

Interpreting the Interpretations of February

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The events of February 1986 that led to the downfall of the Marcos dictatorship have spawned considerable discussion and debate. Among the more dominant interpretations of the February political revolution are the following: the "Miracle at EDSA" or the religious interpretation with the Catholic church and its symbols as the true conquerors of the event; "the Father of the Revolution" interpretation claiming that political power was handed by Enrile and the reformist officers to President Aquino; "the American (not so) Invisible Hand" interpretation highlighting American intervention in the revolution; and "Overtaking the Proletariat" interpretation which suggests that the proletariat was overtaken by the bourgeoisie in the final struggle to topple the Marcos regime. Each interpretation is cultivated by individuals or groups identified with the Catholic church, the military, the Americans and Communist Party for their own purposes.

Introduction

The events of February 1986 are still very much present in our daily lives. However, it is not institutionalized democratic processes nor efficient and graft-free government service that reminds us of our glorious February but empty rituals and sacrilegious icons that bowdlerizes the revolution.

First it was t-shirts. Only a few days after the event, yellow shirts bannered among others "I Stopped A Tank," "I Was A Human Barricade," and "Veteran — February 1986 Revolution" hit the market. Mendiola, once the eye of the storm of protest, became a t-shirt hawker's haven.

It was "immortalized" not only in songs but in music video. This is perhaps the only revolution with not only one but at least three music television videos (MTVs). Before they were censored and before the euphoria waned, the revolution's MTVs were regularly played on all television stations. This is not really surprising as February is really a product of today's electronic technology. Indeed, the interest it generated outside the Philippines is due to modern telecommunication facilities.

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Not to be outdone by the upstart video industry, the traditional source of entertainment, the movies cashed in on the event. Films capitalizing on the revolution, like "Pipo's Power" (a play on People's Power) and "Balimbing" (political turncoats), competed for the poor Filipinos' peso.

It took a while till we were bombarded with advertisements using the events at Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) to pander consumer goods. But true to the capitalist tradition where everything sacred is profaned, milk, electric fan, soap, and beer manufacturers were soon selling their products by evoking images of the revolution. Some advertisers who are less vulgar than others merely changed the personalities closely identified with the past regime endorsing their products. The rest took the usual hard sell route that alienate some of the so-called "heroes of EDSA."

The book industry took longer to cash-in on February. As a stopgap measure, reprints of books banned during the Marcos years warmed the bookshelves while writers and typewriters rushed their "interpretations" of the biggest political event since the assassination of Benigno Aquino. Bookworms and souvenir hunters can choose from picture-books to "serious" analyses of events. These books shared a common characteristic, that is, lack of insight.

But the desire to appropriate February is not limited to those interested in earnings. For example, the books about February do not serve the profit motive alone. They are part of individuals' and groups' arsenal used to promote ideas that serve their political interests. This battle for ideological hegemony is important because, according to John B. Thompson, "Relations of domination are sustained by a *mobilization of meaning* which legitimates, dissimulates or reifies an existing state of affairs"¹

Revolutionary situations are prime objects of meaning mobilizations because while old relations of domination have lost their legitimacy, new ones have yet to be established. Those who succeed in representing themselves as the revolutionary group or class, will take the highground in the political battles in the "reconstruction" period. The struggle among various political groups to interpret February must be seen as part of political maneuverings to gain hegemony in post-Marcos Philippines.

This paper discusses the core themes of some of the dominant interpretations of the February event — the "Miracle At EDSA," the "Father of the Revolution," the "American (Not So) Invisible Hand" and "Overtaking the Proletariat" — and their political implications. While they are not "official" interpretations, they are cultivated by certain individuals and/or groups popularly identified with the Catholic church, the military, the Americans and the communist party for their own purposes. They are important inasmuch as they are conscious attempts to impose meaning to a historic event in order to mobilize it for political gain.

The Interpretations of February

The Miracle at EDSA

In the age of liberation theology, it is no longer fashionable to speak of religion as the opium of the masses. But an analysis of the core themes of the "religious" interpretation of February suggests that it still is. In order to illustrate this, the writings of Francisco Tatad of the Christian Social Democratic Party and Antonio Lambino of the Jesuit Loyola House of Studies, have been examined. These two are among the most vocal proponents of the "Miracle at EDSA" thesis:

Tatad describes the event:

Its "combatants" include men, women and children who had more fun than fear during the event, and who like to think of what they went through as a religious experience. Their triumph confirms for them not the strength of an army nor a political grouping, but the power of prayer. They feel they have been part of a miracle.

Ironically, it was not hate or anger that drove the masses into the streets . . . It was Faith.

They made a Marian celebration of the revolution.²

Lambino, echoing Tatad, and arguing against a lay account of February, insists that

(i) it was not economic leading the people to stay there. It was not politics even that ultimately made them stay. It was the power of conscience touched by religious symbols.³

He elaborates:

I am not speaking abstractly when I say that our February Revolution was a revolution steeped in Gospel values. I do not mean to say that everyone who was there had profound experiences with religion . . . It is all combined; some had in-depth religion while some did not understand them well. *But the total phenomenon was used by God through people in order that their actions could accomplish what needed to be accomplished.* (italics supplied)⁴

Responding to the question on the role of the church in the February Revolution, Lambino argues that:

" . . . the church was present in that helicopter pilot who, hovering over (Camp) Crame, saw a massive sea of humanity formed into a cross along EDSA and Santolan Street. And that symbol spoke to him and he said: "How could I do otherwise than to defect?" The church is present in him. The church is present in all those people who whenever a tank came, faced a statue of our Lady of Fatima to that tank. The church is present in those people."⁵

I quoted at length Tatad and Lambino because paraphrasing does not do justice to their "outrageous" hypothesis. However repugnant this interpretation may be to non-believers like me, among the believers in the Philippines this interpretation finds widespread acceptance. The dominance of this view is being consolidated in the memorabilia of the revolution and utterances of important government officials. Prominent in picture-books and videos about the revolution are pictures of nuns and priests with their rosaries in hand confronting tanks and armoured personnel carriers. Instead of a simple marker or a monument in EDSA to commemorate the revolution, a chapel was proposed to be built. President Aquino herself equates people power with prayer power.

This is not surprising. A number of religious gained prestige during the dark days and nights of martial rule by being strong advocates of human rights. There was a significant religious presence in EDSA, the Catholic and Protestant churches openly supported the "rebels" at Camps Crame and Aguinaldo, soldiers and civilians received their marching orders from the Catholic radio station Radio Veritas. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the way the dictator was overthrown — Marcos' martial law administrators turning against him and becoming instrumental in his ouster — is very susceptible to religious interpretation. The turnaround of Marcos' Defense Minister Enrile and General Ramos fall neatly in the religious idea of conversion.

There is no denying that religious symbols proliferated in February, but it is arrogant to claim that they were the predominant ones. Even if they were, the meanings attached to these symbols are not necessarily those attributed to them by Tatad and Lambino.

The popularity of this interpretation is partly due to the fact that the events leading to EDSA were already interpreted from a religious perspective. Opposition politicians were contented with the explanation that the electoral contest between Aquino and Marcos was a battle between "good" and "evil." On the other hand, the Communist Party of the Philippines and its allied organizations, which could have provided an alternative to the religious view, boycotted the elections and were marginalized in subsequent events. As a result, the ideological field was left wide open for the catechists. They succeeded in promoting the elections and the succeeding battles in Christian terms, as a battle between the "forces of light and the forces of darkness."

Marx's insights in the *18th Brumaire* provides a more probable explanation for religious symbols in the February political revolution:

The tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living. And just when they appear to be engaged in the revolutionary transformation of themselves and their material surroundings, in the creation of something which does not

yet exist, precisely in such epoch of revolutionary crisis they timidly conjure the spirits of the past to help them; they borrow their names, slogans and costumes so as to stage the new world-historical scene in this venerable disguise and borrowed language.⁶

As we all know there are no innocent interpretations. In the religious interpretation, it is the churches, the Catholic church specifically, that is empowered.

By virtue of the fact that the Philippines is 85 percent Catholic, the church is already an important political institution. Political leaders have always been careful to cultivate close relations with the Catholic church. In Philippine politics, there has always been a high premium in being considered a good Catholic. The religious interpretation of February and the subsequent popular acceptance of this interpretation enhances this already important institution.

There are numerous indicators of the power of the Catholic church in the new government ushered in by the revolution.

The concept of reconciliation, the centerpiece of the Aquino administration's political policy, is religious inspired. One cannot fully understand the administration's seeming fixation on ceasefire with the communists and Muslim rebels without the idea of reconciliation.

Among the closest advisers of President Aquino, who is an avowed devout Catholic, are church people. It is reported that when she first heard of the loyalist attempt at power grab in July, her first instinct was to call the Catholic church's prelate, Jaime Cardinal L. Sin.⁷ The popular recognition of the power of the church in the Aquino cabinet is evident in the currency of the terms the "Jesuit Mafia" and "Council of Trent."

In the Constitutional Commission, the body tasked to write the new Constitution of the Philippines, the Catholic church is well, if not over, represented. Its influence is seen in the big push to teach religion — read Catholicism — in public schools and the inclusion of a right to life (of the unborn) provision in the new Constitution.

Christian values are very important in the new order. The President governs, to the extent that she does, like a good Catholic: ever mindful of what is morally right and just. The leniency with which she treats those sworn to defeat her — the political warlords, the generals loyal to Ferdinand Marcos, the *abandonados*⁸ who taunt her and harass her, and killed one of her supporters — betrays her loyalty to christian values. Her cavalier attitude towards rumored coup attempts and instability of her government is a result of her faith. Her decisions are final and nothing can change her mind about them. What could move the President to reconsider her decision if she is convinced that it is morally right and just?

Using Christian values as a yardstick, she is certainly a good person but perhaps it is high time for her to realize that a good person does not necessarily make a good president. The country has a surplus of good persons, it needs a good president.

In the end, despite the Catholic church's open embrace of the Aquino administration, the latter's support base will not be built on solid ground. The only effective guard against threats emanating from the political right, and the only hope for realizing the possibilities opened by February is a militant and organized citizenry. The church version of February depoliticizes the masses. It takes away from them purposive action and their decisive role in history.

The "Father" of the Revolution

The improbable romance with the military, a most hated and feared institution during the Marcos regime, had peaked and is on the decline. Filipinos do not adore them as much as before and are not willing to overlook their mistakes anymore. After the euphoria created by February, Filipinos are suspicious once again of the military and its civilian leaders. The Marcos loyalists' failed power grab and lenient treatment by the military of their "brother officers" involved in this incident marked the turning point of the people's romance with the military.

But Defense Minister Enrile still struts and talks like the conqueror of Malacañang, a far cry from the pathetic figure that he was that night of February 22: voice breaking, with his back against the wall and ready to die. How soon he forgets.

Perhaps forgetting is easier when faced with an ominous future. Past abuses have yet to be punished and the perquisites of power are about to be lost. The creation of the Presidential Committee on Human Rights, tasked to go after human rights violators, defines the limits of the people's and this government's reconciliation policy. Ceasefire talks with the Communist Party (CPP) and the New People's Army (NPA) are creating anxiety in the military. If the new government succeeds in inking a ceasefire agreement with the CPP/NPA, then there is no reason to maintain the present size of the military. Furthermore, a ceasefire is a repudiation of the military's solution to the insurgency problem — physical elimination of all communists.

Indeed, the military and Enrile stand to lose a lot when their role in politics is finally diminished. Given these, it is not at all surprising that they put forward the preposterous claim that they handed political power to President Aquino.

In *Breakaway: The Inside Story of the Four-Day Revolution in the Philippines, February 22-25, 1986*, the events of February are interpreted as primarily a military operation, with Defense Minister Enrile as hero and Fidel Ramos and the reformist officers of the military playing second lead.⁹ This is the argument sustained in the written as well as the pictorial section of the book.

Half of the 75 photographs in the book has the military as the main subject. Marcos has more pictures in this book than Cory Aquino. There is only one picture showing Aquino listening to a briefing being given by Enrile; Marcos has six. There are four pictures where Enrile is the main subject, eight pictures of Enrile and Ramos, and two of Enrile and other opposition leaders. The next most prominent group in the pictorial section are soldiers and their guns (26 photographs). There are 12 pictures of soldiers with "people power" as background. After leafing through the pictorial section of the book, there will be no doubt in the readers' mind that for the author, Enrile and Ramos were the central character of the drama and Aquino was only a bit player.

The book's explanation of the revolution is so incredulous that an extended quotation is necessary. Cecilio T. Arillo argues that:

Of all the characters in that drama at EDSA, the roles played by Enrile and Ramos deserve to be placed in context. Neither man was a reason for the popular discontent that grew under Marcos; they were, in fact, among the most disenchanted. But when the time came for them to dramatize their discontent, it was the military that turned the tide against Marcos. That role, as skillfully choreographed by Enrile and Ramos, cannot be overestimated. Corazon Aquino may have won the elections, but if the military had not intervened as it did in shifting loyalty from the dictator to Enrile and Ramos, there is serious doubt if she could have effectively claimed the presidency for herself. Marcos may have been as bad and as hopelessly unpopular as he had been pictured to be, and he may have truly robbed Mrs. Aquino of her election, but if he had retained the loyalty of the military, Mrs. Aquino's emotional campaign would have stayed in the wings a long, long time before anyone could even think of driving out Marcos.¹⁰

Arillo's assertion that the mobilization of people power and the military defection were "skillfully choreographed" by Enrile and Ramos, is difficult enough to believe amidst the junior reformist officers' claim that Enrile and Ramos were asked to join the mutiny at the last minute.¹¹ Furthermore, veterans of the street parliament would also wince at his claim that officers of the Armed Forces who mutined in February have the two of them on their side.¹² Perhaps the most difficult assertion to accept is that Enrile and Ramos cannot be blamed for even some of the sins of martial law.

There is a grain of truth to the claim that the military handed power to Aquino, but they could not have done otherwise. Had they tried to take power for themselves, they would have no protection against their erstwhile

protectors — the masses camped in front of EDSA. The February revolution was no mutiny or *coup d'état*, it was an event where the masses played an important role. To argue along this line is not to downgrade the military's role in February but simply to put it in proper context. The military did play an important rôle in the overthrow of the dictator. Had they remained loyal to Marcos, the drive to overthrow him would have taken longer and at much greater cost to human lives. But this could have meant that the people's victory would have been more clearcut and the political revolution would have easily transformed into a social one.

To recognize the role of the military in February is not the same as recognizing Enrile as the "Father" of the revolution and the restorer of Philippine democracy. Francisco Nemenzo succinctly sums up the role of the military and the people in the February political revolution: "The mutiny was the triggering factor but people's power was decisive."¹³

By consecrating themselves as the restorers of democracy in the Philippines, Enrile and his cohorts want the Filipinos to accept a view that empowers them and marginalizes progressive groups in Philippine politics. Their version of February would have us believe that they are the only ones that really matter. What they offer the people is a combination of pleading and threats. They want us to be grateful for their role in the revolution, give them a role in government that is due them and forgive them of their crimes. After all, they claim, they were merely following orders when they committed the crimes (that they are willing to accept) and their enemies are equally guilty of human rights violations. They are quick to demonstrate and make mileage of events that show that they are the only true protectors of the Philippines' recently restored democracy.

The American (Not So) Invisible Hand

Immediately after Marcos fled, rumors of American, specifically, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) intervention in the revolution became popular. This view held sway among the supporters of the regime and individuals in various left groups. Among Marcos' supporters, the United States (US) was the villain who kidnapped their leader: had the Americans not intervened, Marcos would still be president. On the other hand, the relative ease with which the regime was overthrown made some leftists see the US hand in the events. These leftists, while suspicious of any religious interpretation of the event, are nonetheless susceptible to another version of mono-causal explanation of history, i.e., conspiracy theory.

There is no one version of the US role in February. Even the Reagan administration speaks in many tongues, alternately praising the Filipinos for their heroism and claiming credits for the bloodless nature of the Filipino

revolution. But it is precisely because of this ambiguity in the US position that a version of the events that highlights American influence in February is built. That it was American helicopters and personnel that evacuated Marcos from Malacañang and the Philippines give further credence to the said interpretation.

Immediately after the flight of Marcos, many Americans congratulated themselves in their important role in the Philippine revolution. The Lincoln (Nebraska) Journal's editorial reflects the prevailing US sentiment in the heady days of late February:

It has also been a sensible, well-crafted and praiseworthy participation of American influence. By and large, President Reagan's and Congress' encouragement of the Philippine democratic process – which meant Marcos' acceptance of quitting after 20 years – provides important credits for the United States with the new government in Manila.¹⁴

White House spokesman Larry Speakes claimed that a “carefully orchestrated” US policy was instrumental in the peaceful ouster of Marcos.¹⁵ An unnamed senior Reagan administration official claimed that they “dealt successfully with a series of evolving circumstances, and in the end achieved what we set out to achieve.”¹⁶ Other US officials credited the US with a more active role in the events. For example, US Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger claims that the US provided logistical support to the rebel helicopters. He explains the context and extent of this support:

It was very important that the group in (Camp Aguinaldo) not be attacked. When you have a group of 2,000 people held up in a military camp from which they could easily be attacked by a large force and there were a larger force under Ver at that time that would have been a very, very bloody scene.

So we wanted to do everything we could to prevent that and the presence of the helicopters over this group could very well have discouraged any sort of attack.¹⁷

Admiral William Crowe Jr., Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, claims that the US was a communication link between the two contending forces.¹⁸

But while American officials would only admit to helping in the peaceful overthrow of Marcos, Filipinos were the ones who were giving the Americans the credit for the whole thing. They read into the US statements of a more active role for the Americans – that the Americans actually forced Marcos out and installed Aquino. Marcos himself claims that he was forcibly taken by the Americans to Guam and then Hawaii. He claims that the agreement, which the Americans violated, was for them to take him to Paoay, Ilocos Norte (his hometown) where ostensibly, he will either take his final stand or retire.

American analysts claim that there are enough evidence that suggest that the US government was reacting to the Philippine developments in

February in an *ad hoc* manner.¹⁹ US Representative Stephen Solarz said that Reagan's call for Marcos to resign came at the "23rd hour, 59th minute."²⁰ Officers of the Armed Forces who mutined against Marcos emphatically reject US claims. Contrary to what Weinberger and the US want the world to believe, the mutineers claim that the US refused to give fuel to rebel helicopters during the crucial first two days.

It is not a surprise that the Reagan administration would like to take credit (even when it is not due) for the Philippine February. For, as Christopher Madison explains: "It was not only the Administration's first significant foreign policy achievement; it was probably the first time since Vietnam war that the United States managed to look competent in using its power and influence in the Third World."²¹ The claim is not only important for (US) domestic purposes. Participation in the overthrow of a hated dictator is also further "proof" that America is a friend of the Filipinos, and a friend of democracy. It proves the leftist charge of a "US-Marcos dictatorship" wrong. Like the Philippine military — whose participation in February washed away most of the stigma of their participation in the Marcos regime — the Americans hope to clear their Philippine record through their claimed participation in February.

Of course, Ferdinand Marcos benefits from the kidnapping by the American thesis. If he admits that he ran from the Philippines under the cover of darkness in the custody of the Americans, he admits that he does not deserve to be President. Furthermore, running does not augur well with his (self-propagated) image of a bemedalled war hero. He would admit losing to the larger force of America but not being outsmarted by Enrile and Ramos, and certainly he cannot accept that the people ousted him because he is still their leader.

America and Marcos for their own selfish reasons cultivate a version of events that takes away from the Filipino people their central role in February. At the same time, some Filipinos, mesmerized by a colonial culture that glorifies white America and terrorized into believing that the Marcos dictatorship was invincible, were unable to believe that they were the main actors in such a historic undertaking.

Overtaking the Proletariat

There is no Communist Party of the Philippines interpretation of the events of February. However, from various documents that came out after the revolution, a clear outline of how the CPP sees February emerges.

The CPP, which predicted that the February election will be nothing more than "a noisy and empty political battle" to legitimize the Marcos regime has openly admitted its mistake. It recognizes that it was unable to

influence, much more lead to the revolution, because its forces boycotted the elections.²² As a result, according to the CPP's National Urban Commission, "the proletariat was roundly overtaken by the bourgeoisie in the final bend of the marathon struggle to bring down the Marcos fascist dictatorship."²³

The party assessed that the boycott strategy was based on the four flawed premises: (1) it did not correctly understand US policy towards the Marcos regime, (2) it underestimated the bourgeoisie's determination to overthrow the Marcos regime, (3) it failed to see that the regime had become extremely isolated and as a result was unable to rule, and (4) it underestimated the willingness of the people to go beyond the electoral process to end Marcos' rule.²⁴

The CPP maintains that the overthrow of Marcos widened the democratic space but it did not "alter the nature or abate the intensity of the fundamental contradiction in Philippine society, that is, between US imperialism and the local reactionary classes, on the one hand, and the broad masses of the Filipino people, on the other."²⁵ The CPP argues that the main enemies of the national democratic revolution — the comprador big bourgeoisie and the landlords hold key positions in the new government and are consolidating their political position.

Recapturing the political initiative is seen as important by the CPP. As a result, it is adopting a twofold policy towards the Aquino administration: "(a) encourage and critically support its progressive elements, policies and programs, and (b) expose and oppose its fascists and pro-imperialist elements, policies and programs."²⁶ Specifically, the targets of attacks are "US imperialism, the Enrile-Ramos/Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) fascist bloc, the Marcos loyalists/KBL warlords, the pro-imperialists in and out of government, and the clerico-fascists."²⁷ This also means formal and informal alliances with the so-called "Liberal Democrats" who "want to push the democratization process and at least reduce imperialist domination over the country."²⁸

The party correctly assessed that the political initiative is in the hands of the government. There is tremendous pressure from the urban masses for a ceasefire. However, the initial policy by the NPA to negotiate with the government from a position of strength by ambushing military patrols in the countryside, is not winning them friends in the cities. It is even strengthening the military and other anti-communists as these groups are able to claim that the communists are not really interested in peace and war is the only language they understand. The call for a coalition government has the same effect as the ambushes.

The downplaying of the coalition government is perhaps an indication that the Party realizes that to continue to do so will put them in objective

united front situation with the forces of reaction who are out to destabilize the new order.

It is interesting that the CPP does not refer to February as a revolution, despite the overthrow of the "fascist dictatorship" and the installation of a bourgeois-liberal government through active popular action. This stems from its rather limited definition of a revolution which equates it with the national democratic revolution, and the spontaneous manner the Marcos regime was overthrown which contradicts its idea of a revolution ought to be led by a revolutionary party, i.e., the CPP.

But by saying February is not a revolution and that nothing has changed in terms of the basic Philippine problems only a few months after the new government is installed, is to empower the CPP as the only group capable of solving the Philippines' fundamental problems. The possibility of the CPP regaining its image and role as the leader in the struggle for democratization that it enjoyed during the dark years of martial law, rests on how it will deal with the Aquino administration and how it will answer the issues raised by February. This is dependent on how far the rectification process in the CPP will go and whether they will be less dogmatic in their analysis and hence their actions.

February as a Political Revolution

What happened to February is similar to what Benedict Anderson claimed to have occurred during the French event of 1789:

The overwhelming and bewildering concatenation of events experienced by its makers and its victims became a 'thing' — and with its own name: The French Revolution. Like a vast shapeless rock worn to a rounded boulder by countless drops of water, the experience was shaped by millions of printed words into a 'concept' on the printed page, and, in due course, into a model.²⁹

But to the extent that as historical actors we inform our actions with our understanding of our social world, we will continue to interpret our world. On the other hand, as long as meanings empower certain groups and marginalizes others, individuals and groups will continuously offer interpretations.

The interpretations of February discussed above do not exhaust the universe of interpretations of the event. There are other interpretations of the event as there will be more that will be offered because the Filipinos have accomplished something that we still do not fully understand.

In judging which interpretation of February to believe, there is a great danger that many will take the easy way out by introducing simplifications — such as a single cause to explain the event. But what is needed is an inter-

pretation that takes into consideration the highly varied, tortuous and disconcerting reality. This is a difficult task because the issue cannot be decisively resolved empirically. For what is at stake is not if February happened or not, but what we make out of February that we all know happened.

Empirical validation still has a place in assessing interpretations. However, its limits are clearly circumscribed. It is important to check the validity of the component parts of an interpretation. For example, was there in fact a helicopter pilot who defected because he saw from the air the people protecting the camps formed into a cross or did the military consciously mobilize the people? Secondly, the internal consistency of the interpretations of the event can be examined as well. It is very important to ascertain what is left out and what is highlighted in an interpretation. But these checks notwithstanding, in the final analysis, the people accept an interpretation because it provides a coherent way for them to understand the event.

This (human) condition demands a particular role for intellectuals. Not only because intellectuals can check the validity, consistency and exhaustiveness of the claims of an interpretation, but also because intellectuals can expose what is at stake in a given interpretation — how a meaning empowers certain groups as it castrates still others. Intellectuals can show the various structures that make certain interpretations more accessible to the masses than others.

In interpreting February, the central role played by the masses must be recaptured. The first three interpretations discussed above effectively displaced the masses from center stage. To the extent that the role of the masses in February cannot be denied, these three interpretations incorporated it in their analyses. However, given the interests they represent, it is also not surprising that the people who risked life and limb by staffing the barricades became mere backdrops in the event in these interpretations. Secondly, and as important, the profound transformations brought about by February must be stressed. While February certainly did not usher socialism in the Philippines, the change from a dictatorship to a bourgeois liberal government brought about significant changes in Philippine life. One only has to watch the many socially relevant shows in Philippine television today to be convinced of the changes in our daily lives. These two conditions — the decisive role of the masses in the overthrow of the dictatorship through extra-constitutional means and the substantive changes and the possibilities brought about by the overthrow of the dictator — strongly suggest that February was not simply an uprising but a political revolution.

The task for Filipino intellectuals is clear. We must lend our resources in the elaboration of interpretation(s) that recaptures the role of the masses

in the revolution and empowers the proletariat and the peasants. Interpretations that displace and marginalize the masses from their central role last February and the structures that reinforce these anti-people interpretations must be exposed and combated. To do this is to be faithful to the event and the only way to realize its promise.

Endnotes

¹John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 132.

²Francisco S. Tatad, "Preface: A Marian Revolution" in Monica Allarey Mercado (ed.), *An Eyewitness History, PEOPLE POWER: The Philippine Revolution of 1986* (Manila: James B. Reuter, S.J., Foundation, 1986).

³Edicio de la Torre, Antonio Lambino, S.J., Alexander Magno, "The February Revolution: A New Political Phase Or A Return To Pre-Martial Law Politics? (A Panel Discussion)," *The Philippines in the Third World Papers*, Series No. 42, p. 3.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁶Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" in David Fernbach (ed.), *Karl Marx, Surveys from Exile: Political Writings Volume II* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 146.

⁷Influential members of her cabinet who are members of a Catholic religious group are reportedly acting in a conspiratorial fashion.

⁸The term refers to the loyal followers of ousted former President Marcos whom he abandoned when he left for exile in Hawaii. It was coined during one of the loyalists' rallies at the Luneta wherein one of Cory Aquino's supporters wearing a yellow shirt was mauled and killed.

⁹Cecilio T. Arillo, *Breakaway: The Inside Story of the Four-Day Revolution in the Philippines, Feb. 22-25, 1986* (Manila: CTA & Associates, 1986). This is an interesting and important book because the author had access to classified and declassified information from the military. To the extent that book exculpates Enrile and Ramos for their crimes during Martial Law and glorifies them, downplays the role of Aquino and soft-pedals the role of the masses in February. It is a hack job for Enrile and his allies in the military.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 30-31.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³Francisco Nemenzo, "A Nation In Ferment: Analysis of the February Revolution," mimeos, p. 17.

¹⁴"Courage of Philippine People Make Bloodless Revolt Possible," *Lincoln (NE) Journal* (February 15) in *Congressional Record* (March 5, 1986), p. E631.

¹⁵"New Slate, Fresh Problems for the Philippines," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* (March 1, 1986), p. 486.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷"US Claims it Aided Anti-Marcos Forces," *Business Day*, Vol. 20, No.4 (March 5, 1986).

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹"New Slate . . .," *op. cit.*, p. 487.

- ²⁰*Ibid.*
- ²¹Christopher Madison, "Foreign Policy Focus," *National Journal* (March 8, 1986), p. 608.
- ²²"Party Conducts Assessment, Says Boycott Policy Was Wrong," *Ang Bayan*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (May 1986), English ed.
- ²³"When A Zigzag Turn Is Shorter Than A Straight Route," National Urban Commission, Communist Party of the Philippines, mimeo, p. 1.
- ²⁴"Party Conducts Assessment, Says Boycott Policy Was Wrong," *ibid.*
- ²⁵"An Urgent Task: Consolidate the National United Front," *Ang Bayan* (July 1986), p. 2.
- ²⁶*Ibid.*
- ²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 4.
- ²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 3.
- ²⁹Benedict Anderson, *Imagine Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 77-78.