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President Ronald Reagan was the American President when the so-called People-Power Revolution at the E. de los Santos Avenue (**EDSA**) happened in the Philippines from Feb. 22-26, 1986. To some historians, it was actually President Reagan and his advisers who orchestrated the relatively peaceful change of government in the Philippines.

The Philippine crisis of February 1986 was not the first time that President Reagan dealt with Philippine President Ferdinand E. Marcos.

After President Marcos was reelected in November 1969, then California Governor Reagan and his wife, Nancy, represented the United States government in the inaugural ceremonies in Manila. The press photographers had a field day in snapping pictures of Governor Reagan, who was resplendent in a Barong Filipino, dancing with then First Lady Imelda Romualdez Marcos. And they photographed also at the presidential gala ball Mr. Marcos while he danced with Mrs. Nancy Reagan, who was garbed in a Filipino terno.

After Mr. Reagan became the American President in 1981, his friendship with Mr. Marcos and his affection for the Filipino people continued.

It was said the Reagans' friendship with the Marcoses and the Filipino people was the reason the Reagan administration selected so many Filipino chefs from the United States Navy to serve at the White House kitchen. Even in his private life after he retired as President, Mr. Reagan continued to employ Filipino Americans in his domestic and office staff.

### **Cancun Dialogue**

President Reagan attended in 1981 the so-called North-South Dialogue in Cancun, Mexico. President Marcos was invited also to the international summit. On Oct. 23, 1981, Presidents Reagan and Marcos met privately in Cancun at the said conference of world leaders. While the topics of the Reagan-Marcos meeting were not announced, pundits speculated that the talks were over the state of emergency that the Philippine President had declared in his country after ostensibly ending martial law. Opposition leader Benigno S. Aquino, Jr., was then on exile in Boston, Massachusetts and there was a growing protest movement in the Filipino-American community against the Marcos dictatorship.

After former Senator Aquino returned to the Philippines and was assassinated at the airport

tarmac on Aug. 21, 1983, President Reagan became more alarmed at the developments in the former American colony. Mr. Reagan wanted the Philippines to become a full democracy again. However, policymakers in Washington, DC, continued to advise Mr. Reagan that while his opponents labeled Mr. Marcos as an alleged "sonovabitch," he was after all their SOB. The remarks of Sen. Mike Mansfield about what really ailed the Philippines perhaps prevented President Reagan from actually pressuring more Mr. Marcos to restore the full exercise of democracy. Senator Mansfield was said to have remarked, "The problem with the Philippines is that it has 60-million cowards and one SOB."

### A "Snap" Election

During President Reagan's second term, the State Department increased the pressure on Mr. Marcos to agree in instituting more political reforms.

In 1985 during a telephone interview with American broadcaster Ted Koppel, Mr. Marcos accepted the anchorman's dare to seek a fresh mandate. President Marcos said that he would call a "snap" presidential election. And he did.

After the "snap" election was held in the first week of February 1986, the opposition claimed victory. The rubber-stamp of a Philippine parliament declared, however, Mr. Marcos as the winner. Then Defense Sec. Juan Ponce Enrile and the Armed Forces Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Fidel V. Ramos defected and led a popular uprising that history now calls the EDSA Revolution.

Students of serious history might actually write that the EDSA Revolution was perhaps the turning point of President Reagan's battle with the Soviet Union. The Cold War had been fought during the Reagan Administration actually in fierce military confrontations in Afghanistan and Nicaragua, among other battlegrounds. President Reagan's labeling of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" that the Free World had to dismantle was actually at stake in the Philippine crisis of February 1986. For if the United States could not aid the Filipino people in regaining democracy, how could it help the Eastern Europeans free themselves from the yoke of the Evil Empire?

President Reagan sent a career diplomat, Amb. Philip Charles Habib, to Manila to defuse the situation and find a peaceful solution to the crisis. Ambassador Habib shuttled between the camps of President Marcos and his opponent, Corazon Cojuangco-Aquino, the widow of Senator Aquino.

### "Time to Cut"

## Remembering Ronald Reagan and his Role in Philippine History - MabuhayRadio

Written by Bobby Reyes

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President Reagan also asked several United States senators to help in resolving the crisis. Sen. Richard Lugar of Indiana, the senior Republican member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was asked to assist. Sen. Paul Laxalt of Nevada pitched in, too. They started calling on President Marcos, his allies and opponents and proposing a political settlement among them.

In the evening of Feb. 24, 1986, President Marcos called the White House. He wanted to talk personally with President Reagan. He wanted to ask his friend to broker a government of national reconciliation with him and Mrs. Aquino sharing power. At the White House crisis center, it was Senator Laxalt who answered Mr. Marcos' telephone call. Senator Laxalt told Mr. Marcos that it was "time to cut and to cut it cleanly." There was silence at the other end. Senator Laxalt asked if President Marcos was still there. Yes, he was still there and probably shaking his head and recognizing the fact that finally the end of his political career has come.

Within 24 hours, the Philippine crisis was over. President Marcos accepted the offer of the Reagan administration of an exile in Hawaii. In the evening of Feb. 25, 1986, President Marcos and his entourage left the presidential palace by helicopter to Clark Air Force Base where they boarded American military jets to Hawaii via Guam.

A student of serious history from Arkansas finally told the world of the EDSA's role in President Reagan's battle against the Evil Empire. On Nov. 12, 1994, President Bill Clinton arrived in Manila for a two-day state visit. In his speech delivered on Philippine soil, President Clinton said that the EDSA Revolution started a peaceful movement that swept the world and caused the Berlin wall to tumble down just three years later.

Perhaps one of the biggest triumphs in President Reagan's political life and legacy is the way he influenced the outcome of the EDSA Revolution. History, to interpret the speech of President Clinton, would someday record, if it has not recorded it yet, how the Filipino revolt ended peacefully and how it served to inspire peoples all over Eastern Europe to bring down also without violence the Iron Curtain. The Soviet Union's Evil Empire disintegrated in a series of EDSA-like peaceful upheavals. Even Mother Russia is now on its way to becoming one of the world's leading democratic countries.

Yes, Mr. Reagan probably said in his private moments that the Filipino people won one for the Gipper.

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