

One Year of a Shotgun Marriage: The Aquino Government and the Bureaucracy

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"I want to see again in the Philippine bureaucracy the qualities for which it was renowned: honesty, competence, helpfulness and humility. I want our civil servants to have again a sense of pride in government service. I want government to be as attractive as the private sector to the brightest and best of our people". (Presidential Candidate Corazon C. Aquino, "To Rise from the Ruins," January 6, 1986.)¹

In the heat of the campaign for the 1986 presidential elections, straw polls began to show that even civil servants were going for Cory Aquino. Ferdinand Marcos then hurled a last-ditch claim: "If you vote for Aquino, you will all lose your jobs". The Aquino campaign denied this in a long letter to members of the bureaucracy. "I will uphold the security of tenure of the civil service," she promised, "those of you who have performed your duties competently will be protected".

And so she won, in a convoluted — and ultimately glorious — process I will no longer detail here. Then in the transition Freedom Constitution she promulgated a month after, she gave her government full authority to purge all elective and appointive officials.² The siege officially ended on February 25, 1987, almost simultaneous with the promulgation of the new Constitution.

Now is an opportune time to look back at that crucial year of transition. In this paper, I shall attempt to tackle three questions:

(1) What were the roots of the conflict between the political leadership and the bureaucracy?³

(2) What is the state of the shotgun marriage between the Aquino government and the bureaucracy it inherited from

its discredited predecessor?

(3) What are its prospects in the remaining years of the Aquino government?

The Regime-Bureaucracy Problem

According to democratic theory, the civil service carries out the policies of the government which represent the sovereign people. The bureaucracy is assumed to be a neutral instrument, capable, as in the British case, to nationalize steel under one regime, denationalize it under the second and nationalize it yet again the next time around. However, the regime's mastery of the bureaucracy is not an automatic process. A resounding victory at the polls stamps it with legitimacy and is a major part of its power over the bureaucracy. But the fact alone that it holds power may already insure that its commands will be obeyed. La Porte explains it this way:

The adaptability of the administrative system (in particular its apex) to work for the person in power will continue. There is enough historical evidence to support this assertion. It is in the nature of the higher bureaucracy to reach some accommodation with whoever is in power . . . High level civil officers in all societies understand power and its use (1982:148).

Yet in a sense, every political leadership has to prove itself before its bureaucracy. Otherwise, this permanent, expert institution may become its head rather than its servant. As even Max Weber asserted:

The question is always who controls the existing bureaucratic machinery. And such control is possible only in a very limited degree to persons who

are not technical specialist. Generally speaking, the trained permanent official is more likely to get his way in the long run than his nominal superior, the Cabinet minister, who is not a specialist (1947:338).

Many trusting governments have found to their dismay that their efforts for reform are stymied by a recalcitrant bureaucracy.⁴ Others have been ignored unless they “strengthened the capacity of the national bureaucracies to dominate their environments” (Parsrish; 1973-230). Thus it is not surprising that a new government must “come on strong” and show the civil service who is the master before things get out of hand. When it takes over from a discredited regime in an abnormal succession process like the Revolution of 1986, the potential for conflict becomes even larger.

The regime-bureaucracy problem must be analyzed because it provides a good case study of why transition years are so difficult. Euphoric about ousting a dictator, the government must now deal strongly but justly with real human institutions he left behind. The civil service is one of those institutions. An indispensable instrument of the Marcos government, it exemplified many of its main characteristics: authoritarianism, militarization, American domination, corruption. But in the process of ensuring these for Marcos it also became well-trained, allowed to develop professional norms, given some leeway for initiative. The dictatorship was potent but was inefficient and slack even at points where one expected it to have total control. Any bureaucracy after all is first and foremost a technical body. Once allowed its mind, there is no system yet devised that will hold it down without any exceptions.

Thus it must not be missed that the bureaucracy at the end of the Marcos regime was a strong one, capable (of both good and ill), and dedicated at some parts only to Marcos, at others, or even at the same parts (and without recognizing the conflict), to the nation. The authoritarian government could not eat it up wholly. As its ideological training sessions boomeranged, it created a corps of open and closet dissenters. The contradictions in society were reproduced in the bureaucracy: it was authoritarian *and* participatory, developmentalist and nationalistic, corrupt *and* committed.⁵ It was a system struggling against itself and many welcomed the new government as a means of finally becoming one again.

Nor was its population only in the extremes. There was a huge army of civil servants who were irrevocably in the middle, following only their bosses' lead, just there for a living. The new government would err if it persisted in seeing the civil service simply as a remnant of the dictatorship. It had many beneficiaries and collaborators of the Marcos regime, to be sure, but it also included many victims, as well as neutrals who just coasted along.



The Shotgun Marriage: A Year Later

It was a one-sided romance: the bureaucracy (except at its highest — political — levels) wanted Corazon Aquino, but the bride would have preferred someone else. The People's Power Revolution provided the shotgun and the reluctant wedding was on. In this no-choice situation, the bureaucracy eagerly embraced the government but the latter was more powerful here than in any other turf and accepted it only on its own terms.

The Aquino government used various means to reform the bureaucracy: the aforementioned purge, reorganization, various system changes. Its style of governance also affected the bureaucracy as main implementor of its policies. The processes and results of each illustrate how the government managed its year of revolution.

The Purging of the Bureaucracy

A purge at the aftermath of a revolution has many things going for it. There is the democratic argument. By voting for Aquino, the Filipino people signalled their desire for changes in policies and institutions. The people certainly saw the bureaucracy as manipulated and used by the regime, most blatantly in the unbridled electioneering of the elections

(Tancangco, 1986, 1987) and in the unparalleled corruption which later got to the Guinness Book of Records (Aquino, 1987). Thus the government charged the bureaucracy of collaboration with Marcos, unable to appreciate some of the civil servants' unhappy role as unwilling victim. Motivated by resentment⁶ and eager to push its agenda, the government would satisfy itself with only a purge.

That was initially a popular move. Even civil servants were happy to see that the first resignations were from persons who had discredited the service. It continued to be supported even when courtesy resignations became demanded rather than made voluntary acts. For one, it was accepted that all new governments should have a free hand in choosing its top officials. For another, it was clear that many Marcos collaborators⁷ would hold on to the positions they dishonored unless forcibly removed. It then became a matter of the strength of will of the new officials against that of the old.

But singling out these persons was not easy. Having very little to go on, ministers relied on the impersonal procedure of asking everyone from a certain position upwards to submit courtesy resignations. This innocent demand immediately ran into trouble since in the civil service under Marcos, the career system was up to the deputy minister's rank. (In other words, a new government can change only the top official plus the "political" deputy minister, and no one else.) It was therefore hardly possible to remove anyone without violating career principles.

The public at large — and the civil service — would have supported the purge under two conditions: (1) if every removal was justified; and (2) if the ministers had stopped at positions of authority. The first criterion recognizes the mixture of merit and spoils under the Marcos civil service. Some indeed were Marcos stooges or undeserving appointees but the rest earned their positions by good performance or regular procedures. Thus it was unfair of the new officials to make a blanket denunciation of the staff. A reading of the election results and of the temper of Philippine society would have reminded them that many in the bureaucracy also rooted for the new government.

The new officials also dipped very low, asking for courtesy resignations even from section chiefs and removing the rank and file — levels which everyone knew were not positions of high discretion and authority. This was widely seen not as an attempt to clean up but as an opening for new patrons to play politics.

Moreover, being new, the ministers did not know the bureaucracy enough to trust it. Thus they relied on people from the outside who like them had little appreciation of the bureaucracy. Suspecting the personnel there, they proceeded on their preconceived notions of how bad the agency was. Indeed in the beginning, many found their prophecy fulfilled. However, one does not run an agency on pure zeal, and before long, they found themselves stymied by technical matters (and

a lot of bureaucratese) that needed the oldtimers' assistance.

To newcomers humble enough to recognize these and to appreciate the work of the old, a gracious *modus vivendi* came into being. In others, however, the problem remained. In one agency, employees were given termination letters effective thirty days after, the extra time to be used to train their replacements. That was certainly distribution of spoils, not purging.

There was also resistance against "volunteers" who impressed the political leaders with the latest from the private sector and became assistant ministers in a flash. Then there were the volunteers who took in line functions but remained outside the reach of accountability. They were supposed to be praised because they were not in the payroll, but they received allowances or charged expenses that made regular salaries pale in comparison. This was referred to as the illness called "volunteer fever".

The Unclear Policy: To Purge or Not to Purge

The purge was the most frightening weapon used. Up to May 28, however, the official policy was simply that anyone could be removed: no grounds were listed until Executive Order No. 17 which also provided for a central appeals committee.

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Resort to dismissals varied from agency to agency. The axe was sharpest reportedly at the Ministry of Human Settlements (a target for abolition even during the campaign)⁸, the Ministry of Local Governments, the Ministry of Labor and Employment, the Ministry of Natural Resources and in various local governments, e.g., Quezon City and Puerto Princesa City. More than one third of career executive service officials (CESOs), the highest civil service level, lost their positions.⁹ They also fell on the judiciary and on local government officials.

Meanwhile, several ministries used the axe sparingly. The Ministry of Health asked courtesy resignations of 1,500 personnel, accepted 60 and demoted ten. The Civil Service Commission removed only one. The Ministry of Social Services and Development reported that it kept all its personnel, including casuals, "rather than lay them off and further aggravate the unemployment situation . . . in line with the new government's policy to build a just and humane society" (1986:5).

In other cases, the purge was dropped in favor of attractive early retirement packages. These did not always work according to plan: while many deserving of removal could not be sweet-talked into leaving, others which the bureaucracy — if not the leadership — would have wanted to retain opted out. Declaring that they would not add to the unemployment problem, one agency claimed a mission for these personnel:

We look at our resignees and retirees as "development agents," well-educated, trained and motivated individuals, whom DBP is releasing into the economy. Most of them have already indicated their intentions to put up their own . . . projects, for which they are certainly prepared, and do their bit for economic recovery (1986:5).

One wonders, though, if the employees were as good as that, whether the cost of training them, then letting them loose into the economy with generous benefits from taxpayers, and then training their replacements were worth the cost of upheaval in that and other agencies.

Fairness in the Procedures

Just as fearsome as the purge was the way it was handled. In one agency, employees were asked not their record of performance but "where were you during the February revolution?" or "how did you vote in February?" which even Coryistas thought unfair and refused to answer. In another, courtesy resignations were required on pain of not getting one's next salary. Others were given letters terminating their employment "for analogous reasons". (How can a civil servant expect to answer that charge?)

But other agencies used more fair, humane and public procedures. For instance, the Ministry of Health went through a painstaking appraisal of the record of its top employees,

poring through personnel records, audit reports, health situation statistics and feedback of superiors, subordinates and clients (Alfiler, 1987). The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports also conducted a thorough study of its personnel and took pride that in its reorganization, "highly qualified and competent key officials were appointed based on merit and performance" (Alonzo, 1987). The data are not yet all in, but a preliminary generalization may be this: management persons — technocrats if you will — can afford *not* to remove staffs wholesale, relying instead on their ability to inspire and to lead. Politicians, on the other hand, tended to grasp the opportunity provided by the Freedom Constitution as a "democratic" right and an opportunity for patronage.

Fairness of the Removal Policy

Unwilling to coddle their fellows who took advantage of the old dispensation, many civil servants were nevertheless appalled by the removal of personnel who were not the worst offenders, especially if the worst in their judgment were retained or even moved up. They also sought a distinction as to degrees of severity of offense. Some indeed merited dismissal, but others in happier times would be meted out only suspensions, warnings or even just ignored. Cleansing the civil service could also have been effected swiftly just by simplifying administrative procedures against erring personnel without removing everybody else's tenure security (Aniceto, 1986).

It would not be so bad if the replacements were improvements. But as Soriano (1986) described it:

What we can see emerging today is a sorry scenario of mediocre and poorly paid public servants of the old dispensation being replaced with other patronage appointees of no greater competence or experience in their tasks.

The availability of retirement packages were regarded by employees at other agencies with dismay. Here were benefits distributed according to the financial capacity of the agency and the creativity of its head — and sometimes also due to the vociferousness of its employee organization — when justice required distribution of both rewards and punishments according to performance.

What about the appeal provided for under EO 17? Of the thousands dismissed¹⁰ only about 700 sought the review process. A lawyer in the committee staff did not think it implied that the rest were for just cause. Rather, she pointed out various difficulties: the vagueness of the dismissal order (which made it difficult for the civil servant to counter the argument), the lack of lawyers to draw up the sworn statement (petitions in any other form were not entertained) and the lack of faith that they will be redressed. Other reasons may be added: the fact that most dismissals were couched as acceptance of courtesy resignations (which technically made the removal an initiative of the employee, therefore not subject to

appeal), the lack of knowledge of the review process, its centralized nature, the fear that if they complained they will lose all benefits.

Most of the appeals were favorably disposed of, but aggrieved employees may not have been reinstated since the committee had no power to enforce its decisions. In addition, the committee sought at all times to be fair to the minister and get his comment on each case under appeal. The latter generally did not consider the matter as a priority and took time in sending his reply. It was a delay borned by the employee since he forfeited wages during this period, whether or not he was subsequently upheld.

General Effects of the Purge

Stories about the swinging axe terrified many employees even in offices where political heads were quite fair and careful. Fearful of losing their jobs, many started applying for other positions. With the economy still down, the only available vacancies turned out to be in other government agencies. Thus started the *rigodon* of personnel who, rejected (or afraid of being rejected) by one minister, applied to the next. Those who sat it out did not do much work either.

The purge also activated a few organizations within the bureaucracy, encouraged by a government that praises people power. Although their protests were generally of no avail, old groups like the Confederation of Government Employees Organizations (COGEO) and newly formed ones like the LINGKOD of beleaguered National Food Authority were joined by other feeble voices in their attempts at mass action and protests. Some asked for retention while others questioned why particular persons were being retained.

Comparison of Marcos and Aquino Purges

Marcos in 1973 and 1975 required courtesy resignations of all civil servants but these were not accepted in as sweeping a fashion as this time. The contrast is explainable: the patrons were already in place. However the purges under martial law and that of 1986 were comparable in that neither governments managed there to show their vision of what the civil service should be. They purged the corrupt as well as the honest, the lazy and inefficient along with the hard-working, the partisan and the apolitical. The latest purge had only one major advantage over the old: they removed only incumbents, unlike Marcos' ministers who, eager to please the President with a long list but unwilling to face the ire of their staffs, included in the purge several dead, retired and resigned employees (Cariño, 1977). As in the current rigodon, guilty persons who found patrons could get themselves reinstated also (Aniceto, 1986).

The Folly of Government Reorganization

President Aquino created the Presidential Commission for Government Reorganization (PCGR) upon assumption to office. Although bureaucratic gigantism was among its major criticisms of Marcos, the PCGR seems to have ended up abolishing four agencies and creating nine, leading an observer to call its work as "reduction by addition" (*Philippine Currents*, November 1986, as quoted by Tapales, 1986:12). The bureaucracy now has over 90 deputy ministers, up from 42 on the eve of Marcos' downfall, and about as many assistant ministers.

The PCGR established as its guiding principles the promotion of private initiative, decentralization, cost-effective-



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ness, the efficiency of front-line services, and accountability. The principles themselves were rarely disputed, but the proposals of PCGR were. Partly this was because — sometimes in support of the PCGR but frequently in competition with it — a parallel effort was instituted by practically every minister. Both processes claimed to be participatory, with public hearings called by the PCGR and internal reorganization often in consultation with the staff. The latter was where the bureaucracy managed to pit its strength against newcomers.



The PCGR, meanwhile, tended to be dominated by persons from the private sector although internal consultations were part of its procedures also.

Resolution of the competing plans was expected to be made at the Office of the President. One of the recurring problems appears to be “turf” issues, with two offices claiming the same unit. In one celebrated case, an executive order for the constitutional commission was signed, given an official number and then rescinded when a later reorganization order for a ministry was found to still include a unit transferred from it to the commission. (The ministry retained the unit.)

Another problematic area concerns the amount of control a ministry may exercise over agencies clearly within its sector but previously autonomous. A case in point is the agricultural ministry and the separate enterprises for coconut, sugar, and rice and corn, each of whom now prefers to continue the inherited arrangement.

The PCGR devoted time to a study of the government corporate sector which ate up a huge amount of government resources during Marcos’ era. Together with the Commission on Audit it drafted substantially similar orders for rationaliz-

ing this sector. A third draft, from the Ministry of Finance, strengthened the Government Corporate Monitoring and Coordination Committee (GCMCC) and, in tandem with the PCGR draft, or the COA draft by itself, would allow for an integrated system of performance evaluation of public enterprises and their differential treatment from the civil service (PIDS, 1987:12, 13). Although these policies have been earlier announced by the government, no draft has yet been favored.

Although PCGR is supposed to have disbanded, as of January, 1987, only 4 out of 54 drafted EOs have been signed (PIDS, 1987). The snail’s pace has not only slowed down government performance; it also contributed to the sense of uncertainty among civil servants, since, following “time-honored practice,” some persons who could not be purged are due to be reorganized out.

Wage Increases

With the stick of the purge and reorganization, the administration promised the carrot of wage increase, but only after the bureaucracy was trimmed. This did not sit well with civil servants, who felt they were already deserving of the pay hikes. (This was the same posture they took when Marcos promised to increase salaries during the election campaign: its bad timing smacked of electioneering, but it did not necessarily secure their vote for him because they felt they had earned it long ago.) Increases were in fact given: across the board, a 10% pay hike was decreed late in 1986, plus a Christmas bonus equivalent to one month’s pay. Selected employees, notably teachers, received increases. The last did not come easily but were gained only after a series of mass leaves, and in the midst of threats that strike leaders may be subject to court cases and possible dismissals.

The New Constitution has included vastly increased salaries for the President and other officials, though still much lower than the indicative pay scale submitted by PCGR: P25,000 versus P100,000 monthly for the President, for instance. According to a daily, such a salary increase may already be in effect down to the minister level (at P17,000). However, rank and file rates have not been changed, leading again to questions of inequity.

Attacks against Waste: Corruption and Abuse

Aside from blood-letting, ministries embarked on systems improvement. They cleaned up purchasing units and focused on contracting procedures and other rich sources of graft. MOH reported after the first 100 days that it had saved about P13 million; others claimed the same feat without specifying amounts.

But corruption as an issue cannot be laid to rest. Cardi-

nal Sin's warning on it stirred a hornet's nest that led to the creation of a presidential anti-graft committee and the demand that accusers show proof. The government's responses were not much different from Marcos' and did not allay public fears. Its defensive posture was understandable but misplaced. First it must be said that no one was accusing it of being as corrupt as Marcos. It is probably — hopefully — impossible to duplicate that plunder, being more than 20 years in the making and having used some of the best legal and financial minds in the country (not necessarily in the bureaucracy). Hence current critics decry corruption which is not of the same degree as FM's, but which is of a kind one does not expect from the government of the sincere and pious Cory Aquino. Her moral tone makes the people expect a political will that can send to jail even close friends and relatives. Moreover, the new Constitution has strong accountability provisions that should perpetuate her moral stance even after she is no longer President.¹¹

However, corruption seems to be proceeding apace at all levels of the government, including the bureaucracy and the political leadership. The policeman on the street still gets by on *lagay*. At the same time, it is not confined only to the bureaucracy. One need only interview successors of some deposed ministers to get a feel of how much in the right tract the President was when she changed some of them. Unfortunately, she did not see fit to use them as negative examples nor did she use their ouster as models of the moral and political will the public expects of an honest President. Rather it was widely implied that their removal was due to pressures from unseen forces, making the government appear lacking in moral courage and indecisive about attacking corruption as well as captive of certain vested interests.

The procedure followed was unfair to all concerned. If the officials were honest, exoneration was called for. If not, the public needs to know. The civil service particularly, should be given, by example, clear guidelines of the kind of behavior they should exemplify and the kind of punishments they would receive if they strayed.

There also appear to be cases of potential abuse perpetrated by this regime in its stewardship of the public treasury. A study of the foreign travel undertaken by the governments of 1985 and 1986 is a case in point (Briones, 1987). Early in its term, the Aquino government liberalized expenditures of officials while abroad, from \$35 per day to \$100 per day plus "reasonable hotel expenses for ministers . . . slightly lower for other officials" (Office of the President, Memorandum June 11, 1986). Some officials were indeed reasonable, travelling economy class and staying in three-star hotels. President Aquino during her visits abroad was also a model of thrift and rectitude.

Many officials did not follow that example. Some not only travelled frequently, first class on air fare and in hotel accommodation, but also included their wives in the official

entourage. Some brought big delegations to conferences (as many as 19 in one case, all paid for by the Philippine government). Representation expenses, increased from \$350 to \$2,000, were allowed not only to ministers. Rates of at least \$1,000 were given also to deputies, special assistants, and in one case, to a pilot. This from a government supposedly in a straightjacket budget. Indeed, for 12 months of Marcos in 1985 and about 8 months of Aquino in 1986, the expenditures were P56 million in the first and P47 million in the second.

How can waste, corruption and abuse rear its ugly head again? First and charitably, I must point out the nearly pathological fear of new officials of anything smacking of red tape, ignoring the rationale for some of these procedures. Thus, there is the resort to negotiated purchase instead of public bidding, immediate sale instead of a public announcement of several days to allow all interested persons to come forward, and the like. Some volunteers were "hurt" when a senior civil servant demanded that proceeds of a sale of government assets be remitted to the treasury and official expenses be withdrawn following budgetary and accounting rules: they had instead placed the funds in personal accounts, claiming that they were not planning to use them for their personal needs. The innocence of this exchange is touching, but it does not require experience in government to see where it may lead (and in fact did lead).

Second, the new government did come in with a lot of idealism. This led to a government of trust and not enough controls. (But to the bureaucracy it re-instituted pre-audit.) The open-endedness of the travel memo is a case in point. To reasonable morally upright people, it may be sufficient. But when ego trips and Avelino's classic question (What are we in power for?) still motivate officials in positions of trust, more than trust must be applied.

Some have used the opportunity to feather their own nests. We might also have underestimated the greed of people who have been out of power for decades. The idea that government is a milking cow has not vanished.

Third, beyond personal character, one must recognize the temptations of the socio-economic milieu. Some idealism were quickly dispelled by the size of offers business people still call "small business expenses" to escape close scrutiny, queuing or disqualification. Besides, society does not honor "unexplained poverty" to the same extent that it flocks to those whose wealth after a few months in office cannot be explained by their salary and allowances. Add to that the fact that corruptors provide both rewards and punishments. Thus, grafters in and out of government can not only enrich those who join their fold, but can also make life difficult for those who do not.

Fourth, some corruption is legal and a government that retreats behind legalisms early in its term has all but given up



the crusade. Some of Marcos' plunder was of this kind, as he legislated favors for cronies and foreign monopoly interests. Decision making which is not open is more prone to policy errors like these. The provision of exemptions to certain business — e.g., giving forest concessions when they are closed, opens the door to abuse if not corruption.

Fifth, seeking to document a corruption case is very difficult since intelligent grafters do not make videotapes or receipts of their transactions. What government must do is to prevent corruption, by plugging conflict of interest holes, for instance, and by comparing one's station in life before and after (or at any point during) one's stint at public service. Despite many demands from the press and the public immediately after the Revolution, the new government did not ask for net worth statements of its key officials, except until after some months. Then it did not compare these with their statements after leaving the service.

Running after Marcos' wealth is right: the Philippines must get back its treasures. But the moral lesson that it teaches is revenge, not ethical commitment. The real crusade is when incumbents, relatives and friends of the sitting government are prosecuted for stealing from the people. The government must apply the same zeal as the PCGG does in investigating rumors of this cache and bringing the perpetrators to justice.

More than anyone else, the rates of corruption and abuse are known by civil servants who now react in one of three different ways. The vast majority act as they did during the previous regime closing their eyes to all evil and staying out of the action if they are allowed to, muttering under their breath that governments are all alike.

The second group is the most dangerous. Confident that the regime is weak or a participant in corruption, they continue in their old ways, at higher rates (because of somewhat higher risk), attaching themselves to new patrons, if possible.

A third group has taken to denouncing corruption, hoping that the raps will not be reversed on them as they were in old days. There are even groups of them who wrote to pinpoint anomalies in their respective agencies that were not known to the general public. The increased number of complaints in the Tanodbayan bears testimony to the heightened vigilance.

Politicization

The bureaucracy under Marcos was politicized two ways: towards the regime's partisan and corrupt demands, and towards dissent from it and commitment to the people. The civil service longs to do its work quietly and to be neutral again. However, politicization is a heady brew that cannot be refused once tasted; the proliferation and growing strength of employee organizations may make that impossible. It also appears that the new Constitution proscribes electioneering, but not all other partisan political activities (Article IX B, Section 2-4). Until this provision is clarified, it appears to be open season for partisan politics in the bureaucracy.

Whatever the Constitution says, people have notions about what may or may not be allowed civil servants. There was outcry in the mass media when civil servants were "directed" to participate in the June 12, August 21 and Yes

miting de avance rallies. There is also a report that one ministry paid its employees P2,000 in "voting allowances" in the last plebiscite (although they were not told how to vote). And the government campaign for "yes" votes recalls the style of traditional politicians. In every stop, the President announced or actually released certain budgetary allocations, gave land grants or promised infrastructure and government programs (Tantangco; 1987). In many cases she was accompanied by unannounced senatorial aspirants who campaigned anyway. Incumbent public officials with her considered it an official trip and charged their campaign to their respective agencies. At least one officer-in-charge was removed because "no" won in his municipality.

It should be recalled that President Manuel Quezon shunned the campaign for the ratification of the 1935 Constitution to underscore its non-partisanship (Tantangco, 1987). But the "hakot" participants in rallies and other political acts are ominous signs that this government, like the previous one, may not be above using public resources for its own ends.

Participatory Tendencies and Centralized Decision Making

After a year of Aquino and redemocratization, what became of authoritarianism in the bureaucracy? The authoritarian tendency remains; devotion to hierarchy is a strong characteristic of all bureaucracies. However, the civil service has been largely demilitarized, both in terms of military officials sitting in civilian positions, and in the resort to soldiers to enforce or substitute for civilian decisions.

A counterpoint to authoritarianism is the degree of participativeness. True to its people-powered reputation, this government has made link-ups with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as one of its major innovations. However, participatory management is not yet in vogue in the bureaucracy despite constitutional provisions allowing employees organizations and participation at all levels of decision making. Instead, what is more evident is the ministers' inattention to employees with grievances or with policy suggestions, as shown by groups which felt they had to picket their own agencies in order to be heard.

Participation may come with more decentralization. Fiscal re-allocation in favor of the regions are evident in several ministries; regional trips have become working visits rather than excursions. Such a trend tends to be more visible in agencies which have reorganized or stabilized their personnel line-up. Delays caused by personnel uncertainties have tended to shift the burden of decisions to the top.

Decentralization also can follow smoothly when over-all policies are clear. But while many agencies are ready to delegate authority to the field, these are being postponed because they have to wait for the decisions of the top. Despite a rushed

development plan, the main outlines of the government agenda remain unclear.

The centripetal trend is already strong in a society with authoritarian traditions and a long tenure under martial rule. It is exacerbated by a President who is not only popular but is regarded as the only sincere person in government. Yet centralization in a person who does not enjoy exercising power can immobilize government. When *everyone* wants the personal attention of Cory Aquino, she may postpone decisions indefinitely, unless forced by oncoming events.

The Mendiola tragedy of January 22 is a case in point. Dissatisfied with the Ministry of Agrarian Reform, the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) wanted no less than an audience with the President. They did not get it until after the tragedy during which various agrarian reform policies were announced in quick succession. It is anybody's guess how soon the implementing details will be ready. The May 1st proclamations on labor waited practically up to the end of the year before they were substantiated by executive order. The Population Commission staff is confused because the population policy is unclear: should they push for all methods of family planning or just the natural ones?

By contrast, the Community Employment and Development Program was quickly announced, decided and put in place, but implementation appears to bog down, with different interpretations of its scope, objectives and indicators provided by each agency in the implementation chain. Now there is talk of ghost projects and conflicts among agencies which are supposed to undertake them.

This governance by fits and starts is difficult for a bureaucracy inured in routine and regularity. It bears the brunt of complaints when policies are unclear. It also cannot act when policies that have been announced cannot be implemented due to lack of a legitimizing order or because procedures remain ambiguous and vague.

Prospects for the Regime-Bureaucracy Relationship

The main regime-bureaucracy conflict centered on the purge, which, with the Freedom Constitution now history, is officially over. However, with reorganization still pending, some form of personnel changes can continue to be expected, although more difficult now with constitutional provisions calling for the protection even of temporary employees (Article IX, B, Section 2-2, 6). Even with these major irritants, however, the marriage is likely to survive. The regime faced few problems with its civil service, in sharp contrast to the coup attempts of the military, and the melodramatic efforts of some local officials to literally chain themselves to their posts. This general calm may be traced to qualities of both partners of this marriage.



The expansion of neutrality to include any demand of a power – holder can be dangerous.

The Qualities of the Bureaucracy

This marriage is unequal in that the groom is so unassertive vis-a-vis his bride. That tells us something about the bureaucracy which is not exactly good news for it or the current leadership.

First, it is generally passive, the teachers' strikes and the pickets at various agencies notwithstanding. It is slow, even when its own survival is at stake. This was how it preserved itself during the dark days of the Marcos rule, and it is how it will continue to act indefinitely. In this it is not much different from the vast majority of the people in society.

Second, the causes that move civil servants are still the personal ones – wages, jobs, personal grievances, not abstract causes like justice or responsive services. Most of the demonstrations and protests last year centered on the former. They did not rally against the injustice of the purge nor the confusing policies: they did not call for participation or for public service ethics. These, despite the fact that a surprising number of them in private conversations point to these problems.

Third, the civil service defines itself as neutral and ready to obey, but it may extend such obedience to partisan or unreasonable demands without question, as long as it comes from a superior. While neutrality has been demanded of the civil service since Weberian times, its expansion to include any demand of a power-holder can be dangerous to the growth of a militant public service and a conscientious citizenry.

The Policies of the Leadership

It would be unfair to charge the unstormy year just to the weakness of the bureaucracy. Rather there is also a lot of congruence in the ideology of the new government and that of its bureaucracy. This is its developmentalist thrust, but with factions pushing for economic nationalism and social equity. The Americanized bureaucracy on the whole agrees with the continuation of the developmentalism of the old regime, with obedience to WB-IMF continuing despite rhetoric to the contrary. However, this government continues to maintain open debates about the issues which are at least refreshing. Refreshing also is the fact that old memos of critical civil servants are now resurrected, to serve as weapons against international demands.

At the same time, equity and social services appear to have a fighting chance under this government. Although the poor have yet to feel more direct benefits, re-allocations in favor of basic services to them have been made. Many of these are still in the level of *pagbubungkal ng lupa* (groundworking) to quote a deputy minister (Bautista, 1987). Coupled with stronger regional offices and tie-ups with NGOs, this signals a change, but will require massive bureaucratic reorientation.

This is because beyond the banner issues, there are likely to be conflicts in operationalization. For instance, most bureaucrats want decentralization, but they tend to prefer it when oriented to benefits but not when adding to their responsibilities. Here the bureaucracy needs training, management support and tolerance of initial mistakes. Many of the technologies for regional planning, poor biased methods or participatory approaches are already available, but now have to be really used and made the focus of personnel evaluation. The seeds have been planted, as early as Marcos; this is the time for sincere and thorough use and acceptance of these processes.

The Areas of Potential Conflict

My discussion of the regime-bureaucracy interaction has shown problems which the government faces not only relative to this institution but in many other areas also. In the purge and reorganization as in many substantive fields, it lacked an over-all policy, which resulted in inconsistent treatment of different parts of the bureaucracy and unclear notions of what it wanted to achieve. It also did not press its high moral advantage, sometimes giving a lower value to justice and integrity and elevating instead expediency, personalism and partisanship. This was evident in the personnel and administrative moves as well as in the issues of corruption and politicization. In the latter it also allowed itself to be pressured instead of setting its priorities independent of special interests.

In its defense, one can raise the fact that its agenda was not only full but overcrowded, a problem it had in common with other transition governments (Linz and Stepan, 1978). Moreover, it was beset by strong forces of the left and the right both of which had real armies. Under these circumstances unarmed groups like the bureaucracy — or the poor, whatever their just grievances, have to wait for better days for their causes to be heard.

These problems have also been raised by a few articulate voices in the bureaucracy. These pockets of resistance should be viewed not as enemies but as sources of strength. In many ways, they are the creative and conscientious part of the civil service. Going beyond mere personal issues, they have a vision of the role of their agencies and the civil services as a whole in the development and redemocratization process, and they are anxious to see them play important roles under the new government. Many were dissatisfied but powerless under the old regime, and see in the new a means of allying themselves with reform. As the regime falters, this sector cries out against it. But with clear and fair policies, it will be a major supporter.

The rest of the civil service will be passive, easy to sway, easy to cow, a henpecked husband, if one may stoop to a sexist term. It behooves this government to care for this group but also to listen to the bearers of bad news and leave aside its known disdain for unsolicited advice. A government that hears

only happy news is soon isolated from its people. It must sit down with those in the civil service — and other forces — who now criticize it, for they will be the source of ideas and new directions in the days to come.

An honest, competent, helpful, humble, attractive civil service? Indeed it will emerge only if this government marshalls its strengths, learns from its errors — and those of the past administrations, including the Marcos government — and moves to reform itself as it has called the civil service to reform. **K**

NOTES

¹This is the first policy speech of Mrs. Aquino, delivered following Marcos' charge that she is "only a housewife" (*Malaya* January 14, 1986: 5).

²Article III, Section 2 of the Freedom Constitution reads: "All elective and appointive officials and employees under the 1973 Constitution shall continue in office until otherwise provided by proclamation or executive order or upon the appointment and qualification of their successors, if such is made within a period of one year from February 25, 1986."

³For purposes of this paper, the terms "government" or "government of the day," "regime," "administration," and "political leadership" or simply "leadership" will be used as equivalents and will refer to the current government headed by Corazon Aquino unless otherwise noted. The terms "bureaucracy" and "civil service" will be interchangeable. They will not encompass the military branch of the civil service (one of its closed career services) unless specifically stated.

⁴Articles on this are many but scattered. See for instance Khan and Zafarullah, 1982 and Jain, 1976 on Bangladesh and India respectively.

⁵For more comprehensive discussions, see Carino, 1985, 1987.

⁶"Resentment politics" is manifested by a government when it acts out its anger against persons and institutions identified with a previous order (Linz and Stepan, 1978).

⁷I do not limit this term only to his bureaucratic cronies but to everyone associated with the corruption, waste, abuse and partisanship the regime exemplified.

⁸The Philippines has reverted to a presidential system with the ratification of the new Constitution and now refers to its main divisions as "departments" headed by "secretaries." I call them here "ministries" and "ministers" because they were the official names during the transition period. I also use these terms generically, e.g., "minister" refers to the top official of any government agency, not just to the head of a ministry.

⁹According to the Career Executive Service Board, 144 of 400 CESOs (36%) have been asked to retire or resign during the transition period. The figures do not include incumbents of CES positions who have not yet been inducted as CESOs. There are approximately 1,000 CES positions.

¹⁰There is no nationwide reporting system available, neither at Malacañang, the Presidential Commission on Government Reorganization, the Civil Service Commission, nor at the Ministry of Justice, the secretariat for the Review Committee. The persistent rumor is about 150 — 200,000 of a total personnel force of 1.6 million; this includes

employees of national and local governments and public enterprises. See Iglesias and Tancango, 1986, and Tapales, 1986.

¹¹ Aside from enjoining public officials to "lead modest lives," Article VII of the 1987 Constitution contains strong provisions against conflict of interest, prohibiting top officials from holding any other office during their tenure unless specifically provided in the Constitution or being financially interested in any government contract.

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The revolutionary tendencies of the masses, even at the moment of the February revolution, did not at all coincide with the compromise tendencies of the petty bourgeois parties. The proletariat voted for the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries not as compromisers, but as opponents of the czar, the capitalists and the landowners. But in voting for them they created a partition-wall between themselves and their own aims. They could not now move forward at all without bumping into this wall erected by themselves and knocking it over. Such was the striking *quid pro quo* comprised in the class relations as they were uncovered by the February revolution.