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Beyond February: The Tasks of Socialists

The fall of Marcos happened so fast and with so little blood that some of those who fought for it cannot believe they have won. Some say it was a "miracle"; others dismiss it as "changing of the guards". Many call it a "revolution", but few have bothered to analyze it.

Divergent interpretations of the past reflect divergent attitudes to the present. The "miracle" theory, for example, expresses indifference to questions of strategy ("Leave it to Cory and God!"), while those who deny that important changes have occurred find no reason to rethink ("The line is always valid until imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism have vanished from this earth!"). The need for analysis is obvious only to those who grasp the significance of February ("If indeed it was a revolution, then we must know its possibilities and limitations in order to develop a new strategy.")

The Sectarian View

Because it did not follow their idea of how history ought to move, the sectarians insist that the February affair was not a genuine revolution. Since they doubt the people's capacity for autonomous action, all major events, unless planned, controlled and directed by themselves, are ascribed to a CIA conspiracy.

Three arguments are typically advanced to dispute the revolutionary character of the February revolution: 1) it was not bloody enough; 2) it was confined to Manila; and 3) it did not destroy the military, the bureaucracy and the socio-economic elite.

Measuring the authenticity of a revolution by the liquid volume of blood spilled looks a bit silly. More people perished in Philippine elections than in the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia! What was bloody was not the revolution itself but the *counter-revolution*, not the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917 but the defense of the Soviet state against the white army and foreign intervention in 1918-1921. Moreover, coups d'etat in Indonesia, Chile, the Sudan, etc. cost hundreds of thousands of lives, and yet nobody considers them revolutions. And if Marcos decides to shoot his way back, the ensuing civil war will claim a lot of lives, but the bloodshed is not going to make it revolutionary.

It is utterly misleading to regard what happened in EDSA as separate from the February 7 election, which involved the whole country. The snap presidential electoral battle, the subsequent civil disobedience campaign, and the civilian-military uprising formed a totality. This, too, should not be taken apart from the 14 years of popular resistance to the Marcos dictatorship. Seen in such a context, the uprising was indeed the culmination of a nationwide process.

Moreover, the assertion that the uprising was confined to Metropolitan Manila, mainly in the EDSA-Crame-Aguinaldo area, is factually inaccurate. In Baguio, rebel troops were also defended by thousands of unarmed civilians. If the confrontational aspect of the EDSA event did not materialize throughout the country, it was simply because two essential conditions did not exist elsewhere; i.e., a split in the local AFP unit and an overwhelming loyalist supremacy. But outside Manila and Baguio the military forces stayed intact, either remaining totally loyalist or turning wholly reformist.

The absence of confrontations similar to EDSA was, however, no indication of indifference among people outside Metro Manila. The rest of the population in other cities and provinces, although physically separated from the EDSA event, were by no means uninvolved. They were astir and on alert: keeping watch on any unusual movements in their localities, while keeping tab on the unfolding event at EDSA through their radios or TVs in hope-filled sympathy with the barricaders.

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A revolution as apocalypse occurs only in the sectarian imagination. Real revolutions in history are never as dramatic as the novels written about them. The military and the bureaucracy do not crumble all at once, and the socio-economic structures are eroded over time, through persevering popular pressures.

In a sense, the Russian Revolution in February 1917 was less revolutionary than our own, yet Lenin himself was not embarrassed to call it a *revolution* without feeling obliged to enclose the word in quotes. The Russian February installed a provisional government presided first by an inconsequential nobleman (Prince Lvov) and then by a member of the Tsar's lameduck parliament (Kerensky), whereas our February enthroned the most popular president the country has ever known. In both cases, the military and the bureaucracy were maintained, but the changes we have already witnessed under Cory Aquino — no matter how slow and halting for our taste — go much farther than the institutional reforms in Russia before October. What ought to be closely monitored by serious observers of Philippine politics are not so much the reforms initiated by the new government but the democratic space the revolution has opened up and how the popular movement is making use of this to sustain the *social* revolution.

The Snap Elections

Casting aside the sectarian criteria cited above, we conclude that by achieving a *political* revolution the events in February raised to a higher level the continuing *social* revolution. Three arguments support our conclusion: (1) A despot was removed through extra-constitutional means, not in accordance with procedures prescribed by the regime; (2) the masses played the decisive role; and (3) opportunities for social transformation have immensely expanded.

Even the most autocratic regimes prescribe a procedure for changing rulers, either in a written constitution or by tradition. In a dictatorship this procedure is so designed that replacing the incumbent is virtually impossible. The Marcos dictatorship illustrated this point. Its constitution provided for elections every six years, unless earlier called by the president himself. But the entire electoral machinery was packed with Marcos henchmen who habitually turned a blind eye at fraud and terrorism by the government party.

Despite all this, the legal opposition (as distinguished from the underground) decided to give the exercise one last try when Marcos, under US pressures, called for snap elections to

be held on 7 February 1986. We were not particularly optimistic of ousting him in that manner. We were certain that Marcos would cheat. Nonetheless, we saw the elections as a chance to explain fundamental issues to people who ordinarily ignore us. Since we do not uphold the dogma which counterposes election to revolution, we opted for critical participation. We wanted Cory to garner a majority so massive that Marcos would either be forced to yield, or he would have to cheat brazenly and thereby frustrate American imperialism's interest in bestowing his dictatorship with a semblance of legitimacy.

Events unfolded just as we thought. The elections were the worst in Marcos's long record of political fraudulence. Initially underestimating his opponent, Marcos planned for subtle and selective cheating, i.e., allowing relatively clean elections in places where foreign observers would be present but using the tried and tested methods of ballot-box stuffing and switching in the hinterlands. In the last few days of the campaign, however, he panicked and decided to cheat with impunity. Even then, scrambling of voters' lists and vote buying proved inadequate to cancel out Cory's lead. In the end, he resorted to the crudest techniques such as tampering with computerized tallies and inventing "phantom precincts".

Marcos prevented Cory from winning through the electoral process. But the elections brought together the people's democratic movement and the reform movement in the armed forces (RAM). What drove the last nail on Marcos's political coffin was the bizarre convergence of the popular uprising and a military mutiny.

Mutiny and Insurrection

The two forces evolved independently of each other. The history of the people's democratic movement, of course, can be traced to as far back as the Katipunan. It has had a turbulent career, subsiding and rising up again. But the mighty wave that washed Marcos to Hawaiian shores had its specific origin in the student activism in the mid-1960s. This spread beyond the university campuses and evolved into a formidable force on the eve of martial law. Instead of crushing it, as was undoubtedly his intention, Marcos's indiscriminate repressiveness enabled it to grow at a phenomenal rate. The assassination of Cory's husband in August 1983 was major landmark in its history because it brought into the struggle those elements who had hitherto watched only from the sidelines.

The movement suffered a momentary relapse a year later. Unable to force Marcos's resignation, the bulk of what came to be known as the "yellows" reverted to their air-conditioned dens, leaving the "reds" isolated in the parliament of the streets. The snap elections rekindled the "yellow" spirits, the brazen fraud on February 7 psyched them up for acts of civil disobedience, and the military mutiny escalated their civil disobedience campaign into a full-blown insurrection.

By contrast, the reform movement in the armed forces (RAM) has a very short history. Its beginnings may be traced to the early 1980s when young regular officers — PMA graduates — first showed signs of rebelliousness, provoked by what they considered a debasement of their profession into an instrument of personal power. RAM formally established itself in March 1985, but at the beginning nobody took it seriously. Its newsletter (*We Belong*) was circulated in the open. Its leaders held press conferences and appeared in tv talk shows; but they were all too garrulous and too handsome that the whole project was perceived as a crude publicity stunt of Gen. Ver. There was nothing in their behaviour to fit the conspiratorial stereotype. Perhaps for the same reasons, Ver did not take them seriously either.

The elections turned RAM into a serious political force. Seeing in the exercise a rare opportunity to change the image of the military into a guardian of the ballot box, RAM sponsored an educational campaign ("Project Kamalayan 86") to inform soldiers of their responsibility to ensure free and honest elections. When Ver threatened its leaders with disciplinary action unless they dropped the project, RAM took this as a clue that Marcos meant to cheat. Thereupon, the RAM steering committee worked out three contingency plans should Marcos win through fraud.

Because the walkout of computer operators was led by the wife of a ranking RAM officer, Ver may be forgiven for suspecting RAM of infiltrating the COMELEC. The RAM officers knew the axe would fall on their necks sooner or later. When they learned on February 17 that Marcos was going to declare martial law on February 24, they readied their forces, alerting their comrades in the field. When 15 soldiers were arrested while training inside Fort Bonifacio on February 21 and, in the course of investigation, were pressured to implicate the RAM leaders in a conspiracy to kill the president, the RAM had no choice but mutiny the day after. Only then did Enrile and Ramos, for their own reasons, decide to join.

Had the rebellious RAM officers been able to follow their contingency plans, the mutiny (if it survived) might have developed into a coup d'etat with the masses just idly watching by. None of these plans reckoned with people's power; they were all conceived as purely military operations.

As it turned out, however, the masses would play the decisive role. Many units in Metro Manila which RAM counted upon for reinforcement lost heart when the mutiny was actually launched, leaving just a few to defend the two camps. This prompted Juan Ponce-Enrile to abandon Camp Aguinaldo and combine forces with General Fidel Ramos at Camp Crame on Sunday afternoon, February 23.

The planned "invasion within 24 hours" by RAM-led troops from the field did not materialize because they failed to mobilize as quickly as possible the number required to cancel out the loyalists' overwhelming superiority in Meiro Manila. It was only on Monday, February 24, when the rebels



gained the capacity for moving troops by capturing the transport planes at Villamor air base; and this was made possible by the unexpected defection of the 15th Strike Wing and the 5th Fighter Wing. They could have been demolished before then, if not for the massive turn-out of people whose presence deterred a loyalist assault and promoted defections.

While protecting the mutineers, people's power also contained the mutiny, preventing it from developing into a coup d'etat that would have either installed a military dictator or a civilian government chosen by a military junta. Enrile now boasts that he could have been president if he wanted to, implying that he voluntarily handed over power to Cory. Without meaning to devalue his role in the country's deliverance, it is important to point out that Enrile's accession in February is an extremely questionable scenario. Would Ramos have gone along with him? Since RAM is not just Gringo Honasan and Red Kapunan (the majority being idealistic junior officers), could he have gotten its support for a power grab? Would the people have risked their lives if he did not state categorically at the outset that he was upholding the true results of the February 7 elections; in other words, recognizing Cory as president? And if the people did not intervene, would he be alive now?

US Involvement

US imperialism has always been a major factor in Philippine politics. It is generally taken for granted that US pressures compelled Marcos to hold the snap elections. Political attaches of the US embassy were also believed to have played a role in forging the Cory-Doy coalition and toning down Cory's initial anti-bases stance. But not everything which happened after that, especially in the fateful month of February, can be ascribed to US intervention.

Defense Secretary Weinberger, the staunchest supporter of Marcos in Washington, had the gall to claim soon after the February Revolution that the removal of Marcos was a "triumph of Reagan's foreign policy". At the rate Reagan is bungling the world over, he certainly needs at least one "triumph" more impressive than the invasion of little Grenada! But the Philippines is the wrong country to cite as evidence of his wisdom.

A simple but scrupulous chronological analysis would show Reagan's handling of the Marcos problem as consistent with the pattern of US imperialist behavior in the Third World. Reagan handled the Philippine case in much the same way Carter handled Nicaragua and Iran. He supported the dictatorship until it stood at the verge of collapse, abandoning it only after the balance of forces shifted decisively in favor of the rebels. This would have been transparent had our revolution been a bit protracted. Since it lasted only for three days and four nights, the Washington media manipulators could easily jumble the sequence to make Reagan look like the hero he was not.

Immediately after the February 7 elections, Reagan (without waiting for the report of his official observers mission) said he was pleased that a viable two-party system had been set on firmer grounds in the Philippines. Fraud, according to him, was committed by both sides; and he appealed to Cory and Doy to join Marcos in some sort of power-sharing scheme.

Marcos at once recognized it as tacit acceptance of his fraudulent elections and a clever way to diffuse the anticipated popular protests. He dangled a cabinet post to Doy Laurel and offered a seat to Cory in a mythical Council of State. But Cory, whose political acumen everyone had underestimated, spurned Reagan's proposition and proceeded to plot a massive civil disobedience campaign with sympathetic cause-oriented groups.

A mass movement to destabilize the neocolonial regime was precisely what the Americans sought to avoid. Letizia Constantino quoted unnamed White House sources as admitting that Reagan sent Habib to Manila "to forestall Mrs. Aquino and her supporters from despairing of American help and taking to the streets". In his talks with Filipino officials and opposition leaders, Reagan's special envoy tried ardently to sell the power-sharing formula as a provisional arrangement prior to another elections which he wanted Marcos to promise this year or sometime in 1987.

Cory stood her ground. While Habib was in Manila, she was busy pushing the civil disobedience campaign. That was the score when Habib left on the very day the mutiny began. But prior to his historic press conference on 22 February, the pro-American Enrile talked to Ambassador Bosworth over the phone and sent his law partner to the latter's Forbes Park home pleading for help. Still obsessed with the power-sharing formula, however, Bosworth tried to dissuade Enrile on the ground that a mutiny might create an opening for the communists. Instead, he offered to mediate between Enrile and Marcos.

As noted earlier, the mutiny would have occurred even without Enrile and Ramos because the RAM officers felt the noose tightening around their necks. They had to strike on that day before Ver could neutralize them in a wave of arrests.

On 23 February Reagan issued a press statement expressing disquiet at Enrile's revelations the night before of massive electoral fraud. But the people at that moment were already blocking tanks with their bodies. They were in the midst of insurrection. What Reagan thought of the elections no longer mattered to them. They knew Cory had won and they were determined to enforce her victory.

Not until Monday, 24 February, did Reagan issue a threat to withdraw military aid should loyalist troops attack the rebel camps. That was what Enrile wanted on Saturday. When it eventually came on Monday, it was too late. The balance of

forces had turned in the rebels' favor. RAM had seized the strategic initiative and it was already Marcos who badly needed American protection.

Inadvertently to be sure, the ultra-Left sectarians reinforced Reagan's effort to steal glory from the Filipino people. By spreading the baseless theory that the February Revolution was "scripted by the Americans", they gave Reagan what he badly needed to refurbish his now dubious image as a master of foreign policy.

The Aquino Government

The February Revolution supplanted the Marcos dictatorship with a democratic government but state power remains with the capitalist class. The crucial policies of the new regime are not designed to free the country from neocolonial capitalism. The commanding heights of the economy were wrested from the "crony capitalists", only to be handed over to another faction of the same class.

The new economic managers are obsessed with the restoration of the market mechanism. Their fury is focused on the big corporations owned by Marcos and his relatives and cronies. Some 180 such corporations have already been sequestered, but the OICs are invariably recruited from the business community who run them like regular capitalist enterprises.



Elleen Fontanilla/People Power

The Minister of Trade, himself a representative of big business, assures the Makati Business Club (nervous about the socialistic pronouncements of the Labor Minister) that the sequestered corporations will eventually be privatized.

In the political sphere, the changes are clearly designed to cripple the Marcos machine, removing the slightest possibility of restoration. The 1973 constitution has been discarded and a new one is about to be written. The Batasang Pambansa, despised as "the world's most expensive rubber stamp", has been abolished. KBL officials from the cabinet down to the municipalities have been purged. Loyalist generals of the armed forces have either been retired, kept in a freezer or placed under house arrest. Suddenly starved of spoils, the barangay captains are left to nurse their wounds in silence or mobilize their remaining followers in pathetic rallies for the return of a rotten benefactor.

Limits of the Revolution

But the daily lives of ordinary people have not improved to a significant degree. They continue to encounter corruption, inefficiency and bureaucratic arrogance in the public service. In certain areas military atrocities persist. The time factor cannot explain all this. (Cory's team, of course, has only been a hundred days in office.) But there is a more fundamental and, therefore, more disturbing reason: the new government is excessively cautious because it wants to avoid confrontation with powerful forces in the neocolonial establishment. Instead of taking the fullest advantage of the revolutionary circumstances that brought it to power and capitalizing on the tremendous popularity it still enjoys, it hesitates to tamper with socio-economic and political structures other than those directly linked to Marcos.

Indecisiveness is typical of a bourgeois-democratic regime, although by no means an unavoidable feature. It regards caution as the key to stability. "Please don't rock the boat," Cory tells the restive masses. They heed her plea because they appreciate the odds against her. But time does not solve any problem. At the rate her ministers and OICs are clowning like old politicians or learning to behave like bureaucrats, time will work against her. Unless she can revive popular enthusiasm with an inspiring reform program, the euphoria that swept her to office may turn into destructive cynicism.

A show of "moderation" is evidently intended to placate the native elite and the Americans. But it simultaneously erodes faith in a populist leader. Filipinos, after all, have every right to expect improvements in their material conditions and a remedy for the age-old social inequities. Those who suffered so long and have had a recent taste of victory will not wait forever.

The structures which Cory's government is too scared to touch are also the roots of these inequities. In 1972 Marcos skillfully used the people's craving for social justice by posing as the arch-enemy of oligarchs. Some progressive individuals

were willing to give martial law a chance precisely for this reason. They turned hostile to him when it became abundantly clear that he was breeding a new oligarchy of "crony capitalists".

It would be most unwise for the Cory government to assume that ordinary people are just interested to see the cronies out. Free enterprise only excites the capitalists because it means a brighter prospect for business. For the unpoliticized masses, however, it is a matter of indifference; and for the politicized, it is positively reprehensible. Overturning Marcos' machinery of theft and coercion is necessary but insufficient to achieve social justice. Unless accompanied by basic and thorough-going reforms, it will just resuscitate the traditional inequities.

A bourgeois-democratic revolution must resolutely move forward or history will consign it to oblivion. Such a revolution cannot stand still. Half-way solutions to monumental problems appease people, but only for a while. Either Cory heeds the clamour for change and pursues the historical process through to the end, or she puts her regime in danger. Perpetual vacillation on fundamental issues will result in an Indonesian September (Rightwing coup) or a Russian October (Leftwing insurrection). In history, "miracles" do not happen twice because people are bound to modify their behaviour after the first unexpected experience.

Patrick Uy/People Power



Forces in the Government

Ideological heterogeneity is one of the most outstanding features of the new government. The composition of the cabinet reflects the diversity of forces which supported Cory in the last elections or defected to her camp in the February revolution. Beyond a common disdain for Marcos, there is little else to hold them together. The government itself has become an arena of class struggle. What makes this unlikely coalition fragile is that the five identifiable blocs within have divergent perspectives, and each is backed and pressured by forces outside the government.

To understand the concrete nature of Cory's government, we should analyze the component blocs: (1) UNIDO, (2) PDP-Laban, (3) the Makati Mafia, (4) Enrile, and (5) the progressives.

1. *UNIDO* is a relic of a bygone age. It consists of old-style machine politicians, many of whom supported Marcos in the early years of martial law but turned oppositionists only when his bankrupt regime could no longer provide enough patronage for everyone.

Aspiring for Washington's endorsement, UNIDO dissociated from the Convenors Group over the dismantling of American military bases and the release of all political prisoners. When she agreed to run under its banner, Cory adopted UNIDO's ambiguous stance on the bases but stuck to her position on the detainees. UNIDO expected a Cory-Doy victory to boost its political fortunes through the old patronage system. When Marcos fell, several KBL parliamentarians wanted to defect and UNIDO, following the principle of "politics is addition", was only too eager to accommodate them. That could have made UNIDO the majority party in the Batasan. But Cory showed utter contempt for these "balimbings" and, instead of extending the hand of welcome, she deprived them of jobs by doing away with the Batasan.

2. *PDP-Laban* is challenging UNIDO in its own turf. The two parties are now bitterly squabbling over the appointment of officers-in-charge of provinces, cities and municipalities. As Minister of Local Governments, Aquilino Pimentel is accused of abusing his authority by choosing only PDP-Laban members or prospective members.

PDP-Laban party consists of relatively young and vaguely reformist politicians, most of whom came to national prominence only during the martial law period. Their anti-fascist credentials are more impressive than UNIDO's. They also claim to be more coherent ideologically since all applicants for party membership are required to undergo an ideological formation program. In an honest-to-goodness canvass of members, this is probably the larger of the two parties in Cory's government. And because it has a democratic policy-making structure, PDP-Laban is more open to pressures from below and tends to be more reflective of current thinking than UNIDO. On the US bases, human rights, agrarian reform and the economic

recovery program, its announced policies come close to the positions of the cause-oriented groups. Aside from the progressive bloc in the Aquino government (about which more will be said later), PDP-Laban should be regarded as a potential ally of the socialist movement.

3. What we call the "*Makati Mafia*" is not a party but a bloc of like-minded ministers representing big business. It goes by various names assigned by mischievous outsiders. They have also been branded as the "Jesuit Mafia" and "Council of Trent" on account of their ostentatious religiosity.

It has a narrow base of support locally, being confined to the big business community. But this inadequacy is compensated by the trust of the US and the international banking community. The Makati Mafia therefore wields an influence disproportionate to its size because the government desperately needs external funds for the economic recovery program. But the most eminent personalities in this bloc are weakened by having skeletons in their closets due to previous associations with Marcos and his brother-in-law.

The Makati Mafia is the main conduit of US imperialism in Cory's government. But it is also the most vulnerable. Unless the Americans arrange with IMF-World Bank a generous package for the Philippines, the influence of this ultra-conservative bloc is bound to decline. If what Jose "Jobo" Fernandez and Jaime Ongpin get will be the standard package of devaluation, wage freeze, higher taxes, etc., popular pressures will force Jobo out. Ongpin's clout will be clipped, and given his "prima donna" tendency, this may just persuade him to resign as well.

4. *Enrile* constitutes a bloc all to himself, an odd ball in the anti-fascist government of Cory. He served as the martial law administrator and remained a Marcos lackey until his fateful defection on 22 February. Although his role in bringing down Marcos is well appreciated, suspicions of hidden wealth and culpability in human rights abuses cast a shadow on his character. Like the Makati Mafia, he enjoys American confidence, being conservative and a staunch defender of neo-colonialism. He is the type of strong leader that Reagan wants for the Third World.

His current power status has been overrated. The foreign media describe Enrile as the power behind the throne. But events do not bear this out. He meekly retreated every time Cory slapped him down. For instance, he objected to the release of Sison and Dante, but Cory nonetheless honoured her pledge to free all political prisoners. He strongly opposed the declaration of a "revolutionary government", but Cory just the same threw away the 1973 constitution and abolished the Batasan. Lately he turned down the request of Amnesty International to investigate the human rights situation after February, but Cory opened the doors and even thanked this Nobel Prize-winning organization for its continuing concern in the Filipino people.

None of Enrile's recommendees has been appointed to the cabinet. Only in the local governments of Region 2 does he have a say in appointments. Even his own deputy in the

ministry of national defense is Cory's choice. There is even a suspicion that General Heto is there to watch his move for a possible conspiracy.

Like Laurel, he has cause to conspire, but both are realistic enough to know that no one can stand up to Cory as of now. Perhaps they are just biding their time, waiting for the euphoria to die down and her popularity to sink. With America's blessings, they might even draw the Makati Mafia to a conservative united front. But unless Cory makes a fatal error, they have no chance. Against her, they may not even be able to count on Gen. Ramos and the RAM. And without the military on their side, a conservative conspiracy is futile.

5. The *progressive bloc* is a generic term for cabinet ministers like Jose Diokno, Joker Arroyo, Augusto Sanchez, Rene Saguisag, Jovito Salonga and Mita Pardo de Tavera. They are persons of impeccable integrity with unblemished records of resistance to the Marcos dictatorship. As activists and human rights lawyers, some suffered imprisonment for their courage. The Americans regard them with hostility and big business view them with suspicion. Their capacity to influence policy depends to a great extent on the support they get from the periphery, i.e., the people's democratic movement from where they came and of which they remain an integral part. They are the most dependable allies of the socialist movement, far more so than the reformist politicians PDP-Laban.

Forces at the Periphery

We consider the overthrow of Marcos a *revolution* rather than a *restoration* because of the greatly enhanced role of the masses in our political life. Whereas in the bourgeois democracy before martial law popular participation was confined to suffrage (i.e., choosing which faction of the ruling class would repress and represent them), the experience of struggle has raised to a very high level the political understanding, organization and militancy of the masses. People's power is a new reality which did not disappear with the disappearance of Marcos.

Led by IC (Independent Caucus, now known as BISIG) and BANDILA, the cause-oriented organizations which participated in Cory's election campaign have banded together in LAKAS. Their aim is to institutionalize people's power, i.e., to organize the unorganized supporters of Cory and turn what was a spontaneous outpouring into a conscious political force. Without organized support, Cory could not withstand pressures from the politicians, big business and American imperialism.

BAYAN suffered a setback as a result of its boycott line in the last elections. But rectification process is now going on and, hopefully, BAYAN will emerge from it revitalized and cured of sectarian tendencies. Then it would be possible to realize its original purpose of establishing a genuine united front.

Meanwhile, recently released political prisoners who were generally critical of the boycott line have taken parallel initiatives. The rationale of the Volunteers for Popular Democracy (VPD), for instance, is akin to LAKAS, and we should explore the possibility of a LAKAS-VPD alliance as a first step toward a genuine united front. Also worth a closer study is the Partido ng Bayan. Although its tactic of contesting elections may be incongruous with our strategy, some of its professed goals are akin to aspects of our socialist vision.

A principled unity of all progressive forces is absolutely necessary to combat the conservative tendencies in the new government and sustain the revolutionary character of the February Revolution.

Tasks Ahead

The "nothing has changed" theory (a variation of "changing of the guards") is as harmful as it is wrong. It obscures the crucial difference between bourgeois dictatorship (fascism) and bourgeois democracy. To take it at face value is to blind ourselves to the vast opportunities for advancing socialism. It also shackles us to styles of political work that may be appropriate to conditions of illegality even when a broadened democratic space has already been unfurled.

We are in fact freer now than at any time in our history, not in the formal sense of having freedoms enshrined in the system of laws (even the Marcos constitution "guaranteed" freedoms!), but in the sense that we value our rights and liberties more because we had to fight for them. Prior to martial law, "democracy" was handed to us by a foreign power; and it served as a facade for elite rule because people entrusted the process of governance entirely to the politicians and bureaucrats. Today the politicians and bureaucrats are trying to govern in the old way but the people who have become more politicized and better organized through the struggle against a ruthless despot have the capacity and the will to intervene.

Cynics argue that the present situation is so volatile that the freedoms we enjoy today may be snatched away tomorrow. That is a real possibility, especially if all we do is to celebrate democracy. But freedoms become real to the extent that we dare to use them. The cynics' reluctance to act in freedom will turn the possibility into a certainty. Fascism thrives where people are scared to be free.

It was more out of luck than foresight that we held our pre-congress conference in January, on the eve of the revolution. We resolved to push through the socialist campaign with the threat of repression hanging above our heads. After the dictatorship was demolished by people's power, we have more reason to fight for socialism with enhanced vigor.

As we noted earlier, the people did not keep the power they won in the February Revolution but handed it over to the liberal bourgeoisie who, in turn, are bound to use it for their



own class interests. It is therefore illusory to expect the new government, no matter how sincere and amiable compared to its predecessor, to carry out the reforms that meet the people's objective needs. The initiative for meaningful reforms must come from the people themselves, and people's power or pressure politics will have to be applied. The role of BISIG is to equip the working people with the skills to extract reforms from the liberal democratic government, and ultimately to wield power themselves and build a socialist society.

From the above analyses of the revolution and the Cory Aquino government, we can identify five general tasks of the new socialist movement.

Theoretical Work

For many years the progressive movement in the Philippines specialized in negative propaganda, exposing and opposing the Marcos regime without having to offer a comprehensive and coherent alternative. Since we neglected theoretical work, we left the field entirely to the reactionary and reformist institutions which joined the anti-dictatorship movement. As a consequence, when Marcos fell and suddenly, we had a government in search for a program, the Opus Dei and the Jesuits were the only ones to respond immediately.

The *Socialist Vision* is a preliminary effort to develop such an alternative program. But this is necessarily inadequate to meet the need for ideas on economic recovery and social reforms. The general principles in the *Socialist Vision* have to be fleshed out, defended, and concretized in relation to current happenings and the day-to-day problems of the people. In this effort, we should not only address ourselves to the Cory government but also, and more importantly, to the Filipino workers in whose hands lie the future of our country.

Organizational Work

Theoretical work is sterile apart from practical organizing work. In this area, too, the possibilities are great. The liberative experience people have only recently gone through has made them realize the tremendous power of collective action. It is easier now than ever in the past to explain why our political future must not be entrusted to government: why the people, if democracy is to become real, must continuously intervene in the process of governance, relentlessly apply pressures from below. If this government drifts down the path of its predecessors, becoming insensitive to the people's needs and aspirations, then the people will readily recognize the need to transcend it.

Special attention should be given to bringing socialist ideas to the working class and organizing the workers not only to promote and defend their economic interests but also to discharge their historic mission of building a socialist society.

Alliance Building

In the last year we were forced to fight ultra-Left sectarianism in the movement. The dramatic turn of events fully vindicated our principled position. Recognition of their mistake has inspired the other sections of the movement to undertake a painstaking process of rectification. But we must combat in ourselves the arrogance we deplore in others. The "we told you so" attitude flatters our ego but does not contribute positively to the liberation struggle.

More urgent in a bourgeois democratic regime than under a dictatorship is the need to unify all progressive forces. This

alone can sustain and deepen a process that history has already set in motion. Cory's government, by its nature and by its composition, has become a battleground of contending forces. US imperialism, which backed Marcos till the bitter end, is now trying to court the government. And we have seen that there are power blocs within which are amenable to a compromise with imperialism. Alone, we lack the strength to counteract them; but in collaboration with other progressive groups, we can be strong.

BISIG should therefore consolidate relations with BANDILA in the framework of LAKAS. At the same time, we should reestablish lines with BAYAN and participate in its activities which coincide with our own program of action. In view of the fact that the arrogant and manipulative techniques that split BAYAN last year are being subjected to severe self-criticism, we can help immensely to promote rectification by opening anew the prospect of a broad united front on the principles which the sectarians violated.

Combat Conservatism in the New Government

The present situation is so volatile and Cory's government is so heterogeneous that it has a tendency to apply the brakes and slide back. Since power has only been transferred to another faction of the same ruling class, the bad habits and disastrous policies of its predecessors invariably reassert themselves. There are already unmistakable signs of this in Cory's government.

UNIDO is contending with PDP-Laban for the meager spoils available to an impoverished government. The big bosses of the Makati Mafia are again consorting with US imperialism. Despite disturbing reports of continuing atrocities, Enrile confines the reforms in the armed forces to a reshuffle of

officers at the top. Corruption, inefficiency, wastefulness and bureaucratic arrogance still characterize the public service.

Socialists should join hands with the nat-dems, soc-dems and lib-dems to resist backsliding and push the revolution forward by confronting the conservative forces at all fronts. While exposing and opposing their policies, the more important task of BISIG is to formulate, advocate and defend the socialist alternative.

Defend Our Revolutionary Gains

While being conscious of the limitations of Cory's government, we recognize that its positive aspects are predominant. We must defend it against reactionary plots. Since the Marcos loyalists are just a minor nuisance, the gravest danger to Cory may come from within her own government. Intoxicated by victory in a war they did not have to fight because human barricades stopped the tanks sent out to crush them, some senior officers of the New AFP threatened to "lynch" progressive ministers and "march to Malacañang". They must be put in their proper places before this drunken boast becomes a serious conspiracy.

The old politicians are also dangerous because of their overwhelming ambition and their readiness to ally with any force that promises to serve their interests. That is why they have always been accessible to imperialist pressures. Socialists must always be alert to the first signs of a plot between the old politicians and disgruntled elements in the government.

Potentially destabilizing are Marcos followers who refuse to concede defeat. At the moment they are just a past, but they can be dangerous if certain factors activate the closet loyalists in the armed forces.

