

Accolade to Martial Law: The Termination of Proclamation 1081 in State-Controlled Media

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to analyze the practice of narrative molding through a textual overview of selected media pieces circulated by the Marcos Administration - particularly concerning the lifting of the state of Martial Law on January 17, 1981. Given the significance placed by the Marcos Regime on media projection, I argue that the occasion of removing Martial Law on paper was instead used as its advertisement and enshrinement. Marcosian rhetoric would seek to touch upon both public and partisan realms, pitching Marcos leadership as both saving the nation against a perceived enemy, and as an agent of positive human development. Such frameworks thus necessarily situate the "New Society" in the same association as the "good" of Marcos.

Keywords: *Martial Law, Media, Marcosian Rhetoric*

Introduction: Marcosian Reputation and the Significance of Media

The Philippine Human Rights Victims Reparation Act (R.A. No. 10368) declares that it is state policy to recognize victims of gross human rights violations committed during the regime of former President Ferdinand E. Marcos. The Supreme Court also reaffirmed, through its decision in *Republic of the Philippines vs. Sandiganbayan* (G.R. No. 152154), that the Marcos family failed to justify the acquisition of various assets stored in Swiss bank accounts which were disproportionate to their known lawful incomes. But despite these condemnations for corruption and human rights violations, the dictator's son and namesake, Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr., became the country's 17th President.

While the main driving motif of Marcos Jr.'s campaign focused on ideas of unity (*pagkakaisa*), it was always accompanied by the shadow of his father's reputation. His 2022 inaugural address constantly implied that the Philippines had a more prosperous past under his father. Statements such as the following were touted, reinforcing misconceptions peddled by his supporters on social media spaces:

I once knew a man who saw what little had been achieved since independence... Food self-sufficiency has been the key promise of every administration. None but one delivered. ... No excuses; just deliver. It was like that, once upon a time. ... My father built more and better roads, produced more rice than all administrations before his. (Marcos Jr., 2022)

Marcos Jr. was inaugurated as President on June 2022 - less than fifty years since the day his father proclaimed Martial Law over the Philippines on September 1972. Existing research has long linked the political resurgence of the Marcos family, after being ousted by a people's revolution in February 1986, to a massive and well-funded branding mechanism to deodorize the family's legacy at the expense of its critics and victims.¹ Key among these movements is the shaping of narratives concerning the former Marcos dictatorship as a just and

1 Further discussions on the subject can be found in Bautista, V. F. (2018). The Pervert's Guide to Historical Revisionism: Traversing the Marcos Fantasy. *Philippine Studies* 66(3), 273-300; Cabañes, J. and Ong, J. (2018). "Architects of networked disinformation: Behind the Scenes of Troll Accounts and Fake News Production in the Philippines." Newton Tech4Dev Network; Soriano, C. R. R., & Gaw, F. (2022). Platforms, alternative influence, and networked political brokerage on YouTube. *Convergence* 28(3), 781-803; and Guiang, F. (2022). Myth-Making and History-Writing: Marcosian Revisionism as Evidence of Therapeutic Historiography. *Pingkian Journal for Emancipatory and Anti-Imperial Education* 7(1), 23-49.

overall positive good. To build on this literature, I sought to review this phenomenon through a case study of the termination of Proclamation 1081 on January 1981. I wrote this paper in particular as an exploratory exercise into the formation of the “New Society” – the term assigned by the Marcos Regime to refer to the dictatorship period – as a tool formed in reaction to its surroundings and utilized through the media atmosphere to sustain and legitimize the regime.

Media’s Significance to Marcos Sr.

Ferdinand Marcos Sr. saw the value of media projection in his pursuit of executive power. Enriquez (2023) notes that Marcos allied with brothers Eugenio and Fernando Lopez—accessing vast media entities such as the Manila Chronicle and ABS-CBN—to win the 1965 Elections against Diosdado Macapagal and his 1969 reelection bid against Sergio Osmena Jr. With the aid of his Law school friend and future crony Roberto Benedicto, Marcos founded the Far East Managers and Investors (FEMI) media holding company. Eugenio Lopez would be persuaded by Benedicto to help build Kanlaon Broadcasting System (KBS) with hardware and technical training. Benedicto later took over ABS-CBN’s broadcasting facilities after the crackdown on the Lopez Family during Martial Rule.

The importance linked between the media sphere and the health of Presidential Marcos’ awareness of the media’s influence is further established when analyzing the declaration of Martial Law. David Rosenberg (1972) notes that the Philippine Press after the Second World War was the freest of its kind in Southeast Asia. Its journalists remained outspoken—critical of a government which tolerated its existence—where media communications in neighboring countries had been nationalized or socialized by the state. That being said, such outlets were not free of economic or political influence—as ownership tended to be concentrated around elite circles.²

The impression of a biased or politicized media threatening peace and order was seized upon in Proclamation 1081. Mass media personnel and infiltrated media outlets were indicted for facilitating social unrest through slanted and exaggerated news and commentaries. Letter of Instruction 1 (1972) would order the Department of National Defense to seize newspapers, magazines, radio and television facilities and all other media of communications which could be used to undermine the government. General Order 2-A (1972) enumerated lists of persons

2 Examples present during this period include A. Soriano y Cia with control over the Radio Mindanao Network and Inter-Island Broadcasting Network, The Elizalde family with the Manila Broadcasting Company and Metropolitan Broadcasting Company, and the Lopez Family with ABS-CBN.

labelled as conspirators against the state, including various members of the political opposition and Marcos' critics. General Order 19 (1973) imposed detention against persons circulating information causing to raise panic or to discredit the government. The National Security Code (1978) would also be situated on the basis of continued efforts to undermine the New Society through such means.

Marcos' Presidential Decrees (P.D.) similarly prioritized information control and organization. P.D. No. 1 (1972) created the Department of Public Information to take charge of all media censorship and licensing. P.D. No. 36 (1972) was passed in the succeeding month to create the Mass Media Council (MMC) to process all future applications for broadcasting permits. This was reorganized via P.D. No. 191 (1973) into the Media Advisory Council (MAC), and then once again in 1974, through P.D. No. 576, into the Print Media and Broadcast Media Councils (PMC and BMC).

Reyes (2018) examines a memorandum from the National Media Production Center (NMPC) for President Marcos which provides insight into the scale of state-sponsored publication. It shows a listing of the President's books printed in the year 1980. The production of thousands of copies of works such as *Notes on the New Society of the Philippines II*, *The Democratic Revolution in the Philippines*, and Volumes of the Tadhana Project amounted to a cost of 2,529,500 pesos at the time. The same letter requested financial assistance to cover the costs thereto. The document outlined an additional PHP 10,136,000 as an estimated cost for printing another set of titles such as *Ideology for the Filipinos*, *Democratic Revolution in the Philippines*, and *Marcos of the Philippines*.

News and communications outlets permitted to operate under the regime were also concentrated around a Marcos crony clique, if not subjected to state or self-induced censorship. The *Daily Express*, *Evening Express*, *Pilipino Express*, *Expressweek* magazine, as well as TV Channels 4 and 9 along with several radio stations under the Kanlaon Broadcasting System (KBS) were controlled by Roberto Benedicto and Enrique Romualdez, Marcos' cousin-in-law through First Lady Imelda Marcos (Manapat, 2020; Mijares, 2017). *Bulletin Today* and sister publications *Bannawag*, *Liwayway*, and *Bisaya* were controlled by General Hanz Menzi, Marcos Sr.'s aide-de-camp. *The Times Journal* and its other periodicals were owned by Benjamin Romualdez, Marcos' brother-in-law. The *Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas* (KBP), created as a self-regulatory body for radio and television, remained tightly controlled by the BMC (Enriquez, 2003).

Inoculation and Antagonistic Rhetorics

Roland Barthes' *Mythologies* (1983) offers an insight into the gravity of such priorities through an allusion to advertising.³ The rhetorical form that manifests in this case is one where audiences are "inoculated" through the presentation of a contingent evil as a means to prevent or cure an essential one. In the process of this treatment, the contingent details behind subjects are reduced to essential images through which the desired message, or "myth", can be put forward. This positioning may also be found in Herman and Chomsky's (1988) Propaganda Model in *Manufacturing Consent*, where the dominating entity imposes anti-communism or civil disruption as a control mechanism. The propagation of a "greater antagonist", which can be labelled upon anyone that threatens the status quo, could be framed in this mechanism – capable of mobilizing support for the incumbent regime.

Marcosian rhetoric can be surmised to have charged the image of Martial Rule along such lines. Marcos' control is first premised with a cause – the increasing instability of the social order necessitated swift and decisive action. At the same time, an antagonist is presented behind the cause. Proclamation 1081 asserted that the nation was gravely endangered by Communist and Muslim insurgencies by foreign powers. Its narrative arrays the antagonist using the liberties afforded to them by Philippine Law against the duly constituted government – thus requiring drastic measures:

...lawless elements who are moved by a common or similar ideological conviction, design, strategy and goal and enjoying the active moral and material support of a foreign power and being guided and directed by intensely devoted, well trained, determined and ruthless groups of men and seeking refuge under the protection of our constitutional liberties to promote and attain their ends, have entered into a conspiracy and have in fact joined and banded their resources and forces together... undertaking and waging an armed insurrection and rebellion against the Government of the Republic of the Philippines in order to forcibly seize political and state power in this country... (Proclamation No. 1081, 1972)

Notes on the New Society is particular in justifying Martial Law, presenting documents concerning assassination plots, arms shipments,

3 The advertisement in question was concerning Astra Margerine. "What does it matter, after all, if margarine is just fat, when it goes further than butter, and costs less? What does it matter, after all, if Order is a little brutal or a little blind, when it allows us to live cheaply?" *Mythologies* 41-2, translated 1983 by Annette Lavers.

and bombings. Various texts and speeches attributed to the late president have emphasized the need to combat elements of the radical left and the entrenched oligarchy (McCallus, 1989). As remarked of by Vicente Rafael's (1990) study on the Early Marcos Years, the state was turned into a hegemonic instrument to exert control over competing elites, while using factionalism in the vocabulary of nation-building. Media is further articulated in this vein as a tool that malevolent forces sought to utilize in undermining the state. Key within these accusations is the idea of rising social unrest putting the nation on the brink of collapse.

However, critics of the Martial Law administration increased in the international space. Evidences of human rights violations and repression would be documented by Amnesty International in 1976, and corruption allegations would be aired by Marcos' former Media Advisory Council Head Primitivo Mijares at the floor of the U.S. Congress.⁴ In 1977, the International Commission on Jurists published a report criticizing the deterioration of democratic institutions in the Republic, citing the suppression of critical media reportage. This included the shutdown of church radio stations and various newspapers, and the expulsion of Associated Press correspondent Arnold Zeitlin for his coverage of the Government's fight against the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

The Marcos government would attempt to address these concerns across the 1970s. As reported by the Amnesty International Mission in 1976, the government expressed a willingness to work with and provide action-points to external observers. The International Commission of Jurists would receive files from The Department of National Defense pertaining to their own reportage of conditions within detention facilities as well as the abuses of military personnel and the status of their cases during the same year.⁵ Further than that, the Armed Forces in Mindanao—where much of the Philippine military power was concentrated—were made to participate in civic action or rebuilding initiatives among conflict-affected communities.⁶ Brigadier General Fortunato Abat, leading forces in Central Mindanao, was reportedly adopted as a son of Sultan Kudarat for his and his men's role in facilitating peace and order (Mindanao Cross, 1974). Marcos would seek to assure foreign press representatives in 1976 that no mass human

4 Mijares' Conjugal Dictatorship expounds on the various instances of corruption which he would present.

5 Copies of these reports are stored presently at the William Jack Butler Philippine Martial Law collection, #4288. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

6 General Abat's memoirs of the conflict in "The Day we Nearly Lost Mindanao: The CEMCOM Story." (1994) provide multiple accounts reflecting concerns for civilians in conflict zones and the handling of Rebel Returnees.

rights violations were being conducted, while concerned that such allegations were harming Philippine relations with other countries (Bulletin Today, 1977).

Despite these presentations, skepticism still marred the dictatorship across human rights communities. By November 1980, a month before Marcos announced plans to lift the state of Martial Law,⁷ an International Tribunal conducted in the Netherlands deemed Marcos and the United States responsible for Human Rights Violations committed against the Filipino and Bangsamoro Peoples.⁸ Groups representing various worker and youth sectors submitted cases that shed light on the suppression and plight of labor unions and intellectuals. Alongside them, representatives from the MNLF vehemently asserted that the Marcos government was waging a genocidal war against the Muslim peoples in Mindanao.

Crafting Appeal: Nationalism and Human Rights

Clearly, Marcos had to address the criticisms that continually festered during his incumbency. It is thus necessary to not only view the justification of the use of Martial Law, but to observe the creation of its image as a reflection of Human Rights discourse and nation-building. The latter can be well established based on an overview of texts attributed to the former president. In *Today's Revolution: Democracy* (1972), Marcos names a "Revolution from the Center" (p. 12) as a means to facilitate the people's aspirations. Apolinario Mabini is invoked to link revolution to the moral education of the people and to purge them of their vices. Ideals towards a Filipino-style democracy are also crafted along the lines of *disciplina* and collective sacrifice for the nation-state. In the preface for the *Democratic Revolution of the Philippines* (1977), Marcos writes of the "New Society" - the label given to Martial Rule - as the people's emancipation from an old society of injustice. Through the regime, the Filipino people would use disciplined vision to render the fruits of their labors and resources available to all. (p. 8).

Marcos's invocations towards a Filipino people who have rediscovered their sense of self, echoed Rizal's rebuttals of Spanish accounts which simultaneously espoused the glories of a lost pre-Hispanic Philippines (Ocampo, 1998). Zeus Salazar (1983) displays this ideal as a tripartite view of history, purporting a formerly prestigious Philippine past lost through Spanish occupation and exploitation, and anticipated

7 Times Journal, "Martial law lifted in January if..." 13 December 13, 1980.

8 The summation of the proceedings for this event was published in the book *Repression and Resistance* (1983), by the Komite ng Sambayanang Pilipino.

to be recovered when the Filipino People obtained self-rule. Perhaps appropriately, it is relevant to point-out Marcos' more overt foray into crafting Filipino Historical Narrative through the creation of *Tadhana: The History of the Filipino People*. Further analysis of the project has been provided by Rommel Curaming's article in the *Philippine Studies Journal* (2006).⁹ In brief, *Tadhana* was a planned multi-volume series attributed to Marcos' authorship, but essentially ghostwritten through a team of academics. Though it was never fully realized, the project would have formalized a grand historical narrative of the nation under his tenure.

For the former, it is significant to discuss the Ideologies that were being pushed within both the United States and the Catholic Church. On one hand, the Philippines has had an extensive and complicated history with the U.S. Government. American involvement in the region would shape political and economic policy alongside a history of armed insurgencies and anti-state movements.¹⁰ American interests in the Cold War pushed policy makers to maintain footholds in the Pacific Region and contain the spread of communism from the Soviet Union and China. For Marcos, maintaining this relationship ensured the presence of monetary and military aid to supplement his government's projects and policies.¹¹

By the 1970s, discourses on human rights had also filtered into American policy. Søndergaard (2020) writes that congressional forces increasingly pushed towards human rights advocacy in opposition to the Nixon and Ford Presidencies. Representative Donald Fraser would initiate hearings on international human rights issues beginning in 1973, leading to country-specific measures that reduced assistance to the Philippines and other nations. After the Vietnam War, the inaugural address of President Jimmy Carter in 1977 would signal their government's endorsement of the concept:

Our commitment to human rights must be absolute, our laws fair, our natural beauty preserved; the powerful must

9 Curaming, R. (2006). *Contextual Factors in the analysis of state-historian relations in Indonesia and the Philippines*. *Philippine Studies*. Vol. 56, No. 2. 123-50.

10 Further exploration of Philippine-American relations pertinent to this matter are found in Shalom, S.R. (1980). *Philippine Acceptance of the Bell Trade Act of 1946: A Study of Manipulatory Democracy*. *Pacific Historical Review* 49(3), 499-517; and Robinson, L., et al (2016). *U.S.-Philippine Relations in Historical Perspective*. U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001-2014, RAND Corporation, 9-16.

11 Discussions on Marcos' relations with the United States are further supplied in Bonner, R. (1987). *Waltzing with a Dictator: The Marcoses and the Making of American Policy*. New York: Random House and Seagrave, S. (1988). *The Marcos Dynasty*. New York: Ballentine Books.

not persecute the weak, and human dignity must be enhanced... Peoples more numerous and more politically aware are craving and now demanding their place in the sun--not just for the benefit of their own physical condition, but for basic human rights. (Carter, 1977)

This rhetoric is notwithstanding alternate interests—as with the ideological struggle posed between the western world and communism. Ronald Reagan’s victory in the 1980 presidential election positioned the cause of human rights within this dynamic. During the 1980 presidential debate, Reagan criticized the Carter administration for aggressively attacking American allies for human rights violations, while branding a Reagan administration as one that would use the discourse of Human Rights to counter Soviet Propaganda (Burt 1980). The response is relevant in the case of the Marcos regime, and our discussion, in that it diverts attention from totalitarianism enabled by the U.S. to a greater antagonist:

Even though they were an ally of ours, instead of trying patiently to persuade them to change their ways, we have, in a number of instances, aided a revolutionary overthrow which results in complete totalitarianism... this is a kind of a hypocritical policy when, at the same time, we're maintaining a detente with the one nation in the world where there are no human rights at all--the Soviet Union. (Reagan, 1980)¹²

The Catholic Church also has a more prolonged and likewise complicated history in the Philippines. Early Spanish missionaries became an indispensable means for the government to operate the colony and communicate with indigenous locals (Rosenberg, 1972). This same influence, coupled with autocratic policies of censorship in colonial publications, is argued to have pushed the initial development of indigenous media into a militant and nationalist bend. This manifested in the Propaganda Reform Movement undertaken by Filipinos in Spain.

During the Cold War, Papal Encyclicals increasingly levelled with ideas of fundamental Human Rights and dignity—particularly in matters of poverty alleviation. *Mater et Magistra* by Pope John XXIII (1961) would affirm the Church as a teacher and guardian of the poor and oppressed, giving particular attention to agrarian economies. He narrates of millions of persons “condemned through the inadequacy

12 This was in response to a question related to the overthrow of the Iranian Shah, where journalist Barbara Walters asked if America had the right to determine what form of country any government would have, and “do we back unpopular regimes whose major merit is that they are friendly to the United States?” .

of their wages to live with their families in utterly sub-human conditions” (p. 68). In *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John XXIII (1963) affirmed the need to safeguard human rights, arguing against a system “whereby those who are in a position of superiority impose their will arbitrarily on others” (p. 87). Pope Paul VI would draw attention to poverty and marginalization, accounting for signs of Social Unrest to a widening gap between the rich and the poor in *Populorum Progressio* (1967):

The injustice of certain situations cries out for God's attention. Lacking the bare necessities of life, whole nations are under the thumb of others; they cannot act on their own initiative; they cannot exercise personal responsibility; they cannot work toward a higher degree of cultural refinement or a greater participation in social and public life. They are sorely tempted to redress these insults to their human nature by violent means. (p. 30).

The growth of liberation theology in the Philippines would be inspired from these developments. It was an emerging reaction to the development ideology associated with authoritarian dictatorships – seeking to engage with the modernization process through the vantage point of the poor and those displaced by the march of progress (Holden and Nadeau, 2010). Thus, upon the imposition of Martial Rule, the reception of the Philippine church was split between three groups (Rigos, 1975). On one hand, Marcos was supported by a section of the church that tended to speak out only when the institution’s interests were at stake. The church as a whole, led by Jaime Cardinal Sin, did not outright denounce the regime itself but was able to question the government on moral issues and individual actions or incidents. However, there were members of the church that were opposed to the administration, and faced the brunt of state reprisal directed against the clergy. The Sacred Heart Novitiate was raided by state forces in 1974, and church-based publications such as *Signs of the Times* and *The Communicator* – seen to be more critical of the martial law government – were shut-down in 1976 (Youngblood, 1978; Youngblood, 1981; San Juan, 1978).

Despite this backdrop of repression, members of the church sector were vital in documenting the deteriorating situation of human rights of the Philippines and sharing them with audiences abroad. Most notable is the case of Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP), an organization whose roots can be traced to 1974 under the Association of Major Religious Superiors (AMRSP). Operating primarily through a grass roots volunteer work, they published the *Political Detainees Update* to keep track of numerous detention and disappearance cases, and drew attention to a wide range of individuals that could not be

covered by Amnesty International (Sanchez, 2017). Over time, members who contributed to the creation of TFDP would help create numerous other human rights advocacy groups during the Dictatorship period. Among these associations include *Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance* (FIND), *Mothers and Relatives Against Tyranny and Oppression* (MARTYR), and *Samahan ng Ex-detainees Laban sa Detensyon at Aresto* (SELDA).

Projecting Termination Proceedings

Such growing pressures towards Human Rights visibility contributes to the timing of the termination of Martial Law. In this context, ending martial rule appears to have not only been intended for a Philippine audience, but also as a response to human rights challenges posed by both the Church and the United States. Concerning the U.S., the lifting of Martial Law was an opportunity to comfortably present a renewed commitment to human rights. Raegan's landslide electoral victory would see his inauguration take place on January 1981 (Moyle, 1980; Weisman, 1981). The incoming president was also known to have a personal friendship and admiration for Marcos (Søndergaard, 2020).

February of the same year would see the Papal Visit of Pope John Paul II to the nation – the importance of which was captured by major newspapers. Government preparations saw the Coconut Palace commissioned by Imelda Marcos at the cost of ₱37 million as the Papal guesthouse (Ellison, 1988). Under “More funds sought for Papal Visit,” Imelda Marcos is noted by the *Times Journal* to be rehearsing thousands of children in Manila to greet the Pope – including deaf-mute children to interpret the “Our Father” prayer in dance (p. 1). Further advertising Philippine progress, a February 14 article from the same newspaper exclaims that the Pope would see a clean and peaceful Tondo as a result of 180,000 residents benefiting from urban development projects.

All three major news dailies – *The Bulletin Today*, *Times Journal*, and *Daily Express* – would publish similar articles concerning or alluding to the January termination proceedings. Such was the case for the frontpages of their January 3, 5, 6, and 16 issues. The similarity of contents between both newspapers may reflect an observation by Jenny Santiago, a former reporter for the *Daily Express Newspaper* and *Tempo Tabloid* during the 1980s:

Most journalists eventually resigned themselves to the repressive situation... The work of reporters at that time consisted mainly of getting the press releases from their government beats and rewriting them. It was not surprising that some press releases were simply reprinted word for

word. (Santiago, 2007)

Shortly after the New Year, on 3 January 1981, Marcos attended a gathering of 50,000 members of the *Iglesia ni Cristo* (INC) during the birthday of the church's leader Eraño Manalo. Reporting on this event, the Times Journal writes "FM Scores Opposition", stating Marcos' sincerity in ending the state of Martial Rule, contrary to the words of his critics. Marcos' first cabinet meeting of the year is documented on both papers January 5, where inside sources recounted the evaluation of studies concerning the effects of lifting Martial Law on the economy and national security. This is followed on the next day with news pieces speculating that Martial Law may end within the same month, with Defense Minister Enrile assuring that the Armed Forces are ready to adjust to the normalization process. He is later written about on January 9 by the Bulletin Today (1981), remarking that the circumstances ending Martial Rule are "unparalleled" (p. 1). On January 16, dailies relayed Marcos' statement for the people regarding the protection of civil rights after of Martial Rule.

In addition to these, *Bulletin Today* provided at least one front page article referencing or directly concerning the lifting of Martial Law between January 10 and 15. On January 12, Marcos is shown intending to discuss the same matter with the National Security Body on January 15, which is subsequently covered by the same publication. On the following day, the Bulletin Today published an article called "Detention Centers phaseout this week," relating the lifting of Martial Rule with the transfer and release of detainees (1981).

The ceremony itself would take place on January 17, 1981. Among those recalled to have been present by observers were the U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines, key ministers of the national government and also former rebel leaders such as Luis Taruc.¹³ At its onset, the event made clear that the lifting of Martial Law was an occasion predicated on a "rebirth" of the nation and the guidance of the president. Ceremonies began with the hymn of the "*Bagong Pagsilang*" – the hymn of the Marcos Administration created under Martial Rule¹⁴ – introducing the president into the Malacañang Palace Heroes' Hall. The ecumenical prayer recites that a "brighter future" lay ahead for the country while thanking its leadership and the beloved president. The opening remarks,

13 A recording of the proceedings was archived by the People's Television Network – the successor agency to the Maharlika Broadcasting System which documented this event, and can be accessed online. Speech of President Marcos during the termination of Martial Law, January 17, 1981. Uploaded by GovPH (Youtube Channel). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0XeJHMh92M>

14 A collection of the songs used during the period is provided in De Leon, F. P. (1973). *Mga awit ukol sa Bagong Lipunan*. Manlapaz Pub.

given by Chief Justice Enrique Fernando, emphasized a celebration of a new nation born—highlighting that the date of the ceremonies coincides with the anniversary of the ratification of the 1973 constitution.¹⁵

The highlight of the program would be Ferdinand Marcos Sr.'s speech, later published by the Official Gazette under the title "Encounter with Destiny", and his reading of Proclamation 2045. Its opening words signal a link between the rebirth of the nation at present to a destiny construed by the sacrifices of the 1896 Philippine Revolution:

...our forebears—in Pugad Lawin and Tirad Pass, in Kawit and Malolos—offered their lives, happiness and, most valuable of all, their sacred honor to a quest that we pursue to this very day: the great quest for a New Society. (Marcos, 1981a)

Martial rule is narrated as a panacea—a remedy which saved and regenerated the Filipino People. Marcos would cite numerical statistics supporting assertions of poverty reduction, economic growth, and social alleviation. Anarchy was proclaimed to have been successfully checked, and rebellious forces said to have been reduced to disorganized bands alienated from the people—as Marcos pointed to former rebels in attendance to show proof of results. The achievements of Martial Law, heralded as the New Society of the Philippines, are effectively outlined in a manner akin to a State of the Nation Address:

...this was the point of what we have since called, 'the Revolution from the Center,' which bought time for our people so that they could muster the strength to stem the tide of turmoil and rediscover their solidarity. (Marcos, 1981a)

The commentaries of news reporters documenting the event for Maharlika Broadcasting System (MBS) and their interviews with attendees reinforce this narrative. One reporter remarks how "...The entire Filipino people stands with pride with him," at the end of the Presidential Speech. Alliterating, he states that Marcos "initiated this great leadership and this great vision to make the Filipino Nation and the Filipino truly great." Imelda's weeping was remarked of as being "touched by the eloquence of the president", and reaffirming Marcos' "Patriotism and Faith" in the nation's people.

15 The 1973 constitution has also been anecdotally referred to as the "Marcos Constitution"

Projecting Progress and Martial Law

Even after January 17, the termination proceedings were made to linger within publication spaces as positive feedback about Martial Rule was circulated by the state. Between January 18 and 20, all major dailies released copies of Proclamation 2045 as well as excerpts of “Encounter with Destiny.” The U.S. State Department and a number of Filipinos in the United States are also invoked, welcoming the move as an encouraging step forward.

The *Times Journal* would issue a section on page 16 of its January 18 issue outlining a list of milestones obtained by Martial Rule. Among those indicated were nation-wide land reform, the emergence of the nation as a rice exporter, the passage of a new labor code, the reorganization and clean-up of government offices, and the freeing of political detainees such as Benigno Aquino Jr. for humanitarian reasons. Also addressing the initial causes of the Martial Law proclamation—the Communist and Muslim Secession Movements—the document highlights diplomatic endeavors to produce a ceasefire and the creation of Mindanao Autonomous Zones. The document also showcased the dismantling of communist smuggling networks, and the captures of Communist leaders such as Bernabe Buscayano and Victor Corpus. Among the various images attached to these highlights would be shown a backyard garden relating to the Green Revolution Program, the execution of convicted drug manufacturer Lim Seng, and a shirtless Marcos working in a rice field. Rice self-sufficiency under the Masagana-99 program was marketed as a major achievement of the regime, and associated with the virility of the president.

The bullet-point list of achievements provided by the *Times Journal* in this piece reflects what characteristics were most valued in the projection of the New Society. The primacy of law and order is first and foremost—exhibiting decisive or major actions that curbed the communist movement or general lawlessness. Also frequently raised are statements that show an active and reform-oriented government, listing the creation and reorganization of departments, the development of the *Batasang Pambansa*, the building of Local Government Systems, and crack-downs on corrupt officials and military men committing human rights abuses. Social welfare development is highlighted through the subjects of land reform, labor and wage codification, as well as housing projects and funds. Numerous trade and energy deals are also highlighted with diplomatic endeavors—at times highlighting first Lady Imelda Marcos.

The President is weighed-in as an integral component of the achievements of the New Society. Of the 81 statements listed on the document, 31 of them paint Marcos Sr. with an active voice in the

regime’s enforcement of laws or communication with its people. This is also reciprocated in the text with various occasions where an overwhelming majority of voters in a referendum entrusts the people’s confidence in continuing a Marcos-led state. The chronology presented below, based on the “Milestone” list, is simplified and laid-out based on excerpts that reflect these points – constructing a focus on Marcos Sr.’s agency in the progress of Martial Rule.

Table 1.
*Selected List of Accomplishments Published on
 the Times Journal (January 18, 1981)*

Year	Month	Accomplishment/s
1972	September	Marcos Declares Martial Law;
		Presidential decree declares whole nation as a land reform area
	October	Presidential decree frees farmers from Bondage from the Soil;
President updates on peace and order, capturing over 50,000 firearms and arresting over 500 people		
1973	January	Six-day referendum has almost 15 million people support Marcos’ blanket powers as enforcer of Martial Law;
		Marcos ratifies the new 1973 constitution.

	July	9 out of 10 of nation's voters give Marcos free mandate to continue in office past 1973
	August	Marcos creates panel to investigate subversion charges against former Sen. Benigno Aquino
	September	President releases funds for the rehabilitation of Mindanao
1974	June	Marcos declares that all disposable lands are owned by all
	September	Marcos signs decree declaring the barangay the smallest unit of local government
	November	Marcos offers amnesty to subversives in the country;
		Amnesty offered to Filipinos abroad
	December	Marcos frees 622 detainees
	1975	February
November		Marcos integrates Metro Manila's four cities and thirteen towns and establishes the Metropolitan

		Commission. First Lady Imelda Marcos is appointed as the first governor.
1976	March	Marcos confirms reports of offshore oil strike in Palawan
	May	Minimum wage decreed by presidential order is enforced
	September	Marcos broadens the powers of the Batasang Pambansa
	October	Marcos ratifies 9 amendments to the constitution
	December	The president announces for 13 Mindanao regions to become autonomous as soon as possible
1977	January	Marcos provides 65 million dollars for Tondo foreshore project
	March	Marcos and Khadaffy forge an agreement regarding the plebiscite for creating autonomous regions in Mindanao and Sulu
	December	Almost 90 percent of voters give vote of confidence to Marcos, granting him the right to function as both Prime Minister and President on the way to interim elections

1978	January	Marcos creates the national home Mortgage Financing Corp to facilitate funding for housing of all workers.
	December	Marcos creates the office of the <i>Tanodbayan</i> (Ombudsman) and Sandiganbayan to try cases of graft and corruption against government employees and officials.
1979	November	The President launches an eleven-point program for the country's industrialization; Marcos orders formation of the <i>Lupong Tagapayapa</i> to unclog court dockets
	April	Marcos visits Hawaii, restating his position on Martial law before American news publishers. He is overwhelmingly welcomed by Filipinos and Americans.
	May	Marcos orders the release of Aquino Jr. for humanitarian reasons. Thousands of other detainees have also been freed from detention.

December	<p>Marcos announces the lifting of Martial Law, ordering the scrapping of military courts, restoration of the privilege of the writ of Habeas Corpus, and the release of thousands of detainees;</p> <p>Marcos issues a decree to integrate monthly living allowances of workers (110 pesos) into the basic wage. This increases basic pay between 4 to 18 pesos a day.</p>
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This trend is not alien to the termination proceedings themselves. As with the production of the Marcos books mentioned earlier in this article, spectacles had long been projected in controlled media to this effect. McCallus' (1989) work lays bare various examples of this during earlier years of Martial Rule, providing feature titles from the *Times Journal* released during Marcos Sr.'s birthday on September 11, 1973. Even then, he had been touted as "Marcos the Revolutionary", "Marcos the Road Builder", and "The Charismatic Leader". Two poems were provided in the same issue, evoking Marcos as a hero who built the country, and likening him with the glory of past revolutionaries.

Articles released by the three Dailies from January 21 and 23 would add to the perceived effectiveness of Martial Rule by narrating how there are Filipinos opposed to its end. These would present concerns that it would disempower the government from resolving greater issues. Such questions are ultimately met in the text by reassurances from President Marcos or Minister Enrile that the government would be ready to meet-out security concerns should the need arise.

The scale of these releases may pale in comparison to *Progress and Martial Law* – a 148-page book unleashed on the succeeding month. The same piece would be cycled through a second phase of printing on June 1981, the same month that a presidential election was held between Marcos and Alejo Santos. The timing and nature of its publication suggests a stronger connection being forged not only to engaging

audiences with the momentous occasion of lifting Martial Law, but to showing Marcos' staying power as a political candidate.

Suffice to say, the text continues a two-stage narrative of necessity and positivity towards the regime. Reyes points out that the manuscript largely reflects the discussions inscribed onto previous Marcos-associated books such as *Notes on the New Society of the Philippines* (1973) and *Five years in the New Society* (1978). The opening 18 pages of *Progress and Martial Law* recount the justifications for the Declaration of Martial Law outlined in Proclamation 1081. The book organizes these into three main enemies of the state — a communist-led insurgency, a Mindanao secession movement, and a rightist conspiracy of the political elite.

Its third section appears to expound on Marcos' Termination Speech for Proclamation 2045, outlining achievements similarly pointed-out by the Times Journal's list as earlier introduced. These include focuses on a humanitarian approach to Mindanao Secession Crisis (pp. 49-52), Political Reforms in the Constitution, Batasang Pambansa, and Barangay (pp. 52-55), infrastructure development projects for roadworks and irrigation (p. 67), agrarian and labor reforms (pp. 83-97), and social services (pp. 97-103). An appendix of Development Indicators is likewise supplied, showcasing growths in agricultural production, average family incomes, literacy, housing allocation, social security, and medical coverage.

Throughout the book, the progress of Martial Law is consistently framed as a national-level struggle. Down to the text's epilogue, Marcos tells the tale of a nation overcoming disaster, and of the rights and liberties of citizens emerging in a better state "than they were before the intervention of Constitutional Authoritarianism" (1981b, pp. 107-108). What appears to make its contents unique from its predecessors is that it speculates alternative events in order to further convince readers. In the chapter titled "Without Martial Law", the voice of Marcos suggests a variety of alternate historical scenarios that could have taken place had Martial Law not been declared. A Coup d'état under so-called rightist elements or an electoral victory of the Liberal Party might have imposed Martial Law anyway, but ultimately perpetuate social inequalities. The text further hammers a moralizing dimension by claiming strong governance was the decisive result of Martial Law preventing such situations. According to the text, a Philippines without Martial Rule would have seen corruption "continue to gnaw at the moral fabric of society." - where "personalist orientation(s) of politics would impair efforts to create and develop strong political institutions." (Marcos 1981b, p. 24).

Alternatively, a communist takeover might have been possible — one which would “have nothing to offer except prospects of large-scale violence... and the loss of our much-cherished human freedoms.” (Marcos 1981b, p. 28). Marcos goes on by citing the takeover of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia — invoking the impossibility of finding common cause with leftist and radical elements to run a stable government. Speculative narrative-molding is further applied as the achievements of the New Society are expounded upon later into the work, surmising that a Philippines without President Marcos would have been unprepared to tackling the various crises encountered during Martial Rule.

The framing of these alternate scenarios, while dismissible as counterfactual writing, serves to illustrate the value-assignments propagated by Marcosian rhetoric. Human rights would have been gravely imperiled without Martial Law. Moreover, such works channel favor towards an American-aligned, anti-communist drive, which appeal to anxieties within the church concerning violent revolution. These narratives at the same time seek an appeal to the mythos of Marcos’ Martial Rule as the singular and proper agent of social reform.

Conclusion: An Encounter with Contradictions

The processions made for the lifting of Martial show the different lengths by which Media tools were utilized to promote the New Society. Through printing and broadcasting platforms, images of the struggling nation under Marcos’ guidance were conjured in the same space as visions of the antagonistic forces that sought to undermine them. While the public spectacle of ending martial law is framed as a restoration of democracy, the proceedings ultimately advanced a metanarrative of progress centered around the Marcos name.

While large news outlets in the country reported optimism, there was still skepticism expressed by human rights groups. When Amnesty International conducted an investigative report on the Philippines later that same year, it found overwhelming evidence that the principles being espoused on the treatment of political detainees were being systematically disregarded. The 1984 report of the International Commission of Jurists would conclude that, despite the official lifting of Martial Law, the human rights situation remained grim. Youngblood (1981) would note that some aspects of the pre-martial law press began to return — with a recent upsurge of reports concerning crime, graft, corruption, and official wrongdoing. Despite this, criticism had yet to extend to the president or First Lady. It was thought that the threat of libel charges or reprisals for criticizing certain state officials impelled a level of caution among media bodies.

Whether the narrative of a crisis conquered by the Marcoses successfully convinced the general public at the time remains to be decided with finality even in the present day. However, Marcos' very termination speech relayed what was bound to the ensuing law that lifted the state of emergency – an end that was not absolute. He quotes the text from Proclamation No. 2045 – the instrument for lifting the state of Martial Rule – as follows:

...the suspension of the privilege of the writ shall also continue with respect to persons at present detained as well as others who may hereafter be similarly detained for the crimes of insurrection or rebellion, subversion, conspiracy or proposal to commit such crimes... all proclamations, orders, decrees, instructions, and acts promulgated, issued or done by the incumbent President constitute part of the law of the land, and shall remain valid, legal, binding, and effective even after lifting of martial law... (Marcos, 1981)

The state would continue to incarcerate selected political detainees – including those imprisoned for insurrection, rebellion, subversion, or varying forms of conspiracy. Martial Law was effectively continued in selected areas. Executive proclamations, orders, decrees, instructions, and acts operationalized during martial rule retained legal power, subject to changes declared by the President himself. While the Batasang Pambansa possessed the power to affect such change, it was dominated by Marcos' Political Party, the *Kilusang Bagong Lipunan*.¹⁶ Until the family's ouster in 1986, and beneath a fresh coat of presentation, the dictatorship and its norms remained in effect.

Perhaps the effectiveness of the termination narrative hinged on factors outside of the regime's control. In spite of the promotion of human rights discourse in American policy, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Jeane Kirkpatrick would argue that it was in the United States' better interest to be cautious of forcing the pace of political change in developing countries. Echoing Reagan's sentiments in his debate with Jimmy Carter, there was a fear that their allies may lose control of their nations and be replaced by Communist Totalitarian rule (Burns, 1982). In practice, this led to unequivocal American support for autocratic allies, in the hope that a preservation of such order would lead to a trickle-down of democratic reform. American support towards the end of Martial Rule could, in this manner, have just been a formality which would not have been changed by the quality of termination

16 Among their members would include Marcos' own daughter, Imee Marcos, who would go on to join the Batasan Pambansa in 1984. Benjamin Romualdez would have also joined the 1984 legislature after the same election, but remained an ambassador to the United States.

proceedings. Celozza (1997) argues that Reagan's basic concern was the retention of American Bases in the Philippines, and that before his inauguration he hinted to Imelda Marcos that they needed "a fresh mandate" moving forward.

As for the Papal Visit, different sources have called-out the Marcos Administration for the deterioration of Human Rights (Tam, 1981; Kamm, 1981). Despite efforts from state media outlets to craft the narrative of the Pope's speeches in their favor,¹⁷ the very words of the papal speech, documented on February 18, 1981, would emphasize the need for the genuine security of human rights:

Even in exceptional situations that may at times arise, one can never justify any violation of the fundamental dignity of the human person or of the basic rights that safeguard this dignity. Legitimate concern for the security of a nation, as demanded by the common good, could lead to the temptation of subjugating to the State the human being and his or her dignity and rights. (John Paul II, 1981)

Popular resistance would increase significantly in the ensuing years of the decade. Political and economic shocks came with the assassination of Senator Benigno Aquino (Malin, 1984; Sussman, 1988). International confidence in the administration plummeted further when it was discovered that Marcos' economic team was misrepresenting the nation's capacity to carry debt in the same year. Failures to address these and other emerging issues became essential factors for triggering the EDSA Revolt in 1986 and the removal of the Marcos Family from power. What seems clear in the end is that the Marcos house chose to coat itself with fresh paint, rather than fixing its degrading foundations.

Bionote

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17 Frontpage articles from the Times Journal between February 18 to 22 would remark of exaggerated reports from Foreign Press – specifically Newsweek – attempting to spin the Papal Visit as a criticism of the Regime. Other articles would headline their titles with words such as "Pope advises religious – Keep off Politics", "Shun Violence, Pope Tells Youth", and "Western Press Scored". While the Pope balanced his criticisms in such manners – it is keen to observe what is being selected and amplified by the press.

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