

# “People Power” Revolution: Perspectives from Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas

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On February 25, 2001, to commemorate the anniversary of “EDSA 1” — the “people power” revolution that, fifteen years previously, had toppled the violent and rapacious Marcos dictatorship — the Alfred Nobel Foundation, and the Center for Global Nonviolence, conferred upon the Republic of the Philippines, the Nobel Peace Prize Award, and the Global Nonviolence Award, respectively. Significantly, the awarding ceremony took place a few short weeks following “EDSA 2,” a “people power” exercise that put pressure on Mr. Joseph Estrada, suspected of large-scale plunder, to relinquish the Philippine Presidency. Pierre Marchand, head of the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates Foundation,<sup>1</sup> spoke the following words at the Awards Ceremony:

The world salutes the Filipinos for their courage in overthrowing two undesirable residents. You have given the gift, in a world that only knows force and violence, of effecting radical change without firing a shot. The legacy of people power would be the Filipino people’s gift to other peoples of the world. You were given a national gift. Do not keep it to yourselves. The world will never be the same again, if the spirit of EDSA prevails beyond the shores of this tiny archipelago. The 15th anniversary of People Power I was significant as it came 18 years after the death of Ninoy Aquino, 30

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<sup>1</sup>The Nobel Peace Prize Laureates Foundation is composed of peace advocates, including the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Nelson Mandela of South Africa, the Dalai Lama of Tibet, Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo and Jose Ramos-Horta of East Timor, Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union, Henry Kissinger of the United States, and Adolfo Perez Esquivel of Argentina.

years after the death of Martin Luther King, Jr., 50 years after the death of Mahatma Gandhi, 2000 years after the death of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

To these words, Lou Ann Guanson,<sup>3</sup> Vice-President of the Center for Global Nonviolence, added:

We agreed to grant the award in recognition of the nonviolent struggle of the Filipino people as exemplified in EDSA People Power which was done twice in this country.<sup>4</sup>

In this essay we shall take as our first starting point, Marchand's and Guanson's characterizations of EDSA 1 and EDSA 2 as nonviolent "people power" revolutions, seeking to view them through the prism of the work of the political philosopher Hannah Arendt who, despite "the enormous role violence has always played in human affairs," keenly and forcefully negotiates the difference between revolution and violent upheaval, in the context particularly of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, "a century of wars and revolution."<sup>5</sup> For as revolutions go, EDSA 1 was unique and unprecedented, a genuine exercise of "action," in Arendt's sense of that term, interrupting the longstanding and violent automatisms of a 14-year-old dictatorship, in order to begin something new<sup>6</sup>:

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<sup>2</sup>*The Philippine Star* (February 26, 2001), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Guanson, who claims to have mixed blood from Hawaiian, Japanese, Spanish, Swedish, and Filipino ancestors, is also the vice-chairperson of the Martin Luther King Foundation.

<sup>4</sup>*The Philippine Star*, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup>Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1970), p. 8, 3. [Henceforth, OV]. In Arendt's view, violence and revolution are mutually exclusive. Whereas the authentic revolution, prepares for and protects the foundations of action and freedom, "violence does not promote causes, neither history nor revolution, neither progress nor reaction" (OV, 79). Indeed, "[I]f we look on history in terms of a continuous chronological process, whose progress, moreover, is inevitable, violence in the shape of war and revolution may appear to constitute the only possible interruption. If this were true, if only the practice of violence would make it possible to interrupt automatic processes in the realm of human affairs, the preachers of violence would have won an important point ... It is the function, however, of all action, as distinguished from mere behavior, to interrupt what otherwise would have proceeded automatically and therefore predictably" (*Ibid.*, 30-31).

<sup>6</sup>One of the most heartwarming EDSA 1-related stories that have come our way involves a young Australian boy of ten who was watching the live television coverage (via satellite) of the events which took place at EDSA fifteen years ago. On asking his

To act, in its most general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin (as the Greek word *archein*, "to begin," "to lead," and eventually "to rule" indicates), to set something into motion (which is the original meaning of the Latin *agere*) ... It is in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before ... The new always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability, which for all practical, everyday purposes amounts to certainty; the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle. The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable.<sup>7</sup>

EDSA 1 recalls to mind Arendt's argument that the source and origin of legitimate political power resides in the people.<sup>8</sup> "[W]hen and where people get together and bind themselves through promises, covenants, and mutual pledges," when and where they exercise such power as rests on "reciprocity and mutuality," is "real power and legitimate" (OR, 182). What transpired in the aftermath of EDSA 1 is a powerful reminder as well of her caveat that action "is never consummated unequivocally in one single deed or event" (HC, 233).<sup>9</sup> Following the late

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mother what it was they were watching on TV, his mother replied it was the news footage of a revolution in progress. This surprised the boy because instead of the sight of people scampering to safety, they could be seen dancing in the middle of the street. Instead of the sight of people fleeing advancing troops, they could be seen approaching the soldiers with offers of food and flowers. Instead of the sight of people scampering for safety as bombs exploded all around them, they could be seen and heard praying and singing. Instead of the sight of brandished weapons, images of the Blessed Virgin could be seen carried about, as well as rosary beads in the clasped hands of cheerful-looking nuns. The boy asked his mother who these people were. "Son, those are Filipinos," she replied. Awed by the drama that was playing itself out on their TV screen, the boy blurted out: "Mom, when I grow up I want to be a Filipino!"

<sup>7</sup>Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 177-178. [Henceforth, HC.]

<sup>8</sup>Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 179. [Henceforth, OR.]

<sup>9</sup>She writes: "While power, rooted in a people that had bound itself by mutual promises and lived in bodies constituted by compact, was enough 'to go through a revolution' (without unleashing the boundless violence of the multitudes), it was by no means enough to establish a 'perpetual union,' that is, to found a new authority ... Neither compact nor promise upon which compacts rest are sufficient to assure

disgraced dictator Ferdinand Marcos' flight from Malacañang, and in the throes of an exhilaratingly new personal and collective sense of empowerment, the Filipino people installed a new government under the stewardship of Corazon C. Aquino, to which it left the work of laying the foundations for a new practice of politics, and of instituting constitutional safeguards against a recurrence of the sort of untrammelled and, therefore, abusive and rapacious, power that, during the years of the Marcos dictatorship, had laid to waste the nation, its political institutions and processes. Responding to the mandate, the Aquino government convened a Constitutional Convention which produced a document replacing the self-serving constitution Marcos had gotten the Filipino people to ratify in a referendum that could only be described as an exercise in pure deception. It organized nationwide elections to elect replacements for the discredited members of Marcos' rubber stamp Congress. It replaced those magistrates of the Supreme Court who had been co-opted and suborned by Marcos to seal with constitutional legitimacy his declaration of Martial Rule, and who openly ingratiated themselves with Marcos and his fastidious and profligate wife, with men and women of unquestionable legal acumen and moral probity. The new government, in other words, made many right moves, but as the distance from the 1986 "people power" revolution grew, the enthusiasm for political action which it had generated waned. Emboldened by this development, corruption found its way back into national and local government units, into the legislature. No better dramatization of the growing cynicism over the 1986 revolution exists than Joseph Estrada's succession to the presidency in an electoral contest at which he cornered the lion's share of the votes, despite clear intellectual (he never finished college) and moral (he flouted his numerous extramarital relationships), inadequacies. A few short weeks into the presidency, he displayed a shameless, mocking, even brazen thoughtlessness, announcing he would not object to Ferdinand Marcos' interment at (of all places!) the *Libingan ng mga Bayani* [*Heroes' Cemetery*]. Forced to back down by the public outcry which greeted his announcement, he rose to the height of personal incompetence, but not before rifling, for personal benefit, with employee contributions to the giant Social Security System and the Government Service Insurance System, hobbling both systems in the process. He helped himself to the moneybags of the illegal gambling and illegal drug industries. With such accumulated

capital, he built a slew of palatial abodes for his various mistresses and families. The return to old, discredited ways in government, the slide back to graft and corruption, the reemergence of wicked and wanton politicians, the development of political lethargy and unconcern, engendered, among others, by the Estrada presidency, inclined many to question the “people power” revolution’s authenticity, to see it as a political aberration, even a farce. The fact that it was business as usual inclined many to ask: Was EDSA 1 a mirage? Was the people’s resolve to renounce malfeasance in government — so publicly and fiercely avowed at EDSA 1 — a cheat? Our rejoinder to that question is a resounding No! EDSA 1 was not a mirage neither was it a cheat. It, however, has taken EDSA 2 for us to be able to identify and renew our confidence in its promise. We quote from a very recent editorial of one of the leading national dailies in the country today:

The historical context of Edsa is that it is the court of last resort for the sovereign people to throw off the yoke of abusive and corrupt leaders after all institutional means to end the abuses have failed. That has been the meaning embedded in Edsa by People Power I, which toppled Ferdinand Marcos, and People Power II, which deposed Joseph Estrada. The Filipino people endured 14 years of the Marcos dictatorship, its abuses and its looting of the nation’s wealth, before People Power took shape in February 1986. They endured two and a half years of Estrada’s abuses and plunder before they moved to end his greedy, corrupt, and incompetent regime.<sup>10</sup>

We couldn’t agree more. It is the twin “people power” revolutions at opposite ends of one single historical continuum that tell the story of the Philippine revolution. The account which follows attempts to “read” EDSA 1 and EDSA 2 from the perspectives afforded us by Hannah Arendt’s theory of action and Jürgen Habermas’ universal pragmatics.

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perpetuity, that is, to bestow upon the affairs of men that measure of stability without which they would be unable to build a world for their posterity, destined and designed to outlast their own mortal lives” (OR, 182).

<sup>10</sup>*Philippine Daily Inquirer* (April 28, 2001), A 8.

## *Hannah Arendt: Theory Of Action And Revolution*

Arguably one of the most seminal, innovative, even iconoclastic political thinkers of the twentieth century, Hannah Arendt's political thought reflects her profound disappointment with the Western tradition of political philosophy,<sup>11</sup> which, in her view, is "not even capable of asking adequate, meaningful questions, let alone of giving answers to its own perplexities."<sup>12</sup> To bring about a recovery of the significance and historical import of the most crucial political events of the past century, she deploys, therefore, "criteria of judgment and hierarchies of priority different from those commonly accepted and ideals unknown in the ordinary discourse of the modern world."<sup>13</sup> Margaret Canovan writes:

One of the central purposes of Hannah Arendt's work is to ... re-direct our attention away from Society, that self-moving cosmos of which we are presumed to be parts, to Politics: that is, to public actions and interactions of individual men, and the events which they bring about. This change of emphasis ... represents ... an attempt to vindicate human freedom and the significance of individual actions against ways of thought which tend to envisage men as mere cells within the social body. To Hannah Arendt, politics is the realm of freedom, and the defense of politics against sociologism is a defense of human freedom and dignity against determinism and abject submission to fate.<sup>14</sup>

Politics, for Arendt, is the same thing as the active citizenship of those who gather together at a public space to deliberate upon, and pass judgment on, and then translate into concerted action, issues affecting the public in its broad diversity. To understand this dimension of her political thought, we must place ourselves in the context that guided it, namely, her experience of a modernity inhabited by totalitarianism.

<sup>11</sup>Bhikhu Parekh, *Hannah Arendt and the Search for a New Political Philosophy* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1981), p. 1.

<sup>12</sup>Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future – Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 9. [Henceforth, BPF]

<sup>13</sup>Margaret Canovan, *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt* (London: J M Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1974), p. 8.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 2.

Such a modernity Arendt indicts, for squandering the treasures of the past, and for bringing about its own rupture from history. Maurizio d'Entrèves writes:

Modernity is characterized by the 'loss of the world,'... the restriction or elimination of the public sphere of action and speech in favor of the private world of introspection and the private pursuit of economic interests. Modernity is the age of mass society, of the rise of the "social" out of a previous distinction between the public and the private, and of the victory of the *animal laborans* over both contemplation and action. It is the age of bureaucratic administration and anonymous labor, rather than politics and action, of elite domination and the manipulation of public opinion. It is the age when totalitarian forms of government, such as Nazism and Stalinism, have emerged as a result of the institutionalization of terror and violence. It is the age where history as a 'natural process' has replaced history as a fabric of actions and events, where homogeneity and conformity have replaced plurality and freedom, and where isolation and loneliness have eroded human solidarity and all spontaneous forms of living together.<sup>15</sup>

Arendt laments the neglect, even the loss, of the "established categories of political thought and the accepted standards of moral judgment,"<sup>16</sup> along with what prospect they proffered of illumination for the present and redemption from whatever abjection into which it may have sunk. She works, therefore, to bring about a retrieval of those lost elements of the past that could prove worthwhile to the present, and to rehabilitate what traditional values and political standards could serve still to motivate the human community into resisting modernity's distorting effects upon its spirit. Central to this work is her recovery of the ancient notion of *action*, through which alone an understanding becomes possible of the meaning and the demands of politics.

Action, the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live

<sup>15</sup>Maurizio d'Entrèves, "Hannah Arendt's Conception of Modernity," in *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 3.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

on earth and inhabit the world. While all aspects of the human condition are somehow related to politics, this plurality is specifically *the condition* — not only the *conditio sine qua non*, but the *conditio per quam* — of all political life. (HC, 7)

A life without action is absurd and contradictory, as it would be a life bereft of all relationships. For even when a person chooses to seclude himself from human community by retreating into the desert or an inaccessible mountain, he still would not be able to avoid acting, for his isolation would be without meaning if there were no others from whom he could separate himself. Such a life, however, in Arendt's view eventually deteriorates for it is only through action that "men distinguish themselves instead of being merely distinct; they are the modes in which human beings appear to each other, not indeed as physical objects, but *qua* men." A life devoid of action is "literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men" (HC, 176). The life of action, on the other hand, enables man to realize his exclusively *human* potentialities of freedom and individuality, as well as to bring his innate capacities display, for innovation, plurality, membership and remembrance.<sup>17</sup>

Action, as Arendt elucidates the term, possesses two main features: freedom and plurality. She dismisses the commonplace understanding of freedom as the ability to choose from among alternatives, investing it instead with a distinct meaning — the exercise of initiative. Freedom, in that sense, consists in acting, though in such a way as to set up an *initium*, to begin or start anew, to inaugurate the unexpected. The appearance of freedom, like the manifestation of principles, coincides with the performing act. Men *are* free — as distinguished from their possessing the gift for freedom — as long as they act, neither before nor after; for to *be* free and to act are the same" (BPF, 152-153). This capacity has "the closest connection with the human condition of natality; the new beginning inherent in birth ... felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something new, that is, of acting" (HC, 9). Freedom or action, in that sense, enables man to elevate his affairs above the bane of necessity, to resist the automatism of natural processes.

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<sup>17</sup>Maurizio d'Entrèves, "Hannah Arendt's Theory of Action," in *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 66.



If it were true that fatality is the inalienable mark of historical processes, then it would indeed be equally true that everything done in history is doomed .... And to a certain extent this is true. If left to themselves, human affairs can only follow the law of mortality, which is the most certain and the only reliable law of a life spent between birth and death. It is the faculty of action that interferes with this law because it interrupts the inexorable automatic course of daily life ... The life span of man running toward death would inevitably carry everything human to ruin and destruction if it were not for the faculty of interrupting it and beginning something new, a faculty which is inherent in action like an ever-present reminder that men, though they must die, are not born in order to die but in order to begin. (HC 246)

In contradistinction, therefore, to the philosophical tradition, which located the exercise of freedom in the intercourse between the person with himself, Arendt argues that the field of freedom is the political realm, the public space. Freedom is what brings men to live together in a political organization. Without freedom there could be no such meaningful political life. "The *raison d'être* of politics is freedom, and its field of experience is action."<sup>18</sup> It comes as no surprise, then, that in writing about action, Arendt frequently alludes to revolutions as prime examples of action in the modern period. In her view, a revolution is "inextricably bound up with the notion that the course of history suddenly begins anew, that an entirely new story, a story never known or told before is about to unfold" (OR, 21). A true revolution, however, in contrast to other sorts of uprisings is not impelled by violence.

Only where this pathos of novelty is present and where novelty is connected with the idea of freedom are we entitled to speak of revolution. This means of course that revolutions are more than successful insurrections and that we are not justified in calling every *coup d'état* a revolution or even in detecting one in each civil war ... All these phenomena have in common with revolution [is] that they are brought about by violence, and this is the reason why they are so frequently identified with it. But violence is no more adequate to describe the phenomenon of revolution than change; only where change occurs in the sense of a new beginning, where

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 146.

violence is used to constitute an altogether different form of government, to bring about the formation of a new body politic, where the liberation from oppression aims at least at the constitution of freedom can we speak of revolution. (OR, 27-28)

Regarding plurality, Arendt argues that action cannot be carried out in isolation but requires the presence of a community of actors who can witness and adjudge the proffered action. For in the absence of this arena provided by others, no action could be meaningful; indeed, no action would be possible at all. "Action ... is never possible in isolation; to be isolated is to be deprived of the capacity to act." Action, therefore, can only be carried out in the context of a plurality, of the public realm.

Action, the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world ... Action would be an unnecessary luxury, a capricious interference with the general laws of behavior, if men were endlessly reproducible repetitions of the same model, whose nature or essence was the same for all and as predictable as the nature or essence of any other thing. Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live. (HC, 8-9)

Plurality, then, refers both to *equality* and *distinction* among human beings. Human equality creates a continuity among human beings — past, present, and future — and makes understanding possible along historical lines. "If men were not equal, they could neither understand each other and those who came before them nor plan for the future and foresee the need of those who will come after them" (HC, 71). Distinction among human beings, on the other hand, summons the need for inter-subjective communication. "If men were not distinct, each human being distinguished from any other who is, was, or will ever be, they would need neither speech nor action to make themselves understood" (*Ibid.*). It is through plurality, then, that each individual human being becomes capable of acting and relating to others, of building up that network of actions and relationships which constitutes the realm of human affairs. Arendt establishes a close link between speech and plurality and therefore also between speech and action. Speech is the

actualization of plurality for it is through speech that human beings reveal their unique identities.

Action and speech are so closely related because the primordial and specifically human act must at the same time contain the answer to the question asked of every newcomer: ‘Who are you?’ ... Without the accompaniment of speech ... action would not only lose its revelatory character, but, and by the same token, it would lose its subject ... In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world ... This revelatory quality of speech and action comes to the fore where people are *with* others and neither for nor against them — that is, in sheer human togetherness.” (HC, 178-180)

Speech necessitates action. The intention that is expressed must be confirmed by action; otherwise, the motives of the actor would at the very least be suspect. As d’Entrèves clearly explains:

*Action entails speech*; by means of language we are in fact able to articulate the meaning of our actions and to coordinate the actions of a plurality of agents. Conversely, *speech entails action*, not only in the sense that speech itself is a form of action, or that most acts are performed in the manner of speech ... but in the sense that action is often the means whereby we check the sincerity of the speaker.<sup>19</sup>

Without speech, therefore, the action of an individual human being would not only not make sense, it would also be incapable of striking up a harmony with the action of others. Action and speech together need a space of appearance — “that space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly” (HC, 198-199). This space, however, does not precede speech and action, but, in fact, proceeds from both, for the space of appearance comes into being precisely wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action. What maintains this space in existence is *power*, which, according to Arendt, springs up between men when they act together, and vanishes

<sup>19</sup> “Hannah Arendt’s Theory of Action,” p. 71.

the moment they disperse. Furthermore, this power came into being "when and where people would get together and bind themselves through promises, covenants, and mutual pledges" (OR, 181-182). Now, to actualize this power there must be plurality and solidarity. Plurality is the foundation of solidarity, which in turn is the source of power. Plurality is the context in which an individual human being discloses himself to others through speech and action. When his speech and action are witnessed in the open and their coincidence is granted by others, he forms a solidarity with those others and together they give birth to power: "Power is actualized only where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities" (HC, 200). As such the source and origin of legitimate political power is not any one individual but the people engaged in concerted action and communicative interaction.

### *Jürgen Habermas: Universal Pragmatics*

Jürgen Habermas belongs to the circle of critical theorists who undertook the advancement of new interpretations of Marxist theory, and focused their speculation on issues and problems that were rarely tackled by more orthodox approaches to Marxism.<sup>20</sup> What distinguished this school was that it regarded critical social theory to be emancipatory as it frees agents from a kind of coercion, which is self-imposed because it is the result of self-frustration over conscious human action.<sup>21</sup>

Habermas developed his own brand of critical social theory and sourced his main ideas from Anglo-American disciplines, especially the philosophies of science and the linguistic philosophies. He also recast the notion of critical theory by installing rationality and communication at its center. For him, the study of society is to be approached via a theory of communication, and so he shifted from a theory of knowledge to a theory of language as the starting point of his critical social

<sup>20</sup>David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 14-15.

<sup>21</sup>Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 55-56.

theory, which he presented as a programme of universal pragmatics: "I have proposed the name *universal pragmatics* for the research program aimed at reconstructing the universal validity basis of speech."<sup>22</sup>

In an earlier work, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Habermas classified scientific disciplines into three categories in terms of their corresponding knowledge-constitutive interests<sup>23</sup> The first consists of the empirical-analytic sciences which procure knowledge for the sake of technical control. They are dictated by technical knowledge-constitutive interest in the instrumental regulation of objectified processes. The substance and validity of empirical statements formulated in these sciences depend on their possible prediction and technical exploitability. The second is composed of the historical-hermeneutic sciences, which produce knowledge for the sake of interpretation. They are governed by practical interest in inter-subjective understanding. The implication of propositions advanced in these sciences proceeds from elucidating their meaning. A third group identified by Habermas is comprised of the emancipatory sciences, which are motivated by interest in emancipation or self-reflection. Only these emancipatory sciences make use of knowledge for the sake of emancipation. While both the empirical and the interpretative sciences may not be denied their legitimate contributions towards human emancipation from the oppressive conditions of nature and of culture, respectively, it should be asserted at the same time, however, that in the process they perpetuate new oppressive conditions and other forms of pathologies.

Universal pragmatics is an emancipatory science. Through the ideal speech situation that it portrays it is able to expose the manner in which language can serve as a source and perpetrator of unconscious constraints. The ideal speech situation thus serves as an instrument for emancipatory critique. Universal pragmatics is also a reconstructive science for it investigates the universal and unavoidable presuppositions behind the successful operation of speech acts oriented to achieving mutual understanding. Habermas elaborates this aspect of universal pragmatics:

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<sup>22</sup>Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston, Beacon Press, 1979), p. 5.

<sup>23</sup>Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 308-311.

It thematizes the elementary units of speech (utterances) in an attitude similar to that in which linguistics does the units of language (sentences). The goal of reconstructive language analysis is an explicit description of the rules that a competent speaker must master in order to form grammatical sentences and to utter them in an acceptable way ... It is ... assumed that communicative competence has just as universal a core as linguistic competence. A general theory of speech actions would thus describe exactly that fundamental system of rules that adult subjects master to the extent that they can fulfill *the conditions for a happy employment of sentences in utterances*, no matter to which individual languages the sentences may belong and in which accidental contexts the utterances may be embedded. (CES, 26)

For Habermas then language has a pragmatic context. Consequently a theory of language like universal pragmatics must involve an explication of how a speaker is able to bring about an interpersonal engagement with a hearer so that the latter can rely on him. This is because, as Robert Badillo stressed, “the essential notion operative in universal pragmatics... is that there are no speech acts without dialogical participants; that is, speech is not possible without, at the very least, a speaker and a hearer engaged in the process of communication.”<sup>24</sup>

Habermas professed great interest in investigating the validity basis of speech. For he maintained that there is a rational foundation, a series of validity claims possessing cognitive interest, which is behind every attempt at successful communication.

Anyone acting communicatively must, in performing any speech action, raise universal validity claims and suppose that they can be vindicated [or redeemed: *einlösen*]. Insofar as he wants to participate in a process of reaching understanding, he cannot avoid raising the following — and indeed precisely the following — validity claims. He claims to be:

1. Uttering something understandably;
2. Giving (the hearer) *something* to understand;
3. Making *himself* thereby understandable; and,
4. Coming to an understanding *with another person* (CES, 2).

<sup>24</sup>Robert Badillo, *The Emancipative Theory of Jürgen Habermas and Metaphysics* (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1991), p. 57.

Four types of claims are therefore always present before interlocutors who wish to reach an understanding: comprehensibility or intelligibility (*Verständlichkeit*) — that the utterance is understandable; truth (*Wahrheit*) — that its propositional content or existential presupposition is true; rightness or correctness (*Richtigkeit*) — that it is a legitimate utterance within the given context; and, sincerity (*Wahrhaftigkeit*) — that it is spoken truthfully. Together they constitute the *conditio sine qua non* of every communicative action. In other words, such interaction can be pursued only to the degree to which the participants involved in it credibly sustain these four types of validity claims. Of course, it must be admitted that in ordinary conversations these claims are taken for granted. Yet they are assumed all the time so that the interacting subjects could vindicate their beliefs if the situation so warrants. This assumption always persists as the reciprocal presupposition unavoidable in speech. According to Habermas, the goal of coming to an understanding is the attainment of genuine consensus which he defines as "an agreement that terminates in the intersubjective mutuality of reciprocal understanding, shared knowledge, mutual trust, and accord with one another" (CES, 3). It is these elements and general conditions of understanding that universal pragmatics focuses on. This it accomplishes through an examination of the relation to reality that the speaker establishes in his every sentence.

There are three realms of reality in which every sentence is first embedded through the act of utterance: a) external reality — *the* world of *external nature*, of perceived and potentially manipulable objects; b) normative reality — *our* world of *society* or of socially recognized expectations, values, rules; and, c) inner reality — *my* world of *internal nature*, the arena of intentions. Through language, moreover, the subject engages in a process of demarcation:

The universality of the validity claims inherent in the structure of speech can perhaps be elucidated with reference to the systematic place of language. Language is the medium through which speakers and hearers realize fundamental demarcations. The subject demarcates himself: (1) from an environment that he objectifies in the third-person attitude of an observer; (2) from an environment that he conforms to or deviates from in the ego-alter attitude of a participant; (3) from his own subjectivity that he expresses

or conceals in a first-person attitude; and finally (4) from the medium of language itself. (CES, 66)

These demarcations are accompanied by basic attitudes on the part of the speaker: objectivating with respect to external nature, conformative *vis-à-vis* society, and expressive with regard to internal nature. To these correspond parallel modes of communication, namely, *cognitive*, *interactive*, and *expressive*.

Habermas highlights the claim of intelligibility as the only claim attached to a sentence that can be fulfilled immanently in language. A sentence needs only to be grammatical and conform to an established system of recognized rules for the use of language. The other three claims however require something more beyond language:

The validity of the propositional content of an utterance depends ... on whether the proposition stated represents a fact (or whether the existential presuppositions of a mentioned propositional content hold); the validity of an intention *expressed* depends on whether it corresponds to what is actually intended by the speaker; and the validity of utterance performed depends on whether his action *conforms* to a recognized normative background. Whereas a grammatical sentence fulfills the claim to comprehensibility, a successful utterance must satisfy three additional validity claims: it must count as true for the participants insofar as it represents something in the world, it must count as truthful insofar as it expresses something intended by the speaker; it must count as right insofar as it conforms to socially recognized expectations. (CES, 28)

There is likewise a specific function that speech performs in each of the three modes of communication: for the cognitive, the *representation of facts*; for the expressive, the *disclosure of the speaker's subjectivity*; and, for the interactive, the *establishment of legitimate interpersonal or social relations*. And attached to these speech actions are certain conditions that determine their success or failure. Success refers to a situation in which the hearer not only captures the meaning of the sentence uttered but also willingly enters the relationship intended by the speaker. Habermas explains:

The bond into which the speaker is willing to enter with the performance of an illocutionary act means a guarantee that, in



consequence of his utterance, he will fulfill certain conditions - for example, regard a question as settled when a satisfactory answer is given; drop an assertion when it proves to be false; follow his own advice when he finds himself in the same situation as the hearer; stress a request when it is not complied with; act in accordance with an intention disclosed by avowal, and so on. *Thus the illocutionary force of an acceptable speech act consists in the fact that it can move a hearer to rely on the speech-act-typical commitments of the speaker.* (CES, 62)

Admittedly this pattern of relations is easily built when institutional speech acts are concerned because of the binding force of established norms that constitute their background and medium. What challenged Habermas is the matter of institutionally unbound speech acts. He noted that the illocutionary power of these latter acts could not derive from the binding force of the normative context. He sought and found that illocutionary force in what he calls the reciprocal recognition of validity claims.

With their illocutionary acts, speaker and hearer raise validity claims and demand they be recognized. But this recognition need not follow irrationally, since the validity claims have a cognitive character and can be checked. I would like, therefore, to defend the following thesis: *In the final analysis, the speaker can illocutionarily influence the hearer and vice versa, because speech-act-typical commitments are connected with cognitively testable validity claims* — that is, because the reciprocal bonds have a rational basis. The engaged speaker normally connects the specific sense in which he would like to take up an interpersonal relationship with a thematically stressed validity claim and thereby chooses a specific mode of communication ... Thus assertions, descriptions, classifications, estimates, predictions, objections, and the like, have different specific meanings; but the claim put forward in these different interpersonal relationships is, or is based on, the truth of corresponding propositions or on the ability of a subject to have cognitions. Correspondingly, requests, orders, admonitions, promises, agreements, excuses, admissions, and the like, have different specific meanings; but the claim put forward in these different interpersonal relationships is, or refers to, the rightness of norms or to the ability of a subject to assume responsibility. We might say that in different speech acts the content of the speaker's engagement is

*determined by different ways of appealing to the same, thematically stressed, universal validity claim.* And since as a result of this appeal to universal validity claims, the speech-act-typical commitments take on the character of obligations to provide grounds or to prove trustworthy, the hearer can be rationally motivated by the speaker's signaled engagement to accept the latter's offer. (CES, 63)

In a nutshell, this signifies that the hearer can be *rationally motivated* to accept the content proposed by the speaker.

This acceptance is facilitated by the immanent obligation of each type of speech action to provide, for every validity claim made, either grounds (in the case of constatives), justifications (in the case of regulatives), or confirmations (in the case of avowals). The satisfaction of this obligation can be done either immediately - in the context of utterance, or mediately — in discourse or in the succession of consistent actions. Immediately, it is satisfied through recourse to experiential certainty (with respect to truth); through indicating a corresponding normative background (with respect to rightness); or through affirmation of what is evident to oneself (with respect to sincerity). On the contrary, the mediate satisfaction of this immanent obligation is realized according to the mode of communication engaged in. David Held explains the process involved in each of the three modes:

In the cognitive use of language, if an initial statement is found unconvincing, the truth claim can be tested in a theoretical discourse. In the interactive use of language, if the rightness of an utterance is doubted, it can become the subject of a practical discourse. In the expressive use of language, if the truthfulness or sincerity of an utterance is questioned, it can be checked against future action.<sup>25</sup>

Thus universal pragmatics generates a genuine optimism over the comprehensive possibility to examine an utterance. This is an essential component of the rational motivation behind the illocutionary force of a speech action. Habermas assures us of this:

We can examine every utterance to see whether it is true or untrue, justified or unjustified, truthful or untruthful, because in a

<sup>25</sup>Introduction to Critical Theory, p. 338.

speech, no matter what the emphasis, grammatical sentences are embedded in relations to reality in such a way that in an acceptable speech action segments of external nature, society, and internal nature always come into appearance together. (CES, 67-68)



Hannah Arendt ascribes an important function to narratives in her theory of action: “Action reveals itself fully only to the storyteller, that is, to the backward glance of the historian, who indeed always knows better what it was all about than the participants. All accounts provided by the actors themselves, though they may in rare cases provide an entirely trustworthy statement of intentions, aims, and motives, become mere useful source materials in the historian’s hands and can never match his story in significance and truthfulness.” [HC, 192]. This means that narratives lend a measure of truthfulness and a greater level of significance to the actions of individuals.

There is another importance that the telling of a story occupies with regard to action. Narratives perpetuate the memory of deeds through time. Without these narratives, the actions of men, given their frailty and unpredictability, would not endure. In no time they will be relegated to oblivion. The narratives prevent this regrettable eventuality. They afford the deeds of men with permanence and, through remembrance of these deeds, narratives ensure that they continue to benefit future generations. This is important, according to Arendt, because these deeds of men are wellsprings of inspiration and encouragement for the present as well as the future. They also serve as models to be definitely emulated and possibly surpassed.

In what follows, we relate the wonderful story of the Philippine people power revolution — with the same intent assigned by Arendt to storytelling, and in an effort to present that revolution with the advantage of reflective hindsight. We consider below the two people power revolutions as part and parcel of the same story — Edsa 1 and Edsa 2, as part of one story line though woven at different historical moments. Let us then begin where and when it all began.

*February, 1986:* The moment hangs suspended in the halls of our pride, there to sneak a glance at and touch the edges of months later, there to stand back from and admire like an old favorite sepia print pinned in a place of honor, reminding us how we were then, of why

we are today. It hangs there for as long as parents will weave the story for tots with eyes wide open and lips slightly parted — the story of a fairy tale come true; of all these little heroes pushing against the tanks of a master villain; of the legend of a single housewife and a country that took the world by surprise ... Few of us have resisted the temptation to glamorize the event, to speak of it either in hushed tones of reverence or in the grandest terms we can muster, to embellish it with sparkling courage and a sense of mission ... The tale has been fleshed out for the nth time. The details are down pat, if only by repetition ... The fact is, it's a story worth the retelling.<sup>26</sup>

### *Historical Review*

From the end of 1985 up to the beginning of 1986, a series of events transpired which thrust the Philippines into the international limelight.<sup>27</sup> On November 3, 1985, strongman President Ferdinand E. Marcos announced on U.S. television that he was calling a snap presidential election "perhaps in three months or less."<sup>28</sup> The election date

<sup>26</sup>Francoise Joaquin, *Mr and Ms Special Edition* (February 20-26, 1987), p. 10.

<sup>27</sup>The running descriptions in the following pages of the events that led to Edsa 1 are culled from a number of various sources. Unless otherwise indicated, the accounts of the publicly reported events are taken mainly from *Impossible Dream: The Marcoses, the Aquinos, and the Unfinished Revolution* by Sandra Burton (New York: Warner Books, 1989) and from Stanley Karnow, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines* (New York: Random House, 1989). Their stories are corroborated in local press reportages by the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* and in articles by foreign correspondents of *Time* (Susan Tiff with Sandra Burton, Barry Hillenbrand and Nelly Sindayen, "Rebelling Against Marcos," 3 March 1986; Tiff with Burton and Sindayen, "Now the Hard Part" and William Smith with Burton, Johanna McGeary and William Stewart, "Anatomy of a Revolution," 10 March 1986); and *Newsweek* (Robert Cullen with Richard Vokey and Melinda Liu, "Marcos and the Election Mess," 17 February 1986; Anderson with Liu, Vokey, Willenson, Walcott and Rich Thomas, "Cory's 'People Power,'" 10 March 1986). The books by Burton and Karnow were also helpful especially for their accounts of the political haggling among the major political figures that played prominently in Edsa 1, as well as the descriptions of U.S. involvement in the revolution. Additional descriptions of the involvement of organized civilian groups in the events leading to Edsa and the revolution itself come from political analyst and researcher Joel Rocamora in his book *Breaking Through: The Struggle Within the Communist Party of the Philippines* (Pasig: Anvil Publishing, 1994).

<sup>28</sup>It is widely perceived that Marcos' decision to hold the election was in reaction to pressure from the U.S. government for him to prove the legitimacy of his

was later set for February 7, 1986. Alas, it proved to be the fourth and last presidential election that Marcos would participate in, in 21 long years.

The announcement of the snap election actually set off the start of the climax of a story that had been unfolding for a decade and a half – the story of how Marcos was eventually, and unceremoniously, ousted from office. The story had its beginnings in the late 1960s, as a twofold political crisis loomed over the country. Firstly, the Communist crisis found its way to Philippine shores by means of student-led protests against the Vietnam War, and the founding, in December 1968, of a new Communist party; secondly, soon after Marcos' re-election in 1969, allegations of corruption and the possibility of a dictatorship began to be whispered about the country.<sup>29</sup> In the halls of Congress, the administration and opposition parties polarized rapidly. On the streets, a series of violent demonstrations by student, labor, and peasant groups began, in what came to be known collectively as the "First Quarter Storm." Over the next two years, a series of violent incidents was blamed on Communist insurgents, amid widespread belief that these were actually masterminded by the president himself.<sup>30</sup> Finally, on September 22, 1972, Marcos declared Martial Law.

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continued power. However, Karnow provides another perspective, suggesting that Marcos's decision to hold a snap election, instead of waiting for the presidential election scheduled at the end of his term in 1997, was part of his strategy to gain another six years in office. He goes on to elaborate: "[Marcos] would rig the count to win by a slim margin, thereby creating an illusion of honesty to silence his American critics. To deflect them further, he disguised the election as an American initiative by leaking to *Newsweek* that William Casey had suggested it during talks in Manila in May 1985. In fact, Casey never mentioned the subject. But subsequently, when Marcos did schedule the election, Casey claimed credit in order to gild his own role" (*In Our Image*, p. 409).

<sup>29</sup>Four years before Martial Law was declared, in his prophetic first speech before the Senate, Sen. Benigno Aquino, Jr. charged the president with using militarization to "transform our democratic society clandestinely into a garrison state." Benigno S. Aquino, Jr., "A Garrison State in the Making" in *A Garrison State in the Making and Other Speeches* (Manila: Benigno S. Aquino, Jr. Foundation, 1985), pp. 11-26; cited in *Impossible Dream*, 70.

<sup>30</sup>The polarization between the government's administration and opposition factions during this period are explained in greater detail in *Impossible Dream*, pp. 75-83.

The imposition of Martial Law effectively aborted the massive consolidation of anti-Marcos forces. The pro-administration sectors were then able to dominate the political apparatus of the country for the next decade, barring the anti-Marcos elite from the legislature. The threat of arrest, without due process and without a warrant, further alienated the formerly more conservative oppositionists and forced them to go underground. Of the student activists, numerous moderates, frustrated by the seeming futility of their cause, joined the radical leftist groups. Above ground, the public was relatively silent; only the Church hierarchy and a few political groups continued the anti-dictatorship movement, but they all failed to unseat Marcos.<sup>31</sup>

The President lifted Martial Law after nine years, in January 1981. Five months later, he was re-elected to another six-year term, his third elected term of office. Two years later, one of his staunchest and most outspoken political rivals, Sen. Benigno Aquino, Jr., decided to return to the Philippines after three years of self-imposed exile in the U.S. After his plane landed at the Manila International Airport, Aquino was escorted by military men down from the plane towards the airport tarmac. As he descended the steps, Aquino was shot in the head and was killed instantly.<sup>32</sup>

The following week, a staggering *mise-en-scène* dramatized the infuriation of the nation. An estimated two million Filipinos joined Aquino's funeral procession as it snaked through the metropolis. The Aquino murder visibly broke down the dam of the country's pent-up anger.

Over the next two years, the emotional impact of Aquino's murder, coupled with an ongoing economic crisis, created the conditions for the anti-dictatorship movement to grow tremendously, and it coagulated into several fronts.<sup>33</sup> At the extreme left, the mass base of the national democratic militant groups provided the framework for further organization of the labor and urban poor sectors. At the center left were the

<sup>31</sup>*Breaking Through*, p. 34.

<sup>32</sup>*Time* correspondent Sandra Burton narrates her own eyewitness account of the incident, as well as an overview of the conflicting version of the story that arose. See *Impossible Dream*, pp. 115-132.

<sup>33</sup>The following analysis on the various forces that comprised the anti-dictatorship movement is owed to Rocamora. See *Breaking Through*, pp. 34-35.

urban middle class organizations, left academics of universities, and the social democratic movement. The center right included the Catholic Church hierarchy, the organized business sector, and the right-wing social democrats. At the extreme right were those from old politico families such as Salvador Laurel; dissatisfied military leaders such as then assistant chief of staff Lt. Gen. Fidel V. Ramos, Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile; and the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) a faction of professional soldiers who were embittered by the politicization of the armed forces. The combined power of all these sectors led to the largest and most sustained mass actions during the Marcos period, and, as Joel Rocamora suggests, "perhaps ever in Philippine history."

By late 1984, rumors of a possible snap presidential election were already floating. The anti-dictatorship movement still had not solved its biggest problem: its disunity. As of that time, Laurel was still the main opposition candidate who had the political machinery for a possible victory; however, his rightist leaning made him unacceptable to many of the left-oriented groups. In response to this situation, a group of mostly Jesuit-trained people formed a Convenor Group with the objective of forming a tactical alliance among the divided opposition. In May 1985, the militant left also attempted to consolidate the opposition forces through the Bayan Founding Congress. However, bitter political debates within the congress caused it to fail, and the other opposition groups bolted. The left found itself in isolation. The Convenor Group emerged as the unifying alliance of the anti-dictatorship movement, eventually reconciling with oppositionist traditional politicians to form a new coalition. This alliance eventually became the prime mover in supporting the presidential candidacy of Aquino's widow, Corazon "Cory" Aquino, in the snap elections.<sup>34</sup> With Marcos' announcement of the snap elections, the newly organized opposition coalition hurried to work. The reluctant Aquino widow eventually agreed to run against strongman Marcos, with Salvador Laurel as her running mate. The campaign gathered momentum, and television and news photo images of the opposition sorties all seemed to point to an opposition win.

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<sup>34</sup>*Breaking Through*, pp. 36-38; *Impossible Dream*, pp. 282-286.

The elections were marred by violence, as well as staggering and blatant election fraud, leveled against the opposition.<sup>35</sup> An increasingly strident uproar rose across the nation, protesting the election anomalies. Despite this, on February 15, the Philippine National Assembly finished the official tally and declared Marcos the winner by some 1.5 million votes. On the following day, Cory announced her own election victory at a mammoth rally in Luneta Park. She then began a nationwide appeal for civil disobedience to unseat Marcos' "usurper government" by eroding his economic base through a series of boycotts and work stoppages.<sup>36</sup>

As the call for civil disobedience mounted, the officers of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement finalized plans for a *coup d'état*, scheduled for the early hours of Sunday, February 23.<sup>37</sup> A security breach, however, caused a leak and information on the planned coup reached the Chief of Staff of the Armed forces, General Fabian Ver. Upon receiving word that they were marked for arrest, the coup plotters, along with Enrile and Ramos, retreated to Camp Aguinaldo along Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA).<sup>38</sup> That evening, Enrile and Ramos held a televised news conference. As described in *Time*:

The mood was tense as the two men, clad in olive and gray and blinking into the glare of television lights, took their seats before a cluster of microphones ... Behind them huddled about a dozen soldiers, some in full battle regalia. Outside ... heavily armed guards and tanks stood at the ready. When the two men began to speak, the reason for the precautions became startlingly clear, for they were proclaiming open rebellion, Philippine-style, against the 20-year regime of President Ferdinand Marcos.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup>*Impossible Dream*, pp. 350-353, pp. 356-357.

<sup>36</sup>Francisco S. Tatad, "Cory's Boycott," *Business Today*, 18 February 1986, p. 4.

<sup>37</sup>This is as recounted by Karnow, *In Our Image*, 416-417. Karnow explains that the RAM had already established links with some of the Marcos' closest security forces. The plan was to attack Malacañang Palace, seize Marcos, and install a new leader, identified by Karnow as Enrile. According to Burton's account, however, it was planned that a civilian junta, the National Reconciliation Council (NRC), be installed after the coup. Names that were floated for membership on the NRC were Cory, Enrile, Ramos, and a prominent businessman unnamed by Burton. See *Impossible Dream*, pp. 339-340, pp. 372-373.

<sup>38</sup>*In Our Image*, p. 417; *Impossible Dream*, pp. 373-381.

<sup>39</sup>Tiftt, with Burton, Hillenbrand and Sindayen, "Rebelling Against Marcos," *Time*, March 3, 1986.



The revolt had begun. Soldiers and civilians sympathetic to Enrile and Ramos arrived to defend the camp. Ramos and later Enrile moved across the road to Camp Crame. That night, over the Catholic radio station, Radio Veritas, Cardinal Sin broadcast an appeal for people to support Enrile and Ramos by rallying at EDSA in defense of the Camp. "Our two good friends have shown their idealism," Sin told the radio listeners. "I would be very happy if you could support them now." The appeal was effective. By 1:30 a.m., some twenty thousand civilians had massed outside the camp on Edsa.<sup>40</sup> For his part, Marcos chose to wait before acting, claiming a policy of "maximum tolerance."<sup>41</sup> It was mid-afternoon, Sunday, when the first tanks, led by a hesitant Marine Commandant, Brigadier General Artemio Tadiar, began to make their way to EDSA. In the meantime, American intelligence covertly helped the rebels, feeding phony reports to the Marcos side and allowing rebel planes to refuel at the American-controlled Clark Air Base.<sup>42</sup>

All the while, citizens continued to pour into EDSA, creating a mammoth human barricade around the Camp. The crowd swelled to a sea of an estimated two million people dressed in yellow — singing songs, praying the Rosary, waving yellow flags, and carrying religious statues above the heads of the people. Residents in the nearby posh subdivisions made sandwiches and cooked meals in their kitchens, bringing them to Edsa to feed the soldiers and the crowd. At the sight, Commander Tadiar hesitated when orders came for him to disperse the crowd and force their way into the camp. "I don't want to hurt these people," he radioed to head of operations General Josephus Ramas. "I'm also human like you."<sup>43</sup> Karnow later described the scene thus:

Demonstrators carried banners demanding Marcos's resignation. Rebel soldiers, their flag patches inverted, mingled with the throng. One of several climaxes came when loyalist tanks lumbered into the area. As people chanted hymns, priests and nuns knelt in prayer

<sup>40</sup>*Impossible Dream*, pp. 387-388; *In Our Image*, p. 417.

<sup>41</sup>Speculations for Marcos' reasons for not acting right away are enumerated by Burton in *Impossible Dream*, pp. 386-387.

<sup>42</sup>Haggling among the different military commanders are described by Burton in *Impossible Dream*, 389-390; American involvement with the rebels is described by Karnow in *In Our Image*, p. p. 417 and by Burton in *Impossible Dream*, p. 385, 394.

<sup>43</sup>*Impossible Dream*, p. 390.

before the machines, and children pressed flowers on the cries. The tanks retired, the people advanced and the tanks withdrew. The tension continued through the day, the crowd cheering each small victory. The EDSA Revolution subsequently became a legend, encapsulated in Cory's escutcheon: People Power.<sup>44</sup>

After several similar moments like this, the tanks finally received permission to return to Fort Bonifacio.<sup>45</sup>

Marcos' decision to bide time turned out to be, for him, a costly mistake. By Monday, February 24, as the crowd on EDSA grew, government troops were defecting to the opposition in droves. Nonetheless, tension inside Camp Crame remained high, as the situation teetered almost on the edge of violence. Fortunately, fighting did not break out. *Time* later recounted one of the most dramatic moments of the day, when Air Force men, ordered to attack Camp Crame, arrived upon the scene:

When helicopters from the 15<sup>th</sup> strike wing of the air force began circling overhead, it looked as if the reformist rebellion was all over. If the choppers had fired into the Enrile-Ramos headquarters, the reformers would have been helpless. But then the choppers landed, and out came the airmen waving white flags and giving the "L" sign for *laban* (fight), a symbol of the opposition. Suddenly the crowd, realizing that the air force was now defecting, went wild.<sup>46</sup>

According to Karnow's account, as Marcos watched, he began to realize that he no longer had the numbers for a military solution to the problem. After some last-ditch efforts by Marcos to bargain with the opposition failed, a race ensued between Marcos and Cory to legitimize themselves as president. Both inaugurations were set for the next day.<sup>47</sup>

Mid-morning of that same Monday, Marcos appeared on air live over the government-owned TV station Channel 4 to declare a state of emergency. He was interrupted mid-sentence as the station suddenly

<sup>44</sup>*In Our Image*, p. 428.

<sup>45</sup>*Impossible Dream*, p. 393.

<sup>46</sup>Smith with Burton, McGeary and Stewart, "Anatomy of a Revolution," *Time*, March 10, 1986.

<sup>47</sup>*In Our Image*, 418-421. The uneasiness of the coalition between Cory and Enrile is described in greater detail in Burton, *Impossible Dream*, pp. 398-400.

went off the air; angry oppositionists had stormed the government station. By early afternoon, the citizens had captured Channel 4 after a brief exchange of fire that resulted in only one reported casualty. The station resumed broadcast three hours later, manned by volunteers. A newscaster jubilantly declared on the air, "This is the first free broadcast of Channel 4 ... The people have taken over."<sup>48</sup>

Scare tactics from the rebel forces put Marcos increasingly on edge.<sup>49</sup> At three o'clock in the morning of Tuesday, February 25, Marcos received a public plea from the U.S. government: "Attempts to prolong the life of the present regime by violence are futile. A solution to this crisis can only be achieved through a peaceful transition to a new government." Marcos immediately called Washington to confirm the message, and tried to bargain with the US government, but to no avail. US Senator Paul Laxalt gravely told the Philippine chief, "Mr. President... I think you should cut and cut cleanly. The time has come." By this time, it was five o'clock in the morning in Manila.<sup>50</sup>

A few hours later, at Club Filipino in Greenhills, MP Neptali Gonzales read a "people's resolution" annulling the Batasan proclamation of Marcos and Arturo Tolentino as duly elected president and vice-president, respectively, and proclaiming Corazon Aquino and Salvador Laurel instead. Cory and Laurel took their oaths. In her first executive order, Cory appointed Enrile as her own defense minister, promoted Lt. Gen. Fidel V. Ramos to the rank of General, and appointed the latter as her own Armed Forces Chief of Staff.<sup>51</sup> Just after Cory's

<sup>48</sup>*Impossible Dream*, 400; Francisco S. Tatad, "The People Are in Control," in *Business Today*, 25 February 1986, p. 4.

<sup>49</sup>*Impossible Dream*, pp. 400-401.

<sup>50</sup>The events surrounding the telephone conversations between Marcos and U.S. Senator Paul Laxalt are described by Karnow in *In Our Image*, and are corroborated by William Smith in "Anatomy of a Revolution," *Time*, 10 March 1986. Karnow cites in his endnotes U.S. State Department sources for the description of the events that took place in Washington that day. He adds: "I should mention for the record that Marcos denied to me in a conversation in Hawaii that he had spoken to Laxalt on the telephone. When I asked why he decided to leave his palace, he replied that Bosworth had threatened to send in U.S. Marines to oust him and that an American gunboat was headed up the Pasig River to blast him out. Bosworth has denied these stories as preposterous, and I believe him" (*In Our Image*, p. 474).

<sup>51</sup>Francisco S. Tatad, "An Eventful Exit," *Business Today*, 26 February 1986, 4. The negotiations at which Enrile requested for the post of defense minister for himself and the post of chief-of-staff for Ramos, are described briefly in *Impossible Dream*, p. 399.

installation rites at Club Filipino, Marcos pushed through with his own inauguration on a balcony at Malacañang Palace, before a crowd of four thousand cheering supporters. Late in the afternoon, the Marcoses and their children boarded a helicopter which flew them to the Clark Air Field in Pampanga. Hours later, the Marcos family left for Hawaii.<sup>52</sup>

When the news of the Marcoses' departure reached the people, Malacañang Palace fell into the citizens' hands. Tatad described it a few days later:

The men and tanks that had for days stood in front of its gates ready to fight and die for its occupants withdrew in peace after the ex-president and his family had left their official apartments under the cover of darkness en route to a foreign exile. No official announcement was needed, and there was none. Either the people knew it by instinct, or they heard the news on their radios. And the minute it was over, an inexhaustible torrent of humanity poured from all directions in frenzied merrymaking. They surged and swept the Palace gates, cheering, shouting, and dancing.<sup>53</sup>

The EDSA revolution that ousted Marcos became the toast of peace and freedom loving people all over the world. It also came to be referred to as the *EDSA Miracle* for its minimal bloodshed. As *Time* correspondent Roger Rosenblatt put it:

Try not to forget what you saw last week. You say now that it would be impossible to forget: Filipinos armed to the teeth with rosaries and flowers, massing in front of tanks, and the tanks stopping, and some of the soldiers who were the enemy embracing the people and their flowers. Call that a revolution? Where were the heads stuck on pikes? Where were the torches for the estates of the rich? The rich were in the streets with the poor, a whole country up in flowers.<sup>54</sup>



The miracle was attributed, alternately, to Divine Providence (by the Catholic Church and her faithful), to American intervention (by the

<sup>52</sup>*In Our Image*, p. 422.

<sup>53</sup>Francisco S. Tatad, "Winning the Revolution," *Business Today*, 27 February 1986, p. 4.

<sup>54</sup>Roger Rosenblatt, "People Power," *Time*, 10 March 1986.

Reagan administration), and, even to "luck, sheer luck,"<sup>55</sup> by a skeptical U.S. State Department official.

Arendt, however, provides a framework for a better appreciation of the *Edsa Miracle* in the context of her understanding of revolution as an exercise of genuine power.

Two factors may be cited as providing the impetus, on the one hand, for the formation of the mammoth crowds at EDSA, and, on the other, for heterogeneous political and military elements, to participate in the revolution. The immediate trigger of the EDSA revolution was the massive fraud that took place during the presidential elections, which demonstrated the impotence and failure of constitutional means to bring about a legitimate transfer of power. The more long-standing and deep-seated root was the years of dissatisfaction with a government widely perceived and proven to be dastardly corrupt and harshly authoritarian.

To merely say, however, that the EDSA revolution came about as a result of these two factors would amount to an oversimplification. To begin with, the election fraud should have come as no surprise to the people. Just two years before, the parliamentary elections were widely boycotted by a significant portion of the country's organized political sectors, due to the perception that an election would be a practically moot exercise amidst the expected fraud. Moreover, grumblings of discontent over the state of governance had been simmering for years. Preparations for the coup plot, spearheaded by a disgruntled Enrile and his core of loyal and idealistic officers, had begun, according to Karnow, as early as 1983, with the skeleton of options already being discussed as early as March 1985. Election fraud and corruption alone do not immediately spark a revolution.

Arendt maintains that one of the characteristics of a revolution is that it is an act of *power*, which she contrasts with *strength*. Whereas strength lies in the hands of an individual, power is collective; power corresponds to "the human ability not just to act but to act in concert" (OV, 44).

That the EDSA revolution happened at all was a function of its being an act of power. A decade and a half of anti-Marcos sentiment

<sup>55</sup>Morton Abramowitz, quoted by Karnow, *In Our Image*, p. 422.

failed to produce an earlier revolution because of a lack of concordance of forces powerful enough to oust Marcos. From 1967 to 1983, the number of the opposition grew in number, but was splintered by ideological differences and lack of consolidated organization. Furthermore, Marcos employed the use of a successful weapon against concerted action by destroying the public space in which the various groups could coalesce. During the Martial Law years, prohibitions on public assembly limited the "parliament of the streets" that had been a central node of the people's power during the First Quarter Storm. The crackdown on media outfits and the culture of fear sowed by the tyranny of the ruling military further prevented the convergence of anti-dictatorship powers.<sup>56</sup>

The lifting of Martial Law in 1981 finally loosened these restrictions. The parliamentary elections of 1984 set the stage for the various anti-dictatorship factions to form an alliance with a common battle cry: an election boycott. This was further strengthened by the Convenor Group's initiative to have a united opposition front. Even the 1985 Bayan Founding Congress fiasco, notwithstanding the isolation of the left, obliquely paved the way for a further coalescing of the forces that would play prominently in the February 1986 events. As Burton observed:

During the four days in which a dictatorship collapsed and a fragile, new government was installed in its place, the warring social and political forces that had blocked peaceful change so often in the past came together in a brief, harmonious moment of mutual interest and inspiration. As a result, the events which came to pass along the highway that was appropriately named *Epifanio de los Santos* (EDSA) transcended, for once, the individual claims and factional rivalries of the people involved.<sup>57</sup>

With the convergence of these forces, it was not therefore entirely unexpected that the prominent players in the EDSA revolution came from almost every color on the political-economic spectrum. Laurel,

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<sup>56</sup>See Nemesio S. Que, "Hannah Arendt: On Violence and Power," in *Pagdiriwang sa Meron: A Festival of Thinking Celebrating Fr. Roque F. Ferriols, S.J.* Ed. Nemesio S. Que and Agustin Martin G. Rodriguez (Quezon City: Office of Research and Publications, 1997), pp. 82-83.

<sup>57</sup>*Impossible Dream*, pp. 375-376.

Enrile, Ramos, and the Reform the Armed Forces officers came from the right; the latter three making the crucial military step that opened the floodgates of the revolution. Cardinal Sin and Cory, identified with the center right, added to the crowd outside Crame a flock of more than a million. The center left — the academicians, and social democrats — provided the organizational base of the alliance that supported Cory's candidacy.

The revolution's coalescing of power was unprecedented in another aspect, namely, in the alliance of the civilian and the military, a phenomenon almost unbelievable for a citizenry that had cowered in fear of the military establishment throughout the Martial Law years. The images of the revolution were indeed an ironic but graphic symbol: citizens forming a human barricade to protect a military camp; priests, nuns, and ordinary men and women kneeling before tanks to stop the war machines; children offering flowers to loyalist soldiers, asking them to "join us, join us"; rebel soldiers moving about the throng, cheered by civilians.

This remarkable alliance of the civilian and the military resulted in the peaceful outcome of the revolution. Here we see a second theme in Arendt come into play: non-violence. Although both violence and power seek the same function, they are actually opposites. In governments, they are usually found together, with violence arising when power is weakened. However, violence ultimately destroys power; and at no time can violence ever generate power (OV, 56). This is not to claim that revolution marred by violence can never be a genuine revolution; what Arendt meant to assert is that violence should not be seen as a necessary characteristic of revolution.

[V]iolence is no more adequate to describe the phenomenon of revolution than change; only where change occurs in the sense of a new beginning, where violence is used to constitute an altogether different form of government, to bring about the formation of a new body politic, where the liberation from oppression aims at least at the constitution of freedom can we speak of revolution. [OR, 28]

In dissociating the idea of revolution from the element of violence often identified with it, Arendt obliquely implies that a revolution can occur that is non-violent. Hence, Arendt would say, the miracle of EDSA

was not that it was unusually peaceful; rather, the miracle of EDSA was that it proved that a revolution need not be violent in order to be successful. To push the idea one step further, EDSA proved that it is non-violence that does in fact allow for a successful revolution.

The EDSA revolution began with a plan among military factions to stage a violent rebellion in the form of a *coup d'état*. However, the unpredictability which is characteristic of human action caused the subsequent events to take a very different turn. Marcos' crackdown on suspected subversive elements in the military prevented the coup from taking place as planned. The coup plotters were forced to change strategy and retreat to Camp Aguinaldo, and later, to Camp Crame. A significant turning point occurred when Cardinal Sin issued the call to the public to envelop the rebelling faction in a protective barricade of warm bodies. The citizens responded by arriving in droves, eventually forming a sea of people some two-million strong.

The power of the people lay not only in their numbers, but also in their message, and the peaceful manner by which they proclaimed that message. For Arendt, speech is inextricable from action, and violence, while a form of action, ends speech; for this reason, violence lies only at the fringes of genuine action. The absence of violence at EDSA allowed the spoken message of the people to emerge from the throng. The message was a call for liberation from decades of oppressive government and for greater freedom for the people. That message was so loudly captured in the haunting refrains of the song that became the anthem of the anti-dictatorship movement — "*Pilipinas kong minumutya, pugad ng luha ko't dalita; aking adhika makita kang sakdal laya!*" — and boldly printed on the placards raised defiantly at every campaign sortie of Cory Aquino — "*Tama na, sobra na, palitan na!*"

By the power of their number and the force of their message, the throng at Edsa won over the support of an increasingly significant number of soldiers. Upon hearing the cries of the crowd, the war machine withdrew. The soldiers held their fire, many crossed the line to join the revolutionary forces of Ramos and Enrile, and thereby became the protectors of the people against the forces still loyal to Marcos. With the support of the military dwindling, Marcos soon realized he had lost his grip on power. Arendt had contemplated a situation like this and its implication some two decades back:



In a contest of violence against violence the superiority of the government has always been absolute; but this superiority lasts only as long as the power structure of the government is intact — that is, as long as commands are obeyed and the army or police forces are prepared to use their weapons. When this is no longer the case, the situation changes abruptly. Not only is the rebellion not put down, but the arms themselves change hands ... Only after this has happened, when the disintegration of the government in power has permitted the rebels to arm themselves, can one speak of an “armed uprising,” which often does not take place at all or occurs when it is no longer necessary. Where commands are no longer obeyed, the means of violence are of no use; and the question of this obedience is not decided by the command-obedience relation but by opinion, and of course, by the number of those who share it. Everything depends on the power behind the violence. (OV, 48-49)

There were two decisive moments when the EDSA revolution could have turned violent. The first was on the morning of February 23, the scheduled time of the planned coup. Had the coup succeeded, an armed confrontation between the loyalist soldiers and the military rebels would have ensued. And had the leaders of the two sides not engaged in parallel negotiations, no dialogue would have taken place, and violence would have erupted effectively ending all speech-action. Furthermore, had the situation deteriorated into a head-to-head confrontation, the rebel forces would not have been bolstered by defections from the loyalist camps.

The second moment that could have led to violence was when Marcos considered attacking the people at Edsa. What would have taken place would have been a violent response to a powerful situation. This could have led to mass slaughter and the political situation in the country could have worsened further. Arendt had such a scenario in mind when she wrote:

In a head-on clash between violence and power, the outcome is hardly in doubt. If Gandhi’s enormously powerful and successful strategy of nonviolent resistance had met with a different enemy — Stalin’s Russia, Hitler’s Germany, even prewar Japan, instead of England — the outcome would not have been decolonization, but massacre and submission. (OV, 53)

What she said of India could have been said of the Philippines in February 1986. Indeed, had Marcos succumbed to the suggestion of some of his military advisers and taken the violent option, he would have reaped not just a Pyrrhic victory. He would have gained *no* victory at all. Arendt had this to say:

To substitute violence for power can bring victory, but the price is very high; for it is not only paid by the vanquished, it is also paid by the victor in terms of his own power. This is especially true when the victor happens to enjoy domestically the blessings of constitutional government. (OV, 53-54)

To put it simply, had Marcos decided to open fire on the crowd, he might have succeeded in aborting the rebellion; however, his power would have further diminished. He would have lost the support of even more of the Filipino citizenry, and he would have lost the support too of his international backers, most notably the United States government.

In summary, we reiterate our view that the EDSA revolution was both a show of power and of non-violence. Following the framework of Arendt, we confirm that these two elements the EDSA people power revolution operated dependently on each other. It was the lack of violence that allowed power to grow and emerge — and along with it, the speech-action of the people. Likewise, the power of the people — their concerted action — was central in preventing the revolution from degenerating into a violent one.

From Revolution to Constitution. Power and non-violence are key elements of a revolution, as they were in EDSA I; nevertheless, it must be pointed out that these twin factors alone do not complete a revolution. A revolution in the modern sense, Arendt tells us, is never a mere change; always and necessarily it is intrinsically and permanently concerned with a *beginning*, “inextricably bound up with the notion that the course of history suddenly begins anew, that an entirely new story, a story never known or told before, is about to unfold” (OR, 13, 21).

Arendt explains that every modern revolution has always had as its goal, liberation and, more importantly, the emergence of freedom (OR, 21). The difference between these two is crucial to understanding the nature of revolution. Liberation refers to a negative condition: a liberation *from* an oppressor, a tyrant, or a condition of necessity. Revolution, on the other hand, is positive: its content is participation in

public affairs, admission to the public realm. While liberation, then, is the condition of freedom, it does not automatically lead to it (OR, 22-25). Hence, a mere transition of power — even if it means a nation's release from the hands of a tyrant — is not necessarily a revolution. This is what differentiates a revolution from a simple rebellion: "The end of rebellion is liberation, while the end of revolution is the foundation of freedom" (OR, 140). Freedom as a positive condition, however, is not automatically arrived at: it must be secured. The principal lesson of the American Revolution, according to Arendt, is precisely this: the American forefathers recognized — as the Greeks did but the French revolutionaries did not — that freedom in this political sense is not innately guaranteed by birth. More than that, a system, a *body politic*, must be institutionalized in order to *make* all people free (OR, 23-24).

When we apply this Arendtian view to properly assess EDSA 1, then we must maintain that the said event could only and truly be called a revolution if it issued a systemic change. The locus then where we must find the authenticity of EDSA 1 as a revolution lies in its aftermath. Once the euphoria of having ousted a dictator had passed, the world and the nation watched the Cory administration with bated breath. People expected radical changes for, intuitively, they recognized that the more lasting goal of the EDSA revolution was not merely to oust Marcos, but to dismantle altogether what Marcos represented and perpetrated, namely, a tyrannical system of government and an infirm political culture which they had openly proscribed: "*Palitan na!*" [We want the system replaced!]

President Cory Aquino tried her best to meet this expectation and she did make headways in effecting change in government through various measures. One of her first acts was to frame a new constitution. On March 25, 1986, just one month after taking her oath of office, Cory issued her third Proclamation which promulgated a provisional constitution.

Proclamation No. 3 laid to rest speculation among Filipino legal luminaries concerning the political status of the Cory government. It must be recalled that, following the 1973 Constitution, Marcos was proclaimed the winner of the presidential elections. Cory, on the other hand, proclaimed her victory "in the name of the people." After Marcos fled the country, Cory could have subjected herself to the 1973 Constitution by lodging a protest before the Batasang Pambansa and eventu-

ally allowing herself to be proclaimed the rightful victor by the Batasan. She chose instead to proclaim a provisional Constituion, following "the lead of the people who proclaimed her in defiance of the 1973 Constitution." As constitutional lawyer Joaquin Bernas said, Cory established as the foundation of her provisional constitution the mandate of the people.<sup>58</sup>

Together with the proclamation of a provisional constitution, Cory Aquino called for a Constitutional Commission to draft a permanent constitution. The draft was finished in six months and was ratified in a plebiscite on February 2, 1987.<sup>59</sup> The significance of this act of framing a new Constitution can never be gainsaid; for as Arendt declared in her study of revolution, the making of the constitution is "the foremost and the noblest of all revolutionary deeds ... the end product and also the end of revolutions" (OR, 157). At the same time, however, it must be clarified that her emphasis on the importance of constitution-making goes beyond the mere legal twists of what defines a revolution. Arendt stipulated that a genuinely revolutionary constitution, or more precisely, a constitution that is the offshoot of a revolution, must possess at least two characteristics. First, it must be a constitution "by which a people constitutes its own government" rather than a constitution imposed by a government upon a people. The second characteristic is this: recalling once again the distinction between liberation and freedom, a genuinely revolutionary constitution must not only liberate' it must also free (OR, 143-149).

In regard to the first characteristic, we can say that the 1987 constitution stands uniquely apart from the 1935 and 1973 constitutions in that it was framed in its entirety by Filipinos and ratified by the people through a nationwide plebiscite. The same cannot be said of the two previous Philippine constitutions.<sup>60</sup> The second characteristic entails

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<sup>58</sup>Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J., *A Living Constitution, The Cory Aquino Presidency* (Pasig: Anvil, 2000), p. 30.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup>The 1935 constitution, while it was framed by a Constitutional Convention and ratified by the Filipino electorate, was actually initiated by the Tydings-McDuffie Law which authorized the Philippine Legislature for this purpose. The 1973 constitution, on the other hand, was not ratified via a nationwide plebiscite; rather, local referenda were held in each *barangay* for members to vote for or against the proposed Constitution, and *also* to vote on whether they desired a plebiscite to ratify the Constitution.

some complexities. Arendt points out that a common characteristic of modern constitutions has been its tendency to focus more on a limiting of power rather than a generation of it:

If there was anything which the constitution-makers had in common with their American ancestors in the eighteenth century, it was a mistrust in power ... That man by his very nature is ‘unfit to be trusted with unlimited power,’ that those who wield power are likely to turn into ‘ravenous beasts of prey,’ that government is necessary in order to restrain man and his drive for power and, therefore, is (as Madison put it) a ‘reflection upon human nature’ — these were commonplaces in the eighteenth century no less than in the nineteenth (OR, 145)

Such an attitude certainly seemed to have animated the framing of the 1986 Philippine Constitution. One of the Constitutional Commission’s main goals in fact was to prevent another tyranny of power, such as was experienced under Marcos, from repeating itself. Hence, a landmark provision of the new constitution was the clipping of presidential authority — especially with regard to the suspension of the privilege of the writ of *habeas corpus* and the declaration of Martial Law.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, it must be asked whether the 1987 constitution did more than merely *liberate* its citizens by guarding them against a future dictatorship. It must be asked whether it was the spirit and intent of the 1987 constitution to *free* its citizens, by giving them greater power in the public space.

On this matter, Arendt argued that the success of the American constitution lay precisely in the fact that although importance was placed on liberation, far greater importance was placed on freedom:

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On the basis of alleged positive results of the referenda, President Marcos subsequently issued a controversial proclamation that the Constitution had come into effect. See Hector S. De Leon, *Textbook on the New Philippine Constitution* (Quezon City: Rex Book Store, 1989), 33-40. Citing art. VIII, sec. 10 of the 1935 Constitution, De Leon explains that “[t]here was ... no ruling that the 1973 Constitution has been validly ratified ... but the votes were not enough to declare that the Constitution was not in force.” He goes on to mention that the Supreme Court subsequently recognized the validity of the 1973 Constitution in later cases (*Textbook on the New Philippine Constitution*, pp. 35-36).

<sup>61</sup> *Textbook on the New Philippine Constitution*, pp. 45-46, pp. 50-51.

When [the founders of the American revolution] declared their independence from [the English] government, and after they had forsworn their allegiance to the crown, the main question for them certainly was not how to limit power but how to establish it, not how to limit government but how to found a new one ... The aim of the state constitution which preceded the Constitution of the Union ... was to create new centers of power after the Declaration of Independence had abolished the authority and power of crown and Parliament. (OR, 146-148)

At this point we have to make a very important distinction between the American constitution and the 1987 Philippine constitution. In the case of the former, the American Founding Fathers sought to establish a *new* republic after having liberated themselves from the British monarchy. In the Philippines case, the people revolted against a government that, legally speaking, was *already* a republic.

A different revolutionary task then after EDSA 1 has to be spelled out. And the proper question to ask is whether or not the drafters of the new constitution sought to empower the people more than what the old constitutions did.

If we compare the 1987 Constitution with the amended Constitution of 1973, we can easily discern that the Constitutional Commission, as a matter of fact, opened up new avenues of power. Among the more significant are the following:

1. The introduction of a system of initiative and referendum. The traditional representative form of government gave power to ordinary citizens indirectly through their public officials and directly through suffrage.<sup>62</sup> The system of initiative and referendum instituted in the new constitution allows the people to "directly propose and enact laws or approve or reject any act or law or part thereof passed by the Congress or local legislative body" after the registration of a petition signed by ten per cent of the total number of registered voters.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> *Textbook on the New Philippine Constitution*, p. 62.

<sup>63</sup> 1987 *Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines*, Art. VI, Sec. 32. Hector De Leon comments that this section "has institutionalized what is popularly known as 'people power' which was manifested with unprecedented popular support during and

2. The expansion of the section on local government into a separate article. In an effort to decentralize power from the national to the local government, local autonomy has been granted to local government units under the new constitution.
3. The introduction of the party-list system.<sup>64</sup> In order to provide for broader representation to the more marginalized sectors of society, 20% of the seats of the House of Representatives have been allocated to registered party-list groups.<sup>65</sup>

These and other similar provisions in the new constitution admittedly reflect the policy, which the Cory administration tried to adopt in conformity with the spirit of the EDSA revolution — a more representative, more participatory democracy. For their part, the Filipino people, by ratifying the constitution in overwhelming fashion, institutionalized the speech-act they had made at Edsa: a call for greater freedom. With the ratification of the new constitution, the Edsa revolution may be said to have gone full circle — a tyrannical and despotic leader was thrown out, the diseased system of government he created was rejected, and the groundwork was laid for a genuinely new beginning for the Philippine nation. Let us now look at the years that followed the new constitution and see whether the desired changes enshrined in this constitution were actually fulfilled.

In our view, the best feature of the new constitution, with respect to the revolutionary spirit that occasioned it, is the institutionalization and maturation of a system committed to politics from below. Decentralization therefore became the hallmark of government policy since 1987. In 1991, the new Local Government Code was passed, replacing the 1983 version of the law, providing greater local autonomy to the local government units. Since then, these local government units have continued in this spirit, actively lobbying with the legislature for greater decentralization. They have also worked closely with non-government-

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after the 1986 presidential ‘snap’ election and in the ‘Edsa revolution.’ *Textbook on the New Philippine Constitution*, p. 248.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, art. VI, sec. 5.

<sup>65</sup>See Agustin Martin G. Rodriguez and Djinora Velasco, *Democracy Rising?: The Trials and Triumphs of the 1998 Party-List Elections* (Quezon City: Institute of Politics and Governance and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1998).

tal organizations (NGOs) and people's organizations (POs) in the implementation of various social service programs.<sup>66</sup> The commitment to greater representation in the legislature has been further bolstered with the implementation of the party-list system, which allows smaller parties and underrepresented sectors to field candidates for a legislature that had been previously accessible only to large parties with the traditional political machinery.

The constitutional clauses safeguarding freedom of expression and peaceable assembly also allowed for a more vibrant political culture. Having been released from the strict censorship clauses of the Marcos administration (at least in terms of political issues), the tri-media were suddenly ablaze with fearless public affairs discussions and stirring political debates. Without a doubt, the years since the ratification of the 1987 constitution may truly be said to have witnessed real gains made in the creation of greater freedom.

This greater freedom provided for by the 1987 constitution, however, had not been realized without hitches. The local governments, for example, continue to rally for improvements in the law regarding the influence that the national government retains over them.<sup>67</sup> Problems with the implementation of the party-list system have likewise been the topic of much debate. Moreover, the measures initiated at overhauling the political structure of the country have been hampered by remnants of a political culture weighed down by a monstrous bureaucracy and weakened by the system of patronage.<sup>68</sup>

### *The Cory Years: 1986-1992*

From the very start of the Cory administration, several sectors of society were already critical of her government.<sup>69</sup> Among others, they

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<sup>66</sup>Red Batario, "The Press, Local Governments, and Changing Communities," in *Investigating Local Governments: A Manual for Reporters*. Ed. Cecile C.A. Balgos (Quezon City: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 2001), pp. 14-22.

<sup>67</sup>Batario, "Press, Local Governments, and Changing Communities," pp. 22-23.

<sup>68</sup>Sheila S. Coronel, "The Pare Principle," in *Betrays of the Public Trust*. Ed. Sheila S. Coronel (Quezon City: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 2000), pp. 184-185.

<sup>69</sup>One of the loudest criticisms against the Cory government and the two succeeding administrations has been their inability to gain any real progress in solving the



frowned upon what they perceived to be a return to the old politics of patronage and personality that had characterized the previous regime. Writing just three years after the revolution, Karnow made the following observation, typical of what a number of Filipinos felt at that time:

As Cory began to pick up the pieces of her shattered country ... she faced an array of staggering problems that no individual, even with divine guidance, could resolve rapidly. Nor was she inclined to promote drastic measures. Though she labeled her overthrow of Marcos a revolution, it was really a restoration ... Cory was not a revolutionary determined to renovate the society from top to bottom. Essentially conservative, as befit a member of her class, she sought to resurrect the institutions dismantled by Marcos rather than construct a new system... She gradually began to assert herself and showed in instances that she had the right stuff, but she squandered her initial momentum, thereby losing a unique opportunity to introduce reforms. Into the vacuum poured a multiplicity of undisciplined, selfish, querulous factions eager to advance their own ambitions. Revisiting the Philippines during the years following Cory's takeover, I was reminded of the 1960s, with its disorder, drift and doubt.<sup>70</sup>

While most had joined EDSA 1 in hopes of a new system based on true representation and greater freedom, many felt that much of the country afterwards continued to be alienated from the nodes of power.

This turn of events might be better understood if one recalls the different nuances in the agenda of the political coalition that had helped install Cory in power. As Rocamora observed, on one side of the coalition were the more progressive organizations that sought to push for reform agenda they had formulated in the midst of the Martial Law years. On the other side of the coalition, however, was the more conservation faction made up of members of the political elite who were

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problem of poverty. In a country such as the Philippines where poverty is massive and far-reaching, this is a crucial and primary concern. However, following Arendt's theory that the social question must be divorced from the political in a genuine revolution, the following paragraphs will focus more on the failures of the three administrations in the area of building political power. The social question will be tackled briefly in the last part of this paper.

<sup>70</sup>*In Our Image*, p. 423.

anti-dictatorship, but who had no plans of sacrificing their own positions of privilege.<sup>71</sup> Once Marcos had been ousted, the fragile coalition that they had forged from 1984 to 1986 began to disintegrate. In an attempt to strike a balance between the conflicting pressure groups, Cory oscillated between a progressive and conservative stance in her political and economic policies. In the end, it was widely perceived, the conservative in her eventually won out.

At the start of her administration, Cory heartened the center-left groups when she appointed known progressive individuals to key posts in her cabinet: human rights lawyers Augusto Sanchez, as Secretary of Labor, and Joker Arroyo as Executive Secretary. However, both of them were later removed from office after pressure from the military, the U.S. government, and the business sector. This, and the perceived lax stance that the Cory administration took against human rights abuses committed by the military, led to disillusionment among the center left.

The radical left, although they were reduced to fence-sitters during the revolution, nonetheless, initially received a fair deal from the Cory administration. Despite opposition from the military and the United States, Cory released top underground leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), the New People's Army (NPA), and the National Democratic Front (NDF). Negotiations were initiated with the NDF, followed by talks with the secessionist Muslim organization, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Pressure from the U.S. and military, however, crippled these negotiations. In January 22, 1987, a left-led group of organized peasants held a demonstration for land reform at Mendiola. The demonstration ended in a bloody clash with Philippine Marines, an event that came to be ignominiously known as the "Mendiola Massacre." In reaction to this, the NDF promptly withdrew from the talks with the government, which led to the immediate collapse of the negotiations.<sup>72</sup>

The harshest criticism against Cory, of course, was the restoration of the "traditional politicians" and political dynasties that Marcos had left out because he had viewed them to be the bitter enemies of his regime. This included *her* own family, the landed and politically minded

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<sup>71</sup>*Breaking Through*, pp. 44-45.

<sup>72</sup>*Breaking Through*, pp. 48-49.

Cojuangcos. Cory also received much flak for the failure of the anti-nepotism law, and the weakness of her agrarian reform program; this was attributed by many to the influence that many of the old political clans exerted over her administration. Just two years after the revolt, after the first congressional elections under the new constitution, Teodoro M. Locsin bemoaned this backslide in an article that summed up the sentiments of many Filipinos:

Free at last! And not just free in name but free in reality ... It will take time, but what was done at EDSA against the armed forces of the dictator could be done against another dictatorship — that of the old system, with its old-time politics that kept the millions in chains. There was hope for the Filipino people ... The gross character of the last elections dashed that hope. Not completely, it is to be hoped, but who was the winner at the polls? Who if not that enemy of true democracy: Oldtime Politics? The devil back — and the people in chains again?<sup>73</sup>

Near the end of Cory's term, the criticisms against her government remained unrelenting. On the sixth anniversary of the EDSA revolution, the editorial of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* bewailed her shortcoming:

EDSA gave the promise of great things for the nation, but it was a promise that was not to be fulfilled ... [The] Aquino administration had no new policies, new programs and new approaches. Only new faces coming from the same elite class ... It is a democracy of the elite, for the elite and by the elite.<sup>74</sup>

The people themselves were to blame for the failure to transform the triumph at EDSA into solid gains for the nation. The results of the senatorial elections of 1992 were hardly an encouraging sign of the political maturation of the Filipino. Elected to public office was a disappointing "mélange of intellectuals and comedians, millionaires and paupers, honest guys and scoundrels, religious freaks and womanizers."<sup>75</sup>

<sup>73</sup>Teodoro M. Locsin, "Back in Bondage," *Philippines Free Press*, 6 February, 1988.

<sup>74</sup>"Death of a Dream," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, February 25, 1992.

<sup>75</sup>*Philippine Free Press*, 20 June 1992, p. 8.

There were other factors moreover that further contributed to the internal weakness of the Cory administration, and undermined its pursuit of more progressive policies. One of these was the actual danger posed by the rightist forces. Within months after the Edsa revolution, Enrile was already vocally critical of what he considered the “soft” policy towards the radical left. Cory, for her part, did not disguise her distrust of Enrile and his political ambitions. She finally removed him from the cabinet before the year was over. Enrile then became the leader of the new opposition.<sup>76</sup> This, however, did not deter the threats from the right; they instead went beyond the mere political. As a matter of fact, in the six years that Cory sat as president, the disillusioned Reform the Armed Forces movement staged no less than six coup attempts against the. Instability caused by these forces posed a constant problem throughout her term.

It is also conceded by some of her critics that the Cory administration never enjoyed the benefit of an auspicious start as it had inherited from the Marcos regime a staggering foreign debt, a negative domestic growth rate, a formidable insurgency problem, and a neo-feudal political system ingrained deeply in Philippine culture. Furthermore, after the shaky coalition she had established with the right unraveled, Cory had to tackle daily the gargantuan task of balancing the political scales in her government, so much so that as Joel Rocamora noted: “For President Aquino, survival was achievement enough.”<sup>77</sup> Nonetheless, the general public sentiment was one of lament over the failure to capitalize on the opportunities for authentic reform.

### *The Ramos Years: 1992-1998*

The factionalization of the country’s nodes of power after the revolution reared its ugly head in the 1992 national elections. An unprecedented total of eight major political coalitions each fielded a presidential candidate. Amid the usual reports of election fraud, Cory’s “anointed,” her former chief of staff and later defense secretary, Fidel V. Ramos, emerged the winner but with less than a quarter of the votes cast for president. Surprisingly, though, Ramos ended his term as one

<sup>76</sup>*Impossible Dream*, pp. 418-421.

<sup>77</sup>*Braking Through*, p. 43.

of the most respected presidents in Philippine modern history. He succeeded in restoring stability to the nation. He succeeded in appeasing both the radical left and radical right forces as he simultaneously stepped up the depoliticization of the military. In addition, he presented an economic reform agenda that he dubbed "Philippines 2000." Its vision was widely seen as an impressive mix of development and democracy, and its political strategy was to strengthen the State against pressure coming from oligarchies, in order to allow the government to pursue its economic agenda more autonomously. At the same time, however, considering the ineffectualness of the bureaucracy, it expressly veered away from the authoritarian strategy utilized by the East Asian tiger economies; instead, it promoted people empowerment and a democratization of the economy.<sup>78</sup>

This economic package worked by and large in terms of resurrecting the economy; verifiably, the Philippines under Ramos experienced its most stunning economic growth in years. Per capita income increased from \$800 in 1992 to about \$1240 in 1997, and poverty was reduced. Trade was liberalized; monopolies were opened to competition; investor confidence was restored. At the end of his term, Asia was undergoing a crippling financial crisis, but the Philippines, relative to her neighbors, was barely scarred. When President Ramos stepped down from office at the end of his term, the nation's economy was arguably the best-performing in Southeast Asia.<sup>79</sup>

Notwithstanding all these, however, the strength of the Ramos administration — its economic agenda — also turned out the target of the harshest criticisms. From an economic perspective, the center-right macro-economics of his Philippines 2000 drew much flak from the left-leaning sectors. His economic agenda was accordingly still based on the trickle-down model, with a trickle-down perceived as too slow for many.

Politically, his administration was equally wanting. Despite his promise of "people empowerment", the strategy employed by Ramos to gain support for his agenda merely pandered to the old system of politicking. Early in his administration, for example, Ramos was widely

<sup>78</sup>Jose T. Almonte, "The Politics of Development," *Manila Times*, 24-26 July 1993; cited in Rocamora, *Breaking Through*, pp. 174-176.

<sup>79</sup>Antonio Lopez, "Time to Take a Bow," *Asiaweek*, 26 June 1998; Anthony Spaeth with Nelly Sindayen, "Turning 100," *Time*, 27 April 1998.

criticized for acquiescing to the passing of the Countryside Development Fund, which was actually a euphemistic term to disguise its true nature as pork barrel for legislators and a bargaining chip to gain their support for his economic agenda. Thus, writing two years following his election into office, Rocamora noted that the Ramos economic program really had no strategy, other than the unspoken system of patronage, to build a social coalition to support the administration's program. Besides,

The regime has mainly used *trapo* methods to secure its election, the approval of its legislative agenda, and the compliance of the bureaucracy. If it continues to rely on these methods, Philippines 2000 will be compromised in the same way that all reform and development plans were compromised in past administrations.<sup>80</sup>

Ramos likewise reportedly had his own coterie of cronies, and he was seen to have handed out government portfolios as political "*balato*" to his friends. Nor was his administration free of graft and corruption scandals, the most memorable of which was the Public Estates Authority-Amari scandal, which then Senator Ernesto Maceda called "the grandmother of all scams."<sup>81</sup>

Traditional politicking in the Ramos administration reached its climax in the last year of his term, when his supporters began to clamor for a change in the constitution, in order to allow the president to extend his term. A series of massive demonstrations, however, which once again united the various political sectors, prevented that move from gaining ground.

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<sup>80</sup>*Breaking Through*, p. 180.

<sup>81</sup>Midway though Ramos' term, the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee investigated anomalies involving the Amari Coastal Bay Resources Corporations' purchase of reclaimed property from the Public Estates Authority. According to a report by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ), Amari paid as much as P3 billion worth of payoffs to brokers, government bureaucrats, and politicians in order to close the deal. Among the names that cropped up as being related to the transaction were those of House Speaker Jose De Venecia, and President Ramos himself. For a fuller account, please see: Ellen Tordesillas and Sheila S. Coronel, "The Grandmother of All Scams," in *Betrays of the Public Trust: Investigative Reports on Corruption*, 145-162; first published in *Manila Standard, Sun Star Daily, Manila Times, Malaya, Business World, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Independent Post*, 18-22 March 1998.

Still, it may be said that, comparatively, the Ramos administration had a lesser share of the brickbats that hounded its predecessor from day one. Apart from the charter change controversy, the general public was for the most part quite supportive of President Ramos. This is rather surprising, to say the very least; for, while the economic gains he introduced into the country definitely merited public approval; however, Edsa 1, as we said earlier, was not a social revolution, but a political one. If the Ramos years were a chapter in the continuing story of People Power 1986, then it may be indicative of the muffling of the cries against traditional politicking that marked Edsa 1.

Indeed, when reports of graft and corruption in the Ramos administration made the rumor mills, much of the public turned a blind eye to them. The corruption controversies relating to the reclaimed property transaction, the government's infrastructure projects, and the 1998 Centennial Commission projects quickly fizzled out.

Another telling mark of this apparent apathy towards old politics was that Ramos' bet in the 1998 presidential elections was a man widely perceived to be the epitome of the traditional politician, House Speaker Jose De Venecia. In his campaign sortie, De Venecia made no apologies for this "trapo" image; he even boasted that what people perceived as his propensity to engage in patronage politics was, in actuality, his ability to forge coalitions and compromises, a skill necessary in the political arena. De Venecia eventually lost in the presidential election but he fared well at the polls, coming in second to the victor, Vice-President Joseph "Erap" Ejercito Estrada.

*The Erap Years: 1998-2000.* At first glance, the results of the 1998 presidential election should have come as a surprise. The economic gains of the Ramos administration alone should have rendered inexplicable the victory of a man who seemed to be, in every way, his complete opposite. In a race with as many as eleven presidential aspirants, Estrada astonished much of the political elite when he received more than 40% of the votes cast and took his oath as the Republic's thirteenth president.

The "Erap phenomenon" was, to many, exactly that — a phenomenon. A former movie actor, Estrada literally limped into Malacañang with a public image far different from any of his opponents'. While another presidential candidate boasted of having completed courses in Harvard and Cambridge, Estrada proudly proclaimed that he had never

finished college. While his predecessor had jogged every morning and kept an impeccable work ethic, Estrada was a heavy drinker who overslept and was late for meetings. Brandishing his “one-of-the-masses” image, he ate with his hands on camera, and gave speeches in the native Tagalog. Among all the “presidentiables,” Estrada was perceived as the least skilled in either politics or economics.

Yet perhaps, upon closer inspection, Estrada’s victory might even have been expected. In a television interview, political analyst Tony Gatmaitan observed that in a country where the masses had not yet benefited from any radical economic change, Estrada was a ray of hope: “*Sinubukan na natin lahat. Ilang dekada na ito. Pumipili sa mga magna cum laude, magagaling mag-Ingles. Wala namang nangyari sa buhay natin. ‘Subukan n’yo naman ako’*” [For decades, we tried everything! We set over ourselves people with degrees, with all kinds of credentials, who even spoke English impeccably, but our lives have remained the same! Try me for a change!]. The “Asiong Salonga” myth<sup>82</sup> that Estrada perpetuated hooked the masses even more to believe that here, finally, was a presidential candidate who understood the concerns of the poor more profoundly than any of the previous politicians. Gatmaitan noted the image that Estrada tried to portray: “*Makasalanan ako kagaya n’yo. Kagaya n’yo, hindi ako marunong mag-Ingles, hindi ko alam kung anong tinidor ang gagamitin. Kaya... ayaw nila akong umakyat sa Palasyo, kasi kayo yung ayaw nilang pumasok sa Malacanang*”<sup>83</sup> [Like you, I am flawed. Like you, my English is poor; I don’t know which fork is which in the formal dinner setting. “They” don’t want me in Malacañang because they don’t like you there either!]

On the outside, Estrada appeared to be a departure, not only from the traditional images of past politicians, but even from the traditional politics that had plagued the country for decades. He did not come from any of the old political dynasties, and his first speeches were laden with promises of a new kind of politics, one wherein “*walang kai-kaibigan, walang kama-kamag-anak*.” As it disappointingly turned out, however,

<sup>82</sup>“Asiong Salonga” was one of Estrada’s most famous movie roles, a Robin Hood-like character who defended the poor and downtrodden.

<sup>83</sup>Tony Gatmaitan, in an interview on “Kaibigan Ko si Erap,” *I-Witness*, exec. prod. Anna Rodriguez, field prod. Lloyd Navera, writ. Rowena Azada, hosted by Vicky Morales, GMA-7, Manila, 11 December 2000.



his administration was exactly the opposite of every promise he made. While Estrada himself was not a member of any traditional political clan, the style of governance he adopted was nothing but an unabashed display of "trapo" politics. A year into Estrada's administration, while many of his detractors were breathing sighs of relief at the apparent soundness of his economic policies, political scientist Alex Magno observed with furrowed eyebrows Estrada's seeming predilection for his "reliance on informal processes."<sup>84</sup>

The scandals that plagued Estrada seemed to prove the political analysts right. One of the early signs of trouble came with the president's underhanded way of dealing with big business. The *nouveau riche* that he surrounded himself with were pestered with rumors of using their closeness with the president to close certain deals. Estrada's alleged maneuverings in business became even more apparent with the Best World Resources stock fraud; not only were the prices of the Resources manipulated, but the most powerful man in the land himself was said to have interfered in the investigation.<sup>85</sup> The local media had a bone to pick with the Estrada administration as well. When *Manila Times* came out with one critical article too many, Estrada demanded a public apology. Publisher Robina Gokongwei at first refused, but alleged threats by the administration that it would order a tax investigation of her family reportedly pushed her to acquiesce. After the front-page apology to the president was printed, the Gokongweis sold the broadsheet, declaring they were pulling out of the publishing business.

Things did not fare much better in the political realm. Critics observed that Estrada's own cabinet — widely perceived to be a cabinet even better than the previous administration's — had little real executive power. The group of people really calling the shots, they said, was the slew of over sixty presidential advisers, consultants, and assistants that Estrada gathered around himself. While some of these appointees were genuinely talented politicians and technocrats, quite a number of them were just close friends and cronies of the president whose claims to expertise were as questionable as the reasons why they had been given

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<sup>84</sup>Alex Magno, quoted in Todd Crowell and Antonio Lopez, "Better than Expected," *Asiaweek*, 2 July 1999.

<sup>85</sup>Manuel L. Quezon III, "The Fight of His Life," *Philippines Free Press*, 18 November 2000, p. 3.

such positions of privilege in the first place.<sup>86</sup> In a 1999 article, journalist Ellen Tordesillas described how, at meetings of this so-called "Midnight Cabinet," Estrada's close drinking buddies managed to peddle the influence of their friendship on presidential policies:

[These men keep] him company while he unwinds over drinks; they even sing with him on the karaoke, as well as play mahjong, which could stretch these boys' nights out way past their usual quitting time if the President is losing. For the country's chief executive apparently does not take defeat at the gaming table very well ... But he takes well to recommendations and pieces of advice offered by his friends during these midnight sessions, say some government officials. Indeed, they even say a number of presidential decisions with wide-ranging implications [such as the use of pension funds for corporate takeovers] have been reached not during the Cabinet meetings that are usually held once a month, but during the informal discussions that take place while the President relaxes with his pals, who are not exactly without business interests to advance and defend.<sup>87</sup>

The legislature suffered a similarly negative fate. With only a loose coalition — rather than a real party — representing the administration, Estrada reportedly used tried-and-tested patronage politicking to peddle influence in Congress. Personal favors rather than issue-oriented discussions, it seemed to many, were the means by which Estrada got things done.<sup>88</sup>

Such was the atmosphere of the nation when the impeachment trial, which would ultimately led to the explosion of EDSA 2, began.

### *Assessing the Revolution*

Perhaps it could be said that whereas EDSA 1 was a decisive moment of speech-action, made possible by power and non-violence, it needed

<sup>86</sup>See Sheila S. Coronel, "The Pare Principle," in *Betrays of the Public Trust*, 182-188, first published in *i Magazine*, October-December 1988; and Ellen Tordesillas, "The Nocturnal President," in *Betrays of the Public Trust*, 188-195, first published in *i Magazine*, October-December 1999.

<sup>87</sup>"The Nocturnal President," p. 189.

<sup>88</sup>"The Fight of His Life," p. 4; Todd Crowell and Antonio Lopez, "Better Than Expected," *Asiaweek*, 2 July 1999.

to be institutionalized through the framing, and ratification by the Filipino people, of the 1987 constitution. However, following the ratification of the 1987 constitution, the Philippines seemed to have "lost its treasure," to use an Arendtian metaphor. The sequence of events in the next eleven years brought into question the efficacy of EDSA 1. Although some gains were made in the increasing of power especially on the level of grassroots politics, this was hampered by the old-politics culture that pervaded the political apparatus, and the apparent weakness of the nation's presidents to battle against patronage politics. On the whole, the Philippines seemed to have emerged as a nation that had merely conserved the "*trapo*" system of old, with its accompanying policies, structures, and culture.

Jurgen Habermas' insight into the nature of a speech act will serve us here to further Arendt's view. For Habermas, there are certain conditions that determine the success or failure of speech actions. Success refers to a situation in which the hearer not only captures the meaning of the sentence uttered but also willingly enters the relationship intended by the speaker:

The bond into which the speaker is willing to enter with the performance of an illocutionary act means a guarantee that, in consequence of his utterance, he will fulfill certain conditions - for example ... act in accordance with an intention disclosed by avowal, and so on. *Thus the illocutionary force of an acceptable speech act consists in the fact that it can move a hearer to rely on the speech-act-typical commitments of the speaker.* (CES, 62).

Habermas therefore claimed that the speaker can illocutionarily influence hearer precisely because "speech-act-typical commitments are connected with cognitively testable validity claims." (*Ibid*, 63). On the basis of his fidelity to this commitment, the speaker can rationally motivate the hearer to accept the content of his speech act. This means that the acceptance is premised on the fulfillment of the immanent obligation of each type of speech action to provide, for every validity claim made, either grounds (in the case of constatives), justifications (in the case of regulatives), or *confirmations* (in the case of avowals).

The satisfaction of this obligation need not be immediately carried out however. There is also the mediate satisfaction through discourse or the succession of consistent actions. In the expressive use of language,

to which an avowal belongs, the truthfulness or sincerity of the utterance can be checked against future action.<sup>89</sup> The speech act enunciated by the people at EDSA 1 was an unmistakable avowal of their rejection of the old system of government and a resounding clamor for a new kind of politics. The events that followed, however, seemed only to have unmasked such avowal as a farce. The occurrence of the second people power revolution served to redeem the legitimacy and validity of the original speech act that was the first people power revolution.

### *The Unfolding of EDSA 2*

As scandal after scandal rocked the Estrada administration, one sector after another of the population became disenchanted with the new dispensation. The business sector originally appeared willing to grant Estrada some leeway, not raising much of a ruckus even when rumors were floating that certain high-profile businessmen were using their friendship with the president to earn fat commissions for themselves. With the exposé of the stock fraud case, however, followed by the *Manila Times* scandal, the businessmen began to be flabbergasted as they realized that Estrada entertained no qualms in putting the pressure on commerce and trade, just to have his way or to please a few unscrupulous friends. These twin scandals delivered the lethal punch to his relationship with big business.<sup>90</sup>

Political watchers also grew alarmed over the resignation from the government of some of the most respected appointees of Estrada, reportedly in frustration over his under-the-table style of governance. When some of his detractors in politics suddenly began paying homage to the president, observers noted that the only plausible explanation could have been the bounty that Estrada showered these former critics: political appointments for their family members, business contracts for government projects, and lavish presents in cash and kind.

<sup>89</sup>Ranilo B. Hermida, "From Hermeneutics to Pragmatics: Philosophy as Emancipation in Habermasian Critical Social Theory," in *Four Essays in the Conduct of Philosophy as an Interrogative Practice*. Unpublished Masteral Thesis (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1999), pp. 116-117.

<sup>90</sup>"The Fight of His Life," p. 3.

The unorganized middle class, for the most part, never really liked the new swashbuckling president. As the months rolled by, and the stench of his incompetence and corruption in his administration became sickening, their unease slowly turned to rage. The *Manila Times* fiasco and his feud with the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* further alienated Estrada from the already critical middle-class media outfits, and stories of alleged corruption by Estrada abounded on the pages of broadsheets and on news and public affairs television programs. Fed with report after report of presidential anomalies, the middle class seethed like a tempest ready to burst.

It was not traditional politics alone that infuriated the people this time, but the vicious ends for which traditional politicking was brazenly used. An ugly picture of the Erap presidency emerged in so obvious a way that even those with no interest in business or politics could easily understand. It was bad enough that Estrada was using "*utang na loob*" to close business deals and to push government agenda. It was even more shocking that he was using it to buy lavish mansions for his mistresses and to stash money in the pockets of his family.<sup>91</sup> Not only was Estrada fomenting a kind of governance based almost purely on patronage; what was worse, it was, in the words of journalist Manuel L. Quezon III, a "patronage dispensed without rhyme or reason."<sup>92</sup> Just two years after his election into office, dissatisfaction with Estrada escalated into the beginning of the end. In an administration governed by friendships rather than political machinery, it turned out a bitter irony that his downfall would be eventuated by a disgruntled friend and former drinking buddy, Ilocos Sur Governor Luis "Chavit" Singson.

### *Estrada Is Impeached.*

On October 2000, Chavit Singson appeared on television to make the statement that was replayed again and again over the next few months. Raising his voice in front of a media mob, Singson said that he was personally accusing "the lord of all jueteng lords, no less than the

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<sup>91</sup>See Sheila S. Coronel, ed., *Investigating Estrada: Millions, Mansions and Mistresses* (Quezon City: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 2000).

<sup>92</sup>Manuel L. Quezon III, "Reversal of Roles," *Philippines Free Press*, 30 December 2000, 3.

president himself," Joseph Ejercito Estrada. In his affidavit, Singson contended that the president accepted more than P400 million in payoffs from illegal *jueteng* operators, and pocketed P130 million in kickbacks from Ilocos Sur's tobacco tax revenues.<sup>93</sup> The plot advanced rapidly. Singson was summoned to appear before the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee, which promptly conducted an investigation into the illegal numbers game. Within days, the controversy dubbed "Jueteng-gate" erupted by monumental proportions. One after another, the coalition-mates of the president severed their political ties with the president. A slew of politicians, including Vice-President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, called on the president to resign. On November 14, the House of Representatives impeached the president after a display of deft parliamentary maneuvering by the previously pro-administration House Speaker Manuel Villar.<sup>94</sup>

By the time Estrada was impeached, support for his administration within the national government structure dwindled to the select group of advisers surrounding him and to a much-emasculated coalition in the legislature. Outside the walls of government, only Estrada's closest cronies and the mass base which elected him into office continued to show a stubborn willingness to give Estrada the benefit of the doubt. Meanwhile, oppositionists from all colors of the political spectrum began to lead a series of demonstrations clamoring for the president's resignation. The Estrada supporters responded with their own demonstrations, crying, "Erap Remain!" For his part, Estrada insisted that the impeachment proceeding be given due course. He made a big fuss over his protestation of innocence, repeatedly claiming that he was certain he would be acquitted by the Senate. This declaration ruffled the members of the opposition in the Upper Chamber, for it was not an empty boast as Estrada did hold the aces in the Senate. While he had lost the majority in the Lower House, however, in the Upper House — which is invested by the Constitution with the exclusive power to try and decide all impeachment cases — Estrada had enough supporters who could frustrate a guilty verdict. It was out of fear for this eventuality

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<sup>93</sup>Nati Nuguid, "On Trial," Philippines Free Press, 16 December 2000, 2; corroborated by reports from Inquirer Online, <<http://www.inquirer.net>>.

<sup>94</sup>"Chronology of Events," <<http://www.inquirer.net/Jueteng/chrono.htm>>.

that the oppositionists demonstrating on the streets changed their chants and called instead on the senators to vote according to their consciences, rather than according to party affiliations, and to convict the president.<sup>95</sup>

After some last-minute attempts by the president's battery of lawyers to quash the charges failed, the impeachment trial finally began. There were four charges against the president: bribery, graft and corruption, betrayal of public trust, and culpable violation of the constitution. The trial became a daily radio and television fare for the nation, proving to have a more captive audience than had the soap operas it preempted. Within weeks, the courtly address, "Your Honor," and such legal phrases as "*subpoena duces tecum*" and "immaterial and irrelevant," entered into the popular vocabulary.

A day before the impeachment court was to break for the Christmas holiday, the defense presented its most shocking testimony yet. Clarissa Emerita Gray Ocampo, senior vice president and trust officer of Equitable-Philippine Commercial and Industrial Bank, testified that she saw the president sign bank documents using the alias Jose Velarde. "Jose Velarde," prosecutor Joker Arroyo had explained in his opening statement, was the name on a check for PhP 142 million deposited into a bank account of the president's friend Jose Luis Yulo. The money from this bank account had allegedly been used to purchase the "Boracay" mansion in Quezon City for Laarni Enriquez, one of the president's mistresses.<sup>96</sup>

Ocampo's statement was a deathblow to the defense, at least in the minds of millions of people who were following the trial. Ocampo's credibility was above question; here was a woman who had everything to lose and nothing to gain by pointing her accusing finger at the president. Moreover, the implications of her testimony could be grasped even by people uninitiated into the intricacies of banking law and "legal gobbledygook." Simply put, when the president stood in front of the press weeks before denying any knowledge of a "Jose Velarde," he was lying. Whether or not that legally constituted a betrayal of *public* trust, the plain and simple fact was that it was a betrayal of trust, period.

<sup>95</sup>"On Trial," p. 2.

<sup>96</sup>Nati Nuguid, "Following the Trail," *Philippines Free Press*, 30 December 2000, 8-12.

## *People Power 2001*

Under the Marcos regime, it had taken the assassination of a beloved senator for a country to finally vent their anger by spontaneously pouring into the streets; and even then, it took another two and a half years before the president was finally ousted. Under Estrada's rule, the explosion that rocked the nation was much swifter, far less bloody, but no less dramatic. On the evening of Tuesday, January 16, the country sat glued to their radio and television sets as the twenty-one senator-judges argued heatedly over whether the now-famous "second envelope" should be opened. The envelope contained additional documents supportive of the allegation that Estrada owned bank accounts containing P3.3 billion in unexplained wealth. The debate on the floor was over a technicality: Estrada's defenders were insisting that the envelope remain closed, since its contents were not directly related to the articles of impeachment. Finally, the issue was submitted to a vote: "yes" for the envelope to be opened, "no" for it to remain closed.<sup>97</sup>

For many, the senator-judges' vote on this envelope was crucial. Over the past few weeks, the behavior of many of the senator-judges in the courtroom had betrayed their biases. It had become increasingly apparent to the anti-Estrada populace that, the strength of the evidence against Estrada notwithstanding, the president still had the numbers in the Senate to win for himself an acquittal. The vote on the envelope, then, was going to be a portent of the outcome of the trial. It was widely believed that a "no" vote by any senator would be a clear indication that he or she would also vote for the president's acquittal by trial's end. At a previous press conference, the private prosecutors had announced that if the envelope was not going to be opened, they would walk out of the impeachment trial, which, by that point, would have been proven to be a sham. One at a time, the senator-judges publicly declared their votes. By the twentieth vote, the outcome was clear: the no's had it, and the evidence in the envelope would be suppressed. Senator-Judge Aquilino Pimentel was the last to vote; he voted "yes," and immediately announced his resignation as Senate President. Chief Justice Hilario Davide banged his gavel to adjourn the day's session. The trial room rose in uproar. The opposition senators gathered mournfully, some in

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<sup>97</sup>Sandra Burton, "People Power Redux," *Time*, 29 January 2001.



tears. The private prosecutors, as they had promised, walked out of the room. The anti-Estrada audience alternately applauded Pimentel's resignation and booed the eleven senator-judges who had voted "no." In response to the crowd, Senator-Judge Tessie Aquino-Oreta, known to be a staunch supporter of the president, waved to the crowd and danced jubilantly.

The vote itself was supposed to be a significant victory for the President but the reaction to the vote turned out to be catastrophic to his government. Within two hours, streets all over the nation were filled with people angrily denouncing the tainted trial. In Metro Manila, text messages were quickly passed from cellular phone to cellular phone: "Go to EDSA." The people, once again, congregated in droves at the historic site. Maritess Vitug reflects below on the implications of this swift development of events:

It was a Pyrrhic victory. A day later the 11 House prosecutors quit in angry protest stating: "We fear that our further participation in the charade will only mislead the people — the ultimate judge." Both sides had viewed the trial as a way to consolidate democratic institutions and resolve the political crisis — as long as it worked out favorably for their side. With the trial suspended, both sides were pointing fingers. "It is such an infantile, juvenile reaction to resign," said defense lawyer Sigfrid Fortun. "If you want democracy to work, you have to have faith in its institutions. It doesn't make sense for you to join in the game and then subsequently quit if you lose." But that was precisely the problem: people lost faith in the impeachment process. "The fact that we are now resorting to the streets shows that we don't trust the institutions," says Don Songco, a leader of Kompil, a coalition of non-government organizations opposing the government. Cardinal Jaime Sin, a force in the 1986 revolution and a longtime Estrada critic said: "We see the continuance of the trial as an exercise in futility and a mockery of truth. We cannot be blamed if we use other ways of intensified nonviolent forms of protest, including even civil disobedience."<sup>98</sup>

Over the next three days, as Filipinos elsewhere in the nation held their own local anti-Estrada demonstrations, the crowd at EDSA swelled

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<sup>98</sup>Maritess D. Vitug, "The Return of People Power," *Newsweek*, 29 January 2001, p. 11.

to a few hundred thousand. "Guilty *si Erap!*" was their verdict. "Erap Resign!" was the angry demand. Support for that sentiment grew. All but a handful of Estrada's Cabinet resigned. It became increasingly clear, however, that the President himself was determined not to resign. Past noon on Friday, January 19, Defense Secretary Orlando Mercado and the top commanders of the armed forces convened for a meeting. The situation on their hands was dangerous: the military was split. On one side were the troops loyal to Estrada; on the other were commanders calling for a *coup d'état* to depose the president. If the military had not reached a consensus, the situation could have escalated into a civil war.<sup>99</sup>

Within the hour, the military's stand was decided. Estrada received the clinching news by telephone: Armed Forces Chief of Staff Angelo Reyes and Defense Secretary Orlando Mercado had defected to the opposition. After the phone call, Reyes and Mercado, together with the rest of the commanders who had broken away from the president, made their way to Edsa. On stage, in front of a cheering crowd, Reyes pledged his support for Macapagal-Arroyo. The vice-president triumphantly announced, "Now our protectors have joined the people."<sup>100</sup>

At 6:00 o'clock in the evening, Philippine National Police chief Panfilo "Ping" Lacson, known to be a good friend and supporter of the president, announced on television that the police were also withdrawing their support of the President. It was, he said, the most difficult decision of his life.<sup>101</sup>

### *The Vice President Is Sworn In*

As with the first EDSA, the defection of the military and the police was pivotal. This is because, as Arendt remarked: "[The superiority of the government] lasts only as long as the power structure of the government is intact — that is, as long as commands are obeyed and the army or police forces are prepared to use their weapons. When this is no longer the case, the situation changes abruptly ..." (OV 48-49). When the military and police stopped recognizing Estrada as their commander-in-

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>101</sup>Edgardo Angara, in excerpts from his diary published in *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 4-6 February 2001.

chief, he lost every way of protecting his government. The country was at the moment facing a precarious situation. Although Reyes had publicly pledged his support for Macapagal-Arroyo, the Vice-president, she did not have the constitutional mandate to give orders to the military. There was, for the next few hours, a real vacuum in the leadership of the nation. If left unresolved much longer, the situation could have only worsened. Events had to move quickly.

By Friday evening, the crowd at EDSA was making plans to mobilize towards Malacanang the following morning to force Estrada out of office. Meanwhile, negotiations between the opposition and the administration continued into the night. Estrada had a proposal: to hold a snap presidential election in May in which he would not run. The opposition flatly rejected it, pointing out the legal problems it would cause, since the vice-presidency was not vacant. Instead, they gave the president a deadline: Resign by Saturday, at 6:00 o'clock in the morning.<sup>102</sup>

By Saturday morning, a contingent of EDSA demonstrators began their march to Malacanang, even as negotiations were undertaken on the details of the president's resignation and a peaceful transfer of power to vice-president Macapagal-Arroyo. Even as these were transpiring, however, according to Executive Secretary Edgardo Angara's account, the president signed a letter drafted by Assistant Secretary Crispin "Boying" Remulla of the Presidential Management Staff. The letter stated that the president was unable to discharge his duties, and so he was designating the Vice-President to serve as acting president of the country. The original resignation letter, drafted by Palace negotiators, was never signed.<sup>103</sup>

That same morning, the Supreme Court justices met secretly. By noon, they were standing on stage at the Edsa shrine. In front of the jubilant throng, Chief Justice Hilario Davide administered the oath of office to the new president, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Around two hours later, the Estrada family boarded a Coast Guard barge that took

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.* Because Estrada did not sign a formal letter of resignation, questions about the legality of the Macapagal-Arroyo assumption of office dogged the new administration for the next few weeks.

them across the Pasig River. From there, they returned to their family residence in Greenhills.<sup>104</sup>

### *Edsa 2 As Redemption Of Edsa 1*

Habermas maintained that there is a rational foundation, a series of validity claims possessing cognitive interest, which is behind every attempt at successful communication; thus, he asserted that “anyone acting communicatively must, in performing any speech action, raise universal validity claims and suppose that they can be vindicated [or redeemed: *einlösen*]” (CES, 2). It is this principle of his universal pragmatics that we used in establishing the linkage between EDSA 1 and EDSA 2. We view the second people power revolution of 2001 as the redemption by the Filipino people of the statement they made at the first people power revolution of 1986. Fifteen years separate these two historical moments and in between were developments that tended to belie the public avowal of EDSA 1. Arendt was right in noting the omnipresent danger among revolutionists to squander the treasures secured by their triumph. No amount of rhetoric could have preserved the gains of EDSA 1, no happy turn of eloquent phrase could have perpetuated its memory, for the claim made at that first people power revolution required something more beyond language. For when it is a question of the truthfulness or sincerity of an utterance, such validity claim made can only be checked against future action. It is here where the true significance of Edsa 2 lies, namely, as an affirmation that indeed the Filipino people have made a genuine stake at their liberation from the enslavement of bad governance. Without EDSA 2, EDSA 1 would have been a mere circus; with EDSA 2, however, no one can anymore rightfully challenge or deny the validity claim of EDSA 1.

### *Epilogue*

By way of an epilogue, a brief remark must be made about the events that occurred after the second “People Power.” Only two months after EDSA 2, President Macapagal-Arroyo faced her first major crisis — a

<sup>104</sup>Angara, in excerpts from his diary published in *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 4-6 February 2001; “People Power Redux,” 18.

mass demonstration that threatened to ferment into her ouster from office. In the last week of April 2001, a throng of Estrada supporters — with conflicting estimates placed anywhere between a hundred to five hundred thousand — amassed around the Edsa Shrine, in an event that came to be known as "EDSA 3." The Estrada supporters, mostly from the metropolis' urban poor, came to rally against Estrada's arrest. They stayed on for a few days, after which a large group of them marched to Malacañang, threatening to take over the Palace. The attempt was thwarted by the military and riot police.

We have been attempting to look at EDSA 1 and 2 as a continuing story: EDSA 1 as the political Revolution, and EDSA 2 its reaffirmation. The nagging question which remains is how to make sense of EDSA 3.

EDSA 3, we realize, stands in stark contrast to EDSA 1 or 2, because of its unmistakable social element. It began for vaguely political reasons: as a sign of support for an ousted president. However, as the movement grew, the economic factor became more and more evident. Some political leaders — whose dubious intentions need not be dwelt on here — fired up the crowd with repeated references to the gap between the rich and the poor: "*Sabi nila, mababaho daw kayo!*" was the cry of one leader. "*Pumunta tayo sa Makati at pitikin natin ang ilong ng mga mestizo!*" another leader was heard to say. With or without these exhortations, it was generally felt by the crowd that EDSA 3 was, as some of its leaders called it, "the Poor People Power."

Arendt's view on the social question, in the context of her theory of revolution, must now be addressed here. She insists that an authentic revolution should not primarily address the social issue. The danger, she says, of attempting to solve the social problem through a political revolution was evident in the French experience. Margaret Canovan elaborates what Arendt meant:

Pressed by the ineluctible mass demand for salvation from misery, French revolutionaries substituted the drive for relief from poverty for the pursuit of freedom from tyranny ... The masses required a double liberation from both the demands of necessity and the yoke of tyranny. The confusion of the former with the latter was in the circumstances understandable. Yet as understandable as it was, the rise of *le peuple* as a political force entailed the introduction of necessity as the sole content of public life. The hold of

necessity on the vast majority of men and women, far from being loosened, was tightened and extended to all.<sup>105</sup>

Based on her reflection on the French experience, Arendt could only conclude that political revolutions cannot be successful in a nation teeming with abject poverty:

No revolution has ever solved the "social question" and liberated men from the predicament of want, but all revolutions, with the exception of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, have followed the example of the French Revolution and used and misused the mighty forces of misery and destitution in their struggle against tyranny or oppression. And although the whole record of past revolutions demonstrates beyond doubt that every attempt to solve the social question with political means leads into terror, and that is terror, which sends revolutions to their doom, it can hardly be denied that to avoid this fatal mistake is almost impossible when a revolution breaks out under conditions of mass poverty. [OR 108]

At first glance, EDSA 3 may seem to confirm her conclusion. Much delayed though it may have been, seeds of the terror that Arendt observed in the predominantly socially-motivated French revolution were present in EDSA 3, as attested to by the video images of the violence that erupted when many EDSA 3 demonstrators stormed Mendiola. To hastily jump to that conclusion, however, would be a case of careless logic. EDSA 3 did *not* send the EDSA revolutions to their doom. Nor did EDSA 3 come about as a direct result of EDSA 1. EDSA 1 was not a class revolution. In 1986, the rich stood under the heat of the sun alongside the poor. The revolution they were waging *was* in intent primarily a political one rather than an economic one, the country's poverty notwithstanding. The right question to ask, therefore, is how this could have been possible, in a country fraught with mass poverty, that the social question did not overtake the political one?

Arendt's conclusions appear to be based on a somewhat materialist presupposition that in a country weighed down by poverty and gaping class distinctions, any revolution would automatically become a primarily social one. While this may be true for the Marxist-inspired armed

<sup>105</sup> *Political Thought of Arendt*, 177. See OR 86.

revolution that the Communist Party has tried to wage in the country, it was not the case with EDSA 1. The very strong middle class presence in EDSA 1 might have prevented the social problem from taking the upper hand in a revolution that was primarily political. While the social problem *was* recognized by the main players in that revolution, the clear distinction between the political and social revolution was also clearly recognized. One of the Constitutional Commissioners, Fr. Joaquin Bernas, S.J., could not have expressed it better for the rest; writing after the drafting of the Bill of Rights, he remarked: "These [changes in the Bill of Rights], together with the traditional guarantees, will go a long way towards the completion of the *political* revolution. But the work is by no means over. The *social* and *economic* revolution must still be completed."<sup>106</sup>

There might be a second reason why EDSA 1 did not become a social revolution. Culturally, this seems to be a country where the relational aspect of the social question is just as important, if not more, than the material. To be rich is not so much a sin as it is to be "*matapobre*" or "*mapangmata*" [disdainful of the poor]. Estrada himself was not loved by the masses because he was poor. It is a well-known fact that he lived in a posh subdivision, Greenhills, and it is no secret in this country that movie stars make millions. Estrada was loved, rather, because he could walk through Payatas dumpsite without flinching at the smell, because he could push aside his security group to hug his poor admirers, because he could feed a poor man with food from his own hand. Likewise, at EDSA 3, it was not *all* of the rich whom the crowd was decrying; most of the politicians who went on stage were themselves known to be rich. The crowd was angry instead at the rich whom they perceived to be anti-poor. Hence, what the poor seemed to be asking for was nothing but recognition and respect, intangibles that are fought for in a political rather than a purely social revolution.

Thus, when Arendt penned those lines, published in 1963, she did not foresee that it could be possible even for a country in abject poverty to wage a political revolution.

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<sup>106</sup>Bernas, *A Living Constitution: The Cory Aquino Presidency*, 46.

## *The Political Question*

Nevertheless, Arendt's insights into the social question do affirm several things that may help us to understand the meaning behind Edsa 3. First of all, when a poor country aspires to wage a genuine political revolution, it must be ensured that the resulting spread of political power reach especially the most marginalized sectors of that nation, the poor. In this sense, then, EDSA 3 can be seen in a somewhat positive light. The right of people to gather in a public space and express their views is precisely what was guaranteed by the 1987 Constitution. A common cry among the participants of EDSA 3 was, "*Kami naman!*" For a sector of society that has traditionally been alienated from the centers of power, EDSA 3 was a chance for Metro Manila's urban poor to step quite literally into the public space symbolized by the Edsa-Ortigas intersection. In this sense, then, EDSA 3 might be seen as yet another chapter in the story of the revolution that began in 1986. The results of EDSA 3 seem to support this view. One of the immediate strategies that the Macapagal-Arroyo administration employed in response to EDSA 3, even before the events of May 1, was the adoption of a program of dialogue with the urban poor that, as of this writing, is still ongoing.

Equally revelatory is the vigor with which, in the aftermath of Edsa 3, civil society pursued voters' education programs prior to the local and congressional elections last May 2000. A running theme in these programs was the "new politician vs. old politician" dichotomy. Much of the televised voters' education campaign, for example, underscored the dangers of patronage politics. In a left-handed way, Edsa 3, it seems, has reiterated the urgency for political reform which Edsa 1 originally aspired to.

At the same time however, the pockets of rage that characterized EDSA 3 must also be paid attention. Even though EDSA 3 opened up the public space for the poor, it was a long time coming. It is not comforting to note, for example, that the urban poor dialogues were reactionary measures, rather than deliberate initiatives taken by the administration in the quest for greater people empowerment. It might not be too far-fetched to say that had EDSA 3 not happened, the national government may have reverted back to the usual apathy of past national administrations with regard to opening wider the doors of the public space to the marginalized poor.



## *The Social Question*

We have discussed the political implications of EDSA 3; however its social implications cannot be completely disregarded. While we question the contention that liberty is an *absolute* condition of freedom, there does seem to be some validity in saying that liberty *expedites* the emergence of freedom. Hence, political freedom for the poor can only emerge *in its fullness* when the poor have been liberated from the chains of want and necessity. Tangibly speaking, the poor at EDSA 3 certainly enjoyed some amount of freedom as they chanted in the street. However, to engage in the political discourse of the nation in a more prolonged way would necessitate their access, not just to the Edsa-Ortigas intersection, but to other forms of public space: the media, the halls of legislature, the circles of political debate and discussion. The access to all these, while probably not a direct result of material wealth, can certainly be precipitated when a people has been liberated from hunger and the immediate concern of survival. In this sense, EDSA 3 may have been the flag to alert the nation regarding its still-unsolved social problem. If anything, EDSA 3 has been a painful reminder about the gaping divide between the rich and the poor in Philippine society.

Thus, the Philippine experience of EDSA 1 and EDSA 2 (when regarded as a single continuing story, as we have suggested) shows that Arendt's views notwithstanding, a political revolution *is* possible in a poor country, so long as its founders are careful to distinguish between the political and the social issues. EDSA 3, however, emphasized a caveat for poor nations aspiring to such a similar revolution: Given the economic questions entrenched so deep in such a nation, any political revolution must be careful not to alienate the poor from the revolutionary spirit. Moreover, the social question *must* be addressed in a country that aspires to be a truly democratic republic for *all*. 