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Memories of FQS

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The day after

BY THIS TIME, 36 YEARS AGO, THE COUNTRY WAS in a state of collective shock, wondering what happened the night before. Media talked of four young protesters ascertained dead, felled by government bullets at different points during some eight hours of battles around Mendiola that started from the storming of Malacanang at nightfall and ended near daybreak. Some three hundred had been hauled to Camp Crame and other prisons elsewhere in Manila. Everywhere—in media, in government, in the factories, in schools, in the communities, in the streets, at home—the buzzword was *revolution*.

Pete Lacaba, in his *Days of Disquiet, Nights of Rage*, imaged that moment like no other: " A spirit was abroad that night, and the streets spoke of it in whispers: *the revolution has arrived*...And indeed the revolution was on everybody's mind, before everybody's eyes. Mothers and



fathers and brothers and sisters and friends sat by the radio throughout that sleepless night, all on edge, thinking of the revolution. That night, an exodus of privilege made ghost towns of exclusive villages in the suburbs; the chi-chi crowd, fear in their guts and guilt in their hearts, holed up with their hysteria in the big hotels, driven there by certainty that Forbes Park and Bel Air and Dasmarinas and Magallanes would be set afire by an avenging people." I've never seen the rich so scared shit!

Quoted by Pete, Senator Eva Estrada Kalaw warned: "The students set the emotional powderkeg that may become the signal for wave upon wave of unrest in the streets, in the factories, on the campuses, in our farms." In retrospect those words were really prophetic.

January 26-30: days and nights of disquiet and rage

"It's a cultural revolution, not an insurrection."

Let the education begin—teach-ins, people's congresses, people's marches, education in action.

Go to the people! Go to the countryside!

How it came to this—of accidents and intentional actions:

- the mike that started a revolution: January 26
- December 29, 1969
- The Clash of '69
- That bloody '69 vote
- Junking the parliamentary route: '67-'68 split-ups
- We had no business messing up with the Vietnam war
- The October 24 Movement

What may be learned from all this?

—**On discourses:** New words, new ways of framing, new sites, new actors, new movements have come into the picture and may soon be gone. But despite more than a generation of struggle the song remains the same: *it's about fairness/justice in this fragile, troubled world.*

—**On the role of state:** Almost undiminished despite adjustment pressures for much of the '80s and the '90s, state power still looms large in our everyday existence. Its capture remains as necessary as ever to deliver justice, if not development. Armed resistance/revolution



as means has not completely lost its appeal. Protracted people's war may have gone out of fashion (Nepal as exception) but advocacy for an AS route has not run out of steam. Chiapas opened a different path of challenging big power but a case probably too context-specific to have any universal value. Iraqi resistance is another. Yet again, the unique Hamas electoral victory in the recent Palestinian elections might be worth more than just coffee shop conversation.

—***On the new social movements:*** What's up, what's new? Some say the traditional movements—trade union, peasant, women, etc—are passé. NGO, environmental, ecofeminist, fair trade and trade justice, non-heirarchical, and some such movements are in. Well, the traditionals are not exactly passé yet and the 'in thing' may not be quite new. Horizontal power and self-governance may have helped us live our lives with less government but government chases us deep into our bedrooms and we still run to it for settling marital feuds.

P R R M - C B I S
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About the author

Isagani R. Serrano is Senior Vice President and Board Member of the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM). He's written for CIVICUS the following: *Civil Society in the Asia-Pacific*, 1994; *Humanity In Trouble But Hopeful* in CITIZENS, 1995; *Profile: Philippines* for CIVIC INDEX, 1997; *Coming Apart, Coming Together* in Civil Society at the Turn of the Millennium, 1999; *A Global Citizens' Commitment*, 1999. A community organizer, educator, writer, guitarist, 'farmer', and political prisoner for seven years during martial law in the Philippines. Trained in education and literature, community organization and development management. Holds a Master of Science in Environment & Development Education (MSc in EE/DE) from the South Bank University-London.

