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# *Cacique Democracy in the Philippines: Origins and Dreams*

About this time last year, President Corazon Aquino told a most instructive lie. Addressing the Filipino-Chinese Federated Chambers of Commerce on 9 March 1987, she described her appearance before them as a 'home-coming,' since her great-grandfather had been a poor immigrant from south-east China's Fukien province.[1] Doubtless her desperate need—given the Philippines' near-bankrupt economy and $28 billion external debt[2]—to inspire feelings of solidarity and confidence among a powerful segment of Manila's business class made some embroidery understandable. But the truth is that the President, born Corazon Cojuangco, is a member of one of the wealthiest and most powerful dynasties within the Filipino oligarchy. Her grandfather, putative son of the penniless immigrant, was Don Melecio Cojuangco, born in Malolos, Central Luzon in 1871. A graduate of the Dominicans' Colegio de San Juan de Letran and the Escuela Normal, and a prominent *agricultor* (i.e. hacendado) in the province of Tarlac, he was, in 1907, at the age of 36, elected to the Philippine Assembly, the quasi-legislature established by the

American imperialists in that year.[3] One of his sons (Corazon's uncle) became Governor of Tarlac in 1941, another (her father, Don José) its most prominent Congressman. In 1967, one of his grandsons (her cousin), Eduardo 'Danding' Cojuangco, became Governor of Tarlac with Ferdinand Marcos's backing, and went on to count among the most notorious of the Marcos cronies. Another grandson (her younger brother), José 'Peping' Cojuangco, was in those days one of Tarlac's Congressmen, and is today again a Congressman—and one of the half-dozen most powerful politicians in the country. Her marriage to Benigno Aquino, Jr., at various periods Governor of Tarlac and Senator, linked her to another key dynasty of Central Luzon. Benigno Aquino, Sr., had been a Senator in the late American era and won lasting notoriety for his active collaboration with the Japanese Occupation regime. At the present time, one of her brothers-in-law, Agapito 'Butz' Aquino, is a Senator, and another, Paul, the head of Lakas ng Bansa (one of the three main 'parties' in her electoral coalition); an uncle-in-law, Herminio Aquino, is a Congressman, as are Emigdio 'Ding' Tanjuatco (cousin), and Teresita Aquino-Oreta (sister-in-law).[4] A maternal uncle, Francisco 'Komong' Sumulong, is majority floor-leader of the House of Representatives. Nor was Corazon herself, on becoming President, quite the simple housewife of her election broadsheets. For thirteen years she had served as treasurer of the Cojuangco family holding company, which controls a vast financial, agricultural, and urban real estate empire.[5]

Yet there is a core of truth in President Aquino's claims of 9 March 1987 and this core offers a useful guide to understanding the peculiarities of modern Philippine politics. The '-co' suffix to her maiden name is shared by a significant number of other dynasties within the national oligarchy: Cuenco, Tanjuatco, Tiangco, Chioco, etc. It originates from the Hokkienese *k'o*, a term of respect for older males; and it shows that her family originated among the Chinese mestizos who bloomed economically under the Spanish colonial regime and consolidated their wealth with political power under the Americans.[6] It is the dominance of this group which decisively marks off the Philippines from Spanish America (mestizos frequently in power, but not Chinese mestizos) and the rest of Southeast Asia (Chinese mestizos, indeed any mestizos, removed from political power, with the ambiguous exception of Siam). How did this happen?

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[1] *Philippine Star Week*, 8–14 March 1987.

[2] In July 1987 she estimated that debt payments would consume 40 per cent of government revenues, and 27 per cent of all export earnings for the following six years. The economic growth rate in 1986 was 0.13 per cent. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 28 July 1987.

[3] *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 12 February 1987; and information kindly supplied by Philippine historian Michael Cullinane. He ran as a candidate of the Progresistas, the most openly American-collaborationist of the parties of that era. The above article implausibly suggests that Melecio's grandfather, a certain 'Martin' Cojuangco, was the real immigrant founder of the dynasty.

[4] Emigdio is secretary-general of the Lakas ng Bansa. José 'Peping' Cojuangco is chairman of another main coalition component, the PDP-Laban.

[5] *Time*, 5 January 1987.

[6] On this stratum the *locus classicus* remains Edgar Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life, 1850–1898*, New Haven 1965.

## Spanish Colonialism, the Church and the Mestizo Elite

By the time the Spanish arrived to conquer, in the 1560s, the empire of Felipe II had reached its peak, and the islands, named after him, were the last major imperial acquisition. Iberian energies were absorbed in Europe and the Americas. The few Spaniards who did travel on to the Philippines found little on the spot to satiate their avarice. The one substantial source of rapid wealth lay not in mines but in commerce with Imperial China. Manila quickly became the entrepôt for the 'galleon trade', by which Chinese silks and porcelains were exchanged for Mexican silver, to be resold, at colossal profit, across the Pacific and eventually in Europe. It was not a business that required much acumen or industry; one needed merely to be in Manila, to have the right political connections, and to work out relationships with the Chinese traders and artisans who flocked to the entrepôt.[7]

The absence of mines, and, until much later, of hacienda-based commercial agriculture, meant not only a concentration of the Spanish in the Manila area, but the lack of any sustained interest in massive exploitation of the indigenous (or imported) populations as a labour force. At the same time, the fact that the pre-Hispanic Philippines (in contrast to Burma, Siam, Cambodia, Vietnam or Java) lacked any states with substantial military or bureaucratic power meant that relatively little force was required for the initial conquest and for its subsequent consolidation. Small garrisons, scattered here and there, generally sufficed.[8] Hence, *in the provinces*, to a degree unparalleled anywhere in the Americas except Paraguay, Spanish power in the Philippines was mediated through the Church.

The ardently Counter-Reformation clerics were fortunate in finding the great bulk of the indigenous population to be 'animists'. Buddhism and Hinduism had not reached so far. And though Islam was sweeping in from what today is Indonesia, it had consolidated itself only in parts of Mindanao and adjacent southern islands. There it could be contained, if never subdued.[9] Meanwhile a vast proselytization was launched

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[7] On the galleon trade, see William L. Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, reprint edition, New York 1959. Furthermore, responding to pressure from enlightened clerics and officials appalled by the savage extortions of the settlers in the Americas, Madrid attempted to make amends in the Philippines by (fitfully) barring the residence of private Spaniards in the provinces.

[8] There is a sizeable literature on the Spanish Philippines, but see especially, James L. Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses, 1565–1700*, Madison 1959; Nicholas P. Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines: From Conquest to Revolution*, Quezon City 1971; Renato Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited*, Quezon City 1975, Parts 1 and 2; and the many impressive essays in Alfred W. McCoy and Ed. C. de Jesus, eds., *Philippine Social History: Global Trade and Local Transformations*, Quezon City 1982.

[9] Drawing on their experiences in the Iberian peninsula, the Spaniards termed these Southeast Asian Muslims 'Moors' ('*Moros*'). The name has, after four centuries, stuck. Those Muslims today seeking independence from the Philippines are loosely united in what they call the Moro National Liberation Front. The ghost of Felipe II must be amused.

The best historical-anthropological sources on the 'Moros' are: P.G. Gowing, *Muslim-Filipinos—Heritage and Horizon*, Quezon City 1979; Cesar Adib Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, Quezon City 1973, and his *The Contemporary Muslim Movement in the Philippines*, Berkeley 1985; and T.J.S. George, *Revolt in Mindanao: The Rise of Islam in Philippine Politics*, Oxford 1980. Important monographs on two of the major ethno-linguistic groups within the Moro People are Thomas Kiefer, *The Tausug: Violence and Law in a Philippine Muslim Society*, New York 1972; and Reynaldo Clemeña Ileto, *Magindanao, 1860–1888: the Career of Dato Uto of Buayan*, Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University, Southeast Asia Program Data Paper no. 32, 1971.

which has resulted in the contemporary Philippines being 90 per cent Christian.[10] (Only in twentieth-century Korea has Christianization in Asia been comparably successful.) The most noteworthy feature of this campaign was that it was conducted, most arduously, not through the medium of Spanish, but through the dozens of local languages. Till the very end of the Spanish regime no more than 5 per cent of the local population had any facility with the colonial language. Spanish never became a pervasive lingua franca, as it did in the Americas, with the result that, certainly in 1900, and to a lesser extent even today, the peasants and fishermen in different parts of the archipelago could not communicate with one another: only their rulers had a common archipelago-wide speech.

Two other features of clerical dominion had lasting consequences for the evolution of Philippine social structure. On the one hand, the quarrelling Orders, parcelled among out the various islands by Felipe II in the sixteenth century, pioneered commercial agriculture in the later eighteenth century, at the prodding of Carlos III's last, enlightened governor, José Basco y Vargas (1777–87). It was they who built what, in effect, were the first great haciendas. But these 'conglomerates' remained institutional, rather than family (dynastic) property. The friars might liberally father children on local women, but they could not marry the women, or bequeath property to the progeny. In due course, the conquering Americans would dispossess the friars of their lands, as the eighteenth-century Bourbons had dispossessed the Jesuits; and these lands would fall like ripe mangoes into the hands of the likes of President Aquino's immediate ancestors.[11] The Philippines thus never had a substantial *criollo* hacendado class.

On the other hand, the Church, at least in its early days, had serious dreams of Christianizing the Celestial Empire. From the start it set eagerly to converting those whom the Spanish generally referred to as *sangleys*.[12] Usually unlucky with the itinerant fathers, they were spectacularly successful with the children fathered on local mothers. Spanish colonial law helped by assigning these children a distinct juridical status as mestizos (in due course the word meant, typically, not the offspring of Spaniards and 'natives', but of Chinese and local women). Christianized through their mothers, organized in their own guilds (*gremios*), compelled to avoid political transvestitism by wearing a distinctive costume and coiffure, these children, and their in-marrying further descendants, came to form a distinct stratum of colonial society.

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[10] The standard work is Horacio de la Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581–1768*, Cambridge 1961. But see also Gerald H. Anderson, ed., *Studies in Philippine Church History*, Ithaca, N.Y. 1969; and the brilliantly iconoclastic text of Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule*, Ithaca, N.Y. 1988.

[11] In the provincial environs of Manila alone, the clerics had accumulated, by the end of the nineteenth century, over 500,000 acres of land. The basic text on these developments is Dennis Morrow Roth, *The Friar Estates of the Philippines*, Albuquerque 1977.

[12] From the Hokkienese *sengli*, meaning 'trader'. It is a lesson for our nationalistic age that neither the Spaniards nor the Hokkienese could yet imagine 'Chinese'. In this regard, they lagged far behind Amsterdam's United East India Company, the giant transnational of the seventeenth century, which devoted intense penal, juridical, and 'sumptuary' effort to forcing targeted groups under its power to realize that they were, after all, *Chinese.*

In some cases, perhaps only the '-co' suffix to their names betrayed distant celestial origins.

They might, however, have remained a marginal and stigmatized group, had it not been for the services of British imperialism. When Madrid joined in the Seven Years' War, London responded, *inter alia*, by occupying Manila in 1762 and holding it for the next two years. The local *sangleys*, frequent victims of Iberian extortion and contempt, rallied to the invaders, who, when they retired, insouciantly left these humble allies to the vengeful mercies of their erstwhile oppressors. Most were then expelled from the Philippines, and further immigration was legally barred for almost a century. Into the vacuum created by the expulsions came the mestizos, who took over much of local trade, and began, following the friars' example, to move into small-scale latifundism.[13]

But they were, world-historically, several generations behind their ladino confrères in the Americas. Among them there were still no great rural magnates, no lawyers, few priests or prominent exporting merchants; above all there was no intelligentsia. The Church, characteristically reactionary, controlled printing and what miserable travesty of educational institutions existed. Hence the great nationalist upheaval that rocked the Americas between 1810 and 1840 had no counterpart in the archipelago until the 1880s.

The nineteenth century, nonetheless, was kind to the mestizos. One might have expected Spaniards to flock there after the loss of the Americas. But the last galleon had sailed in 1811. Spain itself was racked with ceaseless conflict. And Cuba was so much closer, so infinitely richer. New people arrived, but the ones who mattered were not Spaniards but Anglo-Saxons (British and Americans) and, once again, *sangleys*, by now of course 'Chinese'. In 1834 Manila was fully opened to international trade, and Cebu City and other smaller ports followed in due course; the ban on Chinese immigration was abolished. Chinese discipline, austerity, and energy quickly drove the mestizos out of inter-island trade and small-scale urban business. On the other hand, the internationalization of the economy after 1834 offered the mestizos—now a quarter of a million strong in a four million population—new opportunities in the countryside, in combination with British and American trading houses. These businesses saw the possibilities in full-scale commercialization of Philippine agriculture, and thus provided the necessary capital and commercial outlets to permit the mestizos to become, for the first time, real hacendados.

Nothing better illustrates this interplay between Anglo-Saxons, mestizos and Chinese than the modern history of the island of Negros, today the 'sugar island' par excellence of the Philippines. Almost uninhabited when British interests set up the first sugar mill there in 1857, the island's population had increased almost tenfold by the end of the

[13] The account in this and the following paragraphs is summarized from Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life*.

century, and 274 steam mills were in operation.[14] If the British supplied capital, transoceanic transport, and markets, it was mestizos from Panay and Cebu, threatened by the Chinese influx into the port-cities of Cebu City and Iloilo, who managed the transfer of the peasant labour needed to grow and process cane. In no time at all, these frontier capitalists turned themselves, on the Spanish model, into 'feudal' hacendados in the *nouveau riche* grand style. Thus, in the summer of 1987, when talk of land reform was in the Manila air, Congresswoman Hortensia Starke, one of the great sugar planters of Western Negros, could tell the newspapers: 'Your land is like your most beautiful dress, the one that gives you good luck. If someone takes it from you, he only wants to destabilize you, to undress you.'[15]

## The Growth of National Sentiment

The next step was to get educated. A serious education was not easy to acquire in the colony, where the Church was violently opposed to any inroads of liberalism from Madrid and controlled most local schools. But the mestizos' growing wealth, the internationalization of the economy, and the steamship combined to make it possible for a number of young mestizo males to study in Europe. Quickly termed *ilustrados* (enlightened ones), they created during the 1880s the colony's first real intelligentsia, and began a cultural assault on benighted clericalism and, later, on Spanish political domination.[16] No less significant was the fact that, going to the same schools, reading the same books, writing for the same journals, and marrying each other's sisters and cousins, they inaugurated the self-conscious consolidation of a pan-Philippine (except for the Moro areas) mestizo stratum, where their elders had formed dispersed clusters of provincial caciques. It was these people who, at the very end of the century, began calling themselves 'Filipinos', a term which up till then had designated only Spanish creoles.[17]

Wealthy and educated they might now be, but they had no political power. Late nineteenth-century Spain was too feeble economically and too divided politically to cope intelligently with rising mestizo demands. Repression was the order of the day, culminating in the execution in 1896 of the brilliant mestizo polymath José Rizal, whose two great, banned novels, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, mercilessly satiri-

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[14] See David Steinberg, 'Tradition and Response' in John Bresnan, ed., *The Marcos Era and Beyond*, Princeton 1986, p. 44. This text also contains important essays by Wilfredo Arce and Ricardo Abad on 'The Social Situation,' and by Bernardo Villegas on 'The Economic Crisis.'

[15] *The Manila Chronicle*, 19 July 1987. She went on: 'To give up the land is to go against everything you have been taught as a child. It is like changing your religion'. Another Dragon Lady, coconut hacendada Congresswoman Maria Clara Lobregat, wailed: 'The land has been there for years and years, and you develop some attachment to it. It's like you have a house with many rooms and you are asked to share the rooms with others.'

[16] See especially Horacio de la Costa, *The Background of Nationalism and Other Essays*, Manila 1965; John N. Schumacher, *The Propaganda Movement: 1880–1895*, Manila 1973; Cesar Adib Majul, *Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Philippine Revolution*, Quezon City 1967; and Renato Constantino, *Insight and Foresight*, Quezon City 1977.

[17] 'These people' included, at the non-Europe-educated edge, Don Melecio Cojuangco.

zed, in Spanish, clerical reaction, secular misrule, and the frequent opportunism and greed of his own class.[18]

Yet, not unsurprisingly, the inevitable insurrection did not originate with the *ilustrados*. In 1892, Andrés Bonifacio, an impoverished autodidact from the Manila artisanate, formed a secret revolutionary society with the mellifluous Tagalog name of Kataastaasang Kagalanggalang na Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan (The Highest and Most Respectable Society of the Sons of the People—Katipunan for short), after the Masonic model.[19] The Katipunan's title already implied its reach and limitations. The use of Tagalog, rather than a Spanish understood only by a tiny elite, showed Bonifacio's intention of appealing to, and mobilizing, the *indio* masses. On the other hand, in those days Tagalog was spoken only by the masses of Central and Southern Luzon, and was incomprehensible in Mindanao, the Visayas, and even Ilocano-speaking northwestern Luzon.[20] In August 1896, Bonifacio launched an ill-prepared insurrection in Manila, which was quickly suppressed, but the movement spread rapidly in the surrounding provinces, where leadership was increasingly taken over by youthful mestizos.[21] Preoccupied by the revolutionary movement that had broken out in Cuba in February 1895, the Spanish fairly quickly gave up the struggle. In 1899, a Republic of the Philippines was proclaimed under the leadership of 'General' Emilio Aguinaldo, a youthful caudillo from the province of Cavite (who had had Bonifacio judicially murdered in 1897).[22]

It was, however, a fragile Republic, with more than a few similarities to Bolívar's abortive Gran Colombía. It had no purchase on the Muslim southwest; parts of the Visayas seemed likely to go their own independent way; and even in Luzon mestizo leadership was contested by a variety of religious visionaries and peasant populists carrying on the tradition of Bonifacio's radicalism.[23] Moreover, the mestizo generals themselves (who included the grandfathers of both Ferdinand Marcos and Benigno Aquino, Jr.) began to follow the pattern of their American forebears, by setting themselves up as independent caudillos. Had it not been for William McKinley, one might almost say, the Philippines in

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[18] Several English-language translations of these novels exist, the most recent by Leon Ma. Guerrero: *The Lost Eden*, Bloomington 1961; and *El Filibusterismo (Subversion)*, London 1965.

[19] The standard nationalist texts on the Katipunan and the revolution it initiated are: Teodoro A. Agoncillo's *The Revolt of the Masses: The Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan*, Quezon City 1956; and *Malolos: The Crisis of the Republic*, Quezon City 1960. Agoncillo's theses are undermined by Reynaldo Clemeña Ileto's masterly *Pasyón and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840–1910*, Quezon City 1979, which is unquestionably the most profound and searching book on late nineteenth-century Philippine history. See also T.M. Kalaw, *The Philippine Revolution*, Kawilihan, Mandaluyong, Rizal 1969.

[20] As late as 1960, fifteen years after American-style independence, and thirty years after it had been decided to promote Tagalog as an official, national lingua franca, less than 45 per cent of the population understood the language—marginally more than the 40 per cent claiming to understand English. See the 1960 census data cited in Onofre D. Corpuz, *The Philippines*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1965, p. 77.

[21] See Milagros C. Guerrero, 'The Provincial and Municipal Elites of Luzon during the Revolution, 1898–1902', in McCoy and de Jesus, eds., *Philippine Social History*, pp. 155–190; and Nick Joaquín, *The Aquinos of Tarlac, An Essay on History as Three Generations*, unexpurgated version, Manila 1986, Part One.

[22] Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *The Writings and Trial of Andrés Bonifacio*, Manila 1963, contains most of the relevant documents in Tagalog and in English translation.

[23] See Ileto's often heart-rending account in *Pasyón and Revolution*.

the early twentieth century could have fractured into three weak, caudillo-ridden states with the internal politics of nineteenth-century Venezuela or Ecuador.

But the McKinley Administration, egged on by William Randolph Hearst, went to war with Spain in April 1898, claiming sympathy with Filipino (and Cuban) revolutionaries. A week later Admiral Dewey destroyed the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay; and by the Treaty of Paris signed in December, the Philippines was ceded to the Americans. From that point, 'pacification' replaced 'sympathy'. By 1901 Aguinaldo had surrendered, with most other caciques following suit, though peasant resistance continued in some areas until 1910.

## US Colonization and the National Oligarchy

The American colonization changed everything.[24] In the first place, it ensured the political unification of the archipelago by smashing, often with great brutality, all opposition.[25] Even the Muslim areas, which Spain had never wholly subdued, were fully subjected to Manila, thereby probably losing their last chance at sovereign independence. Secondly, it vastly improved the economic position of the mestizos. The American regime decided to expropriate much (about 400,000 acres) of the rich agricultural land hitherto held by the Orders, and to put it up for public

[24] The contrasting fates of the contemporary anticolonial movements in Cuba and the Philippines are instructive. In Cuba, American imperialism, claiming to side with the revolutionaries, ousted the Spaniards, established its own military rule for four years, and then installed a quasi-independent Republic, which, however, came under its full economic control. The island had far less strategic than pecuniary value. With the Philippines it was largely the other way round. Washington's strategists, giddy at their navy's first imperial circumnavigation of the globe, saw in the superb harbour of Manila Bay a perfect trans-Pacific 'coaling-station' and jumping-off point for the penetration of China and the outflanking of Japan. These 'bases' could only be secured—not least from rival imperialist powers—by political means, i.e. colonization. Ever since, American relations with the Philippines have ultimately centred on military considerations. A succinct account of the thinking behind the American intervention can be found in William J. Pomeroy, *American Neo-colonialism: Its Emergence in the Philippines and Asia*, New York 1970, chapters 1–2. In 1897, Captain Alfred Mahan had been appointed to McKinley's Naval Advisory Board, from which he peddled his imperial sea-power theories to substantial effect.

There is a vast literature on the American era. The classical text is Joseph Ralston Hayden, *The Philippines—A Study in National Development*, New York 1942. Peter W. Stanley's penetrating and highly entertaining *A Nation in the Making: The Philippines and the United States, 1899–1921*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1974 and the later volume he edited, *Reappraising an Empire: New Perspectives on Philippine–American History*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1984 are the best modern guides. See also Norman G. Owen, ed., *Compadre Colonialism: Studies on the Philippines under American Rule*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia No. 3, 1971; and Theodore Friend's unintentionally revealing *Between Two Empires: The Ordeal of the Philippines, 1926–1946*, New Haven 1965. A useful recent text is Daniel B. Schirmer and Stephen R. Shalom, *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*, Boston 1987, chapters 1–2.

[25] See Leon Wolff, *Little Brown Brother*, London 1960; and Russell Roth, *Muddy Glory: America's 'Indian Wars' in the Philippines, 1899–1935*, West Hanover, Mass. 1981. The newly-baptized 'Filipinos' put up a stout resistance. The repression cost at least 5,000 American lives and 600,000,000 still-golden dollars. Probably the high price, and the 'Indian-hunter' mentality of the troops dispatched, accounts for the savagery of the Americans. The killed-to-wounded ratio among Filipinos was 5 to 1. At least 20,000 died in action, and a further 200,000 from war-related famine and pestilence. General 'Jake' Smith, assigned to pacify recalcitrant Samar, told his men: 'I want no prisoners. I wish you to kill and burn; the more you burn and kill the better it will please me.' Samar was to be turned into 'a howling wilderness.' To the Fairfield, Maine, *Journal*, Sergeant Howard McFarlane of the 43rd Infantry wrote: 'On Thursday, March 29, [1900] eighteen of my company killed seventy-five nigger bolomen and ten of the nigger gunners . . . When we find one that is not dead, we have bayonets.' Wolff, *Little Brown Brother*, pp. 360 and 305.

auction. The mestizos, well-off hacendados even in late Spanish times, were the group with the money and the interest to take advantage of this opportunity, and most of the former ecclesiastical property fell into their hands. Still more important, after 1909, by the terms of the Payne-Aldrich Act, the Philippines were enclosed within the American tariff wall, so that their agricultural exports had easy, untaxed access to the world's largest national market—where, in addition, prices, especially for sugar, were often well above world norms.

But it was above all the political innovations of the Americans that created a solid, visible 'national oligarchy'. The key institutional change was the stage-by-stage creation of a Congress-style bicameral legislature, based, in the lower house at least, on single-district, winner-take-all elections.[26] The new representational system proved perfectly adapted to the ambitions and social geography of the mestizo *nouveaux riches*. Their economic base lay in hacienda agriculture, not in the capital city. And their provincial fiefdoms were also protected by the country's immense linguistic diversity. They might all speak the elite, 'national' language (Spanish, later American), but they also spoke variously Tagalog, Ilocano, Pampango, Cebuano, Ilongo, and a dozen other tongues. In this way competition in any given electoral district was effectively limited, in a pre-television age, to a handful of rival local caciques. But Congress, which thus offered them guaranteed access to national-level political power, also brought them together in the capital on a regular basis. There, more than at any previous time, they got to know one another well in a civilized 'ring' sternly refereed by the Americans. They might dislike one another, but they went to the same receptions, attended the same churches, lived in the same residential areas, shopped in the same fashionable streets, had affairs with each other's wives, and arranged marriages between each other's children. They were for the first time forming a self-conscious *ruling* class.[27]

The timing of American colonization also had a profound formative influence on the emerging oligarchy and its style of rule. The America of 1900–1930 was the America of Woodrow Wilson's lamented 'congressional government'. The metropole had no powerful centralized professional bureaucracy; office was still heavily a matter of political patronage; corrupt urban machines and venal court-house rural cliques were still pervasive; and the authority of presidents, except in time of war, was still restricted. Hence, unlike all the other modern colonial regimes in twentieth-century Southeast Asia, which operated through huge, autocratic, white-run bureaucracies, the American authorities in Manila, once assured of the mestizos' self-interested loyalty to the motherland, created only a minimal civil service, and quickly turned over most of its component positions to the natives. In 1903, Filipinos held just under half of the 5,500 or so positions in this civil service. By the end of the 'Filipinizing' governor-generalship of (Democrat) Francis Harrison in 1921, the proportion had risen to 90 per cent (out of a mere 14,000 jobs); and by the mid-thirties Americans held only 1 per cent of

[26] But with a highly restricted, property-based franchise. Even on the eve of World War II, only about 14 per cent of the potential electorate was permitted to vote.

[27] One gets a nice close-up feel for this change in Joaquín's *The Aquinos of Tarlac*, pp. 155–98.

civilian bureaucratic posts, most of them in the educational field.[28] (American power depended on military dominance and the tariff.) As in the United States, civil servants frequently owed their employment to legislator patrons, and up to the end of the American era the civilian machinery of state remained weak and divided.

The new oligarchs quickly understood how the Congressional system could serve to increase their power. As early as Harrison's time, the Americans acquiesced in the plundering of the Central Bank of the Philippines. House Speaker Sergio Osmeña, Sr., and his friends helped themselves to huge, virtually free loans for financing the construction of sugar centrals, and cheerfully ignored the subsequent bankrupting of the bank of issue. In a more general sense, Congressional control of the purse, and of senior judicial appointments, taught the oligarchy that the 'rule of law', provided it made and managed this law, was the firmest *general* guarantee of its property and political hegemony. (As we shall see, it was Marcos's suspension of the 'rule of law' that aroused the alarm and hostility of significant portions of the oligarchy in the 1970s and early 1980s.)

One final feature of the American political system is worth emphasizing: the huge proliferation of provincial and local elective offices—in the absence of an autocratic territorial bureaucracy. From very early on mestizo caciques understood that these offices, in the right hands, could consolidate their local political fiefdoms. Not unexpectedly, the right hands were those of family and friends. Brothers, uncles, and cousins for the senior posts, sons and nephews for the junior ones.[29] Here is the origin of the 'political dynasties'—among them the Aquinos and Cojuangcos—which make Filipino politics so spectacularly different from those of any other country in Southeast Asia.

Those were palmy days. But after 1930 the clouds began to gather. As the Depression struck the United States, Washington came under increasing pressure from trade unions and farm organizations (who opposed the influx of Filipino labour and agricultural products) to impose independence on the colony. Though the caciques could not decently say so in public, independence was the last thing they desired, precisely because it threatened the source of their huge wealth: access to the American market. Besides, they had now switched from Spanish to English, and their children were going to school in Manhattan and Boston. And they lacked the monarchical residues which, suitably transformed, underpinned the imagined 'national traditions' of Khmer, Burmese, and Indonesians: the mestizos had no Angkor, Pagan, or Borobudur at their service. It was thus with real reluctance that in 1935

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[28] See Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *A Short History of the Philippines*, New York 1969, p. 169; and David Wurfel, 'The Philippines', in George McT. Kahin, ed., *Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia*, second edition, Ithaca, N.Y. 1964, pp. 679–777, 689–90.

Next door, in the Dutch East Indies, the colonial state of the 1930s had about 250,000 officials on its payroll, 90 per cent of them 'natives'. See my 'Old State, New Society: Indonesia's New Order in Comparative Historical Perspective', *Journal of Asian Studies*, XLII, 3 May 1983, p. 480.

[29] Such policies did not always guarantee harmony. Members of these cacique dynasties frequently quarrelled and competed with each other in local elections. But it can safely be said that an oligarchy is truly in place when rulers and opposition leaders, ins and outs, both come from the same families.

they accepted Commonwealth status. The one evident plus was the initiation of a Filipino chief executive. The urbane, rascally mestizo, Manuel Quezon, became Commonwealth president.[30]

## The Japanese Occupation and After

Six years later, in December 1941, the armies of Imperial Japan struck south. In a matter of weeks most of the Americans were sent packing, including General Douglas MacArthur, who carted President Quezon and Vice-President Osmeña along with him.[31] The rest of the oligarchy (one or two celebrated exceptions aside) bustled to collaborate with the invaders. Among the most prominent of these collaborators were Corazon Aquino's father-in-law (who became Speaker of the Occupation Assembly and Director-General of the pro-Japanese 'mass organization' Kalibapi) and the father of her Vice-President (Don José Laurel, Sr., who in 1943 became President of the puppet republic then inaugurated by Tokyo).[32]

But collaboration could do nothing to save the hacienda-based export economy. Japan would permit no exports to America, and American bombers and warships ensured, after 1942, that few crops would reach Japan. The treasured 'rule of law' began to break down as anti-Japanese guerrilla bands, sometimes led by the small Socialist and Communist parties, expanded in the remoter rural areas, as inflation soared, and as Japanese exactions increased. Former tenants and landless labourers were emboldened to squat on hacienda lands and grow, not sugar, but crops needed for their everyday survival. Many refused now to pay the old brutal rents, and had the insolence to threaten the bailiffs who demanded them. Above all in the Central Luzon of the Cojuangcos and Aquinos, where rural poverty and exploitation were most acute, such peasants joined hands with the guerrillas in forming the Hukbalahap armies which harassed the Japanese and assassinated such collaborators as they could reach.[33] Unsurprisingly, many of the oligarchs abandoned

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[30] See Friend, *Between Two Empires*, chapters 3–11, for an exhaustive account. The role of President Aquino's father-in-law is recounted in chatty detail in Joaquín's *The Aquinos of Tarlac*, chapters 3–5.

[31] MacArthur had longstanding Philippine connections. His father, General Arthur MacArthur, had been second-in-command of the original American expeditionary force, and replaced his odious superior, General Elwell Otis, in May 1900. He stayed in power till 4 July 1901, when 'civilian rule' replaced that of the soldiers. The MacArthur family also had substantial business investments in the archipelago.

[32] For some amusing glimpses of these stately ruffians at work, see chapter 5 of Renato and Letizia Constantino, *The Philippines: The Continuing Past*, Quezon City 1978. The standard text on the Occupation remains David Joel Steinberg, *Philippine Collaboration in World War II*, Ann Arbor 1967. But see also Hernando J. Abaya, *Betrayal in the Philippines*, New York 1946; and Alfred McCoy's essay in the volume he edited entitled *Southeast Asia under Japanese Occupation*, New Haven, Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies, Monograph Series No. 22, 1980.

[33] The classic text on the peasant resistance during the Japanese occupation, and its relationships with Socialist and Communist cadres, is Benedict J. Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, Berkeley 1977. See also Eduardo Lachica, *The Huks: Philippine Agrarian Society in Revolt*, New York 1971; and 'Documents—The Peasant War in the Philippines', *Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review*, XXIII, nos. 2–4, June–December 1958, pp. 375–436. (The documents, originally composed in 1946, offer valuable data on land concentration, peasant landlessness, tenancy rates, and exploitation of sharecroppers.) Note, in addition, the remarkable special issue of *Solidarity* (No. 102), 1985, devoted mainly to retrospective discussion of the Huk rebellion.

their haciendas to their unlucky bailiffs and retreated to Manila, where they turned their experienced hands to war-profiteering.[34]

One might have expected the returning Americans to punish the oligarchs for their collaboration with the enemy. Senior officials in Washington indeed made noises to this effect. But the on-the-spot Liberator was, of course, MacArthur, who had close personal and business ties with the prewar oligarchy, and who, like Lyautey in Morocco, enjoyed playing lordly proconsul to native houseboys.[35] Quezon having meanwhile met his incautious Maker, MacArthur in 1946 arranged the election of his old mestizo friend (and prominent collaborator) Manuel Roxas as first president of the now sovereign Republic of the Philippines.[36]

Roxas had only two years in power before he joined Quezon, but they were exceptionally productive years. An amnesty was arranged for all 'political prisoners' (mainly fellow-oligarchs held on charges of collaboration). In 1947, an agreement was signed permitting the US to retain control of its twenty-three (large and small) land, sea, and airbases for a further ninety-nine years (this was what, as in 1900, most mattered to Washington).[37] And the Constitution of 1935 was so amended as to give American citizens 'parity' access to the resources of the newly sovereign Republic (in return for which the oligarchy was granted continuing access, for a defined period, to the protected American market.)[38] There was an additional bonus in this move, since it guaranteed activation for the Philippines of the Tydings Rehabilitation Act, which offered $620,000,000 to those Americans and Filipinos who could demonstrate that they had lost a minimum of $500 as a result of the war.[39] (Since the average annual per capita income of Filipinos was then a quarter of this sum, the major Filipino beneficiaries of Senator Tydings' generosity were the caciques.)

The next aim was to restore fully the pre-war agrarian and political order. For three basic reasons this goal proved difficult to achieve. First was the price of independence itself: removal of the American ringmaster for domestic political competition, severe weakening of the state's

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[34] See Resil B. Mojares, *The Man Who Would be President: Serging Osmeña and Philippine Politics*, Cebu 1986, for example. This excellent text shows how while father Sergio Osmeña, Sr., was serving in Washington as vice-president in exile, son Sergio Jr., was making money hand over fist supplying the Japanese occupation regime in Manila.

[35] See William Manchester's edifying *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur, 1880–1964*, London 1979.

[36] Quezon died in the United States in 1944, and was succeeded, ad interim, by his vice-president Sergio Osmeña, Sr. MacArthur had no time for Osmeña, whom he regarded as old, tired, and too Spanish in personal style.

[37] Wurfel, 'The Philippines', p. 761.

[38] Stuck with the Constitution's quorum requirements for amendments, Roxas found no way to achieve the necessary change except by disqualifying, on charges of terrorism and electoral fraud, those opposition Congressmen representing areas dominated by the Hukbalahap. See Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, pp. 150–51.

[39] See Friend, *Between Two Empires*, pp. 258–60.

capacity for centralized deployment of violence,[40] a fisc no longer externally guaranteed, and a war-ravaged and near-bankrupt economy. Second was the appearance, in Central Luzon at least, of an emboldened peasantry backed by armed Hukbalahap forces, which, denied access to constitutional participation by Roxas's manoeuvres, had little reason to make accommodations. Third was a rapid expansion of the suffrage that UN membership, in those innocent days, made it impossible to deny.

## The Heyday of Cacique Democracy

Hence it was that in the last year of Roxas's life the Philippines saw the first conspicuous appearance of the country's now notorious 'private armies'. Drawn from lumpen elements in both Manila and the countryside, these armed gangs, financed by their hacendado masters, terrorized illegal squatters, peasant unions, and left-wing political leaders, with the aim of restoring uncontested cacique rule.[41] The term 'warlord' entered the contemporary Filipino political vocabulary. Unsurprisingly, the new warlords found that their private armies were also highly functional for a now unrefereed electoral politics. The presidential elections of 1949, won by Roxas's vice-presidential successor Elpidio Quirino,[42] were not merely corrupt in the pre-war style, but also extremely bloody and fraudulent: not so much because of central management, as because of the discrepancy between state power and cacique ambitions under conditions of popular suffrage and acute class antagonism.[43] (Characteristic of the time was what Nick Joaquín, the country's best-known writer, called the 'bloody fiefdom' of the Lacson dynasty in the sugar-planter paradise of Western Negros. Manila was virtually impotent vis-à-vis Governor Rafael Lacson's murderous 'special police' and 'civilian guards'.)[44]

This was not what the Americans had bargained for. Besides, China had just been 'lost', Vietnam seemed likely to go the same way, and major Communist insurrections had broken out in neighbouring Malaya and Burma. Colonel Edward Lansdale was dispatched to restore order through the agency of Quirino's Secretary of Defence, Ramon Magsaysay, one of the few prominent politicians of the era who did not have cacique origins. Thanks to a mere million dollars in military and other

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[40] The Philippine Army was still small, and 'second army' in character. In other words, it belonged to that array of mercenary forces, racially segmented, poorly armed and trained, and deployed for 'internal security' purposes, that we find throughout the late colonial world. (After independence, some of their former NCOs—such as Idi Amin, Sangoulé Lamizana, Suharto, Jean-Baptiste Bokassa, etc.—became colonels and generals in an unhappy trice.) The contrast is with the 'first armies' of the industrial world, including that of the Soviet Union, which were self-armed, officered by military academy graduates, technologically sophisticated, amply financed, and capable of substantial external aggression.

[41] More than anything else it was the ravages of the private armies that precipitated the open Hukbalahap insurrection against the state in 1948. See Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, chapter 5, for a fine account.

[42] His defeated opponent was none other than fellow-oligarch Don José Laurel, Sr., president of the wartime puppet Republic.

[43] It is probably a general rule that *private* armies appear only under such conditions. The reappearance of these armies in President Aquino's presidency indicates the weakness of the state's army and a general social polarization.

[44] Proximate ancestors of today's so-called 'vigilantes'. See *The Aquinos of Tarlac*, pp. 221ff.

aid, the physical isolation of the Philippines, the restricted Luzon base of the Hukbalahap, and the errors of the Huk leaders themselves,[45] Lansdale prevailed. By 1954, the Huk rebellion had been crushed; thousands of impoverished Luzon peasants transmigrated to 'empty' Mindanao[46] (where they soon came into violent conflict with the local Muslims); and Magsaysay manoeuvred into the presidency.[47]

The period 1954–1972 can be regarded as the full heyday of cacique democracy in the Philippines.[48] The oligarchy faced no serious domestic challenges. Access to the American market was declining as post-independence tariff barriers slowly rose, but this setback was compensated for by full access to the state's financial instrumentalities. Under the guise of promoting economic independence and import-substitution industrialization, exchange rates were manipulated, monopolistic licences parcelled out, huge, cheap, often unrepaid bank loans passed around, and the national budget frittered away in pork barrel legislation.[49] Some of the more enterprising dynasties diversified into urban real estate, hotels, utilities, insurance, the mass media, and so forth. The press, owned by rival cacique families, was famously free.[50] The reconsolidated, but decentralized, power of the oligarchy is nicely demonstrated by the fact that this press exposed every possible form of corruption and abuse of power (except for those of each paper's own proprietors), but, in the words of historian and political scientist Onofre Corpuz: 'Nobody in the Philippines has ever heard of a successful prosecution for graft.'[51] It was in these golden times that Corazon Aquino's father, Don José Cojuangco, acquired 7,000 hectares of the

[45] Characteristically, even the Communist Party of the Philippines was vulnerable to caciquism. Among its top leaders in the late 1940s were Casto Alejandrino, scion of a large landowning family, and the brothers Lava, intellectuals of landowning origins (an uncle had been a colonel in Aguinaldo's Revolutionary Army). They eventually quarrelled violently with the Hukbalahap Supremo, Luis Taruc, who came from a family of tenant-farmers (both his grandfathers had been sergeants in the Katipunan army). No real surprise that the well-born stood to the militant left of the commoner. This information comes from the extraordinary, recent joint interview conducted by *Solidarity* editor F. Sionil José, with Casto Alejandrino, Jesus Lava, Luis Taruc and Fred Saulo, and printed in the above-cited 1985 issue of *Solidarity*.

[46] See the valuable, if ingenuous, text by former CIA officer Alvin Scaff, *The Philippine Answer to Communism*, Stanford 1955, chapters 3–6 especially.

[47] Declassified documents cited in Raymond Bonner's *Waltzing with a Dictator: The Marcoses and the Making of American Policy*, New York 1987, give a nice picture of the Lansdale–Magsaysay relationship. During the 1953 election campaign Lansdale insisted that all Magsaysay's speeches be written by a CIA operative masquerading as a *Christian Science Monitor* correspondent. When he discovered that the candidate had had the impudence on one occasion to use a Filipino speech-writer, the enraged Quiet American walked into Magsaysay's office and knocked him out (pp. 39–40).

[48] It was the time when Ferdinand Marcos and Corazon's husband, Benigno 'Ninoy' Aquino, Jr., came to national prominence.

[49] See Frank H. Golay, *The Philippines: Public Policy and National Economic Development*, Ithaca, N.Y. 1961. See also the Villegas chapter in Bresnan, ed., *The Marcos Era*, especially pp. 150–55. This well-intentioned economist puts it modestly thus: 'If one were to look for a political explanation of this flawed economic policy, he could find it in the imperfections of a fledgling democracy in which power was still concentrated in the hands of the former landed gentry who turned into manufacturing entrepreneurs during the fifties and sixties. The Philippine legislature, through which tariff, fiscal, and monetary reforms had to pass, was dominated by groups that represented the very industrial sector that had been pampered by overprotection.'

[50] The internationally celebrated symbol of this freedom was the muck-raking *Philippines Free Press*. It is less well known that the Locsin family which ran it was violently opposed to any unionization of its staff, and used brazenly brutal methods to thwart it.

[51] *The Philippines*, p. 86.

10,300 hectare Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac, and turned its management over to his energetic son-in-law Benigno 'Ninoy' Aquino, Jr.[52]

But cacique democracy contained within itself the seeds of its own decay, and these began visibly sprouting towards the end of the 1960s. Uncontrolled and parasitic plundering of state and private resources tilted the Philippines on its long plunge from being the most 'advanced' capitalist society in Southeast Asia in the 1950s to being the most depressed and indigent in the 1980s. By the end of the golden era, 5 per cent of the country's income earners received, probably, about 50 per cent of total income. At the same time, over 70 per cent of state revenues came from regressive sales and excise taxes, and a mere 27.5 per cent from income taxes—largely paid by foreign corporations.[53] Combined with a characteristically tropical-Catholic birth-rate of over 3 per cent (which since 1850 had increased the islands' population eightfold), the result was a massive pauperization of the unprivileged.[54]

**Ferdinand Marcos: The Supreme Cacique**

Cacique democracy in the independent Philippines also led to secular changes in the operation of the political system. The oligarchs more and more followed Chairman Mao's advice to walk on two legs. Manila was where the President resided and where Congress met, where pork barrel funds were dealt out, where licences and loans were secured, where educational institutions proliferated, and where imported entertainments flourished. The dynasties began leaving their haciendas in the hands of sons-in-law and bailiffs and moving into palatial new residential complexes on the outskirts of the old capital. Forbes Park was the first, and still the most celebrated, of these *beaux quartiers*, which remain sociologically unique in Southeast Asia. Elsewhere in the region luxurious houses are jumbled together with the dwellings of the poor.[55] But the golden ghetto of Forbes Park was policed, as a complex, by armed security guards; access even to its streets required the production of identification papers.

This partial move to Manila combined with demographic increase and the postwar expansion of the suffrage to monetarize political life. It was less and less possible to win elections, even provincial elections, on a forelock-tugging basis. The costs of campaigning increased exponen-

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[52] See Joaquín, *The Aquinos of Tarlac*, pp. 273–86, for a sly account. Luisita is certainly the most famous hacienda in the Philippines today, and still, pending land-reform, in the hands of the Cojuangcos. Don José acquired it from a French-financed, Spanish-managed company, which became discouraged by persistent 'labour unrest.' In the mid-1950s, its sugar central serviced 1,000 sugar planters and its annual production was valued at eighteen million pesos.

[53] Cf. Corpuz, *The Philippines*, pp. 77 and 105.

[54] The Marcos era did not initiate this process, merely accelerated it. Today 70 per cent of the population lives below the World Bank's lordly poverty line. A recent article in *The Philippine Inquirer*, 17 January 1988, offers instructive comparative demographic data on Bangkok and Manila. Bangkok has 25 births per thousand population, and suffers 17.2 postnatal deaths among every 1,000 babies born alive; the figures given for Manila are 63.9 and 69.5 respectively.

[55] I remember that in the Jakarta of the late 1960s naked slum children played football in the mud thirty yards from the house of a Supreme Court judge. Some of Bangkok's wealthiest families' homes are still located a stone's throw from stinking, cess-pool infested squatter clusters. But the tendencies are in Manila's direction as new, segregated suburbs develop.

tially in the 1960s, not least because the period saw the renewed growth of the private armies. In contrast to the late 1940s, these armed groups were now deployed mainly in intra-oligarchy competition.[56] Corazon Aquino's husband was conforming to general practice in the late 1960s when he campaigned for a senatorial seat in a black Mercedes ringed with Armalite-toting bodyguards.[57] With splendid, grumbling insouciance, Senator Sergio 'Serging' Osmeña, Jr., on losing the 1969 presidential race to Ferdinand Marcos, complained: 'We were outgunned, outgooned, and outgold.'[58] By then, at forty per hundred thousand head of population, the Philippines had one of the highest murder rates in the world.

So the stakes slowly grew, and American-era inhibitions slackened. The crux was the presidency, which always had the potentiality of dislocating cacique democracy. We noted earlier that the stability of the system, and the solidarity of the oligarchy, depended on the Congress, which offered roughly equal room at the top for all the competing provincial dynasties. The one-man office of president was not, however, divisible, and came to seem, in the era of independence, a unique prize. The shrewder, older oligarchs had foreseen possible trouble and had borrowed from the US the legal provision that no president could serve for more than two terms—so that the office could sedately circulate within the charmed circle. But it was only a matter of time before someone would break the rules and try to set himself up as Supreme Cacique for Life. The spread of military juntas and one-party dictatorial regimes throughout the Third World in the 1960s made a break of this kind seem more normal: indeed it could even be justified opportunistically as a sign of liberation from 'Western' ideological shackles.

The final destabilizing factor was education. As noted earlier, in Spanish times educational facilities were extremely limited, and the only 'national' language available was Spanish, to which, however, no more than 5 per cent of the indigenous population had access. Secular, twentieth-century American imperialism was a different sort of beast. Immensely confident of Anglo-Saxon world hegemony and the place of English as the language of capitalism and modernity, the colonial regime effortlessly

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[56] The best structural accounts of the system's entropy remain Thomas Nowak and Kay Snyder, 'Clientelist Politics in the Philippines: Integration or Instability?' *American Political Science Review*, 68, September 1974; and their 'Economic Concentration and Political Change in the Philippines', in Benedict J. Kerkvliet, ed., *Political Change in the Philippines: Studies of Local Politics Preceding Martial Law*, Honolulu 1974, pp. 153–241.

[57] The *New York Times*, 9 August 1967. The same account describes Cojuangco financing of Aquino's political career, and the heavily guarded family compound (six California-style ranch houses grouped around a colossal swimming pool)—a useful antidote to the current martyrology surrounding the assassinated senator.

[58] The *New York Times*, 16 November 1969. Marcos spent other people's money so lavishly in this campaign that inflation increased 18 per cent, the blackmarket value of the peso fell 50 per cent, and he had to ask a $100,000,000 prepayment of military-base rent from Washington. *Ibid.*, 6 December 1969. It surely helped his case that he had contributed $1,000,000 to Nixon's 1968 election campaign (according to Rafael Salas, his executive secretary from 1966 to 1969, as cited in Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator*, p. 141).

extruded Spanish[59] and so expanded an English-language school system that by 1940 the Philippines had the highest literacy rate in Southeast Asia.[60] After independence, the oligarchy, like other Third World oligarchies, found that the simplest way of establishing its nationalist credentials was to expand cheap schooling. By the early 1960s university degrees were no longer a ruling class near-monopoly.

The huge expansion of English-language education produced three distinct, politically significant, new social groups. Smallest was a radical intelligentsia, largely of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois urban origins, and typically graduates of the University of the Philippines. Among them was Nur Misuari, who in the later 1960s formed the Moro National Liberation Front in the Muslim southwest. Still better known was José Maria Sison, who broke away from the decrepit post-Huk Communist party to form his own, and, borrowing from the Great Helmsman, founded the New People's Army which is today a nation-wide presence and the major antagonist of the oligarchy.[61] (The spread of English, and, later, of 'street Tagalog', in nationalist response to American hegemony, has made possible an archipelago-wide *popular* communication—below the oligarchy—that was inconceivable in the era of Bonifacio or the Hukbalahap.)

Next largest in size was a *bien-pensant* proto-technocracy, which also included graduates from American universities. Drawn from much the same social strata as the radical intelligentsia, it was enraged less by the injustices of cacique democracy than by its dilettantism, venality, and technological backwardness. This group also deeply resented its own powerlessness. When Marcos eventually declared Martial Law in 1972 and proclaimed his New Democracy, it flocked to his standard, believing its historic moment had come. It stayed loyal to him till the early 1980s, and long remained crucial to his credibility with Washington planners, the World Bank and the IMF, and foreign modernizers all and sundry.

Largest of all—if not that large—was a wider urban bourgeois and petty-bourgeois constituency: middle-level civil servants, doctors, nurses, teachers, businessmen, shopkeepers, and so on. In its political and moral outlook it can perhaps be compared with the Progressives (definitely not the Populists) of the United States in the period 1890–1920. In the 1960s it made its political debut in campaigns for honesty-in-government, urban renewal, crackdowns on machine and warlord politics, and the legal emancipation of municipalities and the new suburbs. As might

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[59] Virtually no Filipinos today speak Spanish, but a certain sham-aristocratic aura still surrounds the *idea* of Iberian culture. Older members of the oligarchy prefer to be addressed as Don and Doña. Ideologically the hacienda remains un-Americanized. And children are still overwhelmingly baptized with Spanish names, even if later they acquire American or local nicknames ( Juan 'Johnny' Enrile, Benigno 'Ninoy' Aquino).

[60] According to Wurfel, *The Philippines*, pp. 691–92, by the early 1920s the funds spent on education had reached nearly half of annual government expenditures at all levels. Between 1903 and 1939 literacy rates doubled, from 20 per cent to 49 per cent. By the latter date nearly 27 per cent of the population could speak English, a percentage larger than for any single local tongue, including Tagalog.

[61] The NPA's top leadership was originally composed largely of University of the Philippines graduates. The same is true today, if to a lesser extent. This leadership appears still to think in English, to judge from the fact that many key party documents have no Tagalog versions.

be expected, this group was both anti-oligarchy and anti-popular in orientation. Had it not been English-educated, and had not President Kennedy secured a major change in the American immigration laws, it might have played a major role in Philippine politics in the 1970s and 1980s. But these factors offered it enticing alternatives, such that, by the mid-1980s, well over a million Filipinos (mainly from this stratum) had emigrated across the Pacific, most of them for good.[62] This bourgeois haemorrhage in the short run weakened a significant political competitor for the oligarchy, but in the longer run cost it an important political ally—one reason why the Aquino government has so little room for manoeuvre.

The Marcos regime, which began to entrench itself long before the declaration of Martial Law in 1972, was an instructively complex hybrid.[63] From one point of view, Don Ferdinand can be seen as the Master Cacique or Master Warlord, in that he pushed the destructive logic of the old order to its natural conclusion. In place of dozens of privatized 'security guards', a single privatized National Constabulary; in place of personal armies, a personal Army; instead of pliable local judges, a client Supreme Court; instead of a myriad pocket and rotten boroughs, a pocket or rotten country, managed by cronies, hitmen, and flunkies.

But from another viewpoint, he was an original; partly because he was highly intelligent, partly because, like his grotesque wife, he came from the lower fringes of the oligarchy. In any case, he was the first elite Filipino politician who saw the possibilities of reversing the traditional flow of power. All his predecessors had lived out the genealogy of mestizo supremacy—from private wealth to state power, from provincial bossism to national hegemony. But almost from the beginning of his presidency in 1965, Marcos had moved mentally out of the nineteenth century, and understood that in our time wealth serves power, and that the key card is the state. Manila's Louis Napoleon.

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[62] 'Before the revolution', so to speak, by comparison with the migration, 'after the revolution', of comparable strata from Cuba, China, and Vietnam. There are instructive contrasts with other parts of Southeast Asia. The Suharto regime in Indonesia is far bloodier and more efficiently repressive than that of Marcos, but emigration has been small. Holland has a low absorptive capacity, and after 1945 Indonesians had abandoned Dutch for 'Indonesian'—neither of them world-languages. Burma (till 1963) and Malaysia were English-educated, but since the late 1950s the regime in London has been increasingly hostile to colonial immigration.

[63] There is no satisfactory overall study of the Marcos regime, *as a regime*. But there are any number of useful texts on its leading personalities and its policies. Bonner's book is not always accurate, but it is good, and extremely funny, on the Marcoses' relationships with assorted American presidents and proconsuls. Otherwise, see: Gary Hawes, *The Philippine State and the Marcos Regime: The Politics of Export*, Ithaca, N.Y. 1987; David A. Rosenberg, ed., *Marcos and Martial Law in the Philippines*, Ithaca, N.Y. 1979; Alfred W. McCoy, *Priests on Trial*, Victoria 1984; R. J. May and Francisco Nemenzo, eds., *The Philippines After Marcos*, New York 1985; Walden Bello et al., *Development Debacle: The World Bank in the Philippines*, San Francisco 1982; Walden Bello and Severina Rivera, eds., *The Logistics of Repression: The Role of U.S. Assistance in Consolidating the Martial Law Regime in the Philippines*, Washington D.C. 1977; Filemon Rodriguez, *The Marcos Regime: Rape of the Nation*, New York 1985; Stephen R. Shalom, *The U.S. and the Philippines: A Study of Neocolonialism*, Philadelphia 1981; Robert B. Stauffer, 'The Political Economy of a Coup: Transnational Linkages and Philippine Political Response', *Journal of Peace Research*, 11:3, 1974, pp. 161–77; Carolina G. Hernandez, 'The Role of the Military in Contemporary Philippine Society', *Diliman Review* (January–February 1984); and the volume edited by Bresnan, cited above.

## Marcos Settles In

He started with the Army, which until then had been politically insignificant.[64] The size of the armed forces was rapidly increased, the amplitude of its budget multiplied, and its key posts allotted to officers from the Ilocano-speaking northwestern Luzon from which Marcos himself originated. The final decision to declare martial law, for which plans had been prepared months in advance, was taken in concert with the military high command—Corazon's cousin Eduardo 'Danding' Cojuangco and Defence Secretary Juan 'Johnny' Ponce Enrile being the only civilian co-conspirators.[65] The civil service followed, particularly that ambitious sector identified earlier as candidate-technocrats. The state would save the country from what Marcos identified as its prime enemies—the Communists and the oligarchy.

Marcos exploited state, rather than hacienda, power in two other instructive ways. The first was to deal with the Americans, the second with his fellow-oligarchs.

He understood, more clearly than anyone else—including the Filipino Left—that for Washington the Philippines were like Cyprus for London. The huge bases at Subic and Clark Field had nothing to do with the defence of the Philippines as such, and everything to do with maintaining American imperial power along the Pacific Rim. It followed that Manila should treat them as luxury properties, for the leasing of which ever more exorbitant rentals could be charged.[66] So too the Philippine Army. Raymond Bonner's book, *Waltzing with a Dictator*, amply documents how Marcos, at considerable personal profit, rented a (noncombatant) army engineering battalion to Lyndon Johnson, who in 1965 was busy hiring Asian mercenaries to bolster the 'international crusade' image desired for the American intervention in Vietnam. Next to the South Koreans, he got, mercenary for mercenary, the best price in Asia. (In this effort he had considerable help from his egregious wife, who splashed her way into high-level Washington circles in a way that no Dragon Lady had done since the shimmering days of Madame Chiang

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[64] Following American constitutional practice, all military appointments at the rank of colonel or above had to be approved by Congress. Ambitious officers, aware of how bread is buttered, cosied up to powerful Congressional politicians, who exploited their position to build personal cliques within the military by determining the territorial positioning of favoured clients. Come election time, it was always handy to have the local commandant in one's pocket. The most substantial study of the Philippine military remains Carolina G. Hernandez, 'The Extent of Civilian Control of the Military in the Philippines, 1946–1976' (Ph.D. thesis, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1979). It is especially interesting on Marcos's manipulation of budgets, promotions, and educational ideology to secure the installation of the dictatorship.

[65] Bonner's account, based on declassified American documents, is the most detailed. *Waltzing with a Dictator*, chapters 5–6.

[66] Subic and Clark Field are the two bases that get the most publicity, but the base-complex as a whole includes, at one extreme, the ultra-secret San Miguel electronic eavesdropping facility, and at the other, the ultra-open Fort John Hay pleasure-dome. The latter, situated just outside the popular mountain resort of Baguio, technically belongs to the American Air Force, but in practice to Manila's rich. It is composed of almost nothing but swimming-pools, golf-courses, tennis-courts, bowling-alleys, movie-halls, diners, dance-clubs, and so on. Anyone can enjoy these amenities if they can pay in dollars. I recently visited the 'base', and in the course of several hours' perambulations met not a single American, military or civilian, but saw hundreds of prosperous Filipinos amusing themselves.

Kai-shek.[67]) But he also had the imaginative insolence to try to do to the Americans what they had so long been accustomed to doing to the Filipinos. According to Bonner, Marcos contributed a million dollars to each of Richard Nixon's presidential election campaigns—with, of course, 'state money'—thereby joining that select group of Third World tyrants (Chiang Kai-shek, Pak Chung Hee, Reza Pahlavi, Rafael Trujillo, and Anastasio Somoza) who played an active role in the politics of the metropole.[68]

As far as the oligarchy was concerned, Marcos went straight for its jugular—the 'rule of law'. From the very earliest days, Marcos used his plenary Martial Law powers to advise all oligarchs who dreamt of opposing or supplanting him that property was not power, since at a stroke of the martial pen it ceased to be property.[69] The Lopez dynasty (based in Iloilo) was abruptly deprived of its mass media empire and its control of Manila's main supplier of electricity.[70] The 500 hectare Hacienda Osmeña was put up for 'land-reform' somewhat later on.[71] There was no recourse, since the judiciary was fully cowed and the legislature packed with allies and hangers-on. But Marcos had no interest in upsetting the established social order. Those oligarchs who bent with the wind and eschewed politics for the pursuit of gain were mostly left undisturbed. The notorious 'cronies' were, sociologically, a mixed bag, including not only relatives of Ferdinand and Imelda, but favoured oligarchs and quite a few 'new men'.

At its outset, the Martial Law regime had a substantial, if restricted, social base. Its anti-Communist, 'reformist', 'modernizing', and 'law and order' rhetoric attracted the support of frustrated would-be technocrats, much of the underempowered urban middle class, and even sectors of the peasantry and urban poor. Shortly after winning absolute power he announced that the state had seized no less than 500,000 guns from private hands, raising hopes of a less visibly dangerous public life.[72] A limited land-reform succeeded in creating, in the old Huk stamping-grounds of Central Luzon, a new stratum of peasant-owners.[73] But as time passed, and the greed and violence of the regime became ever more evident, much of this support dried up. By the later 1970s the

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[67] *Ibid.*, chapter 3.

[68] *Ibid.*, pp. 140–41.

[69] The best account is Hawes, *The Philippine State*.

[70] More precisely, Marcos seized Meralco, the holding company of a giant Lopez conglomerate that controlled the Manila Electric Company, the nation's second largest bank, plus oil pipelines, an oil refinery, and a major construction business.

[71] Here I rely on an unpublished paper by Resil B. Mojares, 'The Dream Lives On and On: Three Generations of the Osmeñas, 1906–1988,' footnote 8.

[72] See Lena Garner Noble, 'Politics in the Marcos Era,' in Bresnan, ed., *Crisis in the Philippines*, p. 85. While quite successful in the northern and central parts of the country, the arms sweep was a catastrophic failure in the Muslim south. It is clear that the large-scale insurrection of the Moro National Liberation Front launched shortly after the proclamation of Martial Law was precipitated by the fear that a disarmed Muslim population would be wholly at the mercy of Manila and the Christian majority.

[73] See David Wurfel, *Philippine Agrarian Policy Today: Implementation and Political Impact*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Occasional Paper No. 46, 1977; and Ernesto M. Valencia, 'Philippine Land Reform from 1972 to 1980: Scope, Process and Reality', in Temario Rivera, et al., eds., *Feudalism and Capitalism in the Philippines*, Quezon City 1982. For a recent array of perspectives, see the issue of *Solidarity* (Nos. 106–107, 1986) devoted wholly to the problems of agrarian reform.

technocrats were a spent force, and the urban middle class became increasingly aware of the decay of Manila, the devastation of the university system, the abject and ridiculous character of the monopolized mass media, and the country's economic decline.

The real beneficiaries of the regime—aside from the Marcos mafia itself[74]—were two military forces: the National Army and the New People's Army. Martial Law in itself gave the former unprecedented power. But Marcos also used favoured officers to manage properties confiscated from his enemies, public corporations, townships, and so forth. The upper-echelon officers came to live in a style to which only the oligarchy had hitherto been accustomed.[75] Military intelligence became the regime's beady eyes and hidden ears. Legal restraints on military abuses simply disappeared. And there was only one master now to determine postings and promotions. To be sure, the Old Cacique packed the leadership with pliant placemen from his Ilocano-speaking homeland, but there was still plenty to go round.

On the other hand, the dictatorship encouraged a rapid growth, and slower geographic spread, of the Communist guerrilla forces. No less significant than their expanding rural support was their organized reach into urban areas. One of the most striking features of the last years of the regime was the gradual adoption of a nationalist-Marxist vocabulary by notable sections of the bourgeois intelligentsia, the lower echelons of the Church hierarchy, and the middle class more generally.[76] Only the militant Left appeared to offer some way out.

The story of the unravelling of the regime following the brazen assassination of Benigno Aquino, Jr., at Manila's airport on 21 August 1983 is too well known to need detailing here. More important is an understanding of the regime that has replaced it.

**Riding the 'People Power Revolution'**

The initial coalition behind the dead man's widow was wide and (variably) deep: she was then above all Corazon Aquino rather than

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[74] The word is used advisedly. The one Hollywood blockbuster banned under Marcos was *The Godfather*. A crumb under the rhinoceros's hide.

[75] The officers' Forbes Park, an exclusive new residential area amusingly entitled 'Corinthian Gardens', was the one part of Manila to which, during a recent visit to the metropolis, I was unable to obtain even taxi-access.

[76] The nationalism was important. It made generally popular the Left's depiction of Marcos as the *tuta* (running dog) of the Americans. Privately, of course, the Left's leadership was well aware that Marcos was actually the *least* docile of the country's presidents. This evaluation is confirmed by Bonner's book, which shows that Ferdinand was vastly more astute than his opposite numbers in Washington. He had Carter's vain mini-Kissinger, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Richard Holbrooke, in his pocket and charged half a billion dollars for a new five-year bases agreement in 1971. Reagan, an old friend from the 1960s, bundled his fatuous Vice-President off to Manila to inform Marcos that 'we love your adherence to democratic principle and to the democratic process'. CIA Director Casey, in an earlier incarnation as chairman of the Export-Import Bank, had pushed through the bank's largest-ever foreign loan ($644,000,000) to finance a splashy nuclear power project in Central Luzon. (The project remains uncompleted though the interest on the loan accounts for about 10 per cent of the Philippines' annual debt payments.) Marcos got $80,000,000 under the table from contractor Westinghouse, which simultaneously raised its estimates 400 per cent. See *Waltzing with a Dictator*, pp. 307–9, and 265.

Corazon Cojuangco. It was based on a huge groundswell of revulsion against the Old Cacique and his *manileña* Miss Piggy. It included, from the right, ambitious middle-ranking and junior officers of the National Army, frustrated finally by the old regime's visible decay and the ethnic nepotism of its premier danseur; the ever-hopeful technocracy and the non-crony segments of Manila's business community; almost all factions of the Church; the middle class; the non-NPA sectors of the intelligentsia; sundry self-described 'cause-oriented groups' which regarded themselves as the vanguard of a newly-legal Left; and the oligarchs.

The coalition was far too diverse and incoherent to last very long. Two years after the 'People Power Revolution', it has become far narrower and, as it were, more densely packed. First to go were its right and left wings. For the cowboy activists of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM), who had played a pivotal role in February 1986 by betraying Marcos, the only genuinely tolerable successor to the old regime was a military junta, or a military-dominated government under their leadership. But this course had no serious domestic support, and was, for a Washington basking in Port au Prince TV glory, in any case out of the question. Besides, cold-eyed realists in the Reagan Administration perfectly understood that the Philippine military was far too factionalized, incompetent, corrupt, vainglorious, and ill-trained to be given any blank cheques.[77] A series of risible brouhahas, culminating in the Gregorio ('Gringo') Honasan *coup de force* of 28 August 1987, only confirmed the soundness of this judgment. On the left, the situation was more complex. Far the most powerful component within it was the NPA, which had greatly benefited from the Martial Law regime, and had now to decide how to respond to the new constellation of forces. The issue of whether frontally to oppose the Aquino regime, or try substantially to alter its internal equilibrium, was seriously debated in 1986–87. For a complex of reasons, too intricate to detain us here, and the wisdom of which is yet to be determined, the die was cast, early in 1987, for confrontation.[78] The immediate consequence was the collapse of the legal Left, and the manifest enfeeblement of the 'cause-oriented groups', which, by the time of the Honasan comedy, had lost almost everything but their causes. Out of these developments emerged the real, unbalanced, and uneasy partners of the contemporary Aquino coalition: the oligarchy, the urban middle class, and the Church.

During the new regime's first year, when the elan of the 'People Power Revolution' remained quite strong, the coalition's junior partners were optimistic. The restoration of an open-market press, greatly expanded freedom for assembly and organization, and the crumbling of the crony monopolies and monopsonies, filled the various sectors of the middle class with giddy exhilaration. They could be fully themselves once again. Business confidence would be restored and the Philippines rerouted onto

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[77] See Francisco Nemenzo's fine article, 'A Season of Coups: Military Intervention in Philippine Politics', *Diliman Review*, 34, nos. 5–6, 1986, pp. 1, 16–25.

[78] The core judgment was certainly based on estimates of Washington's long-term goals amply justified by the course of events in Central and South America. A valuable introduction to the polymorphous culture of the Philippine Left is Randolph G. David, ed., *Marxism in the Philippines*, Quezon City 1984.

the path of progress. Good Americans were on their side. Honest technocratic expertise would at last be properly appreciated and rewarded. The intelligentsia (or at least major parts of it) now felt free to detach itself from the radical Left; it had a new home on television and radio, and in the press.

Furthermore, President Aquino's inner circle included not only Cardinal Sin but a number of idealistic human-rights lawyers and left-liberal journalists and academics. And Corazon herself, perhaps taking a leaf out of the Book of Modern Kings, made every effort to appear in public *en bonne bourgeoise*. Tita ('Auntie'), as she was now called, was a brave, pious, unpretentious housewife who wanted only what was best for her nephews and nieces. The treasurer of Don José Cojuangco's holding company and the coheiress of Hacienda Luisita remained mostly invisible. There was a touching confidence that the country's problems were on their way to sensible solution. She had opened talks with the NPA and with the Muslim insurrectionaries. A major land-reform—which would not affect the middle class, but which promised to undermine the NPA's expanding rural base—would be enacted. The Americans would provide substantial sums in support of restored constitutional democracy. And People Power would, through free and honest elections, create a progressive legislative partner for the President, giving the middle class its long-dreamed-of chance to lead the country. In substantial measure the ecclesiastical leadership shared these hopes, trusting that the new situation would permit the Church to become once again ideologically united and organizationally disciplined.[79] The catchword of the era was 'democratic space', which is perhaps most aptly translated as 'middle class room for manoeuvre between the military, the oligarchy, and the Communists'.

The second year of the new regime dashed most of these illusions. The talks with Muslim and Communist leaders broke down for essentially the same reason: the Aquino regime found itself in no position to make any attractive concessions. Haunted by nationalist dreams, even those Muslim leaders who seemed prepared to accept 'autonomy', rather than independence, still demanded a Muslim autonomous zone remembered from the American colonial era. Yet ever since the Lansdale-Magsaysay regime had begun transmigrating potential and actual Hukbalahap peasant supporters to 'empty' lands in Mindanao, the island had been rapidly 'Christianized', by spontaneous migrants, land speculators, logging and mining conglomerates, large-scale commercial agribusinesses, and so on. Even had it wished—which it did not—to accede to Muslim dreams, this would have required the Aquino government either forcibly to relocate these tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of 'Christians' (but where to?) or to leave them to the political mercies of justifiably angry Muslims. It lived by its own American-era dreams—a United

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[79] On Church politics, see Dennis Shoesmith's chapter in May and Nemenzo, ed., *The Philippines After Marcos*; and two texts by Robert Youngblood, 'Church Opposition to Martial Law in the Philippines', *Asian Survey*, 18, May 1978, pp. 505–520; and 'Structural Imperialism: An Analysis of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines', *Comparative Political Studies*, 15 April 1982, pp. 29–56. See also *Touching Ground, Taking Root: Theological and Political Reflections on the Philippine Struggle*, Quezon City 1986, by Edicio de la Torre, who is among the most socially committed and thoughtful of contemporary Filipino clerics.

Philippines—and besides, the Army, which had suffered far more severe casualties fighting the Muslims than combatting the Communists, would not have stood for 'weakness'. With the NPA the same was true. There was nothing President Aquino could offer the Communists which they did not already have or which the Army would be likely to permit.[80]

Nor were the Americans much help. The Reagan Administration was preoccupied with its own survival, and a dozen 'more important' foreign policy tar-babies. Its own financial recklessness meant that it had now very little to offer the Philippines even in military aid (which remained a pittance, more or less what it wished to give the Nicaraguan 'contras'). Talk of a 'Marshall Plan' for the Philippines vanished with the noise of escaping steam. And the overseas middle class stayed put. Its members might periodically return home with armfuls of presents for the relatives, but they had decided that the future of the bourgeoisie in the Philippines was too uncertain to be worth any substantial investments.[81] In the first year of the regime there had been much bold talk of liquidating the American bases, but by the second it was already clear that they would stay put: the Aquino government felt it could not afford seriously to antagonize Washington, and besides, it could not contemplate the loss in income and jobs that closure would imply. (In the 1980s, the US military was still the second largest employer—after the Filipino state—in the country.) The one important service the Americans did provide was explicit political support in the face of the various *buffa* coup attempts that anticlimaxed in the 'Gringo' ringer of August 1987.

The pivotal issue for the regime coalition was, however, the 'restoration of democracy', signalled by the 11 May 1987 elections for a reanimated Senate and House of the Representatives, and the 18 January 1988 elections for provincial governors, mayors and other local power-holders. The middle-class hope was that these elections would not only set the provisional Aquino government on a firm constitutional base, but would forcefully demonstrate to the Army and the Communists where the popular will lay. Moreover, it would translate People's Power into sufficient institutional power to carry out the domestic reforms deemed essential to the future leadership prospects of the middle class.

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[80] Her one important success was the 'coming over' of Comrade/Father Conrado Balweg, a militant and charismatic (ex-) priest, who in the Marcos era had formed his own guerrilla force among the oppressed highland minorities of the Luzon Cordillera. The NPA, which had long featured him in its publicity as a popular hero and an example of Party-Church cooperation, while privately criticizing his womanizing and periodic 'disobedience', now denounced him as an opportunist and counter-revolutionary. The Army continued to distrust and dislike him, not least because the condition of his 'coming over', Aquino's promise to establish a genuinely 'autonomous' Cordillera region, appeared to pave the way for sellouts in the Muslim Southwest.

It is instructive that a very successful commercial film on Balweg appeared in 1987. The real Balweg is an extremely complex figure, but in the movie he appears as a surrogate for the Manilan liberal middle class, fighting heroically against both Army barbarity and Communist treachery—of course, for the People.

[81] Nor were they really encouraged to return. There were few jobs for them in the Philippines, and their remittances did much to ease the foreign exchange crisis faced by the government. The same was true of the huge wave of non-middle class Filipino migrants to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It is likely that the Philippines is now among the largest net exporters of national personnel in the world.

## The Caciques Claim Their Own

It was now and here that the senior partners in the ruling coalition finally made themselves felt. During the first year the oligarchy had had its uneasy moments. Corazon herself might be sound enough, but some of her closest advisers were not; the mass media, for the moment still dominated ideologically by middle-class urban reformists, kept up a constant drumfire in favour of a land-reform that hopefully would destroy the basis of NPA rural power. Even the World Bank, along with senior Japanese and American officials, were arguing the same logic. And, pending the elections, the President held plenary powers. Who could be sure that in a moment of frailty she might not do something fatal?

The alarm was real, if probably ill-founded. COLOR (Council of Landowners for Orderly Reform—500 magnate members) was hastily established; it sent Corazon resolutions signed with (happily, its own) blood, threatening civil disobedience in the event of serious land-reform. A Movement for an Independent (Sugar) Negros appeared, claiming to be ready to offer armed resistance to impending Manilan injustice.[82] Lawyers were said, by the press, to be 'going crazy', reclassifying agricultural lands as 'commercial-industrial', signing off surplus plots to infant relatives, fraudulently antedating mortgages, etc.[83]

What was needed in 1986, as in 1916 and 1946, was cacique democracy. If elections could be promptly and freely held, the oligarchy could hope to return to its pre-1972 control of 'the rule of law', and put everyone—the middle class, the military, their tenants, and the 'rabble'—in their respective places.

On 11 May 1987, national-level elections were held for twenty-four senatorial, and two hundred congressional seats. The outcome turned out to be eminently satisfactory. To quote a well-informed Filipino study: 'Out of 200 House Representatives, 130 belong to the so-called "traditional political families", while another 39 are relatives of these families. *Only 31 Congressmen have no electoral record prior to 1971* and are not related to these old dominant families. . . . Of the 24 elected senators, there are a few non-traditional figures but the cast is largely made up of *members of prominent pre-1972 political families*.'[84] Newly-elected Senator John Osmeña—grandson of Commonwealth Vice-President Sergio Osmeña, Sr., and nephew of defeated 1969 presidential candidate Sergio Osmeña, Jr.—told the press: 'One member of the

[82] *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 23 July 1987.

[83] *The Manila Chronicle*, 23 July 1987. One particularly panic-stricken cacique family was reported to have set up forty separate dummy corporations to retain its landholdings.

[84] A survey conducted by the Institute of Popular Democracy, quoted in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* of 24 January 1988. (Italics added to emphasize the 'comeback' nature of the new legislature.) I owe this reference and the one that follows to Mojares, 'The Dream Goes On and On'.

family who does not do good is one too many, but ten members in the family doing good are not even enough.'[85]

The results were widely interpreted as a triumph for Corazon Aquino in so far as twenty-three of the twenty-four victorious senatorial candidates ran as her supporters and as members of various nominal parties in her electoral coalition.[86] Something comparable occurred in the Lower House.[87] But probably the outcome is better designated as a triumph for Corazon Cojuangco. The study quoted above notes that: 'Of the 169 Representatives who belong to the dominant families or are related to them, 102 are identified with the pre-1986 anti-Marcos forces, while 67 are from pro-Marcos *parties or families*.' A shake in the kaleidoscope of oligarchic power.

Not that the shrewder caciques failed to recognize certain new realities, including the genuine popular appeal of the President herself. (A significant number of Marcos collaborators swung over to her bandwagon.) When Congress finally opened in the late summer of 1987, it proclaimed itself committed to land-reform, and appointed 'outsiders' to the chairmanships of the Senate and House committees in charge of agrarian affairs. But within days the chairman of the House Committee on Agrarian Reform, Representative Bonifacio Gillego, an ex-military intelligence official converted to 'social democracy', was bemoaning the fact that seventeen of the twenty-one members of his committee were landlords—including presidential brother José Cojuangco, presidential uncle-in-law Herminio Aquino, and the virago of Negros, Hortensia Starke.[88]

A fuller revival of the ancien régime came with the provincial and local elections which opened on 18 January 1988, and which found 150,000 candidates competing, *à l'américaine*, for close to 16,500 positions—an average of nine aspirants per plum.[89] These elections were of such an exemplary character that they deserve comment in their own right. In some places they represented happy reconsolidations. On the island of Cebu, for example, Emilio 'Lito' Osmeña, brother of Senator John, won the island's governorship, while his cousin Tomas ('Tommy'), son of Sergio 'Serging' Osmeña, Jr., defeated a candidate from the rival

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[85] 'Sonny move vs. Barcenas explained', *Sun Star Daily*, 29 October 1987. The Osmeñas had gone through difficult times under Martial Law. Sergio ('Serging') Osmeña, Jr., had been severely wounded in the notorious Plaza Miranda affair in 1971 (the grenading of an—oligarchic, but anti-Marcos—Liberal Party election rally in downtown Manila; Marcos declared it the work of the NPA, but it was widely believed that the killers were military men or convicts in Marcos's own pay). After the declaration of Martial Law he exiled himself to California, where he died in 1984. There John, after initially applauding Ferdinand's declaration, eventually wended his way, returning only after the Aquino assassination.

[86] Vice-President Salvador 'Doy' Laurel's United Nationalist Democratic Organization (Unido); José 'Peping' Cojuangco's Philippine Democratic Party-Laban (PDP-Laban); Paul Aquino's Lakas ng Bansa (Strength of the Nation); and Senator Jovito Salonga's Liberal Party. Only the Liberals date back to the pre-martial law era.

[87] The pro-government coalition won 150 out of 200 seats. The Left, running under the umbrella organization Alliance of New Politics, secured a mere two.

[88] *The Manila Chronicle*, 25 July 1987.

[89] *The Manila Bulletin*, 18 January 1988.

mestizo Cuen-*co* dynasty to become Mayor of Cebu City.[90] A little to the north, in the fiefdom of the Duranos, the eighty-two-year-old Ramon Durano, Sr., ran successfully for mayor of Danao City, with the backing of one violent son, Jesus 'Don' Durano, against the opposition of another. The night after the election, losing candidate Thaddeus 'Deo' Durano, waylaid by intra-family assassins, ended up in critical condition in a Cebu City emergency ward.[91] The old warlord, who for the duration of Martial Law was a key Marcos henchman on Cebu, this time ran on the ticket of the PDP-Laban, the machine of President Aquino's brother José Cojuangco—who successfully recruited many other Marcos caciques under his sister's banner. Similar victories occurred in Olongapo—downtown from the Subic Naval Base—where Richard Gordon, husband of Congresswoman Katharine Gordon, became mayor; in Western Negros, where Congressman José Carlos Lacson was now joined by governor-elect Daniel Lacson, Jr.; and so on. . . .

Not that the old dynasties had things entirely their own way by any means. In some areas close to metropolitan Manila, middle-class reformists mobilized popular elements as well as 'minor' dynasties to break up old fiefdoms. The Laurel machine in Batangas collapsed, to the embarrassment of the ineptly scheming Vice-President, Salvador 'Doy' Laurel. The Rizal empire of Corazon's uncle, Congressman Juan 'Komong' Sumulong, was decimated. In Pampanga, out went the Nepomucenos, Lazatins and Lingads. In the Iloilo fiefdom of the Lopezes, Olive Lopez-Padilla, daughter of one-time Vice-President Fernando Lopez and sister of Congressman Albertito Lopez, ran for governor on the wonderful vulgarian-hacendado slogan of 'Bring Iloilo back to the Lopezes', but was nonetheless soundly thrashed.[92] In Mindanao's Cagayan de Oro, the Fortich dynasty, described by *The Manila Bulletin* as having run the place 'since the beginning of the century', was humiliated.[93] No less interesting were certain military participations. In the Cagayan valley of northeastern Luzon, ex-Lieutenant-Colonel Rodolfo Aguinaldo, a key member of the Honasan rebel group, out-intimidated the local caciques (Dupayas and Tuzons) to seize the governorship. In Marcos's old base in Northern Ilocos, the vice-governorship was won, from military prison, by ex-Colonel Rolando Abadilla—once the dreaded chief of the Metropolitan Command Intelligence Security Group under Marcos, a thug widely suspected of helping to mastermind the assassination of Corazon's husband, and a major participant in the abortive coups of January and April 1987.[94]

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[90] The Osmeña triumph represents the optimum outcome for a dynasty: it has a member in the national legislature, controls the provincial government, and runs the largest local commercial centre. Note that Tomas's defeated rival, José 'Boy' Cuenco, is a younger brother of Senate President pro tem Antonino 'Tony' Cuenco, and grandson of former Senate President, the late Mariano Cuenco.

[91] *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 22 January 1988, and *The Philippine Star*, 23 January 1988.

[92] *The Philippine Star*, 22 January 1988, and *The Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 21 January 1988. She meant, of course, 'back' from Ferdinand and Imelda.

[93] *The Manila Bulletin*, 21 January 1988.

[94] See *The Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 22 January 1988, for an account of Abadilla's past, and *The Manila Times*, 19 January 1988, for a description of the torturer being flown, at state expense, from his Manila cell to a polling booth in Ilocos Norte. Corazon's advisers may have been pleased to see Aguinaldo 'join the system'—and a long way from Manila. Even the case of Abadilla (whom Army leaders insisted would not be allowed to assume office) may have served the purpose of demonstrating how free the balloting really was.

Even the NPA was indirectly drawn in. It was widely, and credibly, reported that in many areas where it had politico-military ascendancy, the movement charged candidates substantial fees for permission to campaign unmolested, and, here and there, lent unofficial support to sympathetic local aspirants.[95] Not that the civil war seriously let up. A day or two after the polls closed, Hortensia Starke's Hacienda Bino was burned to the ground, and the Hacienda La Purisima of Enrique Rojas, a top official of the National Federation of Sugar Planters, barely escaped the same fate.[96]

## Politics in a Well-Run Casino

These variable outcomes need to be viewed in a larger framework for their implications to be well understood. The key facts to be borne in mind are these: No less than 81 per cent of the country's 27,600,000 eligible voters voted.[97] One or other elective post was available for every 1,400 voters. The average number of contestants per post was roughly nine. In most places the contests were 'serious' in a rather new way—forty-one candidates were assassinated by rivals (*not* the NPA) in the course of the brief campaign.[98] In different ways, and to different extents, almost all political leaderships, from right to left, participated and could imagine that they had, up to a certain point, benefited. Everywhere, local patronage machines were replacing the centralized Marcos-era appointive *apparat*.

In any well-run casino, the tables are managed in the statistical favour of the house. To keep drawing customers, the owners must provide them with periodic, even spectacular, successes. A win is a splendid confirmation of the player's skill and heaven's favour. A loss demonstrates his/her misfortune or ineptitude. Either way, it's back to the tables as soon as possible. So with the blackjack of cacique democracy. Each local triumph for reform promises a rentier future; each loss signals miscalculations or ill luck. At the end of the week or the year, however, the dealer is always in the black.

The truth is that American electoralism remains powerfully attractive, even when, perhaps especially when, married to Spanish caciquism in a geographically fragmented, ethnolinguistically divided, and economi-

[95] The army leaked a purported NPA circular warning that 'all candidates wishing to campaign in guerrilla zones have to get a safe-conduct pass from us for their own safety. The CPP-NPA will not answer for those without it'. A guerrilla leader in Quezon Province, interviewed by Agence-France. Presse, confirmed NPA taxation of candidates, affirming that the money would be used to 'advance the revolution'. It is said that such 'election passes' were sold for between 10,000 and 30,000 pesos ($500–$1,500) apiece. The army claimed that about 10 per cent of all candidates (say, 15,000 people) were paying for such passes. See *The Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 18 January 1988.

[96] *Malaya*, 21 January 1988.

[97] *The Manila Bulletin*, 21 January 1988.

[98] The government claimed that the elections were quite exceptionally peaceful: only 124 deaths all told, compared to 204 deaths in the 11 May 1987 congressional elections, 296 in the 1986 presidential elections, 178 in the 1981 presidential elections, 411 in the 1980 local elections, and 534 in the 1971 (pre-Martial Law) congressional campaign. *Malaya*, 19 January 1988. But as the *Philippine Daily Globe*, 20 January 1988, rightly pointed out, in both the 1986 and 1981 campaigns only four *candidates* had been murdered—the huge bulk of the victims being 'small fry'. What was new about January 1988 was that a full third of the dead were actual contenders.

cally bankrupt polity. It disperses power horizontally, while concentrating it vertically; and the former draws a partial veil over the latter. 'Anyone' can get elected: look at the high, uncoerced turnout; look at the number of competing candidates (you too can run); look at the execrable colonels (better they campaign in the provinces than plot in the capital); look at the (probably temporary) fall of the Laurels and the Nepomucenos; look at the NPA's electoral levies, which, from a certain angle, can be aligned with the election-time exactions of the warlords.[99] Precisely because the competition is violently real, it is easy to be persuaded to cheer for, as it were, Arsenal or Chelsea, without reflecting too hard on the fact that both are in the First Division, and that one is watching the match from the outer stands, not playing in it.

But, of course, by no means everyone enjoys spectator sports. Shortly after the 18 January elections a curious reporter went to interview employees at the Cojuangcos' Hacienda Luisita, who had just voted massively for Arsenal. What difference had it made to their lives that Tita Cory had become President? 'We used to get rice and sugar free, now we must pay. We used to get free water from the pumps in our yards. Now we must pay for pumped-in water because molasses from the sugar mill has seeped into our wells.' Daily wages? They had been raised by 2.50 pesos ($0.12) for field-hands, and 8 pesos ($0.40) for mill-workers. Level of employment? Usually from two to four days a week, in good times. One elderly man spoke of trying to survive by busing to additional work in the neighbouring province of Pampanga: transportation costs took 23 pesos from the daily wage of 40 pesos, leaving him a net of 17 pesos ($0.85). It still made sense to go. The reporter was told that a worker, who had been quoted in an international magazine as saying that on the hacienda horses ate better than the hands, had been 'summoned' by management. He had had to retract the slander. But one of the interviewees concluded: 'Of course it is true. The horses get Australian grain and eggs, while we hardly have the meat.'[100] All those interviewed either refused to give their names, or asked not to be identified.

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[99] In the summer of 1987 the liberal part of the Manila press was every day reporting with alarm on the growth of a nation-wide, coordinated system of extremist anti-Communist vigilante groups, financed by the oligarchy, the CIA, and the gonzo American ex-General Singlaub. In January 1988, during the election campaign, this broad fascist front virtually disappeared from print. Needless to say, the groups had not themselves disbanded. It had become apparent that by then most had abandoned Singlaubian mufti and gone back to duty as local gangs of thugs, recruited each to promote the local power, expecially in elections, of particular, contentious local dynasties. There is no question but that these gangs are instruments of class oppression and frequently cooperate closely with local military and police personnel. They play an important part in the ongoing civil war. But their very dispersion and localism show how confident the caciques are, and how little they feel the need to crawl together under the apron of the military.

[100] *The Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 23 January 1988. The end of the final sentence is clearly garbled, and probably should read 'anything to eat', or 'any meat'.