

Philippine People Power

Description

Remembering EDSA – February 25

National PH Holiday Erased in



Last October Pres. Marcos determined EDSA would not this year commemorate removal of his father as dictator of Philippines.

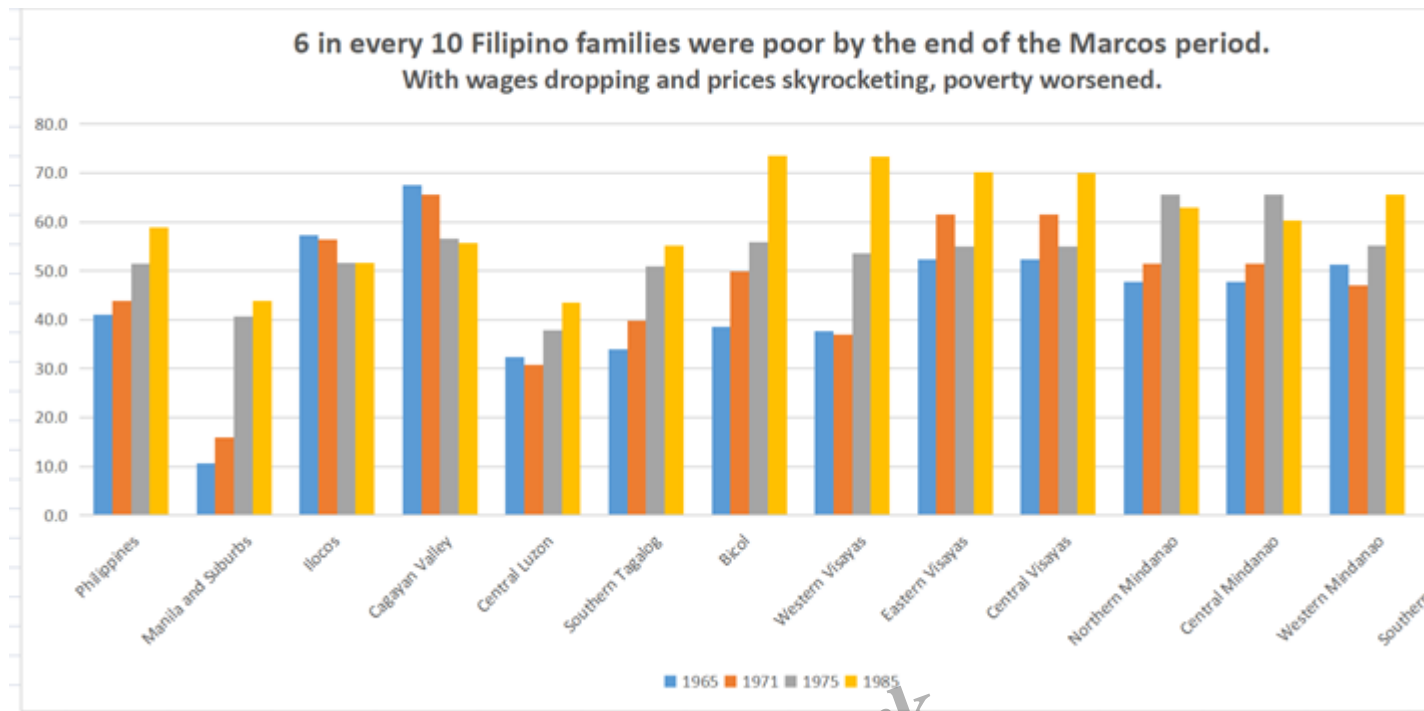
[1] *Power to the People – The EDSA Revolution and the start of the Fifth Philippine Republic*, February 26, 2016

The February 25th People Power Anniversary is a nationwide annual observance and school holiday in the Philippines. This event still holds a special place in the hearts of many Filipinos who remember a revolution that restored democracy to Philippines in 1986.



A popular uprising toppled Ferdinand Marcos and restored democracy in 1986 © Bettmann Archive/Getty Images

A Failing Economy and Crooked National Election were the Last Straws



February 25 falls on a Sunday this year providing a great excuse for the son of the former dictator to drop recognition of this historical event.

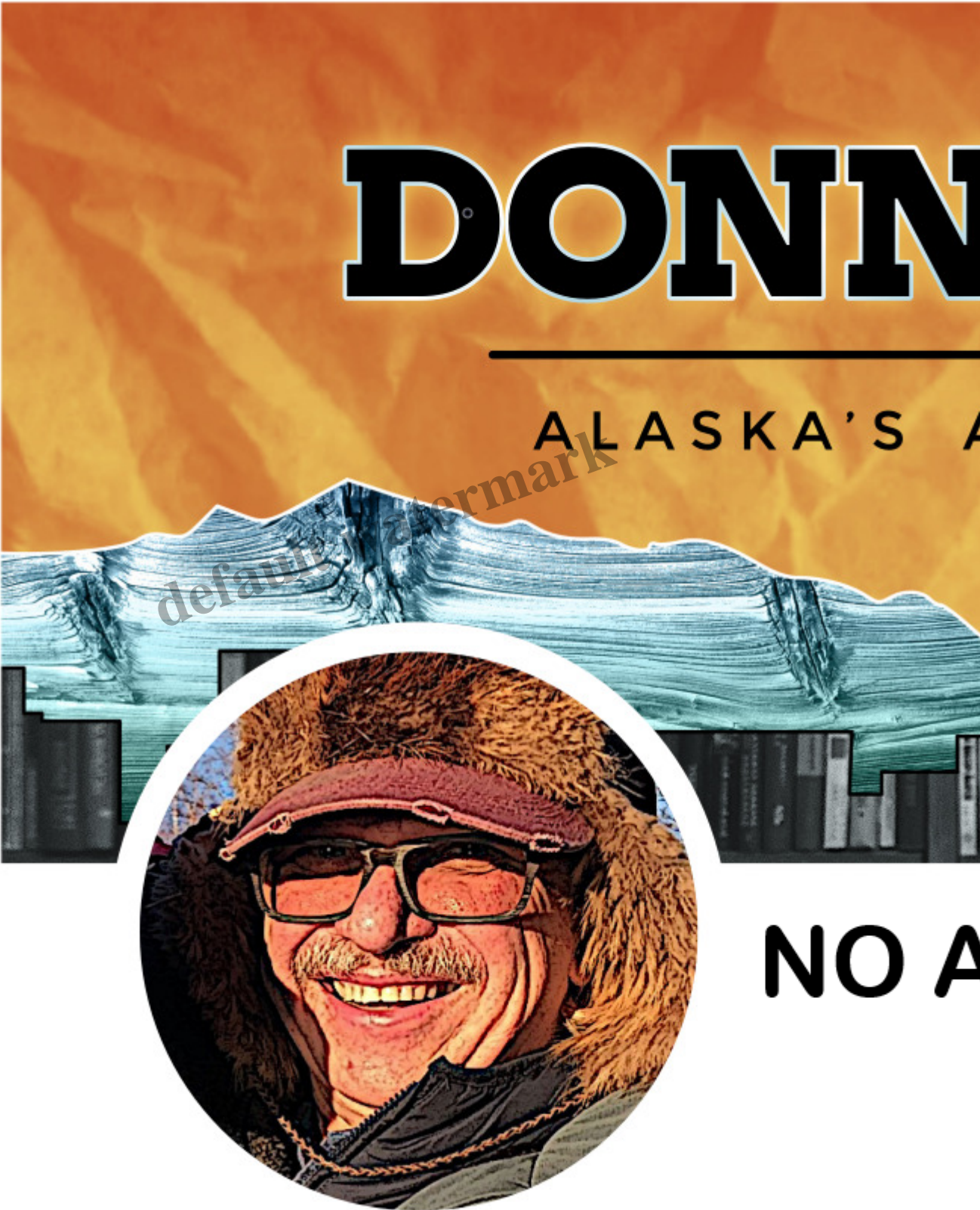
We know now EDSA was born out of a failed military coup d'état attempt at a time when Philippines was a political tinderbox. As poorly as the military had treated the people during the time of dictator **Ferdinand Marcos, Sr.**, when **The People** suddenly galvanized and rose up, scheming generals had to get onto the **People Power** train or cause a massacre of innocent Filipino people in the impending wreck.

Young Filipinos and Old in the Military Choked when Faced with possibility of Civilian Massacre

Few true revolutions result in meaningful improvement of circumstances for the majority of people impacted. A 2016 book containing commentaries of participants, and others who have lived in the wake of EDSA, considers the status of Philippines 30 years later, asking: **What is the true meaning and impact of EDSA?** First-person accounts of what happened in Manila over four days of popular uprising, and thoughtful essays considering what has changed since given the hopes and dreams of that time, are in this memorial book.

Some conclude EDSA was a failed effort and nothing has really changed despite the fact this day is (sometimes) celebrated as a demonstration of what *People Power* meant.

As a visiting teacher this writer regrets any effort to erase or diminish history anywhere—preferring instead to learn from history—and I have written previously about this time in Philippines history.



[2] How President Marcos became a Constitutional Dictator; The Economic Model for Alaska, DONN LISTON, August 3, 2023.

Recently Rappler.com/Newsbreak reported:

The culmination of the bloodless revolt on February 25, 1986, kicked dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos out of Malacañang after an iron-fist rule that lasted more than a decade. His family soon [went on exile in Hawaii](#), an experience that his son Marcos Jr. described as among the darkest days of their lives.

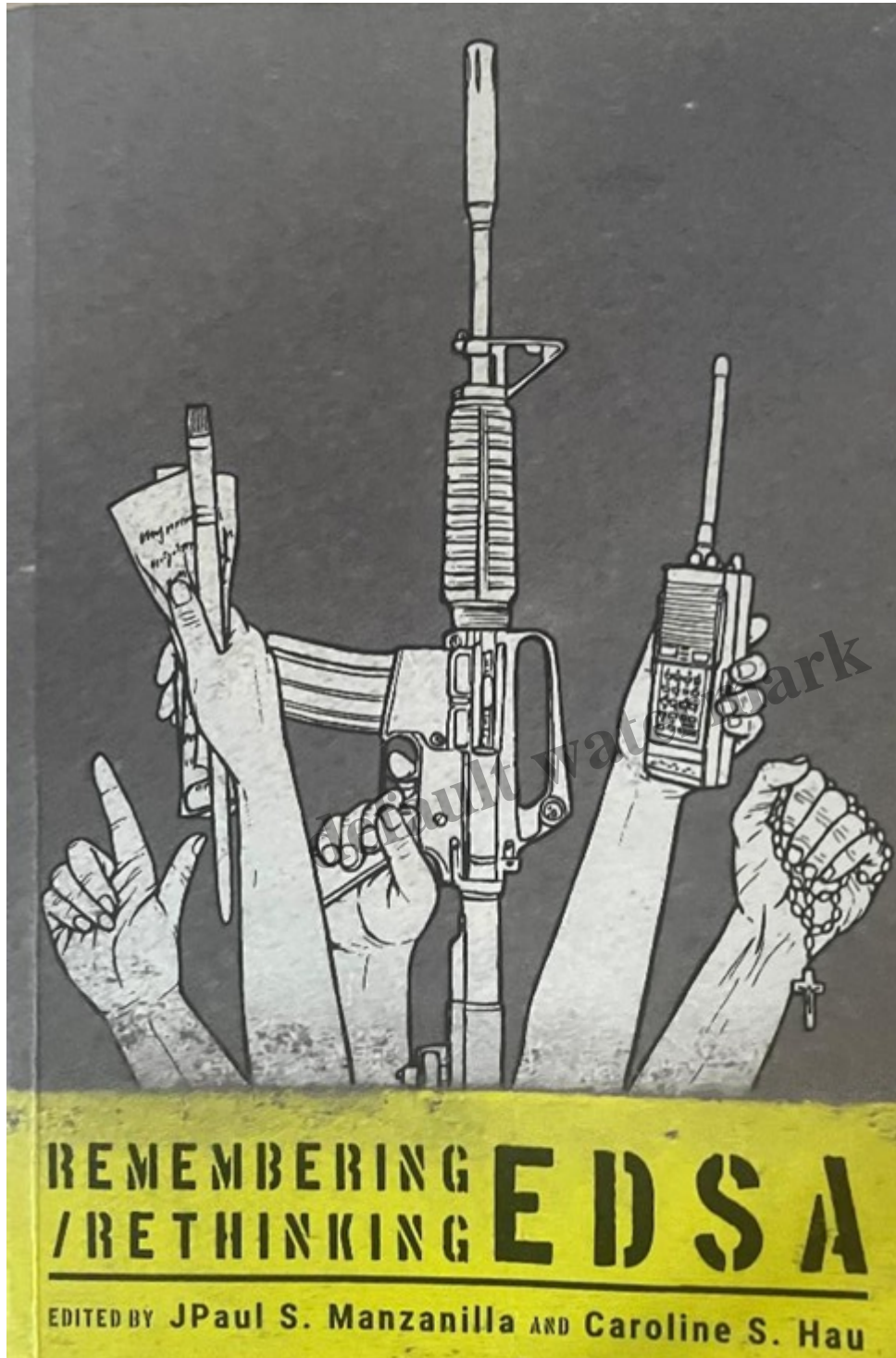
A decades-long project to rehabilitate their family's image ultimately led to the Marcoses returning to power, capped by Marcos Jr.'s ascent to the presidency in 2022.

Also from the Rappler story: *When President Marcos removed the People Power Revolution anniversary from the list of holidays in 2024, 'a fire was lit under us,' says the grandson of democracy icons Ninoy and Cory Aquino.*

So far, the Buhay ang Edsa campaign network has listed the following events later this month:

- February 23: National Day of Prayer and Action for EDSA
- February 24: Kapihan at Talakayan sa Naging Papel ng August Twenty-One Movement noong People Power Revolution
- February 25: Freedom Ride, Multimedia Assembly, and Concert

Remembering/Rethinking EDSA



Recently, to understand better the Philippine protests leading to overthrow of Pres. Marcos, Sr. I read this very informative and personal book.

As a young Idealist this writer had once become swept up in the anti-Vietnam War fervor of The **Moratorium March** in downtown Anchorage, ALASKA in 1969—sixteen years before EDSA



Photo from the Anchorage Daily News when LISTON played guitar during the October 15, 1969 Anchorage Moratorium March.

[4] We were Born to be Wild! DONN LISTON 10/14/2022
<https://donnliston.net/2022/10/born-to-be-wild/>

From ***Remembering/Rethinking EDSA:***

People Power

The Philippine Revolution of 1986 introduced the term “people power” to refer to the campaign of persuasion against state violence. Instead of matching the armed forces of the state with their own weapons, as in a civil war, people power is the use of civilians to prevent the charge of the armed forces of the state. Monumentalized in scenes of civilians blocking, holding flowers and rosaries, offering food to soldiers, it was a cry for compassion and an assertion that violence is illegitimate if used against unarmed protestors.

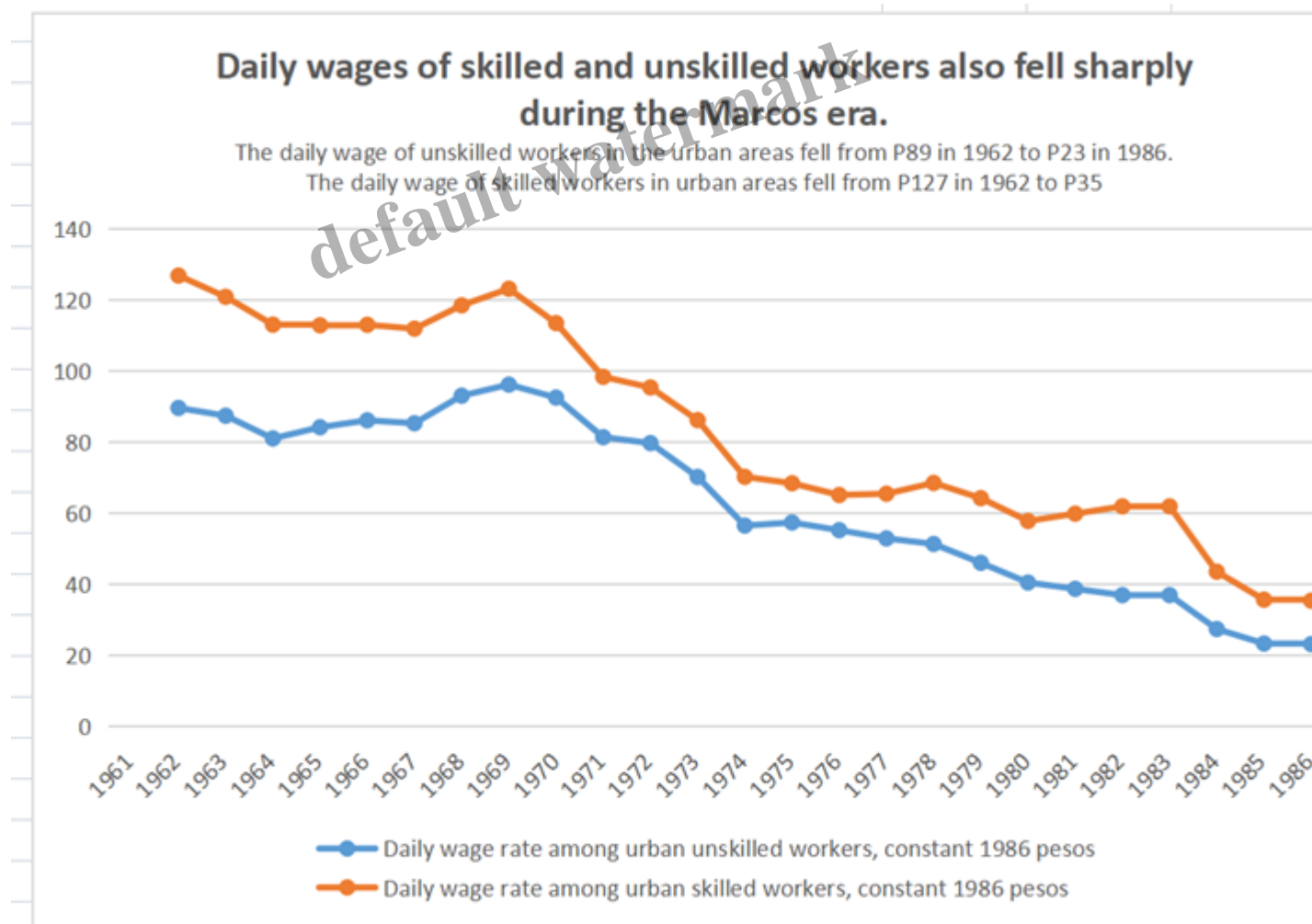
[5] Remembering/Rethinking EDSA, Introduction JPaul S. Manzanilla, P-2

Before the historic four days at Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA), national democratic activists in the Southern Tagalog region had already formed “Solidarity for People’s Power,” in support of clean and honest elections. In her inaugural speech on 24 February 1986, Cory Aquino traced its provenance to her husband’s assassination: “It took the brutal murder of Ninoy to bring about the unity, the strength, and the phenomenon of People Power...”

[6] Ibid P-3 Mercado, Monina Allarey, ed, 1986 PEOPLE POWER: An Eyewitness History (The Philippine Revolution of 1986) Mania: The James B. Reuter SJ’ Foundation

Immediately after EDSA, a number of people have commented upon and developed the notion of People Power. It is generally characterized as a peaceful and nonviolent way of achieving the social and political goals they (the people) have long desired”, and “a nonviolent expression by the Filipino people to achieve justice.”

[7] Erum, Moody L. 1989. Moral and Religious Elements of People Power and Their Bering on Nation Building.



The Crisis that Caused EDSA

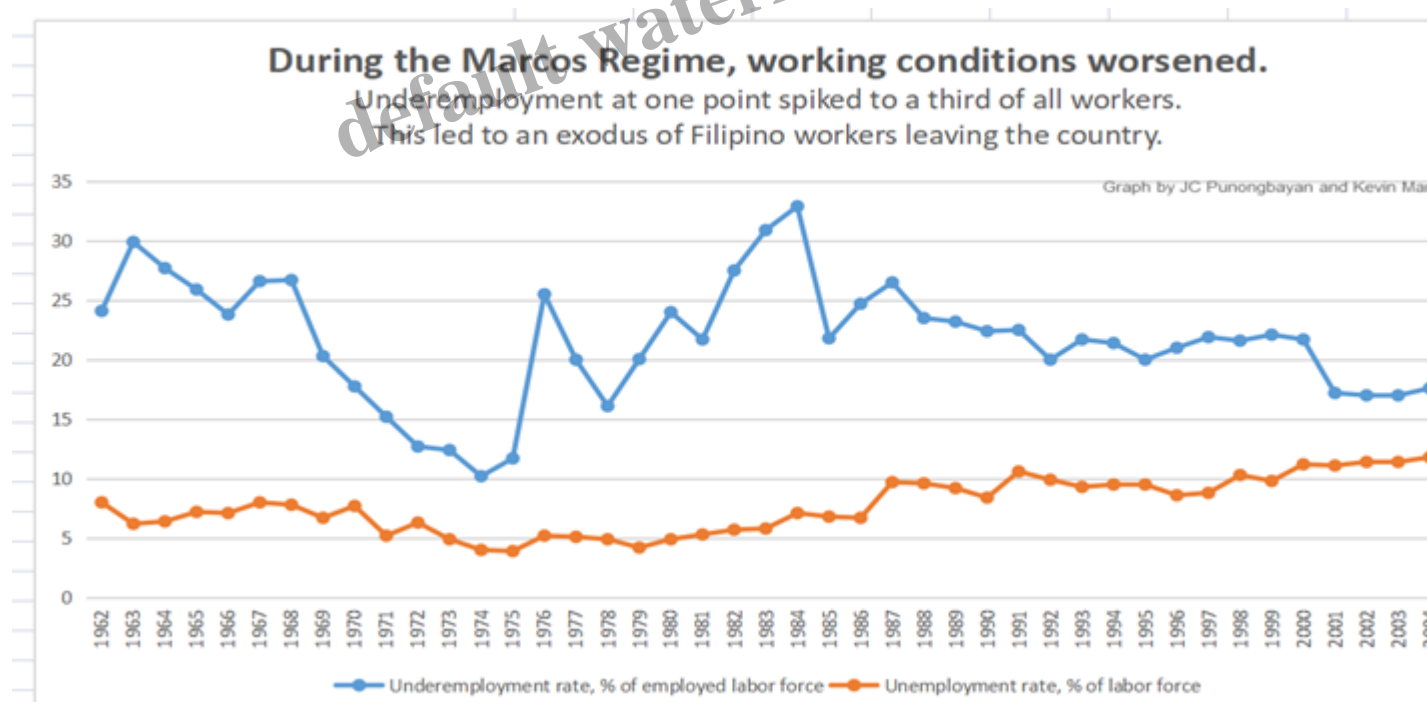
Social Rupture

To contemporary observers, the public outrage at the assassination of Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino, Jr. on 21 August 1983 clearly led to the escalation of a popular protest movement that culminated in People Power. From another angle, the four days in February 1986, from the 22 to the 25th, can be understood as the resolution to the rupture in social structure that occurred with Aquino’s assassination, an event that shocked most Filipinos. P44

Ironically, Marcos himself sought to resolve this social rupture a couple of years after Aquino’s assassination by calling for an unprecedented snap presidential election that he set on 7 February 1986. Seeking to pacify the US, Marcos announced the surprise poll in November 1985 during an interview over American television. Marcos had probably thought the same old electoral tricks would work and put his regime on solid legal grounds. P45

Regrettably for Marcos, various political groupings that opposed his regime managed to achieve something unprecedented: coalesce around Corazon Aquino as the opposition’s candidate for president...P45

[8] ESSAY: People Power: Deception and Truth in a History-Changing Event, Filomeno V. Aguilar, Jr. P42



It is Always Dangerous to Rig an Election and this Effort Backfired

Marcos used technology to create a veneer of objectivity—perhaps the first time ever that computers were used in a Philippine election. As is well known, on 9 February some thirty computer technicians staged a dramatic walk out of the so-called quick count being held at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC), allegedly to protest the systematic manipulation of the vote. Technology was not on Marcos’s side after all because the walkout was captured live on television. Catholic

bishops and the US condemned the fraud. P45

Election Fraud

The NAMFREL tally based on 69 percent of the precincts showed Aquino leading Marcos by 715,045 votes. But on 15 February Marcos's parliament, the Batasang Pambansa, declared him the president-elect, with 10,807,197 votes to Aquino's 9,291,716.

[9] International Observer Delegation. "A path to democratic renewal": A report on the February 7 1986 presidential election in the Philippines. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ATTACHED

The following day, at the Tagumpay ng Bayan rally held at the **Rizal Park** attended by "over a million" people, Cory Aquino proclaimed the "people's victory" and launched a civil disobedience campaign, a largely symbolic one, to protest the stealing of the vote. P46

The story of fracture within the military and an organic movement to take back democracy from the dictator is compelling. Withdrawal of USA support for Marcos sealed his fate. Advisor to Marcos US Senator **Paul Laxalt** of Nevada, when asked if he should stay in the capital and likely die there, told Marcos to "cut and cut cleanly." Newly elected Pres. Aquino demanded Marcos leave the country, thus ending the possibility that the dictator would be brought to justice. Instead he was removed to Hawaii where he would die in American sanctuary.

What was Learned?

Most scholars agree that while People Power toppled a dictatorship, its revolutionary potential fell far short of people's hopes and expectations of change, and that the Aquino government was basically "restorationist" and what was "restored" was yet another variant of an "elite democracy" dominated by a predatory oligarchy composed of a small number of families linked to each other by personalistic ties of blood or marriage as well as shared political and economic interests, intent on extracting "booty" (in the form of rents) and other privileges from the state with little interest in formulating coherent economic policies or in redistributive justice. Scholar Paul Hutchcroft would say, despairingly, that "the more things change, the more they stay the same."

[10] Hutchcroft, Paul D. "Oligarchs and Cronies in the Philippine State: The Politics of Patrimonial plunder." World Politics 43: 414-50

In 2022 Filipinos elected the son of Ferdinand Marcos as president. Having been present and experienced great privilege in political drama throughout his life, Marcos Jr. is now two years into his own presidency—after having been elected by the same People Power that had elected and removed his father as president.

One Filipino blogger, benign0, challenges PH hope for the future:

We then get to the question on whether Filipinos were ever capable to begin with. Much is said about how, in the aftermath of World War II, the Philippines was the richest country in the region, second only to Japan. Why then does the Philippines now find itself way behind — way way behind countries like South Korea which was wracked by war into the 1950s and recently overtaken by Vietnam which only found peace well into the 1970s?

[11] On what bases do Filipinos harbour “hope” for 2024?

Given challenges he faces after two years, on this day Pres. Marcos’ Lessons from history Apply more than any other in the year.

References:

[1] *Power to the People – The EDSA Revolution and the start of the Fifth Philippine Republic*, February 26, 2026

<https://justpayroll.ph/power-to-the-people-the-edsa-revolution-and-the-start-of-the-fifth-philippine-republic/>

[2] How President Marcos became a Constitutional Dictator; The Economic Model for Alaska

<https://donnliston907.substack.com/p/how-president-marcos-became-a-constitutional>

[3] EDSA People Power Revolution, Rappler, February 13, 2024

<https://www.rappler.com/topic/edsa-people-power-revolution/>

[4] **We were Born to be Wild! DONN LISTON** 10/14/2022

<https://donnliston.net/2022/10/born-to-be-wild/>

[5] Remembering/Rethinking EDSA, Edited by JPaul S. Manzanilla and Caroline S. Hau, Anvil Publishing Inc., Mandaluyong City, Philippines, 2016 www.anvilpublishing.com

[6] Ibid P-3 Mercado, Monina Allarey, ed, 1986 PEOPLE POWER: An Eyewitness History (The Philippine Revolution of 1986) Mania: The James B. Reuter SJ’ Foundation

[7] Erum, Moody L. 1989. Moral and Religious Elements of People Power and Their Bering on Nation Building. In *Alternatives to Violence: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Filipino People Power*, ed. Douglas J. Elwood, 42-49. Quezon City, New Day Publishers.

[8] ESSAY: People Power: Deception and Truth in a History-Changing Event, Filomeno V. Aguilar, Jr. P42

[9] International Observer Delegation. “A path to democratic renewal”: A report on the February 7 1986 presidential election in the Philippines.

http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNABK494.pdf

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National Democratic Institute
for International Affairs

National Republic
for International

"A PATH TO DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL"

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A REPORT ON THE FEBRUARY 7, 1986

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN THE PHILIPPINES

**By the
INTERNATIONAL OBSERVER DELEGATION**

**Based on a January 26 to February 19, 1986
observer mission to the Philippines
by forty-four delegates from nineteen countries**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The International Delegation which observed the February 7 presidential election in the Philippines was sponsored by the National Democratic and Republican Institutes for International Affairs and included forty-four individuals from nineteen countries. The co-leaders of the delegation were the former President of Colombia, the Honorable Misael Pastrana, and the Honorable John Hume, a member of the British and European Parliament from Northern Ireland.

1. The delegation concludes that the election of February 7 was not conducted in a free and fair manner. It is our belief that the Government of Ferdinand Marcos and the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) bear the responsibility for this failure.

2. The delegation finds that the National Assembly, the Batasang Pambansa, ignored explicit provisions of the Philippine Electoral Code requiring that tampered or altered Election Returns be set aside during the final counting process -- despite protests by representatives of the opposition party. For this reason, and because of numerous other violations of the Code, the delegation concludes that the February 15 Batasang proclamation naming Ferdinand Marcos and Arturo Tolentino the winners of the

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3. At the same time, we observed millions of Filipinos who were committed to making the electoral process work. Principally because of their commitment, the election succeeded in providing a vehicle through which the national will of the Philippines was ultimately expressed.

4. There is no single piece of "smoking-gun" evidence which leads to our determination that the election failed to meet a "free-and-fair" standard; there are instead many "smoking-guns." They include the following:

-- The campaign period was marked by numerous violations of the provisions designed to curb improper campaign practices and to limit the Government's use of its power to influence the election;

-- The Commission on Elections (COMELEC) did not carry out its responsibility under the election code to provide equal access to the television media during the campaign period. As a result, Marcos benefitted greatly from the partisan-owned and influenced television and radio media, though the opposition had reasonable access to alternative (radio and print) media.

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including indelible ink applied to voters' fingers were in many areas either ignored or unenforced. A combination of these two factors contributed to an undetermined amount of double voting.

-- An estimated 3.5 million voters were disenfranchised on election day when they could not find their names in the voting register. This resulted in a voter turnout of only 76% in this important presidential election, compared to 89% in the 1984 Batasang election. This was a major dropoff, especially considering the absence of a well-organized boycott for this election.

Disenfranchisement appears to have occurred in opposition-oriented provinces or cities. For example, in the ten cities and provinces which had the highest voter turnout, the winner was the ruling party. In the ten cities and provinces which had the lowest turnout, the opposition won in eight out of ten. More striking is that in the cities or provinces where the ruling party won by a margin of 150,000 votes or more, the turnout ranged between 82% and 96% of the vote. On the other hand, in areas where the opposition's margin of victory was greater than 150,000 votes, the turnout ranged between 71 and 81 percent.

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-- Virtually all members of the delegation observed that voters were told by credible sources that voters were being paid on election day to vote for the Marcos-Tolentino ticket. In many areas, carbonized sample ballots were used as proof of an individual's vote and as a receipt for payments ranging between 25 to 500 pesos.

-- Numerous instances of intimidation of voters were recorded by the delegation; members of the military, the Civil Home Defense Forces, and Barangay officials were commonly implicated.

-- Pollwatchers from the designated opposition UNIP party and the accredited citizen's arm, NAMFREL, were not permitted access to polling places in many provinces.

-- Problems relating to the counting of votes occurred during all phases of the process. Major discrepancies between the count kept by NAMFREL -- based on hard copies of precinct tally forms signed by all members of the Board of Election Inspectors -- and COMELEC occurred throughout the week following the election, evidencing attempts to manipulate the vote count.

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despite the claim of the UNIDO pollwatchers present at the precinct that they voted for Aquino.

-- Hard evidence was uncovered of "ghost" precincts, fictional polling places, wherein the vote was completely fabricated. In one municipality of Sorsogon, Leyte, three such precincts were discovered over and over above the 55 authorized. In the 55 legitimate precincts, the vote was 6,371 for Marcos and 5,800 for Aquino. In the three ghost precincts, the vote was 9 for Marcos and 9 for Aquino.

-- While we have no direct evidence, we believe that the interference with the counting process which occurred after election day was not simply a dispute between COMELEC and NAMFREL over their "quick count" agreement; rather we believe this was part of an effort by the Government and its supporters to buy time that the above mentioned fraud could be undertaken.

5. The above-listed violations were perpetrated by national and local officials who supported the Marcos-Tolentino ticket. While we cannot exclude the possibility, our delegation did not observe a single election code violation by supporters of the opposition party despite efforts undertaken to monitor their

[10] Hutchcroft, Paul D. "Oligarchs and Cronies in the Philippine State: The Politics of Patrimonial plunder." World Politics 43: 414-50

[11] On what bases do Filipinos harbour "hope" for 2024?

<https://www.getrealphilippines.com/2023/12/on-what-bases-do-filipinos-harbour-hope-for-2024/>

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