***from* The Snap Revolution**

**by James Fenton**

**Although Corazón Aquino won the presidential election in the Philippines in 1986, President Ferdinand Marcos also claimed victory. Widespread election fraud by the Marcos regime sparked public outrage, and many soldiers, including Lieutenant General Fidel Ramos, revolted. This eyewitness account describes an encounter between Aquino supporters and pro-Marcos forces under General Ver.**

Eventually we found our way down to a stretch of the Avenue where the attacking soldiers were supposed to be.

Their vehicles were pointed in the wrong direction and they were well and truly stuck in the crowd. I went up to the officer in the first jeep and asked him what was happening. He was rather tight-lipped. All they wanted to do, he said, was go back to their base at Fort Bonifacio. But the people wouldn’t let them. As he said this, the soldiers in the back seat were making Laban signs [hand signals showing support for Aquino] at me. The crowd had given them bags of bread rolls.

The officer seemed to think the people were being thoroughly unreasonable. But what could a mere four truckloads of them do against all these millions? People were coming up and cheering them and saying: “You are our brothers. You’re Filipinos like us.’ Jojo asked one soldier whom he supported.

“I don’t know,” he said. “I’m confused. We have two commanders. Ramos and Ver. We don’t know which to support.”

We went to the next truck. Jojo asked a soldier: “Are you confused? You seem to have two commanders.”

The soldier said: “No, I am not confused. We have only one commander.”

Jojo said: “So which is your commander—Ramos or Ver?”

I don’t know,” the soldier replied.

These men had been brought in from Mindanao, and they were supposed to be pretty ruthless types. One of them said; “I just want to go back to Zambo.” (Zamboanga.) They were absolutely loaded down with bandoleers of bullets. They had machine-guns—they had everything—and they were entirely nonplussed. At the back of the stranded convoy sat one such soldier, visibly teetering on the edge of defection. A man came up to him and said, “Here, take my watch, take it as a souvenir. Please, go on. We are all Filipinos and we shouldn’t kill each other.” The soldier was terribly embarrassed. It was a gold watch and the man had tears in his eyes. Only yesterday I had seen my taxi-man bribing a soldier just like this one. This gesture of the man’s was like an honest bribe. It was half sordid, half heroic. The crowd told the soldier to take the watch, but the soldier could only shake his head. If he was going to come over to the people, he couldn’t come over on a bribe. The gesture was a rebuke to him. It said so much about the relationship between the military and the people.

And it was part of the genius of the Filipino revolution that it moved forward on simple gestures like this. It was essentially a confrontation between a cynical and a heroic view of the national character. Marcos had opted quite openly for cynicism. Filipinos, he had said, both before and after polling day, were great ones for joining bandwagons. And he had calculated that the right expenditure would achieve this effect. There was really nothing covert about his operation; everyone had known what the deal he was offering amounted to.

Opposed to Marcos were the people wearing T-shirts with Ninoy Aquino’s slogan: “A Filipino is worth dying for.” Their approach was essentially idealistic. If Marcos said, But Cory is a completely inexperienced politician, this cut no ice at all, because Marcos had already defined what a politician is. Nobody wanted a politician any more. They wanted heroism.

**Activities**

1. ***Write*** a Summary of the above piece.
2. ***Recognizing Point of View***. With a classmate, role-play a conversation between a Filipino civilian who supports Aquino and a soldier who supports Marcos.
3. ***Writing for a Specific Purpose***. Fenton speaks of a conflict between cynical and heroic views. Write a slogan that illustrates the heroic view of the Filipino people.