the soldiers' loyalties it is Ramos who has headed off each coup attempt by going out immediately to meet with rebel troops, refusing to repeat Ver's mistakes in the 1986 revolution.

84. Kessler, 106.

85. *Ibid*, 86-87.

86. *Ibid*, 89.

government and longed for a society and economy far different from those at any time under Marcos. Land reform and other promises failed to come about because members of Congress were, and continue to be, the nation's wealthiest citizens and largest landholders. At the same time, the Church has retreated from politics after a stern reprimand from the Vatican and no longer openly calls for political change.

Although the Communist insurgency died down after Marcos' departure, vigilante groups sprang up again in 1987. Culturally, the nation has a tradition of social, religious, and geographic fragmentation which encourages further problems. As Richard Kessler wrote in the late 1980s, Aquino's themes of truth, justice, freedom, and country are also "themes of the Communist insurgency and a source of its popular appeal. President Aquino's failure to deliver on these promises after Marcos had been toppled could once again strengthen the country's revolutionary forces — in particular, the Communist Party of the Philippines."<sup>87</sup> Initial hopes and expectations after Aquino assumed office quieted these forces temporarily, and Ramos had all but mastered Communist insurgency in 1988 and 1989. But these forces continued to be of concern. As Kessler points out, regardless of who leads the government, "Philippine history shows that rebellions can be suppressed but rarely eliminated for long."<sup>88</sup>

All in all, Filipinos' loyalty and gratitude to Cory remained throughout her presidency, but these feelings were separate from perceptions of her performance as president. Although Mrs. Aquino was "presented with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to institute basic reform, she, like Marcos with martial law, threw away the chance."<sup>89</sup> Most reforms that were carried out were dictated or driven from outside. As W. Scott Thompson writes, "in the Philippines we have seen all too clearly how rapidly power corrupts.... Aquino's major defect was in her inability to *use* power, to harness it, corruptly or nobly."<sup>90</sup> Even her goal of democracy was sought with more attention to form than substance: "all democracy had come down to in the Philippines, during the Aquino era, was an attempted guarantee, for the moment, against another dictator."<sup>91</sup> "By the middle of 1989 it was clear that the old politics had triumphed. Aquino's popularity had slipped to 35 percent approval...down from 77 percent a year earlier."<sup>92</sup>

By early 1992, Aquino's external support had disappeared. The United States had started the Philippines down the road to freedom and democracy, concerned about the future of this nation and her peoples; when Aquino came to power in 1986, it was said that "the breadth of support for the Philippines in Congress is rivaled only by that for Israel."<sup>93</sup> But Congress soon lost interest and

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87. Kessler, 27.

88. *Ibid.*, 139.

89. W. Scott Thompson, *The Philippines in Crisis: Development and Security in the Aquino Era 1986 - 1992*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) 4.

90. *Ibid.*, 6.

91. *Ibid.*, 172.

92. *Ibid.*, 133.

93. "The Philippines and the United States," (The Asia Society, New York, 1986), 29.

moved on to other issues. Now, after what long had been characterized as a parent-child relationship between the United States and the Philippines, the parent had moved out — both literally and figuratively — taking with it much of the United States' influence, millions of dollars, and up to 60,000 jobs.<sup>94</sup> The Philippine Islands are no longer considered strategically vital for the United States.

But what of democracy? Jeffrey Simon has written that the "period following a revolution without guerrillas that succeeds in overthrowing a government... is often characterized by continued unrest and challenges to the very survival of the new regime."<sup>95</sup> This is still the case in the Philippines today, where many of the same strategic elements which overthrew Marcos have become threats to democratic stability. Considering this poor outlook, W. Scott Thompson has predicted that Philippine democracy will have a tragically short life.

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94. Greenberger, Robert S., "Philippines Beginning to Come to Terms with the Prospect of Life Without US," *The Wall Street Journal*, 28 April 1992.

95. Simon, 9.



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