

SPECIAL REPORT
THE INSIDE STORY OF THE VMA RAID

LIBRARY
SECTION
FEB. 19 1988

34/03.23

LIBERATION

VOL. XIII NO. 6

PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE PHILIPPINES

NOVEMBER 1985



The NPA peasant guerrilla

He who toils also fights

Preparing for the snap polls

No sweeter scent is there than the smell of elections, for the traditional opposition in the Philippines. Trust them then to jump at the prospect of the forthcoming snap elections like hounds scenting game. The lure undoubtedly is very attractive — the presidential and vice presidential stakes. But before joining the fray, it would do them good to carefully restudy Marcos' dismal record on elections and his devious motives in holding the snap polls.

Under the present social setup, elections have offered little more than a brief diversion for the people, with factions of the ruling elite contesting the reins of political power. But in no case have these settled the pressing questions of authentic democracy and human rights for the vast majority of the people, let alone such fundamental questions as national sovereignty and genuine land reform.

The various electoral exercises since 1972, including a host of plebiscites and referenda, have been clearly designed to legitimize one or another of the dictatorship's schemes to prolong its stay in power. The May 1984 polls for the Batasang Pambansa is a case in point. The US-Marcos regime cajoled some elements of the opposition to join the poll race. More than a year later, it is clear to all but the most politically naive or politically opportunist that the Batasan has been led by the nose in sanctioning the dictatorship's schemes.

With the opposition's presence, the sham legislature recently enacted a Public Assembly Law which clearly undermines the gains won by the people in the democratic protest movement over the last decade and more. Ostensibly designed to protect the right to freedom of assembly, the law for one bans demonstrations in favorite rally sites like Mendiola bridge. This in effect restricts and mocks the basic rights of free speech and assembly, in a thinly disguised bid to protect the dictator from the ire of the people.

This case illustrates how Marcos has cunningly made use of the legal opposition in playing his dirty game. His latest ploy, the snap elections, attempts to repeat the same modus operandi to his advantage. Working in collusion with US imperialism, Marcos calculates that the early presidential elections will dampen the people's anger over worsening political and economic conditions, check the momentum of the anti-fascist movement by dividing the opposition and the people, and give the regime a "new mandate," especially with regard to suppressing the revolutionary movement.

As with past elections under the present regime, a Marcos victory in the snap polls is a foregone conclusion. Even if the fragmented legal opposition were to unite, it will not be strong enough to contend with the hefty Marcos campaign chest, the vast KBL machinery and the Marcos faction's control over the military, Comelec, bureaucracy, local governments and mass media.

The National Democratic Front has always held that democratic, free and fair elections are impossible under dictatorial

rule. In fact, elections will only help legitimize the US-Marcos dictatorship and deflect public attention from more urgent issues. We have also held that elections alone will not solve nor alleviate the people's fundamental problems which are deeply rooted in the semi-colonial and semi-feudal system. That only the radical restructuring of society through an armed revolution will bring about the basic changes we desire.

This is not to completely repudiate the value of elections, however. Under certain circumstances, elections have a role to play in the general effort to oust the US-Marcos regime. When combined with militant mass struggles and the armed revolution, the electoral struggle can be an effective form of struggle against the dictatorship. It can play an important role in the broad context of people's war which involves various forms of struggle.

For one, engaging in electoral struggles could be most advantageous to the people if these serve to strengthen and expand the people's organizations and mass activities. And also, if these are utilized to bring greater numbers of people closer to the revolutionary option without their having to directly engage in armed struggle. And moreover, if these serve to further weaken the US-Marcos regime.

However, even as we recognize the role of electoral struggles, the primacy of revolutionary armed struggle in the people's war should at all times be emphasized. In relation to armed struggle, electoral or legal or parliamentary struggle is secondary while the former is principal and decisive. And in relation to mass struggle, electoral struggle is secondary while militant mass struggle is primary.

As they gear up for the coming polls, it would be helpful for the people as a whole and the legal opposition in particular to keep all this in mind, even as we urge them to keep their options open in a game where the rules are set at the dictator's whim. Already, two options are forming in the broad opposition front vis-a-vis the elections: boycott and participation. Whatever be their ultimate decision, it is imperative that the various organizations, political parties and forces continue to direct their concentrated protest at the US-Marcos dictatorship as the principal enemy of the people and to uphold the issues, demands and interests of the masses. It is also necessary that they sharply expose the counter-revolutionary and anti-people motives behind the snap polls, so that the people will not be fooled by the illusion of "peaceful electoral change."

For the people in general, the brewing electoral fight offers many opportunities in conducting propaganda, education and organizing work to advance the revolutionary armed struggle and the people's democratic mass movement. We reiterate our call to national democrats everywhere and the Filipino people to sharpen their political senses, critically analyze issues and developments, and carry out flexible tactics in accordance with the developing situation.

IN THIS ISSUE

Cover stories: This month, *LJB* focuses on revolutionary work among the peasantry, the largest oppressed class in the country. The lead article gives an overview of the gains made by the revolutionary peasant movement nationwide. Also featured are a case study of the anti-feudal struggle in southern Negros and a two-day meeting of a peasant association in central Samar.

EDITORIAL	2
COVER STORIES	
A harvest of gains	3
A legacy of hope	5
Democracy in action	7
MAINSTREAM	
Four-month offensive	10
SPARKS	11
CRACKS	12
LETTERS	13
COUNTERCURRENTS	

Cover: NPA peasant guerrilla	
Snap show	14
It's a charade	16
NDF STANDPOINT	
"Communism is not the issue; rabid anti-communism is"	17
SPECIAL REPORT	
They made history	21
INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY	
"No easy walk to freedom"	24
CULTURAL	27
POINTBLANK	28

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDF) serves as the organizational framework and channel for the unity, cooperation and coordination of all anti-imperialist and democratic forces in the Philippines and for progressive Filipino and solidarity groups abroad. It came by registering to the establishments of the Preparatory Commission for the National Democratic Front on April 24, 1973. *LJB* is the official publication of the NDF.

COVER STORIES

On today's significant issues and events

A harvest of gains

An overview of the advances made by the peasant movement

From the eye of a passing storm, they wearily tramped toward the city. More than 5,000 farmers in all, they came from Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog to converge in Manila that Oct. 21 to call for an end to militarization as well as to the monopoly and control of land and agricultural resources by big comprador-landlords and imperialist firms.

But as if to show its contempt for these toilers of the earth, on the very day ironically marked as Peasants' Emancipation Day,* the regime's police forces assaulted the marchers without warning. Killed were two students from Central Luzon, as the march ended in a tragic tableau of peasants with their backs bent, heads bowed, faces in agony, bleeding from bullet wounds.

The brutal assault, coupled with the massacre of 27 rallyists in Negros Occidental a month earlier, was another graphic illustration of the Filipino peasantry's oppressed plight under the Marcos regime. On the other hand, the peasants' long march itself — which was echoed by similar protest actions in other major cities of the country — dramatized the continued advance of the peasant movement in the Philippines despite intense repression.

Led by the Pambansang Kaisahan ng mga Magsasaka (PKM), the revolutionary peasant movement has indeed steadily grown since the establishment of the first peasant organizing groups by the national democratic movement in the early '70s. A member and pillar of the National Democratic Front, the PKM presently has chapters throughout the country. It maintains strong ties with the New People's Army whose recruits mostly come from the peasantry.

The gains of the revolutionary peasant movement as a whole can be gleaned from the numerous social and economic benefits brought about by the revolutionary agrarian reform program, the expanded organizational strength of revolutiona-

*On Oct. 21, 1972, a month after the declaration of martial law, Marcos signed into law Presidential Decree 27, otherwise known as the regime's land reform program. Since then, the regime has commemorated that day every year to mark the peasants' "emancipation from bondage to the soil."



With heads held high: Militant peasants march through Valenzuela

ry peasant organizations, the heightening level of political consciousness of peasants and the growth and intensity of the open peasant movement.

Reports culled by **LIBERATION** from some underground regional newspapers bear these out. In the guerrilla fronts and zones in the countryside, peasant mass organizations and various local organs of democratic power have been consistently carrying out the minimum demands of the revolutionary agrarian reform program, in line with the General Program of the NDF. Combining open and secret, armed and non-armed actions, poor peasants and revolutionary forces are reducing land rent, eliminating usury, increasing farm workers' wages and boosting their agricultural productivity.

Advancing revolutionary land reform

Cagayan Valley. In a guerrilla front here, as early as 1981, the peasants with the help of the revolutionary movement were able to reduce land rent from one-third to one-fourth of the net harvest. In another front, sugar plantation workers upped their wages from P8 to P18 a day. With the advance of the armed struggle in the area and the formation of the local people's militia, banditry, cattle-rustling and anti-social activities were reduced.

Central Luzon. In guerrilla zones, the revolutionary movement has reduced the landlords' usual share of 15 to 24 cavans

of palay per hectare per harvest, to only seven cavans or less. The open peasant movement in the region has also carried out a sustained campaign to lower the price of farm inputs like fertilizers and pesticides.

Quezon. After a series of confrontations with some big landlords, the revolutionary peasant movement in some areas succeeded in turning the extortionate arrangement of 70-30 of land rent in favor of the coconut farmer-tenants. Full peasant mass organizations have also organized farm workers to work collectively. This lightens their work load and raises their productivity, thus providing them with more bargaining power in hiking their wages which would not have been possible if they persisted in working individually. The peasants are also reviving the *turnohan* and the *suyuan*, mutual labor exchange practices. Because the mass organizations targeted first the more powerful landlords in the open rent reduction campaign, it is now easier to negotiate concessions from smaller landlords.

Bicol. In 1983, a guerrilla front launched a ground rent reduction campaign with the help of Communist Party cadres. Through strikes, pickets, negotiations and petitions, the campaign spread to 200 barrios and seven municipalities in 52 plantations covering thousands of hectares of land mostly planted to coconut. As a result, 2,543 coconut plantation workers upped their wages by 20%. In one plantation, the farm workers' P60

fixed wage became a 50-50 sharing arrangement with the owner.

Thirteen haciendas covering 2,554 hectares that were left idle by their owners were put under cultivation on a 90-10 sharing arrangement in favor of the 764 poor families tilling the area. While on five other haciendas covering 373 hectares, the landlords have stopped getting their share from the 141 families tilling these. Consequently, the people have been able to donate a full one-third of the profits to the revolutionary movement. Some 27 cooperatives have also been set up consisting mainly of stores, communal piggeries and fishponds. These complement the encouragement of mutual aid practices for greater productivity.

Leyte. Early this year, in several barrios in the towns of MacArthur and La Paz, the masses launched combined open and secret anti-feudal campaigns and were also able to reduce the rental of farm machinery from 25% to 20% and even to as low as 12%. Wages of farm workers in some coconut plantations increased by 25% to 50%.

Mindanao. In some guerrilla fronts, peasants have confronted corn mill operators and succeeded in lowering the fees for corn- and rice-milling. Within some concession areas, the revolutionary movement has helped settlers assert their right to stay and earn a living after negotiations with concessionaires. In Western Mindanao, experiments are being carried out for the large-scale planting of protein-rich crops such as mungo beans and mushrooms. These are intended to increase the peasants' productivity, develop their livelihood and contribute to the support for NPA guerrillas.

Aside from the economic benefits de-

rived from these anti-feudal mass campaigns in all these areas, social and cultural benefits have also been gained. On the whole, the consolidation and expansion of peasant mass organizations have led to the peasantry's greater control of their everyday lives. Clinics, local *boticas* and schools are being established and literacy campaigns launched. Such education, organizing and other revolutionary work has considerably reduced violent crime, banditry and anti-social activities in the countryside controlled or influenced by revolutionary forces. Through their own efforts, the peasants are creating the positive conditions for their revolutionary development.

Boosting the open peasant movement

With the revolutionary PKM serving as its backbone and guide, the open peasant mass movement has made tremendous advances. This year, tens of thousands of peasants and farmworkers were mobilized in a series of large mass actions in provincial and regional centers all over the country. The peasant campaign culminated in the week of Oct. 21, which progressive groups have come to mark as the Marcos regime's bogus land reform day.

In Ilagan, Isabela, newly revived peasant organizations led more than 1,500 marchers last Oct. 19 to push their sectoral demands. The march signalled the revival of open peasant struggles in the area since the Sta. Isabel-San Antonio hacienda issue in 1981.

On the island of Panay, local farmers' organizations spearheaded a militant people's strike or *welgang bayan* in the cities (the first ever there) and farm strikes in the countryside. The *welgang bayan* pa-

ralyzed 90% of the entire Panay countryside and 70-80% of the transport and business activities in urban areas. In Iloilo City, 15,000 people joined a big rally. The farm strikes which lasted three days cost the Iloilo City government an estimated P5 million.

In all, this October saw the first nationally coordinated peasant campaign ever under martial law. In an interview with LIB, Fernan, a leading member of PKM cited the gains made. "Our biggest gains were the heightened militancy and greater national projection of anti-feudal issues and struggles which characterized the campaign as a whole. The open peasant movement was able to reap good media coverage and projection through its persistent media liaison efforts," Fernan noted. As a result, he added, the totality of countryside problems like hunger, poverty, land monopoly, landgrabbing and militarization were given equal attention. He contrasted this to previous years' campaigns when urban-based sectors perceived peasant problems as mainly that of militarization.

"Moreover, the campaign was able to focus on specific and immediate sectoral demands of the peasantry," Fernan said. "Regional and provincial issues such as the raising of prices of farm products and the lowering of interest rates and prices of farm inputs were tackled alongside such general problems as US imperialist domination of Philippine agriculture."

Most of the demands put forward in the campaign, Fernan said, were in substantial agreement with the NDF's agrarian reform program, as enunciated in Point 7 of the General Program. The open movement projected the minimum goals of reduction of land rent and partial elimination of usury to the ultimate goal of wiping out feudal and semi-feudal exploitation in the countryside. The campaign was thus able to expand the reach of the NDF and help propagate its revolutionary program.

As a result of the campaign, provincial and regional organizing and expansion work was also given a big boost. Several provinces such as Aklan and Capiz saw the founding of their province-wide peasant federations. More open and underground peasant organizations at all levels are expected to be set up after the campaign.

The totality of all these peasant struggles will certainly swell the ranks of the revolutionary underground. As the people's political power grows in the countryside, the time will soon come when the backbone of feudal power and US imperialist domination over the country shall be torn asunder. By then, the tragic tableau of the Filipino peasants with backs bent, heads bowed and faces in agony shall be no more. Instead, the peasants shall arch their backs, hold their heads high and lift up their eyes in fellowship with the untrammelled flight of birds.

LIB Staff



Upholding the peasants' cause: Students join farmers' rally



In high spirits: Negros peasants in communal farm

A legacy of hope

Revolutionary movement in Negros brings about changes for the peasantry

Sandro is big and dark, his skin the color of earth. Standing against a backdrop of rocky hills that make up much of the landscape of southern Negros, he seems to blend well with the scenery. After all, Sandro truly belongs to the land.

At the age of ten, Sandro was deemed old enough to help plow the small patch of land his family tilled. From then on, his days followed a familiar pattern of clearing, planting and waiting for the harvest. It was a slow and languid existence that traced the passing of the seasons, but it was far from idyllic.

For generations, Sandro and the other poor peasants in southern Negros lived lives fraught with pain and suffering. Marginalized by a monocrop economy that allocated most of the island's rich volcanic soil to sugar cane plantations, many were forced to eke out a living in difficult terrain where only the most hardy crops could grow.

It was during the "lean" months — times when their net produce had all been used up — that they suffered the most severe forms of feudal exploitation. For instance, for a P100 loan, a rich peasant or landlord charged them a usurious 100% interest. For every cavan of rice they borrowed, they were made to pay back one-and-a-half cavans the next harvest season.

Landlords also found convenient ways to avoid paying them higher wages. For example, for a full day's work weeding two to three hectares of land, a peasant in the interior was paid a two-liter can of kamote, worth only P3. Landlord-merchants also bought the peasants' produce

at greatly depressed prices. They paid a maximum of P60 for a cavan of corn, and sold this back to the peasant during the lean months for P120 or more.

But basically, landowners exploited the peasants by exacting exorbitant land rent. In the plains, the prevalent system was 70%-30% or 75%-25% sharing in the harvest in favor of the landowner. In the interior, it was *tunga* or 50%-50%. In both cases, however, all expenses incurred in land preparation, planting and harvesting were shouldered by the peasant. All the landowner did was to pick up his share.

To compound their problems, landlord rule was brutally enforced. Goons were used to intimidate the peasants and make sure that the landlord received his full share of the harvest. Bogus organizations like the Bayanihan Volunteers, which was led by a charlatan who had strong military links, forced peasants to enlist and collected from them various fees every cropping season. Settlers who cleared forests to establish homesteads became victims of landgrabbers who wanted the lands in the interior for use as pasturelands for their cattle and for logging concessions.

For Sandro's family, the human costs of such a life of hardship were especially tragic. "No matter how hard we worked, we got nowhere. We could hardly produce enough to pay our debts," he said. Of the meager 30 cavans of corn produced by the two-hectare rocky land they rented from a rich peasant, half went to the latter. Sandro and his relatives lived on their share of nine cavans of corn for

five months, giving up the six other cavans as payment for a previous loan of three cavans.

Normally, they would have consumed the nine cavans in five weeks. But they had no choice except to stretch their food supply for as long as they could. They survived by eating once a day, occasionally supplementing their diet with kamote. To supplement his income, Sandro worked as a laborer in a nearby hacienda. But the paltry wages he received were of little help in improving their lives. "It was a desperate existence," he said. "We had nothing to pass on to our children but hunger and poverty. My wife and I watched helplessly as our children lay sick, their limbs like thin sticks."

The seeds of revolutionary change

But before long, the seeds of revolutionary change were sown in southern Negros. In 1971, small social investigation teams composed of youth activists went to the countryside to prepare the ground for peasant organizing and guerrilla warfare. By 1975, despite an intense military encirclement and suppression campaign, the national democrat activists' pioneering work in the countryside bore fruit. Several NPA armed propaganda units were formed, and the first guerrilla front was opened in the southwestern part of the island.

It was during this period that the armed propaganda units moved to dismantle the landgrabbing and cattle-rustling syndicates in the area, which also formed part of the military's intelligence network. The NPA was so successful that news of its role in putting a stop to landgrabbing spread fast. Landlords, cattle rustlers and other criminal elements no longer dared to engage in their old abusive practices. Soon, mere news about NPA presence in an area was enough to deter would-be landgrabbers from even entering the locality.

Mass support for the revolutionary movement increased as the peasants found new hope and strength in its people-based and thorough-going programs. Sandro was among the first to join the Barrio Organizing Groups (BOG) which were formed in the mid-'70s by the revolutionary movement to organize the peasants for the revolution. Tempered by many years of hardship and struggle, he quickly took to heart what he learned in the education courses given to members of the peasant mass organizations. In 1975, he was elected president of the BOG in his barrio and helped set up the first cooperatives in the area. In 1977, he became president of the peasant organizing group in his barrio which later developed into a peasant organizing committee. By 1981, Sandro, then 31, decided to work full-time for the revolution as a leading activist of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

As a peasant mass leader and *kaupod* (comrade), Sandro participated actively in the anti-feudal struggles that were launched in full force in 1981. The first efforts of the *Lubos na Aomasyong Mag-sasaka (LAM)* or peasant mass organizations concerned the raising of prices for their produce. That same year, the organized masses in a barrio in Sipalay negotiated with a landlord-merchant to raise the prices of palay and corn he bought from them. At that time, the prevailing price was too low, at only P20 to P40 per cavan. The merchant refused to give in and even threatened the peasants, despite the diplomatic approach taken by the masses. Thereafter, the peasants decided to adopt more militant tactics. They confiscated and burned his cargo truck and refused to let the merchant take photos of the damaged vehicle to prevent him from collecting insurance on it. Soon after, the merchant had no choice but to give in.

Spurred on by these initial successes, the organized peasants were ready by 1982 to launch struggles to lower land rent and interest rates on loans, and to increase farm wages. In many areas where the landlord's share of the harvest was 50%, for example, the masses succeeded in bringing this down to only 20% or 25%. In some barrios, landlords no longer even bothered to collect rent.

In the *kaigangan*, or hilly land, the daily wages for weeding and plowing were raised by an average 140% from 1981 to the present. In the plains, the average rate of increase was 167%, and in the semi-plains, 122%.

Under the aegis of the revolutionary movement, interest rates were also greatly reduced. "*Atili*, or payment of loans in kind, used to be a big burden for the peasants," said Sandro. Before, landlords would charge as much as three to five cavans as payment for a cavan of *binhi* (seeds). Today, the payment has been reduced to one-and-a-half or two cavans. And there are cases when interest is no longer charged. Some landlords and rich peasants have cancelled their tenants' debts altogether. The organized masses are also able to obtain the same conditions for rice loans.

But there was still a need to raise productivity and without the landlords, where would the peasants get capital for this? "The solution," said Sandro, "lay in the development of cooperatives."

Cooperatives movement

The *komunal nga uma*, or communal farms, were established by the revolutionary movement to help improve the peasants' livelihood and raise funds for the mass organizations. Here, teams of five to seven people take turns in working on the farms. Ninety percent of the produce goes to individuals (based on the number of work points they accumulate), 8% to the mass organization, and 2% to the

Communist Party branch in the barrio. "Sometimes, lands abandoned by landlords are converted into communal farms and so are lands confiscated from informers," Sandro said.

The *tiangge* or cooperative stores were also set up with the capital contributed by the mass organizations. Teams of peasants take turns managing the stores every two weeks. The teams are responsible for marketing, inventory, recording, sales and the like. Capital is maintained



Negrense peasants march to Bacolod City

at a level sufficient to supply the masses' basic needs. Even with the 10% to 15% profit charged, the *tiangge* is able to sell such things as salt, sugar, vetsin, bread, detergent soap, cooking oil, gas and cigarettes at prices lower than commercial rates. A quarter-bar of detergent, for example, retails for P3 in the town center; at the cooperative, it is sold for only P2.50. Profits from the *tiangge* are in turn, used to fund various community projects, such as the purchase of better seedlings, sprayers and other farm equipment.

The peasant organizations also help foster the community spirit through the practice of *dagiwana* or mutual exchange of labor. Through this, teams from the different sectoral mass organizations take turns in working on the different farms in the barrio, to help raise the productive level of each peasant family.

Thus, though not yet full-blown, the cooperatives system being implemented step-by-step by the revolutionary movement in many barrios in southern Negros has helped improve the life of the masses and led to closer relations among them.

Harnessing the rich peasants

This has resulted in the near-reversal of roles between the poor peasants on the one hand, and the landlords and rich peasants on the other. "Rich peasants are no longer as exploitative as they were because their capacity to exact exorbi-

tant land rent and usurious interest rates has been drastically reduced," said Sandro. "Our policy, however, is not to destroy the rich peasants, but to harness their resources to serve the revolutionary struggle. Our propaganda have always stressed the need for unity against the greater enemy - the US-Marcos dictatorship. Thus, we have encouraged rich peasants to support struggles being waged by the poor peasants and become allies of the revolution." As a result, support organizations of rich and middle peasants have also emerged in the barrios.

The rich peasants extend support in various ways. "In the poor peasants' struggle to raise prices of farm produce, rich peasants do their share by heeding the mass organizations' call to launch a boycott against the merchant-landlord in question. This is a big help because the rich peasants have the biggest produce. If they refuse to sell to the merchant, the latter usually has no choice but to start negotiating with the peasants," explained Sandro.

During the lean months, it is the rich peasants who lend money or provide jobs at better terms than the landlords. They also donate insecticides and lend farm equipment for free to the cooperatives. Sometimes, the rich peasants serve as middlemen during the mass organizations' confrontations with the landlords. In barrio- or town-wide political mobilizations, they usually compose the negotiating panel.

"In turn, the mass organizations of poor peasants always resolve whatever differences they have with the rich peasants, through democratic consultations, never through antagonistic confrontations," said Sandro.

But with respect to landlords, the general policy is to smash their economic and political power. Exceptions, however, are made in cases of landlords who are supportive of the revolution. In places where the peasant organizations are not yet fully prepared to confront the landlord, the masses launch *operasyon tago*, where a portion of the harvest is hidden so that the landlord does not receive his full share.

But once the masses gain enough strength and attain a high level of organization, they openly confront the landlord with their demands. Early this year, for example, more than 1,000 residents of Sitio Cambugyot, Barrio Manlukalok, Sipalay acted in concert and succeeded in pressuring their landlord to remove all land rents.

In cases where the landlord refuses to give in, the people's militia sometimes pays him a visit, as a further show of strength. "After this," said Sandro, "the landlord usually agrees to the demands." If he still refuses, the policy is to systematically confiscate a portion of the landlord's share of the harvest, as well as some of his livestock and farm equipment.

A legacy of hope

The launching of anti-feudal struggles has proven to be the key link in pushing forward the revolutionary movement in the countryside of southern Negros. On the basis of its concrete gains — reduced land rent, increased wages, elimination of usury, freedom from landgrabbing — work traveled swiftly across the mountains and plateaus of southern Negros and things have never been the same since then. "About 85% to 90% of the people in this area have already benefited from the anti-feudal struggle. Today, they form the wellsprings from which mass leaders, cadres and Red fighters arise," said Sandro.

"Many times, the masses from other barrios come to the organized areas to seek our advice. And always, our organizers who enter new areas are warmly welcomed. 'We have long been waiting for your arrival,' they tell us." Now, even the unorganized masses take the initiative to launch mass struggles against landlords and military abuses.

The peasants' often stormy confrontations with the landlords have also made them acutely aware of the sharp contradictions that exist between their classes. "They now have a clearer view of the relations between exploiter and exploited," pointed Sandro. This has also led to the masses' unwavering support for the armed struggle, for they know that without it, they have no weapon with which to protect themselves.

Thus, NPA recruitment is no longer a problem. Even the launching of NPA tactical offensives has become a mass undertaking and it is not uncommon for an entire barrio to be involved directly in its implementation.

The revolutionary anti-feudal struggle has above all, invigorated the revolutionary spirit of the basic masses. In the barrios, they now effectively wield political power and have gained the respect of the rich peasants and even that of some landlords. They now know what it is to have dignity, to rely on their own strength and to have faith in the power of their organized actions.

For Sandro and many other peasants in southern Negros whose lives have been deeply touched by the revolution, a whole new world has been opened. Sandro's wife is now herself a leading activist. His two teen-aged daughters are members of the Barrio Youth Organizing Group, and a teen-aged son who used to be a fulltime peasant organizer, is now a Red fighter. A younger son is also an inter-barrio courier. No longer does Sandro feel doomed to pass on the bleak legacy of hunger and poverty to his children. His legacy, instead, are the hopes that the revolution has stirred in his breast. For even now, his children are living proof that such hopes will someday come true.

Victoria Manalo



Public discussion: Farmers meet to resolve common problems

Democracy in action

Two days in the life of a peasant association in Samar

This article is based upon an actual meeting of a peasant association in a barrio in Samar. We have changed the name of the barrio to San Crispin to protect its inhabitants from possible enemy retaliation. LIB staffer Juan Picas who recently made a trip to guerrilla fronts in Samar covered that meeting and this is his story.

The waning days of the harvest season signal the celebration of fiestas in the interior barrios of central Samar. This October, however, the people in the remote and rugged barrio of San Crispin decided to forego with the traditional festivities because of economic difficulties and instead, focus their efforts on holding a meeting of the Asosasyon hin Parag-uma or peasant association.

The timing of the meeting was appropriate. The harvest of upland rice, locally known as *kalinayang*, had been completed. No longer were barriofolk worried over losing their crop through natural or man-made havoc. Three days before the scheduled assembly, a committee composed of 11 elected leaders of the Asosasyon finalized the agenda and schedule.

On a Tuesday morning, peasants from as far as three kilometers from the barrio center sauntered down the main road of San Crispin which had acquired the quilted image of dark earth and golden palay drying on woven mats. Their destination was a little chapel, the only building in the barrio that could accommodate the sizeable gathering expected.

Sixty-six of the 75 members of the

Asosasyon came. The Asosasyon itself was composed mostly of poor peasants (97%), a feature also common to other peasant associations. In fact, except for its Waray name, the Asosasyon of San Crispin is similar to other peasant associations organized by the national democratic movement all over the country. They share the same objective of uniting poor and middle peasants and farm workers in a barrio for the revolutionary struggle, especially in the implementation of the revolutionary land reform program which is upheld by the NDF.

Inside the chapel, the aroma of strong, handrolled tobacco mingled with the sounds of laughter and light banter as the members took their seats. Some urged the singing of revolutionary songs "to warm their throats" and a man volunteered to borrow a guitar from a neighboring household. But Ka Dino, a committee official in his late 30s, called the meeting to order. However, he said that before proceeding to the main agenda, he would first share an "important matter" which somehow spun as a humorous anecdote angling for a moral lesson.

Lost-and-found

Two days ago, Ka Dino said he found a bag containing money near the village well. "I'm informing the assembly because someone might have lost it or some of you might have heard of someone losing a particular amount of money. All the owner has to do is to prove to the assembly that he owns it."



Camaraderie: NPA guerrillas share light moment with peasants

As it turned out, a young man named Tente told the Asosasyon members that he had lost some money. When asked to prove his claim, Tente replied, "I frankly don't know where I lost the money. It was entrusted to me by my father. But I do know that the plastic bag contains exactly P55 in bills." Ka Dino then declared that the amount was indeed P55. He asked the permission of the Asosasyon if he could hand over the lost item to Tente. The people readily agreed.

With the matter resolved, Ka Dino then revealed: "It was a *pukaw* who really found the money and that perhaps made the difference." (The word *pukaw* literally means "awake" in Waray, but in the guerrilla zones it is generally used to describe a person who is politically aware.) Someone from the assembly answered, "This incident should be related to our children to serve as a positive example."

The lost-and-found story set the mood for the main meeting. Those who wanted to warm the occasion with revolutionary songs had their wish fulfilled with the help of the much sought-after guitar. They first sang a song describing the iron discipline of the New People's Army and the masses. Everyone stood at attention for the next song: a rendition of the *International* in Waray. The song cued the assembly on the formal start of the meeting.

They began by deciding on a plausible "front" or excuse for their large gathering should unexpected visitors chance upon them. From among several suggestions, they agreed upon the story that the assembly was investigating the non-delivery of 100 cement bags promised by town officials on the eve of last year's Batasan elections. The presence of the barangay captain and some councilmen who were

members of the Asosasyon lent strong credence to the "front."

After roll call, Ka Dino presented the agenda which dwelt mainly on the assessment of the Asosasyon's performance from June to September 1985. (The previous assessment meeting was held in May of the same year.) The agenda was divided into four major areas of concern: campaigns related to some socially discouraged practices, education, production and health; the status of Asosasyon finances; the reactivation of a barrio cooperative; and, the appointment of a new committee official to fill a vacancy.

The Asosasyon also agreed upon the rules of conduct of the meeting, adopting four guidelines: views and ideas are to be expressed freely; a person in the process of expressing his views and ideas should not be interrupted; members should pay attention to the speaker; and, anyone who wishes to leave the hall should ask permission from the moderator. For the first agenda topics, Ka Raul, a committee official and head of the barrio militia unit, served as moderator. He used a summary of reports earlier made by the committee as his guide for discussion. He stressed, however, that the reports were still subject to discussion, revision and approval by the body.

Improving community life

First to be assessed was the campaign against the wasteful practice of gambling which is strongly discouraged by the revolutionary movement. Ka Raul announced the names of three persons who were reported to have engaged in gambling activities, adding background information regarding each particular offense. He asked each person if the complaints against them had a sound basis.

The first man readily admitted the offense. The second also admitted to

betting in a cockfight held in a neighboring barrio, and confessed winning P100. His frankness elicited teasing remarks from friends and neighbors. Ka Tonyo, the third person mentioned in the complaint, posed the question: "Is raising roosters in itself a form of gambling?" He explained that his roosters were part of his family's modest backyard poultry. "Without roosters, the hens will not lay eggs," he emphasized. The whole chapel rang out with hearty laughter. Since no member of the assembly could offer concrete proof of his gambling, Ka Tonyo's name was scratched from the draft document and Ka Raul apologized in behalf of the committee.

The discussion on the campaign against drunkenness followed, focusing on two committee officials included in the complaint. So overwhelming were the evidences from several eyewitnesses that the two did not bother to put up a solid defense. Based on the accounts, Ka Dino said that the alleged offenders must have been really intoxicated because they could not recall saying words that other members clearly remembered. "The capacity of a person to consume liquor is relative, but there are clear indications of drunkenness: a loose tongue, wobbly knees and a weightless head," he said. Compared to eight other persons charged, the two committee officials received the brunt of the reprimand. It was the assembly's way of driving home the point that a position of authority does not provide special privileges.

A sense of drama swept the hall as the assessment shifted to the campaign against the infliction of physical harm on family members. Ka Tomas, one of the five persons reported in the complaint, was said to have hit his wife with a fist blow. Ka Tomas countered that the report against him was erroneous and must refer to an act he had committed during the previous assessment period wherein he admitted having maltreated his wife. Ka Raul asked him to think hard and be honest with himself. Still, Ka Tomas stubbornly denied the charge. Ka Raul then invoked the right of the accused to know the identity of the complainant — who turned out to be Ka Tomas' own wife. With bowed head, Ka Tomas then began to tell the truth. "In a fit of anger, I laid my hand on my wife but did not realize I would hurt her."

The assembly asked his word of honor that he would not in any way take it against his wife for reporting the incident. Ka Tomas agreed. Ka Dino revealed that through the Asosasyon's efforts, the maltreatment of wives and children had decreased in incidence from 18 to 5 since the last assessment period. He also noted the reduced cases of drunkenness.

On the subject of theft, a member inquired: "If a person does not return a borrowed item, is it as good as stolen?" As

an example, he cited a neighbor who borrowed a mosquito net from him but failed to return this even after repeated requests. Instantly, the person implicated stood up and explained his side. Based on the discussion, the assembly decided that the issue was a simple case of good or bad faith, not theft. Ka Raul reminded the borrower of an existing policy that requires a person to return what he has borrowed.

The assembly broke up for lunch at noontime and reconvened at 2 p.m. Ka Dino read a letter from the *Hukbo* (the NPA) requesting the barrio people to be more prudent in selecting forest areas for *kaingin* farming. The *Hukbo* was apprehensive that the denudation of the forest would alter the area's ecology and bring about soil erosion and floods, as well as diminish favorable terrain for waging guerrilla warfare. The letter suggested specific areas where *kaingin* could still be undertaken with the precaution that the clearings should not be favorable for military helicopters to land.

Accepting the NPA's request, the assembly devoted half an hour to defining the forested areas to be protected and those to be utilized for *kaingin* farming. It was apparent that the *Asosasyon* had long recognized that the fate of the peasants in the barrio is intertwined with that of the *Hukbo*; one cannot survive without the other.

Following up the topic of environmental conservation, the assembly discussed the campaign against the poisoning of rivers and streams. Two members were reported to have used poison to catch fish. Both admitted committing the offense but also claimed that they used a weak pesticide. Ka Raul, however, carefully noted that all chemical pesticides are poisonous. He stressed the dangers of drinking from or bathing in a poisoned stream. Someone tersely added: "To catch fish with poison is pure laziness."

On education and health

On the campaign on education, Ka Raul reported the regular holding every month of group discussions based on articles in *Larab*, revolutionary newspaper in Samar. To facilitate the campaign, the *Asosasyon* had been divided into 12 study groups which are coordinated by a task force appointed by the committee. The *Asosasyon* receives three *Larab* copies per issue, based on P0.05 contributions from each member. Due to limited copies, an instructor from the task force serves as a "reader" to a group and leads the subsequent discussion.

Ka Raul also said that the task force on education was also able to conduct a formal course on organization-building. Those who missed the course or the latest *Larab* discussions were listed and a definite schedule for holding remedial classes was set. An *Asosasyon* member

urged everyone to apply "criticism and self-criticism" in resolving family and community problems. He pointed out that members need not wait for an assessment meeting to take place in order to strengthen unity within the community.

The remaining hours of the afternoon were devoted to *Asosasyon* finances. Ka Raul said that funds raised from monthly membership dues, which is P0.50 per member, had been depleted to P25.75 due to emergency expenses of members. But he reported the generation of P108 in four months for the tactical fund. This fund, based on the annual contributions of P6 per family, is used to support the *Asosasyon's* political activities like rallies. Also discussed in detail was

efforts. However, his report was offset by news from Ka Sisa, also a committee leader and head of the women's organization. She bared the success of the women's production teams in implementing *tiklos* during the four months under review. "This is a concrete indication that the womenfolk, as equal partners in tilling the land, can contribute much to farm production," she noted.

The discussion on the health campaign consumed the rest of the morning and early afternoon. Since Barrio San Crispin has a long history of typhus epidemics, strong emphasis was made on preventive rather than curative health practices. Ka Raul reported that three waste disposal pits had been added to the existing four in the barrio. An additional toilet



A welcome friend: Peasant boy greets Red fighter

the status of monthly contributions of each family to share a *gatasan* or a milk can-size of rice or its monetary equivalent to the *Hukbo*. In addition, each *Asosasyon* member gives P0.25 monthly to families of full-time guerrillas living in the barrio.

A persistent drizzle greeted the *Asosasyon* members on Wednesday morning, the second day of the assessment meeting. Sad news followed the singing of *Bandilang Pula*. Someone announced that Ka Fredo could not make it to the meeting because his grandchild died last night. No one knew the sickness that caused the death of the child who was just a few months old. For a brief moment, the assembly stood still, gripped by a painful reminder of their inability to defeat all at once an environment of poverty.

After the brief moment of silence, a committee official reported on farm production and developments and problems in the cultivation of various crops and raising of livestock. He bared the poor participation of the production teams in *tiklos*, the practice of accomplishing farm work through cooperative

had also been constructed but he said there were still 58 families who had not complied with the policy. He positively reported that domestic animals, especially pigs, were now more carefully penned in by their owners for sanitary purposes.

Later on, a group reported having cleared an area for cultivating medicinal herbs. Parents could now make use of these as purgatives against parasites. With the people's growing knowledge about medicinal plants, Ka Raul said patronage of the *Asosasyon*-run *botika* had dipped. He reminded the assembly that there was still P96 in the health fund and that malaria pills are being offered for free.

With time running out again in the afternoon, the assembly decided to postpone the assessment on the barrio cooperative and immediately hold the election for a new committee official. After the election, Ka Dino summed up the two-day session, pointing out the gains made by the peasant association. The members then gave a hearty round of applause, very happy about their two successful harvests that season — a harvest of rice crops and a harvest of the *Asosasyon's* gains. **Juan Picas**

MAINSTREAM

Developments in the anti-dictatorship struggle

Four-month offensive

NPA escalate operations in Central Luzon from July to October



There are many reasons why it would have been difficult to wage guerrilla warfare in Central Luzon. First, it is only a boundary away from Metro Manila, the seat of power of the US-Marcos dictatorship. This proximity to the national urban center has helped to develop the highly urbanized character of several of its six provinces. Second, it hosts some of the largest military bases outside continental USA. In addition, the presence of the export processing zones, oil refineries and other key economic investments in the region has boosted its importance to the regime which has heavily militarized the whole area to protect these interests. Moreover, the terrain of Central Luzon which is mostly flatlands is disadvantageous to the type of guerrilla warfare being waged by the New People's Army.

However, the NPA has proven itself able to adapt to various conditions and use these to their advantage. Today, the NPA and the revolutionary forces in the region of Central Luzon are emerging as a strong military challenge to government troops.

The months of July to October this year witnessed the great leap made by the NPA-Central Luzon, as it launched several successive and successful military operations. In the span of four months, a total of 53 operations were staged by the Red fight-

ers with the help of the people's militia. Five of these were raids on enemy camps and detachments; another five were ambushes; one was a sniping-harassment operation and more than 30 were sparrow/partisan operations which punished notorious enemies of the people.

The courage and determination shown by the Red fighters paid off with an additional cache of 68 firearms and several thousands of bullets for the NPA-CL arsenal. Forty-seven of the seized arms were high-powered rifles such as an M79 grenade launcher and M16 armalites; the rest were pistols, Garands and other less powerful types of handguns and rifles. Several boxes of ammunition were further confiscated, as well as other military and communications gadgets. Two military detachments were also burned down during the raids.

Killed in the NPA offensives were 70 enemy forces. Among the casualties were 49 regular troopers and 15 CHDF men. In contrast, the NPA suffered only four casualties.

The NPA operations in Central Luzon were described by *Himagsik*, the revolutionary newspaper in the region, as "*dumadakilang lumakag nap at tumatapang*." The newspaper attributed the exemplary performance of the people's guerrillas to their sharpened military skills as well as their broadening and strengthening mass base.

"The masses are realizing that only through participation in the armed struggle can victory be hastened. Even the number of people directly participating in the different forms of struggle is increasing," said *Himagsik*.

In an interview with a leading cadre of the National Democratic Front interim council in Central Luzon, he stated that the advances made from July to October are "indications of things to come." "All provinces in the region have greatly improved militarily, including Pangasinan," he explained. "Partisan operations now occur every week. The guerrilla fronts are also expanding their reach and influence. *Yung magkakatabi, pinagsama-sama na, kaya hindi lang dumami, lumaki pa.*"

Another NDF member from Central Luzon said even the KBL members in the region recognize the strength of the revolutionary movement. "*Sila pa ngayon ang lumalapit sa atin,*" he said.

Himagsik also reported the employment of new tactics such as the use of water transport in a raid, the first in the region. Last Aug. 4, the Red fighters attacked a security outpost at a fishpond in Macabebe, Pampanga owned by Paul de Jesus, a henchman of Marcos crony Eduardo Cojuangco. The guerrillas rode on two motor boats and quickly executed the planned operations, which yielded an M16, an M2 and a .38 pistol. A powerful communications radio was also confiscated.

The lone sniping-harassment operation staged in the period was one of the NPA-Central Luzon's most successful. It signalled the growing strength of the armed city partisans and sparrow units in the region's urban centers which are located near large enemy camps. The target of the punitive operation was Pedro Talplacido of Nueva Ecija, a former NPA member who had surrendered to the military, betrayed his comrades and joined the CHDF. He served as a guide in military operations, endangering the lives of the masses in the area.

On Aug. 13, at 11 p.m., while guarding a PC-INP checkpoint, Talplacido paid his debts to the people. He was hit in the heart from a 40-meter distance by two guerrilla snipers; he died instantly. Other Red fighters then fired at his companions, who were less than 70 meters away. They were then able to prevent them from calling for help in a nearby military detachment.

These advances attained in Central Luzon are actually just a mirror of progress also being made in other regions in the country. They signify not only the rising level of armed struggle but also demonstrate the correctness of the people's chosen form of struggle. If the past four months in Central Luzon are really an "indication of things to come," then the revolutionary forces in that region are indeed on the right road to victory.

SPARKS

Newsbriefs about the resistance movement

GABRIELA MARKS "WOMEN'S DAY OF PROTEST"



GABRIELA members protest oppression in tableau

"Women's Day of Protest" was commemorated through a colorful parade last Oct. 28 by over 2,000 members of the General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership and Action or GABRIELA.

The parade reeled off from Plaza Roma, making a stop-over in front of the Executive House where Prime Minister Cesar Virata holds office, at Ermita which is dubbed by marchers as the "Prostitution Strip," and in front of offices of different ministries like labor, education, tourism and justice. At the justice building, the women marchers wailed loudly together, to signify their mourning for the death of justice in the Philippines.

The parade culminated in front of the US embassy where a program was staged, showing the role of women in changing society. In a novel move, US imperialism was represented by the Statue of Liberty which held an armalite in one hand and an oppressed Philippines in the other.

KAPATID RECEIVES PEACE PRIZE

The Kapisanan para sa Pagpapalaya at Amnestiya ng mga Detenidong Pulitikal sa Pilipinas (KAPATID) was named recipient this year of the Diakonia Peace Prize, an award given annually since 1979 to an organization "which in times of war, political repression, persecution or other severe difficulties, works for human dignity and human rights by defending people who are victims of an inhuman misuse of power." Diakonia or Swedish Free Church Aid is an institution under the Christian churches in Sweden.

Dean Armando Malay, chairman of KAPATID, received the peace prize in behalf of the organization last Oct. 25 in a ceremony held at the St. Andrew's Theological Seminary. The prize, which included 50,000 Swedish crowns or roughly P110,000, was presented by two Diakonia representatives, Leo Liljengren and Agneta Magnuson, who came all the way from Sweden for the occasion.

KAPATID was founded seven years ago and has formed chapters in several regions in the country. It has launched successful campaigns for the release of several detainees and for the upliftment of living conditions inside prisons.

TRIBAL LEADERS BAT FOR SELF-DETERMINATION

Some 1,000 people, including 60 representatives of the country's eight million national minorities, staged a brief rally in Plaza Miranda on Nov. 15 to dramatize protest over government and multinational encroachment on tribal minor-

ities' rights.

Waving colorful banners, the rallyists also resolved to intensify their struggle for self-determination and autonomy and for the dismantling of the US-Marcos dictatorship and the establishment of a democratic coalition government.

The tribal leaders revealed that the military has been luring tribal people into joining small fanatic sects to fight the NPA and its supporters. Recruits are given arms to sow terror in areas where the guerrillas are active. But many minorities, they added, have instead found it inevitable to join the armed struggle, convinced that it is the only way to liberate themselves from age-old oppression and exploitation.

MARTYRS HONORED

Relatives of Filipinos who died in the struggle against the dictatorship got together on Oct. 30, eve of All Saints' Day, to pay collective tribute to the fallen martyrs.

Mothers and Relatives Against Tyranny (MARTYR) gathered at the Loyola Memorial Park to honor victims of the dictatorship such as Lorena Barros, Abraham Sarmiento II, Dr. Bobby de la Paz, Benigno Aquino Jr., Ferdie Arceo, Edgar Jopson, Hermon Lagman, Lorenzo Lansang, Crispin and Tony Tagamolila, Fr. Nilo Valerio, Dr. Johnny Escandor and others.

MARTYR extolled the examples of their fallen relatives in a solemn ceremony, capped with a renewal of their vow to "rededicate themselves to the aspirations of all people who have died and to persevere until final victory is won."

PROTESTS ON ESCALANTE, TAFT KILLINGS CONTINUE



Protest posters festoon site of BAYAN-led mass action

Protests over the killing of two youths during the peasants' march last Oct. 21 and of 27 rallyists in Escalante last Sept. 20 continue to mount despite reassurances of "impartial" investigations by the defense ministry and other government agencies.

Last Oct. 23, GABRIELA held an indignation rally at the foot of Mendiola bridge. The participants carried placards of "Katarungan para kina Emmanuel Lazo at Danilo Balgos," "Katarungan para sa mga biktima ng Escalante masaker," and "US-Marcos regime: Murderer."

In Central Luzon, BAYAN-CL, UNIDO-CL and Liberal Party-CL signed a resolution condemning the shooting of the youths who both hail from Central Luzon. BAYAN posthumously gave the first ever "Bayani" award to the two youths.

PKMK CALLS FOR INTENSIFIED LABOR STRUGGLES

Organized trade union groups under the umbrella of the Pambansang Koalisyon ng mga Manggagawa Laban sa Kahirapan (PKMK) called for "greater unity and intensified workers' struggle" against assaults on the labor front. In a gath-

ering of 500 officials of the country's largest labor federations, alliances and local unions last Nov. 10 at the Pope Pius XII Center in Manila, the PKMK also called for the scrapping of the Public Assembly Act, recently signed into law.

Rolando Olalia and Bonifacio Tupaz, co-chairmen of the alliance, said the forum was also an initial step toward the formation of a "broader labor alliance." In assailing the Public Assembly Act, labor lawyer Potenciano Flores Jr. noted that with the law, the regime further "institutionalizes and legitimizes the use of violence against dissenters."

BANK WORKERS PROTEST

Laid off employees of the Pacific Banking Corp. camped out in front of the Central Bank main office Nov. 8 to protest the job-cutting measures instituted by monetary authorities to comply with IMF-World Bank recommendations. The employees, part of the 400 laid off by the CB from the bank's Metro Manila branches, also held an overnight vigil at the labor ministry Nov. 9 to coincide with a meeting with top ministry officials on their termination.

Pacific Bank is the latest in a string of banks foreclosed by the CB as the banking system collapsed due to pressures of the International Monetary Fund and the current economic slump.

Meanwhile, a nationwide protest rally involving all employees of the state-owned Philippine National Bank was held Nov. 9 to protest the planned merger of PNB with the Development Bank of the Philippines, and subsequent layoffs.

U.S. BLAMED FOR NUKE PLANT

Former Sen. Lorenzo Tanada blamed the United States for burdening the Philippines with a nuclear power plant which, he said, is the "single most expensive and disastrous project" of the Marcos regime.

Without pressure from the US government, "the monstrous Bataan nuclear power plant will not be there," Tanada said during the opening of the three-day national conference on the nuclear facility at the Asian Institute of Tourism. Tanada also reiterated his complaint against the Philippine Atomic Energy Commission, whose competence to pass judgment on the safety of the nuclear plant is being questioned at the Supreme Court.

In June this year, the people of Bataan also registered their opposition to the plant in an unprecedented people's strike that paralyzed the province for three days.

DOCTORS URGE RELEASE OF COLLEAGUE

Groups of medical and paramedical professionals, including the World Psychiatric Association, Medical Action Group and the Philippine Medical Association, sought this month the release of Dr. Josephine Rances-Tan, a doctor who had been involved in the treatment of political detainees and victims of human rights violations in Southern Tagalog.

Military authorities said Rances-Tan was arrested on the strength of a Preventive Detention Action (PDA) order, not only for treating members of the New People's Army (NPA) but giving contributions to the revolutionary movement in Quezon. But the medical groups, in seeking the immediate release of Rances-Tan, upheld the physician's right to treat the sick and injured regardless of political or religious leanings.

LAKAD-PAGKAKAISA HELD

A walk-for-a-cause fund drive entitled "Lakad Pagkakaisa sa Negros" was held Nov. 10 at the Ugarte Field in Makati. Participants of the fund-raising drive came mostly from the health sector and others willing to give a helping hand to the people of Negros. They marched through Ayala, Buendia and EDSA and then back to Ugarte Field where they held a program.

CRACKS

Indicators of the regime's economic and political crisis

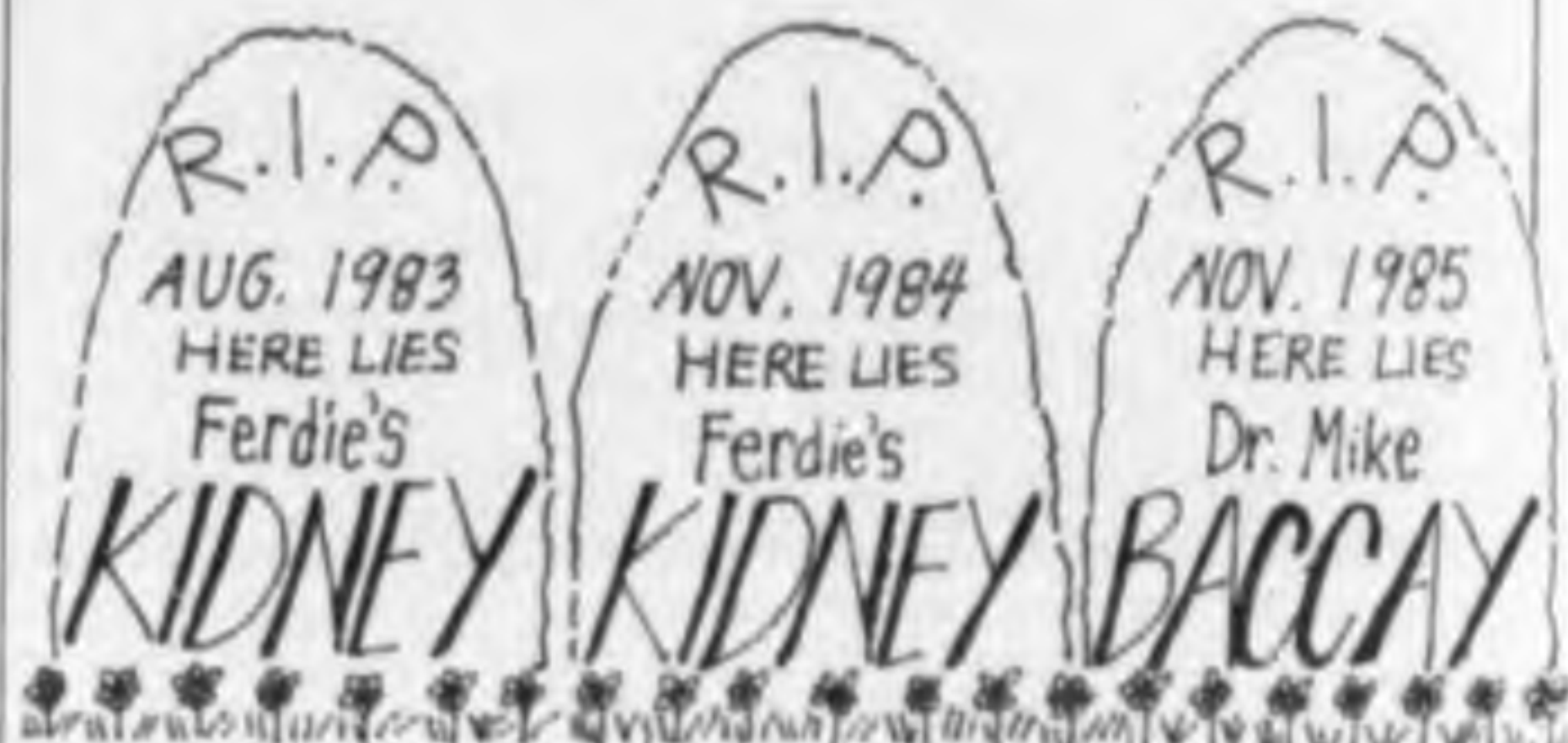
NO-NO-SIR!

Time was when Juan Ponce Enrile was a revered name within the military. But that was at the height of Enrile's career in the '70s. Today, soldiers have begun to shed the aye-aye-Enrile-sir image and are questioning his orders. Recently, three Philippine Constabulary troopers, including a captain, queried before the Supreme Court the legal basis of Enrile's order creating the multi-sectoral Escalante fact-finding committee. The three refused to submit themselves to questioning by the committee, invoking their constitutional right to remain silent.

Enrile used to share with Marcos command-and-control powers over the military. Now, these have been virtually denied him by the power-grasping tyrant. He sourly acknowledged this when, in a magazine interview, he said he considers his "appointment on a daily basis" and that his continued stay as defense minister depends on the wishes of one man, and that he is ready to leave the post anytime.



WHAT YOU KNOW CAN HURT YOU



Although "salvagings" are nowadays not out of the ordinary, one such case deserves serious inquiry. Dr. Potenciano Baccay's slaying would have passed unnoticed had he not been: 1) FM's personal physician for two years; 2) a kidney specialist; and had not 3) morbid reports about FM's health been exposed in American dailies. Press stories abroad revealed that, according to a "presidential doctor," FM "has only six months to live and might not finish his term." Although probers have eyed robbery as the motive, circumstances simply speak of a political rebut.

BLACKMARKET BOOM

Dollar blackmarketeers in Binondo are reportedly making brisk sales these days. Reason - rumors about another devaluation and the delayed release of the third tranche of the IMF loan have spurred renewed speculation among many businessmen. As a result, blackmarket buying rates are now P19-\$1 compared to the official exchange rate of P18.75-\$1. Reports have it that the exchange rate will zoom to at least P20-\$1 by January 1986. And the purchasing power of the peso will in turn, be eroded anew.

WHAT ECONOMIC RECOVERY?

Who says the country's on the road to economic recovery? Well, Virata. And Valdepenas. And many other government lackeys. But Central Bank data themselves contradict such

optimism. From January to August this year, the country's total interest payments amounted to \$1,336 million - equivalent to 50.6% of the \$2,699 million reported value of exports in the same period. Despite the moratorium on our principal debt servicing, interest payments devoured half of our meager export earnings. The downward trend went the same way with both our traditional and non-traditional exports, with the former faring the worst. Coconut exports declined by more than 80% (from \$453 million to \$260 million), sugar from \$180 million to \$126 million, forest products from \$159 million to \$122 million, and mineral products from \$159 million to \$133 million.

STRIKE FEVER IN PITCH HIGH

The Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE) admitted this month that strikes have reached an all-time high. According to the MOLE's own data, 342 strikes have been waged from January to November, which shows a 28% rise over the previous 1984 record figure. The number of strike notices filed by unions also shot up 25%, from 848 in 1984 to 1,062 this year. Even more striking, however, was a 66% increase (98,241 as against 59,000 in 1984) in the number of workers involved in work stoppages, resulting in 2,375 million man-days lost this year.

But lest it be reprimanded by the dictator for spilling out figures too close to the truth, the MOLE also sought to dampen the significance of its own data. It boasted of a strike settlement rate of 94% compared to 70% in 1984. MOLE reports, however, failed to give a complete listing of firms where they claimed labor disputes were settled.

KAYOD-KALABAW

The per capita income (GNP divided by population) of the Filipino declined from \$830 in mid-1983 to only \$650 at present. The figure, one of the lowest in Asia, was revealed by Economic Planning minister Vicente Valdepenas, who cited as reasons the 5.3% GNP drop last year and the projected 4% decline in GNP by end-'85. But Valdepenas also practically pinned the blame on the country's labor force for their dwindling incomes. In order to keep up with per capita income growth in other Asian countries, he said, Filipino workers have to work 10 times more to increase production. *Hirap na nga, lalo pang magka-kayod-kalabaw.*



PERANG MACOY

After faithfully following for a few months the IMF condition to exercise prudence in government expenditures to lessen its budget deficit, the Marcos regime has made an about-face and is on its way to flooding the country with paper bills. Sources at the Central Bank, the Ministry of the Budget and the Ministry of Finance have revealed that the decision was taken in the face of the snap polls and has the tacit approval of the IMF. The same sources said that the IMF will not release the next tranche of loans for the first quarter of 1986 if the Central Bank does not first dispose of the amount it borrowed last from the IMF. Thus, Marcos has given the go-signal to government agencies and ministries to "squander as much as you can."

The regime desperately needs the next tranche of loans for its election campaign fund next year. Initial calculations made by Marcos campaign strategists already show that the dictator's own ill-gotten funds, part of which he has recalled from abroad, will not be enough for the extravaganzas they have in mind. To further hook votes, even payrolls for bonuses have been processed early; and by the



first week of December, government offices will have started distributing "incentive pay" to employees.

All this, while economic production is at a standstill and the certainty that such massive cash outflows will lead to insurmountable inflation. *Perang Hapon* was bad enough during World War II, the old folks say, but *perang Macoy* is fast becoming more monstrous.

UNEMPLOYMENT BOO-BOOS

The truth is, even if Filipinos wanted to work themselves to death, they just couldn't. Today, there are more than 8 million youths aged 17 to 24 years who are jobless, up from 7 million last year. And their numbers continue to rise, said the National Manpower and Youth Council (NMYC). But the NMYC's disclosure also served to lay bare another blatant discrepancy in government labor statistics. Last year's MOLE figure for unemployment (adults and youth combined) was only 1.3 million. How to fit in 1984's 7 million jobless youth into this smaller figure is anybody's guess.

LETTERS

Comments from readers

ON THE KAGUMA PROGRAM

Dear Editor:

We would like to correct an oversight in your July-August 1985 issue regarding the Program of the *Katipunan ng mga Guro ng Makabayan (KGM)*. Instead of the 10-Point Program, it is really an 8-Point Program, a copy of which had already been given to you.

Thank you very much.

KGM National Executive Committee

We published verbatim the answer given by one officer during the interview conducted the evening of July 3, 1985. Though we had already received a copy of the new *KAGUMA Eight-Point Program* about two months before this interview, we were unable to get in touch with you to inquire about the discrepancy. Our apologies. For our readers' guidance, we are printing below the *KAGUMA's* new program:

1. Advance the national democratic cultural revolution and propaganda movement.
2. Advance teachers' struggles for economic welfare and democratic rights.
3. Advance and further intensify the overall struggle to topple the US-Marcos dictatorship.
4. Win over other sectors of the petty bourgeoisie towards the establishment of the National Democratic Front.
5. Establish the broadest possible unity within the educational system against the US-Marcos dictatorship.
6. Advance and unite with the struggles of the basic masses.
7. Advance the revolutionary armed struggle.
8. Link up and unite with teachers and other progressive sectors overseas and win their support for the Philippine revolution.



Dictator Marcos: Scripting the polls to arrest his downfall

Marcos holds all the aces from the start to the finish of the game. Anyone who dares to unseat him in the electoral fray must have backers who equal Marcos' resources, or else he or she is embarking on a frustrating journey of futility.

No one in the opposition, however, can still say for sure if he really intends to push through with the election this time. The dictator has been known to say things which he rarely follows up with action. Even now, should the opposition ticket prove strong and threatening, he can always order the hamstrung Supreme Court to rule the snap election law unconstitutional.

Meddlesome Uncle Sam

At present, however, the emerging "hero" of the hour is neither the President nor the traditional opposition, but meddlesome Uncle Sam. The string of American officials who visited the country this year and the continuing leakage of official documents on US policy on the Philippines are leading many to believe that the sudden call for snap elections was brought about by US pressures on Marcos.

Among those who participated in the exodus here were CIA director William Casey, former US ambassador to the UN Jeane Kirkpatrick and, apparently the most persuasive, Republican Senator Paul Laxalt, an adviser and close confidant of Ronald Reagan.

To a man, these top-ranking White House emissaries bared US anxiety over the growing strength of the "insurgency" in the countryside and Marcos' unyielding stance on implementing "democratic" reforms. "Every month that passes without major political and economic reforms contributes to the likelihood of an NPA victory," noted the situation report of the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence last Oct. 31. "How long can the present trends persist before the situation is irretrievably lost - before it is too late for reforms to take hold? There can never be a precise consensus on a precise timetable but available evidence strongly suggests that the point of no return will be reached within three years."

Dave McCurdy, a member of the US House of Representatives Intelligence Committee, said that the CIA and Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency agree on a steady trend "pointing toward catastrophe (with) a growing insurgency, declining economic growth and deeper intransigence (on the part of) Marcos." McCurdy, in fact, pointed out that this was one of the rare times when the US intelligence community is "so united in its analysis."

Indeed, last August 1 to 3, 50 representatives of the US government's intelligence agencies, the Pentagon, State Department and the financial community, met at the US War College in Washington D.C. to discuss precisely the Philippine problem and propose solutions to it. Although

COUNTERCURRENTS

Developments in the US-Marcos regime

Snap show

US imperialism and Marcos have the most to gain from the snap elections

"I announce that I am ready to call a snap election, perhaps earlier than eight months - perhaps three months or less than that - if all these childish claims to popularity on both sides have to be settled."

Hollywood's Al Pacino couldn't have given those words as much passion and seeming sincerity than when Ferdinand Marcos delivered them. Nor could the timing and setting have been more dramatic: just after midnight last Nov. 4, during an interview in an American talk show beamed live via satellite. And its effects were more electrifying than anything ever produced by Dino de Laurentiis.

The announcement effectively threw the entire opposition into a frenzy, while the rest were left gaping in surprise. Some, who remember how the dictator could easily change his mind again, raised doubtful eyebrows.

The idea of the snap polls for the presidency first came out late last year when the President was reported to be dying. Marcos, however much he denies it, has long been suffering from a degenerative disease that affects the internal organs. Others believe he deliberately resurrected the early election bait as part of his old tactic of divide and conquer - to keep the opposition forces from uniting and to isolate other organizations which see no hope in elections under the regime. As it happened, the ploy resulted in widening the rifts among some opposition leaders who are eyeing the Malacanang

throne.

Marcos' sudden turn-around on the snap polls suspiciously occurred at a time when the results of the Sandiganbayan trial of the Aquino-Galman double murder case are about to be released, and the new chief justice of the Supreme Court is about to be named. In fact, the election issue successfully overshadowed the otherwise controversial appointment of Ramon Aquino, a former Marcos law classmate, to the bench. It again proved how Marcos could coldly manipulate the people's right to suffrage and use it as a diversionary tactic from other equally important issues.

For the 68-year old dictator, an election victory is just what he needs to prove his claim of a "mandate with the people." To get the opposition to bite his bait, he conceded to their demand to postpone the poll date to Feb. 7. But he has stubbornly refused to grant their more substantial demands, especially his resignation before the elections, which his own Constitution requires.

As it is, Marcos appears very confident of winning - and for good reason. As the NDF stated in a press release (see sidebar), "A Marcos victory in a snap election is a foregone conclusion." With the military forces under his thumb, the Commission on Elections packed with Marcos loyalists, the government bureaucracy from ministers to mayors to barangay captains controlled by Marcos, with the strong and vast machinery of the KBL nationwide and the millions of campaign funds at its disposal,

Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Richard Armitage and Assistant Secretary of State Paul Wolfowitz attended the meeting, the majority of the participants were the "behind-the-scenes" shapers and implementors of US policy on the Philippines.

According to the *San Francisco Examiner* (Sept. 15 issue), in a news report apparently leaked to it, "Senior US intelligence and diplomatic officials are contemplating a major policy shift to further distance the Reagan administration from the government of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos. The conference, said one of the participants, was "far more extensive than anything in the past on the Philippines." It proposed major policy options for the country, in formulations more strongly worded than that contained in the National Security Study Directive, which was also leaked to the press last March.

ous reforms, a communist triumph appears likely. And a communist victory would force us to relocate our defense facilities from the Philippines to the detriment of our vital interests throughout Asia and the Pacific Ocean."

A particular thorn in the US side is the pending reinstatement of Gen. Fabian Ver, chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) on leave and one of the 26 accused for complicity in the Aquino assassination. US officials believe Ver's return to duty after his eventual acquittal will further erode the credibility of the military. However, Marcos insists that he has already promised Ver, a known Marcos loyalist, that the latter will be reinstated if he is proven innocent.

Main US interest in the country

Even the most naive however, will find it difficult to swallow American reasoning

"It's a charade" - NDF

"It's a charade."

So spoke NDF official Antonio Zumel on the snap elections. In an interview with *Business Day*, the former National Press Club president turned underground leader said, "Knowing Marcos as we all do, we don't think he has gone into this half-heartedly. He really must have planned this." The interview, which appeared in the same week as the NDF interview in *We Forum*, marked new publicity coups for the NDF.

Zumel said that the election is "deliberately being aimed by Marcos at his American patrons presumably to show them that he is not afraid to submit himself to the people's judgment, at the traditional opposition to befuddle them and to upset their plans, and to the people at large, basically to deceive them."

In a press release of the Balita ng Malayang Pilipinas (BMP or Free Philippines News Service), its official new agency, the NDF further noted that the new Marcos electoral ploy "essentially embody the attempts of the US imperialists and the Marcos clique to widen the political base of the fascist dictatorship and project a new 'popular mandate' for domestic and international audiences, while laying the bases for an intensified terror campaign and harsher economic impositions on the people."

On whether the NDF will participate in the farce, Zumel said: "As NDF, we don't participate in elections (under the regime). In past elections wherein these clearly served to perpetuate Marcos in power, we called for a boycott."

He clarified that given the concrete conditions in the country, fundamental changes in society cannot be brought about by elections, but only with a complete overhaul of the present system. For this, "armed struggle is necessary, so is a national united front and various forms of mass struggles. Electoral struggle is a form of mass struggle but it is only a small part."

However, while the snap elections will not solve the people's problems which are rooted in the semi-colonial and semi-feudal ruling system, the NDF stressed that the polls offer many opportunities to advance the revolutionary armed struggle and the people's democratic mass movement. The NDF called on national democrats and the Filipino people to "sharpen their political senses, painstakingly analyze each and every development and carry out flexible tactics in accordance with the developing situation."



These policy options are: 1) the abandonment of Clark and Subic bases, which intelligence analysts say are "increasingly at risk"; 2) a proposed foreign policy speech by Reagan that would distance the US even further from Marcos; 3) the leaking of a national security report stating the US policy of seeking the ouster of Marcos; 4) the sending of US military advisers and trainers to assist Philippine anti-insurgency efforts; and 5) financial assistance to whatever leadership might emerge after Marcos.

However, although key US agencies seem united over their analysis regarding the Philippine problem, they still have no unified policy on what to do with Marcos. At present, for lack of viable political alternatives to him, US imperialism as a whole continues to support Marcos. But this has not lessened US pressures on the dictator, especially in the military sphere.

Said Armitage in his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "There is a need for a comprehensive counter-insurgency plan that must integrate political, economic and social liberalization with reinstated military professionalization and resolve. Without vigor-

that its interests here is mainly "because the US nurtured the independence and democratic institutions of our former colony." In truth, as it has itself often admitted, the US has "extremely important interests in the Philippines," principally, "the unhampered access to our bases."

At present, Clark Air Base and Subic Naval Base are the two largest US military bases outside continental USA. Their geographic location is ideally suited as they stand guard in behalf of US interests to important sea routes from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean. The US fears the loss of the bases in the Philippines would endanger vital oil and trading routes from the East and open up the Pacific to Soviet expansion.

Clearly then, if any US official is losing sleep over the Philippines, it would be because of their all important military bases here. Political instability and the growth of the revolutionary forces are only important to them in so far as these will affect the security of their strategic interests. Many US officials have therefore underscored the negative consequences of a relocation of the bases. Noted

Armitage during the Senate Foreign Relations Committee meeting, "I would like to state clearly and for the record that currently, we are not planning to relocate our facilities from the Philippines. There is no single location or combination of locations in the Western Pacific that can replace all the advantages that we currently enjoy in the Philippines."

On his part, former US ambassador to the Philippines William Sullivan said the US could probably patch together some system that would make it possible without Clark Air Base. "But," he stressed, "for Subic, there is no substitute." Aside from the cheap labor costs, the thousands of highly skilled Filipino workers in Subic can repair any ship that the US navy sails. It is also the home of the US Seventh Fleet. To transfer both bases to other areas like Guam or Tinian would mean further costs of at least \$8 billion.

This therefore pulls to pieces the much publicized policy option to abandon the bases, which was topbilled in the August War College meeting. The policy option runs contrary to everything that Washington has previously said and done about the bases, and is currently doing. At the most, the leaking of the entire conference itself is being used as a warning to Marcos to stop using the bases as a political leverage to get concessions from the US government.

In addition, the US wants the Marcos regime to further tighten security in the bases. Recently, a security investigation report on the bases revealed that security was very lax and that the expensive equipment inside were easy targets for guerrilla operations. It also reported the sighting of an NPA squad encamped within the base perimeter at Clark.

In a move which further debunks the forecited policy option, US officials are presently seeking Congress approval of \$1.7 million for security and safety improvements at Clark, plus the construction of a \$3 million security fence here which is to be eight-feet high and topped with broken glass. Moreover, the US Air Force and Navy are planning to invest another \$1.3 million in new military construction for the bases between now and 1992, including 2,500 new family housing units for US servicemen and their families. Also, the US Air Force is planning to send at least 500 security troops to Clark, while the commander of the US Naval Forces in the Pacific has reportedly requested for a naval amphibious unit and some 1,000 to 3,000 marines to be stationed in Subic.

Stepping up the pressures

Certainly, the US is not about to pull out its most important stakes in the Philippines. But neither is it about to ease off the pressures on Marcos. A common nightmare among Washington policy makers is the Marcos regime's continuing inability to crush the surging revolutionary

movement nationwide. The fact that national democratic forces project a strategic counter-offensive within the next few years is turning their hair into gray. They know that even with the most vigorous reform measures, it will take several years to reverse the tide of people's war. They are no longer fighting against the less experienced Huks in the '50s and they have no time to lose.

"Unlike Iran and Nicaragua, there's no excuse for bad policy . . . because we've had so much clear warning as to what is happening," exclaimed McCurdy. This therefore explains the more hawkish policy options evolved in the War College conference, which indicate a stepping up of pressures on Marcos.



Effigy-burning: Foreshadowing of events

With the proposed foreign policy speech of Reagan that the US does not support Marcos but whoever the Filipinos choose in the elections, the US evidently hopes to increase the pressure on Marcos to concede more cosmetic reforms that will prevent the radicalization of the opposition and the people. Through the elections too, the US hopes to open new political (but pro-US) alternatives to Marcos and clarify a definite succession mechanism. As a conference participant stated, "As long as Marcos thinks Reagan backs him, he will dismiss criticism from people like Wolfowitz and (Sen. Stephen) Solarz." It was reportedly agreed that the Reagan speech would thus contain "much stronger language than before."

The US has also raised the possibility of direct US military involvement to contain the revolutionary forces. The *Examiner* story said although the US Department of State is not very agreeable to this, several CIA officials responsible for the Philippines were "enthusiastic." It also revealed that plans for direct US intervention already exist and will be used if necessary in order to stem the rising insurgency.

Of the various US government agencies, the CIA perhaps has taken the most hard-line position on Marcos. It has even en-

dorsed the staging of a military coup d'etat to unseat him, though mindful of the wide-scale instability such an option could unleash. The CIA apparently fears that the longer Marcos stays in power, the greater the instability in the Philippines. Noted a conference participant, "We hope the Filipinos find a way to get rid of (Marcos) and then we'll help the one who succeeds him. We want to get things going without appearing to steer the ship."

But as things stand now, Marcos himself wants a hand in co-steering that ship and will do anything to prove his viability as a puppet. And this is where his snap election ploy falls neatly into place. Through the elections, he intends to wrest a new "mandate" from the people, enough to placate the most pugnacious among his American patrons. At the very least, he intends to use this as a diversionary tactic for the whitewashed results of the Aquino murder trial. Moreover, he hopes to isolate the nationalist and progressive bloc within the open opposition and cajole the people into working within the limited framework of the electoral struggle.

The US, on the other hand, has also much to gain from Marcos' scheme. Though the dictator could have been safe enough in his throne for two more years without the special polls, the early election guarantees the security of the US bases and other vital US interests in the Philippines. To wait for the presidential election until 1987 could be dangerous for the US, since some US officials themselves believe that the "point of no return" will only be two to three years from now. As a matter of fact, the snap elections falls within the general electoral tactics of the US strategy to divert the attention of the people from the more urgent question of US intervention and provide the Marcos regime with the political legitimacy and stability needed to protect the entire ruling system.

For the Filipino people, however, the forthcoming snap elections are added chains that will help strengthen the hold of the US-Marcos dictatorship over the country. At this time of severe economic dislocation, two elections in a year will rob the last breath from a dying economy. It is not the wealthy Marcos camp that will bear its adverse effects but the hungry millions of Filipinos. If the snap elections is then made into a dramatic movie, it should be titled: "Nagabit ang tao sa kapal ng mukha." The people's patience can take only so much after all.

The fight against the continued rule of the US-Marcos dictatorship can never be solved through elections alone. Only with the strong, united and armed actions of the masses — in the urban streets and in the countryside — can the chains of oppression be broken. And this, no local or Hollywood film could ever demonstrate more clearly and with enough passion and sincerity than by the rising tide of the people's war in the entire country. Liz Beltren

“Communism is not the issue; rabid anti-communism is”

An interview with the Public Information Officer of the NDF

This year, the National Democratic Front and its member organizations like the Communist Party of the Philippines became the brunt of anti-communist attacks from the US-Marcos regime and certain groups. The smear campaign also included progressive legal alliances and organizations. In the interest of “setting the record straight” and ferreting out the truth, **LIBERATION** is publishing this interview with the Public Information Officer of the NDF. We hope that this interview will be helpful in clarifying the real issues hidden behind the anti-communist witchhunt and in guiding national democratic activists and allies in combatting the persisting black propaganda drive against the revolutionary movement.

Q: How do you characterize the recent upsurge of anti-communist attacks in the mass media and in public pronouncements of some personalities and political groups identified with the legal opposition?

A: The recent spate of anti-communist and anti-NDF attacks by the US, the Marcos dictatorship and even certain elements of the traditional opposition must be viewed within the context of the intensifying contradiction between the Filipino people and the US-Marcos dictatorship.

The revolutionary people’s war has reached a degree of effectivity that imperils not only the Marcos regime but the political rule of big compradors, big landlords and bureaucrat capitalists which has historically plagued the country under the sponsorship of the US.

As US imperialism’s interests become severely threatened by the steady growth of the people’s movement, it is all too natural that the US will encourage and even instigate moves by big comprador-landlord interests within the anti-Marcos opposition to stall or even derail the revolutionary movement, with the overall objective of politically isolating the progressive forces. At the very least, the US and its local proteges would wish to deflect the anger of the Filipino people from themselves by making “communism” an issue.

The NDF knows for a fact that the US has even fielded its agents within the open mass movement. These have been masquerading as militants but are more interested in attacking the revolutionary movement than in making common cause with the Filipino people who have been struggling long and hard to oust the US-supported Marcos regime. It is no coincidence that these new “militants” should emerge at this juncture, when the people’s movement poses a direct and serious challenge to the reactionary ruling system.

The NDF maintains that communism is not an issue. Rabid anti-communism is. Those elements who resort to Red-baiting and witchhunting only sow disunity among the people and objectively undermine their own position. Gloating over supposed opposition disunity, the US-Marcos dictatorship has of late become more emboldened to step up its attacks against the entire opposition, regardless of ideological color. Those who hope that the dictatorship will treat them with kid gloves, provided they also advocate anti-communism, only succeed in showing their true colors.

Q: Who are behind these attacks? Why are they conducting these?

A: The US and the Marcos regime are the principal purveyors of anti-communist and anti-NDF attacks. They have used



The New Inquisition

these extensively to rationalize their continued plunder of the country’s economic resources and suppression of the people’s democratic rights. As a matter of fact, the dictatorship openly cited “insurgency” as its basis for declaring martial law in 1972. Today, Marcos’ main claim to the throne, as far as his US backers are concerned, is his continuing ability to defeat the “insurgency.”

Lately, however, there have been a few in the legal opposition including a number of clerics as well as employees of cleric-run institutions, who have joined the dictatorship in orchestrating an anti-communist chorus. Their common goal is to preserve the current semi-colonial and semi-feudal order.

As for those elements of the traditional opposition who have suddenly become champions of anti-communism, they hope that their Red-baiting will convince US imperialism to transfer its support from the Marcos regime to them. Their situation is akin to that of a dog begging crumbs from its master’s table.

Q: Let us take up the issues raised in these anti-communist attacks. How does the NDF view the martyrdom of the late Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr., whom some quarters of the opposition claim as their “exclusive” hero?

A: One of the major issues raised in these anti-Left attacks is the matter of Ninoy Aquino’s martyrdom and the Left’s alleged exploitation of the issue.

The NDF wishes to emphasize that it regards Ninoy as a martyr of the people’s cause, a victim of the same dictatorship that has tyrannized the Filipino people for over a decade.

While it is no secret that Ninoy had disagreed with the Left on a number of issues including the method of ousting the Marcos regime, these differences were viewed by the NDF within the context of a general unity in purpose. Differences aside, however, Ninoy remained a staunch opponent of the Marcos dictatorship and an advocate of the people’s democratic rights.

It was precisely for this reason that the Marcos dictatorship had him murdered. It is for these reasons that the NDF and other progressive sectors regard him today as a martyr. It is only fitting that his example as well as the example of others who have died fighting this regime be held up and that justice

“ Varying ideological outlooks or religious beliefs should not be obstacles to political unity against a common enemy. ”



Targeting the main enemy: Rallyists with effigies of FM, Uncle Sam

be exacted from this hated regime for his assassination and for its other heinous crimes.

Q: Does the NDF advocate communism? What is the relationship of the NDF to the CPP?

A: The NDF is a revolutionary coalition of organizations and groups, classes and sectors, political forces and individuals, as well as minority tribes and clans that advocate genuine national independence and democracy. The Communist Party is a member of the NDF.

Within the NDF, differences in ideological beliefs are no hindrance to the achievement of a firm unity around a common national democratic platform. Thus, within the Front, Christian revolutionaries fight side by side with Communists, minority tribesmen with their lowland brothers, nationalist businessmen with revolutionary workers, teachers with students, and even enlightened landlords with farmers. It is precisely within the Front that such cooperation is promoted and strong unity is forged. Without such cooperation and unity, it would be extremely difficult to push forward the struggle to totally dismantle the US-Marcos dictatorship.

Q: Are agreements in ideological positions, philosophical outlooks and religious beliefs valid requirements for political unity against the present regime?

A: As earlier stated, varying ideological outlooks or religious beliefs should not be obstacles to political unity against a common enemy. It is only the US-Marcos regime and a few anti-Left diehards at its service that peddle this untruth in a transparent attempt to sow disunity within the opposition, thereby protecting their positions of privilege and political and economic preeminence.

Within the NDF, each member organization agrees to respect other forces' and individuals' ideological or religious positions. Such respect for each group's independence and initiative, for each other's organizational integrity, is further tempered in the process of struggling against the common enemy.

Q: Does the Communist Party of the Philippines control the NDF? What can you say of some comments that both the CPP and the NDF are "totalitarian"?

A: The CPP is a respected member of the NDF. It participates actively in the activities and campaigns conducted by the Front. It is on record that communists have been among the most

self-sacrificing and dedicated of the Front's members. Whatever influence the CPP has developed within the NDF through the years is born of its steadfast adherence to the NDF's program and the dedication of its members in serving the Filipino people, especially the basic masses of workers and peasants.

The CPP's participation in the NDF, however, certainly does not connote domination. In numbers alone, the CPP's published membership of 30,000 is only 3% of the total estimated membership of the NDF. And in terms of membership, the CPP is considered as only one organization among many in the NDF, which include the national democratic organizations of peasants, women, health workers, teachers, youth, ethnic minorities and others. None of these organizations are allowed to dominate the Front. This would be self-defeating.

By using the term "totalitarian," the few pro-imperialist elements within the opposition wish to distinguish or make themselves out as "democratic." This is a false distinction.

In the first place, the NDF has represented the interests and enjoys the broad support of the workers, peasants, the urban middle class as well as nationalist businessmen and capitalists. These comprise the overwhelming majority of the Filipino people. Within the NDF, each organization exercises full initiative in carrying out its particular role in the people's war, within the framework of the NDF's Twelve-Point Program and tactical policies. In fact, the level of discussion and debate within the Front is an unprecedented exercise in actual democracy. For instance, the revised draft program of the NDF took all of two-and-a-half years in formulation due to the extensive discussions required to write the draft in its present form.

This kind of thorough-going democracy definitely goes against the grain of the comprador-landlord brand of politics, inured as they are with their kind of ruling class "democracy."

However, the NDF welcomes sincere elements among the comprador and big landlord classes who are determined to dismantle the existing dictatorship. We urge them to close ranks with other progressive forces including the NDF to oust the US-backed Marcos regime and establish a free, democratic and progressive Philippines.

Q: How does the NDF view the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan or BAYAN? What can you say about charges that it is NDF-controlled and that some BAYAN leaders are in fact NDF cadres?

A: The political coalition BAYAN was organized by progres-



BAYAN: "A welcome initiative"

“ It is on record that communists have been among the most self-sacrificing and dedicated of the Front's members. ”

sive elements among the legal opposition to answer the need for a political center that will adopt a militant approach to the central question of dismantling the regime. The NDF welcomes such an initiative and encourages it, as the NDF welcomes other sincere initiatives aimed at ousting the US-Marcos regime.

The NDF is waging a people's war, a popular movement, which involves the total mobilization of the Filipino people conducting and effectively combining political as well as military struggles. Nothing less is needed to defeat a powerful enemy propped up as it is by the military and economic might of US imperialism.

The NDF believes that organizations and alliances such as BAYAN are a positive force in this people's war to achieve genuine national independence and democracy.

As to claims that BAYAN is controlled by the NDF, we would suggest that detractors of this legal alliance direct their inquiry to the leaders of BAYAN themselves. We understand, for instance, that in a number of regions where the coalition has been organized, notably in Mindanao and Northern Luzon (Marcos' own homeland), BAYAN counts among its members opposition leaders belonging to even traditional political parties. At the same time, the broad ideological and organizational range of groups affiliated with the alliance and actively participating in it belies any claim of domination by any single political group.

Within the progressive open movement, a number of alliances on specific issues or encompassing a given territory have been organized as well over the years. These too play a positive role in the general nationalist and democratic movement.

Those who make claims of "domination" do nothing but project their own lack of faith in the capacity of the Filipino people to set up appropriate fighting organizations united in a common objective despite differences in class background and economic status, ideological outlook and ethnic origin.

Q: How does the NDF view certain groups and personalities identified with the so-called "social democrats" which claim to be "moderates" and "non-violent"?

A: Recently, especially after the Aquino assassination and the massive outpouring of grief and protest that followed it, some elements in the opposition have become more active in pushing a strategy of non-violence. The NDF recognizes that not a few of these individuals and groups are sincere in their belief that the US-Marcos dictatorship can be made to step down peacefully.

However, their own experiences in the open mass movement and in other forms of protest activities these past two years have convinced many of them of the futility of appealing to the better senses of the regime. Many of them, in fact, have tasted firsthand the intrinsically violent character of the US-Marcos dictatorship, in particular, and the reactionary state, in general. Hence, some of them have come to positively consider armed struggle as well as militant forms of fighting the regime.

But there are a few who use a campaign of "active non-violence" to hide their pro-imperialist and counter-revolutionary bias. The clerico-fascist leadership of the so-called "social democratic" movement is an example of this. In the midst of escalating terrorism, of peasants being massacred wholesale, of journalists and religious leaders disappearing or being salvaged, of workers being shot at in their defense of legitimate demands — they preach a particularly insidious brand of reformism. In this way, they hope to disarm the people and to scare the broad masses, particularly the middle forces, from the path of people's war. They conveniently

obscure the fact that it was the US-Marcos regime, by imposing a fascist dictatorship, that declared civil war against the Filipino people in the first place.

These elements objectively help the dictatorship, despite their anti-dictatorship protestations.

We call on the mass membership of such organizations to review the historical record of these self-proclaimed prophets of non-violence and to repudiate their counter-revolutionary line. It was these same leaders who, upon the imposition of martial rule in 1972, hid behind the policy of "giving the dictator a chance" and who, throughout most of the anti-dictatorship struggle until recently, openly proclaimed that the dictatorship was managing the country's economy well enough. We call on the mass membership of such groups to follow the lead of the many revolutionary martyrs and cadres such as Edgar Jopson and Emmanuel Yap who, having once belonged to reformist organizations, eventually joined the ranks of the revolutionary movement.

We call on the Filipino people to learn from their experience under the present dictatorship. The US-Marcos regime has been their best teacher on the violent character of the state and on the need to overthrow it.



SocDem-led rally: "Sincere elements are called to reject reformism"

Q: How does the NDF view the "moderate" position of fighting Marcos first, then US imperialism later; or, the line of taking US imperialism as a positive force in the anti-dictatorship struggle?

A: There are some elements in the opposition who, while recognizing US imperialism as the instigator, author and principal supporter of the Marcos dictatorial regime, would wish to concentrate their fire on the Marcos regime in particular and postpone the matter of contending with the US, after the Marcos government shall have been defeated.

The NDF does not object to such an approach on the part of sincere elements within the opposition. The NDF, however, would wish to call their attention to the historical record of US-Marcos collaboration which, on the basis of its interests in preserving the country's semi-colonial and semi-feudal backward condition, set up a repressive regime in 1972. This dictatorship in turn granted the former unprecedented privileges in exploiting the human and natural resources of the country. This, together with the dictatorship's massive corruption and mismanagement, precipitated the severe economic and political crisis we find ourselves in today.

With the Marcos regime's political isolation worsening espe-

“ Criticisms of the NDF or any of its members should be conducted in the spirit of forging closer unity among anti-dictatorship forces and the Filipino people ”



DCG: Only viable alternative to the US-Marcos regime

cially after the Aquino assassination, the US now makes it appear that it is distancing itself from its erstwhile protégé. But facts speak better than pronouncements. The US continues to pour in military and economic aid to the regime and is even now considering increasing such aid to the tune of another US\$1.3 billion package, apart from exerting pressure on its allies such as Japan to put in additional funding to keep the regime and the political rule of the compradors and big landlords afloat.

Should the Marcos dictatorship finally collapse, it is extremely doubtful that US imperialism will alter its historic policy of maintaining economic, political and military dominance over the Philippines and squeezing the country dry, as it has done since the turn of the century.

At present, the US is not about to give up the embattled regime. Thus, those who hope to replace Marcos while neutralizing the US, or worse, directly court US favor, hope in vain.

On the other hand, there are those who would profess a "Marcos now, US later" line to hide their pro-imperialist stand. These elements, be they in the opposition or hiding behind the dictatorship, are counter-revolutionary elements whose main vision is to set up a remodeled fascist dictatorship after Marcos. The Filipino people, in the course of their struggles, will see through their anti-dictatorship facade. The people will persist in their struggle until genuine national independence and democracy are won.

Q: What are the basic differences between the NDF Twelve-Point Program and the program of the Nagkakaisang Partido Demokratiko Sosyalista ng Pilipinas (NPDSP)?

A: The NPDSP, renamed the Partido Demokratiko - Sosyalista ng Pilipinas (PDSP), is a coterie of pro-imperialist, rabidly anti-Left pseudo-revolutionaries who have been more intent on destroying the revolutionary movement than on going all-out to oust the US-backed Marcos regime. Their program centers on essentially reforming the current dictatorship from within, inasmuch as participating in people's war would "help the communists."

These elements prey upon the Christian, specifically Catholic, tradition of the country, particularly of the middle forces and elements of the ruling classes, in order to set up an "anti-

communist" crusade while presenting an anti-dictatorship face.

This anti-Leftism has led them to concoct a confusingly eclectic program that serves to rationalize their mainly reformist orientation:

1) Their alleged attack on domestic capitalism, including that of the national capitalist class, actually supports US imperialism which has long regarded the bourgeois section of the economy as "inefficient."

2) Their definition of imperialism is made deliberately vague to encompass any form of foreign influence, instead of pinpointing US imperialism as the main enemy of the Filipino people and principal instigator and supporter of the dictatorship. This achieves the dual purpose of shielding US imperialism's role in perpetuating the present semi-colonial and semi-feudal state of the country and, in a devious way, ascribing to the revolutionary movement a "Chinese imperialist" character - similar to the long-discredited line used by the Marcos regime and its US supporters.

3) Their version of the armed struggle is the pseudo-revolutionary's line of exploding a few bombs and maintaining an armed force in support of parliamentarism. The PDSP recently maintains that armed struggle is no longer applicable under present conditions when avenues for peaceful change have been opened, presumably by US pressures on the dictatorship to institute reforms. In effect, the PDSP's main strategy is to convince US imperialism to get rid of the regime by riding on the crest of widespread discontent among the people - a discontent which they are increasingly afraid of as it may get out of hand.

4) While mouthing such slogans as workers' socialism or people's socialism, the PDSP's vagueness in explaining these terms is calculated to promote a concept of "comprador and big landlordism with a conscience."

These and other examples of verbal hocus-pocus actually promote the existing semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. Their appeal to the humanitarianism of compradors and big landlords as well as to the liberal tradition of US imperialism puts them in the same league as those old-line politicians who fear thorough-going democratic change even as they ride on the people's revolutionary movement.

The PDSP leadership are professional witchhunters. In the US scheme of things, they play the role of Trojan horses, a fifth column within the revolutionary movement. In essence, the PDSP is a pseudo-revolutionary party at the service of US imperialism and of big comprador and big landlord interests.

Q: What is the NDF policy regarding anti-communist attacks and regarding those who are pursuing these among the legal opposition?

A: So long as criticisms of the NDF or any of its members are conducted in the spirit of forging closer unity among anti-dictatorship forces and the Filipino people, such criticisms are welcome, as they have been in the past. Any political movement is not free of errors. And it is precisely for this reason that any leadership should forge the closest links with the people.

The NDF will respond to attacks made against it or any of its member organizations on the basis of principle and within the context of the broad anti-dictatorship movement. We wish to underscore that the main enemy is the US-Marcos dictatorship.

On the other hand, open or covert collaboration with the US-Marcos regime, especially that kind which imperils or causes harm to the revolutionary forces or the masses such as identifying national democrat cadres and activists to the enemy, will be dealt with accordingly. □



Battle plans: Negros Red fighters discuss tactics for raid on VMA

They made history

An exclusive story on the NPA raid at the Visayan Maritime Academy

In the annals of guerrilla warfare in the Philippines, no other event has quite captured the public imagination and courted the enemy's ire than the NPA raid on the armory of the Visayan Maritime Academy (VMA) in Bacolod City last March 25. But not only is it unsurpassed for the sheer daringness of its execution. The no-shot raid with its record yield of 429 high-powered rifles, two handguns and some office equipment was also a marvel in terms of planning and intelligence-gathering. It also offered striking proof of the high level of discipline possessed by Red fighters and the organized masses' strong support for the revolutionary struggle. In a recent interview held in a guerrilla zone in Negros, Ka Binoy, the NPA officer who led the offensive, revealed to **LIB** the inside story of the VMA raid and the factors that led to its successful implementation.

As early as February 1985, we received a tip from a reliable source that it was possible to raid the armory of the Visayan Maritime Academy and that it contained hundreds of Garand rifles and other arms. On this basis, we proceeded to conduct our own investigation to verify what our informant had told us and to gather more intelligence data.

Because of their proximity to the

proposed target, we enlisted the services of NPA partisans operating in Bacolod City to conduct most of the investigation. Through a network of contacts both inside and outside the VMA, the city partisans found out that the armory indeed harbored hundreds of rifles and that it was inside an office building located at the far end of the school compound. They were able to come up with a map drawn to scale, showing the layout of the school. In the course of the investigation, they were also able to find out even the routine activities of school personnel and security guards in charge of guarding the compound and the armory at night.

They found out, for instance, that aside from the security guards posted near the gate, there were four military men who were responsible for securing the armory. The armory detail was composed of two navy chief petty officers (CPO), a corporal and a marine sergeant. This security detail was sometimes assisted by a working student who also lived in the compound.

The armory guards, however, were lax. The partisans discovered that the marine sergeant and one of the CPOs often left their posts at night, leaving only the other CPO, the corporal and the student behind. But the corporal's noc-

turnal habits also led him to leave the school compound regularly. "Mahilig sa chicks" was how the partisans described him. At night, he frequented bars and disco joints or visited his many girlfriends. This meant that on most nights, there were only two men left to guard the armory.

While the teams studied conditions within the VMA, a partisan guerrilla busied himself with observing the surrounding area. Disguised as an ambulant fish vendor, he scoured the ins and outs of surrounding streets for days, until he could draw an accurate map of the area from memory.

Soon, the different pieces of information began to form a coherent picture. But we realized that since the school was located in Barrio Sum-ag which was still well within the Bacolod City limits — and well within the reach of the 331st PC Company — such an operation would entail tremendous risks.

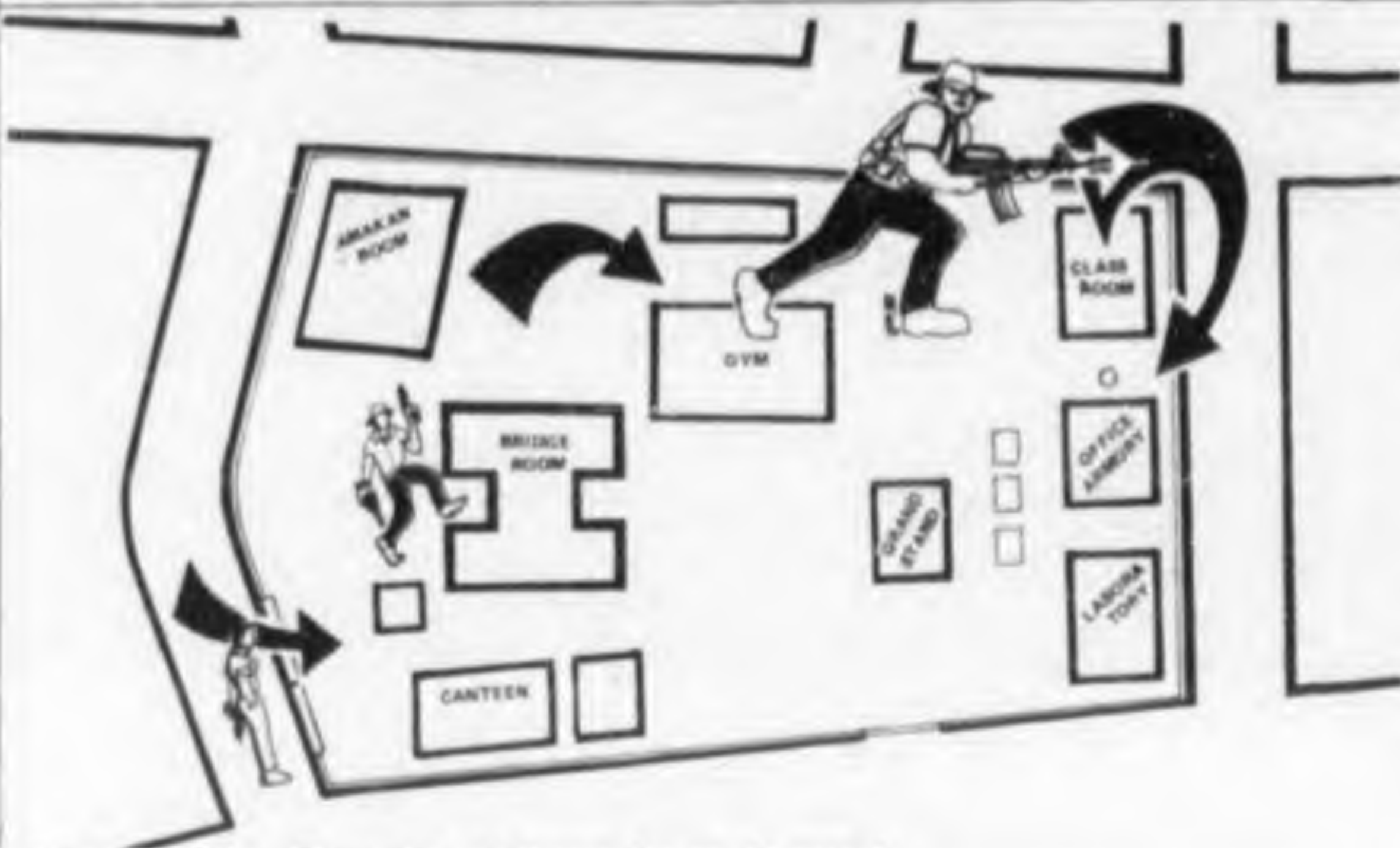
Nonetheless, we enjoyed one important advantage — the element of total surprise. For unlike military units based in the countryside, the police and PC operatives in Bacolod were usually placed under red alert only a day before the NPA anniversary on March 29. And even then, they only looked out for *operasyon pinta-operasyon dikit (OP-OD)* teams which put up posters and paint revolutionary slogans on walls to commemorate the anniversary. Never in their wildest dreams would they anticipate an NPA assault at so near a target.

After weighing the pros and cons, a decision was reached. The VMA armory

HOW THEY DID IT



The target: Only a heartbeat away from the city proper



How they did it: Disposition of forces during the assault

would be raided. The time and date were chosen: the evening of March 25 - still four days away from the NPA anniversary and two days after the school graduation rites so that few or no students would be present.

The preparation

The key to the successful execution of the raid was also singled out: to maximize results, the operation would have to be a *no-shot raid*. If at all, only one or two shots should be fired, and these should be from handguns. This was so as not to alarm residents who would think they merely came from police or military men in nearby eateries who usually fire their guns when drunk. But if it should be necessary to fire several shots, a silencer should be used to muffle the noise.

A few more details had to be ironed out. The Red fighters had to familiarize themselves with the layout of the office building that housed the armory. To do this, we enlisted the help of an

activist who was a VMA graduate. With a partisan, he entered the school on March 17, the day the compound was opened to the public for the annual tactical inspection which featured a pass-in-review and fancy drills performed by the students.

Both wasted no time in soaking in as much information as they could about the campus and the office building. They found out that the office itself occupied only a portion of the building. Adjoining it were a bedroom and a kitchen-dining area. They likewise discovered that one could also enter the building through a door that led to the kitchen-dining area. Later, they were to find out that after 5 p.m., the office door through which they entered was usually closed, but that the kitchen door was often left unlocked till late at night. They also casually looked through an ir-secured window that led to the bedroom. Inside, rammed against a wall, was the armory. A compact, closet-like structure secured by a combination lock,

it was in actuality, a vault.

This information confirmed what we found out previously from the other intelligence teams. In order to seize the guns from the armory, we had to get inside the vault. This would be easy if, during the raid, the arms custodian would cooperate and give us the combination to the safe. But what if he refused?

To prepare for this eventuality, we procured tanks of oxy-acetylene from contacts working in foundries and metal-works shops and trained ourselves in the use of acetylene torches.

To further complete all the necessary preparations, yet without overlooking any security problems, we readied the following: heavy trucks to transport the strike force and hauling teams into and out of the compound; swift communication lines (including VHF radios and secret codes) to coordinate the movements of the teams; blocking forces to intercept possible enemy reinforcements from the 331st PC Company; and 30 of our best people composed of battle-tested and iron-disciplined regular NPA fighters, militia and members of propaganda-organizing teams to complement a squad of city partisans. Less than a week before the assault, they had already gone down from the guerrilla front and were absorbed by our support units in communities outside Bacolod.

All throughout the preparation stage, only a handful knew about the plan to raid the VMA armory. Neither the contacts who provided the acetylene tanks and torches, nor those who provided the vehicles and agreed to serve as drivers, not even the VMA graduate who entered the office building was told about the plan. They may have had some idea of it, but they were disciplined enough to keep it to themselves and not ask questions until the proper time.

The assault

It was only on the morning of March 25 that the entire group was gathered and the plans, laid out before them. Finally told about the mission, they became excited. But the teams soon settled down to serious business. For the rest of the day, the participants listened intently and studied every detail of the plan to take control of the compound.

There were three alternatives. First, three comrades armed with .45 pistols would knock at the gate, pretend to be looking for a school employe (whom they knew was not around), quickly disarm the security guards, and call in the rest of the strike force to control the armory and the other buildings, all without firing a single shot. Second, the strike force would enter the compound from behind by going around and scaling the slightly more than two-meter

high wall near the office building. But if, at the gate, the guards and military men immediately spot them and start firing, the only choice was an organized withdrawal.

The third alternative would be put into action if the Red fighters are able to control the compound only after several shots had been fired. Should this happen, the plan was to make the most of the situation by seizing whatever arms and equipment they could, and withdraw before the military arrived.

As it happened, at a little past 7 p.m., a brownout blanketed the city with darkness. No one among the residents nearby noticed the approach of three young men who arrived at the VMA and politely asked the guards if they could talk to a friend of theirs who worked there. They were let in and instructed to wait while a guard on duty pored over the logbook to see if the person they were looking for was in. With lightning speed, the young men drew their .45s and tied up and gagged the guards in seconds. Plan A was put into motion.

At that very moment, guerrillas inside a Fiera jeepney that had been patrolling the streets around the school for several minutes received a much-awaited call on their VHF radio. They proceeded to the compound and the VMA gates were opened to receive more than a dozen other members of the NPA strike force. They were armed with a baby armalite, one AK 47, one Thompson submachinegun equipped with a silencer and the rest had .45 pistols. Five were posted by the guardhouse, and two ran to the canteen.

But there was still the armory to control. From the gate to the office building was a distance of about 200 meters, and we had to pass by the gym to get there. We knew from the noise and the bright lights flooding the area around it (the brownout had ended by then) that there were people inside. It was important not to give away our presence to them lest they alert the men in the armory before we could get there.

There was only one way to avoid walking through the lighted area — we had to pass behind the poultry house located along the compound's eastern wall. For about 10 tension-filled minutes, the eight of us who were assigned to take control of the armory inched our way through this meter-wide passage. But we were so quiet, we did not even rouse the chickens. It seemed like forever, but we finally reached the office building.

As expected, the back door was unlocked. We stormed in and surprised the CPO and the student assistant in the middle of their meal.

After taking control of the office, two men were dispatched to take control of the gym. We then radioed for

the dumptrucks. One by one, they rolled in and parked alongside the office building. Aboard the three trucks were more than 20 men awaiting orders to haul in the load.

Inside the office building, the strike force ordered the CPO to open the vault. To our relief, he did as he was told without much ado. We did not have to use the acetylene torches after all.



Ka Binoy receives much-awaited radio call.

When the vault door was opened, we were awe-struck for a few moments by what we saw. The rifles and ammunition boxes were stored in so compact a manner and we did not realize there were so many of them. Elated, we all took turns in hauling. We formed long lines that extended from the armory to the dumptrucks. Some comrades covered a shorter distance by passing the rifles between the bedroom window's iron grills to the waiting arms of haulers on the other side. We also took two typewriters and a NIVICO television set from the office.

The entire operation was over in 45 minutes. The implementation of the raid was smooth from beginning to end. The only thing we regret was not having been able to bring any red paint. We had more than enough time to conduct OP-OD, and this would have allowed us to leave our mark, so to speak.

After the raid

Barely ten minutes after the last vehicle left the compound, a VMA security officer arrived and was surprised to find the gate unlocked and the guards tied up and gagged. At a little past eight, the alarm was sounded. Roadblocks were set up along all exits from the city. The military was in panic.

Meantime, a rush of excitement swept through Bacolod. Speculations

were rife that it was not really the NPA but Eduardo Cojuangco's men who pulled off the raid. It's his way of undercutting rival businessman and VMA owner Roberto Benedicto, they said. Others said it was an inside job, and police suspected that the military was involved. The military in turn suspected that it was the police who did it.

The rumors were somehow put to rest and replaced by jubilant cries of "I told you so" when the NDF and the NPA issued separate statements confirming that it was the revolutionary forces that conducted the spectacular assault. Exclaimed a businessman sympathetic to the revolution, "Iyan and raid. Walang putok, walang patay, pero maraming armas."

For days and weeks, the military scoured warehouses and nearby buildings, adjacent barrios and haciendas, in an attempt to recover the arms. Caught red-faced and empty-handed after so many days of futile searching, the military turned against one of its favorite whipping boys, the church. Accusing church people of being involved in, if not masterminding, the raid, the military broadly hinted at possible raids against church buildings and convents. But the resulting backlash of public opinion against the military was stinging, and the hate-campaign against the church was promptly stopped. Still, the military was in a quandary. They could not understand how more than 400 rifles could disappear so quickly.

Where and how were we able to hide the arms we seized? For almost a month, they were cached in different locations not far from Bacolod. We came back for them when the heat finally wore off and the military gave up the search. As to how we hid them, perhaps that story can be told another time, another day . . .

What is important is that to this day, not one among the more than 40 people directly involved in the VMA operation has talked, not even to their relatives or friends. Neither have the masses in the areas where we withdrew and hid the arms. It is a true measure both of their discipline and the depths to which the revolution has taken root among them. It shows that even outside the so-called Red areas, the revolution is not wanting in mass support.

Those who participated in the assault may have kept mum about it all, but stories about the raid continue to be told and retold by others. Modest and soft-spoken, Ka Binoy would hesitate to say this. That one evening last March, he and his companions quietly etched their place in history. *Victoria Manalo*

"No easy walk to freedom"

Escalating struggles in South Africa are pushing the downfall of apartheid



Funeral march: South Africans in protest rites for comrades slain by police

The people shall govern
All national groups shall have equal rights
The people shall share in the country's wealth.
The land shall be shared among those who work it.
All shall be equal before the law.
All shall enjoy equal human rights.
There shall be work and security.
The doors of learning and culture shall be opened.
There shall be houses, security, comfort.
There shall be peace and friendship.

These stirring words represent the collective aspirations of millions of blacks in South Africa who to this day are denied their most basic human rights under the racist white minority government's policy of *apartheid* or racial segregation. (see LIB, May-June 1985). The words form part of the Freedom Charter drawn up in June 1955 when about 3,000 delegates representing different progressive organizations within South Africa gathered in Kliptown, a small village near Johannesburg, to convene a Congress of the People. During the congress, the delegates greeted the reading of each section of the Freedom Charter with loud cries of *Africa! Mayibuye!*

Today, amid the turbulence that characterizes politics in South Africa, the words spoken thirty years ago burn even more strongly in the hearts of 25 million Africans who continue to groan under the tyranny of *apartheid*.

A history of racial oppression

Although not yet called by its present name *apartheid*, racial oppression in South Africa has existed since the mid-17th century, when the first permanent white settlement was established in the

Cape area by the Dutch East India Company. From 1652 up to the early 1800s, South Africa was colonized by Dutch settlers who established a society wherein African slavery was a fundamental part. The settlers later came to be known as Afrikaners and evolved a Dutch-based language also called by this name. By 1806, however, British colonial rule was imposed around the Cape. This led to a mass exodus of Afrikaners from the Cape Colony to areas north of the Orange River and the coastal plains of Natal. This exodus, known as the Great Trek, in turn led to the formation of two independent Afrikaner republics, the Orange Free State and Transvaal. In each of these territories as well as in British-ruled Cape Colony and Natal, a



Fringes of desert: Designated "homelands"

racially stratified agriculture-based society developed. Although slavery was officially abolished in 1834 by the British, the freed Africans became nothing more than farm laborers and indentured servants. The white minority continued assuming a position of dominance and the indigenous African population was relegated to a serf-like status.

With the discovery, however, of diamonds at Kimberley and large gold deposits in the Transvaal toward the end of the 19th century, there began an economic revolution that was to cause profound changes in the country. The discoveries caused South Africa's predominantly agricultural economy to shift to one based on mining and industry. These also led to increased competition between the Afrikaner republics on the one hand, and the two British colonies and the British government on the other. Tensions erupted into the Boer War of 1899. Britain emerged the victor in the rivalry between colonizers and, by 1902, the two Afrikaner republics were brought under full British rule. Eight years later, in 1910, they were united with the Cape Colony and Natal to form the Union of South Africa under the British Commonwealth. (South Africa was later to secede from the Commonwealth in 1961 and become a republic). In these conflicts, there was complete disregard for the interests and rights of the African majority.

Meanwhile, the expansion of diamond diggings and gold mining drew large numbers of Africans to work as migrant laborers. Africans thus became the major part of the labor force, serving as a vital factor in determining the course and rate of industrial development in the country. It was their sweat and blood that served to fuel the growth of South African industry.

Consolidation of white rule

The period since the formation of the Union in 1910 also saw the progressive disenfranchisement of the black majority population and the consolidation of white political and economic control throughout South Africa. Moreover, it was marked by increased social stratification on racial lines. Extraordinary measures were implemented to preserve the superior social and economic status already enjoyed by the white population before 1910. Both these trends became particularly evident after World War II.

In 1947, the National Party, the party of Afrikaner pride, took power and officially adopted the policy of *apartheid* or "separate development." Africans were not consulted over the form and content of the newly adopted constitution, nor were their protests heeded by the British parliament which was responsible for enacting the Union. The subsequent passage by the South African legislature of the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government

Act subdivided the Africans into tribal groupings possessing limited powers of self-government.

Ten areas were designated as "homelands" or *bantustans*. Under this system, Africans, who comprise about 70% of the population, were condemned to live in these aridlands whose combined sizes compose only 13% of the total land area of South Africa. The remaining 87%, which includes all major urban and industrial centers, was reserved for occupation by the white minority. The *bantustan* policy further dictates that whatever rights blacks may have as citizens can be exercised only within their respective "homelands."

Thus, Africans who went to work in the white-occupied areas were required to obtain special permission. Otherwise, no African was allowed to remain in the white-occupied urban areas for more than 72 hours, unless he was born there and has worked there continuously. Nonetheless, most blacks working in "white areas" were required to live in black ghettos or townships located at the outskirts of urban areas.

To regulate the flow of Africans into "white areas," all Africans above the age of 16 were required to carry at all times, a reference book or "pass," which contained their photograph, race, sex, identity number, address, age, marital status and other personal information. Failure to produce the pass on demand was enough cause for arrest and detention. The creation of *bantustans*, on the other hand, led to a situation wherein indirect rule via the chiefs and traditional social structures was brought up to date. The goal obviously was to reaffirm tribal affiliations among blacks and inhibit the rise of African nationalism, which they feared, would pose a threat to white dominance.

Legislation governing the separation of blacks, whites and coloreds (those of mixed racial ancestry) was strengthened and expanded. Separate social institutions for language, culture and education were enforced. Only a disproportionately small share of the state's resources has been devoted to the black community, and numerous laws have been introduced to limit real African advancement in all spheres. In doing this, the *apartheid* policy thereby guaranteed not only the continuation of white supremacy but also the expansion and competitiveness of Afrikaner business worldwide through the maintenance of a low-paid, docile and highly mobile reserve force of African workers.

South African policy makers justify *apartheid* with the racist conception enunciated by current state President P. W. Botha: "The whites and Africans in South Africa differ from one another so radically that they are separate nations and there is absolutely no possibility of considering any process of their becoming equal, and thus no opportunities for this



Reality of apartheid: Segregated library



Passbook: A stamp of repression

should be created." The white minority government, they further claim, is a "bastion of the Free World" and a "protector of Western civilization" in Africa against the "threat of communism." On this basis, they said, it was important to eliminate threats to the stability of South Africa.

Anti-communism, in fact, remains central to government policy, serving to rationalize demands for more sophisticated armaments from the West and as a pretext for suppressing local resistance to *apartheid*. Significantly, the same rationalizations are being used by the United States and other Western powers to justify their continued refusal to impose an arms embargo and harsher economic sanctions against the South African government. Instead, the US continues to supply the racist regime with military and economic aid, and US and European transnational corporations continue to do business in South Africa despite United Nations sanctions (see LIB, May-June 1985).

The rise of African resistance

African tribal groups have firmly resist-

ed encroachment and extension of white political control over their territories since the first years of white settlement at the Cape. However, they resisted as separate tribal entities rather than as one people united by a common cultural and linguistic heritage. Only after the formation of a unitary state in 1910 did African resistance to white rule begin to be organized on cross-tribal and on more clearly nationalist lines. The creation of a huge migrant labor force working in areas far from their tribal lands further served to weaken traditional tribal loyalties. These two developments gave significant impetus to the evolution of a supra-tribal form of African nationalism.

This form of African nationalism had widest appeal within the small but significant African middle class that developed in the urban and industrial areas of the Cape and Transvaal. It was the members of this educated African elite who launched the first protest actions against *apartheid*.

In 1912, these elements from the urban middle class grouped together to form a national political organization to represent African interests. The organization was first named South African Native National Congress, but was renamed the African National Congress (ANC) in 1923.

The ANC was by no means a radical political force in its formative years. Its activities were designed to effect improvements in the social status of Western-educated Africans rather than to articulate the grievances of the majority of the black population. Nevertheless, it did voice African concern over the introduction of measures such as the Native Land Act of 1913 which denied Africans the right to purchase land outside their designated reserves, and the Representation of Natives Act of 1936, which removed Africans from the common voters' roll in the Cape. It was not until after the Second World War, when *apartheid* became official policy, that the ANC developed an overtly political program and received mass support.

Transition to militancy

In 1952, the ANC joined other progressive groups in launching a mass campaign of passive resistance and defiance against discriminatory and unjust laws. Many blacks, and some whites, purposely violated such laws and presented themselves for arrest. But despite the non-violent nature of the campaign, the government responded by imprisoning more than 8,000 people. After sporadic violence broke out in the eastern Cape, the government rushed through emergency measures that were used to suppress the campaign.

Nelson Mandela, the ANC head who led the "Campaign of Defiance of Unjust Laws," was banned from attending or addressing gatherings. The government, apparently, could not take the risk of exposing the people to his stirring calls for



ANC leader Nelson Mandela

struggle. In a speech at the 1953 ANC conference which was read for him by another militant, Mandela said: "Dangers and difficulties have not deterred us in the past; they will not frighten us now. There is no easy walk to freedom anywhere and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death again and again before we reach the mountain tops of our desires."

On June 25, 1955, a high point in the anti-apartheid struggle occurred with the drafting of the Freedom Charter. The government once more responded by arresting and raiding the houses of more than 150 leaders of the organizations that participated in the drafting of the charter and other protest activities. They were all charged with plotting the overthrow of the state and brought to trial in Pretoria, the administrative capital. The Treason Trial, as it came to be called, dragged on until 1961. But because of international pressure, all the accused were acquitted.

Militant but non-violent protests continued. But the transition by the ANC from an organization espousing a non-violent strategy to one advocating armed struggle, finally occurred in the early '60s. In March 1960, police opened fire without provocation upon a crowd of unarmed Africans demonstrating against the restrictive pass laws in Sharpeville, a black township 30 miles from Johannesburg. Sixty-nine Africans were killed, many of them shot in the back as they tried to escape. Massive protest funerals and indignation rallies were launched throughout South Africa that were also met by the introduction of further emergency measures. Not long after, the ANC and other anti-apartheid organizations were banned, and their leaders arrested and imprisoned.

These experiences convinced many black political leaders of the futility of peaceful methods and that change could only be brought about by armed struggle. In late 1961, an underground ANC manifesto declared: "The time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices — submit or fight. That time has come to South Africa." The manifesto announced the establishment

of the Umkonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) to serve as the military wing of the ANC that was now driven underground by intense repression. Its opening salvo: 10 explosions that blew up electrical installations and municipal offices in Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth. The armed secret organization continued to engage in acts of sabotage against government property for the next two years.

South African officials believed that the ANC would suffer a setback with the arrest in August 1962 of ANC head Nelson Mandela, who was later sentenced to life imprisonment. But the ANC merely adopted to new conditions of repression by moving its headquarters outside South Africa and skillfully making use of various tactics of struggle. Contrary to the expectation of South African officials, resistance continued and grew even more intense in the following years. Although banned, massive boycotts and labor and student strikes were launched.

In June 1976, more than 10,000 black students participated in massive protests and battled police in South West Township (Soweto) near Johannesburg. The three-day Soweto Uprising, which was spurred by government moves to use Afrikaner in teaching some subjects in segregated schools for blacks, soon spread to other black townships. Although the government later withdrew the order, the uprising was brutally suppressed. At least a hundred blacks were killed and more than a thousand injured. Today, the Soweto Uprising serves as a rallying point for the surging anti-apartheid struggle.

The continuing struggle

In recent years, the African National Congress' resolve to step up its political and military offensive against the South African racist regime has borne results in the intensification of mass campaigns and sabotage against government installations. Already, the massive wave of protests currently sweeping South Africa has "driven the racist rulers into further acts of desperation," said ANC president Oliver Tambo. "The imposition last July of a state of emergency in black townships where protests have been most intense show that the organs of government have collapsed in these areas. (The government) has conceded that the only way (it) can restore apartheid in these townships is through martial law. (The government) could no longer rule in the old way."

Given this, the task of all South Africans, said Tambo in a speech broadcast over ANC's Radio Freedom last July and beamed into South Africa from neighboring countries, is to spread the offensive to other parts of the country. In particular, he said, the struggle should be brought to the white-occupied areas to "attack the apartheid system and its forces of repression . . . at the very doorstep of the colonial oppressor." He

called on whites not to pit themselves against the overwhelming black majority, but to "renounce apartheid and join the anti-racist forces in the struggle for a democratic South Africa."

Earlier, at the Second National Consultative Conference of the ANC held in Zambia from June 16 to 23 this year, the delegates also agreed unanimously that since "the racist regime headed by South Africa President P.W. Botha is still determined to defend the apartheid system of white minority rule by force of arms," there was a continued need for the ANC's "broad strategy which pursues the aim of seizure of power by the people through a combination of mass political action and armed struggle."



A pledge of undying commitment

"(But it is) armed struggle in particular," said the ANC, "that serves as a vital, indispensable component of the struggle for national and social liberation in South Africa, where the apartheid regime relies for survival on its fascist army and murderous puppet administrations who slaughter men as readily as they butcher children. The democratic majority in our country supports the People's Army — Umkonto we Sizwe, whose rising sophistication will yet compound the survival problems of the apartheid system."

The communique of the conference moreover stated that "the possibility of victory was greater now than at any other time in our history . . . The masses of our people have been and are engaged in a struggle of historic importance directed at making apartheid unworkable and the country ungovernable. They are creating the conditions for the escalation of our

attack leading towards the situation where it will be possible for us to overthrow the *apartheid* regime." "For us," continued Tambo, "the future is brightening whilst for the Pretoria racist clique, the future is getting darker each passing day."

The conference also resolved that it would not even consider the issue of a negotiated settlement on the South African question while black leaders were in prison. The ANC called for their immediate and unconditional release.

To a great extent, the present gains of the liberation movement in South Africa rest on the "four pillars of revolutionary struggle." These are 1) the all-round vanguard activity of the underground structures of the ANC; 2) the united mass action of the people; 3) the armed offensives led by Umkonto we Sizwe, and 4) the international drive to isolate the *apartheid* regime and win world-wide moral, political and material support for the struggle.

In assessing the recent achievement of the ANC, Tambo stressed that the organized mass democratic movement is now sufficiently strong to tackle more tasks to mobilize the working class into a revolutionary trade union movement, the rural masses inside and outside the *bantustans*, the women-folk and the religious community into the struggle.

He also hailed the creation of the United Democratic Force (UDF) as a historic achievement in the people's efforts to unite in the broadest possible front against the inhuman *apartheid* system. The UDF, which was formed in 1983, is a broad legal multi-racial coalition of some 600 community groups, women's organizations, students' associations, trade unions and other anti-*apartheid* organizations, with a combined membership of nearly two million. "The formation of the UDF is a product of the people's determination to be their own liberators," said Tambo.

Tambo also said the South African movement for national liberation is "part of a multi-million strong world alliance of forces which fights for national independence, democracy, social progress and peace. On the other hand, the *apartheid* regime belongs firmly within the camp that furthers counter-revolutionary goals."

As an expression of revolutionary optimism and faith in the people's struggle, Tambo asserted: "The future belongs to the majority of the people of South Africa, black and white, who, in the struggle, are today laying the foundations of a united, non-racial democratic South Africa in what will then, but only then, become a peaceful and rapidly advancing region of Africa."

Today, these relentless struggles of the people of South Africa are rapidly breathing life into the Freedom Charter, which embodies their most cherished aspirations. The Filipino people are one with them in their cry: *Africa! Mayibuya!*

LIB Staff

CULTURAL

WHILE I CLEAN MY M16

We had a small quarrel this morning: She found the barrel of my M16 "filthy!" I seldom saw her so angry, and at so small (so small! I thought then) a matter. "Your rifle's filthy! Are you a guerrilla or what?!! I was angry by then, of course: comrades, especially wife and husband, do not speak to each other in this manner, I snarled. She said nothing.

By mid-morning, she spoke again: "I will be leaving in a while, to lead a patrol. The comrades are getting ready even now. I am sorry for not telling you about this earlier; and I am sorry, truly sorry, for this morning." I said nothing.

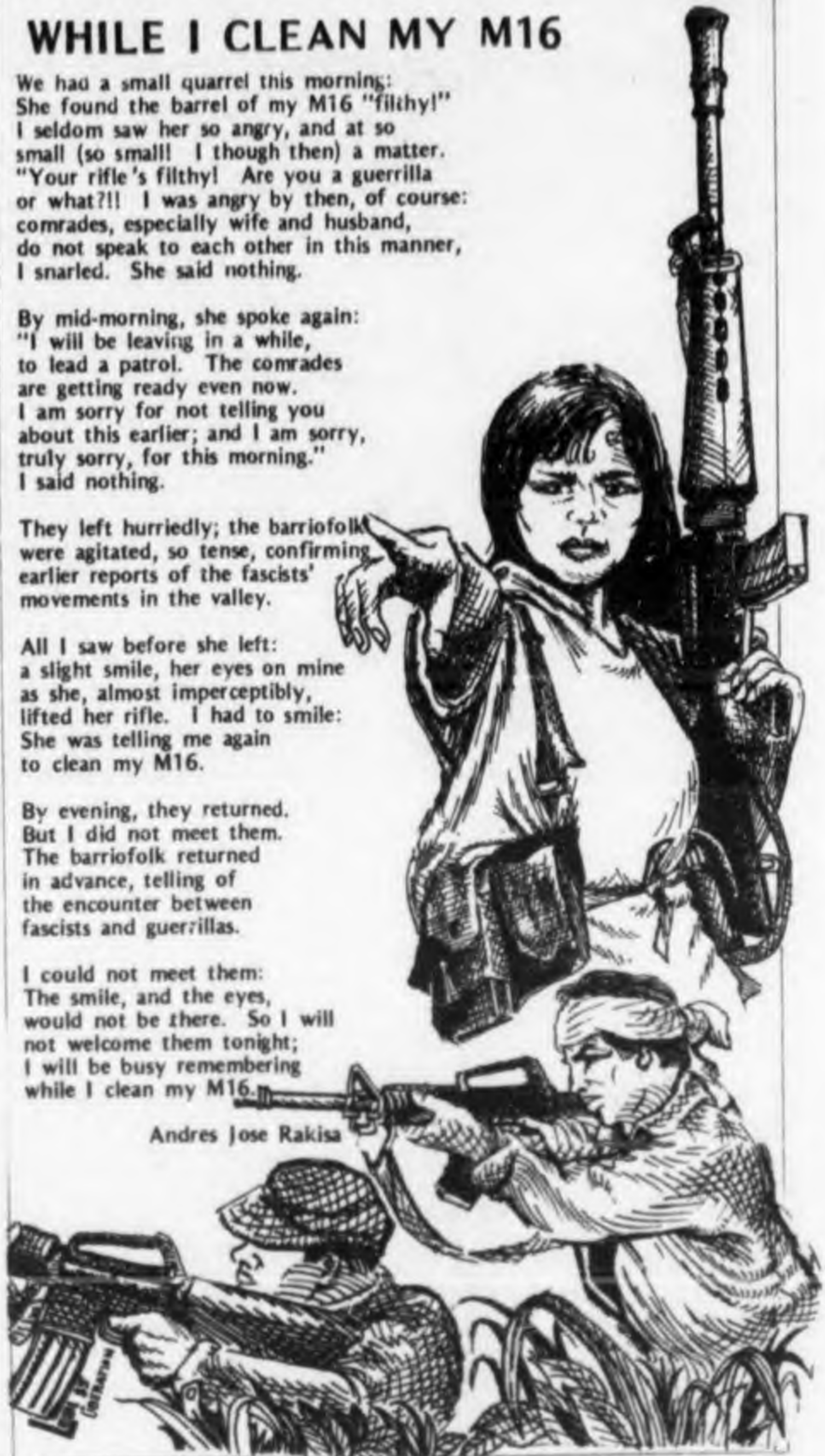
They left hurriedly; the barriofolk were agitated, so tense, confirming earlier reports of the fascists' movements in the valley.

All I saw before she left: a slight smile, her eyes on mine as she, almost imperceptibly, lifted her rifle. I had to smile: She was telling me again to clean my M16.

By evening, they returned. But I did not meet them. The barriofolk returned in advance, telling of the encounter between fascists and guerrillas.

I could not meet them: The smile, and the eyes, would not be there. So I will not welcome them tonight; I will be busy remembering while I clean my M16.

Andres Jose Rakisa



Bare essence

Is it true that military trainers now include a section on a quick-change of clothes in the survival course being taught in the AFP? In Negros at least, military men make sure they wear civilian clothes underneath their uniforms. During NPA attacks, they quickly discard their fatigues, which is no easy feat. You see, they have to do this while running away at break-neck speed.

Some soldiers, however, tend to get carried away. Just this September, Red fighters sniped at troopers bathing in a river about 200 meters from their detachment. One soldier who was caught with his briefs on, later ended up streaking all the way to the detachment.

But others have made a habit of it. Troopers from the 3rd Scout Ranger Company based in Isabela, Negros Occidental used to do their extorting, er, marketing, clad only in their jockey briefs. Were they somehow hoping that, without their uniforms, they couldn't be identified?

Still, others never even manage to do any "quick-changing" at all. They wet or dirty their pants the minute they hear NPA gunfire. Tsk, tsk. Maybe the AFP should include a course on toilet training too.

One way of surviving an NPA assault, however, has been discovered by some enterprising soldiers. Recently, some wounded soldiers during an ambush decided to play possum, thinking that approaching NPA medics were really out to finish them off. But when they noticed the medics treat one soldier who didn't play dead, the "slain" troopers quickly came back to life. One by one, they shouted at the NPAs, "Ako rin, ako rin, magpapagamot!" Now, this is something military trainers never teach AFP recruits.

What is the citizenship of Adam and Eve?
Filipino.
Why?

Because Adam and Eve had no shelter, no clothing and couldn't afford apples, and they both depended on one man who told them it was Paradise.

GEMS OF THOUGHT FROM IMELDA:

On criticisms that, with her recent trip to the USSR, she was trying to play the Russian card with the Americans: "I went to Russia to pray and not to play cards."

On charges about her expensive jet-setting ways: "This is the age of jets. So how do you want me to travel around . . . paddle a canoe?"

On the First Lady's nebulous intelligence, Confucius say: "Ignorance is the night of mind, but a night without moon or star."

Baccay on Marcos: "He has six months to live."
Marcos to Baccay: "You have six minutes to live."

A British lord traveled all the way from England to a southern Negros town to ask for the hand in marriage of his long-time pen-pal. A Mills and Boon romance? Not quite. The Englishman turns out to be a vampire who "infects" his fiancée as well as other Negrenses as he "bites" his way up to Bacolod City.

Most Negrenses, however, saw through the whole vampire scare story as another military ploy to divert attention away from the real bloody story — the Escalante Massacre.

A man scheduled for a brain transplant was being toured by his doctors around a room stocked with different brains.

"How about this excellent engineer's brain," the doctors told him. "It only costs \$5,000 an ounce." The man shook his head.

"Well then, we recommend this lawyer's brain, for only \$10,000 an ounce."

But the man still wanted to shop around, until the doctors got tired of showing him around their entire stock.

"Well, there's only one brain left. This," they proudly stated, standing before a small container, "is a KBL assemblyman's brain. It costs \$50,000 an ounce."

When asked why this was so expensive, the doctors replied: "Because in the first place, this brain has been hardly used. In the second place, it took the whole KBL party to supply that ounce of brain."

