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NEWSDAY OPINION

CITIZENS normally expect government responsibility in a broad array of concerns. To rate a government as being good, we evaluate its performance in the areas of public order and safety, political stability, gross economic productivity, human rights and numerous other social concerns. "Jobs, justice, food and freedom," the late Senator Diokno's rallying demands, are popularly perceived as legitimately government imperatives.

Our times, however, do not permit normal expectations to be rationally sustained for long. In the midst of our perpetual crises, a minimalist philosophy of government appears to be emerging. More and more people are re-examining claims for government's multiple functions and probing into what might be the ultimate justification for government to exist and for the citizenry to support it.

Even less than two hundred years ago, it was possible for governments to be considered "good" without accounting for environmental protection, air and water quality, gross national products, equitable distribution of incomes and wealth, stable prices, universal suffrage, public health and mass literacy.

However, no government in the last two thousand years merited sustained public tolerance, much less popular support unless it had effectively addressed the issue of public order and guaranteed at least a minimum level of public safety. (Popular support for President Aquino is probably inspired by precisely the fear that public order and safety would deteriorate even more should she be politically disabled. I shall examine this possibility in a later column.) Even tyrannies at times became preferable and gained significant public support in societies plagued with serious

Minimalist government and public safety

Surveys appear to validate a prevalent feeling of Filipinos being in a war zone

and prolonged disorder. Hitler's and our own Marcos' political preeminence might be considered as relatively contemporary footnotes in this regard.

The present government appears to be impotent in addressing this minimalist imperative. The common citizen is assailed by crime in various forms, from all directions. The Social Weather Stations' nationwide survey last February, 1989 documents the shocking state of criminality suffered by citizens within the last 12 months of the survey. (If the reference period had been extended from the last twelve months to the last two or three years, the crime victimization rate would definitely have been much higher.) About one in five respondents to the survey reports himself or a member of his immediate family as a victim of theft and robbery; one in ten, his home being broken into; one in twenty, physical violence of some form. The national pattern embraces Metro Manila, where the corresponding figures are practically the same. In the rural areas of the Visayas, the situation is much worse. The comparable figures there are anywhere between one and a half times to twice as bad as the national and Metro Manila statistics. No country in Southeast Asia reports crime incidence levels comparable to that reflected in the SWS February 1989 survey.

Public apprehension regarding their personal safety



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has not significantly improved from 1985, as revealed by independent surveys like those of the Social Weather Stations, Ateneo University and (during the time of Marcos) the Bishop-Businessmen's Conference. Four to five out of ten people say people in their own neighborhood are afraid to walk the streets at night because it is not safe. At least half of the respondents asked in these surveys over the last four years say, in their own neighborhood people are afraid that robbers might break into their house.

Another indicator of public disaffection with the state of public order and safety relates to the Aquino administration's record in solving the assassination/murder of government men or officials as well as government critics. This is the only performance area where the Aquino administration is almost consistently negatively rated by survey re-

spondents in the last two years. In three out of four Social Weather Stations national surveys from October 1987 to February 1989, the dissatisfied significantly outnumbered the satisfied respondents four to three. In the Metro Manila area, the indictment was even more strongly expressed, with five dissatisfied to three (even at times only two) satisfied respondents.

Predictably, in rating the Aquino administration's performance in bringing about a more peaceful society, a serious deterioration in public appraisal has taken place. In March 1987, nationally, eight respondents expressed satisfaction for every one who did not. Since then, the proportion of those satisfied has declined by one fourth even as the dissatisfied have doubled their number.

Survey data appear to simply validate a far too prevalent feeling of Filipinos being in a war zone nowadays. The sense of physical insecurity is at its height, compounded by the grim realization that neither the law nor its agents, especially those wearing uniforms, are to be unequivocally trusted. Besieged by crime, threatened by dissidence, overwhelmed by much deteriorated life support systems and vainly seeking clear directions from government leaders who preach transparency as a political virtue, most Filipinos might eventually accommodate themselves to minimalist expectations, settle for what any effective government must guarantee and what any competing political leadership would predictably offer, public order and safety, and damn the costs.

War zones do not take overly kindly to facile democratic theorizing. In 1989 Philippines, a government that refuses to govern will probably not govern for very much longer, transparency and heart notwithstanding.

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IT IS strange that such a prestigious title as "Doctor," evoking a sense of professional competence and service commitment, could be popularly corrupted to mean the willful manipulation and misrepresentation of the truthful state of affairs. From noun to verb, "doctor" transmogrifies in meaning as probably no other term. Thus, while a doctor laudably diagnoses and cures an ailment, the one who doctors anything, good or evil, presumably corrupts or worsens it.

A doctored political regime, whether it started as a truly viable democracy or not, does not end up being democratic at all. In regimes that are not democratic to start with, doctoring involves a deliberate distortion and misrepresentation of the contrary nature of these regimes.

Precisely because doctoring has become the addiction of our times, the major doctoring efforts have been towards duping people into thinking that they, not the authorities, indeed are the sovereign controllers of their national destiny and that powerful agencies like governments work for the public's interests and are accountable in some manner to their public constituency. Apologists often allege that a doctored democracy is a fragile regime, functioning for as long as its citizens willfully suffer whatever actions their ruling authorities might undertake. In this kind of regime, the citizens' duty is never to ask why; theirs is simply to comply and, commonly enough, die.

One suspects that the practice of doctoring has a long tradition in our country. While this art of public deception attended all political dispensations in the last ninety years, the Marcos administration has merited special attention. In a sophisticated effort to misrepresent its real objectives as regards political and economic power in Philippine

Doctored democracy

Far too often the day of reckoning never comes or comes too late, with the authorities having done irreparable damage to the nation in the meantime

society, it arrogantly manipulated the naturally ambiguous language of politics as well as the supposedly less pliant, technical jargon of economics. Thus, Marcos' "democratic revolution" is unmasked as the most efficient dictatorship this country has known to date. His "New Society" and "New Filipino," stripped of their rhetorical flourishes, reveal themselves to be disconcertingly old and familiar, even offensive to those with a sense of history. Economically, our local as well as international statistics donned public relations garb which resulted in ritualized doublespeak. The foreign debt, GNP growth rates, income distribution, employment, real wages and inflation figures were skillfully doctored to suit regime interests during most of the Marcos years.

In these deceitful exercises, Marcos had competent domestic help. Technocrats, most of them with doctorates as well as other academic degrees, lent their skills and reputations to facilitate their patron's mission of hoodwinking the Filipino public. In the last twenty years, prostituted knowledge and tyrannical power consorted freely with each other and the people suffered the bastard effects of this treasonous liaison.

Those who doctored our political and economic life in the last two decades (as well



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as those who doctored our prehistory and history across the millennia) successfully created and sustained illusions David Copperfield still has to figure out. No less than President Bush (at the time Reagan's Vice-President and emissary to Marcos) hallucinated while under the influence of these doctors and publicly paid tribute to illusory democratic institutions he admired in Marcos' Philippines.

So much for historical notes.

The Aquino administration has been having an extended honeymoon with the public, thanks to our essentially romantic character as a people and the deliriously cathartic experiences afforded by

EDSA as well as several inept political power plays since then. Most romantics are essentially conservative at heart and most of us are inclined to preserve our heart, even when this heart beats false and, *molto allegro*, sends us careening towards what could well be a shocking, heart-breaking finale.

Despite troubled times, most Filipinos do not easily take to confrontational politics where they call their leaders to account. This day of reckoning appears to be studiously avoided until all hopes, even more critically all illusions, regarding the leadership have been finally dashed. Far too often this day of reckoning never comes or comes too late, with the authorities having done irreparable damage to the nation in the meantime.

This political procrastination makes for complaisance, and irresponsibility among the authorities. Poor government performance, they may be tempted to think, is not fatal to their rule. Objective conditions and factual accounts are not all that relevant to the question of regime survival. What counts is the image, even more precisely the illusion, of a working, democratic (or at least democratizing) regime.

In late 1989, Cory magic has practically dissipated. The survival of the Aquino administration depends on now making a choice: the hard option of effective, delivering government, or the easy choice of a doctored democracy, with its premium on sleight-of-hand government and multiple illusionist programs. For all we know, the choice might already have been made. Lately, the evenings have been smelling much of ozone. I fear it will be sometime before we find out how much new money was really pledged in Tokyo.

ONE of the greatest freethinkers, the physicist Albert Einstein, refused to believe that the universe came about by chance. "God," he was reputed to have said, "does not play dice with the universe." Yet, being a man of great compassion as well as intellect, he probably would recommend that decision-making in societies such as the Philippines were better left totally to chance. Here, rolling a fair dice would serve the interests of the majority more often than our historical system of decision-making. The logic of chance cannot be as merciless in its response to the needs of a people as the logic of conjoined political power, economic interests and social position, an unholy trinity with which the ruling gods identify themselves and with which they impose on an overawed public.

The Filipino's compulsion for gambling has been misunderstood and often romanticized. He does not gamble because he is excited by the odds being in his favor; this would make him to be a far more rational being than he actually is. With the exception of cockfighting and *cara y cruz*, the games he plays, from the barrio *jueteng* to the national charity sweepstakes, are those where the odds are overwhelmingly against him. (*Sabong* and *cara y cruz* are here only presumed to be fair; in many actual venues, both are rigged games too.)

Nor does he gamble precisely because the odds are against him; this would make him far too much of an underdog champion if not a masochist. Winning is as much his personal preference as it is of other people's. Given a choice between losing with an underdog and winning with a *llamado*, most Filipinos, like most people elsewhere would probably opt to win.

Neither does he gamble because he is indifferent to the outcome and is only trying to

Rolling dice and making decisions

Should fairness continue to be denied, more Filipinos could be expected to play the final, the most desperate gamble of all.

while away his time. The movies, tv shows, community betamax and even the radio programs are cheaper and equally effective timekillers.

He gambles because he must, because he is desperate in a system where everything that makes sense makes sense against him. He tries to work in a system where sustained productivity as a worker nets him hardly a raise and, more often than not, actually a drop in real income.

He gambles because he must, in a system where his social security is defined by law to be ultimately enjoyed at the age of 65, when even in 1989 his life expectancy is only between 62 to 64 years old. He is thus pitifully secured only when the grave has already claimed him one to three years earlier.

Finally, he gambles because however much the gods of chance might conspire against him, they are not maliciously intractable to the meek and the miserable. There is the slimmest possibility of winning and it leads him to anticipate deliverance from the grossest evils of his present, miserable life and resurrection in a much better life thereafter. Since gambling is the only way to escape his current bondage, he runs too great a risk in not buying at least a sweepstakes



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ticket. (This logic is not altogether pedestrian. La Place, the French mathematician and astronomer, justified belief in God as indicated by a comparable risk analysis. Nothing is lost in erroneously believing that there is God when indeed there is none. But to err in denying Him when indeed He is around is to risk eternal damnation.)

The truth indicated by the prevalence of gambling in the Philippine concerns the extent and depth of desperation among its citizens. Filipinos do not appear to be compulsive gamblers by nature. They do gamble however when compelled by circumstances to do so.

The logic of gambling ap-

pears to me to be the same one behind the decision to join a subversive organization. One does not become subversive because he was genetically programmed for subversion. Rather, he opts for a high-risk activity precisely because his life has come to be characterized by far too many guaranteed miserable outcomes. Subversion's probability of success is infinitesimal, but the small possibility is there and it is the only alternative to a life of sustained injustice and multiple deprivations.

The current extent of armed subversion, whether one speaks of the communists, the Muslim rebels, the military coup-makers or some of the most loyal Marcos loyalists, is still relatively small. A more serious concern should be the continuing large and possibly even expanding bases from which these groups recruit their members. These bases could not have maintained themselves if life had materially improved for most people in the last three years, as claimed by many government agencies.

Since 1984, national and Metro Manila surveys done by people now with the Social Weather Stations find three out of four respondents saying they cannot rule out the possibility that most Filipinos could lose faith in peaceful means of effecting democratic change. Should President Aquino deign to solicit advice from ordinary citizens, she might well discover that subversion is basically linked by most Filipinos to the throw of a fair dice, to a fairer chance in securing a materially better life. Should fairness continue to be denied, more Filipinos could be expected to play the final, the most desperate gamble of all, subversion. Three-fourths of our adult population appear to have already thought, perhaps are still thinking, this terrible thought.

SOMEONE once remarked that if men were angels, then there would be no need for government. This does not ring true. Christian theology confirms that angels did have to be governed and with no less than the firmest hand conceivable. Even then some of the brightest angels could not restrain themselves from attempting unauthorized exercises.

For human beings, government is an inescapable reality. The people who effectively control the operations of government are collectively referred to as the authorities. They may sport official titles or they may lurk in the background largely performing their controller functions *incognito*. Filipinos understand their political dynamics intuitively and thus we call the authorities "*ang mga maykapangyarihan*," those with power, or "*ang mga makapangyayari*," those who can make things happen.

Democratic government imposes a terrible requirement on both the governors, the authorities, and the governed. Following a theory that the power of the authorities ultimately comes from the people, democracies mandate that the authorities must be accountable for their political acts to the latter. *How* the powerful are to be made accountable to the people is the central problem of democratic government.

Elaborate procedures are designed to facilitate this accountability of the authorities. Within government itself, there are constitutional as well as regular statutory agencies to monitor the acts of the formal authorities and subject them to investigation, censure, as well as more stern disciplinary measures. In a presidential form of government, the formal mechanisms of checks and balances are supposed to neutralize tyrannical

Authorities and public accountability

Petitions, rallies, demonstrations, and 'welgang bayan' are becoming far too regular fixtures in our political environment



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tendencies in any of the major branches of government and their respective authorities.

Formal political processes such as elections and recall are also designed to encourage a sense of public accountability. Resorting to either, a disgruntled constituency could remove public officials who betray their public trust.

Longer-term strategies are associated with democratically-oriented socialization processes and educational programs. Together with other institutions, the family and the schools could be used to inculcate values of public service and public accountability.

All these measures can fail for various reasons. When the authorities collude among themselves, all the constitutional and statutory provisions for public accountability go for naught. Checks and balances, periodic elections and recall, as well as judicial administration are corrupted and reduced to being formal democratic trappings of an oligarchic or tyrannical regime. Or else, as in the case of socialization and education, they take too long and are irrelevant to the plight of the present generation.

Historically, there has been only one reliable guarantor of public accountability. In less stressed political regimes, organized, active citizen groups have forced their authorities to serve public interests even as the latter might have tried to subvert them. The due process of law which has proved terrifyingly effective to even the most powerful authorities in the United States, Great Britain and Japan reflects the organized citizen pressure which could be exerted in these political systems.

In more highly stressed political systems, dramatic encounters between the authorities and an organized citizenry often compel the former towards an unwelcome, even

bloody public accounting. The rise of Castro in Cuba, the Shah's fall in Iran, as well as the collapse of the South Vietnamese government involved organizing a citizenry against tyrannical authorities.

Throughout recorded history, the demand for public accountability has been associated with organized force. It initially takes the form of prayerful pleas for understanding or reasoned petitions for the redress of grievances, gradually transforms into spirited rallies and demonstrations, and ultimately erupts into violent political action. The force of prayer, the force of reason, the force of numbers, and finally unmitigated political force — these are the stages in the metamorphosis of the process of public accountability.

In the Philippines, public accountability demands are being expressed in progressively dangerous forms. Petitions, rallies, demonstrations, and *welgang bayan* are becoming far too regular fixtures in our political environment.

There is a clear and present danger in the pattern of actions taken by hundreds of thousands of Filipinos who are again taking to the streets in their quest for responsive government and responsible authorities. There is a less clear but even greater danger in a repressive government response which the authorities, with the egging of rightist counselors, appear to be currently favoring.

The streets might be cleaned of rallyists and demonstrators, at least temporarily. Yet their very absence could indicate a more serious problem. Public accounting might be delayed, it is never successfully denied the determined public. Not even where the authorities believe themselves to be gods and their public much less than dutiful angels.

Politics and the military: War Plan Yellow?

IN the last twenty years, military involvement in national politics had always been at the behest of civilian politicians and authorities. The initiation of extensive civic action programs by the military, the declaration of martial law, the appointment of senior military officers to high civilian positions, as well as junior partnership by the military in traditional areas of graft and corruption — all these were inspired and facilitated by civilian politicians whose political agenda required military involvement and support.

Coup-making itself might not have proliferated if civilian politicians had actively discouraged military wards who looked up to them for political inspiration as well as some degree of protection when things go hot.

Many military men may not take kindly to the implication of this view so far, but it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that they have been simply "auxiliaries" in the language of Plato, or, in the drab language of labor bureaucrats, "domestics". Domestics, even if they are of the status of a General Ver, get no more than leavings of their masters. Thus, in the last administration, no military man attained billionaire status even as several civilian predators made the grade.

It is difficult to believe that the present political dispensation has not tried to involve active military men in politics too. As "duly constituted authorities" who have been the target of unauthorized military exercises, it would be natural for this administration to scan the military for constitutionalist officers as well as other types who could be co-opted

Military constitutionalism is indicated for as long as the administration seeks to position military men who will defend Congress, the courts with the same ardor as they would defend President Aquino...

and wield them into a group of reliable defenders of the administration.

This is well and good, for as long as constitutionalism is not confused with unwavering military loyalty to a specific administration, much less a political personality. Military constitutionalism is indicated for as long as the administration seeks to position military men who will defend Congress, the Courts and the other constitutional and statutory agencies with the same ardor that they would defend President Aquino, their current Commander-in-Chief, and her administration against any illegal destabilization attempt.

This background of civilian initiative and military constitutionalism helps sensitize us to the possible calculus of current military promotions, particularly those which are indicative of deep selection by the authorities. An interesting case, for instance, is that of Major General Rodolfo G. Biazon, Deputy Chief of Staff and concurrent commanding general of the National Capital Region Defense Command, a capable officer, an intelligent military man and straight talking constitutionalist.

His constitutionalism is



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legendary. In November 1986, in an emotional meeting of military officers preceding the abortive coup, "God Save the Queen," Biazon dramatically took off his general's star and, critical of the ambiguous political language affected by his peers, dared them to speak as warriors and clarify their individual positions on who could gain from this power play even as democracy must suffer a beating.

More recently, reacting to some speculations that he was being groomed for the Chief-of-Staff position, Biazon's reaction was predictable and eminently quotable: "I don't

want to fight issues, I want to do my work."

He would have to vault over at least fifteen more senior colleagues to gain the position of Chief-of-Staff. Biazon himself realizes that such deep selection could trigger disaffection among military men. Issues, including spurious and malicious ones, could easily attend an unpopular promotion and, as Biazon implies, such issues would sap the energies of a conscientious military man.

If, for whatever reason, some politically influential people were truly interested in making him Chief-of-Staff, they have less than two years to effect it. (Biazon is due to retire on April 14, 1991.) His build-up must be started right now. Thus his current appointment to the position of Deputy Chief of Staff appears sensible as a tentative move towards the CS target.

Biazon in all probability deserves his current appointment, and, should he eventually become Chief of Staff, would probably merit that too. This, however, is not the point.

The crucial issue is whether military promotions still continue to be defined by self-perpetuating administrations. (In Marcos' time this meant all promotions down to battalion commanders' level had to be personally reviewed by the President.) Military promotions then would only be part of a general political plan, one not necessarily consonant with constitutional principles.

The rise of a constitutionalist like Biazon should be more critically appreciated. It augurs well for the country if his current promotion were made truly on the basis of national need and his own merit. If other objectives guided the administration, however, then Major General Biazon and others like him in the military would eventually have their constitutionalist principles grossly tested.

The political vocabulary of computers

This computer language is replete with political sense which Filipinos may immediately understand perhaps because in every Filipino lurks the dark spirit of a calculating, computing political man

As everyone knows, computers have already earned a place in our political history. Who can forget the impressive sight of men and women in white solemnly leaving their computers and walking out of the PICC as they exposed systematic, computer-assisted frauds in the snap election of 1986? Or, for those who strolled into the NAMFREL headquarters in La Salle Greenhills, the mesmerizing grip of computer monitors as they sought to track the latest tally of votes from NAMFREL stations all over the country? In a sense, the 1986 snap election was a test of two computerized systems, both committed to monitoring a critical political exercise, but with one system tasked with subverting the popular will and the other with upholding it.

The political character of computers is betrayed by the language they use. I do not mean the technical language of computer programming (Fortran, Forth, Firth, Cobol, Basic, Pascal, or C, among others) but to the plain English used by those who boldly interface computers with ordinary computer-users. This computer language is replete with political sense which Filipinos may immediately understand, perhaps because in every Filipino lurks the dark spirit of a calculating, computing political man.

Have you wondered how computers and computer programs refer to political administrations which are ever promising, particularly when such administrations are gifted with imaginative speech-writers? They are *word processing*



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administrations, concerned with *Wordperfect* images of their role.

In such administrations, the authorities are often inclined to give *bad commands*, a critical mass of which lead to *fatal errors* in government management. The authorities regularly make *illegal function calls* as they shamelessly help themselves to public funds and other material resources.

These politicians are extremely gifted in *local area net-working*, which they undertake to expand their areas of illicit operation. They often build themselves a network of *bad sectors*, where local politicians, military officers and policemen systematically extort from a helpless citizenry.

Sometimes the public can stand no more and put up quite a bit of resistance to the exploitative authorities. The latter are then forced to consider its options regarding whatever might have triggered this public rebellion. They might try

to prudently *abort* the object of public hostility, arrogantly simply *retryit*, or even cavalierly *ignore* public sentiments. Matters like the recent Garchitorena scam as well as the alleged senatorial "sexcapades" become full blown public issues even as the authorities try the full range of the *abort, retry, ignore* options.

The build-up of public unrest could lead to a dangerous situation. Convinced about their authorities' fecklessness and total disregard of public welfare, the citizenry might start thinking the erstwhile unthinkable: *formatting* government. A new set of authorities could be set-up and all traces of the previous administration *deleted*. This process of formatting and re-formatting takes place peacefully in most democratic societies. However, where peaceful change is impossible, the citizenry must resort to *low level formatting*, in which case the use of physical force becomes unavoidable.

Some analysts of Philippine politics despair that EDSA has resulted in *format failure*, that the Marcos *bad sectors* had not been wiped out and that, on the contrary, they have become resurgent in the current administration. They predict that more and more Filipinos could lose faith in peaceful means of effecting change and that organizations like the CPP-NPA and the MNLF would gain credibility as preachers of more effective *low level formatting* strategies.

Less radical therapies are suggested by those who are terrified by revolutionary change. They say there is time

yet to make government work truly for the interest of its constituency. What needs to be done is to *debug* government programs and see to it that they run much closer to their original formal specifications.

This alternative might call for an upgrading of the *central processing unit* or *CPU*, the core set of government officials responsible for conceiving, operationalizing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating government's own set of development strategies.

Non-radical programs must be productive within a rather short time span, a constraint characteristic of severely stressed political systems. Thus, *accelerator boards* and *turbo* operations to hasten the pace of government are seriously considered by many desperate liberals and conservatives.

Obviously, government operating effectively and at high speeds needs an adequate and reliable *power supply*. Both *standby* and *uninterruptible power supply* systems need to be in place as political brownouts threaten. Popular support and capable security forces must be conjoined for government operations to succeed in critical times.

The worst condition conceivable is one where government is neither decisively functional nor decisively dead. We then anguish over a government which is *hung up*. Clearly a most *fatal error*. National recovery through *formatting* is always a painful process and, in the case of a *hung up* system, only an energized citizenry can take the lead. We must then *cold boot*.

WE ARE a very personalistic people. Our political fortunes being what they are, this *personalismo* could be either a national political asset or a national curse.

In trying times, a decisive leader can galvanize the nation to confront and resolve its multiple crises. Where the leader vacillates, however, a whole nation keeps waiting for a political initiative which comes too late or does not come at all. In the meantime, the crisis exacerbates and the entire nation suffers immensely.

No Filipino political leader has had as much windfall capital in terms of extensive and reliable public support as President Aquino. From Marcos' fall in February 1986 up to March 1987, survey data from the Social Weather Stations (SWS) chart the unprecedented public support for Cory Aquino.

During this period, her political base could be demonstrated as initially largely in the Greater Manila Area, expanding to the rest of Luzon (including the Ilocano areas) by October 1986, and, by March 1987, encompassing both Visayas and Mindanao.

Between March and October 1987, signs of public disaffection increasingly manifested themselves in various public demonstrations against the administration. Nevertheless, those who gambled in a military coup in August 1987 overestimated the extent of public dissatisfaction with the administration and found themselves decisively isolated by civilian as well as constitutionalist military counteraction.

Although in August 1987 enough public support materialized for a government threatened by military rebels, the nation-wide feeling a couple of months later reflected popular dissatisfaction with perceived low levels of performance by the Aquino admini-

Cory magic as political alchemy

Survey shows 'national satisfaction margins' for Mrs. Aquino have gone down

stration. Thus, the first significant drop in the performance rating of the President was reflected in the SWS survey of October 1987. (Her margin of satisfaction, the difference between the proportion of people who are satisfied and those who are not satisfied with her, dropped dramatically to 36 points.) The President was moved to announce in late October, 1987 that between her and the public, "The honeymoon is over."

By February, 1988, however, the President had rebounded to "honeymoon" levels in public estimation. Her decisive statements in October 1987 on how government would be spurred to action by a committee of one (no less than the President herself) appear to have fired the public imagination.

Since February 1988, a whole series of economic, social and political issues has been running its course. Many gave rise to public demonstrations, marches, rallies and strikes joined in by thousands of private sector as well as government workers. Factory and farm workers, jeepney drivers, students, as well as that most forbearing group of private and public school teachers participated in these organized actions.

There appears to be much disillusionment with presidential performance in the midst of these issues. Social Weather Stations surveys in the last two years reflect this negative assessment. National satisfaction

of the country.

One more thing which might be anticipated is the smaller proportions of poor people who would remain supportive of the President. It would be a truly remarkable political development if she lost the support of this most loyal of constituencies. (Even Marcos in his twilight years, as reported by the Philippine Social Science Council's survey of September 1985, somehow managed to maintain the loyalty of the poorest people.)

The President appears to understand and accept the trends outlined by reputable surveys of public opinion. This may be the reason why lately she has assumed a more take-charge type of leadership and projected a lot more decisiveness in her mode of government. Her summary pronouncements on the administration of justice, public safety and graft and corruption in government are comparable to those she made on the subject of garbage collection, potholes in the streets of Manila, as well as Meralco and PLDT public services last October 1987.

The strategy could work for a while, but unless clear results are associated by the public with all these images of decisive leadership, public disillusionment is bound to return and, probably, with a vengeance. (Even now, more and more of our people are persuaded that the only way to get government to attend to their needs is through concerted, mass action. There is no guarantee that this popular mind set will uncompromisingly limit itself to peaceful attempts at effecting 'social change.)

Cory magic, as political necromancers might try to sustain it through illusory government, is better left alone. The President and her people had better try something else. Like landing a truly big fish and publicly eviscerating it.



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margins for President Aquino declined from 64 points in February 1988 to 50 points in September 1988 and 37 points by February 1989. (In Metro Manila, the margin of satisfaction by February 1989 was dramatically lower, 14 points, down from 32 points in August 1988.) There is reason to believe that this erosion in public esteem for the President has not been arrested, either nationwide or in Metro Manila.

Should public satisfaction with presidential performance continue to decline at the present rate, surveys by the end of 1989 will show President Aquino with single-digit or even negative margins of satisfaction. Earlier surveys will probably indicate a firming up of Metro Manila dissatisfaction and its fairly rapid communication to the other areas

Competently reporting readings of the public pulse

YESTERDAY, two journalists in a Metro Manila Daily (not the *NEWSDAY*) reported public opinion findings supposed to have come from a recent Metro Manila survey by the Social Weather Stations, an independent survey research group. As reported, the findings touched on public perceptions of presidential popularity, respondent preferences in a hypothetical presidential elections if held today, the incidence of crime in Metro Manila, and public sentiments regarding a national strike or *welgang bayan*.

I was the one which directed the political component (about 85 percent) of the survey and I was very much surprised by the manner in which fairly experienced media men presented and interpreted our findings to the public.

Both journalists appeared to have relied on very unreliable sources in reporting out the alleged survey findings. Findings were presented, complete with figures, for questions which actually were not even asked in the Social Weather Stations survey. There was, for instance, no part of the survey which hypothesized a presidential election now to establish the voting preferences of respondents. Yet, the journalists alleged a ranking by survey respondents with Secretary Fidel Ramos supposedly on top, followed by Senator Joseph Estrada and President Aquino.

Neither was there any part of the survey which monitored the proportion of respondents who lost valuables in their cars. Yet the two journalists provided a figure (one in three or 33 percent of the car-owning respondents) precisely for this outcome. The survey actually tested for the incidence of car-napping among the respondents who owned cars and one in five or 21 percent reported being so victimized.

A session with journalists to inform them of some of the most basic ideas in statistical probability, sampling and field work is suggested here



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They also indiscriminately lumped public sentiments of trust in selected public officials with performance ratings of these officials and the survey did not inquire into at all: the public willingness to support the policies of these officials.

While there might be a high degree of positive correlation among these three political dimensions, it is fairly obvious that they are not one and the same thing.

Even in the two concerns actually included in the survey, trust and performance ratings, there is a significant difference among the ratings. In the case of President Aquino, for instance, while 51 percent of the respondents express their trust in her, only 35 percent would say they are satisfied with her performance as President. Clearly, trust is more liberally treated by Metro Manilans than

evaluations of the performance of public officials.

Yet another thing that appears to be the bane of many journalists reporting on survey findings concerns the intelligent use of quantitative data. The two reporters yesterday kept talking about presidential "popularity" as having eroded to 6 percent in the latest SWS survey. The figure cited is neither a popularity nor a percentage figure. The question is about performance, not popularity, and 6 points is the difference between those who say they are satisfied with presidential performance (35 percent) and those who are not (29 percent). This difference of 6 is 6 percentage points and not 6 percent.

Sometimes, the 'apse is simply incredible. Without supplying any specific figures, one reporter yesterday referred to "an overwhelming majority" who would support a nationwide labor strike." The actual figures happen to be 49.7 percent who believe it is right that workers join a *welgang bayan* now and 50.0 percent who disagree. This precisely split opinion cannot be sensibly described as an "overwhelming majority." Either the reporter misunderstands what an "overwhelming majority" means, or else his undisclosed figures are grossly wrong.

So much for highly imaginative reporting.

How can one improve the quality of journalistic reporting when it comes to survey

results? I believe that a session of at most three hours would be sufficient to convert the most survey-illiterate reporter into a relatively knowledgeable and, therefore, responsible monitor of the public pulse.

The three-hour session would educate the reporter in some of the most basic ideas of statistical probability, sampling and questionnaire design, as well as fieldwork execution. Levels of confidence, error margins, sampling size and question formulation could be discussed and understood within the first one and a half-hours.

The next one and a half hours could then be spent on the political and cultural dimensions of survey research. Survey politicization in terms of funding constraints, timing of the survey, sponsor's control over data generation, analysis and public dissemination should be discussed. Finally, the cultural context within which the survey findings must find meaningful analysis will have to be properly identified.

With this background, any journalist can evaluate any survey or a host of surveys and make an intelligent decision as to which ones ought to be seriously considered, which ones are probable hoaxes, and which ones might even be treasonous undertakings.

Incidentally, every year in the last five years some of us have offered to help newspapermen gain this capability in evaluating the numerous surveys which hit (and will continue to hit) us from everywhere. I have personally discussed this idea with three or four editors of our better papers. Everyone acknowledges the idea to be a good one. To date, not a single newspaperman or journalist has found three hours to invest in the good idea.

Which explains why most journalists will continue to report on surveys with as much good sense as I manifest when I gallantly attempt a formal exposition of chaos theory.

LATELY we have had a spate of pronouncements by government officials and other influential people on the issue of American military facilities in the Philippines. The President, the Vice-President, Cabinet officials, senators, congressmen, mayors and journalists have aired their positions (and non-positions) on what is popularly referred to as the American military bases issue.

What about the general public? What ideas do they entertain regarding this concern? In a country purportedly transiting towards a democratic order, political as well as other opinion leaders might consider asking the people on crucial issues rather than simply telling them. Otherwise, one might suspect that a general disdain for public opinion prevails and that, instead of a much trumpeted democratizing polity, there persists an oligarchic regime.

Legitimate public opinion probes have to be done with great care, with all the competence and conscientiousness that academic social science demands. Otherwise, they degenerate into incompetent and often prostituted instruments in the service of vested, oligarchic interests.

No less crucial is the imperative for surveys of public opinion to be reported on by competent news people. Lately largely ignorant columnists authoritatively pontificating on the basis of either grossly misunderstood or non-existent survey findings disgraced the pages of some of the better papers in Metro Manila. This sad state of affairs has no short-term remedy, unless newspaper editors are willing to assume stern measures when confronted by clearly incompetent columnists and reporters. One cannot be overly optimistic in this regard. It is like chasing the wind, as the sage in Ecclesiastes says.

The Social Weather Stations (SWS) has the most ex-

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tensive, non-proprietary survey data available on American military bases, with five of its national surveys since March 1987 tracking related public sentiments. Using a sample of 1200 voting age respondents, implying an error margin of plus or minus 3 percent, SWS surveys in the last two years asked whether respondents were aware of the existence of American military bases here and whether they believed the bases ought to be removed immediately, removed by 1991, removed or retained indefinitely depending on what the Americans are prepared to materially offer for the use of the bases, or retained because the Philippines already benefits enough from status quo arrangements with the United States.

Clearly the first two options are anti-bases while the last is a pro-bases option. The third might be referred to as the depends-on-benefit (DB) preference. The last is basically a status quo (SQ) option.

Between March 1987 and February 1989 (the latest SWS national survey), about 7 in 10 respondents affirmed awareness of the military bases used

by the Americans here. All over the country, aware urban respondents outnumbered their rural counterparts, with Metro Manila respondents predictably showing the highest proportions (80 percent to 90 percent). Together with urban locality, socio economic class and sex showed definite influence on the probability of respondent awareness, with the socio economically better off and the males being more aware than the poorer and female respondents.

In the last two years, the anti-bases sentiments have been remarkably stable, with remove now and remove by 1991 averaging about 22 percent. The status quo (SQ), pro-base option has been running at around 46 percent, while the depends-on-benefits (DB) option accounts for 27 percent on the average.

Clearly, while the SQ sentiment comes near expressing a national sense (reckoning this to be at least a majority of respondents choosing the option), the question of the bases is not a foregone conclusion even if a national referendum were held today. The DB respondents could go with the anti-bases vote should they feel that the United States has failed to put together a viable package of benefits in return for the use of the bases. (Or should they be lead into believing that the United States simply has not seriously considered what could be fair returns for the bases. American officials making careless remarks about Philippine ideas of fairness just might be the most effective anti-bases sentiment builders.)

Americans have reason to be concerned about Filipino public opinion on the bases. There is a good probability that the 46 percent pro-bases, SQ bloc of public opinion could

erode, as has already happened in Metro Manila. (From March 1987 to February 1989, SQ respondents in Metro Manila dropped from 52 percent to 37 percent!)

Awareness appears to be negatively correlated with SQ responses. (In February 1989, Metro Manila at 91 percent had the highest proportion of aware respondents compared to 56 percent and 57 percent in low awareness areas like the Visayas and Mindanao.) In terms of pro-bases SQ responses, however, Metro Manila posted only 37 percent, about 2/3 to 3/4 of the proportion of SQ respondents observed in Visayas and Mindanao.) A campaign might be launched by interested parties to inform the remaining 30 percent of voting-age Filipinos who are still not aware of the bases. A higher awareness profile could facilitate a national distribution of respondents which followed the Metro Manila pattern more closely, with a consequent depreciation of the SQ option.

Metro Manila has been the main political trend-setter for the rest of the country. Historically, lag times between what takes place in the metropolitan area and its adoption by the rest of the country could be as much as two years and as short as six months. Perhaps, with the growing criticality of our times as well as technological advances in communication, the lag time might even be significantly reduced to, say, three months.

A more intensive analysis of Metro Manila public opinion on the bases, with some very surprising findings for those who hew to conventional wisdom and superficial journalism, deserves a separate write-up. Such an analysis sharpens the challenge between the protagonists of the debate on the bases, delineates the probable soft targets of pro and anti-bases campaigns, and will be the subject of my next article.

CONVENTIONAL wisdom has always pointed to Metro Manila as significantly different from the rest of the Philippines. Politically, Metro Manilans are supposed to be trend setters, initiating developments which take the rest of the country anytime between six months to two years to manifest.

Conventional wisdom may not be completely reliable on the point of innovation nowadays. (Much of the conceptualization and implementation of autonomous government ideas, for instance, is undertaken beyond Manila. The same thing might be said of military as well as CPP-NPA attempts to innovate in insurgency-related strategies and tactics.) Still, it is not so much on this point that conventional wisdom might be found wanting, as in its apparent inability to appreciate the much accelerated rate of diffusion of any political development, from whichever focal point in the Philippines.

Following this line of thinking, one might anticipate that political developments in Metro Manila and the rest of the country would tend to differ more in terms of degree and not of substance. Opinion profiles, for instance, would be recognizably the same all over the country, with temporary and not too large differences across areas in the proportions of respondents subscribing to any specific survey choice.

This is probably already happening in the case of public opinion on American military bases in the country.

Metro Manila largely reflects the national patterns of public opinion as presented in this author's immediately preceding article on the American military bases. As indicated by average values based on data from five Social Weather Stations' surveys in the last two years (March 1987 to February 1989), national opinion on the bases is split three ways. The anti-bases group (composed of those who would remove the bases now or, at the latest, 1991) accounts on the average for about 22 percent of all respon-

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dents; the pro-bases, status quo (SQ) group for around 46 percent; and those who would decide to remove or retain the bases after 1991, depending on the benefits the Americans would offer for use of the bases (DB), about 27 percent.

The comparable statistics for Metro Manila are 24 percent for the anti-bases group, 28 percent for the DB group, and 45 percent for the SQ group. Superficially, the Metro Manila opinion distribution is not distinguishable from that of the nation. A close analysis of the two-year survey data reveals otherwise.

There is at least a sustenance and probably even some buildup of the anti-bases group. For those demanding an immediate removal of the bases, the proportions are from 9 percent in March 1987 to 12 percent in February 1989; for those who would remove the bases by 1991, the increase is from 16 percent in March 1987 to 20 percent two years later. (Nationally, no significant change is reflected for this combination of anti-bases groups, with those calling for removal in 1991 even showing a marginal decrease from 19 percent to 16 percent.)

The more remarkable thing is the significant erosion (from 52 percent in March 1987 to 37

While there is at present a plurality of people for retaining the bases (38 percent in Metro Manila as of July 1989 and 43 percent nationwide as of February 1989), this plurality is an eroded and probably still eroding plurality.

percent in February 1989) among the SQ group or those who would retain the bases after 1991. (The national data does not show as sharp a reduction in SQ proportions, from 43 percent in March 1987 to 48 percent in February 1989.)

Neither the anti-bases nor the pro-bases group is able to muster a majority sentiment, unless either is supported by the more pragmatic, dependent-on-benefit or DB group.

The criticality of this DB group is further suggested by the fact that, between March 1987 and February 1987 (and up to July 1989, relying on the data of the yet officially unreleased Social Weather Stations survey of July 1989), the margin enjoyed by pro-bases SQ respondents over those who are anti-bases are almost always less than the proportion of DB respondents. (The only exception in the last two years is March 1987.) *What this means is that status quo oriented, pro-bases interest groups cannot safely presume that any referendum on the bases will be decided in their favor by Metro Manilans, or by Filipinos in general should the Metro Manila pattern of opinions become the national pattern within a relatively short time from now.*

Yet another consideration can upset the complacent pro-bases party. When opinions do get to change from one option

to another concerning the bases issue, the opinion changes reflected in the last two years do not bode well for SQ sentiments. Those who are for removing the bases in 1991 appear to be able to change towards DB and SQ (as reflected in survey data from March 1988 to August 1988), but their clearest and most recent movement (from February 1989 to July 1989) is towards remove the bases now, a clear hardening of their anti-bases position.

On the other hand, some DB and SQ sentiments can change into remove by 1991, as reflected by opinion changes from October 1987 to March 1988. Furthermore, among the SQ respondents in July of 1989, as many as 12 percent of the total SQ proportion of 38 percent might be considered vulnerable to switching to remove by 1991 or DB; these 12 percent are those who believe the bases could continue to stay in the Philippines after 1991, but for a period less than five years. Should much controversy attend the discussion of Philippine benefits from the bases, or should there be more insensitive foreign officials making pronouncements which sting Filipino pride, these soft SQ respondents just might make the switch to other options on the bases. And, finally, as regards the very critical DB, this sentiment has so far shown itself capable only of changing

into an anti-bases, not a pro-bases, stance.

Some implications can be drawn from this analysis. First, while there is presently a plurality of people for retaining the bases (38 percent in Metro Manila as of July 1989 and 43 percent nationwide as of February 1989), this plurality is an eroded and probably still eroding plurality. Second, specifically in Metro Manila, the criticality of the DB group heightens as a combination of hardening among the anti-bases and softening among the pro-bases opinion groups takes place. Third, the DB's criticality must be interpreted as political capital for the Philippine government since it prevents interested foreign parties from making simplistic assumptions about how the bases issue must resolve in their favor. (At the very least, the crucial DB sentiment complicates the foreign calculus and induces interested foreign governments to re-think what might be cavalierly perceived as "crazy" demands by Filipinos for an improved package of benefits.) Fourth, because there is a great deal of similarity in the general profiles of public opinion nationwide and in Metro Manila, there is a good chance that some of the more critical features of the Metro Manila profile could be integrated and, within a fairly short period of time, reflected nationally. Fifth, in September of 1989, there is no way one can be dogmatic about how the issue of the bases will fare in a Metro Manila or nationwide referendum.

What we have in the bases issue is a free zone, with those who intelligently maximize their opportunities eventually gaining ground over those who don't. No miracles can be expected in resolving the bases issue and neither irresponsible journalists nor opportunistic political leaders will provide a lasting answer to this national concern. Only a better informed, intelligently-organized and passionately-led people can.

The moral grounds of politics

Realistically there are two ways to make our public officials sensitive to considerations of the public interest. Either they are compelled by a well-informed, outraged and intelligently organized citizenry or they are compelled by a patriotic and politically powerful leadership

RECENT happenings make one wonder whether morality has any relevance at all to the actions of our public officials. Indeed one could argue that if morality were primarily understood in terms of operational mores, i.e. prevailing notions of what is right or proper action given any particular situation, then the present morality of many public officials might be summed up thus: what is moral is whatever one dares and can get away with.

A lawmaker no less is implicated in a gross law-breaking activity and his peers in the House ethics committee define the situational context as possibly one of disorderly conduct, punishable by a couple of months suspension from that august body of all honorable men and women. Conduct unbecoming a member of the House is a charge theoretically subject to a full range of remedies, from a formal reprimand, to suspension and expulsion from the House. Among his peers, however, there appears to be a general resistance to underscoring the more severe sanctions against conduct "unbecoming" a lawmaker.

By the time this article is published, the House committee shall have finished looking into this case, in a session that will bar the public from attending and where posterity will be dumbfounded regarding what transpired. Unless there is a late change of heart, no records of the committee proceedings are to be kept nor entered in the official journal of the House. In such circumstances, the unbecoming conduct might not be that of Honorable Nicanor de Guzman Jr., but of those who would not suffer public scrutiny on a matter of vital public interest.



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Other civilian officials from the executive, the judiciary as well as the Senate have found themselves in similarly compromising circumstances in the past. Yet, to date, no implicated official at the higher levels of government has been meted the full measure of law probably because his peers or immediate superiors shunned full probes and legally-indicated disciplinary measures.

On this issue of public accountability, no branch of government appears to enjoy the advantage of standing on higher moral grounds relative to its counterparts. In the last three years, public trust in government agencies and most public officials has deteriorated significantly. A cynical public actually views the present administration as probably no better than the Marcos administration in terms of existing graft and corruption. Furthermore, the public mood is beginning to turn ugly. In a Social Weather Stations' survey last July 1989, most Metro Manila respondents said that government officials linked to graft and corruption are indeed

generally guilty and must be summarily suspended from office while being investigated by their peers or superiors. Six out of ten respondents even view corrupt public officials as a greater threat to the nation than the CPP-NPA rebels. One suspects from this cluster of attitudes that Metro Manilans now identify graft and corruption in government with heinous crimes and would endorse summary punishment for culpable public officials.

Realistically there appears to be at least two ways to make our public officials sensitive to considerations of the public interest. Either they are compelled by a well-informed, outraged, and intelligently organized citizenry, or they are compelled by a patriotic and politically powerful leadership.

The first alternative cannot be evaded, but takes anywhere between a generation or two to bear results. The entire process of political socialization and general education has to be played out, particularly for our youth as they are educated into values of democratic politics and the public accountability of political leaders. All our primary educational institutions, both formal and informal, must be synergistically linked to focus on citizen obligations and rights in a functional democratic regime. A great deal of this education must concern itself with the dynamics of political organization, as citizens set the parameters within which public officials must largely and conscientiously operate.

The second option is reflective of more critical times, when the main constraint as regards effective public policy is itself time. Even as democratic education is activated and sustained, the political

leadership assumes the gross responsibility of seeing to it that powerful political groups are kept from preying on their people and plundering the national patrimony. In enforcing conduct becoming of political managers, the leadership rallies citizen support by showing itself to be singularly committed to the principle of public accountability of public officials.

Where these alternatives are not possible, societies historically have activated more forceful dynamics for grounding the actions of its political leaders on more clearly moral, public interest grounds. Then convulsive political and social upheavals result and revolutionary changes such as those which overtook France in 1789, Russia in 1917, China in 1949 and Vietnam from 1945 to 1975 manifest themselves all too clearly. While no guarantees are provided by history as regards the incorruptibility of revolutions, its dialectical propensities appear to periodically cleanse a political system of its most pernicious vermins, the most unbecoming of political authorities.

The costs of revolutionary upheavals are extremely high, both in terms of human and material resources expenditures. Still, in 1989, as Filipinos assess their quality of life and their political institutions, only three in ten are confident that Filipinos will never give up on peaceful change. Seven in ten maintain a political calculus which does not rule out the possibility that Filipinos might go beyond the charming experience that was EDSA in 1986. For these seven, the supreme law, the highest morality in politics, is undeniably *salus populi*, the welfare of the people.

Critical mass in Philippine politics

Politically aware citizens do not constitute a politically critical mass until they learn to undertake organizational work and press their political claims as an organized group

POLITICIANS and political scientists can learn a lot from competent physicists. Take the idea of critical mass, for instance. Physicists not only scientifically understand the concept, they also feel comfortable with it. On the other hand, politicians and to a much lesser extent political scientists at best intuitively comprehend critical mass and rarely feel comfortable with it.

Physicists understand that for certain types of physical reactions to be sustained, or more precisely to be self-sustaining, there has to be enough (critical) mass materially capable of and actually necessary for the specific reaction. Beyond conceptual understanding, physicists are comfortable with the fact itself of critical mass, confident in the knowledge that modern physics endows them with the requisite skills for controlling the rate of reaction in a mass gone critical. Between nuclear reactors and nuclear bombs, between energy for peace and energy for war, is the consummate faith of physicists in their science and the rigorous regimen it demands for those to be certified as professionals in the field.

The political dynamics of democratic regimes is highly dependent on a clear understanding of the concept of critical mass and, once developed as a political reality, its skillful management. By critical mass, politically speaking, we must understand a sufficiently large number of our people or our leaders who intelligently comprehend the essential features of a democracy and who will employ all political resources to initiate as well as sustain a democratic regime.

Democracies have two essential features, others being desirable but nevertheless secondary characteristics. The rule of the majority, the presence of



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free and clean elections, separation of powers and other features cited in some theories of democracy might be temporarily waived in certain circumstances without doing irreparable damage to a democracy. However, a democratic regime must at all times operationally serve its constituent public and uncompromisingly maintain a functional or working system of public accountability for the regime authorities.

The ability to gauge whether the public interest is indeed being served depends not so much on the benign transparency of government as the functional education of a citizenry in the realm of political dynamics, in the citizens' awareness of the actual political processes and the organized interest groups which conclusively spell out political outcomes in any society. (Incidentally, a significant reform which the Department of Education, Culture and Sports could summarily undertake is to bar lawyers from teaching introductory courses in politics or government. Only competent political scientists and respectable politicians must be tasked with introducing our young people to the dynamics

of Philippine politics. This way no alien and unreasonable political expectations, mostly generated by legalistic positions of the political system, are foisted on our youth and they easily see through political leaders who practice management by illusion.)

Beyond awareness lies organized action. Politically aware citizens do not constitute a politically critical mass until they learn to undertake organizational work and press their political claims as an organized group. Thus, the political education of our citizenry must also systematically develop organizational skills, from the most elementary type like the formal creation of an organization and the election of its officers, or the operational day to day management of a going concern, to the more advanced forms like the articulation and aggregation of erstwhile disparate, even apparently conflicting interests, the management of electoral campaigns, and the setting up of rallies, demonstrations, strikes and other public campaigns.

A citizenry with this kind of political education will help create institutional arrangements for exacting responsibility from their political leaders. However, the public accountability of the latter will not be grossly dependent on whether these institutional arrangements actually worked or not. The bottom line will be no formal guarantor like Congress, the Executive or the Judiciary, but the willingness of the citizenry to take even to the streets and resolve matters with their own collective hands precisely when the institutions and the authorities consistently refuse to serve the public good or indisputably betray their public trust.

Clearly, this kind of politically critical mass could be

highly volatile. Like the physicists, politicians and political scientists must have a profound knowledge of the nature of the critical mass they are working with. A superficial familiarity with the people and an ensuing contempt for their fundamental demands in a democratic regime would incline political leaders to be feckless governors or reckless authorities.

In a democratic or democratizing regime, a prudent political leadership would help build up this critical mass and try to channel the vast political energies it represents towards equitable national development. However, where democracy does not exist and oligarchical authorities are obsessed with self-perpetuation at any cost, two political alternatives might be considered. One option is an outright, fascist response to abort the development of this critical mass. The other alternative is political alchemy, the preferred craft of the politician who believes you can fool all of the people all of the time. Marcos dexterously combined the two options, but with all his skills could not quite keep the critical mass from continuing to build up. The present administration appears to be keeping its options open as regards how to deal with an emerging critical mass.

The proportion of Filipinos going critical is definitely on the increase. When critical mass is finally attained in our country, the acts of political institutions like the present House of Representatives will be markedly appreciated as having accelerated this truly democratizing process. After all, like the poor devil in Goethe's *Faust*, many congressmen could point out, "I am he who while ever conspiring to do evil somehow manage to do good."

Iskolar ng Bayan: UP's quiet revolution

THE University of the Philippines is undoubtedly one of the most controversial Philippine institutions. Born of a colonial regime's desire to guarantee a supply of reliably collaborative, university-educated, native elite, UP has nevertheless provided the country with some of its most nationalistic personalities. Markedly biased towards educating those fated to become government authorities, UP has somehow nurtured some of the most single-minded subversives in the country's history. For better or worse, in government as well as in private industry, aboveground as well as underground, UP graduates count among the most successful and influential Filipinos.

Until last June 1989, UP could well have meant the University of the Privileged. Most of its students traditionally came from the socioeconomically well-off as well as the politically notable classes in Philippine society. Particularly in the last twenty-four years, the University committed itself to admission policies which effectively excluded students from poorer, especially rural families. The UP College Admissions Test or UPCAT regularly reflected a bias for urban-domiciled, urban-educated, well-to-do applicants to the university.

At the same time, under a system brazenly referred to as one of "prerogatives," the scions of prominent politicians and other influential Filipinos were allowed to enter the university, despite the fact that they could not make it through the UPCAT or simply arrogantly chose not to take it. (Professors who had to handle classes for this bloc of "prerog" blockheads, as I twice did in the last five years, may never fully recover from the unnerving encounter. Informally, some university officials consoled shattered professors by pointing out that these students did not last more than a se-



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mester in UP anyway and that, in the meantime, as the poor professors responded to calls beyond that of duty and academic sense, potentially dangerous elements were appeased and kept from harassing the UP through its budget, as well as other non-academic vulnerabilities.)

Thus, for much of the 80s, academic competence has not been the only major concern of UP administration officials. Parking space for largely well-heeled, car-driving student population has also merited administrative attention.

However, it is not in the restoration of academic competence or in the provision of adequate parking space that UP must be seen as undertaking a quiet revolution. From the time of its inception and up to now, UP's singular radical idea whose time has come is its transformation from being the University of the Privileged to the University of the People.

Costwise, being a state university dependent on public taxation for its operations, UP has always been a University of the People. It is in another area, that of benefits rather than costs, that UP's decision to democratize the opportunities for a college education must be understood as truly revolutionary.

Since June 1989, through the *Iskolar ng Bayan* Program

which provides for both socialized tuition and financial assistance, academically capable students from poorer families stand a good chance of entering UP and finishing a UP education. A realistic package of monthly stipends, semester book allowances, and tuition waivers, a no-nonsense academically demanding program, and an accompanying work program to neutralize any possible feelings of being on a dole-out — all these make it likely that economically handicapped students will graduate from UP.

At the same time, the well-off and the really well-to-do continue to benefit enormously from the socialized tuition scheme. (Even the wealthiest UP students who pay P4,000 a semester are paying less than one-half to one-third of the tuition, as 20 percent of the full cost of UP education is still subsidized by the citizenry for UP students whose families may be earning millions of pesos a year!)

What the better-off students have had to do since this semester is to somewhat limit their share of the benefits rather than significantly increase their share of the costs of UP education. The *Iskolar ng Bayan* Program initiates all UP students (our future generation of leaders in this country) to an operational program of equitable development, instead of simply reinforcing lip service commitments to social justice. As UP students learn to become more comfortable with the *Iskolar ng Bayan*, there could be a qualitative change in orientation, from simply limiting one's benefit to even willfully maximizing the costs one could legitimately absorb. In this case, UP will have done what the national government has failed to do so far, to operationalize the social principle of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need." Those who see ideological coloring in this statement

might be less apprehensive if they recognize that the same sentiment is at the core of "noblesse oblige," certainly a commitment that transcends ideological boundaries.

The program for socialized education, for *Iskolar ng Bayan*, has been discussed for several generations in UP, as well as in many other institutions. It is remarkable that it has finally taken off in 1989 in UP, a traditional bastion of oligarchs. While credit must be shared by members of the UP Board of Regents and other university sectors for pushing through with this critical program, special mention must be made of President Jose Abueva, who courageously staked his leadership on this equity-oriented measure, University Professor Romeo Manlapaz who single-mindedly brainstormed the concept of socialized education better than anyone else in UP, and Vice-President for Planning and Finance, Felipe Medalla, the economist from Lipa who wisely gave up his *balisong* and traded it in for a Toshiba laptop sometime in early 1989. Simulating the funding requirements of the *Iskolar ng Bayan* on a Lotus program, Medalla overwhelmed skeptics who feared that *Iskolar ng Bayan* could cost UP much too much.

In the end Medalla and his laptop were right. There was hardly a dent on the UP budget to service the program. Erstwhile free-loading, better-off students paid enough tuition last June 1989 to defray practically the entire cost of *Iskolar ng Bayan*. As a result, 11,300 of the economically more deservicing students paid no tuition at all and 6,100 received monthly stipends of from P250 to P1000 and book expenses of from P250 to P500 per semester.

Somewhere in the UP's *Iskolar ng Bayan* is a lesson the national government itself might do well to learn.

The sense of the Senate and public sense

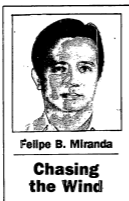
The more difficult challenge to the leaders is to help influence its constituency in the formation of intelligent public opinion and to lead it especially on matters where relevant information and its capable analysis may not be presumed yet as being public domain

YESTERDAY I attended a joint session of the Senate committees on Foreign Relations and National Defense and Security, chaired respectively by Senators Leticia Shahani and Ernesto Maceda. The matter under consideration was the sense of the Senate as expressed in two resolutions, P.S. Res. No. 601 ("Expressing the Sense of the Senate that the Phase Out of the Presence of Military Bases, Troops and Facilities That Began in 1935 [sic] Ends in 1991") and P.S. Res. No. 602 ("Expressing the Sense of the Senate in Favor of the Termination of the US-RP Military Bases Agreement in September 1991 and Urging the President of the Philippines to Serve Notice of Such Termination on the United States at the Earliest Possible Time, Precluding Any Extension, in Order to Give Both Countries as Much time as Possible to Prepare for the End of Such Agreement in 1991").

Given my background in social survey work, I thought the best contribution I could make was to situate the sense of the Senate, as embodied in the two resolutions, within the larger sense of the public, as determined by surveys done by the Social Weather Stations in the last two years.

I pointed out that the sense of the Senate runs well ahead of the public mood. After all, even as there is decreasing public support for maintaining the American military facilities here as well as a firming up of opposition to their continued stay, a plurality of the public still prefers that these facilities remained in the Philippines.

Furthermore, I noted the criticality of a large segment



of the public who would either retain or reject these military facilities depending on what package of benefits the Americans are willing to offer for their continued operations here.

Precisely because of these public opinion characteristics in the last two years, I concluded by saying that there is no firm foundation in some people's belief that a national plebiscite now would probably endorse the continuation of American military facilities in the Philippines.

The sense of the Senate, as expressed in the two cited resolutions, is clearly against the continuation of these facilities beyond 1991. Assuming that public opposition to these facilities accelerates and assumes majority status by 1991, the Senate sense at best currently anticipates and probably helps mold public opinion on this issue.

A more interesting case is one where public support for the concerned facilities rebounded and, by 1991, clearly ruled in favor of retaining them here in the country. The cur-

rent sense of the Senate might then be perceived as not only in variance with but directly in opposition to the public sense. Is there not danger in expressing a sense of the Senate when the public sense appears not to have fully resolved itself yet, or, even if already formed, appears to be contrary?

In a functional democracy, the answer probably would be no. Political leadership in a democracy requires the leaders not only to be faithful representatives of the public as the public mood shifts and turns on various issues. The more difficult challenge to the leaders is to help influence its constituency in the formation of intelligent public opinion and to lead it especially on matters where relevant information and its capable analysis may not be presumed yet as being public domain.

The issue of American military facilities is precisely where Filipinos could stand more and better information, as well as a wider range of analyses, to improve the chances of reaching a clearly soberly informed and nationalistic decision.

The dynamics of current and prospective international relations and the role of overseas American military bases have to be competently delineated if the public is not to be stampeded into a decision uncritically indicated by cold warrior sentiments. Cost-benefit analyses at the national as well as local levels, for both economic as well as extra-economic dimensions, have to be shared with the public. Alternative uses or conversion possibilities of the present military bases must be done in consultation with the public, particularly those who would

be immediately adversely affected should the final policy be one of terminating American use of these bases by 1991 or anytime shortly after.

Should the expression of the sense of the Senate be attended by these other exercises, Senate resolutions 601 and 605 could be justified as being in the public interest. The current activities of the Senate, through its committees on foreign relations and national defense and security, indicate that the Senate is responsibly attending to a serious national concern.

There appears to be a clearly active political leadership in the Senate, unlike in other agencies of government where inactivity, indecision and ambiguity seem to be the preferred leadership modalities.

Active leadership is a risk-taking as well as risk-managing process. The ultimate risk which the Senate runs in expressing its sense is that the public might finally repudiate it. In a democracy, even this repudiation carries some honor with it. Public officials get to be identified with specific and clear positions on matters of national interest and the citizenry which opts to change its public officials is at least clear as to the reason for change.

As for public officials who suffer the consequences of political clarity in this worst scenario case, there is still the consolation that, in the long run, their expressed sense might turn out to be the really more sensible and patriotic sense. After all, on matters of politics, as well as faith, morals and science, no claim must be seriously pressed for public infallibility. Everyone knows better nowadays.

Of presidential ratings and broken eggs

A nation which liberally treats its political history, even encourages collective amnesia as regards the unspeakable conditions of the past and the treasonous acts of its political leaders, cannot come to grips with the present



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RECENTLY some journalists in a metropolitan paper (not the *NEWSDAY*) were scorched by sources who leaked garbled survey findings on the extent of public approval for the President in Metro Manila. Citing the Social Weather Stations (SWS) July 1989 Metro Manila survey, these less than reliable sources persuaded two journalists to trumpet deteriorated public support for the President.

Indeed there had been decreasing public support for the President, as reflected in smaller proportions of the polled public saying they are satisfied with her performance as President. The journalists, however, had grossly misreported the amount of slippage in her performance rating, mistaking the margin of satisfaction (the difference between those who are and those who are not satisfied with presidential performance, about six percentage points) for the proportion of the satisfied voters in Metro Manila (in July 1989, about 35 percent).

From another point of view, the journalistic lapse was more serious. Given the politically sensitive nature of a finding of growing public disaffection with the President, the journalists should have exerted some efforts in clarifying not only the extent of public discontent, but its probable substantive characteristics. They could have called the SWS to confirm their leaked statistics

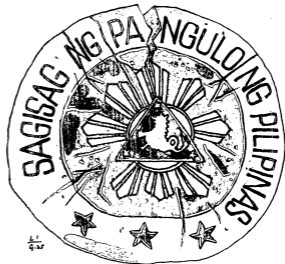
as well as asked SWS analysts for more information germane to perceived presidential performance. Failing to undertake this and in rushing to print, the journalists laid themselves open to charges of superficial reporting, if not yellow journalism.

Had the appropriate journalistic sense been applied, the general public, ever the avowed client of every journalist, would have been better informed. Some of the more salient characteristics of critical public opinion might have been better appreciated. For instance, the liberal, forbearing, and self-sacrificing nature of Filipinos comes across express satisfaction with President Aquino. Within this group of positive voters, three out of four actually say that their standard of living had worsened. It had been the same in the last year; only one in four reports being a gainer, or having an improved standard of living.

Among those unshelved about rating presidential performance (35 percent), almost half experienced no improvement in living standard; one in four actually suffered a deteriorated quality of life in the same one-year period. On the other hand, as regards those who are clearly dissatisfied (29 percent), close to half say their living standard had definitely worsened while another 41 percent report no improvement whatsoever.

Ratings of presidential performance could also reflect public expectations about their future state of life, say in the coming year. Those who look forward to better times constitute about 40 percent of Metro Manilans in July 1989. Another 40 percent are uncertain about what the future will bring while a smaller proportion (15 percent) anticipates no less than a grim future.

Among those who are satisfied with the President, half are optimistic, 38 percent are uncertain and only 7 percent are pessimistic about the future. Those who suspend judgment on presidential performance have a split opinion as to whether life would be better



(38 percent) or would be the same (39 percent), with another 14 percent expressing a worsening of conditions. The people who are dissatisfied with President Aquino are not primarily pessimists (27 percent), but optimists (33 percent) as well as those who see their current quality of life being pretty much the same in the coming year (40 percent).

These figures suggest that Metro Manilans more readily associate their satisfaction with President Aquino's performance with optimism about their future conditions than actual gains made in the past. Dissatisfaction also is more clearly related to pessimism about their future rather than actual losses in life conditions suffered in the past.

So much political capital for the current administration is

implied by this calculus of opinions. It means that the Aquino administration (or probably any other administration in our political history) is liberally evaluated by Filipinos. The crucial dimension of public opinion, insofar as potentially decisive mass political action is concerned, appears to turn on evaluations of prospective or future states. So little might be gained and so much more might be lost in fact by the public, but for as long as there is enough hope as regards the future, the citizenry would remain adequately supportive of a political administration. The fall of Marcos might be better understood in the Filipinos' despair about the future rather than the actual despoliation Marcos inflicted on his people.

A nation which liberally

treats its political history, even encourages collective amnesia as regards the unspeakable conditions of the past and the treasonous acts of its political leaders, cannot come to grips with the present. Furthermore, by focusing primarily on brighter futures illuminated neither by current or past conditions, a citizenry makes itself susceptible to authorities skillful in sustaining mass illusions.

Obviously, there is uncritical positive thinking which gives aid and comfort to tyrannical or incompetent regimes. Many Filipinos still have to understand that responsible optimism issues only from constructive dialectical thinking, a mode of thought which enables one to make an omelette precisely because he understands the creative function of breaking eggs.

Flying the flag at half mast

The issue of the flag flying at half mast is concerned not with the physical, but the political, economic and moral remains of Marcos rule

THE flag is the most substantive embodiment of the nation, not the transparent symbol of a demerited political regime nor distraught political authorities. To order that it be flown at half mast is to acknowledge that the nation mourns the death of a clearly honorable man, a patriot no less who has contributed to the well-being of his country.

The symbolic act is not a liberal's gesture where benefits of the doubt underpin the decision to honor the demise of a political actor. No ambiguity, no indecision, no vacillation, and certainly no muddled, open options are entertained in any sober decision to fly the flag at half mast for anyone.

Why does the Aquino administration often order the nation to honor the passing of Marcos, at the same time it maintains that the economic plunder of the country, the destruction of democratic government and the ravaged patrimony of the nation are the devilish handwork of Marcos and his cronies?

Some people in the current leadership (as well as others who pretend to an alternative leadership) claim that Marcos's claim to national honor is better determined by generations of Filipinos yet unborn, that a final assessment as regards his patriotic stature must be left to posterity, to those with enough perspective to objectively gauge his con-



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tributions to the well-being of his countrymen.

There is much sophistry in this view. There is no such thing as final assessment by history, by posterity, or by yet unborn generations of Filipinos regarding the worth of any political leader. All such assessments are made by specific groups of people in specific circumstances with specific interests and thus are invariably temporary and subjective evaluations.

What dignifies any group of people, be it the leadership or the entire nation, is precisely its sense of duty which compels it to clearly assess controversial issues in the light of currently available information. The concern is not even primarily one of correct assessment although this is highly

valued for obvious reasons, but that a leadership or a nation does not shrink from making a necessary assessment, and that it does not fudge in any way to leave people confounded regarding the substance of its assessment.

Those who unnecessarily complicate, confuse and confound the issue of Marcos's patriotism appear to include the highest levels of leadership in our country. President Aquino, in particular, obfuscates on this matter of Marcos's legacy to the Filipino nation.

Take one summary indicator of public esteem for Marcos in order to save on so many words. Let EDSA be that indicator. It is probably true that the darkest motivations as well as the transparent results of EDSA to date are indicative of the Pareto optimum politically expressed, that is to say the phenomenon of elite replacement by yet another elite in oligarchical regimes which mask and humor themselves as democracies. Elite changes of this sort are based on no fundamental antagonism against oligarchy and many of the oligarchs who marched in EDSA could and did make their peace with Marcos and his kind.

Nevertheless, for every oligarch who participated in EDSA out of passionately selfish interest, there could have been more than twenty ordi-

nary citizens, the *demos*, who risked life and limb precisely because EDSA meant a resolute protest against Marcos and a possible deliverance from oligarchy. Nationwide, the EDSA sentiments clearly projected itself as democratic and against Marcos and all credible attempts to gauge the national pulse on this issue reveal massive public support for precisely this EDSA sentiment. Even a demerited administration must admit this to be a fact, if only because it is the same fact which this administration exploits to argue that it must remain in power yet longer.

What conceivably could have changed the public perception such that the nation might be induced to mourn for Marcos? Against what background might the national mood be cast to warrant a public paying homage to the memory of the fallen dictator? The poor remain poor, the corrupt remain corrupt, the oligarchs remain in firm control and the vision of EDSA recedes at the speed of light. Only the administrators have changed, the administration is essentially the same. Could this continuity of national conditions and public administration have inclined the nation towards a more compassionate estimation of Marcos? Those who argue this way must be prepared to acknowledge their assessment of Filipinos as basically masochistic and fatal-

istic. Few democratic-minded Filipinos will agree with this view.

The issue of flying the flag at half mast is different from that of Marcos's physical remains being allowed to come back. The latter is trifling and does not deserve the TV coverage, the radio time, the news paper pages and all the learned words, words, words issuing from deodorized Malacañang to the stinkboxes of Quezonville. It may be summarily resolved even on non-humanitarian grounds. Even dogs, when they are not carved up for something more useful, deserve to be buried where they did their things while alive. This country cannot and should not do less for Marcos. Let his cadaver be buried and rest in peace here.

The issue of the flag flying at half mast is concerned not with the physical, but the political, economic and moral remains of Marcos rule. In this sense, the issue is not one of returning Marcos's remains. A national referendum would probably show that Marcos never left this country at all, he was simply overthrown and taken over by politicians who took advantage of the mass illusion which was EDSA.

The raising or lowering of a flag must not be seen as a ritualistic function, performed at the behest of authorities who irresponsibly induce the country to mourn and honor less than honorable Filipinos. Raising a flag to its full height calls for the determined efforts of an awakened and, at times, even revolutionary citizenry. More often than not the citizenry must struggle against the persistent efforts of politicians to keep the flag down, at half mast or much lower.

The national security and the people

The administration must account for several areas of national security which deteriorated much in the last three years. Public safety has definitely eroded, whatever the military and police authorities might say in their official reports

A LOT of wisdom attended the earliest months of the Aquino administration. Conscious of its people power origins, the administration initially heeded Machiavelli's less appreciated political line: "He who does not build on the people builds on foundations of sand."

The President proceeded to clear much democratic space, with appeals to all sectors of society to participate openly in the nation's political and economic reconstruction. Reconciliation was to be the national policy, but its premise was the rectification of parties which had grossly wronged the nation. Reconciliation being set within the greater framework of justice, restitution by these parties was also alluded to by some authorities.

The Marcos cronies, the problematic sectors within the military, the MNLF and the CPP-NPA were invited to help form a new nation, one based on the elementary idea that the nation's security transcends the interest of any single area, group, or person. Then Chief of Staff General Fidel Ramos articulated the sentiment in a June, 1986 speech when he said: "We have... redefined security to mean the security of the people and not just the security of Metro Manila, not just the security of the families of high government officials, and the security of a general, as was previously practised in the past regime."

Overwhelmed by the EDSA zeitgeist, the general pledged the military to this new democratic cause. For a start, he began referring to the military as the New AFP, even as the



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New Armed Forces of the People. Within the year, however, General Ramos would noticeably drop the "new" as well as the "people" in his allusions to the AFP.

The concept of a people-centered national security could not take off the ground, neither in the military nor in the civilian realms of government. The military found the communists much too scary and the MNLF much too deviant to seriously consider them as indeed part of the people and thus eschewed any serious collaboration with them. On the other hand, the civilian government quailed before the prospect of government without the assistance of key Marcos men and proceeded to obfuscate the reasonable character of these opportunistic collaborators.

It may thus be said that the popular core of national security eroded due to two contrasting orientations: the military's propensity to draw things strictly in terms of black

and white (or more precisely, red and all other colors where the communists are concerned), and the civilian authorities' tendency to obliterate the legitimate boundaries between treasonous acts and patriotic allegations. It may be added that the civilians' fecklessness was also reflected in the military's unwillingness to apply more than token discipline to erring members of its 160,000 strong, armed fraternity.

The security of the people consequently has been jeopardized by repeated, "unauthorized military exercises," in the form of coups as well as the more banal crimes of robberies, hold-ups, gambling, and often deadly disorderly conduct by men in uniform. More vitally, the same security of the people has been imperilled by the ease with which key Marcos people retained or wangled influential positions in civilian government, in the legislative, the executive, as well as the judiciary. Some of these civilian influentials bought their way back into respectability by surrendering mere pittance of their ill-gotten wealth or allying themselves with newly powerful political patrons. Many others who panicked in the four fearful days of February, 1986 and fled the country are now arrogantly returning without so much as a pittance by way of penance for having plundered the nation with Marcos.

The administration must account for several areas of national security which deteriorated much in the last three years. Public safety has defi-

nitely eroded, whatever the military and police authorities might say in their official reports on the crime situation in the country. The modest economic gains which might have been made are perilously unstable and suffer from being concentrated far too much in sectors that traditionally have been privileged rather than poor. Graft and corruption continue unabated and threaten the political as well as the economic life of the nation. (No relief is provided by the assertion that the monetary volume of graft and corruption might largely be the same and that what is going on is better understood as a "democratization" of opportunities for these activities. Too many public officials I briefed on survey findings regarding government graft and corruption made much of this possibility and offer it as a consolation to the harassed public!)

These dimensions of national security, public safety, equitable economic development and government with minimal "negative bureaucratic behavior" (the public administration experts' euphemism for graft and corruption) have not been effectively addressed by the Aquino administration. The problem in these areas is not simply one of more successfully informing the public as regards the accomplishments of government, a public relations job as many people in Malacañang believe it to be. The problem is one of substantive achievements before it is legitimately a problem of public relations. Lasting regimes build on firmer foundations than PR jobs.

A woman for all seasons

Competitiveness, survival and doing well, or mediocrity, bankruptcy and extinction — these are truly stark choices which people like Lilia Clemente have come to welcome as part of their daily lives...

THERE are some women (and probably as many men too) who make one feel the ennobling responsibility of being human. Whoever they might be, Socrates's Aspasia, Dante's Beatrice, or Mother Teresa, they all must be seen as committed to the full growth and development of every human being. No one is a *bonsai* artist, the supreme egotist who willfully dwarfs his subject, driven by the compulsion to stunt all forms of natural development.

Last Friday, the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women presented a petite Filipina, Lilia Clemente, an internationally acclaimed investment manager, to discuss "The Global View: Investment Issues for the 1990's." She charted the course of global economic and political developments, from the "Go-Go 1960s," to the "Problematic 1970s," the "Boom Bust of 1980s and Today," to look ahead to the trends and challenges of the 1990s.

She talked of capital asset pricing and dividend discount models, two-tier markets, covariance assets, tactical asset allocation, derivative securities, market capitalization, deregulation of securities markets, diversification of global assets and global equity investing. She also provided quick sketches of Johnsonian great society programs, Nixonomics, the Midcast Wars, Reaganomics, Thatcherism, globalization, the rise of Japan, Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost*, the restructuring of the United States, the imminent rise of a United States of Europe and the Pacific century starting even



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now. But she also concerned herself with changing gender roles, the growing demand for "freedom from mindless work, more leisure and new type[s] of work." She talked of the need to dream, but emphasized the imperative to dream with others for it is shared dreams which stand a good chance of becoming reality. She talked particularly of dreaming with the vast majority, the millions and billions of poverty-stricken human beings who live lives of collective nightmares and have forgotten how it is to dream for themselves and their children.

She discussed all these myriad things and the remarkable thing was that no one in the audience remembered Imelda and her invariably rambling perorations into history, economics, politics, psychology, culture, slave-and-star complexes and holes-in-the-skies, among other more mundane concerns.

In lieu of a nerve-shattering imeldific encounter, Lilia's audience had the rare experience of being with a woman who appeared to be sensitive to the twists and turns of every major global development in the last three decades, someone fully confident in her abilities to chart her personal future as well as that of her highly regarded New York-based investment company, and finally, a woman with a compassionate and activist concern for the less fortunate, *les miserables*, wherever they might be found.

Here was a woman, a Filipina no less, succeeding eminently in a highly competitive, mostly male-dominated world of high finance where everyone understands no special favors are truly asked nor altruistically given, where indecisiveness is clearly fatal and where even decisiveness is no guarantee of success, only a fair chance at survival and beyond. Competitiveness, survival and doing well, or mediocrity, bankruptcy and extinction — these are truly stark choices which people like Lilia have come to welcome as part of their daily lives, as characteristic features of their extremely demanding environments. These people thrive in all times, in all climes but particularly in times of crises, in veritable war zones.

No, the audience was not reminded of Imelda at all during Lilia's fairly long, superbly integrated and even inspiring talk.

However, given the global panorama she painted of multiple challenges and opportunities in the last three decades,

a panorama which she projects to remain essentially as generous or as stingy to nations in the 1990s as in the past, depending on how a people efficiently use or squander their resources and opportunities, Lilia's audience could not help thinking of our own, apparently intractable crises. Someone articulated what many had wished to ask: "If you were President of the Philippines, what measures would you take even now to maximize Philippine gains from the rest of the world in the 1990s?"

Lilia outlined the measures, even as she humorously fended off the questioner's political conditionality. She might have taken all of three minutes to reply to the very popular question. Not once did she allude to the sincerity of a leader in her answer. Consequently, she did not have to spice it with shibboleths like transparency, hopeful prayers, and open options. From the prolonged applause which ended her presentation and the subsequent open forum, I don't think anyone in the audience seriously missed the staples of Malacañang oratory.

As we trooped out of the room, many people kept remarking on how Lilia is a woman for all seasons, but the popular suspicion, I suppose, is that a woman like her is particularly indicated for the here and the now, in this country where the recent autumn of a patriarch may yet lead to a hundred years more of barren solitude, in a government where well-meaning matriarchs rule and yet unknowingly force their own people into *bonsai* culture.

The crisis of Filipino ambiguity

Especially for the weak, ambiguity is the key to survival. The poorest among our people are never ideologically identified with a political cause, only with political personalities who at the moment might be seen as relative success stories, as patrons to be touched by one's litany of misfortunes

IT IS customary when Filipinos meet to ask where one might be going. "Oy, saan ka pupunta?" The culturally indicated response is an ambiguous "Diyan lang." In this encounter, the social imperative is to acknowledge the other party's presence and to extend, however vaguely expressed, one's general concern for his well-being. There is really no serious interest in the other's destination and his usual response to the perfunctory probe is aptly non-informative.

When one is asked to publicly evaluate anything or anyone, the "safe," non-committed response is preferred by most people. As regards the character of a person or the quality of some work or product, the typical answer is "Okey lang," or "Puede na." Meticulously reasoned, forthright assessments are the exception rather than the rule.

This cultural value of ambiguity probably serves some purpose in our society. Especially for the politically weak, ambiguity is the key to survival. The poorest among our people are never ideologically identified with a political cause, only with political personalities who at the moment might be seen as relative success stories, as patrons to be touched by one's litany of misfortunes. When such personalities die, are bested, or in any way replaced, the poor do not take much time in reaching a *modus vivendi* with the new authorities, whatever might be the latter's political colors. For most of the poor, political neutrality or ambiguity facilitates this unavoidable accommodation of the poor by the



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strong.

Equally interesting is the functional value of ambiguity where the politically strong, even the dominant authorities are concerned. The case of Congressman Nicanor de Guzman, Jr. is a case in point. Effectively convicted by his peers of conduct unbecoming a member of Congress, De Guzman is not ostracized and booted out of the House, but merely suspended for behavior which links him to breaking rather than observing the law he is tasked to make.

The popular view of this dubious resolution of the De Guzman case is that it reflects the configurations of political power in the House of Representatives. More precisely, what is being said is that the merits of a disciplinary case against a member of Congress are not the decisive considerations, but the relative power position of political blocs within the House.

The Senate has its own share

of equivocal actions. Its reluctance to conduct an investigation into the alleged "sexcapades" of some senators unfairly compromised the reputation of three lawmakers; worse, the integrity of the chamber itself was compromised. Public cynicism inevitably attends the perceived inability of a government agency to investigate members of its own fraternity.

The Executive's flair for ambiguity borders on the theatrical. Sirident calls for catching the big fishes of graft and corruption are matched by the quiet resolve to gently release those which had been miraculously netted. National security scenarios which align themselves more with hysterical paranoia rather than dispassionate, rational analysis of political developments prop up political decisions of questionable wisdom. The administration excoriates Marcos as the root of most evils in the Philippines today, yet it orders the Philippine flag to fly at half mast in honor of the dead dictator.

The Judiciary too has its moments of less than clear decision-making. The Supreme Court ruling on the petition to allow Marcos to return to the Philippines finds the justices evenly split until the Chief Justice cast his vote to deny the petition. The justices' ambivalence is reflected by the court's expressed unwillingness to have its decision establish a precedent for similar cases. Those who are more legally-oriented point out that the Court might have erred in situating the Executive's right to forbid

the Marcos return in the President's residual powers, something they claim might be entertained under the 1986 Freedom Constitution, but not the present one.

The list could go on and on. Beyond the primary agencies of government, one could look into the ambiguities of media, the church, the schools and perhaps even the most basic social institution, the family itself. Everywhere in the country, there appears to be much skepticism, even cynicism as regards the most basic values of Philippine society.

Heels and heroes, traitors and patriots, crooks and lawmen, the bad and the good — nowhere in Philippine history do we encounter as much confusion as at present on when to draw the line between one and the other. And so we go about our respective ways, refusing to clearly assess our society, institutions and people. Everyone and everything is as good or as bad as any other person, any other thing. We have reached a stage in our history which the thinker Marcuse referred to two decades ago as one of "pure tolerance," a condition of universal cynicism, gross moral relativity, and rampant anarchy.

Until after our crisis of ambiguity is resolved, our society and people will continue to pay a very high price simply to physically survive from one day to another. We cannot prosper until a critical mass of our citizenry is able to critically pose the question, "Saan tayo pupunta?" and answer it with something better than "Diyan lang."

Education and equity

It is to the credit of UP authorities that the ironic biases against the poor have been recognized and, more importantly, acted upon ... UP's success in this endeavor will be best indicated by traffic flow on campus sometime next year as freshman aspirants come again to the university

LAST Sunday traffic jammed the Diliman campus of the University of the Philippines. A good portion of over thirty thousand students applying for UP admission took their entrance examination in Diliman. Only six to eight thousand from this pool of thirty thousand applicants will make it to UP in the coming school year.

The candidates for admission mostly came in private cars and jeeps instead of buses and jeepneys. A significant number of the private cars included 1989 models and luxury brands like Mercedes Benz, BMW, Toyota Cressida and Crown, Mitsubishi Galant Super Saloon, and Nissan Maxima, among others. Many of the hopeful examinees could be seen driving their own cars as they frantically scouted for parking spaces.

The snarled traffic in the normally quiet campus recalls the frenzied rush for bargain sales in some department stores. Indeed, a UP education is one of the best bargains currently available: quality college education for less than a dollar a day, much less than the cost of pizza or cheeseburger, even for those who would pay the full tuition of P8,000 for two semesters in UP. (And there is a better than even chance that one would pay only a small fraction of this full tuition!) No wonder those who regularly can afford pizzas, cheeseburgers and coke for lunch rush to UP come entrance examination time. In the last two decades at least, these people have crowded out those whose diets primarily included dried fish, some kangkong, cheap rice and lots of low calorie, drinking



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water for lunch. Performance in the UP college admission tests somehow correlated best with high protein meals, preferably served in urban settings.

A year ago, the World Bank came up with a study titled "The Philippines: The Challenge of Poverty." One of its most predictable findings concerns the inequitable character of educational opportunities in the country.

The report's text deserves a full quotation: "Although the majority of the poor have access to elementary education, the educational system in the Philippines is regressive at all levels. The regressivity of education at the elementary level stems from the variance in quality, where poorer students receive lower quality services. In secondary education, there is not only inequality within public schools, but also lack of access to the higher quality private system. The regressivity becomes more acute in tertiary education where subsidies are larger and go mostly to higher income students."

The report documents the systematic biases which work against the poor in gaining an education. When the poor can go to school at all (mostly in the elementary stage of education), they have to make do with public schools which are poorly provisioned in terms of physical facilities, textbooks and competent teaching personnel. By the time they enter the secondary school, the great economic reaper rather than genetic intelligence has cut down their number to six or seven of the original ten who started elementary schooling. Hardly anyone from families who could afford pizzas and hamburgers become casualties during this period, even as they stay in academically better endowed public and private schools.

In the secondary stage, the additional bias of access to quality private high schools is strengthened and works against the already depleted ranks of scholars from the poor. Pizza and hamburger eaters already disproportionately predominate in this type of schools. Their families are not intimidated by the high cost of education in these relatively expensive private schools.

The ultimate bias against the poor is reserved for tertiary education. Whereas in the elementary, the poor are handicapped because they are educated mostly in lower quality public schools, and in the secondary because many of them drop out as they are unable to afford the cost of high school education, in the tertiary or university level the poor (including those who are unable to continue schooling at any level) are forced to subsidize

the well-off. Students in state colleges and universities. The latter, given their marked edge in passing college admission tests, reap the benefits of quality college education even as the poor are saddled with the costs of providing these benefits.

It is to the credit of UP authorities that the ironic biases against the poor have been recognized and, more importantly, acted upon. Starting last semester, the *Iskolar ng Bayan*, a program to neutralize anti-poor biases has been activated. While passing the college admission test in UP continues to have a PH bias, the university is already facilitating the successful stay of poorer students who somehow manage to make it through this test. A package of tuition scholarship, book allowance and monthly stipends is already in place. Work is continuing on a less socioeconomically discriminatory instrument for evaluating applicants for a UP education. Furthermore, the university is continuing to impress on its privileged studentry that a truly socialized education must never be equated with freeloading at the expense of the public and particularly the poor.

It takes quite a while for this message to be accepted and for all the institutional support for socialized education to be set up. A university administration which is exerting itself to reverse historical inequities in the realm of education deserves all the support of responsible Filipinos. UP's success in this endeavor will be best indicated by traffic flow on campus sometime next year as freshman aspirants come again to UP.

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Microgovernment and public expectations

The Anti-carnapping Task Force is a good case study of a gov't agency which has been saddled with a poor public image and unrealistic public expectations despite its rather decent performance

EXPECTATIONS obviously condition public perceptions of government performance. Where public expectations are grounded on a pragmatic understanding of current conditions and the resources available for their amelioration, the government must be seen extremely fortunate and enjoying a political windfall. Whether the authorities make good use of this capital or squanders it is of course another matter.

There is evidence indicating level-headed public expectations of the national government. Social Weather Stations surveys in the last three years chart the continuing, though much eroded public support for the present government in its economic as well as political operations.

There are no comparable studies of public sentiments for smaller government agencies. Yet, it is mostly these microgovernment units that the public directly deal with and on which their assessments of overall government performance depend. Public expectations as well as evaluations of small agency performance have been vulnerable to manipulation by sensationalist media or imperfectly guided by the probably atypical experiences of a few articulate people.

Take the case of the Anti-Carnapping Task Force (ACTF) of the PC/INP. Set up in 1972 to curb carnapping and allied illegal activities in the country, this agency has developed a public image which is not all that positive. News reports, opinion pieces and letters to the editor more often than not reflect badly on the agency's efficiency and its personnel's integrity.

One might inquire into the substantive bases of the pub-



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lic's image and their expectations of the ACTF. In this case, it is doubtful that the public know enough about the formidable tasks and the less than formidable resources assigned to the agency. Neither is it probable that its accomplishments have been properly communicated to, and accordingly appreciated by, the public. Consequently, the ACTF's public image through the years could be anything but objectively correct.

The ACTF's Clearance Officer, Major Bernabe Sagsagat, appears philosophical concerning ACTF's mandate. His main concern is the balance necessary between responsibility and resources. As is the case in many government agencies, the awesome tasks given the ACTF appear to overwhelm the meager resources committed to their accomplishment.

In Metro Manila alone where approximately 700,000 vehicles challenge the meager monitoring capabilities of the ACTF, the agency is responsible for inspecting personal as well as institutional vehicles for possible criminal violations. Between August 1988 and September 1989, Major

Sagsagat's clearance unit processed 161,266 clearance applications. His staff of 53 people checked for engine and chassis numbers, color change, transfer of ownership and vehicle registration, among other things. Averaging 576 applications for clearance daily during this period, they still managed to clear 154,365 vehicles or an average of 569 daily. In the process, they identified 453 vehicles which were impounded for being on the wanted or carnapped list or for having tampered engine or chassis numbers. (One of the vehicles recovered in 1988 was carnapped in 1971 from a young second lieutenant, a 1971 PMA graduate. The car was a graduation gift from his mother. Now a full colonel, he and his 17 year-old Toyota Crown have been finally reunited.)

Apart from records verification and macro-etching (a process introduced in 1987 which has made for more efficient detection of tampered engine and chassis numbers), clearing a vehicle submitted for inspection means checking it against a list of over 20,000 vehicles reported carnapped, missing or tampered with in the last 27 years. Without enough, reliably functioning computers nor up-to-date, computerized records, the process of visual inspection and clearance issuance takes at least two working days. (Major Sagsagat's fond hope is to be able to reduce this waiting time to one working day, but he acknowledges that current and foreseeable resources levels in his unit militate against this outcome.)

The ACTF is a good case study of a government agency which has been saddled with a poor public image and unrealistic public expectations de-

spite its rather decent performance. The public see it as a major annoyance, if the views of those waiting for their vehicles to be inspected or for their clearances to be issued are any indication. Many even see it as a focal point of graft and corruption, where to get one's vehicle cleared it is convenient to have influential patrons, preferably military men who could unduly intervene in the process of clearing. (As the good major acknowledged, some of his own personnel might not be completely resistant to "a negative bureaucratic attitude," which predisposes towards "petty graft" in some cases.)

Much of the problem really might be solved by assigning the resources appropriately demanded by a viable anti-carnapping campaign. There are, however, other equally important considerations. The public definitely has to be better informed about the rationale for the ACTF's operations and their materially beneficial results. Furthermore, public psychology badly needs attending to. One of the most exasperating things, after waiting for hours for one's vehicle to be inspected and a day or two for a clearance to be issued, is paying a three-peso charge for his clearance paper. One cannot help associating the paltry charge with a perception of so much wasted time. Either one is charged substantially more (after all the security paper on which the clearance is typed already costs government four pesos, according to Major Sagsagat), or else, following the full logic of public service, the charge should be completely waived. Either way the public dealing with ACTF might be less vexed and more readily sympathetic with its taxing work.

The curse of erosion

Our current crises must be attributed to a lack of vision which keeps us from anticipating the terrible consequences of piecemeal thinking...

MEDIA and Malacañang had a common reaction to the results of Ateneo University's August 1989 national public opinion survey. They expressed much concern with the apparently continuing erosion of public satisfaction with President Aquino's performance as a public official. Media and Malacañang acknowledged the need for government as a whole to exert itself more to arrest what appears to be a growing public disillusionment with government agencies and their lead officials.

In the last two years, academic surveys done by the Ateneo University and the independent Social Weather Stations have charted the public's growing disenchantment with President Aquino as well as most of her Cabinet members. Two things which escape the attention of most sensationalist-minded media men reporting on survey results should be noted. First, with the exception of the national survey conducted soon after the August 1987 coup, dramatic decreases in public satisfaction with President Aquino are not discernible from one survey to the next. What has been taking place is most aptly described as an erosion of public confidence in this administration's ability to manage the affairs of the country and, in particular, the presidency. Second, one cannot rule out the probability of restoring greater public confidence in President Aquino, should she be perceived as being much more decisive as a political leader.

On the first point, it takes at least a year for presidential performance ratings to drop dramatically (that is to say, with the margins of error built into the SWS and Ateneo surveys, for someone to be able to say the proportions of those satisfied or dissatisfied with President Aquino have definitely markedly increased or



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decreased). Between a survey and the one immediately preceding or following it, one usually does not get dramatically differing results.

Take the proportions of people expressing satisfaction with President Aquino in the last four surveys of Ateneo University: 76 percent in February 1988, 73 percent in August 1988, 64 percent in February 1989 and 58 percent in August 1989. The surveys' margin of error permits any of these figures to be read either with a minus 3 or a plus 3. It is clear that from February 1988 to August 1989, there has been a 20 percent to 30 percent drop in the proportion of people satisfied with President Aquino. However, an error margin of plus or minus 3 means there might have been no significant change from February 1988 (73 percent) to August 1988 (76 percent), a significant but less than dramatic change from August 1988 (the figure here could be 76 minus 3 or 73 percent) to February 1989 (which could be 64 plus 3 or 67 percent), for a decrease of only 6 percentage points from August 1988), and again possibly no significant change between February 1989 (whose 64 could be read as minus 3 or 61 percent) and August 1989 (which could be

read as 58 plus 3 or 61 percent, with a net zero increase or decrease relative to February 1989).

This pattern of sustained, gradual erosion leading to long-term critical proportions appears to be true of presidential performance ratings as well as other things in this country. Our main indicators of development, whether they be economic, political or social, generally reveal protracted deterioration through time. Whether we are talking of the foreign debt or the state of public safety and education nationwide, or even simply of the traffic conditions and smoke belching in Metro Manila, the inescapable conclusion is that the catastrophes in these areas initially nibbled their way into our present times.

Our current crises must be attributed to either a lack of vision which keeps us from anticipating the terrible consequences of piecemeal thinking, or a lack of seriousness of character which might even encourage integrated, visionary thinking but keeps it at the level of rhetoric. For both handicaps, it is not so much the people in general as the leadership which must suffer the greater responsibility.

There is some evidence from survey data showing how our people crave strong-willed and decisive leadership. As monitored by a Social Weather Stations survey, President Aquino's first and so far only precipitous loss in public confidence, was soon after the August 1987 coup. Whether she was stung to public decisiveness after the coup by basically personal or more clearly political reasons are not all that important; the public favorably reacted to her resolute pronouncements on how the coup plotters must be handled and, after her October 20, 1987 take-charge speech, once more

gifted her with head-turning performance ratings by February 1988.

There are some data firming up that this presidential rebound in public estimation could once again happen. Her July 1989 state-of-the-nation speech as well as some of her strong injunctions to members of her Cabinet to perform better or else meet their deserved fate could still shore up eroded public confidence in her. The latest Ateneo survey, for instance, already indicates that she has regained the support of the poorer classes. (In briefing her on current public opinion in Metro Manila last September, I had occasion to point out that unlike any other President for whom survey data exist, she no longer enjoyed a significantly larger proportion of support from the poorer classes as of August 1989. I tried to impress on the President that this development must be considered more crucial than even the trend towards lower levels of popular support. Even the embattled Marcos, as late as September 1985, enjoyed greater support from the poor than Aquino did in July 1989. A President who has been deserted even by the poor, I thought, must indeed be the loneliest, perhaps also the most threatened of all political creatures.)

There must be a limit to the number of times even a president like Aquino could rebound in public confidence. Should the popular perception of presidential decisiveness be unable to sustain itself again on objective grounds, the jaded public could irreversibly commit itself to cynicism and progressive political alienation. The wisest course of action then would be for many of us to prepare for a deluvian scenario. Erosions prelude deluges, so environmentalists would say. Political analysts cannot much differ with them.

Economics as it really matters

The underground economy continues to flourish because gov't has not inflicted a development plan on its operators, because policy makers and well-meaning economists have not intruded successfully into their daily operators

IT IS doubtful that in 1983 economists suspected the strength and resiliency of the Philippine economy. The main reason for this could be their bias for elegant analytical frames focused on the interaction of economic factors amenable to relatively easy identification, operationalization and integration into neat, formal models of the economy.

The vocabulary of economic modeling often betrays some arrogance. Consider how empirical conditions that the model cannot accommodate are passed off at times as "imperfections" or "distortions," rather than outright limitations, of the pure model. The physical world thus represents an imperfect or distorted state of the economist's analytical model. (Shades of Platonism and Judeo-Christian theological thinking! And worse yet, we are left in the dark as to whether the economist is clearly arguing for the alignment of the real world with his much fancied model, a procrustean preference, or promising, next time around, a model more reflective of and responsive to the reality he is analyzing!)

Or how casually those things that actually cannot be comprehended or predicted by an economic model are attributed to "exogenous variables," the theorist's euphemism for saying he does not know and his model cannot account for possibly embarrassing, eyebrow-raising real life outcomes.

Most economic analysis and modeling also betray a distinct bias against a deliberate inclusion of political factors which underpin or decisively determine the configuration of actual economic developments. Political economy is not the most dynamic of the economic profession's concerns, except perhaps in Latin-America and other Third World countries where classi-



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cal and neoclassical economic analyses have amply revealed their limitations.

In refusing to include political parameters in their analysis, economists have become the darlings of authoritarian regimes, where too revealing an inquiry into the political foundations of the national economy is rightly construed as a form of subversive activity. Our economists largely ignored political economy work until 1984, when a group from the UP School of Economics collaborated in the influential "white paper" on the Philippine economy. There was hardly anything in that celebrated study which was not already known two or three years earlier. The poor state of the national economy, the regressive character of public finance, the accelerating capital flight, the deepening foreign indebtedness, the coconut levy mess, the "political" banks, even the very personalities who, being smarter than others, plundered the national economy with impunity—all of these were fairly well known to most of the serious and technically competent economists in the country. It nevertheless took a series of shocking national events to push them into publicly articu-

lating what they had either suspected or known for a long time.

Economic speculation from late 1983 up to early 1986 mostly turned on economic breakdown, dislocation and otherwise disastrous scenarios for the national economy. Economics was never more the dismal science as during this time. Paradoxically, the much-feared breakdown never came about and economists marvel-ed much that the system somehow held up.

Economic analysis then had not paid enough attention to the informal or "underground" economy, apparently counting for as much as 30 to 40 percent of the national economy. The informal sector simply had not been factored enough into analyses by formal economists because it did not readily allow for inclusion into already neat, elegant models of the economy. The data which would have established the extent and operations of this sector were not readily available. Neither the government's economic monitoring system nor the academic researches of professional economists interested themselves much in the economic activities of innumerable street hawkers, mostly unregistered, small, even portable artisan shops and *talipapa*, micro *sari-sari* stores, mushroom-type *turo-turo* and *karindaria* (among the most successful were those plying their daily trade behind the very walls of the UP School of Economics and College of Business Administration, serving tasty, inexpensive meals and doing well even as the University's own Food Service continues to lose money on glamorized, exorbitantly-priced prison fare served to captive faculty members and students) and other comparable establishments all over the country.

The informal economy continued to flourish precisely because government had not inflicted a development plan on its operators, because policy makers and well-meaning economists had not intruded successfully into their daily operations and they had to contend merely with "*long*," "*lagay*," "*pang-ayos*," and other donations of a similarly involuntary nature.

The underground, informal economy protected itself against government technocrats' bungling by ignoring or avoiding the web of bureaucratic rules and regulations which stifled entrepreneurial initiative and productivity. It ignored the emasculating effects of regressive taxation, avoided the penalizing effects of aboveground foreign currency remittances, and thumbed its nose at labor regulations curbing the entrepreneurial spirit. In prospering, the underground economy and its hundreds of thousands of small patriots gave the lie to the minority of big-time traitors who messed up all sectors of the economy which government and its minions were able to control. The informal and underground economy, without the benefits of professional, economic expertise, simply, effectively kept the national economy from breaking down.

A lesson appears to be indicated by this presentation. There ought to be an introductory economics course where matters such as the ones alluded to here might be more intensively studied and appreciated especially by our young people. That way they will learn economics as it really matters, not as some technical exercise in sterile model-building. Having survived the Marcos years, some economists ought to be able to handle this introductory course competently.

Constitutionalism and the military, Part I

Constitutionalism is a long process presuming a successful internalization of values which must be held in productive tension, those of patriotism and decisiveness on one hand, and that of military restraint on the other

THE 1987 Philippine Constitution anticipates challenges which a disaffected military might mount against a constitutionally-defined civil order. Many provisions reiterate the principle of civilian supremacy and try to ensure civil control over the military. All military men are required to take an oath affirming their loyalty to the Constitution (Article XVI, section 5). The line of command within the military and beyond explicitly identifies the President of the Republic as the commander-in-chief of all armed forces in the country (Article VII, section 18). All military appointments from the rank of colonel or navy captain need confirmation by the Commission on Appointments, a civilian body (Article VII, section 16).

The provision establishing an integrated police force, "national in scope and civilian in character," (Article XVI, section 6) is suggestive of an attempt to guard against military preeminence in Philippine politics. A vitalized national police, as mandated by the Constitution, could be a countervailing force against a politically ambitious military.

Constitutional anxiety for the military is indicated by an odd mention of the Armed Forces of the Philippines by name even before the Government itself or any of its three major departments is explicitly alluded to (Article II, section 3). Among the world's 160 to 170 national constitutions, the Philippine Constitution of 1987 might be the only one reflecting this curious aberration.

The constitutional worry



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could be legitimate. Some evidence indicates that 70 percent to 80 percent of the military voted against ratification in the same plebiscite where more than 80 percent of the nation endorsed the Constitution. Although soldiers have taken their required oath of constitutional allegiance, their opposition to the draft constitution has made the civilian authorities skittish whenever coup rumors surface. As for the rest of the nation, repeated "unauthorized military exercises" in the last three years have triggered much apprehension.

As the Department of National Defense celebrates its 50th anniversary, a crucial question which might be raised is the extent to which the Department, a civilian agency, has contributed to building up a constitutionalist spirit within the military. A clear answer to this question is demanded by the confluence of developments and perceptions which could tempt some military men to

political take-over.

Thinking military men could be impressed by the general erosion of public faith or confidence in government, its various institutions and most of its lead authorities, as reflected in credible public opinion surveys. They could note that the sense of public cynicism in government might not have increased as much for the military as in the civilian sectors. Furthermore, they might reflect on how, among the very few leaders who appear to have maintained public confidence, a military man taking to a civilian career appears to have posted the best track record in the last three years.

Hitch these thoughts to popular perceptions of widespread graft and corruption in government, fecklessness and indecisiveness in dealing with issues of public safety and national security, unwarranted arrogance on the part of some civilian politicians in their dealings with military men, and, as in the case of the pending Senate bill establishing the Philippine National Police, patent unfairness in provisions discriminating against the most senior constabulary officers.

Finally, thinking military men might take note of the various, often cited success stories like Thailand, Taiwan, South Korea and a few other countries where national consolidation and relatively more efficient public administration bore imprints of military intervention.

All these are heady and dangerous thoughts for military men whose recent institutional history reveals much politicization.

The Department of National Defense and the civilian government as a whole might have addressed some of the crucial gripes of military men, as in the case of improved pay scales and other material benefits, relatively more and better equipment for the field soldier, improved ratios for soldiers in headquarters and other office positions on one hand and in field assignments on the other, and a more rational system of military promotions. All of these achievements, it might be pointed out, are necessary conditions of a successful process of professionalizing a military, but they are not sufficient guarantors of a constitutionalist mind-set among military men.

Constitutionalism is a long process presuming a successful internalization of values which must be held in productive tension, those of patriotism and decisiveness on one hand, and that of military restraint on the other. The DND might point to its value formation programs as part of a general attempt to build a stronger sense of constitutionalism. This is generally true. However, the current value formation programs in the military need situating within the present context of popularly perceived ineffectiveness and indecisiveness of civilian government. Explicit, candid treatments of the current political environment and why the military must continue to politically obligate itself to an admittedly soft constitutional order are *de rigueur* for thinking military men. My next article will explore this perilous question of military accommodation.

Constitutionalism and the military, Part II

The dictates of patriotism and decisiveness must be projected as clearly bounded by a constitutionalist framework

THE EXPOSURE of military men to civilian functions and politicians in the last two decades stripped the mystic of civilian rule and military subordination. Too many of our civilian officials and political figures left indelible impressions of ineptitude, opportunism and corruption among military men interacting with them in the martial law years. Invaluable political capital in the form of military men automatically extending their respect and support for civilian authorities dissipated. For far too many military men, familiarity with civilian officials and politicians bred well-deserved contempt.

This attitude of many military men is understandable, given their own management capabilities honed by academic training as well as actual experience in government and private firms. There is a strong conviction in the military that running a government is a formidable task, but that they could do it at least as well as or no worse than the current crop of bungling and corrupt civilian officials and politicians.

Military men, in the face of much publicized nationwide perceptions of governmental weakness, inefficiency and general indecisiveness, could be thinking the unthinkable: why must we continue to support this soft constitutional order, why should we continue to obey civilian authorities who appear incapable of national development and are, at times, even outrightly hostile to military men who secure them?

There is no way now for civilian authorities to abort these dangerous thoughts. The years of martial rule and the last three years of the Aquino administration conspire to fertilize these perilous ideas. The



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problem now is how to keep ideas of military intervention from reaching full term, from being so well nurtured by political and economic realities that they are delivered in the final form of a successful military coup.

Obviously, the best response of a concerned civilian government to a military challenge which might be building up is to improve the level and quality of government performance. This strategy serves to undercut military intervention in two ways. First, it provides military men with an alternative conception of civilian government as being reasonably effective and contrary views as being objectively wrong or politically motivated. Second, it builds up the government's citizen mass base and thus make it less likely for military plotters to succeed should they attempt an overthrow of the civilian authorities.

Together with a credible performance response, civilian authorities have to clarify and make use of two traits which thinking military men probably have: patriotism and decisiveness. The operationaliza-

tion of these concepts must pressure the military men to apply it first on themselves, ahead of the civilian authorities. The tactical objective here is to sufficiently moderate the military's eagerness in expropriating the moral high ground for themselves.

Patriotism and decisiveness must be presented to military men, particularly the officer corps, as served by a willful determination to put institutional and national integrity over personal integrity. An officer who refuses to be on the take but will not inform on or actively help prosecute his peers might have personal integrity but sadly serves no

focus of any program aspiring to strengthen constitutionalism within the military.

The dictates of patriotism and decisiveness must be projected as clearly bounded by a constitutionalist framework. Patriotic and decisive military men must be reminded of constraints which the people, in ratifying the 1987 Constitution, defined for all political forces and institutions in the country. Popular election is a constraint set for those who aspire for political power. Thinking military men may be reminded of politically influential personalities who were former members of the military and who, via electoral exercises as well as legal appointment processes, assumed positions of political eminence. They could be further informed that to date, the most consistently appreciated political figure in the Philippines is a former military man who appears to have protected the government against unconstitutional takeover.

Yet, after acknowledging how the people and their Constitution define the limits of legitimate political action, constitutionalism might be more strongly served by reminding those in uniform that they are custodians of the Constitution, and that ultimately the strength of the Constitution is markedly strengthened or weakened by the very actions of its guardians.

None of these prescriptions actually bar a patriotic and decisive military from launching a coup against inept, indecisive and corrupt authorities. However, they do make the calculus of political takeover a more taxing one for thinking and decisive military men, especially if they also happen to be patriotic Filipinos.



more than a very limited, selfish objective. A nation, it might be pointedly argued, is not patriotically nor decisively served in this manner.

Even as civilian authorities relative to military men might be perceived as grossly deficient in patriotism or decisiveness, military men must be re-oriented to a comparison between the military's previous and its current performance as a critical institution. A resolute, continuous and transparently productive house-cleaning within the military could be focused on as a desirable

The spirits of '92

Until the substantive character of our people is subjected to more penetrating probes, our explorations of presidential polls and contenders must be limited to being the delightful exercises of precisely those who influence political outcomes

LAST SATURDAY the Philippine Futuristics Society hosted a group of seers to conjure the presidential spirits of 1992. The seers obliged but not before going through a ritual of environmental assessments. They explored the traditional features and continuing trends of the Philippine political system as well as its emergent socio-economic and political "discontinuities," and set up alternative political scenarios for the next two and a half years. Within the bounds of these comprehensive parameters, the track records, the political resources, the pluses and minuses of no fewer than 26 political spirits were plotted.

The seers' final consensus appears to be that if President Aquino still wanted the job, she can have it by re-election in 1992. (Constitutional amendments to cure re-election infirmities would have been effected between now and election time.) Other parties who contemplate the displacement of the President by 1992 must console themselves with low probability outcomes such as presidential assassination, civilian-military insurrection and presidential abdication. For yet others on the list of 26 notables, the more realistic view would have to be making do with vice-presidential slots in a 1992 electoral contest. And, still according to the seers, aggressively positioning themselves for the presidency in 1998.

The political scenarios invoked by the seers included two-party, multi-party and co-



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alition party struggles in 1992, with each scenario outlining the various parties' and their lead personalities' organization as well as mobilization requirements. Time, personnel, funds and strategic planning are crucial considerations even now for all of the parties analyzed.

The island character of the country, the geographic patterns of voters' concentration (the lead seer coined the term "Lingay-en-Lucena corridor" to refer to a belt of voters strategically accounting for 38 percent of the national votes), the role played in elections by the three P's (party, platform and propaganda, or its variant, party packaging, promotion and propaganda), the critical character of "tantrum politics" (or expertly thought out and deliberately staged public display of temper by politicians with a well-developed sense of drama)

— all of these items among so many others were analytically and entertainingly looked into by the seers for the better part of last Saturday.

Fearless forecasts, not necessarily by completely uninterested seers: Doy Laurel, at best number 2, never number 1; Doy Laurel, absolutely the only one who could challenge the Queen in 1992 and be number 1; Salonga, a hard sell; Mitra, not only a hard sell, probably an impossible sell; Peping Cojuangco, king or co-king-maker, but unlikely king; Ramos, desperately needs a more extensive and better organized political base than public opinion survey groups can provide; Maceda, the man who would be king needs to be blessed by the queen, so how is this going to be done, through whom, with whom? Imelda, Imelda who? Imelda and Danding Cojuangco, how do they make it to the Philippines between now and 1992? Through whom, with whom?

For all the comprehensiveness, sophistication and apparently hard-nosed, "mechanic's" diagnoses of the presidential possibilities for 1992, one nevertheless felt uneasy at the end of the half-day symposium. Far too much attention was focused on aggressive and manipulative party organizations and political personalities. There was precious little about the mass of citizenry as they might view the notables contemplating the presidency in 1992, or as they might be moved to organize in ways that make traditional

political leaders marginal to the process of political mobilization. A summary discussion of public perceptions of the elite was confined to how 4 or 5 M's (all personal qualities of a candidate starting with the letter M, as in "matapang," "madaling lapitan," etc.) determine laymen's estimation of any candidate for public office.

Not enough attention was focused on why Filipino voters might be becoming more and more apathetic to political exercises and consider elections as peripheral to their lives. Or, beyond apathy, why their political disillusionment and cynicism are such that fully one-half of Filipino adults believe it is possible for Filipinos to give up on peaceful means of effecting change in the country? Three-fourths in fact cannot identify with the optimistic view that Filipinos will never consider violence as a legitimate means of social change.

Until the substantive character of our people is subjected to more penetrating probes and we are able to more objectively assess the extent of their participation in our political processes, our explorations of presidential elections and presidential contenders must limit themselves to being the delightful, even insightful exercises of precisely those who influence political outcomes in this country. Our people probably have only a little part to play in our political drama. It would be surprising indeed if they got all that excited in presidential derbies, as we clearly are.

Political corruption and idiocy

The public call for dramatic action to curb corruption in the Aquino administration is clear. Almost 6 out of 10 respondents agree that corrupt government officials are greater threats to the country than the NPA

THERE are few among us who would refer to the politically corrupt in this country as idiots. The common impression, as a matter of fact, is that they number among the brightest and smartest in our government who systematically plunder or filch the public treasury or, in so many other ways, regularly violate the republic.

As in so many things political, the ancient Greeks developed a clearer vision of political corruption. Their community, the *polis*, is essentially defined in terms of the consensus that there is among citizens a common interest, the public welfare which is the beginning as well as the end of all political association. Those who live in community with other human beings and lead their lives guided by this commitment to the public welfare are called the political men, *politai*. Other who may physically reside in the community of citizens but act selfishly, in violation of the common interest, are *idiotes*.

The enemies of the people are idiots because the Greeks believed that it is largely ignorance, non-knowledge of the public interest, which explains why any member of the polity could possibly act contrary to the welfare of his community. Any man who knows the difference between good and evil, between what is good for his community and that which violates it, would tend to act on the basis of what is good and in the public interest. The cure for idiocy is therefore, logically,



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education. Where for any reason this therapy fails, the idiots are ostracized or exiled, perhaps to live with the gods or the beasts, but in any case to be banned from the company of his fellow citizens.

Filipinos at present perceive political corruption as one of their most serious concerns. Even as this problem has deep historical roots, there is prevalent feeling that at no time has governmental graft and corruption been as extensive as now. If some outspoken public officials are to be believed, The magnitude of this pernicious activity can run anywhere between 15 percent to 70 percent of government agency budgets.

In a Metro Manila survey done by the Social Weather Stations last July 1989, about half of the respondents of 51 percent excoriated the Cory Administration for poorly

handling graft and corruption in government. Only one in four (26 percent) disagreed with this critical opinion and expressed satisfaction with the Administration's efforts.

More than half (54 percent) of those interviewed described government graft and corruption as of alarming proportions. A sizeable plurality (41 percent) actually believed that there is more graft and corruption in the Aquino than in the previous Marcos administration. A much smaller proportion (25 percent) of respondents disagreed with this plurality view.

Public cynicism is indicated by a majority (56 percent) saying that most public officials who are linked to anomalies are guilty parties. An overwhelming majority (87 percent) would have these officials immediately suspended from office.

There is patent disaffection with the President, with 53 percent of the respondents feeling that she cannot discipline her appointees who have been linked to graft and corruption in government. Only 12 percent of those interviewed disagreed with this perception of presidential weakness.

The public call for dramatic action to curb corruption in the Aquino administration is clear. Almost 6 out of 10 respondents agree that corrupt government officials are greater threats to the country than the NPA rebels. It is as if people were telling the President that the real subversives are those around her who use public positions

for illegitimate private gain. The continuing vulnerability of many of her appointees to charges of corruption could significantly erode presidential credibility. Without dramatic, well-publicized presidential action to minimize graft and corruption, the public might yet conclude that Aquino herself is one of the active nodes in this vast network of corrupt public officials.

The public's call for the sternest measures against graft and corruption is not a new one. Earlier surveys done in 1981 and 1985 also reflect the impatience of the people with the languid pace of the authorities in dealing with this problem of an internally hemorrhaging body politic. Our leaders now would do well to learn from the experience of Marcos, as well as other recent examples of leaders who failed to appreciate the real public interest in their respective societies.

Authorities who did not curb political corruption significantly and in time, suffered ostracism and exile from their own political communities. In losing their political legitimacy, these authorities betrayed themselves to be much less than smart or bright. The smartest and the brightest, on the other hand, heeded the people and built on them. These durable authorities are ultimately revealed to be *politai*, seldom *idiotes*. It must be an iron law of politics brooking few exceptions, that idiots make for neither listing nor truly productive political regimes.

Beyond freedom and democracy

The emasculation of government's political will is reflected by its inability to sustain nationalistic policy directions in such areas as agrarian reform, foreign debt, and US military bases

MOSTLY EVERYONE has remarked on the Filipinos' love for freedom and preference for democratic government. The observation is probably objectively true. Nevertheless, as anarchy builds up and the government's will to govern increasingly becomes suspect, popular faith in freedom and democracy could well decline.

Indicators of increasing anarchy are not difficult to come by. The alarming state of public safety, the comprehensiveness of criminal operations as well as the high incidence rate of index crimes, the proliferation of nefarious syndicates and private armies, the Hobbesian condition of vehicular and pedestrian traffic, the insolence of monopolistic utility companies, even the irresponsible and largely unreported sensationalism of many in the press are clear indicators of our current anarchy.

The emasculation of government's political will is reflected by its inability to sustain progressive, nationalistic policy directions in such areas as the country's agrarian reform, the foreign debt and the military bases accessed by foreign powers. On these vital issues, government has responded with much less than decisively nationalistic policies. The Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law is a much diluted version of what is needed to curb the undue influence of landowners in any society seeking equitable improvements in agrarian relations. The self-imposed commitment to *bonsai* one's national growth by pledging to pay all of the country's foreign debts, making no distinction between the legitimate, the questionably legitimate and the clearly illegitimate loans incurred by a plundering administration, is at least a spineless accommodation to foreign interests by the present admini-



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stration and, worse, possibly a betrayal of the people. As regards the issue of the military bases, a non-transparent, "open-options" policy as late as November 1989 reflects either a failure to appreciate the leverage provided by clear, even concededly public bargaining positions, or a subterfuge to trick the public into believing that the administration is still indifferent and thus has no particular, preferred alternative regarding the military bases question.

In the midst of this perceived anarchy and government indecision, some danger signs might be seen as being flashed by an exasperated Filipino public. A big majority of Filipinos refuse to rule out the possibility of popular disillusionment with peaceful means of effecting change in this country. Nationwide surveys done by the Social Weather Stations (SWS) in the last two years suggest that roughly seven out of ten Filipinos believe there is a potential for much volatility in the current system.

As of February 1989, this sentiment appears to be strongest (at 72 percent) among those who belong to the socioeconomically better off, although

more than half (66 percent) of the poorest people would reflect the same apprehension. It is a fairly general view cutting almost equally well among all age groups, sex, urban-rural locality, and geographic areas (Metro Manila, the rest of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao).

Particularly disturbing to those who are democratically inclined is another set of SWS survey findings. There appears to be a significantly high proportion of Filipinos who either outrightly believe that their nation is oligarchically, not democratically run, or at least are undecided about the democratic character of their society. These two groups are about equal in proportions and account for about two-thirds of all Filipinos nationwide, as reflected by SWS surveys in the last two-and-a-half years. Only one in three Filipinos believes his society to be other than oligarchic, or run by a powerful few with ordinary citizens being unable to do much about the situation.

The February 1989 SWS survey reflects the perception of an oligarchic society as equally well distributed among various socio-economic groupings, both sexes, and urban-rural locality. Some significant differences could be noted agewise. The youngest age group (18-24 years old) has the lowest proportion (24 percent) of oligarchy perceivers, compared to about 33 percent among the middle and oldest age groups. Among the areas, Metro Manila (38 percent) clearly reflects this oligarchical beliefs more than the rest of Luzon (28 percent), Visayas (27 percent) or Mindanao (32 percent).

The interesting thing about this view of society being oligarchic is that it does not appear to affect the people's positive or negative rating of government performance.

Specifically in the cases of Marcos and Aquino, public assessments of presidential performance over time yield both high as well as low ratings. Regardless of the high or low ratings they gave either President, the survey respondents contigued to have basically the same oligarchic perception of society. Presidential performance appears to be assessed independently of oligarchic perceptions. Another way of stating the idea more bluntly is that Filipinos do not seem to be particularly impressed, one way or the other, by how presidential performance is effected, but largely by whether there is or there is no presidential performance at all.

As crises continue to beset the country, the disillusionment in peaceful means of effecting change and the marginalization of democratic-oligarchic considerations make for a dangerous combination of political sentiments. Public pressure for performing governments will definitely increase. Authoritarian actions with forcefully clear results are probably going to be much preferred over concededly democratic, but publicly-perceived ineffective measures by feckless authorities.

There is time enough even now for the authorities to arrest the dangerous drift of public sentiments towards the depreciation of democratic government. The public support for decisive government has always been there. Political leaders who are not going to shirk their leadership role in these trying times will find not only a supportive, but even more so a grateful public. It is the same public which will not permit democracy to continue being the refuge of political scoundrels and incompetents, be they Presidents, Prime Ministers or Chairmen of central committees.

Madlangbayan confronts the CPP-NPA: No early requiems

The communist insurgency cannot be rationally viewed as in its last wind and about to give up the ghost. Those who miscalculate as regards the resiliency of insurgency movements don't serve their country well

IN HER state of the nation address last July 1989, the President echoed the military's confidence that insurgency has finally been turned around, that henceforth the CPP-NPA must fight a losing battle until it ceases to be a significant threat to the national security.

The President as well as the military authorities noted how the citizenry appear to be more inclined to supply critical information to government forces in the campaign against insurgency. However, neither the President nor the military sufficiently considered why the public might have started turning against an erstwhile increasingly attractive subversive group. (From the mid-seventies up to the last two years, according to military data, the CPP-NPA mass base as well as armed NPA regulars had been increasing at an alarmingly high rate.) Assuming the official assessment of insurgency to be largely correct, an interesting point is whether government and military forces turned the citizens against insurgency, or the insurgents largely did themselves in. Is insurgency in the Philippines really better understood in terms of the "winning of hearts and minds (wham-ing)," or the "losing of hearts and minds (ham-ing)" of the citizenry? Much of the available data suggest a tragicomic situation, where the party which loses hearts and minds slower than another emerges, at least temporarily, victorious.

It was doubtful that the government or the CPP-NPA



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"wham-ed" their way into public support. Practically all civilian as well as military authorities suffered gross erosion of public confidence in the last three years. Survey data from the Social Weather Stations (SWS) during this period document the inequitable distribution of costs as well as benefits to the citizenry. More of the poor report sustained deterioration in their quality of life than those who are not poor. In the last three years (as well perhaps as the last thirty years), "losers" in Philippine society generally meant the poor, whereas "gainers" more often than not were the better-off.

The Aquino administration candidly acknowledges the inadequacy of its efforts in the area of poverty alleviation. The President herself, in July of 1989, exhorted government agencies to focus their activities on programs which pre-

ferentially target the poorest 30 percent of Filipino families. If another miracle happens, there will be much singing and dancing in the dump piles of Smoky Mountains just before the presidential elections of 1992.

The military could not have made much headway, if any, in pursuing a wham strategy against insurgency. Military men have been nationally projected as participating, even leading, in many criminal activities. Military officers in local posts have been linked to gambling, prostitution and other corrupt operations. Human rights charges have been made against several military units which the military itself has seen fit to investigate and, at times, punish. Involvement in several coup attempts has not contributed to enhancing the military's public image.

So, what has caused insurgency to weaken in the country? The answer could well be the activities of the insurgents themselves. Three types of CPP-NPA operations probably have led to much public alienation: the mass purge within the CPP-NPA occasioned by the fear of military deep penetration agents having infiltrated their organization, the sparrow operations which provide for the assassination of selectively targeted as well as randomly chosen public officials, policemen and members of the military, and, finally, holding operations in communist-controlled barangays which involve progressively severe taxation as well as discipline of the local inhabitants.

These activities have exposed the public to the harsher face of communist insurgency. Images of rural killing fields, sprawled victims of sparrow teams in the streets of Metro Manila, as well as the oral, often highly emotional testimonies of former residents of "liberated" areas combine for an effective anti-CPP-NPA mind-set among many Filipinos.

Even as the public might be less supportive of the CPP-NPA now, it would be premature to celebrate the demise of communist insurgency in the country. Survey data over the last three years indicate at least a third of nationwide respondents believe that the NPA organization in their own place is widespread; about one in four believes that the support for the communists is increasing and that the majority of the local people are sympathetic to the NPA, and one in five views most NPA activities as justifiable. Although these perceptions are those of the minority, their magnitudes cannot be cavalierly dismissed.

Furthermore, the persistence of these magnitudes over time suggests that ideologically-minded people might be the ones holding these views, or, at least, that there is a continuing stream of recruits into the communist cause. Either way, the communist insurgency cannot be rationally viewed as in its last wind and about to give up the ghost. Those who miscalculate as regards the resiliency of insurgency movements do not serve their country well.

Absolutely self-reliant Filipinos

It is not patriotic wondering whether we can truly survive, or whether a leadership that cannot manage electrical power can be more successful with political power. That is negative thinking. Think positive, the Filipino can!

“THE FILIPINO can!”

Without light, without water, without food, without transport, without income, without land, without abode, without peace, without justice and without freedom, the Filipino can?

For as long as he remains in the Philippines, he has to, so he can!

In the last forty years, no nation has learned to survive as well as the Filipino. Under the relentless tutelage of his political guardians, the Filipino has learned to cope with the most adverse circumstances imaginable, deprived of multiple crutches which make weaklings of other survivor nations.

The guardians have planned well and left nothing to chance. The educational system systematically blunts the Filipino's sense of curiosity and substitutes mindless programming inuring him to drudgery. The economy hobbles his natural productivity and craftsmanship, forcing him into uninspired, mediocre, and marginalized work. The polity robs him of his sense of fellowship and replaces it with unmitigated individuality, poised to take advantage of anyone's weakness and everyone's little slip.

Self-reliance is the ultimate guarantor of his survival. Neither the government nor the church, neither the school nor his *barkada* provides that assurance. The guardians conscientiously deprive the Filipino of his water and light, shelter and sleep, forcing him to concede them as no longer basic needs* but luxurious amenities or wants. Jobs and justice, food and freedom suffer the same remarkable transmutation and, before long, the Filipino learns to make do with little or none of these corruptive niceties of life.

Furthermore, wherever the



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Filipino turns, his life and limb are ever the targets of multiple threats and he must personally secure himself against licensed as well as freelancing exterminators, those armed with deadly buses, jeeps, cars, grenades, bombs, guns, darts, knives, even sticks and stones.

As he completes his survivalist course, the Filipino could easily look the marine as well as the Spartan in the eye and twit them for training on charming picnic grounds. Neither, he rightfully believes, could survive a Philippine exposure for more than a couple of months. He, on the other hand, has been doing it for years.

Beyond the Philippines lies easier challenges. Splendidly conditioned by his guardians, he survives with close to nothing in all environments. It matters little whether it be the burning mideastern desert where he is cook, driver, mechanic, carpenter, construction man or engineer, or the polar seas on which bobs his tiny ship where he is steward, seaman, mate or captain, or the strobe-lit night clubs where he is waiter, singer, dancer, comedian or floor manager. Survival has never been easier.

The Filipina is of harder stuff if anything. In five continents and over a hundred countries, she is doctor, nurse, teacher, governess, stewardess, waitress, cook, all-purpose maid, singer, dancer, *mamasa*, streetwalker and mail-order bride, to name a few of her innumerable appellations. She usually outlives her tough Filipino counterpart by three to five years in any kind of environment.

Filipinos are not innocents abroad. Not for long at any rate. In a remarkably short time, they master languages, infiltrate cultures, and, when it becomes necessary, willfully

tempted to hurl expletives deleted at our political guardians. When our primary guardian entices foreign investors to come to the Philippines and we shudder at the apparent temerity in inviting others to share our inefficiency at something so basic as industrial energy and communication, it is easy to forget our guardians' patriotic agenda which is to mold all sixty million of us Filipinos into survivalists of the first order.

It would be best if we kept reminding ourselves of the visionary character and the holy grail of our political leadership. The Filipino, as the



exchange genetic information with interested parties. Trained largely for foreign domestic service, they do their jobs professionally, doing what needs to be done, pleasantly, pleausurably. To many of their foreign clientele, they are valuable prizes to be earned, sterling trophies to be displayed. (Having done what he considered to be a first class job as President of the United States, Ronald Reagan was reputed to have said upon retirement that he would certainly have a Filipino in his domestic service. Mideastern sheiks gratify the same yearning for prestige in recruiting Filipinas to nurse their royal progeny.)

In these days of whiteouts and brownouts, when water and power abruptly disappear to return just as abruptly to disappear once more, one is

Aquino administration would eventually develop him to be, would find no equal in this planet. When all natural resources shall have run out, when mostly all human resources shall have been exhausted, when all impossible dreams shall have turned into veritable nightmares, when everybody else shall have expired for want of food, freedom, jobs and justice, there would be the Filipino, triumphant and alone, for even without these amenities, the Filipino certainly can!

It is not patriotic wondering whether we can truly survive, or whether a leadership that cannot manage electrical power can be more successful with political power. That is negative thinking. Think positive, the Filipino can!

Threats to the Aquino government

Survey data reflect the public's view that while the Aquino gov't is confronted by serious threats and cannot be complaisant about them, the threats by themselves are not sufficiently strong to destabilize the gov't

RECENT events have provoked discussions of threats to the Aquino government and their efficient management. The plebiscite on the organic act providing for the autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao and the published interview of ex-colonel Gregorio Honasan focused much attention to the Muslim as well as military rebels. The much publicized military disaffection with the Maceda bill establishing the Philippine National Police fanned speculations on Honasan's renegade band linking up with active military men especially those coming from the Philippine Constabulary. The death of Marcos and the aggressive campaign to pressure Malacañang into allowing his body to return intensified public interest in the Marcos loyalists. Finally, with the heating up of the military bases issue, foreign governments with vital interests in military bases here were viewed as capable of destabilization efforts against the Aquino government. All of these groups might be perceived as possible threats to the political primacy of Aquino and durability of her government.

Survey data from the Social Weather Stations (SWS) chart public perceptions of these threats in the last two-and-a-half years. In October 1986, public consensus was highest that they greatly imperiled Aquino's government. (About 60 to 80 percent of the respondents confirmed this idea in one of the surveys run



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by the SWS in Metro Manila). By July 1989, however, respondents evaluating these threats as great dropped significantly to between 40 to 60 percent of respondents in a comparable SWS Metro Manila survey.

Even these decreased proportions of respondents constituted far too many people who assessed the threats to Aquino's government as being great. Enough people remained apprehensive about the future of the Aquino government.

Some positive feelings were reflected by those surveyed. According to these people, most of the identified threats were handled just right by government between March 1987 and July 1989. During this period, it was unusual for government to be faced by a plurality of respondents alleging either too lenient or too

strict a handling of the rebellious elements in the country. The pattern of opinions reflects a problematic decrease in the just right responses from March 1987 to August 1988 and a favorable increase of the same responses from August 1988 and February 1989 up to July 1989. This improvement in public perception nets Aquino quite a bit of badly needed political capital during this critical time.

Another dimension of threat perceptions inquires into whether the fighting abilities of those threatening the government have increased, diminished or remained the same in the last 12 months. In March 1988, Metro Manila respondents to the SWS survey said both the communist and the Muslim rebels became stronger, even as the rebel military neither weakened nor strengthened itself. On the other hand, the loyalists were largely perceived as considerably weakening in the same period.

By July 1989, the public perception was that government had gained some ground against the threats confronting it. At the very least, no threatening group had become stronger in the last twelve months prior to the time the SWS survey ran. And, in the case of the Marcos loyalists, respondents largely agreed that the threat had become much emasculated.

Survey data reflect the public's view that while Aquino government is confronted by

serious threats and cannot be complaisant about them, the threats by themselves are not sufficiently strong to destabilize the government and depose its leader. The implicit idea appears to be that, for a government to be successfully subverted, it is not so much the strength of the external threats that is crucial as the internal weakness or weaknesses of the government and its authorities.

In the last analysis, should Aquino's government fall, it will not be so much that the CPP-NPA is able to raise an army twice the size of the AFP, or that the MNLF manages to secure four times more funds and arms from its foreign backers, or that Honasan and company somehow succeeds in recruiting ten times the personnel it used in mounting the August 1987 coup. Neither will this government fall because Marcos' heir apparent has put together an army of Marcos loyalists and marches with it from Batac to Malacañang, to claim what he believes to be his political birthright. Perhaps not even the awesome powers of foreign governments with companies specializing in dirty tricks can guarantee the fall of Aquino's government. President Aquino and those immediately around her must first lose their will to lead the people and then stubbornly refuse to govern the country.

Then there will be no stopping the fall.

The military as NPA: The view from Manila

Nationwide, there are indicators that a martial regime might be tolerated, but this view is strongly contested in Metro Manila where the military is viewed with much suspicion

THE ARMED guardians of the republic, the military, have become one of the focal points of Philippine politics. No longer the captive genie in some bottle, the military may already represent the first effectively autonomous sector within the republic. Given the apparent indecisiveness and debility of the post-EDSA civilian authorities, many Filipinos already desperately scan the environment for alternative leadership sources. The military appears to be a tempting although concededly extremely dangerous candidate for government in this country.

Desperate Filipinos may be reminded of the failures of military regimes in many parts of the world, in particular Latin America. It is indicative of the depths of their despair that, conceding the patterns and lessons of history, they nevertheless hope that the Philippines will be an exception to the rule. The military has a fair number of its own believing in this patriotic mission of military men given the current crisis of leadership in the country. Businessmen too, for much less than patriotic reasons, have sounded out military men regarding the prospects of martial rule. Nationwide, there are indicators that a martial regime might be tolerated, perhaps even welcomed in the short run, provided it produces results which continue to elude a much eviscerated civilian leadership.

For better or worse, the nationwide view is strongly contested in Metro Manila. In the latter, the military is viewed with much suspicion, attended by a great deal of public disillusionment and skepticism. As far as most Metro Manilans are concerned, the military must be seen as NPA, a Non-Performing Asset, insofar as developmental government is concerned. Surveys conducted by the Social Weather Stations in the last three years reflect



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these negative perceptions of respondents coming from Metro Manila.

The loyalty of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to the civilian government is increasingly doubted by Metro Manilans. From a record high of 60 percent who agree that the AFP might be considered loyal and obedient to civilian authority in May 1986, the proportion decreased to 45 percent in March 1988, and down to 27 percent in July 1989. On the other hand, those who disagreed with this perception of military constitutionalism increased from 15 percent to 20 percent to 35 percent for the same survey periods.

Perceptions of military performance in the area of the respondent reflect a similar depreciation. The proportion of respondents satisfied with military performance decreased from 64 percent in May 1986 to 48 percent in March 1988 and 35 percent in July 1989. Those who expressed dissatisfaction, on the other hand, increased in numbers from 10 percent to 25 percent to 29 percent for the survey periods alluded to.

The margins of satisfaction (that is to say the proportion of those saying they are satisfied

minus those who are dissatisfied) reflect an equally demoralizing story. From a positive 10 points in October 1986, the margin of satisfaction declined to negative 2 points in July 1989. That there are currently more people who are dissatisfied than are satisfied with military performance is indicative of two things: (1) the Metro Manilan's more severe assessments of political institutions and personalities relative to those made by his counterparts in the rest of the country; and (2) the military's continuing inability to lastingly win hearts and minds in this crucial area. The second consideration is crucial since it is arguable that the best the military can offer is probably to be found in Metro Manila, the military being conscious that citizens in the capital region would brook less arrogance, disorderly conduct and other negative traits from soldiers. The ability of the military to gain the approval of Metro Manilans would be an excellent indicator of systemic improvement within the military and, inferentially, a welcome enhancement of the ability to enduringly win hearts and minds in the countryside too.

The skepticism of Metro Manilans comes across in their reactions to oft-reported military successes against the communists. In July 1989, only 20 percent say that such claims by the military are credible. Those who disagree (36 percent) as well as those who profess not to know one way or another (39 percent) make up the greater majority who are not impressed much by reports of military success.

Yet, there is evidence suggesting that Metro Manilans continue to wish their military well. Six out of 10 refuse to support NPA sparrow operations even against admittedly abusive military men and call for punishment to be imposed on their assassins. Furthermore,

ranged against the NPA, the military is seen as enjoying increasing public support by a plurality (39 percent) of those interviewed in the SWS July 1989 Metro Manila survey. Although a big proportion (also 39 percent) admits to being undecided about increasing public support for the military, only 18 percent dispute this pro-military development. This positive view of the military gains greater significance given a complementary sentiment that public support has not improved at all for the NPA. About half of those interviewed (45 percent) reflect this perception, with only 20 percent disagreeing.

The public's interest in the welfare of the military is also indicated by their concern for soldiers who take to the field and actually engage the NPA in combat. About four out of 10 respondents express the fear that the military leadership neglects the needs of these front-line soldiers, against two in 10 who believe otherwise. The sentiment is unmistakable. Those who must personally confront the NPA need all the help they can get.

The military's image in Metro Manila could stand quite a bit of improvement. There is evidence to indicate that specific military officers (for example, Brigadier General Rcdolfo G. Biazon of the National Capital Region Defense Command and Brigadier General Alexander Aguirre of CAPCOM) already enjoy much respect from the public in Metro Manila. However, until the military itself gains the kind of trust and confidence the public now reserves only for some persons in the military, the full collaboration between a civilian base and its military arm cannot take place. Until such time, a significant portion of Metro Manilans will continue to view the military as largely NPA.

Satisfying the impatient Filipino

Juan de la Cruz can only suffer what is called 'elitist democracy', hopefully for not overly long. After all, Juan is supposed to be a rather impatient fellow

THERE is a canard being bruited around that the Filipino expects much too much from his government and its leaders, that he is much too impatient and that he does not appreciate the merits of democratic government. This false indictment is pressed not so much by ignorant foreigners as by imperturbable NPA's, the Non-Performing Authorities who politically dominate in the Filipino's oligarchic society.

Public expectations in the Philippines actually span a very limited range of basic needs. The typical Filipino has learned to content himself with minimalist government, one which does not overly exert itself in securing people against bodily threats or providing citizens with light, water, food and transportation. Neither does such a government become concerned with addressing everyman's need for productive education, gainful employment and equitable income. Minimalist government could have socially committed, extended budgets, but it certainly makes no effective commitment to deliver on any of the many socially-indicated services. Budgets, one suspects, are no more than convenient instruments for justifying sustained forays into each citizen's meager resources, the minimalist authorities' way of constitutionally picking everyman's pockets.

The typical Filipino would be delighted enough if his government were to leave him alone, leave him largely to his own resources, to do well or badly as the case may be. Instead, whatever he ventures into to keep body and soul together, he is assailed by



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wolves in police and military uniforms, by *buwayas* in civilian bureaucrat's garb and by vultures in the guise of influence-peddling politicians. In spite of all these predatory species, the typical Filipino somehow manages to survive and, in quite a few cases, even to do well in his country. Thousands of Filipinos who annually migrate to work in over twenty countries and whose contacts with Philippine authorities abroad demand paying all kinds of taxes, fees and commissions without securing any worthwhile service in return echo the wish that they would be left pretty much alone by their own government and its minions.

No, sir, for mostly every street-wise Filipino confronting his minimalist government, expectations run low, too low to justify a theory of political obligation among citizens who could do better in life if they did not carry political deadweights like non-performing authorities around their already much-wrung necks.

Satisfaction for the Filipino,

as indicated by many surveys charting his current gainers-losers status as well as his optimism or pessimism for the future, is ridiculously easily attained. In far too many cases, the Filipino is satisfied with his government or his political leaders precisely because his miserable life has not deteriorated any further. And even where he might have experienced further deterioration in living conditions, he nevertheless avows satisfaction with his government and its feckless authorities precisely because, believing he has reached rock-bottom, he cannot but be optimistic about the future.

The impatience of the Filipino is another grossly fabricated lie. The most "impatient" among the Filipinos conceivably would be the Metro Manilan. Yet, in the city of man, the typical Filipino, who must go to some public faucet or artesian well for his water, says it is normal for him to queue and wait as much as forty minutes to fill up a 5-gallon can of water. The same person who takes public transport to go to work, provided his place of work is not beyond ten kilometers from his place of residence, believes it is normal to take as much as two hours to get there. And if he should need to make a telephone call, our "impatient" Metro Manilan will not blow his fuse if it takes him about fifteen minutes to finally get his party on the line.

Impatient Filipino indeed!

Lastly, there is that charge against the Filipino that he does not quite appreciate the merits and the demands of democratic society. Confronted by simultaneous mul-

tiply crises of economic inequity, political instability, acrobatic morality feckless authority, the "difficult-to-satisfy, overly impatient" Filipino is accused of favoring summary actions and bloody resolutions of situations which ought to be approached with the full majesty, stately gait and deliberateness of sensible people locked in conscientious committee work. Due process, it appears, has to be tediously long, even interminably long due process. Justice truly may not be denied; it may be simply indefinitely delayed. Democracy is obviously a waiting game. You wait, the authorities' game.

If this analysis is correct, the question must be why the slander is so often perpetrated against the Filipino by his own political leaders. A summary answer might be considered. Incompetent authorities need to project an image of being overly harassed, of being unfairly rushed and pushed to act by uncomprehending, essentially irrational, and even extremely selfish citizens. This way they can mask their incompetence in governance, maintain their leisurely dalliance with the most critical of issues, project their unparalleled wisdom and patriotism, and dump all the blame for a continuing, miserable national condition on mostly everyone except themselves.

This indeed is what a redoubtable, euphemistically-inclined senator recently called an "elitist democracy" in the Philippines. Juan de la Cruz can only suffer it, hopefully for not overly long. After all, Juan is supposed to be a rather impatient fellow.

Fully costing the coup: Miracles are costly

The full responsibility for the last coup attempt must be borne not only by those who initiated it but even more so by the civilian authorities who made it inevitable

THE LATEST coup against the Aquino administration has failed. Constitutionalism in the military has been strengthened and democracy has been saved. The Filipinos must rejoice as yet another miracle reveals their special protectorate status in the commonwealth of divinely chosen peoples.

The truth is that the December coup reveals not one, but several miracles in convergence. The first miracle is that this administration, born in 1986 to the dancing and the singing of the multitudes in the streets, in 1989 could no longer rely on a phalanx of people power to shield it from the dark forces of restive military men. Wherever the military rebels operated, most of the citizenry showed no compulsion to dissuade them from their political objective, or to actively oppose them with warm, although shaking bodies, blunt sticks, crumbly stones, verbal reproaches or even simply baleful looks. Most of the people who took to the streets looked at the coup operations as at best high theater, to be savored as panoramic spectacle, but in no sense requiring active audience participation.

The second miracle is that constitutionalism remained sufficiently strong among enough military men such that a critical mass remained protective of civilian authority in the direst hours. Up to about three o'clock in the afternoon of Friday, constitutionalist forces were fighting at a gross disadvantage and yet, much bloodied, remained unbowed. Civilian authorities had little to contribute in this staunch attitude of constitutionalism among dedicated military men.



While a good portion of the military appeared pragmatically indecisive as regards the appropriate response to armed challenges to the government, enough constitutionalist forces acted and bought the necessary time for other forces to be activated in the defense of this administration.

The third miracle concerns the perfect timing with which the *deus ex machina* of Philippine politics comes to be activated. American intervention in domestic politics came at precisely the moment the President herself publicly confirmed the request for American assistance. Everyone in the Philippines and abroad had to know that no less than President Aquino acknowledged the *in extremis* position of her government. No persuasive flights were going to be flown, no defense of democracy was forthcoming without this final public humiliation. The alternative channels of Philippine officialdom through which this request for assistance was made, perhaps even without Presidential clearance, were not sufficiently authoritative.

The President herself had to publicly "confirm." Otherwise, "Uncle!" was not going to be all that convincing.

Miracles are costly. A President who can no longer inspire her people in these times of simultaneous crisis has a patriotic imperative: to find precisely those who can provide such inspiration. Even as President Aquino tries to perform her constitutional role as President of the Republic, she must help identify people who could take over the reins of government, those who could produce better and more lasting results faster than her own administration so far has been able to do. One who cannot govern must help in finding others who can. With a pool of thirty million adult Filipinos to choose from, it would be incredible indeed if any Filipino, even a Corason Aquino, were to be considered absolutely indispensable.

As regards the miracle of sustained constitutionalism in the military, a price too must be paid. Henceforth, the calculus of constitutionalism cannot be a simple delineation by the Philippine Constitution of who are formally the duly-constituted authorities. An extraneous factor has been woven more explicitly into the constitutionalist equation: that of American support. Military men will now be constrained to ask before they lay their lives on the line for civilian authorities in the Philippines: "Do they enjoy the blessings of our American protector?"

Reinforced colonialism is a high price to pay for military constitutionalism. One of the military's problems is precisely strengthening its nationalist orientation, one much weakened by the overly close

collaboration of Philippine and American military authorities. It is not inconceivable that our military men would find it difficult to distinguish between the Philippine and the American interest, should there be an eventual conflict between the two. Military constitutionalism could then be an effective mask for continuing American hegemony over our national political system and its authorities.

The third miracle, that of precise American timing in rescuing the Aquino administration, entails the greatest cost to the Filipino people. With the least of efforts, if statements of limited persuasion flights as constituting the maximum American intervention are to be believed, the Americans have beautifully positioned themselves as the effective guarantor not only of any government but of the democratic way of life itself in the Philippines. Awed by this perception, how many Filipinos would attempt to sever the umbilical cords linking their country to the United States? And how many more would consider the current condition of political dependency to be anything but a natural condition between these "two allies of democracy"? How many more really would be encouraged to critically examine sensitive issues like the American military bases in the Philippines. If we cannot guarantee our own freedom and democracy, how can we conceive of driving away the very ones who can?

The costs of the last coup can only be marginally indicated by the damage inflicted on material property, or by the number of military men and civilians killed and injured, or even the shattered nerves of a distraught administration. The full costs of the coup can only be indicated by the damage it has wrought on our national psyche. In this regard, the full responsibility for the last coup attempt must be borne not only by those who initiated it, but even more so by the civilian authorities who made it inevitable.

American intervention in the December coup: A blunder?

THE FACT of American intervention in the last coup is acknowledged by everyone. The US Air Force's persuasion flights in postcard-blue Manila skies, witnessed by millions of people, cannot be waived away as simply phantom figures by indignant nationalists, embarrassed but relieved constitutionalists, or fuming, embittered and possibly betrayed rebels.

The debate regarding American intervention has focused largely on whether it was proffered by the Americans or requested by Philippine authorities, on whether it was limited to the psychological impact of Phantom persuaders or went beyond towards much more active politico-military actions against the rebels, or even whether Philippine national interests were indeed served best by administration authorities calling "Uncle!" last Friday afternoon.

Whether pro-Aquino or not, Filipinos who discuss American intervention link it to the undeniable American interest in continued access to military bases in the Philippines. There is much concern that calling for American assistance during the last coup might have compromised the administration's ability to critically consider alternative options to the issue of American bases here. The low-key expression of this concern involves counseling the Aquino administration to stress the independence of the bases issue from the issue of the administration's political survival. In its most denunciatory form, the same concern equates the administration's call for American intervention with treason and calls for President Aquino as well as her official family to step down as public officials.

Clearly, one dimension Filipinos have not critically examined is whether American intervention serves the long term interests of the Asians themselves. The casual consensus is that American interests have indeed been served to the extent that a belated Aquino administra-



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tion would be more receptive to accommodating American interests in resolving the issue of the bases. This view needs a more thorough examination. It is at least arguable that the Americans blundered much in the decision to intervene in the last coup.

A distinction has to be made between involvement and intervention at this point. Involvement implies being a party to an issue, even a political contest as to who among protagonists must wield effective political power. It skillfully avoids openly taking sides, or addressing a political situation such that one contending party has its power position decisively enhanced at the expense of another party. It is precisely this leaning to one side or another, this role of decisively regulating the balance of power that makes for intervention rather than simple involvement. The Americans clearly intervened in favor of the Aquino administration at the expense of the military rebels. This fact is not permeable to considerations of whether the Americans were invited by Filipino authorities to come in during the coup, or they announced their availability as invitees before being actually invited, or simply came in uninvited.

Involvement, and once the coup started, open involvement, would probably have better served the long term interests of the United States.

Instead of immediately flying its air force jets, American public officials could have first offered to mediate the political contest, appealing to both Philippine government forces and the rebels to effect a ceasefire and negotiate some political settlement. There is no guarantee that this good offices offer would have been taken up by either Malacañang or the rebels, but it is essential as an initial step to establish American preferences for an impartial course of action given the literally explosive situation.

America's historical links to the Filipino nation, underscored so many times in American and Filipino policy statements, ceremonial speeches and holiday rituals, are supposed to underpin a benign, even avuncular American concern for practically all Filipinos and the various sectors of Philippine society. In addition to established principles of international law proscribing intervention in the domestic affairs of another state, this overall solicitude should incline the United States to be actively neutral whenever Filipinos differ among themselves. (Thus, even the devastating military operations of the rebellious MNLF in the early 70s could not sway the United States to help a beleaguered Manila government and its bloodied military. Parenthetically, many military men's distrust for the United States can be traced to this time when it refused to provide the arms requested by a rather desperate, obviously outgunned Philippine military. The American position then was one of non-involvement in Philippine domestic affairs.) This active neutrality role could have been at least the initial American posture in the last coup.

By ignoring the involvement option and leaping directly to an interventionist policy, American officials precluded a public perception of its own impartiality as well as its reluctance in interfering in Philippine affairs. This over-

sight could have serious repercussions on Philippine-American relations. Whether the American officials intended it or not, there will henceforth be a marked suspicion that the Aquino administration is a compromised administration, that most of its actions would be those of a client rather than a truly independent government. This perception could decisively hamstring the operations of the Aquino government, one which already is much criticized for being ineffective. It is difficult to see how American interest in a functional Aquino government might be served by an interventionist policy which handicaps the very ability of her government to operate with greater public support.

Even now there are dangerous signs of the Filipinos' alienation from traditionally well-regarded Americans. With this latest interventionist act, many Filipinos have started entertaining stronger doubts about the sovereignty of their political system and the independence of their government leaders. This skepticism could feed a backlash Filipino nationalism largely defined in terms of anti-Americanism.

The CPP-NPA's selective targeting of Americans as assassination victims probably has not been popularly perceived as an acceptable political gesture, or even more than an act of outright terrorism. However, given the American policy of active intervention in the last coup, the decision of the military rebels yesterday to free all tourists in their control except those who are Americans could register in the public's consciousness as more of a political statement. Uncritical interventionism could create a public belief among many Filipinos that their own political system is held hostage by alien controllers. From there it is but one short step to a subsequent conviction that it is morally right and patriotic to hold hostage those who would make a hostage of your entire nation.

The crisis of civilian constitutionalism

SINCE THE beginning of the Aquino administration, constitutionalist probes have focused mainly on the military. This is not hard to understand. After all, the dramatic birthing of this administration in part involved a military which rebelled against its own commander-in-chief, Apo Marcos. Associated with civilian leaders who were perceived to be politically insatiable by the Aquino authorities, the military was much suspected as serving masters other than constitutionalism and the rule of law.

This marked distrust for the military is reflected in the summary and arrogant manner of many civilian officials in dealing with military men, especially in the first year of the Aquino administration. It also underpins the constitutional aberration which mentions the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the Constitution ahead of the legislative, the executive and the judicial agencies of government. The citation is not an honorable mention, so much as a shrill injunction to the AFP that civilian authority must ever be obeyed by those in military uniform.

Seven or eight coups later (the count depends on who is doing the counting and what "unauthorized military exercises" are included in the count), the tendency is further reinforced to look at constitutionalism as basically a military-related problem. The increasing numbers as well as seniority of military men involved in coups, the growing sophistication of coup strategy and tactics, as well as the apparently escalating probabilities for coup success (the conventional wisdom is that the last coup would have been successful if the Americans had not intervened in favor of the Aquino government) — all these factors combine to focus attention on the military challengers to the duly established, constitutional order.

Only recently is there sufficient recognition that all the coups to date failed primarily because enough military men had abided by their government. For a military who had



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been largely distrusted by its civilian governors, holding fast to the constitutionalist faith must really be seen as a major miracle. (I do not include here men in uniform whose constitutionalism is a function primarily of prudential political calculus.) Warriors like General Biazon, whose sense of civic duty precludes rhetorical flourishes in decisively defining and executing what needs to be done, somehow continued to protect our Constitution and the civilian authorities, despite the latter's clear invitation to coup-making through their uninspiring and at times even corrupting leadership.

Because of resolute action by enough military constitutionalists in these previous coups, the military as a whole must be acknowledged as no longer the focal point of constitutionalist challenges. The critical core of constitutionalism must increasingly be recognized as constituted by the civilians themselves, by the civilians who run government as well as the civilians who are the general constituency of government. Military coups are marginal threats to constitutionalism and cannot irrevocably destroy the citizens' democratic commitments. The fecklessness of civilian authorities, however, irreparably shatters the public's confidence in democratic processes and makes the citizenry vulnerable to alternative performing regimes, whether they be

democratic or not. Ultimately, democracy and constitutionalism can survive and prosper only when actively performing authorities are able to command the loyalties of their appreciative constituency.

Our largely Non-Performing Authorities (or NPAs) need to heed the signs of the times. Eight out of ten Filipinos refuse to rule out non-peaceful means of effecting change in this country. This is a huge proportion of people who, even as they have marked preferences for non-violence, stare at the possibility of violence in their society and refuse to blink. Many of them might have gone to EDSA last December 8, 1989 to help dedicate the EDSA shrine and most of them were probably inspired by the resolute rhetoric of some of their leaders that sunny afternoon. Nevertheless, beyond the sunny skies and the strident speeches, there persists the nation's immediate and much magnified need for "jobs and justice, food and freedom." NPAs cannot hope to continue managing this country with popular support. NPAs must learn to repent, reform, and perform, if they are not going to be overwhelmed by yet another rebellion, uncle or no uncle, this time by a people whose sense of constitutionalism has finally been overtaken by a sense of absolute despair.

This *kapit-sa-patalim* mentality is not all that alien to Filipinos who heroically continue to bear with NPAs in their society. After the August 1987 coup, Social Weather Stations survey findings in Metro Manila revealed some facets of the crisis of civilian constitutionalism. Those findings inclined me to write in the SWS survey's analytical report: "Various stresses that weaken the [citizenry's] constitutionalist commitment may be indicated by responses which point to a pragmatism which has crossed the borders of constitutionalist politics.

"When asked about their perceptions of probable public reactions to another coup attempt or military government as a *fait accompli*, the responses of those surveyed in

September 1987 could indicate some incipient vacillation as regards the absolute merits of an activist, constitutionalist position. The majority prescribe largely passive, spectator-public reactions in case another coup is attempted. Civilians, they say, should avoid being involved and should not side with anyone. At best, the public could pray for the forces of good somehow to prevail.

"This non-active sentiment is carried over into responses of probable...public reaction to a successful coup which replaces the present government with a military government. Close to half of the respondents anticipate that the citizenry would neither oppose nor support the military government, but close to one-third also predict a probably collaborative citizenry. The firm, uncompromising constitutionalists, a minority of one-fourth, foresee active opposition by the citizenry..."

Citizen actions during the December 1989 coup largely validated the 1987 SWS survey findings and predictions. Perhaps it was a correct assessment of public sentiments which prompted the Aquino administration not to rely on "people power" to save it from the military rebels and, instead, to call on a foreign power for assistance. This inability to rely on its own citizenry for crucial support is tragic enough, but a greater tragedy would have been if the SWS findings as regards citizen reactions to an actual military government turned out to be correct. For Filipinos to even suffer a military government passively, they must first recognize the futility of upholding a civilian government which systematically squanders the nation's human, economic and political resources. Pointedly speaking, only treason by their civilian leaders could possibly drive Filipinos into experimenting even with daunting military regimes. "*Kapit sa patalim*," most Filipinos would say in such eventuality, with the bitterness of men who realize that nothing more could be done but hope for the best. *Bahala na!*

Bouncing back from the coup: The burdens of leadership

Should the Aquino administration resolve its crisis by keeping faith with the national interests and decisively moving towards reforming itself, the costs to the nation of bouncing back from the last coup attempt would be significantly minimized

A LOT of people have been going around asking the same question: can the nation recover from the destruction wrought by the last coup? If we had a sharper sense of history, this question would not have been asked at all. Mostly every people's history has been at least one of survival and, in a few exceptional cases, even one of doing well.

The question is not properly one of survival or recovery. This is as predictable as any social law could be. The question is recovery at what cost. It is precisely this reformulation of a national concern that highlights the criticality of our political leadership. Depending on their vision, capabilities and political will, the cost of national recovery could be patriotically minimized or irresponsibly magnified. Whatever the actual costs turned out to be, our people will not shirk them for such is the urgency of national survival.

A truly concerned, decisive leadership will do what is necessary and will not dilly-dally in doing what needs to be done. Its first imperative would have to be an implacable self-assessment, identifying its own infirmities and capabilities that it might summarily remedy the former and willfully fortify the latter. This process of self-assessment must also include the most candid review and evaluation of its track record as the nation's political leadership in the last three years and ten months.

The gains made in restor-



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ing political forms whose substance has remained largely undemocratic must be reassessed. It is not enough that institutions like the Congress, the Executive and the Judiciary are formally functional or that the formal processes of bureaucratic government and electoral politics are running. The substantive, democratic character of these structures and processes need to be seriously looked into. The empowerment of the people and the accountability of public officials which are both solemnly guaranteed by the Constitution need to be operationalized. Democracy has to be politically, dynamically linked to everyman's daily experience, instead of serving as ritualistic tokens of authorities who are more comfortable with oligarchic politics.

The economic base of democratic life goes beyond welcoming foreign investments at whatever cost, main-

taining debt burdens at levels prejudicial to faster national economic recovery, or enshrining economic growth at the expense of basic equity considerations. Economic welfare cannot conscientiously be made to trickle down, given a constituency whose conditions of deprivation have persisted for several generations. Drastic measures need to be implemented to ensure that indeed the poorest people are able to break away from the vicious circle of systematic exploitation, impoverishment, powerlessness and alienation.

At least a minimal level of order needs to be established by the authorities to realistically guarantee the public's physical safety. Coups are not as costly to society as ordinary index crimes in terms of the human, economic or political resources destroyed by their perpetrators. A government that fails to effectively address the issue of public safety cannot be expected to do better in the management of threats posed by the "coupmen" to its political existence.

One more dimension of effective leadership must be addressed. This has to do with helping instill a sense of self-reliance and national pride in a people whose colonial past overly inclines them towards deference and even mendicancy in international relations. The political authorities cannot survive widespread skepticism regarding their own commitment to national independence and their capabilities for self-sacrifice in the pursuit of this end. Leaders

who appear to be much closer to their erstwhile colonial masters rather than their own struggling countrymen cannot realistically hope to be mistaken for nationalists by the latter. Such leaders have to earn their nationalist spurs and they will do better to distance themselves from their much too transparent patrons.

Clearly, from this list of imperatives for a national leadership set on minimizing the cost of bouncing back from the December coup, one could anticipate quite a bit of resistance by specific leaders who traditionally have had their cake and eaten it too, who have enjoyed reputations of social consciousness and at the same time contributed to the persistent inequity in the society, who, furthermore, have projected themselves as patriots even as their patriotism was of the sunshine variety.

The test of the current leadership is an existential one and cannot be deferred much longer. Should the Aquino administration resolve its crisis by keeping faith with the national interests and decisively moving towards reforming itself and performing as a no-nonsense leadership, the costs to the nation of bouncing back from the last coup would be significantly minimized. On the other hand, should it stubbornly cling to its tried, tested, and failed ways of reactive leadership, the costs of national recovery would be predictably maximized. In any case, the nation will recover. The leadership should not be as confident.

Miagao thoughts on a much beleaguered administration

IF TRANQUILITY made for sober thinking, Miagao in Iloilo ought to be declared the capital of the Philippines. Given the essential unity of Miagao's mountains, skies, seas and people, partisanship, divisiveness and sheer "ornerness" would be difficult to sustain. Wickedness does not come easy in a place like this and I thought all the duly constituted authorities, politicized military men, survivalist politicians, mundane churchmen, restless rebels, and, since they are not hopeless cases, even infallible columnists and news reporters should be required to stay here. I am writing the present column while under the influence of this balmy place and its spirits.

The poet Gemino H. Abad published a collection of poems and literary essays under the title "The Space Between." It celebrates life, the masterful challenge to infuse human meaning into an otherwise unremarkable existence between birth and death. In a similar vein, the political philosopher Hannah Arendt wrote of "Between Past and Future," where she delineates the human conditions which would make for a meaningful democracy in present-day societies. Abad and Arendt are a rich lode of unsolicited advice for the Aquino administration, itself now forced to forge the requisite linkage between a vastly popular past and a yet problematic future. The will and capability to govern the present are going to be this administration's acid test. Its perceived performance will define the citizenry's verdict as to the appropriate place of President Aquino and her administration in Philippine history.

The areas demanding decisive political action are well understood, but remain effectively addressed by the Aquino authorities. The nation's economy, political system, and general culture itself demand more than formal governance



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by the authorities. The substantive reformatting and reconfiguration of these three general areas cannot end with the installation of formal political structures or the mouthing of nationalistic slogans which mask a continuing obsession with trickle-down theories of economic development. Neither can these areas of concern be significantly improved unless the Aquino administration forcefully disrupts an oligarchic political culture and breaks up its pervasive system of graft and corruption.

Between vision and realization is the imperative of vigorous implementation. Being essentially liberal, Filipinos may once more extend the benefit of the doubt to the Aquino administration and grant it a nationalistic vision as well as a patriotic desire for its realization. From this initial capital, one would hope that the Aquino administration could build up a formidable asset — a citizenry fully confident in their leadership's motivations and capabilities for decisive social change. This transformation of political resources depends almost entirely on the ability of government to persuade the citizenry that it is doing well, given the magnitude of its concerns and the extent of its resources.

Perceived government per-

formance being the name of the game, some basic considerations are in order. The implementation of what needs to be done must be a transparent process amenable to simplified public monitoring. The Aquino administration must undertake clear-cut policies and explicitly-targeted programs for each one of the country's main concerns. Program targets are especially critical for the areas of public safety, graft and corruption in government, and economic equity.

In these confusing times, simplicity and transparency are demanded and appreciated no end by Filipinos. Imagine the President announcing to the nation that in the next thirty days, the crime incidence rate would drop by five percent, or else she would simply admit to the failure of her public safety campaign. Or that in the next three months, at least three big fishes would be identified, charged, tried and convicted for graft and corruption in her government. Or that within a year, there would be a two-percent decline in the proportion of poor families in the country. Imagine her specifying not only the target and the time frame for accomplishing them, but also identifying the very data set, the actual monitoring system and the officials and government agencies responsible for the process of monitoring. Imagine her clearly specifying the consequences of failure for her public officials and their agencies. Finally, imagine her inviting all concerned citizens and their respective organizations to put up their own systems for monitoring the programs being implemented.

Such a system would appall the traditional politicians who thrive on deliberate ambiguity and short public memories. Yet another group of people — the technocrats in government — would find the very transparency of the implementation process sug-

gested here most threatening. Even now they resolutely oppose any system which enables the public to see through obfuscatory jargon and ritualistic gobbledeygook. Technocrats will object that conceptualization and definitional difficulties, technical measurement limitations, and similar reasons militate against public-friendly, non-esoteric monitoring systems.

Between the glib politician and the sophist technocrat is their common turf, the vast area of government non-performance and malfeasance, a realm which these unholy allies would like the public to continue regarding as terra incognita. A determined campaign to convert this oligarchic preserve into public domain should enhance the credibility of a presumably "born-again," willful Aquino administration. Targeted towards the progressive extinction of rascals in government, this campaign predictably will be determinedly resisted and undermined by them. Far more dangerous than the military rebels on account of their greater deviousness and more influential positions in government, these scoundrels more seriously merit the presidential ultimatum in the last coup: Surrender or die!

A last note might be sounded. Ours is currently an age of ultimate demands and the President is far from being the final authority in this matter of national survival. Without a publicly perceived, much more forceful implementation of urgent governmental programs, President Aquino cannot expect Filipinos to extend their liberal support in the past to the present. Lacking a significantly high level of popular support, the Aquino administration's future must be viewed as eminently predictable.

Thus the President herself appears to have been served her own ultimatum, by enough Filipinos who suffer not so much from childish impatience as from utter despair. Their demand is strident and fully reflective of our crisis times: *The Space Between; or Else!*

A moratorium on coups?

The call for such a moratorium, effectively backstopped by military men who publicly compact to withhold their units from participating in a coup, has a rational edge to it. Whether the current personal preference of specific captains is constitutionalism, apathy, or mutiny, the moratorium may be seen as temporarily serving a common end

SEVEN or eight coups later, depending on who is doing the counting, battle fatigue appears to be reflected by civilians and military men alike. Perhaps the season also has something to do with it. In any case, there is a palpable weariness, a widespread feeling that one's adrenalin has simply pumped itself far too long and that the time has come to rest oneself, if only for a while.

If only there were some way of ensuring that Christmas could be coup-less, or that the New Year could be celebrated in any of the various ways of a reflective and mature citizenry. Or even in the traditional way of a people much given to raucous merry-making, absolutely unmindful of constitutionalism and treasonous conduct even as their eardrums are shattered by fireworks exploding around them.

Perhaps there is a way to at least temporarily disable the coupmakers. There are some in the military who believe that basically three types of people are involved in coups. You have common soldiers who simply follow their superior officers, largely uninformed of the issues which call for their lives to be on the firing line. Then there are military men, mostly officers with little political sophistication, who might know the issues involved in a limited way and who decide to use their men in helping resolve these issues. Finally, there are the fully politicized military men, with clear agenda of political takeover, who are able to manipulate both the less sophisticated officers and the apolitical soldiers. All three must march in tune to a coup before a military challenge to the civilian authorities could be initiated.

To prevent a coup from



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taking off, one must break the chain of manipulation linking the most politicized to the apathetic, but exploitable military men. However much the politicized military plot, no coup can prosper unless enough officers who have warm bodies under their direct command actively worked to involve their men. These officers are mostly company commanders, captains in most cases, with about a hundred soldiers in their respective units. Due to their superior rank and education, their face-to-face contact, and even personal relations with their men, these officers are automatically looked up to for guidance by their subordinates. They are acknowledged authorities not only on matters of military administration, combat and tactics, but on political and economic as well as some personal issues. The decision to join or not to join a coup, or even to review the decision of superior officers with some degree of finality, is probably effectively made at company level. Below the captain, what remains is largely the execution of a decision which he makes for him and his men.

Would it be possible to address this critical group of young military officers and commit them effectively into at least temporarily shunning coup participation? Could some formal mechanism be facilitated by both the senior civilian and military authorities such that most company commanders and their counterparts in all services might agree to keep their men from participating in any coup action by the politicized military men?

If the authorities acted with dispatch, there is a good chance that the appeal to this sector of young officers could succeed. There is currently a feeling among these officers that they are being used, even as pawns by their superiors, in a strategic chess game where colonels and generals (and some much distrusted politicians) call the shots. In the process, the young officers and their men wind up shooting and being shot, for causes they are unable to really understand or fully identify with. The authorities could legitimately exploit this feeling of resentment by the young military officers and influence them towards agreeing to non-supportive actions for those who would initiate coups.

The call for a moratorium on coups, effectively backstopped by military men who publicly compact to withhold their respective units from participating in a coup, has a rational edge to it. Whether the current personal preference of specific captains is constitutionalism, apathy, or mutiny, the moratorium may be seen as temporarily serving a common end. Time will be bought by those who have consistently defended the established order

and the time could be used to build up their military strength as well as the government's political will. The mutinous military could similarly build up their capabilities, but, more crucially, they could also give their anti-constitutionalist inclination a final review, one that takes into account precisely what the civilian government is able to do given the realization that its performance would spell the difference between political durability and active destabilization. The apathetic military (Major General Canieso's estimate of 70 percent is probably not much off the mark, whatever other military leaders might have to say at this point in time!) would probably be the greatest beneficiary of this moratorium on coups. Given what the loyalist military and the civilian leadership are able to put together during the moratorium, the apathetic's fence sitting on the issue of constitutionalism would be hard to maintain. Their decision could be facilitated without even having to go through the dangers of an actual shooting coup.

A coup moratorium for at least six months and hopefully longer makes sense for everyone. Apart from ensuring that the Christmas season will be appropriately observed by most Filipinos in the next couple of weeks, the moratorium will increase the probability of correctly anticipating the results of any potential coup beyond the next six months. We would do well to take a serious look at our captains in the military even as we are naturally more smitten by glamorous generals and charming colonels. Captains are definitely the warmest military bodies around.

The day after

Leaders who vow to reconcile a much divided nation cannot avoid taking sides, and the only side they can take in a substantively restoring and reconciling democracy is that of the abject many

MOST FILIPINOS probably celebrated Christmas like most children live their days of innocence, that is to say, without either the past or the future for a burden. We are who we are on Christmas Day.

The day after is different. The overworked stomach, the inebriated body, the splitting head and the remorseful soul conspire to make many Filipinos' day after absolutely miserable. The prudent few, those exemplary souls who tempered their needs and disciplined their robust desires on Christmas Day, are a study in serenity, confidently marking the hours of the day after and quietly, efficiently doing what needs to be done.

Nations are much the same as people. Most live it up while a few live providently. It would be patriotic for our leaders and the citizenry to resist the temptations of a holiday mentality in the days and years after Christmas of 1989. The current state of our natural, human and political resources does not permit us to live prodigally as a nation nor to support our overprivileged oligarchs in the style they have accustomed themselves to enjoy.

In confronting our many vital needs as a nation, we must resist a popular indiscretion which irresponsibly postpones the day of reckoning to yet unborn generations of Filipinos. Dependence on foreign assistance for our national development needs leads not only to burdensome foreign debt and a diminished stature among nations; it also results in a debt of character which make us wanting as nationalists and facilitate our acceptance of a dummy role in our



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international relations.

The generous spirit of sacrifice and the resolute will to lead our people through our current wilderness have yet to be reflected in the actions of most of our leaders. The incontrovertible desire to progress as a national community and the uncompromising demand to make leaders accountable to the citizenry have continued to be so much public rhetoric. It is not only the leaders who take sanctuary in shibboleths; the citizenry too has learned to be comfortable with stoutheaded slogans.

Much hard work and painful decision-making await us in our days to come. The hard work lies in making our formal system and its institutions work pretty much as they are formally specified to work. The pain in decision-making lies precisely in the leaders' need to keep faith with the people and to willfully forfeit the extensive network of prerogatives and privileges insulating them from a brutal life suffered daily by their vulnerable public.

Restoration and reconciliation politics are necessary but not sufficient conditions for a truly democratic Philippines. We need not only to restore democratic forms, but more critically to infuse the substance of democracy into these forms. All our formal institutions now could be accommodated by a deceptive oligarchy passing itself off as an elite democracy. In such a political system, at best the people must be considered spectators with no deep commitment to the preservation of constitutional regimes or specific sets of duly constituted authorities.

There are competent political analysts who suspect this public alienation to be a main theme of our national history. In effect, according to their reading, what we have had to date are at least two nations in this country, the elite and the masses, with the latter only superficially interfaced with the elite and culturally as well as psychologically distanced from it. Politics in this case still is theater, but the audience remain its own community, alienated from the players and quite often with really no more than a passing interest in the formal play.

To harness the greater national energy, our leaders will have to go out of their way, reach out more effectively to their still nominal public constituency and demonstrate the unarguable utility of linking a people and their leadership in a common effort towards a common destiny. No leadership can credibly initiate this move at national synergy without first overcoming the public's centuries-old cynicism as regards government and the authorities. The leaders have first to perform and then sus-

tain their performance at levels which might make provisional liberals out of hardened cynics. This miracle cannot be effected by a leadership which refuses to sacrifice much of its historical gains.

As regards political reconciliation, the imperative is not the accommodation of contrary elite interests so much as the dialectical resolution of the contradictory interests of the elite and the vast majority of the people. Until such time as both economic and political development shall have progressed to a qualitatively new stage, the political leaders must accept the temporary zero-sum definition of the national situation and act accordingly. What some people gain, others must lose. A leadership that fudges this reality fails to serve the national interest and, in acting either deceptively or indecisively, repudiates the claims of social justice. Leaders who seriously vow to reconcile a much-divided nation cannot avoid taking sides, and the only side they can take in a truly substantively restoring and reconciling democracy is that of the abject many.

The day after Christmas presents a great opportunity for honest self-appraisal, one which links the lessons of our past to the demands of our present and the dreams for our future. While all Filipinos would do well to participate in this exercise, our leaders more than any other group need greater clarity of vision in analytically processing our multidimensional realities and even greater determination in doing what is necessary to change our much deteriorated national condition for the better.

Food for the gods

IN KEEPING with the season's spirit of extended generosity, Filipinos in Metro Manila offer something for the authorities to feast on, the citizenry's continuing hopes for effective government as well as its support for constitutionalism and the duly-constituted authorities. They served their political leaders a similar banquet soon after the coup in August 1987, when public resources in terms of hopes and support were much more substantial and more easily committed. In 1989, with Filipinos scraping the very bottom of their community chest simply to be able to provide nourishment for the gods, the latter would do well to make better use of the public's offering than they did in 1987. Fiesta-lovers that they might be, it is yet possible for Filipinos to be disenchanted with prodigal guests and, refusing to have more public resources squandered, to actively evict them from the people's palace by the murky Pasig. In December 1989, the last banquet for the gods might be served by a people whose patience and generosity have thinned out to the very edge of a knife.

These thoughts are indicated by 500-Metro Manilans who responded to a Social Weather Stations' public opinion survey on the recent coup. The survey ran from December 11 to 18, 1989, in time to capture much of the public sentiments and attitudes relating to the most recent coup attempt. Funding for the survey reflects a healthy bipartisan interest in public opinion on the coup, with government, private sector and opposition funds commingling to support the non-partisan SWS probe.

The survey confirms the remarkably strong constitutional commitment of Metro Manilans. Despite a strong majority sentiment that practically all (i.e. twelve out of thirteen) of the rebel complaints



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have basis ("makatwiran"), 70 percent of the respondents insist that all these legitimate complaints do not justify resorting to a coup. There is much depreciation of military men who participate in coups, with 48 percent of the respondents saying that the real objective of these people is simply to grab political power for themselves or their civilian backers. One in four contests this cynical assessment; yet another one in three professes indecision regarding the motivation of coup-minded military rebels.

The public's constitutionalism is grossly tested by majority perceptions that the following complaints indeed have validity and thus could lead to much disaffection: too much graft and corruption in government (73%); very low pay and benefits of military men and their dependents (73%); difficult life for most Filipinos (69%); difficulty in relaying complaints to the President (67%); neglect of basic needs of Filipinos (66%); weak/indecisive leadership within the military (63%); favoritism in military promotions (59%); low regard for the military by government officials (58%);

weak/indecisive leadership in government (57%); communist-leaning high government officials (55%); and weak/indecisive leadership in the Department of National Defense (54%). Half of the respondents also validated the claim that there is a lack of arms and other equipment for the military, and 39 percent there is basis in the military rebels' 93 complaint that the government coddles communist and Muslim rebels. Relative to their appraisal of similar complaints by those who participated in the August 1987 coup, the respondents in 1989 agreed even more than in 1987 that these complaints have basis in fact or are *makatwiran*.

The constitutionalist preference is also revealed by the satisfaction ratings which the respondents give to personalities and institutions involved in the last coup. Those people and institutions which acted to support government against the coup have marked positive satisfaction ratings, while those who worked for the success of the coup are negatively rated by the survey respondents.

Popular satisfaction and citizen support could be primarily for the constitutional political process rather than for the Aquino administration itself. The best raters in terms of public satisfaction are not civilian, but military officers who performed constitutional functions. President Aquino trails four military and quasi-military men in the estimation of the satisfied public. Also, while half of the respondents are for maintaining President Aquino as a public official, two out of ten believe it would be good for her to resign and let Filipinos choose a new President; the rest are undecided as to the wisdom of keeping her in office or asking her to step down. Furthermore, about eight in ten be-

lieve that the President's Cabinet need to be revamped, pointing out specific personalities who must be replaced if the good of the country is to be served well. About 22 percent of the respondents actually say all of the Cabinet members must resign or be fired from their position.

Even as the respondents confirm their marked preference for constitutionalism, almost half of them view the current political system as basically oligarchic in character. Only one in four sees the ordinary citizen as being able to influence political outcomes in the country at all. A very high proportion (70%) are unable or unwilling to rule out the possibility that the Filipino might finally give up on peaceful means of effecting democratic change.

There are other startling and sobering findings in this SWS survey. However, the public's constitutionalist imperative and the intimation that even constitutionalism might have its political limits must be considered the most crucial of all. The satisfaction and support that are being currently extended to this government must not be confused with yet another honeymoon offering by incurable romantics. It looks more like a conditional gift from those who, after a four-year affair with their political heartthrob, have learned the virtue of distinguishing loving wisely from loving well. One leads to a condition of innumerable alibis, countless coups and perpetual emergencies; the other leads to much struggle, much self-sacrifice, and eventually, national liberation.

Constitutionalism is indeed on the public's current menu for the gods, but perhaps only for the gods who work hard for and thus earn their just desserts are going to be served at all by our now more critical people.

Requiem for diffident regimes

Our political leaders in 1990 cannot continue being indecisive without dire consequences for themselves as well as the nation

THIS year promises to be most crucial to the political authorities. Before 1990 is over, they probably would have either effectively governed or become extinct. There appears to be no middle ground between these stark choices. Thus, one must anticipate an intensification of efforts by government agencies and, in particular, the executive. Survival and effectiveness have a way of synergistically demanding as well as reinforcing each other.

The threats to the authorities are real. From within their own ranks, the incompetent, the corrupt and the ritualistic officials sap this government's energies and resources, transmogrifying political capital into liabilities and alienating the very constituency which so far has generously provided them with critical support.

Within government still, a demoralized bureaucracy with over a million workers drags its feet in attending to the day to day business of government. Uninspired and uninspiring leadership, dreadful working conditions and marginal levels of benefits spell an unholy trinity making for inefficient and even corrupt civil service.

Within the military, a barely sufficient, critical mass of constitutionalists daily witness the erosion of constitutionalist bulwarks. Daily, both officers and their men are bombarded by treasonous politicians, inept public officials, and mercenary agents of public disinformation. Within their own system, many military men acknowledge multiple crises of effective leadership, military justice, merit promotions,



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and material benefits for soldiers and their families. Siren calls for military men to do right for their country as well as for themselves and their families could be increasingly seductive. Not only the minority who have joined coups in the past are to be regarded as vulnerable to these calls; even more crucial are military men who assiduously fought coupmakers before but, demanding that they now be provided institutions "worthy dying for," continue to encounter vacuous institutions.

Beyond the pale of government itself, the only viable communist insurgency in Asia and the Muslim secessionist movement continue to threaten. The effectiveness of these groups is irrevocably inversely related to the effectiveness of government in managing itself and focusedly addressing the most basic of national concerns. Public order, relatively honest government, national sovereignty and timely action constitute the core imperatives of a minimal-

ist government with more than a fair chance of political survival.

All these threats are meaningfully contextualized only in the ultimate political environment: the millions of Filipinos whose limited sense of history at least includes the last four years and whose vision for the future at least embraces the next twenty four hours and the likelihood of three square meals within the same period. Such people are not going to be overly impressed by government's unfortunate tendency to compare current conditions with those of Marcos' time, nor are they going to be easily consoled with afterlives of milk and honey beyond the next twelve months. The here and the now are increasingly the dimensions within which Filipinos make their appraisals of political authorities. This radical calculus provides little leeway for indolent and procrastinating regimes.

Given our times, national leaders should take kindly to even unsolicited advice, especially if proffered by that failed political genius, the unfortunate Machiavelli. Whosoever succeeds in building a nation, according to him, needs to integrate three things: *necessita*, *virtu*, *et fortuna*. The first refers to a condition calling to be addressed, a necessity as it were given specific times and specific conditions, as when a nation must be forged out of disparate, even hostile elements. The second relates to the political skills which a leader must possess to effectively address any given *necessita*, or political opportunity which presents itself to him. The third, *fortuna*, is the un-

avoidable element of luck which must attend the most skillful efforts of a leader if he is to succeed in utilizing any political opportunity.

The Philippines in 1990 presents a singular opportunity for a skillful political leader, or group of political leaders, to earn a patriot's place in our national history. Liberally assuming that political skills are not wanting in our national leadership, only one thing remains to be bridged between our current abject condition and our aspirations as a people. That thing is fortune.

Machiavelli counsels that of the three conditions for political success, *fortuna* is least tractable to human manipulation. He cites many cases of competent political leaders who nevertheless failed because fortune did not smile on them at the critical moment. Yet, Machiavelli proffers an insight which is that all successful political leaders have treated *fortuna* as a young man handles a very fickle lady, that is to say, with audacity. Who would avail successfully of the opportunity offered by *necessita* must indeed first have the requisite political skills or *virtu* of a leader, but he must act with alacrity, even with impetuosity, if he is to gain the favor of *fortuna* and consummate his success.

Our own political leaders in 1990 cannot continue being indecisive without dire consequences for themselves as well as the nation. All over the world now, the bells have been tolling for diffident regimes. The Philippines cannot be an exception. Our leaders must dare, or perish.

Institutions worth dying for

The initiatives taken by constitutionalist military officers in the last coup attempt belie the misconception that they are incapable of independent thinking or action

THAT arch-constitutionalist, Brigadier General Rodolfo G. Biazon of the National Capital Region Defense Command, surveyed the remains of the December coup in Fort Aguinaldo and, despite the Secretary of Defense's statement that General Biazon would review the "highlights" of the anti-coup campaign for the assembled press people, refused to follow his civilian superior's lead. Voice choking with emotion, the good general laconically commented, "We have a job to do. We will do it."

The President of the Republic issued the ultimatum to the rebel military in her sternest tone, "Surrender or die!" One of her constitutionalist generals, in a face-to-face confrontation with rebel Scout Rangers, effectively amended the executive order and permitted the rebels to march with their arms and sing their way "back to the barracks." No one had to surrender, no one had to die. This general is a sure-fire candidate, a natural for the country's diplomatic service should he resign or retire from the military.

The initiatives taken by constitutionalist military officers in the last coup attempt belie the misconception that they are (and should be) incapable of independent thinking or action, that they are (and should be) largely automata programmed simply to receive and execute the order of superiors in the duly constituted chain of military and civilian command.

In the last coup, there appears to be a conjunction of perceptions among many military men and civilians alike that the complaints publicly aired by the rebels are largely without basis. Taken together, these complaints are an indict-



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ment of the inability of government to effectively address national civilian and military concerns. They are critical commentaries on the indecisiveness of specific political leaders and the corruption of many who hold positions of public trust. The complaints reflect badly on political institutions which have been recently restored and appear to have failed their formal, constitutional criteria for democratic operation.

The legitimacy of the complaints is not the point at issue even for civilians, as revealed by the December 1989 Metro

Manila coup survey of the independent Social Welfare Stations. Only the means resorted to by the rebels, the coup, must be considered still problematic for a largely constitutionalist-minded citizenry.

The civilian mind-set regarding the urgency of many national concerns, the legitimacy of rebel complaints, and the general ineffectiveness of government agencies in addressing serious problems so far is probably shared by many constitutionalist military men. The National Security Adviser, himself a highly regarded retired military officer, has warned that coups would probably continue should civilian politicians fail to attend to the needs of the nation as well as those more explicitly identified with the military.

The most serious challenge has come from the most staunchly constitutionalist of our warriors, from General Biazon himself. As an extraordinarily sensitive military man, General Biazon recently demanded that constitutionalist soldiers be given "institutions worth dying for." Only someone who has had (and continues to have) the terrible responsibility of committing his men and himself to die for a cause can make that kind of demand with credibility. No one appears to have treated Biazon's imperative with any degree of skepticism.

Biazon's anguish is the Filipino nation's tragedy. EDSA in 1986 was a cathartic experience for millions of Filipinos who looked forward to having institutions worth dying for. It is a terrible indictment of our system and our authorities in particular that, after four years, neither our restored institutions nor our revitalized authorities can summarily, credibly claim

that they are indeed, as of now, even worth living for. Survey data point to the increasing public perception that government institutions and politicians in general have at best marginally touched the lives of citizens for the better.

In the last four years, stung by the failed coup as well as a more demonstrative citizenry, the national administration has been furiously assessing its record of governance and publicly projecting a born-again zeal in governance hereafter. The Emergency Powers Act, the hardline coup probes, and the Cabinet shuffle hopefully are not going to be overwhelmed by an earlier tendency of this administration towards dramatic performance where, after the drama has been played out, the public is left desperately in search of the performance.

All fury, signifying nothing is a tale which, even twicetold, yields no institutions worth dying for. Men like Biazon may then conscientiously refuse to sacrifice human lives on the altar of formal constitutions. Should this ever come to pass, it will be precisely because our authorities shall have persuaded constitutionalists in this country that *idiotes*, those who act without concern for the community's well-being, have somehow become the nation's governors.

Idiots worth dying for? This is the supreme constitutionalist test. In far too many historical regimes, the citizenry and their Biazons even reluctantly confronted this stark situation and, in some cases, jointly, wisely and patriotically resolved it. Being Filipinos, we are ever hopeful of being the exception rather than the rule.

The making of a great president

YESTERDAY, THE distinguished retired diplomat and former president of the University of the Philippines, Salvador P. Lopez, informed me that he is writing a biography of the late President Elpidio Quirino. SP, as he is affectionately addressed by many of his university colleagues, believes that President Quirino might turn out to be our best president to date, "better than Magsaysay," he says. Quite a few of our political historians, benefiting from a perspective afforded by more than half a century of presidential leadership, would probably agree with SP. Quirino's presidency indeed appears to gain in stature with the passing of the years.

Biographies of national leaders abound. When conscientiously researched on and competently written up, these accounts of the powerful and the famous serve at least three purposes: (1) they help define the most crucial features of an historical period when a particular national leader assumes political preeminence; (2) they delineate the role(s) played by the national leadership and more specifically the subject of the biography in confronting and managing the challenges posed to a nation's survival or development by a given historical period; and (3) they provide an intimate view of a biographical subject's leadership style as he interacts with others in the process of consolidating and enhancing his political capabilities as a *primus inter pares* or as a national leader *non pareil*. Intelligently done (that is to say, somehow escaping the infirmity of being idolatrous in its treatment of the leader as a pivotal political actor), a biography yields much insight into the dynamics of a political system and its institutions and enables a reader to empathize with the biographer's subject.

Biographies are not the only



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way of exploring the issue of presidential leadership. One could undertake a systematic comparison of a nation's presidents by asking a panel of those with expert knowledge or opinion (say political scientists, sociologists and historians as well as politicians and journalists who have shown sustained interest in the political system and its authorities) or a group of ordinary citizens who might be selected by some random process to evaluate national leaders using some pre-established criteria. The ranked list of leaders could then be plotted against a range of indicators or presidential characteristics, one's objective being to discover whether some particular configuration of indicators or characteristics might be associated with the perceived ranking of national leaders over time.

In trying to establish the relative worth of their presidents, some concerned Americans have tried to apply a system of evaluation like the one suggested above. Recently, two American political scientists summarized their findings in an article titled, "Our Best and Worst Presidents: Some Possible Reasons for Perceived Performance," in the October 1989 issue of *Presidential Studies Quarterly*.

Using a 1983 ranking of 36 American presidents provided by a survey of American historians, the authors tried to compare the twelve best and the twelve worst rated presidents using thirty-eight different indicators. The indicators included physical characteristics and personal background (e.g. height, male birth order, family size, early death of father or mother, occupation of fathers of presidents and their wives), education and high-level, governmental experience (e.g. college background, publications, experience in the Lower House, Senate, Cabinet, and military, among others), political and economic environment during the presidency (e.g. local as well as international economic environmental characteristics, majority support in the presidential election, one-party dominance during one's term and assassination attempts), and, finally, power motivation and behavior orientations (e.g. actively or passively-oriented leader, positive/enjoying or negative/deploring orientation to one's job, motivation scores for orientation towards power, achievement, and affiliation, among others).

The article's abstract summarily states the authors' main findings regarding what might make for great presidents: "High level governmental experience is the least significant series of indicators. Most often background does not test as significant, but there are possible exceptions. Top presidents generally differ from bottom presidents by publishing more books before assuming office, enjoying more political consensus and prosperity during their terms, being more positive and possibly more active, being more assertive on foreign policy issues, and possibly having power orientation which are greater than their affiliation and achievement orientations."

These findings have persua-

sive impact in relation to American presidents and may not be extended simplistically to Filipino presidents. Still, given our extended search for inspiring and capably performing leaders, some of these findings might console while yet others could induce despair among those who desperately scan for a "great" president in our current times.

According to these findings, an inexperienced housewife might yet be a great president, since high level governmental experience appears mostly dispensable on the way to presidential greatness. Personal background could also be largely ignored, although it would have been more reassuring if the housewife had published at least a cookbook before assuming presidential chores. With enough political consensus continuing to attend her administration, it would help much if she projected more assertiveness on foreign policy issues (e.g. the American military bases and the foreign debt) and reflected greater decisiveness in wielding political power to resolve domestic issues. The lack of national prosperity is extremely problematic, but then even a housewife-turned-president cannot have it easy all the way. Somewhere along the trail to greatness, a high motivation for substantive political and economic achievement appears imperative. Restoration politics alone cannot pole-vault this president over the current crises and into the hearts of a truly grateful nation.

Wishing President Aquino and ourselves the best, we must not encourage biographers, indicators analysts nor survey researchers to attempt anything but the most provisional assessment of her presidency at this point in time. Anything else could be unfair to her and, should the assessment turn out to be both final and correct, would be unnerving for most of us Filipinos.

A post-coup view of the Gringos

FILIPINOS, a survivalist nation buffeted by political, economic, and moral crises, have grown accustomed to a *kapit sa patalim* mentality in the eighties and carry over this sense of desperation to the nineties. The sense is particularly strong in Metro Manila, where the citizenry tends to be more informed about current developments, more critical of government and the authorities, and more willing to express their disaffection with both issues and personalities.

In the latest Social Weather Stations' post-coup survey of Metro Manila, the *kapit sa patalim* mentality of Manilaños can be seen as coloring their views of Uncle Sam, the ultimate Gringo. The SWS survey ran from December 12 to 18, 1989 and employed a multi-stage, randomized sample of 500 respondents.

Even as a majority (51 percent) of the respondents surveyed affirm a marked distaste for foreign intervention in Filipino domestic affairs, four out of ten Manilaños nevertheless support the Aquino government's request for American help against the coup forces. Close to half (48 percent) of the respondents are convinced that this was the sole recourse left last December for the Aquino government to survive the threat posed by the RAM-SFP coup.

Pragmatists that they have become (after all there is no better or more incisive teacher than an extended experience of *kapit sa patalim*), Manilaños recognize that Gringo help compromises our government's ability to freely pursue vital national interests. Specifically, the plurality (43 percent) of Manilaños aver that because of crucial American assistance during the coup, the Aquino government would find it difficult to refuse anything the United States desires concern-



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ing military bases in the Philippines. Only 17 percent contest this plurality opinion, with most of the remaining 40 percent who say they are undecided possibly simply preferring to keep their counsel as a matter of prudence. Pragmatists may choose to keep quiet so to prevent undue advantage from accruing to Americans in a perceived bargaining situation involving military bases.



It is probably this realization that Americans could be hard bargainers that incline Manilaños to reiterate in December 1989 their pre-coup, September 1989 option preferences on the military bases. About a third of the respondents continues to be anti-bases in orientation, a fifth remains open to opposing or supporting the military bases depending on the amount of benefits the United States

would provide in exchange for use of the bases, and close to half are pro-bases, arguing that even at current levels of benefits Filipinos should already extend the military bases agreement with the United States.

Pragmatists do not have to be ingrates, even if they are forced to be thankful by extremely unpleasant circumstances. Manilaños remain wary of American intentions, with only 29 percent believing that the ultimate Gringo means well for Filipinos. Seven out of ten Manilaños are skeptical or outrightly repudiate this trusting view. However, relative to earlier survey findings of the SWS in September 1989, even the currently high level of public skepticism already represents a gain for the Americans. A quarter ago, only 20 percent of Metro Manilaños have a positive reading of American intentions. Margins of confidence in the American government (the proportion of those saying they trust American government intentions to be good for Filipinos minus the proportion of those who say they don't) improve from a minus 11 in September 1989 to an even zero in December 1989 after Americans flew persuasive flights in support of the Aquino government during the last coup.

The difficult feelings of Manilaños for the Gringos are also indicated by the improvement or deterioration of their satisfaction ratings for two American public officials as a result of these officials' actions and pronouncements during and soon after the December coup. A negative margin of satisfaction is registered for Ambassador Nicholas Platt, with 27 percent saying their satisfaction rating for him worsened and only 15 percent saying their satisfaction rating improved. A slightly im-

proved, but still stalemated view of President George Bush is offered by Manilaños, with 25 percent saying their satisfaction rating improved and 23 percent asserting the contrary.

Summing up, one could say that current public opinion in Metro Manila relating to the United States and American public officials reveals a strong survivalist determination. People appear to be convinced that what needs to be done must be done, regardless of one's ideal preferences, whatever the grim and formidable consequences of undertaking the necessary action might turn out to be. American assistance being vital to the preservation of the Aquino government, Manilaños yield to necessity and relegate their personal desires for foreign non-intervention to the background. Harboring no illusions about the benign intentions of a foreign government, trusting little in the generosity of alien political actors and pragmatically assessing the inevitable costs of soliciting foreign help, they clarify their national interest and priorities and prepare to survive yet another challenge to their already much-deteriorated commonwealth.

It is a wonder that such a people continue to keep faith with a leadership whose talent for fecklessness has been matched only by its aversion for direly-needed unsolicited advice and its aptitude for soliciting foreign help even as it depreciates the support of its own people. In these qualities, the national leadership appears to be the very antithesis of Manilaños, who survive on their own despite the concerted efforts of all kinds of Gringos to make life in this country exceedingly difficult.

A synthesis is yet to come. Surely. Shortly, if the leadership does not change its stripes. Or loses heart completely, irrevocably.