

The Role of People's Organizations In Philippine Political Development

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People's organizations (POs) are considered organs of power of the marginalized sectors of society. Their main objective is to be able to chart their own future and shape reality in accordance with their own aspirations. In the Philippines, POs have evolved as a reaction to the Marcos anti-democratic and repressive regime. The more revolutionary and politically oriented organizations are exemplified by the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), the national umbrella organization of nationalist, democratic and militant peasant organizations, and the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN), a national federation of organizations of peasants, workers, urban poor communities, students, professionals and cultural minorities. Although the 20-year Marcos dictatorship has begun to be dismantled, the challenge remains for POs to continue effecting changes in the present political setup which is still largely dominated by the traditional elites and politicians.

Introduction

The swift turn of events that transpired between February 22-25 which finally put an end to the Marcos dictatorship could not have been possible without the courage and determination of hundreds of thousands of people who barricaded the streets with cars and their own bodies, commandeered buses and in various other ways, rendered ineffective Marcos' military force against the reformist group of Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and General Fidel Ramos.¹ Information bears out that many of these people were leaders and members or ardent sympathizers of organized democratic forces and cause-oriented groups. As one professor of the University of the Philippines (UP) commented, "the February uprising could not have been imaginable without the organized movements forming the core and setting the perspective of popular struggle. The organized political forces girdled the surge of mass discontent, leading it is a clear ideological flavor, providing its popular character."²

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Indeed it is very encouraging that no less than President Corazon Aquino herself, in her Thanksgiving address delivered at the Rizal Park on March 2, 1986, stated that there is a need for the Filipino masses to organize themselves into "interest groups" and "people's associations" at various levels in order to consolidate the gains made during the "snap revolution" and institutionalize "people's power" that brought the downfall of the Marcos dictatorship.

This study attempts to analyze and place in proper perspective the role of people's organizations in the current Philippine political development. Specifically, the paper zeroes in on some theoretical dimensions of people's organizations (POs), describes actual cases of two organizations — the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) and the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) — and finally, discusses some possibilities for strengthening the role of people's organizations in the country's political development.

People's Organizations and Political Development

In general, people's organizations (including the revolutionary cause-oriented groups and mass organizations) are considered to be organs of power of the poor sectors of society comprising the small farmers, marginal fishermen, landless agricultural workers and other oppressed classes whose main objective is to be able to chart their own future and shape reality in accordance with their own aspirations. They are distinct from other organizations because "their formation, decisionmaking, planning, struggle and reflection are not the monopoly of a few leaders but of the widest mass membership manifesting very vividly the case of people working and struggling together."³ The composition then of POs basically caters to the masses who have always been bypassed in the governmental decisionmaking process, oppressed by conditions of poverty, disabled from understanding the realities of the decadent situation, and paralyzed by a culture of silence and a climate of fear that was most prevalent under the Marcos regime.⁴ As to their role and functions vis-a-vis political development, Professor Karina David of UP enumerates them as: (1) to assert and to fight for their own rights which only presupposes that they need to be strong and knowledgeable in protecting themselves from the law and institutions and turn them to their own advantage; and (2) to define their own individual private troubles in terms of larger issues of social structures and also participate actively in defining their own destinies.⁵ To enhance their effectivity in addressing bigger and systemic societal issues, it is advisable for them not only to organize themselves into a coalition or federation but also to guard against the creation of another bureaucratic monster within their midst which could stifle the spirit of people participation and democratic control.⁶ A common set of principles clearly internalized by each individual member and the organization as a whole will also help them advance their cause. These prin-

ciples include: (1) maximum people participation; (2) maximum control by the people; and (3) simplicity and creativity — where the tactics of organizing and mobilization should be within their own experiences as the oppressed sectors and outside the experience of the exploitative and repressive regime.⁷

As to their strategy of action, POs generally engage in what is commonly known as the conflict-confrontation strategy as contrasted with the usual accommodative and integrative “self-help approaches.”⁸ The conflict-confrontation strategy does not necessarily involve the unleashing of senseless violence but reasonably empowers POs to bargain and dialogue with people in authority. Such an approach has gained the support even of the church hierarchy because dialogue searches for the common good in a free community; however, this could only be achieved when the masses have truly shown that they are no longer servile and afraid.⁹ The “self-help approaches,” as most social and political scientists would contend, are in their entirety but means of the dictatorial regime which only serve as palliatives through which the latter prolongs the illusion that the existing economic and political system has a self-correcting mechanism. In the end, such approaches make the people contend themselves with small concessions and minor welfare gains which inevitably retard their political development.¹⁰

The more revolutionary and cause-oriented groups or mass organizations, which form part of the POs in general, could be considered political in nature since they unrelentlessly address themselves to the task of making the political system and all its institutions become truly responsive to the demands, needs and aspirations of the people especially the disadvantaged sectors of the society. These groups believe in the urgency of effecting changes by first dismantling the dictatorship and thereafter carrying out the needed social and economic reforms in the country. Such groups vary not only in their composition but also in their ideologies and methods of fulfilling their avowed goals and objectives. These groups consist not only of the poorer sectors but also of those belonging to the upper and middle strata of society as well. And the latter are usually based in the urban and metropolitan centers. As Father Jose Dizon, Deputy Secretary-General of the Nationalist Alliance for Justice, Freedom and Democracy would contend, these organizations have their base of unity on their perception of the vast causes of the crisis, the alternative to dictatorship and methods in changing society and liberating the people from the present situation. Anti-dictatorship fronts, Fr. Dizon added, can be divided into the conservative reformists, the liberal democrats and the militant progressive groups.¹¹ The conservative reformists would address the central political question through peaceful and clean elections, the liberal democrats through active non-violence, while the militant progressive groups through militant mass struggles and possibly the establishment of a coalition government as an alternative to dictatorship.¹²

Some components of the theory of political development which are crucial in charting the role of POs in the whole process of political development include the politics of nationalism, political stability and the promotion of equality. The first aspect which is the politics of nationalism, entails the translation of the different and unorganized sentiments of the citizenry and, necessarily, the creation of institutions that can rationally translate them into policies and programs that would best respond to their needs and aspirations. Corollary to this is an expanded form of popular involvement where there is a diffusion of decisionmaking and mass participation thereby bearing influence on choice and decision of government on certain political issues and activities.¹³ Another aspect of political development involves political stability based on the capacity of the government to effect within itself purposeful and orderly change through its more participatory and people-oriented political institutions. Stability is relevant to economic and social advancement. If the concern of the government is to promote both effectiveness and efficiency in the execution of its policies and programs, the political environment that envelopes it must also be made conducive to promoting nationality and accountability in administration as well as a secular orientation toward policy.¹⁴ As Pye would further clarify, stability that is "merely stagnation and an arbitrary support of the status quo is clearly not development, except when its alternative is manifestly a wise state of affairs."¹⁵

Political development also emphasizes promotion of equality which means that all laws promulgated by the government must apply to everybody in a more or less impersonal and impartial manner and that there is fair access to all government goods and services by the poorer sectors of the society. Basically it calls for the abolition of all repressive laws that provide as the weapons and shield of the exploitative ruling classes who are concerned with maintaining themselves in power and control over the masses. However, in order for any government to maintain its control over the mobilization and allocation of resources and services to all, it must preponderously require legitimacy or acceptance of its mandate to rule and the popular support of all its laws, policies and programs by the people themselves. The process of political development itself often becomes a sensitive issue when the existence of a gap between the government and the governed becomes manifest. This particular crisis, occurs when the masses begin to become organized and vigilant in articulating their demands and in seeking redress of their complaints on one side, while on the other side, the political leadership and the elite surrounding them opts to coerce, persuade or control the former. In this case, disintegration becomes inevitable under conditions of conflict and often internal wars.¹⁶

The case of the Philippines under Marcos' dictatorship gives ample evidence to the fact that POs have their basis of existence on the kind of

political development which confronts them. This, in turn, determines the role that POs have to perform in pursuit of an alternative political development which could effectively and responsibly address the issues of legitimacy, participation, integration, justice and equity which are usually found lacking in most authoritarian and dictatorial regimes.

Assumptions Pertaining to the Role of POs

This study takes off from two assumptions concerning the role of POs in the political development of the Philippines. First, the nature and type of the political regime prevailing in a country determines the kind of POs that will emerge and their role and functions in the political development process. Second, the nature and type of POs, as influenced by their own ideologies and strategies, similarly determine both the content and process of political development which will take place in a country.

Nationalist people's movements have always been part of the country's political development. What provided impetus to the evolution of POs, including the revolutionary and politically-oriented ones, was the installation of the Marcos anti-democratic and repressive regime. During the martial law period, many of these people's movements were radicalized upon realizing that the legal, reformist tactics that they were using were in themselves a limiting factor. These radical POs therefore opted to get into active pressure politics which the Marcos government hastily branded as acts of subversion. Some of these POs, for fear of retaliation, were forced to censor their activities while the more determined ones prematurely disappeared from the scene. Other cause-oriented groups and mass organizations which survived continued to engage in a "do or die" political struggle in their aim to abolish Marcos' dictatorship and, thereby, start a new era of democratic political development in the country. Under the government of President Corazon Aquino, hopes are high that indeed this new era of democratic political development may have come of age.

In predicting the kind of political development that the Philippines as a sovereign state might be leading to, a host of factors need to be considered alongside leadership and these are: the ideologies and strategies of POs and other important power sectors (e.g., political parties, the military, the church, etc.). Some significant observations that have been made of the Aquino government are that it is a composite of the country's intellectual and social elite; it represents the same mix (as the previous dispensation) of traditional politicians, liberal democrats and moderate reformists; and, the POs are left out in terms of representation in the new government. Even as outsider, people's organizations especially the militant ones will certainly continue to press for changes which will redound to visible, operational reforms benefitting not only one particular sector of the Philippine

society but the greater number of the Filipino people who belong to the poor and disadvantaged sectors of the society. Unlike the conformists and politician-stakeholders who would opt to preserve the status quo, POs whether they espouse broad goals as nationalism and anti-US imperialism or sectoral objectives as land transfer, upliftment of women, among others, will collectively and in relation to their individual ideologies, chart the process and direction of Philippine political development as they did in the days of Mr. Marcos.

POs' Role in Philippine Political Development

This section focuses on two POs which are of the revolutionary, cause-oriented type — the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) and the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN). Specifically, the following pertinent items of information in relation to KMP and BAYAN will be dealt with: organization's evolution; mission and goals; organizational structure; resources and capabilities; and, activities and accomplishments to date.

The Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP)

The KMP is the national umbrella organization of the genuinely nationalist, democratic and militant peasant organizations (now numbering to 48) in the different provinces and regions of the country. It has a strongly organized mass base of 500,000 peasants and agricultural workers, accepted to have an effective influence reaching an estimated two million who are now part and parcel of all the provincial, municipal and barrio level chapters and alliances. As an organization, it commits itself to the liberation struggle for the establishment of (1) a democratic movement that unequivocally seeks to uphold the democratic and political rights of the peasantry; (2) a nationalistic movement that aims to end the exploitation of land and agriculture by foreigners and establish a genuine nationalist development program for a free and prosperous society; (3) a peasant organization that draws strength from its own collective action and unites with all other oppressed sectors whether in the countryside or in the urban centers; and, (4) a peasant organization that is united and propelled by the support and initiative of its members and democratically led and guided by lessons from history.¹⁷

In the context of the present liberation struggles of the Filipino people, KMP's role is geared towards facilitating and launching nationally-coordinated peasant campaigns, assemblies and other forms of mobilization calling for: (1) dismantling of the US-Marcos dictatorship; (2) advancing the peasant struggle against the fascist US-Marcos dictatorship; (3) implementing genuine land reform and national industrialization; and, (4) upholding the unity of the peasantry and other democratic classes and sectors for justice, freedom and democracy.¹⁸

The KMP was formally organized only in July 1985. However, the history of its continuing peasant struggles actually dates as far back as after Marcos proclaimed Presidential Decree No. 27 (Tenants Emancipation Act) in October 1972. Because of the peasants' disillusionment with the fake land reform program and despite the increasing militarization in the countryside, many of them undauntedly pursued their local organizing and mobilizing efforts among the existing farmers' groups and associations even at the expense of being branded as subversives. In many instances, not a few of them became victims of indiscriminate military arrests, harassment, hamletting, salvaging and other forms of military violence.¹⁹ Fortunately, some of these local farmers associations survived. In 1980-1982, the Alyansang Magsasaka ng Gitnang Luzon (AMGL) and the Bicol Coconut Planters Association (BCPA) took the leadership in openly denouncing the government's exploitative land reform alongside with the feudal and the semi-feudal arrangements and practices being perpetuated by the big landowners and bureaucrats, the compradors and monopoly capitalists that left the peasants more impoverished over the years.²⁰ A case in point is the Masagana 99 and the Samahang Nayon, both of which only served as channels of multinationals' agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and the controversial high yielding variety seeds. The AMGL also protested the problems of farmers being forced to render high rental for farm machines and irrigation. On the other hand, the BCPA pushed hard their demands for scrapping coconut levy and dismantling trading monopolies such as the United Coconut Mills for copra and the National Food Administration for rice.²¹ In August 1983, the first National Consultative Assembly of Peasant Organizations attended by several peasant organizations firmed up a resolution to put up a federation at the national level which became the KMP. Once organized and despite the limited operational resources which is derived solely from membership dues either in cash or agricultural produce collected from members and other financial support from peasant advocates,²² the KMP launched a nationwide anti-hunger/poverty/militarization campaign. This was coordinated by the National Executive Committee²³ and the various regional, provincial and municipal chapters with the support of all farmer-members. One of its biggest mass action campaigns was held on October 20-21, 1985 where peasants and farm workers numbering to about 15,000 assembled and kept vigil at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF) office in Quezon City and marched towards Mendiola but were, however, met by coercive retaliation by the military and the local police force. Prior to this, there were attempts made to dialogue with both Minister Escudero and Prime Minister Virata but the shabby treatment the organization members received only aggravated the situation. In other parts of the country, particularly in Western Visayas and Northern Mindanao, the KMP chapters actively pursued their mass actions and even resorted to an embargo of all trading and marketing of their produce which, in turn, drew out an iron response from the Marcos camp. As a consequence, food

blockades and hamletting of peasant communities intensified.²⁴ Even earlier, in September 1985, paramilitary units and police forces opened fire on demonstrators, killing 27 people, most of whom were farm workers and peasants in Escalante, Negros Occidental.²⁵ There were also 13 peasant leaders and sympathizers arrested in Iloilo and military movement and zoning operations were undertaken to pre-empt the mobilization of peasants. But certainly, all these political and military repressions only strengthened KMP's resolve to work hard for the dismantling of the US-Marcos clique.

As regards its participation in the electoral process, the KMP, being an affiliate member of BAYAN, also opted to support its call for a national boycott of which they perceived as a sham presidential electoral contest. In order to encourage a boycott stand among the farmers, KMP engaged in various peasants' fora and assemblies to discuss the issues involved with their local members. Based on regional election reports, a significant majority of the KMP boycotted the February 7 election.²⁶ However, when presidential candidate Aquino called for a civil disobedience program in protest of the election frauds, terrorism and violence committed by the ruling Kilusang Bagong Lipunan party, the KMP was among the first organized movements to respond to the call and started planning for a nationwide general strike and boycott actions. During the four-day snap revolution, it was quite unfortunate that only a few of the KMP leadership were available as there was no more time to convene all the other chapter members, who are based mostly in the provinces, to join the barricades.²⁷ But soon after the proclamation of the President-elect Aquino and the installation of the new government, KMP officials and members once again made representation and initiated dialogue with the newly appointed Minister Ramon Mitra of MAF on March 18, 1986 and presented a draft of their proposed land reform program which includes demands for redistribution of agrarian lands owned by Marcos cronies to settlers and farmers. Another demand is for government to stop the proliferation of plantation farms and agri-business corporations in the countryside and pursue the granting of land ownership titles to farmers included in the Marcos land reform program.²⁸ As to the issue of working with the new government, KMP adopts what they call as "critical cooperation" and "principled support" where it would always welcome any open dialogue and consultation with the government on programs that not only affect the peasantry but also the rest of other democratic classes in the society. Since the new administration has in several occasions expressed its intention to protect and support the peasants' cause, KMP is all the more intent in advancing the following demands: (1) rollback the prices of fertilizers and pesticides; (2) launch a new agricultural credit scheme with maximum rate of only 12% per annum; (3) cancel all unpaid loans under Masagana 99 as it benefitted only the multinationals; (4) stabilize the palay support price to a level that will not affect the price of rice; (5) reduce the price of crude oil and electricity rates in order to lower the cost of irriga-

tion; and, (6) establish a genuine national agro-industrial program to go hand in hand with the implementation of a genuine land reform program.²⁹

In spite of financial constraints and the spurious efforts of some anti-democratic elements and organizations to discredit it, KMP has made its resolve to pursue broader, more organized and militant actions and to collaborate closely with other democratic people-oriented sectors like the youth, the church and other progressive professionals to fully achieve the liberation of the toiling masses. It also intends to develop researches and conduct symposia and fora on pressing national issues and concerns to raise the awareness of its peasant members and further strengthen its organizing and mobilizing efforts especially in the rural barrios.

The Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN)

BAYAN is principally a national federation of more or less 1,030 organizations mostly from the mass-based sectors of peasants, workers, urban poor communities, students, professionals and cultural minorities. It has a total membership of about 2.5 million all over the country. BAYAN's challenge is the unification of all genuine nationalist, democratic and patriotic movements, organizations and individuals who have consistently taken a more visible and assertive stance after the Aquino assassination.³⁰ As Jose Castro of BAYAN-Metro Manila describes it, "BAYAN represents the most militant of the cause-oriented groups. The US-Marcos dictatorship considers BAYAN as the broadest alliance of basic sectors in Philippine society calling for a radical restructuring of the system. BAYAN also puts primacy on people's militant action and has steadfastly refused to work within the framework of the dictatorship but rather at its periphery."³¹ As Firmo Tripon, also of BAYAN-Metro Manila further argued, "it is only under BAYAN that all these (cause-oriented) organizations are beginning to unite. The opposition before had no real unity. The government is terrified of a unity that will be nationwide. If that is achieved, the government falls, as seen elsewhere in the world."³²

In its founding Congress held on May 4 and 5, 1985, BAYAN elected its national and regional officials. About 1,000 delegates from cause-oriented organizations attended and, as a body, it approved the following demands: (1) the formulation of economic policies through the organized participation of all mass-based interest groups; (2) an end to "crony" capitalism; (3) the people's full and free access to all loan records and a renegotiation of foreign debts; (4) stop militarization; (5) immediate dismantling and cessation of the storage and deployment of all nuclear weapons in Philippine territory; (6) unconditional removal of American bases and the recall of all American troops to their homeland; (7) release of all political detainees; and, (8) institution of a genuine agrarian reform and rural development.³³

BAYAN stands for the following principles: democracy as against dictatorship; nationalism as against imperialism; the welfare of all as against the privileges for the few; and, unity of the nation while preserving ethnic, religious, cultural and ideological diversity.³⁴ BAYAN's immediate objective then was to put an end to the Marcos dictatorship and to interference by the United States (US) or any other foreign intervention in Philippine affairs.

In terms of organization, its highest policymaking body is the General Assembly which has the mandate to elect the Chairman and President of the federation and other members of the National Council. It convenes once a year (National Congress). At present, the National Chairman of BAYAN is former Senator Lorenzo Tañada, the grand old man of the opposition. Its National Council is composed of ten noted anti-imperialist, pro-people and active defenders of Filipino people's democratic rights and welfare.³⁵ The National Council consists of 115 representatives from major sectoral mass movements and the professional, business and special sector organizations. The National Council meets at least three times a year in pursuit of its mandated tasks and functions. As both the General Assembly and the National Council could not really convene as often as they would like to, a National Executive Committee has been formed to govern and decide on all issues and problems, including directing and supervising all activities to be undertaken by the federation through its various commissions.³⁶ Under the National Executive Committee are the various regional, provincial, city and municipal federations and chapters. The local chapters are mandated to establish congresses and have their own secretariats and organizing committees which will assist individuals who desire to join BAYAN right at the barangay level and in forming organizations with at least 21 individuals.

To achieve its objectives, BAYAN has used open, legitimate and militant tactics of pressure politics to advance the cause of the people, evoke their creativity, and enlist their active participation and support.³⁷ To undertake its activities, BAYAN has relied solely on the annual dues of its members but this poses financial and logistical problems as most of them belong to the poorer sectors of the country. Operating funds also come from donations of other organizations and individuals who are socially oriented. As expressed by one of BAYAN's commission member, the organization is beset by the lack of systematic collection machinery to get the necessary funding resources, and the fact that all the past and current operating expenses are loans which have to be repaid at some appropriate future dates.³⁸ As of now, BAYAN has to operate with only a ₱6,000 budget a month which already covers expenses for salaries and allowances of a few regular employees — some 30 of its staff members at its national headquarters are working on a voluntary and part-time basis — and for other operational activities.³⁹

Even before its formal creation on May 1985, BAYAN had already engaged in militant mass actions such as people's strikes, barricading factories and schools, and the "lakbayan" which were held during strategic historical dates (e.g., August 21) where some 20,000 participants marched from towns to cities covering 20-30 kms., camp-outs where barricades were set up in selected PC command/ military camps as well as other less aggressive means of protest such as fasting, holding of symposia and fora to discuss urgent political and social issues for the benefit of both members and non-members alike. During the months of August and October, 1985,⁴⁰ BAYAN coordinated about eight mass actions which were held in Metro Manila and were participated in by more than 78,000 members. These mass actions were directed at openly denouncing the grievous crimes and evils of the US-backed Marcos dictatorship such as the protest of Public Assembly Act, the slaying of the rallyists of the October 21 peasants' march, the abduction of Fr. Rudy Romano, the detention of Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG) lawyers in Iligan City, the futility of the impeachment proceedings at the Batasan, U.S. intervention, political repression, the colonial education, campus militarization and a lot of other pressing national issues.⁴¹

During the February 7 election, it was reported that about 40% of BAYAN's 2.5 million members decided to boycott.⁴² It must be recalled that even the BAYAN national leadership was divided on the issue of boycott or participation. In spite of this, however, many of them actively supported the candidacy of the UNIDO team of Corazon Aquino and former Senator Salvador Laurel. The final decision to boycott, according to Atty. Rolando Olalia of the National Council, was made only after a dialogue with candidate Corazon C. Aquino failed — some of the 15-point demands of BAYAN were not accepted by the latter for some obvious tactical reasons.

After the fraudulent election and as the opposition party called for the launching of a national civil disobedience program, BAYAN, nevertheless, reassured President-elect Aquino of their all-out support and coordinated nationwide protest actions with all its chapter members. During the four-day "snap revolution," there were more or less 5,000 BAYAN members who took part in barricading the Mendiola area and Camps Aguinaldo and Crame along Epifanio de los Santos Avenue. In Mendiola, its members had tried to cordone off the area to prevent possible looting of the palace but, unfortunately, as the crowd turned into a furious mob, BAYAN marshals were swept aside.

At this time that the new government has been installed, BAYAN, according to some of its officials, has not yet actually firmed up its position except for its decision to adopt a "principled collaboration" stance vis-a-vis the Aquino administration to advance the nationalistic and democratic de-

mands of the people. This may involve assistance in the formulation of government plans and programs and also playing the role of constructive fiscalizer through which it will continue to vigilantly call the attention of those in the government regarding abuse of power and thus prevent the possible return to the rotten practices of the deposed regime.⁴³ Many BAYAN leaders claim that what had transpired was the mere changing of the political leadership. The dismantling of the structures of dictatorship, however, will still have to be pursued. In addition, there is yet the manifest meddling of the US in the power struggle and in the formation of the new government. What was smashed by the people's power was only the tip of the iceberg.⁴⁴

Despite the odds, BAYAN is resolved to pursue the common good and the liberation from exploitation of the Filipino masses who should not be merely satisfied with the palliatives of superficial reforms. More than ever, the popular struggle for vigilance and militance, as Atty. Laurente Ilagan, Chairman of BAYAN-Mindanao strongly opined, should continue and with the new thrust and direction.⁴⁵

Possibilities for Strengthening POs

People's organizations have proven true the adage, "unity is power." Their manifest role as vanguard of popular democracy and that of the nation's political development had not been more evident than under the Marcos administration. In the performance of such tasks as articulating the grievances, needs and aspirations of the different sectors of the Philippine society, denouncing the abuses of power, neglect of people's welfare, human rights violations and raising the quality and level of awareness of the people, the different POs that have mushroomed under the discredited government of Ferdinand Marcos have been effective — through the strategies of pressure politics — in pushing the latter's administration on the defensive side of further image-building and cosmetic reforms to no avail.

The infamous Marcos' regime has left a paradoxical legacy to the Filipino nation. While it brought the country into a maelstrom of social, economic and political chaos (that will take a long time to put in order), on the other hand, it nurtured an unparalleled level of political maturity which made possible the Filipino people's mobilization, unified action and the courage behind the February revolution. An indicator of such maturity is the emergence of and the prominent role being played by the various organized sectors of the society.

The same political maturity symbolized by POs will find so much relevance under the new administration of President Corazon Aquino. These organizations can either directly or indirectly influence the present political

leadership in deciding what type or form of government it should establish, what social, economic and political ideology (which can be truly called a Filipino ideology representative of the Filipino people's best aspirations) to reflect in the new Constitution, the scope and extent of government reorganization to undertake and even how to implement a moral regeneration to a country traumatized by the excesses of a 20-year dictatorship and a lot of other immediate and long-range concerns which have to be addressed and done in order to introduce the much needed reforms in the country.

Looking back and examining the cause-and-effect pattern of a series of events, it is not difficult to conclude that organized mass movements, which have clearly transformed into POs have played and will continue to play a significant role in deciding the direction of the country's political development. In spite of the fact that these groups' political struggles did not always have a sustained character because of divergence in principles, differing interests and programs of action even among the groups themselves, all their combined efforts contributed in no uncertain terms in galvanizing the Filipino people's awareness about the issues and problems confronting them and thus strengthened their resolve to actively participate in the political process of running the affairs of their own government.

The challenge for the people's organizations, particularly the nationalist and militant ones, is how to effect changes in a political setup which is still largely composed of the traditional elite and politicians who certainly have some interests to protect, even perhaps at the cost of compromising genuine reform and the liberation of the greater number of disadvantaged Filipino masses from a long-standing exploitative system and structures. At this point, only one thing is certain, that is, POs have been very much around and, as a "social/economic/political force," the Filipino nation's development in all three fronts will certainly be shaped to a considerable extent by these organizations.

For the POs, however, to continue performing their role and functions effectively, they must deal with a range of organizational needs and issues, both internal and external. Invariably, the POs have not been spared of criticisms directed to their ideology, main strategy and program of action, legitimacy, membership participation, adequacy of organizational capabilities and resources, the early resolution of which would mean better survival opportunities. The most pressing need, however, remains to be the strengthening of their logistical and financial resources as in the case with both KMP and BAYAN. Solution to this may perhaps lie in sustaining and encouraging the spirit of volunteerism not only among the general membership but most especially among those who comprise the national leadership.

In further strengthening the POs, it is suggested that the following be considered: (1) strengthening of POs' leadership and membership capabilities and their financial and organizational resources (through innovative resource development and effective collection mechanism) for them to adequately carry out their nationwide organizing and mobilizing activities especially in the countryside; (2) initiating and undertaking efforts leading to the institutionalization of people's power centers in various parts of the country with the POs taking the lead role; which presupposes the unity and joining together of all POs where a reasonable compromise among them could be reached vis-a-vis their differing ideologies, strategy and program of action; (3) opening up the present political system to the POs, particularly the cause-oriented groups and mass organizations who because of their distinct democratic character can promote not only pluralism but also enrich free political discussions on all urgent issues; and (4) coordinating with other support organizations and institutions like the church, private voluntary organizations and similar entities both at the local and international levels.

Endnotes

¹See the more detailed day-to-day account and analysis of the four-day revolution that toppled the Marcos dictatorship through the upsurge of people's power in the Camps of Aguinaldo and Crame at Mendiola leading to Malacañang Palace in Eric Gamalinda, "Military Revolt: Enrile-Ramos vs. Marcos-Ver," and Eric Gamalinda and Teresa O. Parel, "Snap Revolution - Days of Rejoicing and Nights of Hope," *National Midweek*, Vol. 1 (March 5-12, 1986) and Ponciano Bennagen, "It's People's Power," *National Midweek*, Vol. 1 (March 26, 1986).

²Alex R. Magno, "People's Power Beyond Rhetoric," (mimeographed copy).

³Felipe Maglaya, *Organizing People the Power* (Kowloon, Hongkong: The Asian Committee for People's Organizations, 1982), p. 52.

⁴Karina C. David, "Issues in Community Organization," Third World Studies Program, College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Philippines,;

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Maglaya, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁹Refer to Bishop Institute for Social Action IV, Antipolo, Rizal, 1978.

¹⁰David, *op. cit.*,

¹¹"The Parliament of the Streets: Getting its Act Together," *loc. cit.*

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³Lucian Pye, "The Concept of Political Development," in *Aspect of Political Development* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1966) p. 47.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁶Myron Weiner, "Political Integration and Political Development" in *Aspect of Political Development*, *op. cit.*, p. 644.

¹⁷*KMP Declaration of Principles.*

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Interview with Mao Lopez, Liaison Officer of the KMP National Secretariat, NCCP Bldg. EDSA, Quezon City, March 18, 1986.

²¹Interview with Tata dela Cruz, Member of KMP Secretariat, March 18, 1986.

²²*Ibid.*

²³Interview with Mao Lopez, KMP Secretariat, March 18, 1986.

²⁴"The Filipino Peasants Escalate their Struggle for Land, Food and Justice," a position paper, KMP.

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶Interview with dela Cruz, *op. cit.*

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*Ang Pahayagang Malaya*, March 21, 1986.

²⁹Interview with de la Cruz, *op. cit.*

³⁰*Veritas*, "Clash of the Titans: BAYAN vs. the Military," November 3, 1985, p. 10.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Bulletin Today*, May 7, 1985.

³⁴BAYAN's *General Program of Action* (mimeograph copy), BAYAN National Headquarters, Quezon City.

³⁵Included in the National Council are Attys. Augusto Sanchez and Joker Arroyo who are now members of the Aquino cabinet. Its Secretary-General is former student leader Leandro Alejandro.

³⁶The National Executive Committee of BAYAN is being supported by the following Commissions: Mass Struggles and People's Welfare Commission; Electoral Struggles Commission; Internal Relations Commission; and Economic Planning Commission.

³⁷BAYAN, *General Program of Action.*

³⁸Interview with Rita Bawa, Regional Liaison Officer of the People's Struggles and People's Welfare Commission, BAYAN National Headquarters, Quezon City.

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰*Situationer*. August and October 1985 issues, Research and Publication Department, National Secretariat, Social Action, Justice and Peace, CBCP Building, Manila.

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²"On With The Struggles – An Interview with Rolando Olalia," by Tezza O. Parel, *National Midweek*, March 5-12, 1986, pp. 25-27.

⁴³Interview with Atty. Laurente Ilagan, Chairman of BAYAN-Mindanao by the Media Mindanao Service (mimeograph copy), BAYAN, Cavite chapter.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵*Ibid.*