

The Philippines in 1987: Politics of Survival?

BELINDA A. AQUINO*

The year 1987 was a critical one for the Aquino administration as it tried to consolidate the gains it made the year, before, and as it continued its efforts towards redemocratization and normalization. However, its stability has been seriously threatened by a number of events including the bloody August 28 coup attempt, the collapse of the ceasefire talks with the National Democratic Front and the proliferation of right wing vigilante groups. But the moral leadership of President Aquino and the people's response to her call for national unity may save the nation from falling to the hands of the extremists from both the left and from the right.

Introduction

By the time 1987 came around, the Aquino government had survived ten crucial months of chaotic transition from the four-day People Power Revolution in February 1986, which brought it to power. The most dramatic development that strengthened President Corazon Aquino's hold on her fledgling government was the dismissal of Juan Ponce Enrile, her erstwhile Defense Minister, who was believed to be behind the plot to destabilize Aquino in November 1986 through a plan code-named "God Save the Queen."¹ The plan was exposed by Chief of Staff, General Fidel Ramos, who was credited with "saving the Queen." Apparently, Enrile's "Special Operations Group," which was planning to reduce Aquino to a figurehead, like the Queen of England, had tried to enlist Ramos' support. They thought they could replicate the military uprising that triggered the February Revolution.

But this time, Ramos vigorously turned them down and instead "issued an immediate bulletin to every regional commander in the Philippine armed forces. They were told to obey 'only those orders issued by myself or by duly authorized deputies of the general headquarters'."² Thereafter, Aquino convened a seven-hour cabinet meeting where she demanded the

*Professor, Department of Political Science and Director, Center for Philippine Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa.

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resignation of all members of her Cabinet. Subsequently, she accepted only Enrile's resignation, but later also fired two corrupt and unpopular Ministers as a trade-off. Aquino then promptly appointed General Rafael Ileto to replace Enrile. And Honasan and his co-conspirators like Colonels Red Kapunan, Tito Legaspi, and Rex Robles, were given new assignments but they were never charged.

Military Restiveness Continues

President Aquino's thorny problem with military unrest did not end with the sacking of Enrile, or the failure of "God Save the Queen." In fact, his departure deepened the factionalism in the armed forces since he and his followers were now clearly aligned against the Ramos-Ileto tandem.

On 27 January of the new year, about 500 military officers and enlisted men staged yet another operation in the Greater Manila area by taking over Channel 7 in Quezon City. The rebels also struck at the Villamor Air Base near the Manila International Airport, and at the 15th Strike Wing of the Sangley Air Station outside Manila. This time it was not Honasan and his Ramboys who were at the forefront of this military mutiny. It was led by Marcos loyalist forces, many of whom were involved in the Manila Hotel incident the previous July, in which Arturo Tolentino proclaimed himself acting President reportedly on orders of Marcos in Hawaii. The January rebellion took on a farcical note when the rebels who were holed up in the television station were unable to make any broadcasts about their takeover because they did not bring their technicians to operate the channel. It is interesting to note that Honasan and his party paid a visit to General Ramos at Camp Aguinaldo to urge leniency for the erring soldiers. One of the leaders of the Channel 7 takeover, Colonel Oscar Canlas, said he was trying to save the country from Communism. But the media and other observers saw Marcos' hand behind the plot.

As inept as the effort was, it was one more headache for Aquino's presidency, which was still reeling from the Mendiola massacre a few days earlier. On 22 January, nineteen demonstrators were killed and several others wounded at the foot of Mendiola bridge near the presidential palace. The casualties were mostly from the left-leaning KMP (*Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas*, or Peasant Movement of the Philippines), which was demanding a minimum land reform program from the Aquino government. After a few days of picketing the Ministry of Agrarian Reform in Quezon City, the demonstrators, led by Jaime Tadeo, marched all the way to Malacañang Palace in Manila. The Marines and police officers guarding the palace fired at the surging crowd which they had tried unsuccessfully to disperse. The massacre came as a shock to human rights groups and supporters of Aquino, who immediately deplored the use of force against unarmed demonstrators, although some reports later claimed that a few of the marchers were armed. The tragedy, noted a nationalist writer, "illustrates the gravity of the problems that Corazon Aquino continues to face as she moulds a new era for

Philippine society and its people.”³ Land reform loomed as one of the toughest issues facing Aquino, herself a member of a prominent land-owning elite family which has dominated the province of Tarlac in Central Luzon since the 19th century.

The Marcos Connection

Just as “God Save the Queen” was linked to the Enrile-Honasan faction, the Channel 7 fiasco was believed to be masterminded by deposed dictator Ferdinand Marcos, who was preparing to leave Hawaii on the day of the takeover in Manila. Most of the 18 leaders of the coup attempt, some whom had already retired from active service, were loyal Marcos supporters.⁴

This incident was only the beginning of a series of “Marcos capers” that would continue to irritate the Aquino government during the year. In May, two Americans, Richard Hirschfeld and Robert Chastain, posing as arms dealers, visited Marcos at his Honolulu home and secretly tape-recorded their conversation. Marcos had outlined a plan to return to Manila in late June. In effect this would be an invasion that would need heavy arms and tanks that Marcos promised to pay with his Swiss bank accounts and some \$14 billion worth of gold hidden in the Philippines, which only he and his son Ferdinand Jr. knew about. Marcos discussed his plan to buy arms and equipment for an army of 10,000 that would take Cory Aquino hostage.⁵ In his own words, Marcos said, “What I would like to see happen is we take her hostage — not to hurt her — without killing her.”⁶

US Representative Stephen Solarz, another avid Marcos watcher, conducted an investigation of Marcos’ secret plan to invade the Philippines in his Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs. At the same time, the Manila government released intelligence reports that Marcos himself was involved in the weekend bombings intended to disrupt the opening of the newly reestablished Philippine Congress on July 27. The reports cited that he had sent some \$7 million to finance another coup attempt against the Aquino government.

Consequently, the US government, alarmed at Marcos’ unrelenting efforts to destabilize Aquino, warned the deposed dictator not to try to leave the island of Oahu without the permission of the American immigration service. A high-ranking US State Department official personally paid Marcos a visit to deliver the stern message and warn him of the consequences of violating his “parole” status. For its part, the Philippine Government filed 38 civil suits against Marcos and his family and cronies, seeking to recover a total of \$22 billion in actual, moral, and exemplary damages.⁷ This was probably the biggest damage suit in world history. In addition, the Philippine Government made representations with the US State and Justice Departments to allow the criminal trial of Marcos on American soil, possibly in Hawaii or Washington, D.C., to recover at least \$5 billion that he and his associates were charged with plundering from the Philippine treasury when he

was in power. The Swiss Government earlier had agreed to cooperate with the Philippine Government in the recovery effort provided Marcos was afforded a fair trial and due process. Meanwhile, there were already numerous suits against Marcos and associates in the US itself, filed by various individuals, and he was involved in four grand jury investigations concerning, among others, reported anomalies in the sale of arms to his regime by the US Defense Department.

Ceasefire Fails

One of President Aquino's major initiatives toward the end of 1986 was a ceasefire proposal within sixty days to carry on negotiations with the National Democratic Front (NDF) and its two major arms — the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the New People's Army (NPA). NDF leaders Carolina Malay, Antonio Zumel and Satur Ocampo came out of hiding to form the NDF panel; Ramon Mitra and later Teofisto Guingona, both strong supporters of Cory Aquino, headed the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) panel. Both sides had put together a package of specific and general proposals on the negotiating table and the proceedings were widely covered by the Manila and international media.

In general, the NDF negotiators wanted the Aquino government to dismantle the remaining features of the Marcos regime, including all decrees, letters of instruction, executive orders, and other laws passed by the dictatorship which violated human rights. They also asked the government to dismantle the repressive military or paramilitary units like the Civilian Home Defense Forces (CHDF), which had been charged with many of the human rights violations during the Marcos regime. In addition, they wanted the full promotion of the people's welfare and livelihood, the assertion of national dignity and sovereignty, and the adoption of concrete guarantees for durable peace.⁸

Specifically, they proposed a genuine and comprehensive land reform program, aimed at a fair redistribution of lands to peasants and the landless; provisions for adequate housing, wages and employment for all; guarantees for free public education and social services; the abrogation of all unequal military and economic arrangements with the United States; the nationalization of strategic and key industries; the termination of hostilities between the government military and the NPA; the reorientation of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to principles of civilian supremacy, patriotism and service to the people; and the maximum participation of all sectors in a government that is "nationalist" and "pro-people." They also wanted Rodolfo Salas, a top NPA leader who had been arrested earlier, released and recognized as a member of the NDF panel.

The GRP panel, on the other hand, offered a four-point proposal: (1) a short-run recovery program, which is open to everyone including returnees from the NDF/CPP/NPA; (2) a social amelioration program, including land reform, housing, cooperatives, agricultural assistance, rural

credit and manpower training; (3) economic and social reforms, as mandated by the new Constitution; and (4) an honorable amnesty, intended to "heal the wounds of the past and rebuild the nation from crisis."⁹

After a series of meetings, the talks were deadlocked and there were no significant agreements made. The NDF panel charged their government counterpart with insincerity, among other things. The GRP panel said most of the NDF demands were impossible to deliver and were not negotiable. When the ceasefire period ended in early February, the two panels were as far apart from each other as when they began. The NDF negotiators returned to the underground. This signalled the resumption of hostilities between the military and the insurgents. While some effort was made to leave future talks between the two groups open, the negotiations were for all intents and purposes a failure.

In her various speeches before the nation, President Aquino said she wanted to "give peace a chance." In the spirit of the February Revolution, she made an appeal for reconciliation, unity and peace. The hard-liners in her government, however, notably Enrile and the military, did not buy that because, according to them, the "soft-line approach" had not worked historically. The same group also opposed the other initiatives of Aquino, such as the release of 500 political prisoners at the beginning of her term, and ceasefire talks with other insurgent groups like the Muslims and the Cordillera tribal minority in Northeastern Luzon. Thus, Aquino did not have the support of the military from the start in the projected peace talks with the Communists and other disaffected groups. Even after Enrile was fired, his successor General Ileto was not enthusiastic about it either. In a revealing interview, he said with candor:

No, the ceasefire, in fact, is what the other side [NDF] wants. It is their tool. They have used this before, they have succeeded in negotiations, they're good in negotiations. Although President Aquino wants the Peace Talks, the other side wants it also. Both sides want it . . . In fact we [military] were not for ceasefire. You will notice that the initial reaction of the military is 'no ceasefire' because we felt that this is a chance for them to regroup, to improve their combat capability, their chance to gather arms and to consolidate their forces, and to be able to communicate. That's why the military, to start with even during the time of Mr. Enrile, was against the ceasefire.¹⁰

It was never demonstrated by the military how the ceasefire proved advantageous to the NDF/CPP/NPA in terms of what Ileto said — regrouping, improving their combat readiness, consolidating their forces, and so on. But a new set of figures came out regarding the armed strength of the insurgents. From 16,500 at the peak of the Marcos era, when the NPA was expanding largely due to Marcos' excesses, the figure under Aquino shot up to as high as 24,000. This hardly seems credible when we take into account the 2,000 or so who were reported by the military itself to have surrendered after Aquino assumed power. There were also reports that many of the rebels who came out during the ceasefire period did not return to the hills at the expira-

tion of the peace talks. The Marcos dictatorship, which had been considered by many observers as contributing to the brisk NPA build-up had been overthrown. Under these circumstances, how could the NPA gain another 8,000 or so armed adherents in just the ten months after Aquino became president? It does not seem to add up. In any case, there has to be a more reliable picture of the Communist insurgency other than the obviously self-serving accounts of the Pentagon or the Philippine military. It is possible that the figures are being inflated to justify heavy-handed military action against the insurgents, or demands for sharp increases in the military budget. Filipinos jokingly refer to this as the "budgetary NPA situation." This could also be part of the anti-Communist hysteria being fomented by right-wing groups in the country.

Muslim Talks Also Fail

The peace negotiations with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) under Nur Misuari also ended with no appreciable results. The main agenda for the talks was a consideration of the long-standing MNLF demand for the autonomy of the 13 provinces in Mindanao and Sulu, which had been agreed upon earlier in the 1976 Tripoli Agreement. Negotiations started as early as September 1986, and Philippine Ambassador to the US Emmanuel Pelaez had been recalled to serve as chief negotiator for the government panel. Aquino herself had flown to Sulu to meet with Misuari, and for a while, the Muslim question showed some promise of resolution. During the last days of the Marcos regime, presidential brother-in-law Agapito "Butz" Aquino had met several times with Misuari to ask for MNLF support for Cory Aquino's candidacy in exchange for recognition of the MNLF's struggle for autonomy if she got elected.

Eight months of negotiations between the MNLF and the Pelaez panel ended in a stalemate, and the former proposed that the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), based in Saudi Arabia, be made the mediator. Pelaez, however, vetoed the idea, saying the Muslim problem was an internal one, and that the Philippines, as a sovereign nation, "cannot bow to pressure." He also insisted on using the Constitution as the framework for discussing many of the issues involving autonomy. This was not acceptable to the MNLF negotiators.

Meanwhile, the factionalism in the Muslim movement complicated the government's attempt to make a breakthrough in the stalled negotiation. The splinter Muslim groups headed by Dimas Pundato, Macapanton Abbas, and Hashim Salamat, deplored the Aquino government's decision to negotiate only with the Misuari group. The government military also had its own reservations, saying the talks resuscitated a moribund MNLF.

At the end of the negotiations in late April, both the MNLF and the government agreed to keep the peace in Mindanao even with the failure of the peace talks. Aquino ordered the Armed Forces to stop their operations in Zamboanga del Sur and other parts of Mindanao, where government

clashes with the MNLF had been reported earlier. However, even with this, it seemed like "back to war" in Mindanao.

Transition to Constitutional Democracy

In spite of these setbacks, two developments during the year augured well for the national leadership under Cory Aquino, who had pledged to restore democratic institutions during the 1986 Revolution. The first of these was the plebiscite held on February 2 to ratify the new Philippine Constitution drafted by the Commission formed by Aquino in June 1986. The ConCom, as it was popularly known, chaired by the respected retired woman Supreme Court Justice Cecilia Munoz-Palma, had drafted a lengthy Constitution embodying general principles of the rule of law, the supremacy of civilian authority, the separation of church and state, the independence of the country's foreign policy, the protection of human rights, and the promotion of a "just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and independence of the nation, and free the people from poverty through policies that provide adequate social services, promote full employment, a rising standard of living, and an improved quality for the life of all." Conservative in orientation, the document recognizes the "sanctity of family life" and shall "equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception." It has strong provisions on social justice and human rights, and the role and right of "people's organizations." But nationalist groups were disappointed that the document only had lukewarm provisions on agrarian reform, economic development, and Philippine nationalism. An effort on the part of the nationalist caucus in the ConCom to include a provision to dismantle the US bases on Philippine territory was watered down to allow the upcoming Philippine Congress to make that decision.

President Aquino staked her popularity and leadership on the ratification issue. She travelled across the country with some of her Ministers to campaign for a "Yes" vote. Enrile led the advocates for the "No" vote and likewise barnstormed the country, although not as extensively as Aquino. Enrile predicted a 65% winning margin for non-ratification. But he was roundly repudiated as the "Yes" votes amounted to an overwhelming 76%, far more than the 60 to 65 percent predicted earlier. Even in the military as a whole, the vote was 60 percent in favor, and 40 percent against. Considering that Aquino inherited a hostile military, this majority was healthy. In a sense, it was a resounding personal victory for Aquino and a setback for the opposition, notably Enrile.

The second test for the viability of constitutional processes in a society so devastated by the Marcos dictatorship was the Congressional election on May 11 for 24 members of the Senate and 200 members of the House of Representatives. Up to this point, Aquino had not formed a political party to consolidate her power. She preferred to preside over a loose coalition composed of the PDP-Laban (*Pilipino Democratic Party* and Laban, or *Fight*, which had been Ninoy Aquino's party, the UNIDO (United National-

ist Democratic Organization), headed by Vice-President Salvador Laurel, the Liberal Party wing under former Senator Jovito Salonga, the National Christian Democratic Union headed by another former Senator, Raul Manglapus, and a number of smaller groupings. Eventually an umbrella organization, *Lakas ng Bansa* (People's Power), was formed to coordinate the coalition and attract individuals that had not affiliated with existing parties or alliances. The Lakas top leadership included presidential brother-in-law Butz Aquino and Emigdio Tanjuatco, Cory Aquino's first cousin. Cory's brother Jose Cojuangco, Jr., who headed a wing of the PDP-Laban, was also a major leader of the Lakas ng Bansa.

After a series of meetings, the various groups under the Aquino coalition chose the 24 candidates for the Senate, including two women. The ticket tried to represent the broad sectors of Philippine society, although there were some controversial choices who were linked with corruption and complicity with the Marcos regime.

The opposition at first tried to coalesce around one major grouping — the Grand Alliance for Democracy (GAD) — led by Enrile. But many in the GAD leadership, such as former Senator Eva Estrada Kalaw, objected to the presence of Marcos loyalists in their ranks, such as Rafael Recto, Nicanor Yñiguez, and other former members of the *Kilusang Bagong Lipunan* (KBL, or New Society Movement), Marcos' old party. As a result of the rift, the latter formed their own opposition party — the UPP-KBL — with the former acronym standing for Union for Peace and Progress. They proceeded to organize their own slate. Thus, there were three major senatorial tickets, one under Aquino, and the other two under a splintered opposition.

The campaign was enlivened by the entry of the aboveground or Legal Left into the political arena.¹¹ The two political prisoners who had been released by Aquino after the Revolution, former CPP head Jose Maria Sison, and NPA top leader Bernabe Buscayno (also known as Kumander Dante), got together to form *Partido ng Bayan* (PnB, or People's Party), a broad coalition of left-of-center, liberal and moderate groups. PnB decided to put up seven candidates for the Senate, including a woman activist who had been a political prisoner during the Marcos regime. In time the coalition became the Alliance for New Politics (ANP) and was primarily composed of the PnB, the *Bagong Alyansang Makabayan* (New Nationalist Alliance or *Bayan* for short), and the Volunteers for Popular Democracy.

The entry of the Legal Left into the electoral arena was welcomed by progressive sectors of the society, which have long criticized Philippine politics as a monopoly of traditional and elite interests. Only once after the second World War did the Left participate in a Congressional election. This was in 1946 when the Democratic Alliance candidates ran and won a few seats representing Central Luzon. But their victory was nullified when the Philippine Government declared the Alliance a "subversive" organization. Now, in 1987, the ANP senatorial candidates were testing the waters under the banner of "New Politics." The people demand real social change, they

argued in dramatic rhetoric on the campaign trail. "The politics of the old can only bring back bitter memories of hopes dashed, votes bought and blood split by parties keen only on nurturing their naked greed . . . We want full national emancipation, genuine democracy, a government really of the people and not of a handful elite."¹² Their political platform advocated redistribution of free land to peasants, dismantling the US military bases on Philippine territory, national industrialization, economic nationalism, and granting genuine autonomy to the Muslim and Cordillera regions.

Thus, the election was well represented in terms of political ideology — from right to center to left. Several parties of various persuasions, or with no particular political agenda, registered with the Commission on Elections (Comelec), in keeping with the multiparty system provided by the newly-ratified Constitution. However, the Aquino administration candidates dominated the campaign in view of their superior logistics and other resources provided by the government. The GAD candidates also mounted a national campaign and Juan Ponce Enrile outspent all the other candidates, especially in terms of media coverage. The UPP-KBL was tainted by the Marcos association and frightened a good percentage of the electorate by promising to bring back Marcos to the Philippines if they gained a majority in the Senate. The ANP candidates were the poorest of the lot and had to rely on small contributions from their supporters, and were unable to carry out a nationwide campaign.

Aquino's senatorial candidates almost made a clean sweep of the elections, capturing 22 out of the 24 seats. Only one GAD candidate, popular movie actor Joseph Estrada, made it to the top 15 winners. The other oppositionist, Enrile, who had expected to land in the first 5, barely made it to the tail-end slot. In the House of Representatives, Aquino's candidates again won overwhelmingly, taking more than two-thirds of the 200 seats. Some 25 Marcos loyalists or Marcos-supported candidates, however, managed to get elected.

The ANP senatorial slate was way down in the counting with their highest contender obtaining only more than a million votes. One needed at least 5 million to be in contention. In the lower chamber, only three candidates supported by the Left made it.

As in every election in the Philippines, there were allegations made by the opposition parties of massive fraud committed by the Aquino-backed candidates. These ranged from the usual "flying voters" to snatching ballot boxes and vote-buying. Elections had to be cancelled and scheduled for a later date in many provinces like Sulu because of reports of intimidation and terrorism. The Comelec had earlier released a list of "critical areas" where election-related violence was likely to occur.

On the whole, however, the elections were reasonably clean and orderly. For Filipinos it was the first genuine election in 16 years, and it turned out an impressive 85 percent of the electorate. And like most elections

during the pre-martial law years, it was not only a political event but a cultural one. Candidates sang and danced and entertained huge crowds after delivering their fiery speeches. The highlight of each major sortie on the road from as far north as Cagayan to down south in Sulu was the arrival of Cory Aquino, often in her yellow attire, the symbol of the 1986 Revolution.

Affirming Aquino's Leadership

The overwhelming majorities garnered by the government in both the plebiscite and May elections confirmed the wide popularity of Cory Aquino and reaffirmed the Filipinos' faith in her leadership. She also now had a legal framework for governing. She had dissolved the Marcos-created *Batasan* and promulgated the "Freedom Constitution" in the interim to replace the 1973 Constitution. She could have exercised her "revolutionary" powers during the transition period, but preferred to work through the "democratic space" that she had just restored in Philippine society. Various groups had criticized her for squandering her chances away to evolve a meaningful land reform program and to discipline the human rights violators in the Marcos regime. The people, who had probably gotten used to authoritarian ways, had somehow expected Aquino to seize the initiative and crack the whip, so to speak.

But all these observations are a product of hindsight, and it would be more important to understand where Aquino was coming from and what the circumstances were at the time. She was thrust into the political arena without the benefit of a smooth and adequate transition period, which would have enabled her to prepare a national agenda. She was not coming from the ranks of traditional politicians, adept at the ways of wheeling-and-dealing. Personally she had no appetite for power and was just learning "the ropes of the game." Her cautious and deliberate nature postponed decisions on the land reform, military reform, and other social issues. But she was quick to make decisions on the release of political prisoners and on negotiating with the various insurgent groups. In terms of her political style, she preferred the Gandhi model. She was once interviewed by a foreign journalist, who remarked that he had seen Machiavelli's *The Prince* among her reading materials, which also included a collection of quotations from Mohandas K. Gandhi. She said Machiavelli's book was given to her by her late husband's cardiologist who suggested that she read it. "I did one night, and no, it isn't me," she added. "I tried to find something there I could adapt, but I don't know. It isn't like Gandhi's work — that gives me so much inspiration, and I really feel that this is what I was cut out to be."¹³

She was particularly criticized for her slowness in spelling out a policy on land reform. The position of the Minister for Agrarian Reform was the first to be filled in her Cabinet, and the one who was finally selected was not particularly noted for his knowledge of or experience on land reform. Nor did he have a creditable administrative background and experience with pea-

sant and other groups demanded by the job. Then Aquino waited until just a few days before the opening of the new Congress in July to issue an executive order promulgating a Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) in principle. She left it to the legislature to develop the details of this vital program. This seemed like a case of "passing the buck."

But she had her own defenders when it comes to the land reform issue. "In retrospect," noted a church-related group, "one could argue that it (land reform program) would have aligned landowners and other interest groups with other destabilizing factors last year (1986) and dealt a severe blow to the efforts at political consolidation and control."¹⁴ In effect, Aquino might have been destabilized sooner by the landowners and other right-wing elements if she had threatened their interests in a real way. Others note that land reform has been a Philippine problem for centuries and it would be unrealistic to expect Aquino to solve it during her term. Still, she could leave her mark on the presidency by using the powers of her office to make a headway in this contentious issue, which could begin with the redistribution of her holdings in her family-owned Hacienda Luisita.

The Vigilantes and Right-Wing Extremism

An alarming phenomenon that has added to the numerous problems of the Aquino government is the rise of *vigilante* groups across the country, notably in certain areas of Mindanao and the Visayas. While some form of vigilantism has always existed in Philippine society, the current wave appears to be a new development in that it is singularly addressed to anti-Communism, in particular against the NPA. It has disturbed a good number of Filipinos that the military and even civilian agencies, such as the Department of Local Governments, have actively encouraged the formation of these groups for "self-defense" from the NPA. It has even been perversely argued that vigilantism is a form of "people power," the genuine and spontaneous gathering of masses of people during the 1986 Revolution which ousted Marcos.

There are more than 100 known vigilante networks organized around the country. The best-known group is the *Alsa Masa* (Masses Arise) in Davao City, which reportedly has 9,628 members. The others are: NAKASAKA (United People for Peace) in Davao del Sur, which was endorsed by the late Local Governments Secretary Jaime Ferrer; the *Kadre*, CACA (Citizens Against Communist Army), *Sagrado Corazon Senior*, or *Tadtad* (Chop) in Cebu; the 4 K in South Cotabato; *El Tigre* and PC Forward Command in Negros Occidental; Movement Against Violence in Bicol; New Filipino Crusaders in Cagayan; *Filipiniana* in Leyte; Task Force Democracy in Aklan; and *Alsa Bayan* in Rizal, Cagayan and the Cordilleras.¹⁵

Presumably the immediate reason for the proliferation of these vigilante groups is the need to counter the activities of the NPA, particularly in taxation and recruitment. It is argued that ordinary people in the villages and towns are fed up being taxed and harassed by the NPA, and have armed themselves for self-defense.

But it is doubtful that the masses themselves took the initiative in forming most of these groups. The *Alsa Masa*, for instance, was founded in early 1984 by a *barangay* captain, Wilfredo Aquino, and was revived by Lt. Col. Franco Calida, who became provincial commander of the Philippine Constabulary in Davao. Among the membership of *Alsa Masa* are former NPA rebels and ordinary criminals. Its chief spokesperson is a radio commentator, Jun Porras Pala, who is on the air continuously for long hours attacking people who do not support *Alsa Masa*, calling them leftists and communists. *Alsa Masa* re-emerged after the collapse of the peace talks between the government and the NDF in February. In addition to its activities in Davao City, it has under its fold various rightist or fanatical groups, such as the *Puluhan*, Remnants of God, the Mindanao Anti-Communist Movement, the *Kampilan* Battalion, the *Kilusan Laban sa Komunista* (Anti-Communist Movement), the *Guerrero* (Warrior) of Jesus, and the *Surit-surit* (Home-made Rifle) Battalion.

According to various reports, the vigilantes' mode of operation differs from place to place. "Some reports say the CACA in Cebu works very closely with PC intelligence, tracking down leftists and methodically killing them in the style of South American 'death squads.' Elsewhere, NAKASAKA recruits prefer local weapons (such as the broad flat-bladed bolo knife) rather than firearms."¹⁶ The *Tadtads* usually have the most gruesome form of killing. They chop and behead their victims.

The *Alsa Masa* also conducts vigorous letter-writing campaigns, often targeting members of the media.¹⁷

It is ironic that these various vigilante groups whose main objective is to contain the abuses of the NPA have themselves succumbed to the very ills they have criticized. These include "summary executions of NPA — or suspected — members and followers; legally unauthorized men and women taking the law into their own hands in meting out justice; illegal taxation; even extortion; the coercive enlisting of people to join vigilante forces; the manipulation of vigilantes by interested and partisan groups."¹⁸

Who's Behind the Vigilantes? The sudden emergence of the vigilantes, their funding, and who is behind them have been the subject of much speculation. It seems too much of a coincidence that the systematic organization of these groups happened at a time when American right-wing elements, such as Retired Army General John K. Singlaub, were visiting the Philippines in late 1986 and early 1987. Singlaub is a notorious anti-Communist who played a major role in advising and raising money for the Nicaraguan "Contra" rebels against the Sandinista government of Daniel Ortega. He is also the head of the World Anti-Communist League (WACL), which has strong links with the religious right in the US, specifically Reverend Moon's Unification Church, more popularly known as the "Moonies." He was visiting the Philippines ostensibly to search for the treasure that General Tomoyuki Yamashita had buried in the Philippines during the Second World War. The cover for his activities in the Philippines was the "Nippon Star," a

Hongkong-registered company that he set up in Makati in Metropolitan Manila. He had applied to the Philippine Government for permits to search 209 locations and was allowed to hunt at one site. He had met with Enrile when he was still Defense Minister at the time, and with other officials like presidential adviser Teodoro "Teddy Boy" Locsin and General Luis Villareal, then head of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA). General Ramos also admitted meeting with Singlaub socially. A senior military officer who had been monitoring Singlaub's activities, said he believed the latter was engaged in "intense psychological operations to lay the groundwork for unofficial counterinsurgency programs."¹⁹ Villareal himself, who was president of the Filipino Anti-Communist Movement (the WACL Philippine affiliate), and reportedly a personal friend of Singlaub's, said he believed the treasure hunt was intended to raise money for anti-Communist activities.²⁰ A Philippine National Security Council official told the *Manila Chronicle* that Singlaub was laying the spadework for a long-term counterinsurgency project whose impact may be felt only three or four years from now. He was setting up a "well-organized anti-Communist movement with front organizations which can be used for all sorts of purposes."²¹ These include supporting anti-Communist candidates in local and national elections, forming anti-Communist lobbies in Congress, and developing a nationwide pro-American military bases movement. Singlaub had also met with business groups selling the anti-Communist cause. "In fact, one businessman with whom Singlaub has met is now giving lectures about Communism as an international conspiracy directed by the Soviet Union."²² The businessman referred to, Manila banker Vicente Puyat who ran for the Senate in May under the old Marcos party, told the Manila Rotary Club that the Communist rebellion in the Philippines was not a "homegrown insurgency," that the Aquino government was infiltrated by Communists, and that the arms shipments to the rebels came through submarines landing in Mindanao and distributed by an acting Governor of a southern province. It was obvious that part of Singlaub's "psywar" was to spread disinformation. In the 28 August coup attempt, Singlaub's name was to surface again as someone who may have indirectly contributed to it by his inciting certain right-wing elements in the military against Communism. Senator Raul Manglapus, then chairman of the Senate's Committee on National Defense, called for an investigation of the role of Singlaub in the *putsch* on the basis of his previous activities in the country.

Human Rights Group Confirms Vigilante Reports. In mid-May an international fact-finding team headed by former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark visited the Philippines to look into the existence and activities of armed vigilantes. The team, which was composed mainly of human rights advocates, interviewed people in Luzon, Mindanao, Cebu, and Negros. Its findings included: (1) a rapidly growing vigilante movement that has killed, tortured threatened or otherwise harassed civilians who are mostly poor farmers, workers and other individuals who have advocated land reform, wage increases for workers, and withdrawal of the US bases; (2) Philippine military and civilian officials are endorsing and even arming some of these vigilante groups; (3) foreign organizations like the Unification Church-affiliated of the

Associations for the Unification of the Societies of the Americas, the WACL, and the World Anti-Communist Crusade, are actively engaged in organizing the movement; and (4) clear evidence of sophisticated methods of counter-insurgency and "low intensity conflict" (LIC) operating in the Philippines, including direct military action done by Philippine forces with US technical assistance.²³

One of the team members was Ralph McGehee, a former CIA agent in Asia who wrote a book, *Deadly Deceits*, about his 25 years with the agency. He had served as a special liaison officer of the Vietnam Special Forces, which were really assassination squads assigned to liquidate communists in the villages. McGehee noticed "direct parallels" between the Vietnam experience and the current Philippine situation. Among these parallels are, the "search and destroy" operations, "free-fire zones," and forcing rural people into the population centers to deny the insurgents a mass base.²⁴ The *Alsa Masa* and NAKASAKA had counterparts in the Vietnamese reconnaissance units.

McGehee also saw the possibility that a "version of the CIA's Phoenix Program — a coordinated military, police and civilian effort to destroy Vietnamese revolutionary forces through assassination squads trained by special forces with the CIA — is now being employed in the country."²⁵ He pointed out that Lt. Col. Calida, the so-called "godfather" of *Alsa Masa* had undergone training in 1971-72 at Fort Bragg in North Carolina, considered the counterinsurgency training center in the US. McGehee further noted that the mushrooming of anti-Communist literature was a normal component of CIA "media operations." Calida denied McGehee's allegations.

These observations on possible CIA involvement in Philippine affairs in the post-Marcos period are not far-fetched. At the height of the Huk movement in the fifties, CIA operative Edward Landsdale put together a plan combining military action, economic benefits, and political strategy to defeat the insurgency with the help of Philippine officials like Ramon Mag-saysay. More recently, the CIA knew of the corrupt activities of Marcos as early as 1969 and his plan to declare martial law in 1972.²⁶ Since Aquino assumed power, Manila media circles have speculated on the presence of about 115 CIA agents in the Philippines. The hard evidence, of course, cannot be produced, but it would strain credulity to believe that there is no CIA activity in the country today. Trained in covert action and disinformation, CIA officers are not about to give away their agency secrets. Like McGehee, they get to tell what they did in some of these countries after they retire.

Religion and Politics. This discussion of the emergence of right-wing fanaticism in the Philippines would not be complete without mentioning the corresponding phenomenal rise of religious fundamentalism in many parts of the country today. Banners announcing prayer meetings, talk shows, workshops, and seminars by such fundamentalist sects like Campus Crusade for

Christ, 700 Club, Assemblies of God, World Vision International, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, and the much-talked about CAUSA, were commonplace during the year, particularly in Metro Manila and the bigger cities. The Unification Church even sponsored a visit to the Philippines in August of Msgr. Bismark Carballo, a Nicaraguan priest exiled by the Sandinistas for his support of the US-backed "contras." The most visible fundamentalist preachers like Billy Graham, Jerry Falwell, Jimmy Swaggart and Pat Robertson have either visited the Philippines or have regular telecasts in the country.

The Carballo visit inspired a Maryknoll cleric, Fr. Thomas Marti, who has long worked in the Philippines, to research the connections between some of these fundamentalist groups and the right-wing networks in the U.S. Marti found that the Reagan administration sought the help of CAUSA International to support US policy in Nicaragua.²⁷ It might be mentioned that the Moonies and CAUSA have conducted expense-paid seminars and conferences in Washington, D.C., Manila and other places, inviting well-known names in academic, religious and political circles. Among the CAUSA's top brass are Cleon Sousen, a Mormon Church leader, Douglas MacArthur II, and Bohi Dak, the chairman who has acknowledged CIA funding.²⁸ This is just another form of counter-insurgency, but it tries to minimize direct military intervention in favor of small "grassroots" efforts combining socio-economic, civic action, psychological & political objective.

It seems, Marti concludes, that the combination of the political and religious right is intent on fomenting a "Red scare" in the Philippines, as they have done in Latin America, to undermine the earlier efforts of the Aquino government to come to a negotiated settlement with the NDF/CPP/NPA. Noticeable itself is the government's drift to the right and Aquino herself, while cautioning against unrestrained vigilante activities, has not discouraged them. In a visit to Davao City, which some of her supporters considered a "misjudgment," Aquino told members of the *Alsa Masa* "they were a model in the battle against the 18-year communist insurgency."²⁹

The "Guns of August"

After the May elections and the subsequent reopening of the Philippine Congress in July, the Aquino administration seemed to have stabilized and ready to embark on a national program through the institutions of a political democracy. The Aquino ruling coalition had received a stunning mandate from the people, which exceeded its own expectations. This unprecedented demonstration of presidential popularity was made even more dramatic by a jump in six points in the Manila Stock Exchange index.

As the dust settled, two things dominated the preparations for the new Congress — the selection of the top leaders of the two chambers, and hammering out the agenda for the coming year. But the new Congress had only been in session a month and lightning struck. In the early hours of 28 August, some 1,000 troops led by "Gringo" Honasan swooped down on

Malacanañg Palace, a government television station, and Villamor Air Base, in an audacious military bid for power. The renegade troops, many of whom were to say later they were duped into joining the event, came in 27 six-by-six trucks, 4 buses, 2 tanks, an ambulance, and 18 civilian vehicles from various military camps in Central Luzon, including Fort Magsaysay in Laur, Nueva Ecija, where Honasan was serving as an instructor to military trainees. It was literally a war convoy that flaunted their belligerency status by waving the Philippine flag upside down. Fighting ensued as the rebel soldiers approached Malacanañg, which was protected by the Presidential Guards. "Eyewitness told the *Manila Times* one truck loaded with rebel troops was stopped dead on its tracks after Malacanañg guards sprayed the vehicle with automatic fire."³⁰ Twenty rebel troops were killed in this initial burst of gunfire. As the fighting continued on Palace grounds, Aquino's only son, Noynoy, was wounded and three of his bodyguards were killed when they were confronted by a renegade contingent. A fierce firefight also ensued around Channel 4, and later at Camp Aguinaldo where rebel groups had taken positions not far from the Armed Forces general headquarters. When government troops started to storm Camp Aguinaldo, Honasan escaped in a helicopter that some believed was provided by certain US Embassy officials in Manila. It turned out that the Embassy's military attache, Lt. Col. Victor Raphael, a good friend of Honasan's and godfather to the latter's daughter, was in the Camp dissuading government troops from attacking the renegade soldiers inside. Charges by the Aquino government of US "meddling" in the coup attempt forced the recall of Raphael and two other American Embassy officials. Until now, the possible role of certain US elements in the August 28 mutiny is under investigation.

When the smoke cleared, 53 people lay dead in the streets, many of whom were civilian bystanders caught by the crossfire, and several hundreds were wounded, many seriously. A stunned President Aquino went on radio as early as five o'clock that fateful Friday morning to announce that she was safe and that soldiers loyal to her government were very much in control of the situation. And once again, General Ramos not only "saved the Queen" this time but the whole nation from falling into a military junta. He had remained calm throughout and did not immediately mount a counter-attack against the rebels, as impulsively suggested by presidential adviser Teddy "Boy" Locsin, who knew nothing of military strategy. Ramos had to recapture Villamor Air Base first before sending for the more reliable troops from the Southern Command based in Zamboanga, Mindanao. Apparently, Ramos was not sure of the loyalty of the elite troops in charge of the Blue Diamond fighter planes and the Sikorsky helicopter gunships which had played a crucial role in the 1986 Revolution, and had kept them grounded.

The government and Cory Aquino had scored a major victory and the world community was quick to condemn the rebels' misbegotten attempt to seize power. This was the fifth try to destabilize Aquino's 18-month old presidency, and certainly the most bloody and serious so far. She survived it — a measure of her continuing popular support — but some disturbing implications of the coup are worth examining here.

The whole truth behind the affair may never be known, but one thing that stood out was how obviously flawed the entire "intelligence" function was in Aquino's administration. This was not the first time a coup was attempted and an alert intelligence network should have been able to gather and interpret information on unusual troop movements. Just about every command — army, air force, navy, etc. — has its own intelligence arm, and if we include the NICA and the National Security Council, there is a vast and adequate network to monitor the activities of potential plotters. Why was it possible to preempt "God Save the Queen" and not the August 28 offensive? Is it possible some of the intelligence units knew beforehand and were staying neutral in case the renegades succeeded?

The attempted takeover also revealed the fragility, if not the vulnerability, of the "democratic space" that Aquino had restored as the political mode for running the country. As the leading Filipino intellectual puts it, "it was the most alarming because it exposed in brutal clarity the extreme vulnerability of the civilian government and the extent of disloyalty in the Armed Forces."³¹ In the years preceding martial law, civilian supremacy over military authority was axiomatic. The military accepted its constitutional role as an instrument rather than as a partner of civilian leadership in governing the state. The Marcos dictatorship changed all that by giving significant factions in the military a taste of power. They were not just in charge of peace-keeping and defense functions anymore. They were put in charge of agencies in the bureaucracy and public enterprises having to do with economic planning and development. In time there was a new military elite that increasingly took on the powers and lifestyle of the landlord-business elite that had traditionally dominated Philippine society. They started to build mansions in such posh suburban enclaves like the Corinthian Gardens. They were managing big business corporations. They were travelling abroad more often. They were the beneficiaries of Marcos' largesse and corruption. Honasan, for instance, was given charge of Beatriz Corporation, one of the holdings seized by the military from the elite Jacinto family when martial law was declared.

The politicized military did not disappear with the 1986 upheaval. In fact, in their version of that particular event, they argue that the military handed power over to Cory Aquino in some kind of power-sharing arrangement. In short, they were partners in a military-civilian coalition that brought about "people power." This is, of course, a gross intellectual distortion. As the world saw during the four-day Philippine Revolution, it was the civilians pouring in by the thousands, in response to appeals on *Radio Veritas* by people like Jaime Cardinal Sin and media personality June Keithley, who saved the Ramos-Enrile rebel contingent from being assaulted by Marcos' superior military forces. As Nemenzo puts it in his trenchant analysis of the Revolution, Enrile had no chance against "people power" at that level of mobilization. "The people were there not for love of him. They were there to enforce Cory's victory."³² And Enrile himself admitted that his first option was the proclamation of a military junta when he mutinied against Marcos. But seeing the swelling of "people power" in Cory's favor, he pro-

claimed Aquino the legitimate president and admitted his role in the large-scale cheating that Marcos resorted to in order to ensure his victory. There was no coalition forged with Cory Aquino with the military as equal partner, as Enrile claimed months later in his efforts to undermine the Aquino government.

In any event, the military under the Aquino administration must now be a factor in the current political system. And the Honasan attempt, though it failed, showed that the military, at least the politicized segment of it, is no longer content with its old role as an adjunct of civilian rule. According to an expert on Philippine military-civilian relations, the present crop of generals will be replaced by officers who believe in the military's supremacy over civilians, making it possible for more coups to occur.³³ In this view, the military considers its mechanisms and processes for decision making vastly superior to those in a democratic setup which are slow, incompetent, ineffective, and so on. And in a sense, "the military has a valid reason for its apparent discontent with certain officials in the Aquino Government who hold the military in contempt, and who treat them with arrogance."³⁴ The opposite view, of course, maintains that it is the military, particularly the Honasan-led faction, that is guilty of arrogance and illegal seizure of power. Whatever the contending views, one of the lessons that should be learned from the failed coup is the need to transform the civilian leadership itself to minimize, if not eliminate, official and bureaucratic corruption, the excesses of traditional or abusive politicians, waste and inefficiency, and to be more responsive to the needs of the people in general. In this way, competing sources of power like the military and the Left would not become attractive or reasonable alternatives to the people. The weakness or corruption of civilian institutions is precisely what gives opportunity and inspiration to extralegal groups, or the government military itself, to take over.

The possible role of Enrile in the uprising is another disturbing question that will probably never be resolved. Many Filipinos find it not quite credible that Honasan, a loyal aide and very close ally to Enrile, acted totally on his own. "Even the US Government seems to believe Enrile may have had something to do with stirring the post last month. A senior US State Department official tried calling him during the peak of the mutiny to ask him to intercede with the rebels."³⁵ Enrile refused and instead called on the Aquino government to address the grievances of the plotters. The speculation about Enrile's role was later fueled by the discovery of the large cache of arms and ammunition by the Metropolitan Manila police in the townhouse housing the "Jacka" company. Sources disclosed that "Jacka is a holding company, controlled by Enrile and the name stands for his children Jackie and Katrina."³⁶ The raiding party found rifles, handguns, grenades, grenade launchers, and crates of military uniforms marked "logistics command of the armed forces." After the coup, General Ramos revealed that Honasan had been stockpiling arms for more than a year. Why this was not stopped or investigated by the proper authorities is one of the mysteries surrounding the 28 August military rebellion. Much speculation also revolved around the timing of the coup for Enrile, which was just shortly before the

day when the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) filed corruption charges against him in connection with his business transactions as Defense Minister in Marcos' regime.

Finally, the possible complicity of some US elements in the uprising has caused much concern not only in the Aquino government, but among Filipinos in general. The presence of Raphael in the Aguinaldo compound at the height of the mutiny was an established fact. A Filipino reporter claimed that Honasan and his aides were rescued by two American helicopters. "A crewman was even quoted saying to Honasan, 'We were ordered to pick you up.'"³⁷ The media reports on Raphael's "meddling" were based on a sworn testimony of Lt. Col. Raul Dado, the leader of the pro-government troops, who said Raphael tried to dissuade him and his men from assaulting Honasan's troops inside the Camp. When Dado refused, "the US officer turned to other pro-government soldiers and asked them to lay off Honasan."³⁸

The Dado statement was neither denied nor affirmed by the US Embassy. Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Raul Manglapus took up the case with Ambassador Nicholas Platt, who informed the former that Raphael was being sent back to the US. The two other Embassy officials reportedly involved in the incident were not the subject of serious discussions as Raphael was "because they were not seen to have acted the way that Colonel Raphael apparently did."³⁹ Manglapus also expressed the sentiment that the "compadre" (ritual co-parenthood) relationship of Raphael, an official representative of the US Embassy in Manila, with Honasan the rebel leader seeking the overthrow of the Aquino government, made for a very awkward and untenable situation between the two countries and had to be rectified.

Developments: Right to Left

The bloody August affair only served to show that the immediate threat to Philippine democracy today consists of elements from the extreme Right. They may not strike again in the near future as they have been dealt a political and moral blow, and would need time to regroup and consolidate their forces. But we have not seen the last of their ambitious moves to project themselves as the arbiters of the national destiny. They will continue to hype the Communist threat and the inability of the Aquino government to contain it, since these are the only factors that could unify such widely disparate groups as the Marcos loyalists and the military rightists. In a future scenario sketched by a noted Filipino social scientist, the coup plotters, in an effort to create a *de facto* state of emergency in the nation, could resort to any or all of the following measures:

1. Raids on suspected communist safehouses in and around Metro Manila (one of the key components of the aborted "God Save the Queen" plan in November 1986);
2. Arrest and/or kidnapping and assassination of leaders and personalities of the Legal Left;

3. Infiltration by right-wing provocateurs of the ranks of labor, to create trouble that they will subsequently blame on the NPA; and
4. Creation of a state of panic through disinformation and rumor-mongering leading to panic buying, confusion, bank withdrawals, and spread of reports of armed men in various neighborhoods.⁴⁰

In fact, many of these things have actually been happening since Aquino took power. A prominent labor leader, Rolando Olalia of the *Kilusang Mayo Uno*, (May First Movement) was assassinated in November 1986, and his murder remains unsolved. In September of this year, Leandro Alejandro, Secretary-General of BAYAN, was gunned down following protests by his organization of increasing military influence on Aquino's administration. Former NPA top leader Bernabe Buscayno, pardoned by Aquino and later one of the founders of PnB, was ambushed and seriously wounded in June after participating in a television talk show. And in October, left-leaning Polytechnic University of the Philippines President Nemesio Prudente was ambushed and wounded following accusations that he was harboring Communists on his campus. Then, following the murders of three American servicemen and one civilian in Clark Field in October, military and police authorities rounded up hundreds of suspected NPA sympathizers. Also, to counter the NPA "Sparrow" assassination units in the Metro Manila area, the Manila police has organized vigilante gangs, signing up 4,000 residents "for duty."

As it now appears, the right-wing challenge to the Aquino government is likely to incorporate the following groups: (1) the renegade troops, under Honasan's leadership or influence; (2) the renegade soldiers under Major Reynaldo Cabautan, a Marcos loyalist officer who was involved in several previous coup attempts; (3) the Guardians, a fraternity of military officers and enlisted men; (4) members of Marcos' old party, the KBL and its new affiliate UPP, and other opposition parties such as GAD; and (5) the Marcos cronies and warlords, including Ali Dimaporo and Eduardo Cojuangco, who still have significant followings. According to a leading political analyst in the country, an alliance of these discrete elements would provide a more unified political context for future plots against the government, since attempts in the past had been separate ventures by either the Marcos loyalists or Honasan and his Ramboys. And if the above listing of the right wing elements were to be the guide, "the possible outcome of a power grab is the restoration of the old order that was toppled by a popular upheaval because of its enormous corruption, abuse of power, and repression."⁴¹ It was argued, however, that an alliance between Honasan, who was one of the anti-Marcos leaders in the 1986 Revolution, and the Marcos loyalists could be a little far-fetched. If this happens, it will be another case of politics making for "strange bedfellows" primarily motivated by convenience. All this speculation on Honasan became academic with his capture on 9 December in a Manila suburb. He did not resist arrest. As of this writing, the government has not indicated how it will prosecute Honasan.

Meanwhile, the ranks of the right-wing opposition have acquired Vice President Laurel, who resigned as Foreign Affairs Secretary following the

August coup, citing irreconcilable differences with Aquino. He had asked Aquino to grant amnesty to Honasan. Laurel is also seeking a "tactical alliance" with Enrile's group, citing his old Nacionalista Party affiliation as his gambit. This move is typical of Laurel's political opportunism. When he joined up with the Aquino ruling coalition, he did so as the leader of UNIDO. It should also be remembered that he was an ally of Marcos initially. Now he has been forging links not only with Enrile's forces, but also with American conservative groups, using the anti-Communist line to dramatize his appeal. In his trip to the US in October, he was also reported to have met with Cojuangco, one of Marcos' remaining staunch allies living in exile in Los Angeles.⁴² Details of his meeting with Cojuangco in the latter's home were not disclosed.

But it is clear what Laurel is trying to do. He is positioning himself for the presidency in case Cory Aquino is forced out of office. A "constitutional coup" would make him the rightful successor to Aquino. The merger with Enrile is essentially motivated by Laurel's personal ambition, but it also comes amidst pressures from the Right to coalesce on a broad anti-Communist front against the Aquino government.

For all his maneuvering, Laurel's succession to the presidency in the event may not materialize. Aquino's forcible removal from office would most certainly trigger a civil war. And Enrile most likely would make a pitch for power and outmaneuver Laurel in the process. It is highly unlikely that Enrile would play second fiddle to Laurel in the ensuing power play. For one thing, Laurel does not have the firm support in the military that Enrile has. If the conspiracy from the Right succeeds, the logical person it would support is Enrile. Laurel will be left out in the cold.

As the Right was regrouping in the aftermath of the coup, Aquino was doing her own realigning of her Cabinet and administration. She got immediate boost from the Reagan administration and the US Congress, which issued a strong message warning that an illegal seizure of power in the Philippines by the military would result in the cutting off of all American aid to the country. The US Senate passed a resolution, 73-0, expressing its unqualified support to the beleaguered government of Cory Aquino. Several expressions of support also came from other foreign countries.

For a second time, Aquino demanded the resignation of her entire Cabinet. For months on end before the coup, charges of "left-leaning" members of the Cabinet had been bandied about, along with Aquino's supposed "softness" on the Communist insurgency. The military and business had especially called for the removal of Executive Secretary Joker Arroyo, Aquino's closest adviser, whom they had accused of being a "closet Communist," and of arrogance, inefficiency and irresponsibility. He was also accused of having installed a "cordon sanitaire" around Aquino, unnecessarily screening her off from the people, who, Arroyo critics argued, were the ones who put her to power. Now, because of Arroyo's overprotective zeal, she was getting isolat-

ed from the public. Arroyo's resignation was also demanded by Aquino's relatives in the Congress who believed that he unduly interfered with the operations of the pro-government military at the height of the Honasan uprising.

Not one to be contrite, Arroyo hit back charging three big businessmen with strong government connections with undermining not only him but the Aquino administration. And he maintained his criticism of the military, even calling Colonel Honesto Isleta, the spokesperson of the military establishment, a "Goebbels." This drew more ire from Arroyo's detractors, mainly because it implied that General Ramos was a "Hitler." Arroyo's supporters came from the liberal ranks who contended that he was the only one in the Cabinet fending off the incursions of the Right and the abuses of the traditional politicians and grafters in government. He was also the only remaining progressive member of the Cabinet. In the end, there was too much pressure, not only from the Right, to dismiss him and Aquino reluctantly let him go. He was replaced by his Deputy, Catalino Macaraig, a much more low-key and certainly not as controversial a personality as Joker Arroyo.

The other long-standing controversial figure in Aquino's government, who was taken out of the scene, was presidential speechwriter and adviser "Teddy-boy" Locsin. With him, the charges did not only include arrogance but immaturity and foul language. On his way to attend a meeting of the San Miguel Corporation as a member of its Board of Directors one day, he stuck out his finger at a group of demonstrators. President Aquino made him apologize in public for his obscene gesture. He had also called a respected Jesuit figure in the country an "idiot." And reports during the August event showed him impetuously interfering with military operations and getting General Ramos to order an immediate assault against the renegade troops. It was a foolhardy suggestion and Ramos, an expert strategist, had his own reasons for delaying the Government counter-attack.

The other casualty in the "Cabinet massacre" was Finance Secretary Jaime Ongpin, another close Aquino adviser. Ongpin and Arroyo had been the most contentious and aggressive of the Cabinet leaders, and were seen as exacerbating the divisiveness in Aquino's Cabinet. Arroyo had objected to Ongpin's conservative financial policies and "compliant attitude" toward international institutions like the World Bank. Another point of contention between the two involved the reorganization plans of the government. Ongpin wanted to put all financial institutions under his supervision, something that would have given him a formidable base of power. "This could have undermined Mr. Arroyo's own position as overseer of the entire executive department."⁴³ Aquino's acceptance of Ongpin's resignation could therefore be seen as a trade-off to the Arroyo dismissal. Later in the year, on 7 December, the nation was shocked by the news of Ongpin's apparent suicide. He was found slumped on his swivel chair in his office with a bullet wound in his right temple. The talented Harvard graduate had suffered from "clinical depression," according to family members.

As grim as all these developments were for President Aquino, there was one bright spot in the political picture at this point. This was the appointment of newly-elected Senator Raul S. Manglapus to replace Laurel as Foreign Secretary. An articulate politician and talented public figure who had served in various legislative and executive capacities, including Undersecretary and Secretary of Foreign Affairs in the pre-Marcos years, Manglapus' appointment was generally hailed as adding "dedication and experience," to the embattled Aquino government as a whole, and to the Foreign Service in particular. Manglapus spent 14 years abroad, mostly in the United States, as an anti-Marcos exile, and dealt with many international groups on such issues as human rights and social democracy. He also wrote books and did research on the transition of authoritarian regimes to constitutional democracies. It was generally felt that Aquino could not have made a better appointment to the country's premier department.

With a revitalized Cabinet, Aquino herself has gained more stature and self-confidence as the leader of a fractious country. Tired of being criticized from all quarters about her "weak leadership," she lashed out against her detractors in a hard-hitting speech before 1,000 businessmen in October, saying, "Henceforth, I shall rule directly as President. To the *ad hoc* committees and commissions created to inform me on their special areas, I now add one more: an action committee with a single member — me."⁴⁴ She ruled out future peace talks with Communist rebels and ordered authorities to try to end all illegal strikes. And responding to the sexist criticisms against her, she added a tough note. "Although I am a woman and physically small, I have blocked all doors to power except by election in 1992."⁴⁵

For the first time Filipinos were seeing their usually cautious and pleasant President talk like an imperious Margaret Thatcher. And they liked it because this was something that they would have wanted her to do since the beginning in the first place. Perhaps Filipinos have grown accustomed to a more forthright and aggressive leadership style, having gone through two decades of authoritarian rule previously. They have also always seen the presidency as a strong seat of power and powers that must be exercised. Her reluctance to act aggressively had somehow contributed to the fragmentation of power to various competing groups — particularly from the extreme Left to the Far Right. Her instincts led her not to act like Marcos, who monopolized power through fair means and foul. She was not that kind of person to begin with. But the August coup was a rude awakening for her. She had been overtaken by events. Someone had stepped into the vacuum of power. Now, as she looks back at the whole episode, she sees a different perspective. "I was not used to power before. Now I know that, being President, you can really use power — not only for war."⁴⁶

The conventional view is that with the Aquino government in disarray, resulting from a divided military, a fractious Cabinet, and the August rebellion, the main beneficiary of all these is the Left. Senator Rene Saguisag says the Communists are "certainly not losing," and another Senator, Teofisto Guingona, who had headed the government panel during the peace negotia-

tions earlier in the year, believes "the Left can take advantage of the situation."⁴⁷ A right-wing opposition leader, former Marcos Labor Minister Blas Ople, warns that there is a "reign of terror" in many parts of the country today, and that "this government will fall to the Communists if nothing is done."⁴⁸ And General Ramos agrees that the CPP/NPA remains the most serious threat to the country's stability and integrity at this point.

NPA activity has indeed picked up considerably over the year, particularly in the urban areas. Paralleling the "death squads" of the Right, which were widely believed to be behind the assassinations of leftwing leaders like Olalia, the NPA has mobilized its own "Sparrow Units" to liquidate policemen and military officers. There have been more than a hundred of these killings and the "Sparrows" have owned up to some of them. The assassination of Local Government Secretary Jaime Ferrer, a staunch anti-Communist who worked with the CIA during the fifties, was also attributed to the NPA, which was believed to have a logical motive for his liquidation. But the NPA has denied it. The killing shocked the nation because it was the first assassination of a Philippine Cabinet Secretary in history. The wave of political violence marked by almost day-to-day killings on city streets has rocked the Aquino government since it started. It was particularly severe in 1987 with the assassination or attempted killing of Ferrer, Alejandro, the Mendiola demonstrators, the three servicemen at Clark Field, Buscayno, Prudente, etc. Following the coup, NPA rebels blew up bridges and took over public facilities in the Bicol region, effectively cutting it off from Manila. In the wake of the Clark Field slayings, the NDF issued a statement that it would seek retribution against American military personnel who actively promote or support a counterinsurgency program against Filipinos. NDF spokesperson Satur Ocampo hastened to add that Americans, or other foreigners, need not fear being attacked by NPA rebels "as long as they are not involved in the interventionist policy of the Reagan administration."⁴⁹

The Ocampo statement is significant in that it revealed some information that the public had not been aware of previously. He admitted that the NDF has "support networks in 25 countries," including 15 in Western Europe, mainly Greece's ruling Pan Hellenic Socialist Party and the Netherlands' Pacifist Socialist Party. Ocampo stopped short of revealing what kinds of support the NDF is receiving from these countries. The NDF international representative, former Catholic priest Luis Jalandoni, lives in the Netherlands and actively raises funds for the Philippine rebel front. Defense Secretary Rafael Iletto estimates that the foreign aid received by the rebels this year amounts to \$8 million, more than triple last year's \$2.5 million.⁵⁰ Considering that the left-wing parties in Europe which contribute to the NDF effort are small, Iletto's figures are unbelievably high. It is highly doubtful that Jalandoni and his wife, who do not have a large staff, could raise all that money from the socialist parties in Western Europe.

At this point, it is more instructive to look at what is happening on the ranks of the Left itself, because there are developments there that are not taken into account by the alarmist right-wing perspective on the insurgen-

cy. Our view expressed earlier is that elements intent on undermining the Aquino government could be exaggerating the Communist threat to justify aggressive military actions against the insurgents. This view, of course, does not in any way minimize the reality of the threat, nor the ability of the movement to recruit people to its side. We merely want to look at the issue beyond the strident anti-Communist rhetoric that is generated by emotion rather than disinterested analysis. The Communist Left has suffered major reverses in recent years which merit closer attention.

In this regard, recent Philippine history, particularly starting from the waning days of the Marcos dictatorship, could be used as the proper context in which to view the miscalculations or errors of the Left, as represented by the NDF/ CPP/ NPA dominant formation. The decision of the Party to boycott the 1986 "snap election" was a fatal blunder that it would later acknowledge and regret in a "self-criticism" statement. The blunder put it out of step with the rest of the anti-dictatorship forces that swelled after the 1983 assassination of opposition leader Benigno Aquino. It marginalized the Party's role in finally dismantling the thorough-going dictatorship of Marcos that it had determinedly opposed over the years.

The next major blunder was campaigning against the new Constitution, which was overwhelmingly ratified by the electorate. The curious thing was that the radical Left's "No" position on the plebiscite issue made it "allies" with the extreme Right, which vigorously opposed the Charter for its own reasons. Again, the NDF either miscalculated or failed to appreciate the potential of the electoral process to bring about political change. As a well-known analyst of the Philippine Left sees it, "All the other groups and movements in the progressive bloc — radical democrats, social democrats, Christian socialists, Marxist socialists, and popular democrats — opted for critical ratification as a tactical measure to inhibit the development of reactionary forces."⁵¹ The NDF's continuing refusal to recognize parliamentary struggle as a valid form of revolutionary struggle leads to a "bifurcation of the progressive block into two increasingly contradictory streams (that) dims the prospects for a broad left united front in the foreseeable future . . ." ⁵²

The cleavage in the ranks of the Left has recently come out in the open in an exchange between NDF's Satur Ocampo and PnB's Bernabe Buscayno. Buscayno cautioned the Left against acting radically now and instead strengthen its place in the mainstream, otherwise it runs the risk of becoming isolated. What it should do, according to Buscayno, is to join up with people's organizations and apply pressure on Congress to pass laws that serve the people's interests. In short, he was asking the NDF to modify its armed struggle strategy and participate in an "open mass struggle" within the current political system.

In a stinging rejoinder, Ocampo in turn cautioned Buscayno to "beware of bourgeois reformist illusion . . . and to beware of further becoming unwittingly an instrument for the reactionaries to confuse the people."⁵³ Ocampo deplored the "erroneous basis" of Buscayno's arguments, which was

that the Left integrated with the people. The fact is that "the Left has never been apart from the open mass struggle (the 'underground' struggle is not its only sphere of action.)"⁵⁴ He also cited the historical record of the Congress as a bourgeois institution with a class bias and pro-imperialist learnings.

The debate between the radical and the moderate elements on the left-of-center spectrum is bound to continue. On the one hand, there is a "national democratic movement" intent on upholding the primary of armed struggle. On the other hand, there are pragmatic progressive groups which recognize the validity of electoral struggle, mainly because in the Philippine situation, elections are a "way of life," and electoral politics is part of the country's political traditions. In another critique of the NDF, a seemingly disaffected national democratic activist sees "ideological rigidity and dogmatism" as the main shortcoming of the Party Left. "The logic of dogmatism is to reject anything bourgeois and oppose anything that lessens the purity of principles. It is this logic that led to the boycott of the snap elections. The same logic told the Left to campaign against the Constitution. And it is redundant to say that this line of thought was the source of the underestimation of the significance of the Congressional elections."⁵⁵

Thus, in looking at the issue of Communism in the Philippines, which seems to pre-occupy the military, the US, the media, and various other groups, we must not zero in on the NDF/PPP/NPA network, although it is the dominant and most organized of the groupings on the Left. The non-Party elements, such as the "soccems," independent Marxists, socialists, theology of liberation advocates, and other alliances espousing people's causes, have a lot to contribute to what Nemenzo calls a "truly Filipino radical perspective" that grasps and understands the present reality and future prospects for the nation. "But an arrogant party leadership," he warned back in 1985, "that claims a monopoly of wisdom and righteousness, a bureaucratic centralist leadership that stifles critical thinking and muzzles debates, is doomed to waste a historic opportunity."⁵⁶

Philippine-American Relations at the Crossroads

Adding to the domestic challenges that the struggling Aquino administration has to contend with is its mendicant and uneasy relationship with the United States. It has been almost a hundred years since this "special relationship" was struck between the Philippines and the US, but it is still a highly unequal relationship, with the former as dependent as ever on American aid and unable to effect the withdrawal of the remaining bastions of American power on Philippine soil — the military bases at Clark Field and Subic Bay.

The greatest challenge to the current government with regard to international affairs is how to enforce the provision of the new Constitution governing the conduct of its foreign relations. Section 7 of Article II provides that "the State shall pursue an independent foreign policy," and that "in its relations with other states, the paramount consideration shall be sovereignty, territorial integrity, national interest, and the right to self-deter-

mination." In Section 8 of the same Article, the Philippines, consistent with its national interest, "adopts and pursues a policy of freedom from nuclear weapons in its territory."

If these mandates are to be taken seriously, the Philippines would have to drastically alter its relationship with the United States. This means taking the position to terminate the various American military bases in the Philippines, particularly the two biggest ones at Clark Field and Subic. It also means getting the Americans to reveal the extent to which nuclear materials have been stored in these bases, and to have them taken out. For how else can principles like independent foreign policy, national interest, territorial integrity, etc., be interpreted? The Philippine Government will also have to broaden or deepen its relations with the socialist bloc, notably the Soviet Union, China and Eastern Europe.

The major proponent of the need to have a reformed and revitalized foreign policy posture of the Philippines is Senator Leticia Ramos Shahani, a professional diplomat who once served as Ambassador to Romania and Deputy Foreign Minister. "If we wish to develop an independent foreign policy, we should also develop a capability to interpret the intentions of the Soviet Union in all its complexity, and not just continue indefinitely depending on allies for information."⁵⁷ She says that trade, cultural and scientific relations with the Soviets could be valuable, and persistent reports of Soviet interference in the Philippines could be more effectively monitored and confronted if necessary.

The future of the military bases remains the main sticking point between the US and the Philippines in the negotiations that will probably start sometime in 1988. The only position taken by Aquino is that "she will keep her options open" until 1991 when they are due to expire. Popular sentiment against the extension of the Military Bases Agreement and other bilateral arrangements beyond their expiration date has been growing, particularly among nationalist groups. Some groups have also suggested raising the "rental" of the continued use of the bases, since countries like Spain and Iceland get much more for facilities that are not as extensive and strategic as those in the Philippines. Others have suggested calling a referendum to ascertain the people's mandate, but this has been objected to by many quarters on the ground that the people are not familiar with many of the finer political issues connected with the bases. The Philippine Government has also indicated that it would consult its counterparts in the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), which should share the burden of ensuring the security and integrity of the entire region. It must be recalled that when ASEAN's predecessor, the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA), was being formed in the mid-sixties, the region was declared a "zone of peace, freedom, and neutrality." The thrust of ASEAN politics in the next decade should be to enforce that mandate and use all kinds of pressure to prevent Southeast Asia from continuing to be the arena for superpower confrontation that it has always been.

Meanwhile, it takes only nine Senators to block a renewal of the bases treaty when the issue comes up. The anti-bases forces have to engage in intensive lobbying with both the legislature and media. Liberal groups in the US could also be mobilized to put pressure, however futile, on the US Government. At the same time the anti-bases proponents should have by now a comprehensive phase-out plan that they could disseminate in their public campaigns. This is going to be a tough issue since the military and other conservative elements in the Aquino government are certain to opt for the retention of the bases, using the Soviet threat as the main justification. And the US itself will use the issue of Philippine aid as its talking point in the upcoming negotiations.

Given the ramifications of the bases issue, and the fact that the Philippines has an external debt of \$27 billion and 70 percent of its people living in poverty, how can it evolve an "independent" foreign policy? Senator Shahani, chair of the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee, concedes that the task is difficult, but not impossible, given the "necessary political will and leadership." She and Foreign Secretary Manglapus are in the crucial positions in the current government to develop a "now or never" foreign policy of the Philippines, that will be free from the mendicancy and dependency that have characterized it over long periods of time.

Conclusion

It has been a riveting year for the embattled Aquino government. Having hurdled its critical first year in power, it oscillated between periods of political stability and real threats to its survival in the next. A pattern of political violence, resulting in the killing or near-killing of several law-enforcement officers, military personnel, national and local officials, left-wing leaders, and civilians, also marked this year of trial for the current dispensation and for President Aquino in particular.

The stability factor was brought about by popular mandate in the plebiscite for the new Constitution and the elections for the national legislature, which gave Aquino the constitutional legitimacy and the "proper" political framework to govern. The landslide victories of the government in both elections were generally attributed to the "Cory factor." This was reinforced by the superior organizational network and technical advantages that the government-supported candidates had over the opposition forces.

The challenges to Aquino's administration over the year took the form of several attempts on the part of the politicized military and right-wing elements, the gravest of which occurred on the 28th of August. The Communist and Muslim insurgencies, which have long hounded the political scene, also continued to pose major problems for Aquino. While she was able to weather the military challenges, her peace initiatives with the Communist Left and the MNLF were unsuccessful, and future prospects for the resumption, let alone the success, of negotiations are highly unlikely. Thus, the goal of *pagkakaisa* (national unity), which she had enunciated at the beginning of her term, continued to elude her during the year.

After the August coup, questions regarding the survivability of the Aquino government were not only frequent but apocalyptic. Can Cory be saved? Can she make it? How long can she last? How many miracles left? The euphoria that vaulted her to power turned to be foreboding, and to a sense of political despair about her possibly losing the gains of the 1986 Revolution. Surveys showed the erosion of her popularity and her government's vulnerability to future conspiracies. Manila's rambunctious press even speculated on the possibility of martial law once again, as violence continued unabated after the August uprising. The sanctimonious American media also had their doomsday scenarios. Even with the backing of the Reagan administration, concluded one of American's most popular weeklies, "Aquino's future is in her own hands," and "she has a dwindling number of cards to play."⁵⁸ Every other publication, domestic or foreign, warned about the country's dire problems, which might overwhelm or overtake Aquino in the difficult times ahead.

But even as these ominous reservation about her ability to remain in control are made, there seems to be a general agreement that she remains popular and is still the leader that could rally Filipinos away from both Left and Right in to the "Democratic Center." As Doronila puts it, at this stage of Filipino historical development, she is still "the centerpiece of any political plan to save this nation from either a communist or a fascist military takeover."⁵⁹ In the current political equation, the radical Left and the fascist Right are seen as undesirable alternatives because they want to take power through the barrel of a gun, whereas the Center is "democratic" and regulated by peaceful transition through the ballot. Curiously enough, Cory Aquino who is by nature conservative and whose ideology veers to the right of center, is seen as the embodiment of the centrist government that is equated with Philippine democracy.

There is a tendency to see Cory Aquino only in ideological terms in assessing her strengths and weaknesses. She is neither communist nor fascist, so she must be good for the broad middle, the argument runs. Her critics from the Right, however, think she is cuddling the Left, and her critics from the Left in turn have charged that she has caved in to the military. These "quickie" analyses with their shorthand categories of Left, Right and Center often obfuscate rather than illuminate the complex political picture at this point. She is made to look like a fixture in the middle that serves as a deterrent to both Left and Right from seizing power.

That is true on one level of analysis. But the fact is, she is presiding over something bigger — a centrifugally-oriented nation with numerous divisive tendencies that not even the high-handed authoritarian regime of Marcos could bring under control. Aquino also inherited a plundered economy, a divided military, a corrupt bureaucracy, a chaotic local government system, and a gigantic foreign debt. The tenacious political milieu of traditional warlords remains. And so do the vestiges of the Marcos years, including the fanatical loyalists who have been fomenting much of the violence that we have seen since Aquino came to power. If she is as weak and indecisive as she is

made out to be, she would have been overpowered by now by these formidable barriers to her presidency.

So, while she may not be as adept or manipulative in using power as some of the more experienced Filipino politicians are, she has some weapons at hand. She is probably better explained in cultural rather than political terms. Her major strength is a genuine popular appeal, generalized as charisma, that causes Filipinos to like her almost instantly once they see or come in contact with her. She exudes a certain personal quality that is at once simple but powerful in its own right. Even her critics are careful to distance her personally from the failings of her administration. People are willing to make excuses for her, as they castigate Laurel, Enrile, Honasan, the CPP, the US, the Marcos loyalists, the Muslims, the traditional politicians, Aquino's relatives, etc. Observers comment on her "no airs" personality, despite her bourgeois origins and aristocratic upbringing. During the plebiscite and congressional campaigns in 1987, people clawed their way to have a glimpse of her or to be nearer the podium where she would be speaking. She has the force of moral authority rather than political power.

That was why it was a mistake to install a "cordon sanitaire" that prevented her from having steady contact with the people who could give her immediate feedback, and to whom she is ultimately accountable. True, there are security concerns, but a determined assassin could be found anywhere. Aquino's resuming her visits to the provinces after the coup is a positive step. This tack of being with the people again could be the source of her vital strength as she charts the country's future, at least in the next five years.

Of course, in the end, popularity and the moral high ground are bound to be eroded if not buttressed by solid and substantial achievement. And this is where she can begin to use the powers that she has, or powers that are inherent in the institution of the Philippine presidency, more aggressively to secure those achievements. The economy is her greatest challenge. Not only must her government produce for a still alarmingly expanding population; it must also attempt to lessen the economy's "dependency syndrome" and give it more diversified directions. Defining policies for and delivering more services to the poor have to be addressed more resolutely. Political democracy is meaningless in the context of poverty. Without a bold program to address the fundamental socio-economic problems of the people, they will gravitate to alternative centers for the resolution of their plight. Aquino's priorities should be in this direction. When people talk about the "unfinished Revolution," they mean the economic security that could give substance to the "democratic space" that has been restored.

With the capture of Juanito Rivera, one of the NPA's top leaders, on 15 November, and of "Gringo" Honasan, Aquino has regained the political initiative and overcome some of the pressure on her government. Major problems, of course, remain as she attempts to ride out the storm in the third year. For their part, Filipinos heaved a great sigh of relief with Honasan's capture. And there is a touch of comic irony that will continue to amuse them as the year ends.

Back in August, as the Honasan-led troops rolled on to Malacañang, Luis Beltran, a veteran Filipino journalist, had written that Cory Aquino hid under her bed, "perhaps the first Commander-in-Chief to do so." Blistering at this hint of cowardice, Aquino filed a libel suit against Beltran and his newspaper, likewise the first such action of a president in Philippine history. She invited the media to her bedroom and lifted the covers of her bed, which is boarded down to the rug, "even a cockroach couldn't crawl under it!"⁶⁰ This "bed story" graced the pages of Manila's irrepressible press for some time.

When Honasan was captured in an apartment owned by a former aide to Enrile, the housekeeper, Delia Anhao, told national television that Honasan dashed to the maid's room when his captors, some 40 to 50 soldiers in plain clothes, forced their way in to the house. Anhao said "she saw Honasan emerge from under the bed and surrender."⁶¹

Accustomed as they are to finding humor in politics, Filipinos will certainly relish this rather anti-climactic end to "Macho Man" Honasan's career. And for Cory Aquino, this is the second time that she comes out swinging from a sexist battle with a male opponent. When she ran against Marcos in the 1986 "snap election," the latter ridiculed her candidacy and urged her to confine her talents "to the bedroom." After the Revolution, when she was duly proclaimed President of the Philippines, a beaming Cory Aquino faced the cameras with, "It wasn't I who was consigned to the bedroom of history!"

Even with Honasan's capture, however, 1987 has been an especially grim year for the Philippines. Political violence, the Communist and Muslim insurgencies, ordinary criminality, a bloody coup attempt in August, and a succession of devastating natural calamities all exacted heavy death tolls across the country. The most shocking and tragic event happened just a few days before Christmas, when an inter-island passenger ship carrying approximately 1,643 people and an oil tanker with 13 crew members collided on a busy shipping channel off Mindoro Island. Both vessels sank and only 26 people survived. The 1,630 people missing are presumed dead. This is the worst maritime disaster in peacetime during this century, exceeding the sinking of the British liner *Titanic* in 1912, in which 1,503 people perished. For Filipinos it was a national tragedy of awesome magnitude that they will painfully remember for some time.

Endnotes

¹"It was to have been carried out by members of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM), led by Colonel Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan, Enrile's chief security aide. It was the same group which had planned to launch a coup against Marcos in December 1985, but the latter's unexpected announcement in November of a presidential "snap election" derailed the RAM's timetable. The Ramboys, as they came to be popularly known, continued plotting, nonetheless, under the guise of *Kamalayan '86* (the word means *consciousness* or *awareness*), a sort of civic campaign to check abuses in the mili-

tary and fraud in the upcoming election. In reality, *Kamalayan* was a cover to enable the plotters to move around various parts of the country to make contacts with other military units. The coup plot was postponed to February 1987. However, this was preempted by the People Power Revolution, and Cory Aquino was catapulted to the presidency in a stunning upheaval that the military helped bring about. A frustrated group by now, the Ramboys renewed their plotting, this time against President Aquino."

²Bryan Johnson, *Four Days of Courage: — The Untold Story of the People Who Brought Marcos Down* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), p. 270.

³Eduardo C. Tadem, "The Agrarian Question Confronts the Agrarian Government," *Kasarinlan* (Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies, University of the Philippines), Vol. 2, No. 4, 2nd Quarter 1987, p. 33.

⁴They included Brigadier Generals Jose Ma. Zumel, Pedro Balbanero, Jaime Echeverria and Tomas Dumpit; Colonels Rolando Abadilla and Oscar Canlas; and Major Reynaldo Cabauatan. The last one, Cabauatan, was an expelled leader of the Guardians Brotherhood, a military fraternity which included not only officers but also enlisted men. About 400 Marcos civilian loyalists including some big-name movie stars, surrounded the Channel 7 compound, in a pathetic attempt to replay the "people power" Revolution in 1986. They were organized by a diehard Marcos follower, former Mayor Rodolfo Fariñas of Laoag City in Ilocos Norte, Marcos's home province.

⁵See "Transcript of Marcos Tapes on His Coup Plot," *Philippine News*, 22-28 July 1987, p. 5.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷See Staff and Wire Reports, "Marcos Is Sued for \$22 Billion," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 16 July 1987, p. A-1.

⁸National Democratic Front, *Liberation* (Published by the National Democratic Front of the Philippines), Vol. XIV, No. 8 (15 December 1986), p. 2.

⁹"The Philippines: An Agenda for Peace," Published by the Ecumenical Partnership for International Concerns (EPIC), Quezon City, Philippines, February 1987.

¹⁰"From the Start, the Military Was Against the Ceasefire," Interviews with Defense Secretary Rafael Ilet. *The Philippine Collegian*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (22 January 1987), p. 9.

¹¹The NDF/ CPP/NPA is usually referred to as the Party Left and is underground.

¹²*Panahon na ng Pagbabago, Tinig ng Tao, Ipaglaban sa Senado* (Time for Change, Voice of the People, Elect to the Senate), Campaign Announcement of the *Partido ng Bayan* (PnB) for the May 11, 1987 Elections, p. 8.

¹³Seth Mydans, "The Embattled Mrs. Aquino," *The New York Times Magazine*, 15 November 1987, p. 42.

¹⁴Institute On Church and Social Issues, "From Political Consolidation to Social Reform" *Intersect* (Quezon City, Philippines: De la Costa Center), Vol. I, No. 1 (August 1987), p. 11.

¹⁵For a listing of vigilante groups all over the country, see "List of Vigilante Groups," *The Manila Chronicle*, 15 May 1987, p. 5.

¹⁶James Clad, "Vigilante Power," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 23 April 1987, p. 32.

A United Church of Christ minister visiting some Basic Christian Communities (BCC) in Kabankalan, Negros Occidental, spoke of how these communities have become targets of vigilante groups organized by the military. "And there I saw a photograph of a leader of the Basic Christian Community in one of the rural areas and he was beheaded by a vigilante group and his head was paraded around the barrio." Nadine Scott, "A Short Visit to the Philippines Has Lasting Effect on Minister," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 14 November 1987, p. 1-8.

¹⁷This writer received several *Alsa Masa* letters from Davao when she was writing a *Commentary* column for the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. Excerpts from two letters dated April 2 and 15, 1987 from a certain Richard A. Calderon (which is probably not his true name) of Davao City run as follows:

"Do not succumb to the NDF/ CPP/NPA agitation-propaganda warfare even if priests, nuns, and intellectuals are the ones selling the NDF/ CPP/ NPA agitation-propaganda line.

"Please come to Davao . . . In writing about the ALSA MASA phenomenon, you must have empirical basis . . . Your writing about the ALSA MASA phenomenon, your ideas . . . lack a true appreciation for the people of Davao who have successfully revolted against the NPA killings, the NPA extortions, the NPA terror, the NPA threats. The people of Davao have successfully driven away from our city the Communist NPA guerillas.

" . . . out here in Mindanao, peasants and the urban poor are exposing to the whole world the falsity of the Communist promise of a Brave New World — the Communists brought to our lives here in Mindanao death, unhappiness, tyranny, and terror. *This you must appreciate.*" (Underscoring in the original letter.)

¹⁸Institute on Church and Social Issues, "Philippine Vigilantism," *Intersect*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

¹⁹Seth Mydans, "Mystery in Manila: Singlaub's Quest," *The New York Times*, 18 February 1987, p. 6.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹Sheila Coronel, "Singlaub Setting Stage For His Own Secret War," *The Manila Chronicle*, 20 February 1987, p. 1.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 5.

²³Lester Edwin J. Ruiz, "Right-wing Vigilanteism and the Betrayal of Democracy," *National Council of Churches of the Philippines (NCCP) Occasional Papers*, 1987-2 (Manila: NCCP, 1987), pp. 3-4.

²⁴Felice T. Gutierrez and Muriel Ordoñez, "New Terror on the Rise," *Solidaridad II* (Tokyo), Vol. II, Nos. 1-3 (January-September 1987), p. 19.

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶See Raymond Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator — The Marcoses and the Making of American Policy* (New York: Random House, 1987).

²⁷Thomas Marti, "Fundamentalist Sects and the Political Right," *Special Issue Series* (Manila: Socio-Pastoral Institute, 1987), p. 2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁹ See Malou Mangahas, "Aquino: Vigilantes Must Be Controlled," and "Backing *Alsa Masa* Dangerous," *The Manila Chronicle*, 27 October 1987, p. 1.

³⁰ Winston Mercado *et al.* "Palace Attacked; President Is Safe," *The Manila Times* (Extra edition), 28 August 1987, p. 4.

³¹ Francisco Nemenzo, "Gringo's Bloody Adventure," *The Manila Chronicle*, 13 September 1987, p. 2.

³² Francisco Nemenzo, "A Season of Coups (Reflections on the Military in Politics)," *Kasarinlan*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 2nd Quarter, 1987, p. 9.

³³ Carolina G. Hernandez, "The Military in Violent Transition," *The Manila Chronicle*, 13 September 1987, p. 5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Joseph A. Reaves, "Aquino's Advisers Urge Enrile's Arrest," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin and Advertiser*, 13 September 1987, p. A-21.

³⁶ Miguel C. Suarez, "Weapons Seized in Manila," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 4 September 1987, p. A-8.

³⁷ See Wicks Geaga, "Suspensions: Did Enrile, US, Play a Role?" *Katipunan*, September-October 1987, p. 4.

³⁸ Jerry Esplanada, "US Turns Over \$75 M to RP," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 28 October 1987, p. 9.

³⁹ See *Transcript of the Press Conference of Foreign Affairs Secretary Raul S. Manglapus*, 28 October 1987, Philippine International Convention Center, Manila, 10:00 a.m., pp. 1-2.

⁴⁰ Randy David, "Ultra-Right: Common Enemy of Cory and Popular Groups," *The Manila Chronicle*, 11 October 1987, p. 10.

⁴¹ Amando Doronila, "A Grand Conspiracy of the Right," *The Manila Chronicle*, 8 October 1987, p. 1.

⁴² See E. I. Diokno, "Laurel, Cojuangco Linking Up," *Philippine News*, 4-10 November 1987, p. 1.

⁴³ Amando Doronila, "President Responds to Crisis with Maturity," *The Manila Chronicle*, 18 September 1987, p. 6.

⁴⁴ "Aquino Vows to Act as Committee of One," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 20 October 1987, p. A-7.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Mydans, "The Embattled . . ." *op cit.*, p. 70.

⁴⁷ "Back to the Other Fronts," *Asiaweek*, 13 September 1987, p. 22.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Associated Press, "Reds Admit to 3 Clark Killings," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 23 November 1987, p. A-8.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Alex Magno, "Revolution Within the Revolution — The Left and the Aquino Government," *The Diliman Review*, Vol. 34, No. 5-6, 1986, p. 15.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Satur Ocampo, "The Gentleman is in Error," *Katipunan*, December 1987, p. 10. The original article was published in *Liberation*, the NDF publication, August 1987.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Fiel Sebastian, "On the Left's Electoral Defeat," *Katipunan*, November 1987, p. 13.

⁵⁶ Francisco Nemenzo, "The Left and the Traditional Opposition," in R.J. May and Francisco Nemenzo, eds., *The Philippines After Marcos* (Kent, England: Croom Helm Ltd., Provident House, Burrell Row, 1985), p. 68.

⁵⁷ Leticia Ramos Shahani, "An Independent Foreign Policy — Its Implications For the Filipino People," Privilege speech before the Senate of the Philippines, 24 August 1987, p. 9.

⁵⁸ Richard Vokey, "Aquino's Muddle in Manila," *Newsweek*, 28 September 1987, p. 35.

⁵⁹ Amando Doronila, "Only Cory is Holding Nation from Breaking Up," *The Manila Chronicle*, 23 September 1987, p. 1.

⁶⁰ Seth Mydans, "The Embattled . . ." *op cit.*, p. 68.

⁶¹ Combined News Services, "Honasan Gives Up Without a Struggle," *The Honolulu Advertiser*, 10 December 1987, p. F-1. (Underscoring supplied).