



National Council of Churches in the Philippines

(Sangguniang Pambansa ng mga Simbahan sa Pilipinas)

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NCCP POST-ELECTION STATEMENT

(Statement of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines
on the February 7, 1986 National Election)

We are expressing great concern over the conduct of the February 7, 1986 National Election. The heavy turn out of voters on election day gave credence to our belief that the people wanted to express their will and that they desired that this will should be honored and respected. Recent events, however, have shown that there are elements in Philippine society which seek to frustrate the will of the people. It has become common knowledge here and abroad that the electoral process was marred by massive vote-buying, ballot-snatching, harassment and terrorism. We consider all these as acts of subversion against the sovereign will of the people and as insults to the honor and dignity of our nation. The walk-out of some COMELEC computer technicians has put a question mark on the integrity of the electoral body.

We are fearful of the detrimental consequences of these acts to the well-being of our nation. For by these acts, the people are being pushed to the limits of their patience. These acts have created an explosive situation in our country which could usher in a bloody confrontation among the people.

What had been done cannot be undone. But it is not too late to change direction by rectifying mistakes and by pursuing acts that are honorable and just to bring about a measure of credibility on the result of the election in order to restore and strengthen the confidence of the people on the democratic system.

For the sake of God, justice and our common weal, we appeal to the powers that be in our country to exercise their authority and power to bring this election process to a just, honest and credible conclusion at the earliest possible time. Any leadership which is established through means other than this, is empty and will not deserve the respect and confidence of the people. Greater than our partisanship must be our concern that the sovereign will of the people must be respected. In times like this, to be honorable, heroic and patriotic means to direct our loyalty to the people and not to party or to person.

We exhort the people to be vigilant in their pursuit of justice by acting justly, by expressing their freedom with a high sense of responsibility for the well-being of our nation and by being tempered even in their response to acts committed against them and their loved ones, which are violative of their rights and dignity. We appeal for sobriety and calmness in this time of great tension. We believe that, ultimately, that which is just and righteous will triumph. Let us not forget that in this election, in spite of the corrupt and violent manipulations of the demagogues in our society,

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we have proven our capacity to be united in a just cause and our willingness to offer fame, fortune and life when these were needed. In many critical situations in the last election, many of the people expressed the greatness of the Filipino spirit which characterized the lives of our national heroes. Let this spirit kindle the hearts of the people. No tyrant or dictator or system of power can prevail against a people who are imbued with a spirit such as this. We remember what Rizal said, "There are no tyrants if there are no slaves." Let us not despair especially at this time when the odds against that which is just and righteous are overwhelming. The day will soon come, if we persist now, when "righteousness shall flow like a river and justice like a mighty stream."

We commend all individuals and organizations which volunteered their services and their fortune to protect the sanctity of the ballot. We honor those who suffered and those who died in defense of their rights and their honor. We owe an enduring debt of gratitude to them. It is the sacrifice of their life which will purify the life of this nation. But to those who willingly offered themselves to be instruments of violence and corruption and those who willingly disobeyed the voice of their conscience and sold their honor and dignity for the price of gold, may God have mercy on their soul. By these acts they have dishonored not only themselves but also their nation. May they find a way of rectifying their deeds. We pray that someday they, too, will experience the patriotic and heroic virtues which their countrymen, who now struggle for justice and righteousness, are experiencing. When that day comes, they will find their rightful place in a nation which is now discovering its soul.

In times like this, when fear is overwhelming, we must live according to our faith, remembering what the Lord said, "If my people humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."
(II Chronicles 7:14)

(Sgd.) DR. JOHNNY V. GUMBAN
Chairperson

(Sgd.) THE REV. IA VERNE D. MERCADO
General Secretary

February 14, 1986

CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF THE PHILIPPINES
POST ELECTION STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION. The people have spoken. Or have tried to. Despite the obstacles thrown in the way of their speaking freely, we, the bishops, believe that on the basis of our assessment as pastors of the recently concluded polls, what they attempted to say is clear enough.

THE CONDUCT OF THE POLLS. In our considered judgment, the polls were unparalleled in the fraudulence of their conduct. And we condemn especially the following modes of fraudulence and irregularities.

1. The systematic disenfranchisement of voters. The sheer scrambling of the voters' lists made it impossible for vast numbers of our people to express their proper preference of candidates.

2. The widespread and massive vote-buying. The vote-buyers in their cynical exploiting of the people's poverty and deep, if misguided, sense of utang na loob deprived a great many of any real freedom of choice.

3. The deliberate tampering with the election returns. The votes of the people, even when already duly expressed and counted, were altered to register choices other than their own.

4. Intimidation, harassment, terrorism and murder. These made naked fear the decisive factor in people not participating in the polls or making their final choice. These and many other irregularities point to a criminal use of power to thwart the sovereign will of the people. Yet, despite these evil acts, we are morally certain the people's real will for change has been truly manifested.

GOVERNMENT BASED ON THE POLLS. According to moral principles, a government that assumes or retains power through fraudulent means has no moral basis. For such an access to power is tantamount to a forcible seizure and cannot command the allegiance of the citizenry. The most we can say then, about such a government, is that it is a government in possession of power. But admitting that, we hasten to add: Because of that very fact, that same government itself has the obligation to right the wrong it is founded on. It must respect the mandate of the people. This is a precondition for any reconciliation.

RESPONSE IN FAITH. If such a government does not of itself freely correct the evil it has inflicted on the people then it is our serious moral obligation as a people to make it do so.

We are not going to effect the change we seek by doing nothing, by sheer apathy. If we did nothing we would be party to our own destruction as a people. We would be jointly guilty with the perpetrators of the wrong we want righted.

Neither do we advocate a bloody, violent means of righting this wrong. If we did, we would be sanctioning the enormous sin of fratricidal strife. Killing to achieve justice is not within the purview of our Christian vision in our present context.

The way indicated to us now is the way of non-violent struggle for justice.

This means active resistance of evil by peaceful means-- in the manner of Christ. And its one end for now is that the will of the people be done through ways and means proper to the Gospel.

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We therefore ask every loyal member of the Church, every community of the faithful, to form their judgment about the February 7 polls. And if in faith they see things as we the bishops do, we must come together and discern what appropriate actions to take that will be according to the mind of Christ. In a creative, imaginative way, under the guidance of Christ's Spirit, let us pray together, reason together, decide together, act together, always to the end that the truth prevail, that the will of the people be fully respected.

CONCLUSION. These last few days have given us shining examples of the non-violent struggle for justice we advocate here:

- The thousands of NAMFREL workers and volunteers who risked their very lives to ensure clean and honest elections;
- The COMELEC computer technicians who refused to degrade themselves by participating in election frauds.
- The poll officials -- registrars, teachers, government workers -- did their duty without fear or favor;
- The millions of ordinary voters who kept the sanctity of their ballot untarnished, their dignity intact.
- Radio Veritas and fearless press people who spoke and reported the truth at all times.

Men and women of conscience, all. We cannot commend them highly enough.

There are thousands of their kind among government officials in the Batasan, the military, the COMELEC, among millions of our people who in the face of overwhelming odds voted and acted as their conscience dictated. Are there other men and women of conscience who will stand up like them and courageously confess their Christianity?

Now is the time to speak up. Now is the time to repair the wrong. The wrong was systematically organized. So must its correction be. But as in the election itself, that depends fully on the people; on what they are willing and ready to do. We, the bishops, stand in solidarity with them in the common discernment for the good of the nation. But we insist: our acting must always be according to the Gospel of Christ, that is, in a peaceful, non-violent way.

May He, the Lord of justice, the Lord of peace, be with us in our striving for that good. And may the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Queen of Peace, and patroness of our country, assist us in this time of need.

For the Catholic Bishops' Conference
of the Philippines

+RICARDO CARDINAL VIDAL

Archbishop of Cebu

President

Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines

February 13, 1986
Manila