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RAM: An Evaluation
(Why Coup Attempts Failed In The Philippines)

An Undergraduate Thesis
Presented to
Professor Roland Simbulan
Department of Social Science

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Bachelor of Arts
Development Studies

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April 2003

APPROVAL SHEET

This undergraduate thesis entitled “**RAM: an evaluation (Why coup attempts failed in the Philippines)**”, prepared and submitted by **Marissa P. Rosete**, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the **Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Development Studies**, is hereby endorsed for acceptance.



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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My sincere and grateful thanks to many people who had made their special way in helping me doing this paper.

To my family who are always there to support me.

To Dete Jona and Dete Joenna, thanks for all the support, financially, morally, and emotionally, even though we're just half sisters, I know, by heart and in reality, we are never been treated half by all of you...

To my father, for your willingness to contribute in this paper with the best that you can, for all your support, and for challenging me in your own way, thank you for everything...

To my mother, who serves as my strength and my inspiration, for all the kindness, support, love, and walang hanggang pag-unawa, 'nay, para sa 'yo lahat ng 'to...

To my countless friends, Nadia, Raissa, Carlo, Maan, Julie, Angie, Erly, Jenah, Regan, Ate Bless, Karen, Gay, Jehan, Lorelie, Jonald, Loida, Isang, Typee, Jona, Sam, and many more, thanks for all your advices, for all your support, and most especially for the true, meaningful and endless friendship...

To Lordson, for always being there beside me, for staying with me in computer shop until midnight, for giving me strength, for making me laugh in times of crying, and most of all for making my life more meaningful than ever... I love you so much...

To my neighborhood in Catmon and in San Vicente, for all the humors that makes me strong, nakatulong ka'yo in a way...

To all my sisters and brothers in Alpha Phi Omega, who serves to be my second family, may we always be!!!

To Prof. Simbulan, my adviser, for giving me a constructive criticism, advice, and suggestion for the betterment of this paper...

To all the people in RAM office, thanks for your warmth welcome and cooperation.

And above all, to Almighty God, who made everything be possible, you deserve all praises and thanks...

ABSTRACT

This paper entitled "RAM :an evaluation (Why coup attempts failed in the Philippines) contains discussion about the Reform the Armed Force Movement before the 1986 EDSA Revolution, their formation, roots, and actions.

This paper also discusses the transition of the movement into Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabansa after the December 1989 coup attempt. It provides the participation of the RAM members during the 1986 EDSA Revolution, and coup attempts after it, including the 1987 August and December 1989 coup attempts.

This paper tries to evaluate the movement as well as knowing the reason of failure in their coup attempt against the Aquino government. All in all it discusses the good side and the bad side of the organization.

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I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

*"The Philippine military is a world of its own, like all other worlds, it must be studied and understood."*¹ Two general statements can summarize the history and sentiment of the military during the reign of Marcos. First, the common soldiers, especially those in the field, hardly knew what they were fighting and dying for except from Marcos' rhetoric and the rhetoric's of his generals. Obedience to the chain of command was greatly emphasized. The military dictum " theirs was to do or to die and not to reason why" became the single most important commandment emphasized by the Commander-in-Chief and which gave Marcos a free hand to completely turn the military into a quasi-private army. Second, many of the senior officers (generals and colonels) and even junior officers (Lt. Colonels to 2Lts.) contributed greatly to the decay in the military organization.²

¹ Criselda Yabes, The boys from the barracks: the Philippine Military after Edsa. Pasig, Metro Manila: Anvil publication, 1991.

² *Ibid.*

By the early 1980s, the Marcos regime was in its terminal phase, wracked by political and economic crises. The military was riven into factions and its credibility was in tatters. RAM began in the twilight of the Marcos era as a movement to reform the corrupt and factionalized Armed Force.³ Led by some 15 middle ranking officers, the Reform the Armed Force Movement (RAM) has played a key role in the transition from dictatorship under Marcos to democracy under Aquino.⁴ RAM catalyzed the revolution that made possible the ascendancy of Cory Aquino. They called themselves “idealists” for country and people,⁵ the heroes of EDSA.⁶

People Power... a remarkable part of our history. Thousands of people gathered in Edsa, holding hand in hand aiming for one thing, to overthrow the dictator, Fidel Marcos in his position as the President of the Philippines. Regardless of age, sex, status and religion, Filipino people shout for democracy, cry for a true independency. After years of dictatorship, control, and abuse of power, Marcos has reached his end; Filipinos can no longer take him for his management. The break of silence began.

³ Coronel, Shiela S. “RAM: From reform to revolution”. *Kudeta: the challenge to Phil. Democracy*. (Phil. Center for Investigative Journalism, 1990) p. 51.

⁴ McCoy, Alfred W. “RAM Boys”. *Midweek*. (21 Sept 1988) p. 29.

⁵ Magsanoc, Letty J. “Whatever happened to Gringo”. *Sunday Inquirer Magazine*. (6 Sept 1987) p. 5.

With common goal, hope, and prayers, Filipino people had won the battle against the dictator. Everyone has participated on this success. The professionals, the students, the workers, the peasants, religious people, old or young, girl or boy, lesbian or gay, everybody has took part his/her role. Another player on this historical event, from the military sector is the Reform the Armed Force Movement or RAM (Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabayan) boys led by Gregorio Honasan. They have been also a component, a part of this progress. They had been also played a role in this part of our history. Like any other sector, they also called for our rights, they had also asked for true democracy. But after the 1986 Edsa Revolution, where are these RAM boys now? How are their lives? Do we consider them as our heroes? What exactly their role in 1986 Edsa Revolution?

A series of Edsa Revolution had been made, Edsa II, Edsa III, why is it that RAM did not participated on it when in fact they were one of the initiator during Edsa I? Are their existence is only for that period of time? What are their contributions in our society, if there are? Are they really for the Filipino people or just for few individuals? What are the factors why their series of coup attempts had been failed? These are some questions this paper will try to find answers.

⁶ Zamora, Fe B. " Ramos and RAM: On A Collision Course". *Sunday Inquirer Magazine*, (6 Sept 1987) p. 8 3

STATEMENT OF THE OBJECTIVES

This paper will have the following objectives:

GENERAL:

To be able to evaluate and have an in depth analysis on the reformist movement Reform the Armed Force Movement (RAM).

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

- To be able to know the reason of their existence.
- To be able to know and internalize their vision and mission.
- To be able to recognize their role in 1986 EDSA REVOLUTION.
- To be able to understand their importance in the society.
- To be able to assess their lives after EDSA I.
- To be able to get their point of view regarding the failure of several coup attempts.
- To be able to know and analyze the real reason why the coups failed.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This paper will enable the readers to give a wider view about the Reform the Armed Force Movement (RAM). It will provide a better point of view if they are really for the Filipino people and not just serve for any single group or individual.

This paper will help us to analyze the importance of their existence, and the things that they have done and to be done for the betterment of our society. It will also provide a better understanding in our history especially during Edsa Revolution. And lastly it will impart a deeper knowledge about the RAM boys.

SCOPE AND LIMITATION

This paper will evaluate or assess the Reform the Armed Force Movement (RAM) by Gringo Honasan after the EDSA Revolution. It will cover the reason of their existence, their mission, vision and aspirations. Their part in 1986 EDSA Revolution, the failed coup attempts, and their lives after these historic events. What they had contributed for the betterment of the society, if there are? The changes they've made and their successes. Some of the controversies and issues they had been encountered will also be tackled. All in all, this paper will discuss the good and the bad side of the organization.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The research study provides the following topics, which may be discussed in books and periodicals that helped in analyzing and contributed to the study. These are as follows:

McCoy, Alfred. Closer than Brothers. New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1999.

This book contains the history of the two classes of PMA, the Class 1940, the PMA's first graduating class, and Class of 1971, which is the most controversial. From this Class of PMAer most of the organizer of the popular Reform the Armed Force Movement came from.

This book includes the discussion where, when, and how the Movement was formed. It provides a better understanding about the several coup attempts made by the RAM after the 1986 EDSA Revolution.

Alfred Mc Coy, with this book, try to present the closeness or brotherhood within the Philippine Military Academy even after leaving the life of being a *cadet*.

Montiel, Cristina. People's Pulse. Quezon City: Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs, Ateneo de Manila University, 1990.

People's Pulse is a publication series of the Ateneo de Manila University Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs. Attempts are made to depict in summarized graphic form findings culled from the Ateneo Public Opinion Survey run semi-annually by the Institute of Philippine Culture. The endeavor intends to bring survey results to a wider spectrum of readers. Statistical representation and lengthy analysis are avoided for the sake of parsimony.

It is a survey to Filipino attitudes toward the military and includes question about the failure of December 89 coup. The most respondents said that the failed December '89 coup was unequivocally wrong but the level of vehemence in condemning it varied. Many who believed that it was an objectionable more were emphatic in its

wrongfulness and felt those who participated in it should be punished for their acts. However, majority who deemed it wrong thought the coup was needed to jolt the government from its unsatisfactory performance. Only a few considered the coup as correct and worthy of success.

**An eyewitness history, PEOPLE POWER, The
Philippine Revolution of 1986. Manila: James B Reuter, S.J.,
Foundation, 1986.**

This is an oral and visual history of people's power in the Philippine revolution of 1986. It is an oral history told by the people who witnessed and made the events. It is also a visual history told through photographs. This oral and visual history is told in five chapters. Each chapter contains a scenario, eyewitness accounts, and photographs. The book captures history as it was made out of spontaneous courage, which Filipinos will never forget and about which the world will always wonder. This book will reminisce one of the remarkable event in our history, the 1986 EDSA Revolution where in, the RAM were made part of.

Criselda Yabes. The boys from the barracks: the Philippine Military after Edsa. (Pasig, Metro Manila: Anvil publication,1991)

This book is a journalist's first-hand, up-close chronicle of life in the Philippine military in its most crucial years. It recalls how the roots of discontent began after Marcos declared martial law in 1972, and illustrates why the soldiers who helped install Corazon C. Aquino in her place would not settle for staying in the barracks, ready to die unquestioningly for the Republic while politicians in Manila quarrel and starving, ill-equipped troops are fed into the meat grinder that is the countryside.

This book avoids the academic and official trappings of similar works. In their own words, sometimes in exclusive interviews with the author while on the run from the government hunters, the rebels recall how coup attempts were plotted, why they failed, and why they will keep trying until they succeed, or fade into oblivion.

Luttwak, Edward. Coup d'Etat, A practical Handbook. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, c 1979.

Being a handbook, this is not concerned with a theoretical analysis of the coup d'état, but rather with the formulation of the

techniques which can be employed to seize power within a state. According to Luttwak, it can be compared to a cookery book in the sense that it aims at enabling any layman equipped with enthusiasm and the right ingredients to carry out his own coup, only knowledge of the rules is required. Two words of caution : in the first place in order to carry out a successful coup certain pre-conditions must be present, just as in cooking one needs the right sorts of ingredients to start with. Secondly, the readers should be aware that the penalty of failure is far greater than having to eat out of a tin. (The rewards, too, are greater.)

He also stressed that it should be noted that the techniques discussed here are politically neutral, and are only concerned with the objective of seizing control of the state, and not at all with subsequent policies.

Edward Luttwak also remarks in this book, "A coup consists of the infiltration of a small but critical segment of the state apparatus, which is then used to displace the government from its control of the remainder." In this sense, use of military or other organized force is not the defining feature of a coup d'état. Any seizure of the state apparatus by extra-legal tactics may be considered a coup, according to Luttwak.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to make this paper be possible, archival research will be done. The researcher will gather primary data at the CAS Library of UP Manila, UP Diliman Main Library, Public Library of Malabon, and National Library.

The researcher will also find facts through internet and ask information on some credible and knowledgeable person such as old (or present) RAM members.

Also, the researcher will go to the office of RAM (Reform the Armed Force Movement) located in Makati City. And lastly, if possible, will conduct an interview with Sen. Gregorio Honasan.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study will use dialectical materialism as its theoretical framework. In dialectical materialism, the superstructure is based on the substructure. The superstructure includes politics, culture, religion, law, and etc., while the substructure is the economics, which is the base structure. Whatever changes happened in the substructure brought about by changes in the mode of production will affect the superstructure. The mode of production comprises of force of production and the relationship within the workers and the masters. The two should develop at the same time. Meaning, they need to have a parallel improvement. If only the force of production developed by having new and advance technology, using machines, but the relationships between the workers and the masters remain stagnant or underdeveloped, despite of having those machinery's and advance technology, the workers are still being exploited and have bad conditions, there is no any development can be trace in the mode of production. And if these conditions will continue, conflicts arises that lead into crisis. And the crisis or problems in the base structure which is the economics will eventually brings changes and affect the superstructure including politics, religion, culture, law, and etc.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

During the American occupation of the country, particularly during the period from 1901 to 1935, the peacekeeping army was transferred to the hands of the Insular Police, called the Philippines Constabulary (PC). Later, Commonwealth Act No. 1 otherwise known as the National Defense Act of 1935, prescribed the creation and organization of the Philippine Army, with the Offshore Patrol and the Army Air Corps as major components. Additionally, the Philippine Constabulary, which then existed under the Department of the Interior, became an integral part of the newly organized Philippine Army.⁷

On 23 December 1950, the Philippine Army eventually became the Armed Forces of the Philippines with four major services, namely: The Philippine Army, The Philippine Constabulary, The Philippine Air Force and The Philippine Navy.⁸

In order to adequately address the growing insurgency in the 1980s, a major restructuring was implemented. Regional Unified

⁷Cruz, Armando C. Citizen Army Training-1. Marikina, Metro Manila: Michael Angelo Yaunder, 1995.

Commands were organized and were assigned areas of responsibilities, which conformed to the twelve political regions of the country. The twelve Regional Unified Commands were later reorganized into Six Area Commands in February 1986.⁹

Finally, on 20 December 1990, the President Corazon C. Aquino signed into a law the Republic Act 6975 which created the Philippine National Police under the reorganized Department of Interior and Local Government, this law which took effect on January 1, 1991 removed the Philippine Constabulary from the Armed Forces of the Philippines to form the main component of the PNP.¹⁰

This event is considered a major landmark in the history of the AFP because it marked the shift of its role from internal security to total national defense with focus on external concerns. A smooth transition to effect this shift in roles is in progress. The law prescribes that from 1 January 1991 to 1 December 1992, the AFP shall continue its previous role of preserving both the internal and external security of the state.¹¹ Yes, security for both internal and external. The AFP was established for the Filipino people but sadly and badly, it will suddenly politicized and served for the interest of some. The great obstacle of

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

that the AFP has had to surmount was a civilian leader who had decided to stay in power for as long as he could. This he did through legal manipulation and the use of the bureaucracy, especially the military.¹²

The dilemma therefore of the military was whether or not to continue supporting a perverted status quo at all cost and resist moderate and violent forces seeking to dethrone the Marcos regime. It was a dilemma of becoming anti-people rather than pro-people, of protecting one man rather than protecting the state itself, thereby becoming a praetorian guard rather than the guardian of democracy.¹³

It is a sad historical note that it took one and a half decades for the military to fully comprehend their dilemma. It was only when an internal revolutionary force that seems to be beyond its scope and control that soldiers started questioning why directly threatened the military institution. It was when the people whom they have sworn to protect and serve began to hate and despise them that they felt the strong contradiction in their role. It was when the people started to clamor for a change in government that they felt something was gravely

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Guerrero, Salvador, "The Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM): A creation of historical experience". *Kasarinlan*, vol.3 no. 3, 1st quarter 1988, p.52.

¹³ *Ibid.*

wrong with the then existing government. With these contradictions as backdrop, the RAM was born.¹⁴

The emergence of RAM and their will to reform the AFP is interconnected with the conditions of the people. Because of the corruption and abuse of power, while those in the positions have a better kind of living, lending and using the money that supposed to be for the people, there's a lot of Filipino has suffered of poverty. Our country is experiencing economic crisis. And this crisis served as a catalyst for something, anything, which can bring changes for the betterment conditions of every Filipinos' lives.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

DEFINITION OF TERMS

ESPRIT DE CORP— the common spirit existing in the members of a group.

COUP D'ETAT— *a sudden violent exercise by a small group to overthrow a government.*

REVOLUTION— a sudden, radical, or complete change to overthrown or renunciation of one ruler or government and substitution of another.

REFORM— to make better or improve by removal of faults.
Improvement or correction of what is corrupt or defective.

II. RAM: Reform the Armed Force

Movement

During Marcos Regime, abuse of power was rampant especially during the Martial Law. Almost everything was controlled and ruled by the dictator President Ferdinand Marcos. Everyone wanted to speak but no voice, and thousands of people wanted to react but have no means. Human rights were failed to exercise. Power and authority was centralized. Everything has controlled by the steel hands of Marcos--business, media, and etc. And AFP or the Armed Forces of the Philippines was not excused. Thus they decided to take an action. At first, the unit's middle-ranking officers began meeting for informal "gripe sessions" about the military until in July 23, 1982, these discussions coalesced into small secret group called the Reform the Armed Force Movement¹⁵ in reaction to widespread corruption, rampant abuses, and highly anomalous activities within the military establishment.

¹⁵ Manila Bulletin, August 16, 1993.

The Reform the Armed Force Movement emerged as an alliance between Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and a clique of regular officers¹⁶ aiming for a reform in the military system.

IDEALS AND ASPIRATIONS

The Reform the Armed Force Movement stood for some basic value-changes that were badly needed by the AFP. It means Restore Ethics, Fair-mindedness, Orderliness, Righteousness and Morale (REFORM) in the Armed Force of the Philippines (AFP) Movement. Its battle cry was WE BELONG. It meant that the AFP belonged to the people; that the AFP cannot survive without the care and support of the people. It was the cry of the young, patriotic and nationalistic soldier to the people to open up their arms and receive a brother who has lost his identity because he was used as ammunition in a war of partisan politics.¹⁷

In their manifesto, RAM stated that it's "effort shall be geared towards the attainment of the AFP's new thrust of uplifting the morale and welfare of every man and woman in uniform; enhancing the operational effectiveness of the military establishment; and restoring

¹⁶ McCoy, Alfred W. Closer than Brothers. Philippines: Cacho Hermanos, Inc., 1999, p.230

our people's faith in their armed forces, so that in the long run, we shall be able to contribute our share of building a just, peaceful and progressive society where all Filipinos live in harmony and with dignity.¹⁸

Because the AFP has lost many values and mislead its role with Marcos mandate, the Movement came up with the common aspiration stated as follows:

1. Maintain a strong and solid AFP that can uphold sovereignty of the people and the state, support the constitution and protect the geographical integrity of the country and at the same time extirpate all divisive forces within and outside the organization.

The AFP must be solid and strong, functioning in the face of exceptionally difficult situations.

All divisive forces within and outside the AFP, whether actual or potential, must uncompromisingly be dealt with to preclude plurality of purpose, thus maintaining its capacity to coherently discharge its constitutional mandate

¹⁷ Guerrero, Salvador, "The Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM): A creation of historical experience". *Kasarinlan*, vol.3 no. 3, 1st quarter 1988,

Such an AFP must have a complete and absolute unity of thought and action that is characterized by iron discipline, professionalism, intellectual honesty, and moral and ethical uprightness. The AFP must have unity of will that presupposes a firm collective grasp of its main tasks and the application of the above qualities in the implementation of these tasks.

AFP must adopt a singular but flexible and resilient the system as the focus from which emanates all activities related to the accomplishments of its mission.

2. Cleanse the AFP of undesirables.

The AFP must be clean and upright if it aims to instill the true spirit of discipline and perseverance among its officers, enlisted personnel and civilian employees as well as the citizenry that reposed their trust and confidence on the AFP to perform rightful tasks.

Incompetence, inefficiency, and corruption shall not be countenanced as they infect the true spirit of discipline. While incompetence erodes the solidarity of the organization, inefficiency corrodes the operational effectiveness of the organization. Corruption,

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

however, destroys all useful efforts that can be generated by competence and efficiency.

The growth of graft and corruption can be arrested at the individuals' level when every member of the organization shall have already acquired a strong sense of belonging and commitment to the institution he represents and would therefore be intolerant to such growth.

3. Maintain a high standard of discipline.

Discipline must be selfless. It must be internalized and made a way of life by each individual soldier.

Discipline nurtures the development of genuine interest in and regard for the AFP.

Discipline entails moral and ethical uprightness and intellectual honesty. The practice of these virtues is the necessary ingredients in the AFP's drive for reforms.

Every member of the AFP must practice and exude decency in thoughts and actions as embodied in the AFP Code of Conduct. There must be no room for misinterpretation especially in dealing with the citizenry. No despicable activity can ever justified by good intention.

4. Effectively enforce the merit system.

The basis of promotions, assignments, schooling and other related matters must be devoid of favoritism or “bata-bata”/“padrino system” and other personal considerations

Promotions, assignments, schooling and other beneficial matters must be prioritized to members of the AFP on the basis of what and how these grantees and awardees can contribute to the attainment of the AFP’s priority missions.

5. Reorient training and education in the AFP.

Training and education in the AFP must be anchored in producing professional soldiers imbued with a high standard of discipline and social awareness that extends beyond the realm of academic exercise and reaches out to day-to-day practice.

While training and education basically improve the individual soldier, the skills and expertise acquired should be used as means to enhance the AFP's efficiency, effectiveness and capacity to be fair.

Training and education must likewise focus on raising the level of awareness and commitment of every man and woman in uniform and instill a strong sense of duty to the people and country they serve. Practical experiences of brother officers in all fields of endeavor should be raised to the level of theory, which should in turn be made as a basis for future practice in an endless cycle of practice-theory-practice.

6. Promote the morale and welfare of every man and woman in uniform.

The AFP must treat its personnel with a concern that is borne out of a desire to perpetuate the best of its customs and traditions, and to recognize and extirpate the obsolete, the irrelevant and the undesirable.

In order to prevent the decadence of such customs and traditions, the military personnel must have a high morale and a secured well-being.

7. Restore camaraderie and *esprit de corps* in the AFP.

AFP personnel must live by the finest tradition of the AFP – a pragmatic and decent way of living that speaks well of honorable profession.

Generally, achievements must be viewed as those of the whole organization and consequently individual must be credited as members of the organization. In like manner, accomplishments of a particular Branch of Service should be presented as those of the entire AFP. Divisive and elitist practices should be relegated behind complementary and supportive activities to emphasize organizational homogeneity. Since there will always be uneven development, greater organizational efforts must be channeled to weaker sectors of the AFP.

8. Rationalize the management of the AFP's limited resources.

There is a need to remedy imbalances in the appropriation and management of the AFP's resources. Such imbalances negate its operational effectiveness, efficiency and capacity to be fair. It can only

remedied through reassessment and reappraisal of resources vis-à-vis the concrete situation. A correct perception of the exact nature of the situation must be drawn in order to come up with a more rational allocation of these resources relative to the real needs.

In this regard, the emphasis must be on the efficient delivery at the least cost, of the most decent and the most reliable in terms of uniform, equipment, mobility, shelter and other needs, to the individual soldier.

9. Align the concept and practices of leadership with the basic constitutional concept and the tasks of the AFP.

Loyalty must be directed to the Constitution, not to any individual or group of persons. The highest form of loyalty is manifested through the correct performance of one's duties and responsibilities and leaders must acknowledge this.

Leadership must always conform to the basic concepts of the Constitution, the time-honored tradition of the profession of arms, and the interest of the public.

These statements of common aspiration indicate a strong commitment to military professionalism as well as the conditions required to achieve it, conditions which apparently do not obtain or else there would have been no sufficient ground for the reform movement to grow.¹⁹

COURSE OF ACTION

A. Membership

The RAM was dramatically introduced to the public during the Alumni Homecoming at Philippine Military Academy on March 21, 1986. Wearing shirts bearing the words "We Belong", RAM paraded in front of the grandstand and unfolded a banner with words "Unity through Reforms". Almost 500 alumni joined, including senior and retired officers. This singular act captured the imagination of the people and soon the RAM became the focus of attention in a society that was wanting of change. The demonstration-pare was unparalleled in the Philippine military's history and it signaled to the Filipino people that the institution would not allow itself anymore to be isolated from the people's fight for justice, freedom and democracy. With the prevailing explosive political situation after the death of ex- Senator Benigno

¹⁹ Hernadez, Carolina G. " The Philippine Military and Civilian Control" p.917.

Aquino, Jr., the RAM became another validation of Marcos' loss of mandate from the Filipino people.²⁰

With its member's initially coming from PMA classes 1971 to 1984, the organization quickly expanded to include retired alumni who publicly expressed their sentiments and many active officers who were quietly supportive. Greeted with favorable response, RAM then needed only a few active members to devote much of their propagating the aspirations and ideals of the organization to expound more rapidly. An 11- man steering committee was created in the National Capital Region (NCR) for this purpose.²¹

B. Regional Counterparts

Upon learning of the developments in the NCR, fellow officers, mostly PMA graduates, in the different regions banded together to initiate the formation of the movement in their regions. They proceeded to address local issues while keeping themselves constantly informed about the development in the NCR. It is interesting to note that one regional counterpart – RAM region 11 – was more organized than RAM-NCR. The strong organization and cohesiveness of RAM-11

²⁰ Guerrero, Salvador, "The Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM): A creation of historical experience". *Kasarinlan*, vol.3 no. 3, 1st quarter 1988.

²¹ *Ibid.*

could be mainly because insurgency and graft and corruption were worse in that area.²²

C. Functional Committees

As early as April 1985 several functional committees were created and their purposes, responsibilities/task, procedures, organization/composition defined. These were the **economic committee, complaints and grievance committee, and sunshine committee**. In addition, other committees were created to meet the immediate needs of the movement, namely: **the information committee, the education committee, and the finance committee**.²³

Over and above these committees was a secretariat that coordinated the activities of RAM. It aided the Steering Committee in dissemination and communication.²⁴

A consultative advisory group was later created to help RAM in its pursuit of reforms in the AFP.²⁵

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Later, retired general and colonels in the AFP formed a parallel organization called the Senior Cavaliers Reform AFP Movement (SCRAM). They helped the RAM in its campaign for clean and honest elections.²⁶

The functional committees served as venues where the inputs of the members are processed, and more importantly, translated into action. The **economic committee** was concerned with the salaries, benefits and other similar concerns of the members of the AFP. A Colonel headed it. The **complaints and grievance committee** was concerned with the irregularities and inequities not cover by other committees. A Lt. Colonel headed it. The **Resource Management Committee** was concerned with the proper management and allocation of the scarce AFP resources. A Major headed it. The **Special Projects/Audit Committee** was to undertake special projects or entities of special interest to the AFP such as the Retirement and Separation Benefit System (RSBS), the Mutual Benefit Association, Inc., the AFP Saving and Loan Association, Inc. (AFPSLAI) and concerned itself with other entities where soldiers involuntarily invest their money. The committee would conduct surveys or performance evaluation to ascertain its viability and progress. It was headed by a Lieutenant. The **Finance Committee** was concerned with sources and uses of funds of

²⁶ *Ibid.*

the movement. It was headed by a Lt. Colonel. The **Sunshine Committee** was assigned to conduct visitation of relatives of deceased AFP elements and wounded soldiers in hospitals and other related work. The retired group of the AFP headed this committee. Of the different committees that were created, those of information and education were the most active. These committees spearhead the expansion of the movement within RAM, within and outside the AFP. The **Information Committee** met with all sectors of society to include business, church, teachers, students, government executives, and the opposition. They kept a high profile with the press and were able to picture the deplorable state of the AFP. With this 'holy alliance' with the press the RAM became another sector in society that Marcos had to face.²⁷

D. Meetings

At general membership meeting, first time attendees were lectured about RAM and the AFP. The aspirations and ideals of the RAM were discussed as well as the courses of action and general guidelines to be followed in the pursuit of reforms. The lecture likewise included the discussion on the decay and isolation of the AFP from the people and how to overcome it.²⁸

²⁷ *Ibid.*

The informal and formal meetings of soldiers that occurred throughout the different regions immediately after the formal inauguration of RAM contributed greatly to the interplay of ideas. The meetings of specific issues affecting the AFP were openly held. Often the discussion centered on the growing insurgency problem that both government and the AFP had to seriously face.²⁹

At other times, the discussion zeroed in on the AFP itself – its leadership, state of professionalism and discipline. The soldiers talked about their commanders' lack of concern over the difficulties the former encounter in the field, the kind of training and values practiced and the present *esprit de corps* and morale in the organization. The discussions would often times become parochial in nature. Many felt that if reforms were initiated in the AFP other government agencies would follow. And true to their expectations, many government agencies also put up their own 'reform movements'. Some of these agencies are the Bureau of Customs and the Bureau of Internal Revenue where the practice of graft and corruption was rampant.³⁰

What was interesting during those meetings was that the voice of junior officers, mostly Lieutenants and Captains were heard. They were

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

given the opportunity to state the particular problems they encountered in the field. These were no-holds-barred discussions and many commanders simply could not negate the allegations of the junior officers. Many commanders could not answer the problems of their own soldiers for many of these problems were caused by the commanders' irresponsibility.³¹

In their preliminary statement of aspirations the RAM stated that, "We have searched for leaders from among our seniors but then most, if not all, are too high to be non-partisan; too comfortable to be interested; or too wealthy to care. Or perhaps, it is their way of admitting that they no longer have the moral right to lead us to reform."³²

E. General Guidelines

Members followed certain general guidelines in the pursuit of reforms, namely: 1) it must be peaceful; 2) it must be legal, 3) it must be unifying, not divisive; 4) it must deal on principles, not personalities; 5) it must deal on issues, not individuals; 6) it must be in consonance with Marcos' Filipino Ideology; 7) it must follow

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

the chain of command; 8) it must not question presidential prerogatives; 9) it must strive for self reliance; 10) it must be public, open, and overt; and 11) it must be forward looking. These guidelines were religiously followed by the members up to the last days before the February Revolution. Many felt that these guidelines made the movement safe from harassment from the powers-that-be.³³

But members questioned the use of Marcos' book Filipino Ideology (FI) as a source a source of inspiration and guide for the movement. Most of the members believed the book had no place in the movement other than being a ploy so that Marcos would not catch RAM. Nevertheless, many argue that Marcos only put together the different ideologies that were espoused by Filipino forefathers especially Andres Bonifacio and Jose Rizal. In any case, the believed Marcos cannot claim full credit for what he has written.³⁴

What caught the attention of the members was the process of internalization written in the FI. "Internalization" of the democratic revolution, according to Marcos, start as the base of the nation with the common people- inspiring and compelling those in the upper ranks to

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

do likewise, so that a symbiotic relationship maybe established among the various levels of society, making the task of nation-building truly a national concern. When asked by media why of all ideologies available RAM adopted that of Marcos, the standard answer was " *we are after the song not the singer.*"³⁵

F. Approach to Reforms

The behavioral approach of RAM in the pursuit of reforms inspired and compelled their peers and those in the upper ranks. This approach was horizontal and vertical with reforms starting with the person himself. RAM members called this process as 'internalization'.³⁶ It was through this approach that RAMS "won the hearts and minds" of many soldiers and commanders. Al though many were afraid to surface and actively participates, most of them believed in the ideals and aspirations that RAM was fighting for.

The decision to launch a reform movement must have been encouraged by several considerations. One of them is the change of

³⁵ *Ibid.* p.55.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

leadership in the AFP.³⁷ Perhaps they saw Ramos as preferable to Ver in this regard since Ver, being the chief of Staff, represents the establishment, which they seek to reform.³⁸

Ramos' reputation as a truly professional soldier must have been a consideration as well as his own call for reforms upon assuming the position of Acting Chief of Staff.³⁹

The call for reforms among many retired generals could also have inspired the reform movement. These generals came out with a statement after the assassination decrying the fact that the military had Aquino in its custody when the assassination took place. The statement called for a speedy and impartial investigation of the case, the punishment of the guilty, and general reforms in the military so that its shattered image could be rebuilt.⁴⁰

Then of course the sentiments of officials in the US government regarding the military cannot be ignored in this regard. According to high-ranking officials at the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill, the United States would like to see reforms undertaken by the Marcos government not only with regard to free and honest elections, and an impartial trial

³⁷ Hernandez, Carolina G. "The Philippine Military and Civilian Control" (London: Third World Foundation, 1985) p.918

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

of Benigno Aquino assassination, but also with regard to the military.⁴¹ In fact, the Pentagon 's recommendation to the congressional sub-committee headed by Congressman Stephen Solarz is that military assistance to the Philippines should be conditional on substantial reforms of the military being undertaken by the Marcos government.⁴² This is because the Pentagon feels that the military's counter-insurgency efforts are hampered, not only by poor and inadequate equipment and supplies, but also by military misbehavior occasioned by low morale and poor discipline among the troops.⁴³

This is not to say that the United States has had a direct hand in reform movement. However, the American inclination to see a reformed AFP must have encouraged the growth to the movement. After all, the AFP is oriented towards the United States, a close ally of the Philippines which has provided substantial military assistance since 1946, including advance training to a substantial number of officers and men in the AFP, as well as the American surplus equipment and supplies.⁴⁴

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

III. RAM: The Untold Story

There's no book or any written document stated the story of the underground formation/recruitment of RAM outside the barracks. This is base on the story of battle-tested paratrooper, Scout Ranger ex-Marine Corporal Marcelino G. Rosete Jr. 645488 PN (M) Philippine Navy Marines formerly assigned Combat Service Support Brigade (CSSB).⁴⁵

In July 1985, upon the recruitment/formation of the organization inside the military, there were about 33 battle tested soldiers from different command--discharged, inactive, and active in service with different soldiers skills to be considered, finished of different trainings such as Airborne, Commando, Special Forces and etc. instructed to report at the Office of the National Defense Camp. Aguinaldo, Quezon City. They were filled up Military Personnel History Statement and then endorsed to Army Colonel Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan and Air Force Lt. Colonel Eduardo "Red" Capunan. From the office, they were proceed to their "safehouse" located at Cor. Tuazon St., 20th Avenue, Quezon City more or less kilometer away from Armed Forces of the Philippines

⁴⁵ Rosete has been dishonorable discharged from the active military service on October 1985 because of the loss of one M-60 Light Machine Gun mounted in his V-150 Armored Vehicle Commando.

General Headquarters. Provided with soldiers' equipment-- including uniforms, guns, and salary--, these "chosen few" were re-trained Closed Quarter Battle (C.Q.B.), Terrorist and Anti-terrorist Commando, Sniper Course at the province of Zambales, without any knowledge about the planned coup against the Marcos regime. What they know was they were to be assigned and trained for the Sabba issue. Just lately in 1985 the real agenda was bare when one of them discovered the map showing the Malacañang as the target. This was just the time when it was cleared that the formed group headed by Gringo Honasan and Red Kapunan together with some officials were against the government. And these groups of soldiers, had played a very important role for the accomplishment of mission of the organization, Reform the Armed Force Movement. They served as important elements especially during the 1986 EDSA Revolution.

IV. RAM in PEOPLE'S POWER

The February 1986 EDSA Revolution was earlier from the planned coup against the Marcos' government.⁴⁶ On 21 February 1986, the RAM objective "to down Marcos government" was failed to carry out when three (3) RAM officers Navy Captain Jake Malhacan, Army Majors Saulito Aromin and Ricardo Brillantes apprehended in Malacañang.

It was in 22 February 1986 when the group from their "safe house" moved to General Headquarters Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to re-join more or less 180 soldiers' followers of the National Defense Forces headed by then Ministry of National Defense Juan Ponce Enrile.

On the next day, from the Ministry of National Defense Building, Camp Aguinaldo, RAM had crossed EDSA to defend Crame, which is under the command of then Philippine Constabulary (PC) Chief General Fidel Ramos whose one of the defected officer of Ferdinand Marcos.

February 24 1986, from Camp Crame, the group composed of Marine and Scout Ranger elements dispatched toward Santolan and

Ortigas Avenue carrying the objective to protect PLDT Communications from assaulting pro-government Marine Forces but because of people power, armored tanks and troops of Marcos loyalist Marine Brigadier General Artemio Tadiar failed.

The following day, 25 February, the group unit was ordered to clear land mines and bobby traps planted in Malacañang also to protect the palace from the looters. One V-150 Armored vehicle Commando recovered then driven back to the office of the National Defense Building, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

Together with the Filipino people, as they gathered in EDSA, regardless of their social and economic status, with different religion and races, they won the battle over the dictator, Ferdinand Marcos. Together with his family, he had forcedly left Malacañang.

Corazon Aquino was seated as the President of the Revolutionary government right after the People's Power.

⁴⁶ An interview with *Marcelino Rosete*, RAM member participated in 1986, 1987, and 1989 coup attempts, January 10, 2003.

V. RAM after EDSA

After the victorious success of throwing out the dictator, Ferdinand Marcos, many officers in the AFP wanted to be RAM, pretending to be RAM, or made up stories that they were RAM.⁴⁷ It became a fad to be a RAM officer in the New Armed Forces. Ramos wanted it stopped. One of his first order as chief of staff was to disband all fraternities within the military, without specifically naming RAM. But the message was there. The regular session of pre-EDSA days naturally dissolved. Captain Ferrer hosted a reunion of the original RAM, but after that, they saw less of each other when they began working for new assignments. What significantly remained of RAM was the steering committee, composed of at least 11 elected officers who actively took part in the February revolt. Members of the steering committee were Turingan, Honasan, Batac, Javier, Valeroso, Army Major Al Dagudag, PAF Major Charles Hotchkiss, Navy Lieutenant Robert Lee, PC Lieutenant Rafael Tadeo, and Lieutenant Dennis Cruz. The committee revived the standard agenda, like briefings on the national situation, appraisal of performance of senior commanders in the field and renewing publication of "We Belong" newsletters to be distributed to military camps.⁴⁸ The

⁴⁷ Criselda Yabes. The boys from the barracks: the Philippine Military after EDSA. (Pasig, Metro Manila: Anvil publication, 1991. p.35

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

production branch of C2 was no longer the place to meet. "The SC," according to a summary prepared by the RAM secretariat, "will meet regularly at Cafe 576, MND-SG every Tuesday at 1500H."⁴⁹ Café 576 was an ordinary soldiers' canteen behind Honasan's office, but it was MND territory. An outsider may be allowed to join the steering committee meetings by invitation. One of them was the vice chief of staff, Lieutenant General Salvador Mison, who wrote a memorandum containing details of the meeting to Ramos.⁵⁰ Perturbed by his deputy's report, Ramos abruptly sent out a confidential message to key members of the general staff and major service commanders calling them to a meeting with the RAM steering committee.⁵¹ By arranging the meeting, Ramos was obliquely telling RAM, this is how we will handle the Armed Forces, not any ruling clique.⁵²

RAM had something to offer Ramos – the honorary chairmanship of the group. "We wanted him Batac explained, "to start developing the reform movement in the Armed Forces." Ramos, sensitive to the nuance of their gesture, declined. "I'll be biased to one organization," he told them. And from then on, things went downhill.⁵³

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

VI. Coup d'Etat

A. DEFINITION

Coup d'Etat pronounced *koo-deh-TAH*, is a French word, which is more or less synonymous to putsch in German and golpe de estado in Spanish,⁵⁴ is the sudden overthrow of a government, usually done by a small group that just replaces the top power figures. It is different from a revolution, which is staged by a larger group and radically changes the political system. The term is French for "a sudden stroke, or blow, of state policy".

It is a general term, which describes a method of illegal displacing a government or supplanting a regime through the use of military violence.⁵⁵ A coup d'etat is "a direct seizure of political control by members of the armed force, who may be acting in concert with civilian allies."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ The Final Report of the Fact-Finding Commission (pursuant to R.A. No. 6832), October 1990.p.3.

⁵⁵ Finer, Samuel E. The man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), p.139.

⁵⁶ Welch, Claude C. Jr and Arthur K. Smith, Military Role and Rule Perspective on Civil-Military Relations (North Scituate, MA: Duxbury Press, 1974, pp. 8-32.

A coup d'état is both a political act and a military action.⁵⁷ It is the product of a coalition of cliques and groups, usually including both military and civilian elements, who have been preparing for it for a considerable length of time.⁵⁸ In this period of preparation, various groups of political actors will have been sounded out and their support assured or their opposition neutralized.⁵⁹

As a political act, it is unlawful means of seizing power from the duly constituted government,⁶⁰ and employed by the military to replace the political incumbents with themselves or their nominees.

As a military operation, the strategy is naturally of utmost importance.⁶¹ Coup plotters need to consider the elements of secrecy, surprise and the effective tactical neutralization of the possible military and civilian opposition.

⁵⁷ Huntington, Samuel P., Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 218.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ The Final Report of Fact-Finding Commission (pursuant to R.A. No. 6832), October 1990, p.3.

⁶⁰ Ferguson, Coup d'Etat: A Practical Manual (Dorset: Arms and Armor Press, 1987) p.13.

⁶¹ Huntington, Samuel P. Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p.219.

Generally, a coup is staged either by the entire armed forces or by a politicized group of military officers who ride on popular grievances among the officer corps against the civilian leadership.⁶²

Coups have long been part of political tradition. Many Roman emperors, such as Caligula and his successor Claudius, came to power in coups. Indeed, Julius Caesar was the victim of a coup. Modern dictators such as Mussolini and Hitler also benefited from coups or putsches.⁶³

In the late 20th century coups occurred most commonly in developing countries, particularly in Latin America, Africa and Asia, but also in the Pacific (Fiji) and in Europe (Greece, Portugal, Spain, Soviet). Since the 1980s, the coup has been seen somewhat less frequently. A significant reason is the general inability to resolve the economic and political problems of developing nations, which has made armed forces, particularly in Latin America, much more reluctant to intervene in politics. Hence, in contrast to past crises, the armed forces have sat on the sidelines through economic crises such as the Asian crisis in Thailand in 1998 or the Argentina crisis of 2002 and have tended to act

⁶² National ROTC Alumni Association, Inc. (NARAA), The Philippine Coup d'Etat and NARAA Resolution No. 7. (Metro Manila: NARAA, 21 February 1989), p.3.

only when the military perceives itself as institutionally threatened by the civilian government, as occurred in Pakistan in 1999.⁶⁴

B. TYPES OF COUP

Samuel Huntington has divided coups into three types (ignoring Luttwak's non-military coups)

- **breakthrough coups** - In which a revolutionary army overthrows a traditional government and creates a new bureaucratic elite. Breakthrough coups are generally led by NCOs or junior officers and only happen once. Examples include China in 1911 and Egypt in 1956.
- **guardian coups** - These coups have been described as musical chairs. The stated aims of this form of coup is to improve public order, efficiency, or to end corruption. There is usually no fundamental shift in the structure of power. Many nations with guardian coups undergo many shifts between civilian and military governments. Examples include Pakistan, Turkey, and Thailand.
- **veto coups** - These coups occur when the army vetoes mass participation and social mobilization. In these cases the army

⁶³ Edward Luttwak, *Coup d'etat: A practical handbook*, (Harvard University Press, 1969, 1980)

must confront and suppress large-scale and broad-based opposition and as a result they tend to be repressive and bloody. Examples include Chile in 1973 and Argentina in 1975.

Coups can also be classified by the level of the military that leads the coup. Veto coups and guardian coups tend to be led by senior officers. Breakthrough coups tend to be led by junior officers or NCOs. In cases where the coup is led by junior officers or enlisted men, the coup is also a mutiny which can have grave implications for the organizational structure of the military.

C. ELEMENTS OF A COUP

There appears to be five essential elements of a coup, the most important of which are opportunity and motive.⁶⁵ As a leading scholar on the military has pointed out, "to intervene the military must have both the occasion and the disposition."⁶⁶ The other elements are the military's capability to intervene, the strategy of the coup plot, and the leaders of the coup.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ The Final Report of Fact Finding Commission (pursuant to R.A. No. 6832), October 1990, p.4.

⁶⁶ Finer, Samuel E. The man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), p.20

⁶⁷ The Final Report of the Fact-Finding Commission (pursuant to R.A. No. 6832), October 1990, p. 4.

D. CIVILIAN INTERVENTION IN COUPS

Coups are very common form of grabbing of power by the use of military forces. Everywhere else in the world, coups had been experienced, the only difference is that if it succeed or failed. In most countries, unlike Philippines, coup d'état has been successfully made with just one attempt. But not all coups are performed by purely military, there are still or always a civilian intervention. Like in 1979 coup in the Central African Republic which ousted Emperor Bokassa was led by a civilian, Mr. Dacko, the former Prime Minister.⁶⁸ Only two members of his government were from the armed forces.⁶⁹

Coups have also installed government headed by civilians over largely civilian governments. In Iran 1953, the Mossadeq Government was overthrown of forces led by General Zahedi and the Shah was reinstated with General Zahedi as Prime Minister over a largely civilian government .⁷⁰ In Syria, 1966 a military coup overthrew Mr. Bitar's Government and replaced it with Dr. Atassi as Head of State with Dr. Zeayen as Prime Minister over a predominantly civilian government with the leaders of the coup, General Assad and Colonel Suidan as Minister of Defense and Head of the Army respectively.⁷¹

⁶⁸ O' Kane, Rosemary H. T. The Likelihood of Coups (New York: Avebury, 1987)

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid*

E. THE EXTERNAL CAUSES OF COUPS

Coup d'état usually done in order to throw out someone in his position because of his unsatisfying government. There are different reasons in different countries to plot or exercise coup as a form of changing government. But aside from this, there are external causes of coups to be considered.

According to Luttwak, the preconditions of coups are economic backwardness, political independence and organic unity.⁷² Economic backwardness is important because coups are more easily staged where only a minority of the population participates in politics, which is usually the case in poor countries with low levels of literacy. Political indifference is important because a coup cannot be staged where real political power lies not within the state but elsewhere, a condition particularly characteristic ex-colonies and countries where there is a presence of military forces belonging to a great power.⁷³ Organic unity is necessary for a coup for more than one center of power will prove a hindrance.⁷⁴

⁷² O'Kane, Rosemary H. T The Likelihood of Coups (New York : Avebury 1987) p.19

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Being an ex-colonial or we can say a neo-colonial is one factor common in countries that had staged or undergone a military coup. At the same time, Ruth First drawn attention to economic dependence, which brought no help and accuses CIA, Britain, and France of influencing coups.⁷⁵ Murray makes a straightforward vulgar Marxist argument. He argues that the agents of international capitalism – the International Monetary Fund, aid, quota agreements, etc. – conspire to undermine local economies and to catalyze political instability in order to serve the international interest of the capitalist mode of production.⁷⁶ The desired of government of underdeveloped countries to show quick economic improvement is thereby exploited by the capitalist world interested only in its markets. Murray and First cite as a classic example the coup happened in Ghana in 1966. Murray claims that it was directly engineered by the US dominated International Monetary Fund.⁷⁷

The problem with such explanations is that any documented alternative explanation to the role of imperialist institutions deliberately engineering coups would be countered by the claim that the real truth had been deliberately hidden. For example, Murray sees the IMF as deliberately refusing aid to Ghana, in order to precipitate a coup there.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.17

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

He would refuse to accept the IMF's claim that the aid to Ghana had to be refused because of Nkrumah's mishandling of former aid which had made Ghana a bad investment for the other underdeveloped countries whose interests they had also to protect.⁷⁸ Or again, if it were suggested that the dramatic fall in cocoa prices, which preceded the 1966 coup in Ghana was simply the natural effect of the world market supply and demand mechanism, then Murray would claim that the capitalist world had deliberately manipulated this effect in Ghana by ensuring that it remained so heavily dependent on cocoa exports.⁷⁹ In the case of the failure of the aid programmed in Ghana, Imperialist conspiracy would seem inappropriate for explaining why Nkrumah spend the aid he got so unwisely on prestige buildings rather than investing it in such a way that it could provide some returns for repaying the loans.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

VII. COUPS AFTER COUPS OF RAM

Some books stated that RAM (Reform the Armed Force Movement) had been involved with 6 coup attempts against the Aquino Administration, some says they had 9, but the real score was only three. They were only participated the August 1987 and December 1989 coup attempts aside from the 1986 EDSA Revolution⁸¹, and the rest attempts were made by Marcos loyalist.⁸²

RAM was responsible for the most serious armed challenged to the government of President Aquino.⁸³

A. God Save the Queen, 1987 Coup Attempt

After the 1986 EDSA Revolution, Corazon Aquino should not be the President of the Philippines for RAM because she was not following the constitution, where in stated that the President shall be elected by the people. Aquino was just the president of the *revolutionary government*; there should still a snap election needed. Building on military complaints that the Aquino government was dealing ineffectively with the communist threat and that the government had

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ An Interview with Samaco, Spokesperson of RAM- Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabansa, Office of RAM, Makati City, February 26, 2003.

⁸² An Interview with Marcelino Rosete, Malabon, February 2003.

⁸³ Miranda, Felipe B. The August 28, 1987 Coup: Public Perceptions in a Time of Continuing Crisis (Quezon City: Social Weather Stations, 1988) p. 1.

neglected the material welfare of soldiers and their families, the RAM leaders generated sizeable military support and came uncomfortably close to attaining its main political objective in their coup of August 28, 1987.⁸⁴

In August 1987, RAM under the command of Air Force Lt Colonel Tito Legaspi and Air Force “Blue Diamond” Pilot Colonel Baula assaulted Philippine Air Force General Headquarters to paralyze jet fighters and choppers at base operation and also to get PAF Commanding General Armando Sotelo but they unfortunately failed to control Air Force Operation when Sikorski and Huey choppers had take off. Their V-150 armored vehicle and land rover armed with 50 cal. Machine gun shot down. They had suffered more casualties. The group turned to their “safehouse” at Miramal Village, Angeles City and just waited for further instructions after the plotted coup failed.

B. The December 1989 Coup Attempt

During the 1989 Coup attempt, RAM headed by Lt. Col. Eduardo Kapunan assigned to control TV station Channel 4 then Marine Battallion under the command of Col Romeo Dela Peña defected and supported RAM against the pro-government led by Marine major Yacat and Marine 1st Lt. Ramon Mitra Jr. from Batasan Hills. Two V-150

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

armored vehicle commando assigned to support the platoon of marine Lt. Cal, pro Marine government troops withdraw because two armored vehicle run towards camp Aguinaldo then platoon of marine Lt. Mitra (government troops) surrendered. Days later the group shut off Channel 9 tower which is near to Channel 4. The other day Lt. Col. Kapunan instructed the group to leave channel 4. Again, the coup was failed.

A series of coup had been made against the Aquino government but unfortunately none of them has been successfully accomplished. Despite of readiness, planned, or organized ploy by the RAM officers, they failed to get their objective, to let Cory Aquino be out in her position. According to Retired Col. Reynaldo Samaco, presently the Spokesman of the Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabayan (RAM)⁸⁵, the coup attempts were failed because they were not able to communicate their intentions to the people to have support. They really need the people. They cannot achieve the changes alone.

⁸⁵ After the failed 1989 coup attempt and alliance with the SFP and YOU, the Reform the Armed Force Movement changed its name into Rebolusyoaryong Alyansang Makabansa.

VIII. RAM Facing Controversies

Just like a popular artist, RAM had faced many controversies. And despite its popular cause, RAM has not been spared for criticism.

Involvement in Olalia murder case

Rolando Olalia, head of the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) and chairperson of the left-leaning Partido ng Bayan, together with his driver Leonor Alay-ay were found dead in isolated grassy knolls in Antipolo, Rizal on the 13th of November 1986.⁸⁶ It was reported that the night prior to the twin killings, Olalia and Alay-ay were abducted after the labor leader had a meeting with officers of a labor union in Barrio Ugong, Pasig.⁸⁷ Shortly after the grisly murders, Sergeant Gilbert Galicia was arrested in Nanarra, Pilar, Abra after a two-day chase from his hometown Isabela.

In a sworn statement he executed on February 18, 1987, suspect-turned-state-witness Galicia, then a confidential agent in the

⁸⁶ Mella, Cesar T. "Is RAM involved in Olalia Murder?". *Philippine Graphic*. 28 Aug 1995.

Department of National Defense (DND) pointed to Elpidio Layson, then naval commander of Isabela; Sergeant Rodolfo Sabalza, formerly detailed with the DND; Col. Oscar "Tito" Legaspi, then a ranking officer of RAM; and Filomeno Maligaya, then an enlisted man in the defunct Philippine Constabulary, as among those he saw in the place where the victims were kidnapped.⁸⁸

While Galicia said in his sworn statement that he did not witness the actual killings, he admitted providing the suspects a stolen vehicle with plate number BBB678.⁸⁹ The car, he said was the one used in tailing the vehicle of the duo.⁹⁰

According to Salvador Ranin, former NBI director for the National Capital Region, the bureau's investigation showed the crime was perpetrated by RAM to create "chaos and disorder" in the country.⁹¹ The same theory was also raised in 1986 by leftist groups and other progressive, claiming that the said crime was all part of a military plot called "God Save the Queen" to destabilize the Aquino administration.⁹²

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

As what to be expected, Sen. Gregorio Honasan denied the accusation. He stressed that his group had nothing to do with the murders. "We would like to categorically deny ant involvement in such activities, that is our only reaction in the absence of other information," Honasan said.⁹³

RAM as a great torturer

The record of human-rights violations in the Marcos era reveals that almost all RAM leaders engaged in regular torture. They used psychopathic techniques, presaging their later attempts as political terror.⁹⁴ Reading the testimony of their victims, they played games of domination and empowerment, often involving sexual torture of male or female.⁹⁵

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ McCoy, Alfred W. "RAM: Specialist in Torture" Philippine Free Press March 31, 1990.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

- In 1977 the International Commission of Jurists reported that Lt. Vic Batac, RAM's tactician, had participated in torture of a young woman, Maria Elena Ang, through "electric shock, water cure, sleep deprivation, sexual indignities, pistol whipping and threats to relatives."⁹⁶
- In 1981 the Philippine human-rights group Task Force Detainees reported the another officer in the same unit, RAM leader Lt. Rodolfo Aguinaldo, was a "persistent and systematic torturer."
- In 1986, an Australian newspaper alleged that RAM leader Honasan "has played a role in brutal slaying of dissident, Dr. Johnny Escandor, who body was found dumped outside military headquarters in Manila, the brain remove from his skull and underpants stuffed the cavity."⁹⁷
- In 1983, in a letter to his family just before his death, Ruperto Kangleon, a Catholic priest, recalled his torture by a constabulary unit commanded by Lt. Hernani Figueroa, later RAM' spokesman.⁹⁸After the priest proved evasive in his answers, Figueroa, with the calm of a master inquisitor, ordered him taken away to be stripped naked, beaten and sexually humiliated.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

RAM's political strategist, Capt. Rex Robles, translated the group's experience of torture into an ideology of violence and incorporated it in plans for holding power after a coup.¹⁰⁰ "You must show people that you want to be their leader," he explained between coups in a July 1986 interview. "Now if you want to make a naked grab for power, recognize it for what it is and live up to it. Kill people. Discourage any opposition... You have to be prepared to shed a lot of blood."¹⁰¹

These are just some of the controversies RAM had faced. There was also news that stated their alliance with the NPA. There are those who doubt on their real role in the society, whether they are the guardian or enemy of democracy. All of these was part of them. Whether these all are true or not, God knows.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

IX. RAM: Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang

Makabansa, the Transition

After the failure of 1989 Coup Attempt, realizing that reform is needed not just in the AFP but also in other sectors of society, the Movement, in alliance with the Young Officers Union (YOU), the Soldiers of the Filipino People (SFP) and other progressive forces, declared to pursue the struggle as a continuation of the Unfinished Revolution of 1896 to gain true independence and bring forth justice, lasting peace, and prosperity for our nation and people, assuming the present name of **Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabansa.**

A. GUIDING PRINCIPLE

The principle that guides RAM's actions and aspirations, which they reiterate today, is embodied in the RAM's 1986 Manifesto declaring that: " It is our basic aim to establish a unique martial tradition for the nation which envisages that in the event that we are compelled to intervene in the political life of the nation in order to save it, the Members pledge to each other that they shall not exercise political power and they shall return to the barracks as soon as the sovereign will of the people has prevailed."

B. ASPIRATIONS

The Movement, guided by the enduring dream of national unity, vows to continue the Unfinished Revolution of 1896. They will work for the achievement of genuine national independence, to redeem the sovereignty, and liberate the people from the chains of political, social, and economic slavery.

They offer the country, not the tarnished vision of EDSA 1986, cheapened beyond recognition by past administrations, but the revolutionary spirit of 1896 and its noble dream, a dream filled with force yearning for reforms.

They will turn this dream into reality: true independence, a sovereign nation, a just and wise government, genuine nationalism, respects for the rule of law, total human development and freedom in its truest sense. They aspire for the democracy fleetingly enjoyed by the Filipino revolutionaries of 1896 before succeeding decades of subjugation, tyranny, and pretense perverted it.

B.1. POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS

The Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabansa have the following political aspirations:

1. Promulgate a Constitution that will reflect the national will, recognize the unique pluralism of the Philippine society, and address our people's yearning for a true democracy, independence, and sovereignty.

For they believed that until now, the Philippines do not have a government that will be considered as our own. There still a need for a government with Nationalists officials who can lead and mandate without the influence of other.

2. Restore a professional and competent civil service through which the government can execute laws, manage public affairs, and serve the people.

Justice should be for all. And policies and programs should be benefited by the whole and not just by few corrupt government officials.

3. Establish unified, credible, and professional Armed Forces for national defense and security, and create territorial police

agencies for law enforcement and the maintenance of peace and order.

The Armed Forces should be provided with their welfare in order for them to protect and serve their duties. The Philippines should be for the Filipino.

4. Attain a good, honest, pro-people, and efficient government for national renewal and transformation.

National renewal and total transformation should not just in few aspects. There should be an alternative form of government that will serve truly for the welfare of the Filipino people.

B.2. ECONOMIC ASPIRATIONS

The following are the Economic aspirations of RAM in response to the continuing crisis experienced in our country.

1. Develop a nationalist economy based on self-reliance and productivity with emphasis on self-sufficiency in the basic necessities as the necessary foundation for balanced agricultural and industrial growth and sustainable development.

Any development program should be critically, and objectively seen before entering or agreeing. The issue of development through Globalization for instance should be analyzed first. We know that we are not capable yet to compete with other multi national companies, the agreement with this matter wouldn't bring any development but rather make our local investors died. Perhaps, we should prioritize those what we really have and what is our treasure, the agriculture sector should be provided and needs support from the government.

2. Build modern and adequate infrastructures to accelerate development and industrialization.

Those local and small enterprises should be protected and prioritized of the government before any other foreign investors.

3. Give emphasis to the development of our maritime resources.

Our natural resources should be protected and developed. Policies in illegal fishing of other foreign vessels like Chinese should be strictly implemented.

4. Operate on a development-oriented budget.

There should be a well division and distribution of the National Budget.

B.3. SOCIAL ASPIRATIONS

The social aspirations are stated as follows:

1. Promote the equitable distribution of the factors of production and enjoyment of the fruits of development within the framework of free enterprise.
2. Dispense and administer justice fairly and swiftly.
3. Institute reforms in the educational system.
4. Improve health services and demographic profile.
5. Eradicate graft and corruption.
6. Promote total human development with emphasis on moral renewal as well as respect for human rights and well being.

C. TALKING POINTS

The Movement's Talking Points of 1993 are essentially the same as the Eight Talking Points of 1991 except that the issue on military bases, on Marcos, and on the national dialogue was deleted.

The people had decided the bases affair and that of Marcos has become more of a matter between the government and the Marcos family, while the on-going peace process substantially addresses our call for a national dialogue of all contending forces.

The 1993 Talking Points are as follows:

- 1. ATTAINMENT OF A GOOD, HONEST, PRO-PEOPLE, AND EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT FOR NATIONAL RENEWAL AND TRANSFORMATION**
- 2. IMPLEMENTATION ELECTORAL REFORMS TO ENSURE CLEAN, HONEST, ORDERLY AND FREE ELECTIONS.**
- 3. IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONALIST ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS.**

- 4. ACTUALIZATION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE PROGRAMS TO POSITIVELY ADDRESS POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT, AND CRIMINALITY.**
- 5. REVIEW AND REALIGNMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENSE AND SECURITY CONCERNS TO ATTUNE THESE WITH OUR FUNDAMENTAL REQUIREMENTS AND ASPIRATIONS.**

D. CODE OF CUNDUCT

A RAM member is:

1. GOD-FEARING
2. PATRIOTIC
3. PRO-PEOPLE
4. TRUE TO HIMSELF
5. AND READY TO FIGHT FOR OUR COUNTRY.

X. RAM AT PRESENT

The Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabansa is holding its office located at 5112 Filmore Cor. Currie Street, Palanan, Makati City. This office was established right after former President Fidel Ramos gave an amnesty and legitimized the Movement after the peace talks in 1993.

The present Chairman is Domingo H. Calajate but still under the supervision of the Steering Committee headed by Sen. Gregorio Honasan.

The Movement had also joined the **People's Patriotic Movement (PPM)** together with the Bigkis Pinoy (BP) headed by Jose fortunato G. Ledesma.

The present activity of RAM is still in propagating and continues recruiting through seminars held in the office.¹⁰² Usually Reserved Officers attended the seminars but the Movement is open even for civilians. All over the country, there were about more or less 15,000 members of RAM. The members do not have any dues to pay aside from the P150.00 payment for the ID.

¹⁰² The researcher was fortunately attended one of the seminar held on March 1, 2003 at the RAM National Office, Makati City.

SUMMARY AND CONSLUSION

A close analysis of the existence of the RAM, Reform the Armed Force Movement reveals that the ultimate aim of the organization was to have a powerful yet informal organization within the AFP, mainly as a fallback position to the dysfunctional AFP organization during Marcos regime. The RAM as a strong informal organization challenged the chain of command to respond to the inequities that were practiced in the armed forces. The emergence of RAM was a response to uncontrolled anomalies within the AFP during Marcos era.

The strong emphasis on the role of the military in coup d'état cannot then justified by their normally bringing military government to power, they are just likely to install military-civilian mix governments, often install largely civilian governments and sometimes entirely civilian ones. It is because that the real role of the military is never to be politicized and compete powers with the civilian authority. They are, in fact, to protect those legally elected by the people. They are about to obey, follow the order, whatever it is, and never ever complain. Because if the military is organized to be politicized and compete power with the civilian authority, it would be a very dangerous situation for all. The civilian authority is not capable to compete with

the military. The military with all people in highly discipline and highly trained, with all the weapons, the civilian authority can no longer compete equally for power.

After the 1986 EDSA Revolution, where in the battle doesn't end yet, after a series of coup attempts, realizing that changes or reform is needed not just in the AFP but in the country as a whole. RAM, as Reform the Armed Force Movement changed its name into Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabansa, to portrays a different image, propagating and awakening the people regarding the different problems calling for reform. When I asked Retired General Samaco, present Spokeperson of RAM, if there still a possibility for RAM to plan another coup d'état to continue their fight for a true and democratic government, he quickly answered me a big NO. With its new name and its form, propagating and recruiting members, RAM continues to ask reforms that they believe for the betterment of all.

The failure of their coup attempts is because they were never wholly united in their objectives. Several officers involved entertain, or soon develop, personal ambitions for power. The coup is not a purely military affair, but also counts on assistance from civilian politicians and opinion-makers. In fact, the latter may even be the

prime movers in initiating planning for the coup. The military does not directly assume power, but rather serves as an arbiter for civilian leaders.

The ideas, aspirations of RAM are clearly for the country, clearly for the people, but these all are hardly to achieve by the Movement alone. They cannot, in any way, in any act, achieve the true democracy for the nation without the help of the people. And if there are still those officers, with their personal motives and just using the organization for their personal gains, changes... reform... is impossible.

ABBREVIATIONS

AFP – Armed Forces of the Philippines

AFPSLAI- AFP Saving and Loan Association, Inc.

CQB - Closed Quarter Battle

CSSB - Combat Service Support Brigade

DND - Department of National Defense

FI - Filipino Ideology

MND – Ministry of National Defense

NCR - National Capital Region

PAF - Philippine Air Force

PC - Philippine Constabulary

PLDT – Philippine Long Distance Telecommunications

PN – Philippine Navy

RAM – Reform the Armed Force Movement/ Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabansa

RSBS -Retirement and Separation Benefit System

SC – Steering Committee

SCARM - Senior Cavaliers Reform AFP Movement

NPA – New People’s Army

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Appendix A

LESSONS FROM FAILED COUP ATTEMPTS

The UP Diliman Faculty and Staff made an article about the “Lessons from the December Coup”:

We, the undersigned members of the University of the Philippines community, condemn the latest coup attempt by RAM forces and their supporters in and outside the AFP. They mock democracy and invoke the name of the people to hide their self-serving motives. We also condemn opportunist politicians and profiteering businessman who capitalize on this national tragedy for personal gain.

We affirm our adherence to the Constitution and democratic process and in this spirit support the duly constituted authority. We commend the loyal soldiers, the media who were our vital source of information, the Philippine National Red Cross and other volunteers who risked their lives to ease the conflict.

But we call on the Aquino Government to recognize its own failure in responding to the factors that caused the present crisis. The lessons of the December coup are clear:

One, the way of a coup d'état is not the way of democracy, and it will not obtain the support of the people. We cannot allow the military to dictate the national agenda in the name of the people.

Two, for Government to enjoy the support of the people, it must earn it. Enough of rhetoric. Government must now seriously attend to instituting mechanisms for genuine consultation with the people rather than of outside or selected interests.

Three, the victory achieved through US support is hollow especially in the light of the upcoming negotiations on the bases. Foreign intervention aggravates the problem and insults our national dignity.

Government must not seek comfort in victory for the crisis is by no means over. Let it not view the coup attempt as a mere setback or a loss of foreign investments. Government must look upon the crisis as the time to seek new directions in meetings the most basic problems of the people: rising prices, unemployment, unjust wages, graft and corruption, landlessness, power shortage, transport crisis, potable water, housing, malnutrition, heavy debt burden, and so on. This too, is the time to change inept and indifferent government officials who do not deserve the taxpayers' money.

Government, however, cannot succeed alone. We, the people, must work with the Government to strengthen our democratic institutions and rebuild our nation.

We at the University pledge to peacefully resist any government that comes to power through military forces or violence.

*6 December 1989
Diliman, Quezon City*

Appendix B

AN ANECDOTE REGARDING THE DECEMBER 1989 COUP ATTEMPT FROM "THE BOYS FROM THE BARRACKS" BY CRISELDA YABES

Minsan, may isang magsasaka. Yung asawa niya, may sakit, na hindi makatae. Isang lingo nang hindinakatae yung asawa niya. Doon sila sa may baryo –siyempre walang available na doctor. Nagtanung-tanong na lang siya kung sino ang albularyo. Mayroon siyang nabalitaan na isang albularyong magaling na magaling – talagang dalubhasa sa mga lunas, sa mga gamot. Nilapitan niya 'yung albularyo. Sabi niya, "Ka Pedro, malubha yung sakit ng asawa ko. Isang lingo na, hindi nakakatae."

"Madali yan, iho", sabi ng matanda. "Ako'y tumanda na rito sa gawaing ito, mayroon akong lunas ditong epektib. Epektibo ito. Minsan mo lang ipalinom sa asawa mo, siguradong magagamot siya. Ang hiling ko lang sa iyo, pagkatapos mong gamitin yang gamot na yan, pag gumaling na ang misis mo, bumalik ka sa amin at ibalita mo kung gaano ka-epektib yung aking lunas."

Di tuwang-tuwa yung magsasaka, dala-dala yung bote. Pagkalipas ng isang linggo, bumalik yung magsasaka sa albularyo.

"Ka Pedro, epektib talaga yung gamot mo. Bilib talaga ako."

"O, bakit iho, gumaling ba ang misis mo?"

"Hindi", sabi niya, "isang linggo nang patay ang misis ko," Pero tae pa rin ng tae."

Mga kaibigan, ganyan ang epekto ng coup – itong December coup— sa lipunan, sa gobyerno, sa ekonomiya. Mas matindi pa ang lunas kaysa sakit. Patay ang pasyente e.



Marcelino Rosete, equipped with heavy weapons during the 1986 Edsa Revolution, stand guard and man the perimeter defence.

SOURCE: A Million Heroes (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Press, 1986).