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A PEOPLE TRIUMPHS, A DICTATOR FALLS

Hail the victory of the people!



The dictator Ferdinand Marcos has been overthrown – his fall hastened by the direct popular struggle of the Filipino people.

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines salutes the people for their audacity, their militancy and their courage.

The historic events from Feb. 22-25 began with the serious split in the military forces of the dictatorship. Unwilling to go down with their commander-in-chief, deputy chief of staff Fidel Ramos and defense minister Juan Ponce Enrile together with hundreds of others defected to the opposition.

What developed thereafter was far more than a military rebellion. Seizing the action of the defectors as another chance to strike harder at the dictatorship, millions of Filipinos poured into the streets. With their bare bodies, they successfully frustrated repeated advances by tanks and armed troops of the Marcos regime.

They formed human barricades in the major thoroughfares of the capital. Others followed with their own barricades and strikes in other parts of the country. Television stations of the government were taken over. Eventually, the people were able to take control of the presidential palace.

In toppling the Marcos regime, the people have cracked the imperialist hold of the US over the Philippines. After two decades of relentless struggle, they have finally overthrown the tyrant Marcos who for over twenty years served as the principal instrument of US rule in the Philippines and the loyal caretaker of its two military bases and economic interests in the Philippines. In this giant effort, they proved to themselves that they do not need any foreign power to fight their battles, that their collective strength and militancy are powerful enough to push the downfall of an oppressor.

Fearful of being swept down with its puppet in this massive onslaught of the people's resistance, the US, during the final days of Marcos, quickly maneuvered to position itself to direct government policy. It finally decided to dump Marcos and prepare for a post-Marcos era.

The US' immediate aim, obviously, was to try to pacify the people and to minimize the devastating impact of the resistance on the neo-colonial set-up of the US. But in the tradition of protecting US puppet dictators from facing trial for their crimes, the Reagan administration also arranged for Marcos, his wife and cronies to escape via Clark Air Base.

In order to maintain its hold over the Philippines, Washington and its agents will continue to undermine the gains of the people. It will belittle the role of the people in the changes that

have swept the country. It is expected to renew its attacks on the people under cover of the old anti-communist hysteria through pro-US elements who may also have been identified with the US-backed Marcos regime. In this connection, the NDF is deeply disturbed by the presence of, among others, Enrile and Ramos who were the chief architects and consistent implementors of the martial law regime. The Filipino people have caused the downfall of a dictator. With this, they have opened innumerable possibilities for the greater exercise of their democratic rights. At the same time, the Filipino people must persevere in creating a truly free and democratic society. Towards this end, we must continue to demand the following:

- ▶ uphold and promote the free exercise of the people's democratic rights;
- ▶ complete the process of genuine land reform, raise rural production through cooperatives and modernize agriculture;
- ▶ guarantee the right to employment, raise the people's living standards and expand social services;
- ▶ terminate unequal treaties with the United States and renegotiate foreign investments and loans on the basis of equality and mutual benefit;
- ▶ implement a program of national industrialization;
- ▶ promote a patriotic, scientific and popular culture and ensure free public education;
- ▶ respect and foster self-determination for the Moro people, the Cordillera people and all ethnic minorities; and
- ▶ maintain a non-aligned, independent and peace-loving foreign policy.

The NDF takes this occasion to congratulate Corazon Aquino for her courageous role in the ouster of the US-backed Marcos regime. We are prepared to give our support to her positive efforts to fulfill such democratic demands as the release of all political detainees and the full restoration of civil liberties. The NDF further submits that there is a need to redress grievances of victims of gross human rights violations and urges the immediate investigation, trial and punishment of all those in the Marcos military and bureaucracy who have been responsible. It urges as well the investigation of known cronies and the confiscation of ill-gotten wealth.

The NDF sees the compelling need for unity among patriotic and democratic forces in the country during this time of crisis. We see the fulfillment of these democratic demands as a first step towards the thorough dismantling of the US-backed Marcos fascist machinery.

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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 Filipinos and solidarity groups abroad. It traces its beginnings to the establishment of the Preparatory Commission for the National Democratic Front on April 24, 1973. LIBERATION is the official publication of the NDF.

NDF STANDPOINT

Elaboration of the NDF position on important issues

"We are open to a ceasefire"

NDF announces important policy statements in press conference

The National Democratic Front and its member organizations, which include the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army under CPP leadership, are ready to dialog with the Aquino government on a possible ceasefire.

Last March 24, in its first press conference since Marcos' ouster, the NDF said its offer is a manifestation of "support of the Filipino people's legitimate aspiration for democratic peace." Speaking through Antonio Zumel, a ranking officer of the NDF, the underground organization imposed no conditions for preliminary talks for a ceasefire, noting that it is still waiting for initiatives from the government.

"Until now, no approaches, formal or informal, direct or indirect, have been made by the government," Zumel said. "We want to know the definite plans of President Aquino. Right now, however, we cannot call for a stop to NPA opera-

tions because the people must continue to defend themselves against continuing counter-insurgency operations and against abusive landlords."

In the four-hour press conference attended by five local reporters in a secluded area north of Manila, Zumel distributed two statements, one by the NDF and the other jointly signed by the Military Commission of the CPP and the General Staff of the NPA. "These statements take precedence over other views expressed in different areas and in various levels of leadership, whether in the NDF, the Party, the NPA or national-democratic mass organizations," Zumel said.

The statements belie AFP reports about the NPA's supposed unwillingness to heed ceasefire calls by President Aquino. Said the CPP and NPA, "We assure the President and our people that her call for ceasefire has not fallen on deaf ears in

the ranks of the revolutionary forces and the NPA."

Zumel, the first two-term president of the National Press Club (1969-71) who went underground upon the declaration of martial law in 1972, however cited obstacles standing in the way of a meaningful ceasefire and of peace. Chief among these, he said, are US imperialism and reactionaries in and out of the government who are pushing a rabid counter-insurgency campaign, the criminal elements in the regular and paramilitary forces of the AFP and the heavily armed private armies of warlords.

Despite these problems, the former *Manila Daily Bulletin* news editor said the NDF is still open to a dialog and give Mrs. Aquino time to carry out her promised changes. He suggested the holding of preliminary discussions before the actual negotiations for a ceasefire. The discussions would establish the ground rules for formal talks, name a panel of negotiators and clarify their powers, and settle the venue. The discussions could either be held in a white area (a place where the revolutionary movement's influence is not deeply felt) or a guerrilla front, with safe conduct passes to be issued by the side which arranged the venue.

Zumel, however, clarified that a ceasefire is different from a surrender. "A ceasefire does not mean surrender."

Meanwhile, he indicated that the new political conditions have necessitated adjustment in NPA tactics. Instead of a general assault on enemy forces as was the thrust in the 17-year guerrilla war, the NPA's main targets of attack now are "remnants of the deposed fascist regime which are still in place."

He stressed that the NPA will give high consideration to the political basis and political implications of every tactical offensive, to show the people the continuing necessity and justness of revolutionary armed struggle. "If before we gave due consideration for the political justification of tactical offensives, there is all the more reason now for doing so," he said.

He asked the local reporters who represented major Philippine newspapers to help propagate the NDF's warning to civilians, particularly the wives and children of soldiers, to desist from staying in military outposts and avoid riding in vehicles carrying AFP soldiers. "Many times, the NPA postponed or cancelled tactical of-



NPA guerrillas: Heading for a meaningful ceasefire

NDF: "We are ready to dialog"



In the wake of the Filipino people's ouster of the dictator Marcos, and in support of their legitimate aspiration for democratic peace, the National Democratic Front and its member organizations declare their readiness to dialog with the government of Corazon Aquino on the subject of an eventual ceasefire between the New People's Army and the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

For 17 years, the masses of the people have been waging a heroic struggle, both armed and unarmed, to overthrow the rule of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism in our country and to attain the full realization of their patriotic and democratic demands. They have committed their all, including their finest sons and daughters, to the revolutionary cause. Truly, the victory against the Marcos regime belongs to them.

But while the ouster of Marcos is a major victory, so much remains to be done. The three main roots of the people's sufferings and impoverishment still have to be removed. The struggle, therefore, must go on to attain the ultimate objectives of genuine independence and democracy.

In calling for a dialog with the Aquino government, the National Democratic Front hopes to reach mutual understanding and cooperation in harnessing the people's will — demonstrated so powerfully in the ouster of the dictator — toward the achievement of these goals. But the objective conditions at the present time do not permit the surrender of the people's right to bear arms in defense of their revolutionary gains in the past seventeen years.

Deeply rooted among the masses of our people, we are confident that their noble sacrifices, and the repose of their trust in us, shall not have been made in vain. — NDF

fensives to avoid civilian deaths. We have however done our best to minimize civilian casualties," he said.

Zumel, who has been acting as the NDF's spokesman in many interviews, reiterated the NDF's positive view towards the presidency of Aquino.

"We recognize the efforts of Mrs. Aquino and the democratic personalities in her Cabinet to institute reforms," Zumel said. But he noted that almost without exception, those holding high positions in the Aquino government come from the upper rungs of society. He said, however, that this does not negate the fact that a number of individuals in her Cabinet are "imbued with democratic ideals." He urged the government to pursue more essential changes especially in land reform and assert national independence against US imperialism and all outside interference.

The press conference covered other issues like the revolutionary movement's boycott policy, the prospects of the NDF, the Moro National Liberation Front and alliance work with other forces like the social democrats. **LIBERATION** is reprinting here excerpts from the transcript of that press interview with Zumel.

Q: What do you think of the Aquino government's call for a ceasefire?

A: Mrs. Aquino had articulated her desire to negotiate a ceasefire with the revolutionary forces even before the snap election. She repeated this offer when she took her oath. Comrades have been asking each other if there have been actual feelers. However, we know of no approaches so far, formal or informal, direct or indirect. We really don't know what the President has in mind, and we want to know it. We are happy with the democratic reforms she has made so far, and we wish she would continue to institute more reforms for the benefit of our people.

We are open to negotiations for a ceasefire. The revolutionary movement stands for peace, but it must be principled peace, not an artificial peace where an oppressor holds a gun to the head of the oppressed.

Q: What are your conditions for a ceasefire?

A: Right now, we are not setting any condition. We do not want to lay down conditions until we know the real intentions of Mrs. Aquino. We want to know her plans, then we will give our opinion.

The ceasefire negotiations are a complicated issue. For example, there have to be preliminary discussions to settle ground rules such as the venue for the negotiations and who will compose the panel of negotiators. If talks will be held in a white area such as Manila, the security of the representatives of the revolutionary movement must be fully guaranteed. If the talks will be held within the guerrilla fronts, then the revolutionary movement will provide safe conduct passes for government negotiators.

Q: Meanwhile, what is the state of the New People's Army? Are its tactical offensives continuing?

A: There has been no formal and final agreement yet for a ceasefire. . . . Even the Reform the AFP Movement (RAM), through Gen. Fidel Ramos himself, has said that there is no such thing as a de facto ceasefire. As far as I know, there

has been no let-up in the intensity of military operations. As I see it, the counter-insurgency campaign is being pushed by US imperialism, the reactionary leadership of the Ministry of National Defense (MND) and AFP, and even some members of the bureaucracy.

In the face of this campaign, the people have to continue defending themselves. At times, they launch their own punitive operations against key remnants of the Marcos regime who have blood debts to the masses.

For a brief period, especially right after the February revolt, there was a slowdown in the tactical offensives of the NPA. But with the continuing military operations, the NPA has to continue its tactical offensives.

Q: Do regional NPA units have leeway in making decisions on tactical offensives?

A: It is best for an NPA or a Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) representative to answer that. But as far as I know, the NPA will give very high consideration to the political basis and political implications of every tactical offensive. If before we gave due consideration for the political justification of tactical offensives, there is all the more reason now for doing so.

The primary targets are remnants of the deposed fascist dictatorship which are still in place. Many of those who have masterminded grave violations of human rights have not been made accountable for their crimes and were even promoted in the military establishment. Some examples are Col. Rodolfo Aguinaldo, a notorious torturer of political prisoners who was recently promoted Cagayan provincial commander; Col. Hernani Figueroa, who figured prominently in the salvaging of people's doctor Remberto de la Paz in Samar; and Col. Cecilio Penilla, another well-known torturer who was recently named Bataan provincial commander.

These were members of Gen. Ramos' CSU (Constabulary Security Unit) which committed among the most numerous crimes against the people and who were among the most sadistic. There are many like them with many blood debts against the people but who are still there. What does Mrs.



The "New" AFP: Changes are only skin-deep

Aquino plan to do about them?

Other NPA targets are military-backed fanatic sects, the Lost Command, private armies and notorious military and even civilians who have many blood debts which the people demand to be settled. Military formations and detachments which enter guerrilla zones to create trouble among the masses are also key targets.

For example, Mayor Francisco Baclig of Gonzaga, Cagayan was killed by the NPA last March 19 on the basis of his many crimes against the townspeople who had long demanded his punishment.

Even if you say that the military has been deodorized because of its role in ousting Marcos, many in the military, even Ramos and Enrile themselves, were part of Marcos' martial law regime and were the chief engineers of it. They committed many crimes against the people for a long time. Now, the blood of our people cry out for justice. This is a reality faced by President Aquino. The Commission on Human Rights should investigate the perpetrators of these crimes and should get to the top AFP officers pretending to be heroes.

Q: Does that mean your tactics have shifted in such a way that NPA operations have become mainly defensive?

A: NPA operations will not be necessarily limited to defensive actions. It really depends on the prevailing conditions in certain areas. Decisions on these operations, as far as I know, will have to be made on a case-to-case basis. But, as I have told you, there will be due consideration for the political justification for launching each offensive.

I have already named the primary targets: elements in the AFP who have blood debts to the people, abusive warlords and their private armies, and military detachments which create trouble in the barrios.

As a matter of policy, civilian officials in government are not touched, unless they engage in anti-people actions, in which case there is need for their accounts to be settled.

Q: What can you say about the reforms so far instituted by President Aquino?

A: We are happy about the implementation of these democratic reforms, such as the release of the political prisoners, restoration of civil liberties, and others. But we encourage President Aquino to continue listening to the demands of the people. For example, peasants have been clamoring for land reform, rollback of the prices of fertilizers and pesticides, and higher prices for their produce. How the Aquino government will respond to this, we do not yet know. But

it is important that venues to air these demands have been opened to the people.

Another factor is US intervention. For example, small Filipino businessmen decry privileges and advantages enjoyed by foreign capitalists here. US big business on the other hand and US imperialism as a whole will push its interests against that of our local businessmen. We would like to see how Mrs. Aquino will solve this.

Q: Is there any reason why President Aquino may not heed these?

A: We grant the good faith of Cory Aquino. But whatever her subjective wishes, we also have to consider the subjective wishes of the US and some reactionaries in and out of her government who are even now placing obstacles to reforms being made.

Q: What is the truth to a columnist's report that Cory is the target of NPA liquidation?

A: The revolutionary movement has no motive whatsoever to hurt her. We have no reason to wish her ill, much less think of assassinating her.

Pero sanay na kami sa mga paratang na ganyan. When Ninoy Aquino was murdered, Marcos and the military insisted that the revolutionary movement had him killed. And when the Escalante Massacre occurred, (Negros warlord Armando) Gustilo said the NPAs fired first at the masses. And now it's Mrs. Aquino. This has never occurred to comrades' minds.

Q: There are speculations that many NPAs will surrender. What's your comment regarding this?

A: Speculations sprouted even before the election that the NPAs are allegedly surrendering. Though it is possible that one or two or three guerrillas may go down from the hills for whatever reason, the military's claim that many NPAs will surrender and lay down their arms is wishful thinking. We see a very insidious propaganda campaign going on to undermine and create confusion in the revolutionary movement.

A ceasefire does not mean surrender. We cannot surrender because the objective conditions — the basic structural problems of the Filipino people — remain. *Yung humahawak ng armas ay may matatag at malalim na dahilan para humawak ng armas at itaya ang kanyang buhay. Para ibaba niya ang armas na iyon, kinakailangan din na may matatag at malinaw na batayan.*

Q: Has Cory's victory in the polls affected the morale and strength of the NDF?

A: No loss, no setbacks. We have to make adjustments though because as Joma Sison pointed out, there is some democratic space now and the people can express their desires to the President. Mrs. Aquino herself has exhorted the people to organize in the factories, farms, communities and schools and assert their interests.

But although there is relative freedom today, we don't know how long the situation will last. The reactionaries in and out of the government are busy obstructing democratic reforms to preserve their privileges in society. How Mrs. Aquino will deal with them, we still have to see. *Maggapatuloy ba ang democratic trend o pauatrasin ba ng naghuhumiyaw na mga reaksyonaryo?*

In addition, Caspar Weinberger is coming here to talk with President Aquino, and presumably, with the top officials of the MND, about intensifying the counter-insurgency campaign. For what? To attack our people again? That's why the revolutionary movement says that while on one hand, there have been some democratic changes, the forces of reaction and US imperialism on the other hand are also active in anti-people campaigns.

Q: What is the position of the NDF on the Cory government considering statements released earlier calling it "bourgeois"?

A: President Aquino was already asked this question during her very first press conference. She was asked why there was no representative of the toiling masses in the Cabinet. *Kung titingnan natin, wala naman talaga.* Almost without exception, those holding high position in the Aquino government come from the upper rungs of society. This is perhaps what the statement meant.

Q: What do you think of Cory's move to release political prisoners?

A: It is a very positive move. President Aquino is trying to redress the injustices committed in the time of Marcos. We hope the government will work for the release of 500 more political prisoners still languishing in jail.

Q: What are the prospects for the NDF?

A: The NDF was not formed in a vacuum. It was established due to intense exploitation in our land, and to the struggle for the democratic rights of our people. Right now, the most basic and the gravest problems of the people have not been solved. Even President Aquino acknowledges that there are still so many things to be done.

Q: How many members do you have?

A: We have organized forces who are directly under the

NDF. Then there are the organized masses who are led by the NDF member-organizations. And there is what we call the general mass base, which consists of those who in varying degrees are influenced by NDF organizations.

The NDF has an estimated 1,000,000 organized mass base and some 10 million general mass base.

Q: What is your view about the MNLF?

A: The National Democratic Front has always stood for the right to self-determination of our brothers in Mindanao, the people of the Cordilleras and other oppressed minorities. They are even more oppressed than we are. They fought the Marcos regime to assert their right to self-determination. We agree with this and support their struggle.

Q: How do you assess the boycott stand of the revolutionary movement in the snap election? Haven't events proved the incorrectness of the boycott stand?

A: The NDF called for a boycott of the polls because it perceived this to be the most effective means of responding to the situation. We believed that the election would be marred by violence and fraud. We believed that it would be a farce and directed by the US. I'm sure you are aware that at that time, there were spirited discussions within the movement whether we should boycott or participate. If we were to participate, up to what extent were we to do so? Anyway, we decided in the end to boycott the elections, and this stand is being assessed now in all territories and levels of the revolutionary movement.

Based on our preliminary reports, progressive organi-

CPP: "The call for ceasefire has not fallen on deaf ears"



We rejoice with the Filipino people in the victorious overthrow of the Marcos fascist puppet regime. We also sincerely acknowledge the popular support gained by President Corason C. Aquino and the corresponding positive efforts by her and the democratic forces in the new government in unconditionally

ordering the release of political detainees of the fascist regime, restoring civil liberties, and carrying out measures to dismantle the fascist structures. In all sincerity, we hope that these progressive moves will gather momentum towards the solution of more fundamental problems confronting our people.

We assure the President and our people that her call for a ceasefire has not fallen on deaf ears in the ranks of the revolutionary forces and the New People's Army. With just, sincere and prudent moves of the concerned parties, a negotiated ceasefire is possible on a nationwide scale. Moreover, we believe that more than just a ceasefire can be pursued afterwards as more substantial changes are made in the economic, political and military spheres favorable to the broad masses of the Filipino people.

Having said this, however, we must point out that much of the fascist structures remain. And the reactionaries in and out of the government are even now scheming not only to block the President's initiatives at democratic reform but to reverse them. We are aware that US imperialism and the reactionaries in the MND-AFP are prodding her to revert to the rabid "counter-insurgency" campaigns of the discredited and overthrown regime. Regular and paramilitary forces of the AFP, including the fanatic and criminal elements in the CHDFs, continue to sow fascist violence in various parts of the country. And the heavily armed private armies of warlords loyal to the Marcos regime continue to terrorize the masses in countryside and urban areas alike.

These and similar conditions stand in the way of a meaningful ceasefire and of peace. Nevertheless, we are listening

to the President's call.

We look forward to a situation where all the patriotic forces who fought against the Marcos fascist regime can peacefully work together in leading the country towards the attainment of nationalist industrialization and genuine land reform, and eventually towards genuine national independence and democracy.

The New People's Army has persevered in the last 17 years of armed struggle against the US-Marcos regime because of the latter's intense exploitation and oppression of our people, especially the worker and peasant masses. The landless peasants, who comprise the majority of our people, are impoverished and hungry because they continue to be subjected to the most ruthless feudal and semifeudal exploitation. The people's army, which is largely a peasant army, would not have grown without extensive and deep mass support, without serving the interests of the broad masses of the Filipino people.

The so-called "problem" of insurgency that is raging in the countryside and urban areas cannot be solved by military measures, much less through military "counter-insurgency" schemes sponsored and backed by US imperialism. On the contrary, such schemes are the very fuel that fire up the spirit of the oppressed masses to engage in armed struggle as a just means of defending their interests, of fighting for national liberation and democracy. The history of the Filipino people bears this out. The so-called problem can be solved only by undertaking fundamental economic and political changes.

Com patriots, the historic moment of the Filipino people is unfolding before our eyes, offering us the opportunity to unite in changing our semicolonial and semifeudal society to a just, humane and prosperous society. Let us endeavor towards this goal. *Military Commission, Communist Party of the Philippines: General Staff, New People's Army*



Cory supporters: An outpouring of popular support

zations failed to effectively lead or play a very prominent role in rallies or in mobilizing the spontaneous masses in Manila.

In the next few weeks, we may be able to publicize the findings of the assessment. If they show that the boycott stand was correct, then we will say so and explain why. If we come to the conclusion that it was wrong, the revolutionary movement will also say so and explain why. In a movement that truly serves the people, the ego of comrades is not important. What I can say is that we are conducting assessments and there is a healthy exchange of ideas.

Q: Is there a rectification campaign going on in your movement?

A: Rectification campaigns are undertaken only if it is determined that gross errors have been committed. As I've said, we are still in the process of data-gathering. We should analyze how the boycott campaign was conducted and how the people responded to it. If we made a mistake, we should admit it. If not, we should stand by what we said and explain it.

Q: How was your united front work affected by Marcos' fall?

A: We call for the alliance of various progressive political forces to pursue the interests of the people. We do not have a monopoly of good ideas. We listen to the opinions and plans of others. We're open to cooperation with other progressive forces especially in the area of democratic reforms. In concert with each other, we can increase the weight of our influence. We strive to relate with other forces. They need not endorse the whole program of the NDF; it is enough that our interests coincide in some vital areas.

Q: Who is the chairman of the NDF?

A: That's like asking who is the chairman of the CPP. We'd rather keep the enemy guessing.

Q: There are accusations that you tend to manipulate forces in your alliances. Please comment.

A: We do recognize complaints regarding actions of some comrades such as arrogance and heavy-handed methods of

work. I think there are some NDF activists or cadres who commit mistakes. But the NDF does not purposely go out of its way to create dissension. We listen to grievances and if there is sound basis, we seek to rectify our shortcomings.

If there are shortcomings, they must be corrected especially if the comrade in question carries wrong ideas that are reflected in his work. Sometimes, the comrade is well-meaning but he may have problems in his style of work. We seek to correct all these, listen to criticisms from other forces and groups.

Q: How do you view the Social Democrats?

A: The NDF is prepared to unite with all democratic, nationalist and positive forces, including the Social Democrats. This is especially important today when we see that the Social Democrats can make significant contributions to the task of immediately dismantling the fascist structures of the deposed regime and of advancing our democratic struggles.

The Social Democrats, however, are not a monolithic organization. There are sections which sincerely desire unity and democracy. But there are some who deliberately go out of their way to create dissension within the ranks of the people's movement.

Q: With the democratic reforms instituted by the new government, will you surface now?

A: You mean, can I join you for a drink at the National Press Club bar tonight? I'd like that. But you and I know it's not that simple. There are individuals like Cory Aquino and Joker Arroyo (in the government) but there are also reactionary forces. Although they say that they have disbanded the NISA (National Intelligence Security Authority) its members are still active. None of those guilty of salvaging has been detained. With the reactionaries still there, this time you will not simply be arrested, tortured, or detained. *Baka iligpit ka na talaga.*

Siyempre, gusto kong makalabas talaga, makapanood man lang ng sine at bumisita sa mga kamag-anak. Nagbago rin ang buhay ko mula nang mag-UG (underground) ako.

Q: Is there a possibility of the AFP integrating with the NPA?

A: The AFP must be re-oriented. The word "reformed" before "AFP" is appropriate only if it is in quotation marks.

There has been superficial change in the AFP; in essence, the AFP remains the same. In order for the AFP to serve the people, it must be overhauled; its pro-imperialist and anti-people character must be changed completely.

For example, the AFP should be turned into an organization principally tasked with defense of our people against foreign aggressors, in our case US imperialism. Ironically, it receives full backing in terms of military aid, such as hardware and training of soldiers, from US imperialism against our people. In fact, the AFP should not trace its roots to the 1897 revolutionary army of Aguinaldo, but to the founding of the Philippine Constabulary under the United States which set it up precisely to wage "pacification campaigns" against the Filipino revolutionaries at the turn of the century.

Q: How long do you think the ceasefire should last? How will Cory get in touch with you?

A: It depends. It could be six months. It could be a year. If the proper conditions are present, it would be easier to formalize a ceasefire. A political settlement is even possible as long as the people's most basic demands are met.

We do not underestimate Cory's capacity to establish contact with us. *Bahala na siya.* ■

Victory after two decades of struggle

An unbroken thread of resistance: the anti-dictatorship struggle from the '60s to the present



Men against steel: Rallyists turn back loyalist tank with Laban-signs and flowers

Feb. 22, 1986, a Saturday, was like any other day in the Marcos era. Reports of an unusual movement of troops in some parts of Metro Manila and rumors of a martial law redeclaration by Marcos provided grist for coffeeshop gossips. But, otherwise, there were no palpable signs of a great storm coming.

Then at twilight, the unexpected happened. Juan Ponce Enrile, Marcos' defense minister for 15 years and Armed Forces vice chief of staff Gen. Fidel Ramos announced that they were breaking away from the regime and taking over Camps Crame and Aguinaldo along E. de los Santos Ave. (EDSA). They were joined by disgruntled officers belonging to the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM).

A few hours later, a visibly stunned Marcos appeared on TV and accused the rebel soldiers of planning to oust him in a coup. Shortly after Marcos threatened to assault the camps, Catholic church leader Cardinal Jaime Sin appealed to his flock over Radio Veritas to barricade the camps and prevent a bloody confrontation. What followed was a spectacle not even the rebellious soldiers expected.

Millions of Filipinos spilled out into the streets, flooding the highways of Metro Manila and other urban centers. The young mingled with the old, businessmen

linked arms with the priests and nuns, socialites banded with the poor. EDSA, a long and wide expanse of concrete, was suddenly engulfed in an ocean of humanity that shook the very walls of Camp Crame with its power and intensity.

In a unique blend of protest and religiosity, Filipinos blocked the paths of evil tanks and armored personnel carriers by kneeling, praying, crying, pleading



A haughty Marcos before his fall

and offering flowers, food and rosaries to attacking loyalist troopers who retreated in bewilderment, shock and fear.

Rebel soldiers, on the other hand, simply basked in newfound glory. They marvelled at the people's warmth, and the unstoppable trains of food leading to the camps. They smiled and shook hands with civilians, many of whom for over a decade, held them in contempt.

Within two days of the popular uprising and military rebellion, the Marcos regime was ready to collapse. Washington had suddenly withdrawn support. Many of the loyalist troops had realized the futility of stopping the storm and defected to the rebels' side. The regime's media facilities had been taken over by the people, and right at the doorstep of Malacanang — along Mendiola and Nagtahan — crowds threatened to storm the palace. On Feb. 24, Marcos declared a state of emergency and imposed a dusk to dawn curfew, but nobody paid heed.

On the morning of Feb. 25, at Club Filipino in Greenhills, San Juan, the people proclaimed and inaugurated Corazon Aquino the new president. At noon of the same day, at Malacanang Palace, some loyal followers and family members attended Marcos' supposed fourth inauguration. By 9 p.m., however, the dictator and his family who had ruled the nation

for 20 years with unparalleled greed and ruthlessness, fled the palace. As Marcos, his family and friends were flown by helicopter to Clark Air Base where US Air Force planes waited to take them to a sanctuary, angry mobs attacked Malacanang, tearing down every bitter memory of tyranny.

Grief turned to anger

Much of the new militancy that characterized the people's protest in the last days of the Marcos regime was an offshoot of the Aug. 21, 1983 assassination of the dictator's chief political rival Benigno Aquino Jr.

On that day, a stunned nation received news of Aquino's assassination while he was under heavy military guard at the Manila International Airport. Disbelief and horror turned to grief, and grief to anger. On Aug. 31, nearly two million people participated in the 30-km. procession for Aquino, the biggest funeral march in Philippine history. The once largely dormant middle class marched with the masses and chanted with them, "Demokrasya, ipaglaban!"

A month later, on the 11th anniversary of martial law, 300,000 people denounced the regime in Liwasang Bonifacio. The rally ended peacefully, but towards dusk, 20,000 angry protesters proceeded to Mendiola. There, military troops fired at the unarmed crowd. When the air cleared of smoke from gunfire, pillbox and molotov explosions, 11 civilians lay dead and hundreds of others were injured.

What followed was an unprecedented mass movement that surpassed the breadth and scope of any in history, including the First Quarter Storm of 1970.

Yellow confetti rained from high-rise buildings of Makati, Binondo and other financial districts. New forms of struggle such as protest joggings and caravans appeared in the urban centers.

Meanwhile, the economy slumped to depths unseen before. Thousands of import-dependent businesses closed down, immediately swelling the ranks of the unemployed. From December 1983 to March 1984 alone, almost a million lost their jobs. Industrial production slowed down and led to a 5.5% drop in the GNP in 1984. At the same time, inflation shot up to an all-time high of 65%, while more and more Filipinos slipped down the poverty line.

Anxious to squirm his way out of his politically defensive position, Marcos called the 1984 Batasan elections. But a boycott position had been firmed up by progressive groups and liberal democrats after Marcos snubbed six demands that should have guaranteed meaningful polls. Heeding the boycott call, about a third of the country's voters stayed away from the polls.

The 1984 boycott campaign was signi-



Aug. 21, 1984: Marking a year of renewed militancy

ficant because it succeeded in conducting widespread propaganda and education not only on the correctness of the boycott option, but also on major political and economic questions. The boycott campaign was also marked by the development of a higher form of protest, the *Lakayan*, or people's march. The five-day march-rally wound through Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog, and with its progress, the anti-dictatorship struggle clearly reached new heights and intensity.

On May 1, Aug. 21 and Sept. 21 that year, the attendance number in demonstrations broke all existing records across the country. Year 1984 will also be remembered for the people's strikes (*Walong Bayan*) that paralyzed entire regions, cities, provinces and islands such as Mindanao. Twenty-two were recorded for



Making way for new forms of protest

the year. These mass actions also raised the political content of the open mass movement, as calls to dismantle the US-Marcos dictatorship also led to the recognition of the legitimacy of armed struggle.

Embattled, isolated and defensive, the dictatorship launched a series of assaults on popular protest. Two workers were gunned down in the picket lines in 1984, over a hundred were arrested, and scores were injured as they were attacked by police and military forces.

The arbitrary dispersal of rallyists on July 23 in Manila was followed with tear-gas attacks on rallies from August to September 1984, when a bystander was killed and scores of demonstrators hurt. The assaults continued well into 1985, culminating in the massacre of demonstrators in Escalante, Negros del Norte on Sept. 20, 1985 and the violent dispersal of a peasant march along Taft Ave. in October 24. Both assaults resulted in the death of at least 29 demonstrators.

But the killings only fanned the people's hatred of the regime. Thus, when Marcos announced in November last year that a snap presidential election would be held, he did so in order to defuse popular anger against his regime and make another bid at legitimizing his faltering rule.

But Filipinos saw in the polls an opportunity to register deep hatred for the regime. Millions of them flocked to the mammoth rallies of the opposition to hear the frail and gentle challenger Corazon Aquino promise a new era of democracy. Progressive elements also saw an opportunity to expose and oppose the US-Marcos dictatorship by pushing for a boycott of the polls even as they strove to propagate the demands of the basic masses and raise their opposition to a new level of militancy.

On election day, Feb. 7, a vigilant

Impugnati
at
Factor Minimal

PHILIPPINE COLLEGIAN

Struggle against
militarization
of the campus



Students in various parts of the country, and at the University of the Philippines, are protesting against the military presence on campus. (Photo by UP, Manila in Daily Tribune)

Sinalakay ang UP!

The Diliman Commune: UP students defend their school from military attack

electorate guarded the ballots and confronted the armed goons of the dictatorship. But when the ballot boxes were switched, the votes miscounted and Marcos proclaimed the "winner" in the sham election, the people came out in greater numbers.

This time, there was more rage, more fire. The people responded enthusiastically to Aquino's call for a boycott of cro-ny-owned establishments, products and newspapers. Massively cheated at the polls, they were ready to undertake more militant actions to oust the dictator once and for all. The people's defiance culminated in the four-day siege that finally led to the dictator's downfall.

Continuing thread of resistance

The massive protests that followed in the wake of the Aquino assassination are in turn part of a continuing thread of resistance that began more than 20 years ago.

Long before the US-Marcos dictatorship imposed martial law in 1972, Philippine society was nearing boiling point. The problems that had been brought to bear on the Filipino people in the mid-'60s such as the marginalization of millions of peasants and workers and the worsening crisis spawned by the export-intensive, import-dependent economy had forced the people to trigger off pockets of resistance everywhere.

In November 1964, while the country simmered in crisis, and while US big business was intensifying exploitation of the Filipino people, the Kabataang Makabayan (KM) was born. The student movement that the KM mounted and pushed alongside other militant student groups was significant because it eventually



1970 assault on Malacanang



Fascism circa 1970

awakened other sectors of society to the stark realities of a backward semi-colonial and semi-feudal society.

The student protest that swept the following years invigorated the resistance struggles of the Filipino people as a whole. In December 1968, the Communist Party of the Philippines was reestablished from the ruins of the moribund Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas to advance the surging revolutionary movement.

By the time massive multi-sectoral protests rocked the regime in the First Quarter Storm of 1970, the people's resistance had acquired a national democratic character. The "US-Marcos dictatorship" became a clear target of attack, and the basic problems of the Filipino people had been rooted out to be "US imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism," which the dictatorship sought to perpetuate.

In the countryside, peasants found new hope in their struggle against landgrabbing, usury, feudal bondage to tyrannical landlords, and against the intense exploitation and poverty that have been haunting them for centuries. At the heart of the peasant struggle was the New People's Army, founded on March 29, 1969 to lead the armed struggle to overthrow the dictatorship and sow the seeds of an envisioned new democratic coalition government.

Faced with escalating resistance, Marcos imposed martial law on Sept. 21, 1972. While big US businessmen and the US government nodded in approval, Marcos abolished Congress, stripped the people of their civil liberties, banned strikes and demonstrations, institutionalized military harassment and arrested, tortured and killed political dissenters.

Martial law further strengthened the economic and political system which the resistance sought to dismantle. The regime depressed wages to attract foreign investments and encouraged export-oriented industries that assured foreign investors of ample supplies of raw materials and semi-processed commodities. As foreign-owned, mostly US and Japanese transnationals raked in profits, and as Marcos, his family and cronies robbed the national treasury, millions of Filipinos were dispossessed and marginalized.

The regime was periodically saved from bankruptcy with a continuous infusion of massive loans from the US-dominated International Monetary Fund-World Bank combine. The loans amounted to bribes as the two financial bodies made sure that the regime's economic policies favored big business. As the regime incurred heavier debts throughout the martial law period, the more it became bound to IMF-WB dictates.

During these years of unparalleled economic and political repression, the toiling masses of workers and peasants suffered the most. But within these 14

years of terror and fear, they waged the fiercest and most unrelenting resistance struggles against tyranny.

How can history, for example, forget the courage of the more than 500 workers of the La Tondena Co. in Manila, who, on Oct. 24-25, 1975, were the first to defy the no-strike iron policy of martial law?

At a time when all forms of protest were met with immediate repression and harassment, the La Tondena workers occupied their factory for 44 hours to push their demands, to which both government and management paid no heed despite five years of petitions and negotiations. For 44 hours too, soldiers and Metrocom troopers threatened the workers and arrested 515 of them on Oct. 26.

Long before most Filipinos learned the meaning of a united front years later in Camp Crame, a handful of priests and nuns, students and urban poor had demonstrated its power. They held vigil for the workers, gave food, stood guard, boosted morale and distributed manifestos at the gates of the La Tondena factory.

The 44-hour sitdown strike was significant not only because it won major concessions for the striking workers. Above all, it broke the climate of fear, shattered the myth of the regime's invincibility and dramatized the power of solidarity — the very essence of the united front of various sectors of society formed to defy a common enemy.

A storm of protest

To cripple the emboldened workers, Marcos issued Presidential Decree 823, totally banning strikes and prohibiting any form of support to strikers. But Marcos' law was met by a storm of protest.

On Nov. 23, 1975, some 4,000 workers, slumdwellers, church people and students held a protest mass at Sta. Cruz church in Manila, and marched to Plaza Miranda. Then on Dec. 6, 1975, the biggest protest rally in the first three years of martial law was staged by multi-sectoral groups. The 6,000 protesters then tried to march to Malacanang where visiting US President Gerald Ford was meeting with Marcos, but were blocked by a phalanx of anti-riot police.

Nevertheless, before the year ended and barely two months after the historic La Tondena strike, workers in 26 companies followed suit with a spate of "illegal" strikes. The following year, labor staged the first big May 1 rally after martial law at the auditorium of St. Joseph's College in Quezon City.

Later, on Oct. 3, 1976, during the IMF meeting in Manila, 4,000 people from various sectors massed up at St. Paul College to demand democratic concessions. A week later, 12,000 more marched to Plaza Miranda from De La Salle College on Taft Ave. Troops of



NPA guerrillas: Making history and legend

barangay tanods attacked the peaceful demonstrators and injured many of them with truncheon blows.

But despite intense repression, the militant wave of protest swiftly spread across the entire nation — from factories to schools, to churches and communities.

Each oppressed class and sector waged its own resistance struggle. In 1977, students began to oppose tuition fee hikes and called for the restoration of campus democracy, an end to imperialist designs on education and the dismantling of the US-Marcos dictatorship. Teachers pressed for salary increases and basic democratic rights. Kalingas, Bontocs and other tribespeople of the Cordilleras braved arrests and resisted military intimidation and terrorism to fight



BMA fighter: Waging war against oppression

the construction of hydro-electric dams on their ancestral lands. Peasants batted for genuine land reform and the rollback of fertilizer and pesticide prices. In all these struggles, the people repudiated US imperialism — not only for its support of the Marcos regime, but for its direct responsibility in oppressing and terrorizing the Filipino people.

The lessons of a strong united front were not lost on the protest movement. The 1978 election campaign for the Interim Batasang Pambansa saw a united opposition challenge the dictatorship. Until now, the noise barrage launched all over Metro Manila on the eve of the April 7, 1978 elections remains a high point of the protest movement, after which the April 6 Liberation Movement named itself.

By the time the campaign to boycott the 1981 sham presidential elections was launched, the masses had been tempered in struggle. Militant demonstrations were no longer taboo to them, and in the aftermath of the successful boycott of the June 16 presidential polls, it was clear that the regime's isolation was now heightening while the resistance movement's influence and breadth were growing.

Serving as the backbone of many of these open protest actions was the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. Created on April 24, 1973, the NDF provided the framework through which the united front of workers, peasants, the urban petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie carried out and coordinated the anti-dictatorship struggle. NDF underground organizations and chapters were built up in major sectors and regions of the country.

In the countryside, the NPA made history and legend. From a group of 60 in 1969, it had blossomed into Asia's

fastest growing revolutionary army. Today, its operational areas cover 80% or 58 of the 73 provinces in the Philippines. It administers 59 guerrilla fronts nationwide which span more than 10,000 barrios in 35 cities and 634 towns.

Over the years, it has also increased its firepower chiefly from arms seizures from government troopers, raised the level of its military expertise and established more guerrilla fronts. When in 1981, the revolutionary movement entered the advanced substage of the strategic defensive, the NPA began to launch more frequent and bigger tactical offensives against government troops.

Meanwhile, a new protest culture had emerged. Revolutionary songs and literature — many dating as far back as the 1940s — were heard anew in mass actions. "Bayan Ko" and the clenched fist became symbols of an emerging protest era. National democrat activists had popularized such terms and slogans as "US-Marcos dictatorship," "US imperialism," "Marcos-Hitler-Diktador-Tuta," "salvaging," "united front," "UG," "mass movement" and many others. Filipino revolutionaries did not merely spout the words imperialism, feudalism, bureaucrat capitalism and fascism. They explained them and sharpened their meanings even as they debated on the concepts of semi-feudalism and semi-colonialism.

In Mindanao, the Moro people also waged one of the longest-running resistance struggles against the US-Marcos regime. Driven into squalor in city slums and riverbanks, and dispossessed by big agribusiness transnationals and big Filipino landlords, the Moro people, led by the Moro National Liberation Front and its military arm, the Bangsa Moro Army, inflicted heavy casualties on the regime's AFP.

But the Moro struggle was met with ruthlessness by the dictatorship. Armed, trained and advised by US imperialism, the AFP waged a genocidal war against the Moro people. At least 50,000 Moros were killed from 1970 to 1976 alone. More than 200,000 homes were burned, two million or nearly half of the Moro population reduced to refugees, 535 mosques and 200 schools demolished and 35 cities and towns wholly destroyed in the same period.

Elsewhere in the country, the regime's armed forces dug mass graves to bury the thousands they had annihilated in the hope of stopping the people's resistance. From 1973 to June 1983 alone, there were 1,586 cases of summary execution, 428 disappearances, 12,068 political arrests, 644 torture cases and 30 massacres documented by human rights groups.

Blood spilled across the land and the cries of mothers punctuated the staccato of gunfire. In many instances, as in the early morning massacre of 42 men, women and children in Sag-od, Las Navas,



Martyrs to freedom: Their deaths have not been in vain

Samar on Sept. 15, 1981, the highest officials of the land had been involved.

Survivors of the bloodbath told human rights groups that the armed men who committed the Las Navas crime belonged to a special brigade of the Philippine Army assigned to guard the sprawling San Jose Timber Co., a logging concession owned by defense minister Juan Ponce Enrile. The massacre, they said, was part of the military's continuing effort to drive out the peasant masses from Enrile's concession which encompasses 11 towns of



Bannering a new era of struggle

Northern, Western and Eastern Samar.

The people — victors all

The thousands who perished in the "dirty war" of the US-Marcos regime against the people were not in the streets to dance and celebrate with the nation when the dictator was finally ousted. But such victory belongs as much to those who, like them, had fallen into the long dark night "without seeing the dawn." It also belongs to those who kept vigil when most were in slumber, who persisted in the lengthy, costly struggle, but who for the first time, were not at the forefront of the uprising that finally led to the dictator's ouster.

Because many of the organizations in the national democratic movement had boycotted the snap elections, they were easily overtaken by succeeding events and subsequently lost leadership or influence over a broad section of the open protest movement. Ironically, they had lost the initiative when the time came to reap the fruits of their struggle.

To be sure, the boycott position was taken because at that time, it was thought to be the best and most effective way to advance the people's cause. Extensive discussions now being undertaken by the NDF will hopefully, in due time, give way to a thorough-going explanation of whether the move was correct or wrong.

But if only for the fact that the national democratic forces had given so much in the past, they have a claim to their rightful share of victory. Together with all others who fought the dictatorship, they rejoice over Marcos' ouster. But more than this, they vow to protect and expand the people's democratic gains and make sure that the victory over the Marcos regime will lead to an era of true sovereignty and genuine democracy for the people.

Pen Guerrero

MAINSTREAM

Developments in the people's movements

Why the fighting goes on

NPA offensives continue as counter-insurgency persists in the countryside

"We long for peace in our lands. But when soldiers invade our villages, loot our homes and arrest our sons, what recourse have we? Should we lay down our arms or halt offensives, as they expect us to do? No, we have no alternative but to fight back." There was much pain as a Kalinga pangat (elder) spoke these words.

Indeed, it is hard for peace to come by in the mountain villages of the Cordilleras. In Sta. Maria, Flora, Kalinga-Apayao, the crops — once green and heavy with fruit — have become brown as dust. Since January, when tribesmen of sitios Marimay and Parawagan were herded into a hamlet by the roadside, 40 families have known only hunger and disease. They have not even been allowed to see to their farms and livelihood. No, not even as a new government has taken over in Manila.

On Feb. 28, soldiers of the 48th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army's "Bravo Company" led by Capt. Virgilio Asprec raided the San Juan Medical Clinic in Barricawan, Conner, Kalinga-Apayao. The soldiers stayed there the whole day. Failing to find any Red fighter as they had hoped, they interrogated and frightened the sick.

Then, on March 7, the soldiers strafed a house in barangay Mainit in Bontoc, Mountain Province. They killed an NPA suspect and badly wounded three other civilians.

In Taggay, Pinukpuk, Kalinga-Apayao, the 48th IB arrested 13 farmers without warrant and detained them. Agagen Dammay, a farmer from Malima, Conner was shot by Asprec's soldiers just outside his son's home. The soldiers later took the younger Dammay to the barracks, detained him and held him incommunicado while they tortured him.

Across the whole Chico-belt area, which encompasses four towns of Kalinga-Apayao and the Mountain Province, such counter-insurgency operations of the military continue without let-up. Notwithstanding ceasefire offers from the Aquino government, the same situation exists elsewhere in the country.

Counter-insurgency actions persist

In Negros Occidental, the AFP continues to mount atrocities against the people. Last March 6, soldiers and CHDF men surrounded a house in an hacienda in La Castellana town and ordered the occupants to get out and surrender. Once outside, two organizers of the National Federation of Sugar Workers, who had their arms held upward in surrender, were instantly

shot dead. The next day, the Negros military command released a press statement claiming that both were NPAs who died in an encounter.

In Himamaylan town, in the last week of February, the 32nd PC Company burned at least 10 houses of people suspected of helping the NPA. In the hinterlands of Moises Padilla town in central Negros, the Pacubal, a fanatic group armed by the military, continues to terrorize peasants.

In the southern province of Davao March 1, the military dropped bombs in two barrios in Tagum, killing at least six people. The attack on barrios Magdum and Magangit were reportedly carried out by two Sikorsky helicopter gunships in retaliation against NPA operations.

been promoted to key military posts. They are Col. Rodolfo Aguinaldo, an intelligence officer notorious for torturing political prisoners, intimidating relatives and kidnaping babies of NPA guerrillas; Col. Tirso Gador, who is responsible for the salvaging of seven activists; and Brig. Gen. Manuel Ribo, commander of the 5th Brigade of the Philippine Army who ordered the bombing and strafing of the Isneg minorities. All three are reportedly close henchmen of Enrile, reputed to be the biggest landlord and warlord in all Cagayan.

In a statement, the NPA Regional Operational Command in Cagayan decried the promotion of Aguinaldo as head of the Cagayan provincial command; Gador, as chief of the Presidential Guard Battalion assigned to protect President Aquino; and Ribo, as commanding general of the entire 5th army division. They also strongly criticized the government's retention of Enrile and AFP chief Gen. Fidel Ramos whom they accused of being among "the principal authors and collaborators of the fascist super-



These intensified assaults have spurred new criticisms against the military, putting the lie to its so-called reformed image following the Feb. 22-25 military rebellion. "We hardly felt the difference," a Negrense told LIB in an interview. "Though we are optimistic about Mrs. Aquino's government, we do not feel the same way about the AFP which has not given up its old ways to this day." He added that Negrenses still have to see the implementation of basic changes in society. "In many areas," he said, "the warlords remain and the people have to defend themselves."

In the northern province of Cagayan, home province of defense minister Juan Ponce Enrile, the warlords are not the only problems of the people. They also have to contend with so-called "reformists" who are known terrorists yet have

structure that was imposed in 1972."

"Their leadership of the AFP is prima facie evidence that the 'New AFP' is but a continuation of the 'old' military that served as Marcos' main instrument in repressing people during his bloody 20-year rule," said the NPA-Cagayan. "So long as the Enrile-Ramos clique and the entire fascist machinery remain, we cannot with clear conscience lay down our arms to go to the dialog table."

NPA mounts defensive actions

Faced with this situation, the NPA has been forced to renew punitive operations against the military. After a respite in guerrilla activity during the snap elections in February, NPA military offensives have been reported in Quezon, Pampanga, Bicol, Samar, Negros, Bohol and Mindanao — all of which are sites of on-

going counter-insurgency campaigns.

Prime targets of the NPA operations are the repressive remnants of the military machinery known to have perpetrated many crimes against the people. Among these are the Civilian Home Defense Forces, notorious mayors and warlords, abusive police and military men.

Last March 15 in Bohol, guerrillas sprung an ambush on the CHDF outpost in Hanopol, Balilihan town, killing 10 militiamen. On March 16 in Quezon province, two groups of Red fighters raided the police stations of Atimonan and Plaridel towns and carted away firearms and ammunition without firing a single shot. Earlier, in the second week of March, guerrillas in Samar ambushed a team of elite Scout Rangers in Suribao town, killing five of them. In the island of Negros, NPAs pulled off a series of assaults from Feb. 22 to March 6, killing more than 20 troopers and seizing several arms and ammunition. In Gonzaga, Cagayan on March 19, Red fighters gunned down notorious town mayor Francisco Bacilig and three of his security men.

The military has been quick to take full advantage of these tactical operations to smear the NPA. Leading the anti-NPA propaganda blitz is Enrile who blamed the Aquino government's "kid glove treatment" of NPA rebels for the deaths of military personnel. "I think we should ask the NPA leadership if they are interested in reconciliation because... they have killed a number of people despite government pronouncements that there should be a ceasefire," snorted Enrile, who also insisted on mounting a heightened military offensive against the "insurgents."

In truth, the government has not declared any ceasefire, as Gen. Ramos himself has stated. While certain regional military commands like the Task Force Sugarland command in Negros may have announced a unilateral ceasefire in their areas to convince the NPA about the military's sincerity in peace efforts, they have mainly used this to justify renewed campaigns against the revolutionary forces and the masses.

In the case of Negros, newspapers report that the military command there under Col. Isagani de los Santos was the first to violate its promise to suspend tactical actions. On March 6, barely a day after de los Santos declared the unilateral ceasefire, his soldiers raided a house in La Castellana and killed two people. Because of this, plus the many reported military abuses since the new government took over on Feb. 26, parish priests of southern Negros Occidental told De los Santos that their parishioners would continue to deeply distrust the military. Said Fr. Wilfredo Degilla, parish priest of Suy, Himamaylan: "Unless justice is given to my parishioners, I cannot force them

to believe you."

Other areas tell the same story. In the Cordilleras, when Fr. Pat Guyguyon and Bishop Emilio Madangeg were approached by three military officials to initiate a dialogue with the NPA, they told the soldiers: "As long as you are here, there can be no peace. What you should do is pull out your troops and stop terrorizing the people." They added, "What the military does not realize is that the NPA is willing to talk with the current civilian government, but not with the military."



Warm greetings from a little friend

To be sure, the NPA is indeed willing to talk peace with the Aquino government, despite continuous military offensives. Since late February, various NDF and CPP cadres have indicated their willingness to negotiate a ceasefire to "give peace a chance." Some NPA regional commands have proposed conditions for a possible ceasefire, such as the immediate pull-out of troops from the countryside, or at least from offensive positions in the barrios; the dismantling of private armies and prosecution of warlords; the trial and punishment of criminal elements in the military; and the release of all political detainees.

But as military suppression persists in the countryside, peace may become more and more elusive to the masses and guerrillas who desire it most. As a Kalinga *pengat* stated: "We do not want war. But we have to fight and give up our lives because we want peace."

"*Awan ti kapya nu awan ti hustaya.*"
(There can be no peace without justice.) ■

An affirmation

Church activists renew commitment to people

They could not hold up streamers or banners to herald their presence, but they were there, quietly mingling with the multitude. For four days in February, priests, nuns, seminarians, pastors, deaconesses and lay Christians who were members of the underground Christians for National Liberation (CNL) were among the millions who shared the pathos and euphoria of the final struggle that led to Marcos' ouster.

For the CNL members as for many other vigilant Filipinos, being at the forefront of the barricades to halt the advance of loyalist tanks was but a continuation of their long, hard struggles that month. Only two weeks before the historic February siege, the dictatorship staged its most massive scheme to thwart the true expression of the people's will. Some CNL members exercised their moral option not to vote, refusing to legitimize the regime's evil plan. Others, including scores of angry nuns, were among those who guarded the ballots zealously or monitored incidents of fraud and terrorism during election day.

Either way, the church people's brave stand earned Marcos' ire and led to renewed black propaganda attacks against the church. Undaunted, many church people lay ready to face arrest. It was deemed but a small sacrifice to make, as the church people honored and remembered on Feb. 9, GOMBURZA day, the example of many others before them who chose to make the supreme sacrifice of martyrdom.

For the CNL in particular, the events of February were a solid test of the revolutionary organization's strength. Only three months before, in November 1985, delegates from CNL units all over the country had gathered together in Southern Tagalog to review their performance and plan for their future activities. It was to be a consolidation activity to unify the CNL's fast-expanding membership nationwide. The organization's apt response to the challenges it faced in February showed that the meeting had been a success.

In four-day sessions, the delegates assessed their efforts in the past four years, zeroed in on specific problems, drafted a tactical program, and reaffirmed their commitment to the national democratic revolution. As they assessed the past four years, they also noted gains made by the organization which is one of the leading members of the NDF. Today, the CNL can boast of successes in advancing democratic rights, international solidarity work, in winning support for the armed

on of faith

people's struggle in CNL consultation

struggle, and in drawing the various sub-sectors and progressive elements in the church hierarchy into the overall struggle for liberation. Within a year, it helped to set up major legal sectoral organizations on the national level, and many more subsectoral chapters in regions outside Metro Manila.

participation of the church in the revolutionary mass movement; and 7) gather the strongest international support for the Filipino people's struggle.

In an interview with CNL member Justin, he said the CNL's vision of the church is one that "is in complete solidarity with the poor, deprived and oppressed. It must be willing to work within the responses of an awakened people. Whatever is the response and option made by the poor should be taken by the church." Justin added, "If it is the armed struggle, then

"Soldado ti umili"

NPA "soldiers of the people" open Ilocos Sur-Benguet border to revolutionary work

-In 1984, Ka Ariel, an NPA political officer, led an armed propaganda unit in undertaking revolutionary work in the cold and remote villages that straddle the mountainous Ilocos Sur-Benguet border. Since there were no dirt roads or even foot bridges in the border zone, the NPA teams had to cross dangerously steep and narrow cliffs and angry rivers to get there. So isolated is the area that it took a day's travel by foot to reach the nearest road if one wanted to go to the nearest urban centers of Baguio and La Union.

Inhabiting this desolate border region are the hardy Kankanaeys, an ethnic minority tribe in the Cordilleras. They are marginal farmers who supplement their meager rice yields from their *payaws* (terraced farms) and *umas* (kaingin fields) with camote. Occasionally, they plant cash crops like coffee, but have difficulty getting their products to markets in Baguio and La Union because of the absence of roads.

The NPA's social investigation of the area revealed that the Kankanaeys also have to cope with the government's total disregard of their rights to their ancestral lands. Although their forefathers have lived on this rugged land for generations, the government requires the Kankanaeys to possess declaration papers for the lands they till. The papers are merely for taxation purposes, as no land surveys are done. Only very rich Kankanaeys and government officials are able to muster the financial and bureaucratic intricacies of having their lands titled. This makes the majority painfully vulnerable to land-grabbers and other abusive elements.

In addition, the people's education and other welfare needs are grossly neglected. There are very few schools in the area, but a P50 "education tax" is levied for every P3,000 worth of coffee produced. This, the farmers must pay even if none of their children goes to school. Epidemics are commonplace. Scores of children die from outbreaks of measles and typhoid fever without medical treatment. Usually, the most accessible health worker is a midwife who lives in the far-off town center.

Taking advantage of the people's poverty, military-led syndicates have convinced them to cultivate marijuana. It was soldiers who first introduced the seeds to the farmers, contrary to the government's



Disarming the enemy: Priest offers crackers to loyalist trooper

The NDF noted such effective contributions in a message read by an NDF representative: "We are very happy that the CNL continues to grow politically and organizationally, and to contribute more than its share in the political struggle and in the overall people's war." All these, noted the NDF, speak well for the CNL, which was set up 13 years ago as a mass organization of church people dedicated to the national democratic revolution and the transformation of the churches in the Philippines. In April 1973, the CNL was one of the revolutionary organizations that founded the NDF.

In the one-year tactical program formulated in the consultation, the building of a political movement of Christians continues to be the focal point of the CNL's tasks. This means that all CNL members are called "to ensure the participation of the broadest number of sectors in the national mass movement and ensure their consolidation."

The CNL also agreed to: 1) strengthen and consolidate the CNL by setting up organs of leadership at all levels; 2) hasten the formation and expansion of the NDF; 3) tighten alliances with progressives and reformists; 4) frustrate the coordinated attempts of certain church "hawks" to stifle church progressives; 5) expose US imperialist schemes which counter the people's democratic revolution; 6) draw the active

let it be."

At the end of the consultation, the delegates issued a statement decrying the blows of the economic crisis on the people, violent state repression manifested in such incidents as the Escalante and Taft Ave. massacres and increased US intervention in the country. "This prevailing situation is a serious pastoral problem. The continuous trampling of the rights and dignity of the Filipino nation is a sinful situation," said the statement.

The delegates took an "affirmation of faith," saying: "We pledge anew our faith in the revolutionary struggle of the Filipino people and renew our commitment to be in solidarity with them in their just aspiration and vision for national liberation and democracy. We rededicate ourselves to those tasks that we need to do in order to assist in bringing about the victory of the people's struggle. We reaffirm and state once more our solidarity with Christians and church people who are involved and participating in liberation movements in our country and all over the world."

This affirmation is made, said the delegates, in memory and in honor of the many martyrs in our people's history. With this and its sterling performance in the struggles of February, the CNL vowed to persist in "the revolutionary movement of our people." ■

propaganda that marijuana cultivation is an "NPA industry." Upon harvest, the syndicates pay the farmers P3,000 per kilo of marijuana whose street value may reach as high as P25,000. On the Ilocos Sur side of the border, entire communities have reportedly been organized around the practice of cultivating marijuana in such a way as there are teams in charge of production, transportation and sales. The military syndicates in turn provide "protection" and the necessary connections. But the presence of the NPAs has since made a difference in the people's lives.

The coming of the NPA

"When we first came here, the people avoided us," said Ka Ariel in an interview with LIB. "Having been oppressed and isolated for so long, they could not comprehend why strangers would come to their villages without any malicious intentions. But that was only for a while."

The people soon saw the difference between the Redfighters and the government soldiers. Unlike the latter, the NPAs were polite and courteous, especially to the "lallakay," the elders. They paid for what they took and worked with the people on their farms. This, the people highly appreciated because additional labor is very valuable in such an economically depressed area. "Our stature grew in their eyes," said Ka Ariel. "Being very religious, they called us the 'Soldados ti Dios,' the soldiers of God. We told them that we are the 'Soldados ti Umili,' the people's warriors, for we serve all oppressed Filipinos regardless of their spiritual convictions."

What really led the people to accept the NPA as their own, however, was the Red fighters' medical work. No military civic action team or government doctor had ever gone to their barrios because of the difficult terrain. "*Tayo lang ang matiyaga na regular na lumibot sa mga baryo,*" explained Ka Ariel. "Many times our units would stay in a barrio for a whole day conducting medical work. *Nakapila ang masa kahit saan.*"

The NPAs were also able to train medical teams from among the masses. They gave a health seminar on sanitation, communicable diseases and the use of herbal medicine and acupuncture. "In fact," said Ka Ariel, "our research into that field led us to the discovery that marijuana leaves are a good antiseptic. Bolo wounds are common during harvest time and medicines like that are always needed."

Despite regular sweeps of the area by platoon- or company-size units from the Ilocos Sur and Benguet PC commands, the NPA teams operating in these barrios have few problems regarding mobility. "The military just sets up detachments. The soldiers do not go out on patrol often because they could not stand the terrain," said Ka Ariel. "At any rate, because of mass support and the rough terrain favorable for guerrilla warfare, even just two

riflemen-snipers could easily hold up a platoon of soldiers dead in its tracks." Thus, in spite of the enemy's regular and large-scale maneuvers, revolutionary work by the guerrillas and activists is proceeding apace.

"But our advances can also be attributed to a large extent to the success of our education and organizing work among the masses," said Ka Ariel. "Before, the people used to shake with fear and bow their heads in silence in front of abusive soldiers, government officials and landgrabbers. But now, they know their rights and have become very militant and even combative."

mimic this same line. "If an encounter occurs, the masses report that what took place was a shoot-out between soldiers. If weapons or bodies are found, they say these are planted and deny that there are NPAs in their area. When pressed by the military, the people openly challenge the authorities, and ask them daringly, 'Where's your proof?'" said Ka Ariel.

As for the marijuana cultivation, the NPAs have discouraged the practice by explaining to the people that they are being forced to do it because of their poverty and oppression. They also explain to



People's warriors: NPA squad passing through a barrio

Nowadays, when the military arrives in their barrios, it is the people who summon the soldiers and question them.

"You see, we taught them that since they pay taxes to support and feed the soldiers, it is the soldiers who should serve them and not the other way around," Ka Ariel explained. "Thus, when soldiers come, the people ask for their mission order and proudly order them to explain their presence in the village. In one instance, when the PC committed abuses during a military operation, the people even prepared a petition asking us to launch a counter-operation against the military," he recounted.

As a result, many soldiers have become careful not to abuse the people. "One time," said Ka Ariel, "a 20-man unit of the PC Benguet Command patrolling an area was offered sweet potatoes by the masses. The soldiers refused and sheepishly explained, '*Huwag na lang. Baka sa-bihin pa ninyo ninakaw namin.*' A few years ago, the military would have grabbed anything from the people without asking. *Yung mga sundalong dating humihingi o nagnanakaw lang ng pagkain sa masa, nag-babaon na lang.*"

The masses have also learned to zealously protect the Red fighters. Since the usual government propaganda is that there are no NPAs in Ilocos, the masses merely

them the negative effects of marijuana abuse on the lives and future of young people. "However, in the long run, the practice can only be rooted out once we establish a state that will truly work for the all-rounded development of national minorities and the majority of the Filipino people," stressed Ka Ariel.

The NPA's only apparent problem so far is the recruitment of full-time cadres and activists. Because of the region's economic backwardness, labor is very valuable. Many families cannot yet afford to let members leave their farms to work full-time for the revolution. However, the NPA is in the process of solving this problem by reviving cooperative and mutual aid practices and getting people to help families whose members work full-time in the revolution.

"Now, the ground is fertile for expansion," said Ka Ariel. "Already, the masses in the other villages keep asking our semi-legal teams, 'Where is the NPA? Why haven't the Red fighters come to our barrio yet? They know they are always welcome.'" Indeed, the rugged Ilocos Sur-Benguet border zone may be remote and forbidding to many, but not to the national democrat activists and guerrillas who have succeeded in bringing it into the mainstream of the revolution. **Abdul Ulap**

Romance in the hills

Two revolutionaries wed in the countryside

*Ang pag-ising dibdib
Ay pagpanday ng pag-ibig
Ito ay wagas na pangakong mag-alay
Ng panahon at buhay
Alang-alang sa iyong minamahal.*

*Ito rin ay kasunduan
Sa inilog na bayan
Pag-alay sa kanya
Ng panahon at buhay.*

It was the height of the monsoon season, but the sky cleared and the rains mercifully stopped that afternoon in October, giving a most welcome respite to the more than 40 comrades and guests who were gathered that day in a guerrilla camp deep in the forested highlands of southwestern Negros. The good weather meant that a planned open-air wedding ceremony for two comrades, Dodie, 26, and Ben, 29, would be possible after all.

In anticipation of the wedding, the different units, including the children who were with their parents in the guerrilla camp, used their free time to practice songs, dances and poems for the cultural presentation.

Even the camp's kitchen staff was already busier than usual days before the wedding. A cow, which had arrived, courtesy of the masses in a nearby barrio, was promptly butchered by the guerrilla-cooks and its meat, prepared in various ways. Strips were hung over the stoves and smoked to make *tapa* (grilled beef). Other chunks of beef were set aside for soaking in vats of spices and saltpeter to make corned beef. The food was not to be eaten all in one afternoon, however. It was to last for several days more, and the preparations were necessary to preserve the meat.

Nonetheless, the forthcoming wedding was reason enough to prepare something more special than the usual fare. A day before, sacks of flour were brought in, which the kitchen staff later kneaded to make dough. This was formed into hollow balls, and inside were placed small pieces of beef cooked with a sweet-spicy sauce. The miniature buns were then laid out on galvanized iron sheets and baked inside make-shift ovens.

The result — delicious meat rolls, bigger than a man's fist and tastier than those sold in most commercial bakeries. The bread buns were for *pamahaw*, or *merienda*, a treat the hard-living guerrillas usually enjoyed only during special occasions such as this. For *penyapon* (supper), there was going to be *dinugang baka*.

A moving ceremony

But the highlight of the affair was not to be in the feasting. It was in the wed-



Listening intently to a comrade's advice



A beaming couple poses for the camera

ding ceremony itself, which was both solemn and moving in its simplicity. Ben was not clad in a signature *barong* and neither was Dodie bedecked in something fashionable, white and frilly. They were in denim pants and T-shirts, dressed as they would be any other day of their lives in the guerrilla zones. As they sat side by side on a low, wooden bench, no cord or veil was slung over them to symbolize their union. Instead, a red flag

was draped over their shoulders to signify that they were bound both by a personal commitment to one another and by a deeper commitment to the people and the revolution.

Instead of a priest or judge, it was Ka Andres, a senior cadre, who stood before the gathering to preside over the ceremony. Before he began, he called for silence among the assembled comrades and guests, as the revolutionary movement, he said, considers marriage a serious matter. Sure enough, a hush settled over the camp, with only Ka Andres' and the couple's voices heard above the timid rustling of leaves in the wind.

Together, Ben and Dodie pledged, as husband and wife, to "wholeheartedly fulfill their responsibilities to each other and to the revolution," and that "neither of them would cause the dissolution of their marriage except on just grounds, and only with permission from their unit."

To the strains of Visayan and Tagalog love songs, the couple, together with Ka Andres and six other comrades who served as *ninongs*, *ninangs* and witnesses, signed the marriage contract.

As with many a wedding in the countryside, the ceremony was followed by a modest feast and a spirited cultural program with plenty of singing, dancing and merrymaking. The most applauded number, however, was the presentation of a local adaptation of the *smayling*, a Waray literary folk tradition similar to the Tagalog *balagtasan*. Here, groups debate extemporaneously on the merits of two opposing views on a subject, with the arguments presented in verse form, complete with rhyme and meter.

On that occasion, the "debate" centered on the differences between a bourgeois and a revolutionary wedding, with each humor-spiced argument sparking loud applause and ribtickling laughter from the audience. The celebration was capped by cries of "*Mabuhay ang bagong kasal!*" and a stirring rendition of the *International*, which everyone sang while standing at attention with clenched fists raised.

How love bloomed

Dodie and Ben's wedding in the countryside was the culmination of a relationship that slowly developed over the years.

They met in 1982 while attending an educational course for activists in the countryside. Dodie, then 23, was a student activist working part-time in the city. On the other hand, Ben, a former industrial worker, was already a seasoned cadre assigned to a district under the revolutionary front in southwestern Negros.

The educational course, which lasted a few days, provided enough opportunity for the other comrades to good-humoredly pair off Ben and Dodie who were the only unattached man and woman in the group.

Since the two hardly knew each other, they reacted to the teasing with deep blushes and embarrassed smiles. But unknown to Dodie, Ben was already nursing a crush on her. On her part, however, whatever Dodie felt for Ben other than comradely feelings, she momentarily brushed aside. "I wanted to concentrate first on my revolutionary work because I was still adjusting to conditions in the countryside," she said. Nonetheless, as new-found friends, the two agreed to write each other and share developments in each other's line of work.

through letters.

At first, they tried their best to be businesslike, and only wrote about their political work. But their feelings won out in the end, and soon, they were exchanging love letters as well.

Eight months later, while Ben was on a short leave from his unit, they both decided to present their relationship formally before their respective collectives. After carefully listening to the bases for their request, their units gave their approval. They were now officially engaged.

In order to help them get to know

would write to each other as often as our schedules would allow," said Dodie.

Their relationship, nurtured during a year-long engagement, later led to marriage. The date set for the wedding was also chosen to coincide with the time Ben was to attend a cadre training course in the southwest that was to last for several weeks. This way, they would be able to spend some time with each other before Ben once more left to resume his work in another guerrilla front. At the camp, they shared a tiny hut made of wood and banana stalks which other comrades built for them as a modest wedding gift.

Planning for the future

Like any other newly married couple, Ben and Dodie are anxious to make their marriage work. "When we met with senior comrades to review our relationship and receive pre-marital counselling, we were especially advised to be careful about two things. First, we were asked to avoid subjectivism; *kung mayroon kami hindi nagustuhan, dapat maglinawan kami kaagad para maiwasan ang tampuhan,*" she said.

"Second, we were to avoid liberalism in our relationship. If we had any problems, we were advised to consult our *ni-nongs* or our higher units. This is why we chose sponsors whom we can easily confide in. Also, we chose those who, though similarly situated, have successful marriages."

"We were also advised to respect and treat each other as comrades and not to allow feudal relations to set in. And, they reminded us to plan our family." Ben and Dodie intend to have two to three children, spaced at least three years apart. They would also prefer to raise their children in the countryside, although Dodie's parents have offered to care for them in the city.

But more than all this, their units have asked the newlyweds to make an added sacrifice, since both are right now badly needed in their respective collectives. They will thus have to continue spending long periods of time away from each other.

"Things would've been much simpler if we belonged to the same unit," said Dodie. "Once I integrated with the NPA and joined them in one of their operations to see if I had the stamina to become a Red fighter. But it proved to be too physically exhausting for me, and I collapsed after a few days," she said. "So for now, we are making the best of our situation in the hope that later, we could at least be assigned to the same area."

Ben's and Dodie's love for each other has transcended the barriers of class, time and physical distance. With an even deeper commitment to the revolution binding them, it cannot but endure.

Victoria Mansio



Barrio child gives wedding gift as newlyweds sign contract

A year later, Ben joined the NPA and was assigned to an area not far from where Dodie worked. At this point, he overcame his shyness and decided to formally court her. But his request was not approved when it was learned that another comrade was already wooing Dodie at that time. To avoid misunderstandings and petty quarrels, it is a policy in the revolutionary movement to allow only one comrade at a time to court another. Ben was advised to wait, and for a time he and Dodie stopped exchanging letters.

An unusual engagement

For a year, they heard little from each other. But in February 1984, they met again, and decided to have a long talk.

Her relationship with the other comrade had already ended, Dodie confided. This was welcome news to Ben. But he was distressed, just the same. His unit was about to be sent to an even farther guerrilla front, he told her. They were to be parted once more. This time, they could no longer hold back their feelings for each other. "*Nagtapatan na kami,*" said Dodie.

Pending approval of their respective units, however, they agreed not to build up their relationship. Instead, they decided to keep in touch with each other

each other better, comrades in the higher units assisted Dodie and Ben in making arrangements on how often they should see one another. It was necessary to plan ahead, because Ben was again about to be deployed to another far-flung area, and the only way the couple could meet during the engagement was for Dodie to visit him.

At first, Dodie felt uneasy about having to be the one to visit her fiancé. In the city, such an advance by the girl would be frowned upon, she thought. But the comrades explained to her that for their relationship to grow, she had to overcome such feelings. Also, the demands of revolutionary work meant that she could only take a two-week leave at most every three months to see Ben. And even then, they could only be together for two to four days at a time, since traveling on foot to reach Ben's area and returning took up the rest of her two-week leave.

"There was also a time," she recalled, "when I was not able to visit him for a span of six months. When I finally had the chance to do so, he was glad to see me, *pero nagkaroon ng konting tampuhan.*"

But even if they could not see each other very often, their letters more than made up for this. "Because we rarely saw each other, we cherished each other's letters even more. We saw to it that we

SPARKS

Newsbriefs about people's struggles

U.S. INTERVENTION ASSAILED IN PICKET



UP audience holds up anti-US bases poster to Solarz

Some 50 students of the University of the Philippines in Diliman picketed in front of the UP College of Law building last March 7 to denounce US intervention in Philippine affairs. The protest action was held as Rep. Stephen Solarz, chairman of the US Congressional Sub-committee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, spoke during a symposium and outlined a six-point plan designed to help the Aquino government fight the "insurgency" and achieve "economic recovery." Outside, the protesters booed Solarz and held up placards saying "American junk, get out of our system" and "Bases out!" During the open forum, members of the audience also peppered Solarz with questions regarding the US bases, the granting of political asylum to Marcos and the US stand regarding the deposed dictator's ill-gotten wealth stashed abroad.

PARADE MARKS INTL WOMEN'S DAY

Thousands of women representing different organizations held a colorful parade March 9 and proceeded to Malacanang where they held a program to celebrate International Women's Day. During the program, the organizers gave citations to courageous women whose active participation in democratic struggles was extolled. Among those cited were President Corazon Aquino who was named "Woman of the Year," Social Services minister Dr. Mita Pardo de Tavera, Good Government commissioner Atty. Mary Concepcion Bautista, anchorwoman Tina Monzon-Palma, and the women computer analysts who walked out to protest the fraudulent "quick count" by the Commission on Elections.

Earlier, from March 6 to 8, the Women's International Solidarity Affair in the Philippines (WISAP) was held. WISAP was sponsored by the external affairs desk of the General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership and Action (GABRIELA).

ARTISTS BAT FOR CULTURE MINISTRY CREATION

The Concerned Artists of the Philippines (CAP) urged the Aquino government to create a Ministry of Culture to ensure freedom of expression and at the same time "promote Philippine art and culture committed to truth, justice, freedom, democracy and the interests of the Filipino people." In a statement circulated soon after Aquino took power, the CAP "pledged its support and solidarity with all initiatives of the new government that will lead to full freedom of expression, return of civil liberties and respect for human rights." The CAP also called on the Filipino people to defend their gains and not to relax their vigilance until structures of dictatorship established under 20 years of Marcos rule have been completely dismantled.

IBALOIS EXORCISE MARCOS BUST

Some 500 Ibaloi tribespeople accompanied by members of other hill tribes, residents of nearby towns and tourists gathered last March 9 to witness a native ritual designed to "exorcise Marcos' evil spirit." The ritual was held at the 155-hectare Marcos Park in Agoo, La Union where the ousted dictator's giant bust is located. Pig's blood was poured on top of the Marcos statue amid the beating of gongs and drums. At the foot of the monument, other tribespeople danced around an open fire, where the pig was later roasted. The animal's bile and liver were then examined and were found clean — a sign, said the tribespeople, that Marcos' evil spirit had gone.

The participants, mostly Ibalois who were displaced when the park was built in 1981, were led by the Cordillera People's Alliance. They have petitioned the Aquino government for the return of their ancestral lands.

'JOB0' RETENTION BUCKED

Members of the Financial Intermediaries Society Against Tyranny and the Alliance of Bank Employees, Bankers and Businessmen for Economic Emancipation picketed the office of President Corazon Aquino at the Cojuangco bldg. to demand the ouster of Central Bank governor Jose 'Jobo' Fernandez. Fernandez was retained in his post by Aquino after she announced a government revamp.

Calling Fernandez an economic saboteur, the two protesting groups said he had a "track record of subservience to the deposed dictator Marcos and to the International Monetary Fund (IMF)." They also said Fernandez had caused the failure and closure of several banks and had a role in the overprinting of unregistered money. The bank closures were implemented to comply with IMF conditions imposed to "streamline" the country's financial sector, while the illegal printing of money was said to have been done to finance the KBL electoral campaign.

"MARTYR" DEMANDS JUSTICE FOR SALVAGE VICTIMS

At least 50 members of Mothers and Relatives Against Tyranny (MARTYR) petitioned the Aquino government to probe the cases of their relatives who were salvaged under the Marcos regime. In a letter circulated last March 9, MARTYR called on Aquino to create a Commission on Human Rights that will undertake a speedy, thorough and impartial investigation of the deaths of their loved ones. It said that those found guilty of the killings should be brought to justice. Among the signatories were Bona Valerio, sister-in-law of Fr. Nilo Valerio; Sotero Escandor, brother of Dr. Johnny Escandor; Nenita Orcullo, widow of Alexander Orcullo; Josefa Jopson, mother of Edgar Jopson; Fe Lacaba, mother of Emmanuel Lacaba; Mila Aguilar, widow of Magtanggol Roque; and Alicia Morelos, mother of Lorena Barros.

**INDEMNIFY VICTIMS
OF MILITARY ATROCITIES**



Blazing message: Nothing ambiguous about MARTYR's demand



Sison (left) with other ex-detainees in press conference

JOMA SISON TO SUE FM?

Released political detainee Jose Ma. Sison indicated he may go to the US to file a case against Marcos and his former AFP chief of staff Fabian Ver. In an interview last March 7, Sison was quoted as saying that he held Marcos "directly responsible" for all forms of physical abuse he had suffered while detained at Fort Bonifacio. The former Communist Party chairman, who was detained for more than eight years, recalled how he was subjected to "water cure," handcuffed to his cot for 18 months and kept in solitary confinement by his military captors on orders of Marcos.

NEW GROUP FORMED TO AID TORTURE VICTIMS

Militant doctors and other health workers formed recently the Philippine Action Concerning Torture (PACT) to help political detainees survive and recover from the trauma of prison life. PACT program chairman Dr. June Pagaduan-Lopez said the group's organizers were inspired by the work begun by the Denmark-based International Center for the Rehabilitation of Torture Victims. Aside from treating ex-detainees and conducting in-depth studies on torture, PACT also intends to campaign against the participation of military doctors in any form of torture or in the coverup of torture.

BAYAN URGES DEMOCRATIC REFORMS

The Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) recognized Corazon Aquino as the duly elected president of the Philippines the day after she was sworn in during a simple ceremony at the Club Filipino in San Juan on Feb. 25. Aquino's oath-taking rites were held only hours before Marcos fled the country.

In its statement, BAYAN urged the new president to "listen and take heed of the grievances of the various sectors, classes and political forces in society," and proposed that she "take serious efforts at ensuring genuine representation of all democratic sectors and social classes in her government." BAYAN said that if the "reign of national freedom, popular democracy, national unity and economic prosperity" is to be achieved, the new administration must truly represent the people's will and interest.

TOTAL DISMANTLING OF DICTATORSHIP URGED

TAMBULI, a cause-oriented group, called for the complete dismantling of the remaining structures of the Marcos dictatorship. In a caucus of its Central Committee this March, the group said these structures are the 1973 Marcos constitution, the Batasang Pambansa, the military and crony businesses. TAMBULI likewise hit the US for supporting Marcos, saying that Reagan would have continued to bat for the ousted dictator had the Filipino people not pressured him to do otherwise.

In the same meeting, TAMBULI also positively noted the restoration of the writ of habeas corpus and full civil liberties, as well as the release of all political detainees. It hailed Aquino's call for the formation of more organizations at the grassroots level.

CRACKS

Indicators of economic and political crisis

LONG DISTANCE, FROM HAWAII

Marcos is in disgrace and has been banished to an airforce base in Hawaii with little more to do than twiddle his thumbs. Or so it seems. The KBL bigwigs he left behind, among them Leonardo Perez, Cesar Virata, Blas Ople and Jose Rono, appear bent on reviving their lost glory at the behest of Marcos, who advised them to "stay united." The KBL holdouts say they are determined to survive in a set-up that has already promised to render them irrelevant. Topping their agenda for survival was a *quid pro quo* arrangement with Corazon Aquino where they offered to "legalize" her position if she would retain the Batasan, wherein they formed the majority, before the fall. In addition, local officials, most of them KBLs, have also raised an uproar over their impending replacement by the new government.

With much of Marcos' power base still intact, can a Marcos comeback be far behind?



'GODFATHER' BOBBY OF BINONDO



Don't look now, but despite the "snap revolution," erstwhile Trade Minister Roberto "Bobby" Ongpin continues to lord it as godfather of the Binondo Central Bank (read: the dollar blackmarket). Ongpin's role in building up a dollar trading monopoly surfaced anew when

Jose "Lito" M. Llige died of a heart attack last Jan. 30 under mysterious circumstances. It seems that Llige, a Ver boy, had been on Ongpin's hit list for some time because he was competition to his own boys in the blackmarketeering business. Llige further earned Ongpin's ire when the former was unable to raise the amount of P20 million for the KBL campaign kitty, which was required of every Binondo "banker."

As the election neared and the Binondo CB could no longer keep up with the increased demand for speculative dollars, Ongpin saw his chance to pounce on Llige. The minister accused Llige of sabotaging the operations of the Binondo CB by hoarding dollars, and ordered him arrested. Llige met his end at a detention cell in Fort Bonifacio, where he suffered a stroke and died after a few hours in a hospital without regaining consciousness.

Of course, Bobby Ongpin and his boys at the blackmarket were glad to have one less competitor, and looked forward to a time when they would eventually have the entire business all to themselves. After all, godfather Bobby, who used to find it so easy to run after his business rivals through the Presidential Anti-Dollar Seizing Task Force, has found other ways to maintain his control. And that way could be through younger brother Jimmy Ongpin who was recently designated Cory's Finance Minister.

BASE BUILDING

How serious is the US when it says it is prepared to dismantle its bases in the Philippines and transfer these to other islands in the Pacific? The pronouncement seems to be an empty one. In fact, US navy and air force officials are reportedly even planning to invest another \$1.3 billion in the construction of new military infrastructure in the Philippines

between now and 1992. Clark Air Base, in particular, is considered a "very austere facility." It is the oldest US air force base and many buildings have been in use since World War II. If the US' use of the bases is to be extended into the next century, US military officials said, "significant military construction investments will have to be made." With all these plans in the air, it seems the US intends to hold on to those bases for a very long time, indeed.

"TEN"

Just how badly the US wants to keep its bases was aptly illustrated by no less than Congressman Stephen Solarz, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs: "On a scale of 10," he said, "our interests (in the Philippines) are 6 1/2 for the military bases in Subic and Clark, 2 for US investments and trade and to be kind - 1 1/2 for Filipino human rights." Need one say more?



NOW, CAN IT BE TOLD?

Manuel Herrera, one of the Tanodbayan lawyers who handled the prosecution of Gen. Fabian Ver and 25 others accused in the Aquino murder has finally come around to admitting that the months-long trial was a Malacanang-directed *moro-moro* all along. The masterplan to cover up and whitewash the case was even codenamed "Olympus," perhaps to underscore the fact that the orders all came from the god in Malacanang himself.



Meanwhile, Lupino Lazaro, lawyer for the Galman family, also disclosed that testimony from new witnesses implicate deposed dictator Ferdinand Marcos and his wife. Added to the list, however, are Jolly Bugarin of the National Bureau of Investigation, Col. Balbino Diego, legal officer of Marcos' Presidential Security Command, former ministers Jose Aspiras, Estelito Mendoza, Gregorio Cendana and one more unidentified minister who, Lazaro said, was in a "delicate position." But with "people power" clamoring for the whole truth about the murder, will the mysterious minister long remain unnamed?

SKELETONS IN JOHNNY'S CLOSET

Speaking of deep, dark secrets, it's a wonder how Enrile will be able to keep from the public his many holdings in the Philippines, the US, Hongkong and the Caribbean. Once reputed to be the third-richest man in the country, Enrile was one of the Marcos cronies named during the height of the hidden wealth issue. With his snap change of allegiance last Feb. 22, perhaps he's hoping that the Filipino people will now develop selective amnesia and forget all about his dismal past.

LETTERS

Comments from readers

ON THE LEFT'S PERFORMANCE

Dear LIBERATION,

I want to raise several criticisms about the Left's role in the dramatic events of February. First, it failed to support Mrs. Aquino in her campaign. Also, it was absent at the four-day rebellion, and I think this is a grave mistake. As a result, the Left is now facing many problems in recruiting and convincing people about its ideas.

Greatly disturbing to me too are the comments of one "Ka Joyce," that appeared in a US publication. She said, "The insurgency will continue." Against what? I ask. Against a very brave people and a government yet untried?

Then there is also the comment of Lean Alejandro at a meeting with Enrile at the height of the rebellion, who was quoted as saying, "This is a war of the upper classes." Don't you think such statements isolate ourselves from the mainstream of contemporary history?

Of course, most Filipinos are aware of the multitude of problems that are still there. But today, our people are more vigilant and braver. They have seen what true democracy costs. Now is the time to institute changes, and the new government seems very willing to incorporate them.

Don't you think it's time for someone to come forward and make an honest effort to work with the new government? Someone should really try to explain the Left's position and not isolate it from the rest.

The ceasefire offer was a good first step. Freeing the political detainees was another one. Now, it's the Left's turn.

Linda

We share your concern for the current problems besetting the national democratic forces. These problems are presently the subject of ongoing meetings among many of our groups. We are optimistic, however, that through the conscious study of such problems and critical self-examination, we can concretely identify the roots of these problems and resolutely correct our mistakes.

In this effort at rectification, we encourage openness and the broadness of mind and, yes, the humility to admit mistakes. Any dogmatic and narrow views should be criticized because these will only serve to impede the development of the revolutionary struggle. As revolutionaries, we should also be resolute in criticizing any view or policy which tends to isolate the national democratic forces from the masses of the people. For any such view or policy will ultimately cause the retrogression of the whole movement.

On your question regarding the Left's attitude toward the Aquino government, the national democratic forces on the whole are very open to it and welcome close alliance with it, especially in advancing the democratic and nationalist interests of our people. We believe in the sincerity and patriotism of Corazon Aquino and many other progressive members of her Cabinet.

Your letter raises several other questions which we hope to tackle more extensively in our next issues, particularly in the Viewpoint section which presents the opinions of various individuals and forces in the broad united front. In this regard, we invite you, Linda, as well as our other readers to please send in your contributions to this section. In doing so, you will greatly help in the constructive discussion and analysis of current issues and problems in the revolutionary movement.

COUNTERCURRENTS

The Philippine government and the US

Still the enemy

US imperialist menace continues despite Marcos' ouster



Student picket at UP: Thumbs down for US imperialism

"The first thing Mr. Marcos wanted to know was 'whether the message delivered by the State Department (that Reagan wanted him to step down) was valid.'"

"I said it was," said Laxalt.

"Mr. Marcos wanted to know if 'something could be worked out' so he and Mrs. Aquino could share power, but I said I thought it was impractical."

"Then, he asked me the gut question, 'Senator, what should I do?' (Because) I wasn't bound by diplomatic niceties, I said, 'Cut and cut cleanly. The time has come.'"

Malaya, Feb. 27, 1986

When deposed dictator Ferdinand Marcos decided last Nov. 3 to hold a snap presidential election, it was because he wanted to show his American patron that he was still in control of the country. The people, however, overwhelmingly voted for Corazon Aquino, but the Marcos-controlled Batasang Pambansa still proclaimed him winner. This led the opposition to escalate a program of civil disobedience and Marcos responded by secretly drawing up a list of some 5,000 oppositionists to be arrested after his formal inauguration. Even when Filipinos, in hundreds of thousands, thronged to Camp Crame to support the military rebellion, Marcos still held on to power.

It was that single phone call to US Senator and Reagan confidant Paul Laxalt, made in the middle of the night of Feb. 24, that finally convinced the ailing

dictator that his reign was over. After all, the only vote that mattered to Marcos in his entire 20-year rule was the US vote.

That vote which catapulted him to absolute power in 1972 proved crucial in his hasty exit from a country teetering on the brink of civil war. That vote was withdrawn from him when it became clear to the US that Marcos was on his way out — and that the US as his main backer could go down with him. If anything, these US maneuvers unmasked the fundamental reactionary character of US policy in the Philippines. This US politics of self-interest, opportunism and hypocrisy was most evident at the time of the snap election fracas and up to the final days of Marcos' collapse.

The snap election gimmick

The Feb. 7 polls was, first and foremost, intended as a publicity gimmick for the Marcos regime, with the American public as the primary audience. The election campaign was a campaign to get, not the people's vote, but actually the US government's. The snap election was designed to prove that democracy still existed under Marcos and to quell growing protests that the US government was giving aid to a dictator. Whatever names the ballots contained never mattered because Marcos controlled all state machinery, from the Commission on Elections to the National Assembly to the military.

However, the election, aimed at bring-

ing political stability in the country and legitimacy to Marcos' rule, ironically backfired on both Marcos and the US. No amount of deodorizing could cover up the stench of cheating and terrorism perpetrated by the ruling party. The massive frauds, the scores of election-related killings, the walk-out of the Comelec tabulators and the disenfranchisement of millions of voters forced even the American observer team headed by Sen. Richard Lugar to admit that the election was not a democratic exercise as it was hyped to be in the crony-owned newspapers.

Marcos' tainted victory in a dirty election left the US government in a serious dilemma. On the one hand, Washington's continued support of Marcos meant inviting the ire of the American public and the international community and worsening anti-US sentiments already rising in the Philippines. The problem was compounded when several nations openly refused to recognize the new "mandate" of Marcos.

On the other hand, there was Marcos' 20-year record of being a trusted ally, even a close friend of Reagan. Even from the start of the snap election, Marcos was the US' favored candidate over Aquino who had openly decided to "keep her options open" regarding the US military bases, the pivot of US interests in the Philippines.

The US attempted to buy time by sending yet another emissary allegedly to gather more information on the Philippine situation. Philip Habib, who was American envoy to Lebanon and the Middle East, was tasked this time with persuading the opposition to give up its claim of victory in the polls and instead work with Marcos in a proposed presidential advisory council. The council was to consist of three opposition members and three from the Kilusang Bagong Lipunan, Marcos' party.

But Habib's Philippine mission turned out to be a greater failure than his Lebanon or Middle East assignments. Not only did the opposition reject the idea of power-sharing, they even decided to lead a nationwide protest against Marcos' sham victory. But this did not deter Reagan from issuing statements urging the opposition and the ruling party to work together in a "viable" government. A close aide of Reagan also called on the two sides "to come together" and warned them not "to have demonstrations in the streets just because you didn't like the results of the election" — a very pointed attack on Aquino's call for daily demonstrations against the farcical elections.

Reagan's statements revealed where US support really rested. He even praised the Philippine elections as proof of the existence of a healthy two-party system here which, according to him, was "obviously good" for the Filipinos. In defense of Marcos, he also said that there was only



Rapping US military intervention

"an appearance of fraud" during the polls, that "they (the observers) did not have hard evidence" and that the fraud and violence "could have been occurring on both sides."

Reagan's open and outright support of Marcos, despite numerous evidences of cheating on the dictator's part, made the opposition realize that they could not depend on the US to get Marcos out of Malacanang. The White House's continued policy of supporting Marcos stripped some of them of their illusions about America's "solicitude for democracy in the Philippines."

Corazon Aquino wisely saw through Habib's advisory council proposal as a "consuelo de bobo," a scheme to pacify the opposition. As MP Homobono Adaza aptly put it: "It was just like being raped and being told to enjoy the rape." The US' obvious conspiracy with Marcos and its self-interest made Aquino more determined to fight Marcos and claim the victory which the people had vested in her. In a rally dubbed "Tagumpay ng Bayan" in Rizal Park on Feb. 16, the feisty Aquino stated: "No tinsel and celebration of the President's make-believe win can hide his loss of moral and political authority. He is beaten. When is he going to go?"

Clearly, the opposition was not open to any compromise with Marcos, or as Sen. Benigno 'Ninoy' Aquino himself phrased it, "No deal with a dictatorship."

The US: "Segurista"

The defection of defense minister Juan Ponce Enrile and Gen. Fidel Ramos on Feb. 22 gave the US as well as Marcos a massive shock. During the first few hours

of the siege, the White House kept a very cautious silence. Evidently, the US chose to see first how much support the defectors had and how US interests could best be protected before deciding which side to support.

The next day, as thousands flocked to Camps Crame and Aguinaldo where Enrile and Ramos were holed up, the signs became clear. The White House broke its silence. Said Reagan spokesman Larry Speakes: "The only solution to the crisis can be found only in a peaceful transition."

All throughout the four-day siege, the US insisted that their only concern was to avoid bloodshed, conveniently forgetting the millions of dollars in aid it gave to the Marcos regime to kill and terrorize hundreds of rural and urban protesters. If the US was worried at all, it wasn't because of Filipinos being killed in an outright mortar fight between the Marcos loyalists and reformists, but because of the radicalizing effect this would have on the people.

Although Reagan later retracted his statements on election cheating, he still continued to support Marcos whom US Secretary of State George Schultz described as "a constructive force and reliable ally." As with the ousted US-supported dictator of Haiti, Jean Claude Duvalier, transportation and sanctuary were swiftly arranged for the beleaguered Marcos, his family and cronies, including Gen. Fabian Ver. First, at Clark Air Base in Pampanga, then at Andersen Air Base in Guam and later, at Hickam Air Base in Hawaii.

As these concrete evidences of the US' rabid support for its fallen ally stirred strong anti-US sentiments, the US quickly tried to repair its own battered image. In various statements, US officials vainly tried to claim false credit for the ouster

of Marcos. Said Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger in an American TV talk-show, "US forces gave logistical support to rebel-piloted helicopter gunships during the critical face-off." He said the US gave them "aid and comfort" by allowing the helicopters to refuel at Clark. The implication was that, had it not been for American support, the rebels would have been defeated by the Marcos forces.

"It was important that that group (rebels) in this Camp (Crame) not be attacked, and the presence of the helicopters over this group could well have discouraged any sort of attack," Weinberger claimed.

In addition, Adm. William Crowe, chairman of the US Armed Forces Joint Chiefs of Staff, averred that US military facilities had been used to keep communication lines open between the Enrile-Ramos and Marcos factions. He claimed this move was a major factor in the relatively bloodless outcome of the revolution.

The accounts of the reformists, however, belie the US' claims. According to the reformists, they were on their way to a strafing mission and only decided to defect upon seeing the thousands of civilians massed in front of the two camps. Had the pilots not changed their minds then, the US would have been providing support to Marcos troops to annihilate the reformists as well as the civilians. In fact, the US had no way of knowing that the pilots would defect, but Clark willingly provided fuel to the air-borne group on its way to kill thousands of people.

To these blatant lies of the US, an indignant military reformist replied: "We owe nothing to the US." In fact, the reformists had earlier sent an urgent signal to the US embassy to ask for help on the first night of their rebellion. It took



A rise that failed: Rallyists expose US-Marcos role in poll fraud, violence

two days before the embassy could bring itself to answer the call. "Now we know who our real friends are," added the reformist. He said the incident served as an "eye-opener" for him about the United States, and how it ensures first its interests. "America's reluctance, even today to abandon Marcos despite his staggering robbery of the Filipino people exposes the US for what it really is - calculating, manipulative and self-serving."

Still the enemy

That Marcos is now out of power, however, does not mean that the US has completely lost its control over the country. Observers note the dangerous presence in the Cabinet of certain elements who not only served before in the Marcos dictatorship but who rabidly espouse as well pro-US imperialist interests.

Only recently, defense minister Enrile, an old Marcos and US hand, signified that the US bases should be allowed to stay "in the interest of the Philippines." The *Kabataang Makabayan*, in a statement, denounced Enrile's statement as "not only contemptuous of our national sovereignty, but also stand in direct contravention to the position of the present liberal leadership which has not discounted the possibility of eliminating these bases after the RP-US Military Bases Agreement expires in 1991."

The KM, the NDF's revolutionary youth organization, said Enrile has "unwittingly exposed himself as a leading harbinger of US imperialist policies in the military." Questioned the KM: "Does Enrile represent the umbilical cord connecting US interests to the AFP?"

For its part, the NDF noted in a press statement released through the *Balita ng Malayang Pilipinas*, its official news agency: "We have nothing to thank the US for. In reality, Washington was decisive in propping up its puppet Marcos until the very last day of his ignominious collapse. Let us remember that it was the struggle of the people behind Corazon Aquino, the courageous widow of assassinated opposition leader Benigno Aquino - and not the US - that ousted Marcos."

In the same statement, the NDF called on the people to vigilantly oppose any moves of the US that would undermine the gains of the anti-fascist struggle. "We believe that as long as the US maintains economic and military interests in the Philippines, the Filipino people will never truly be free."

What remains today, therefore, for the Filipino people is, to use US imperialism's own words, "to cut and cut cleanly" US imperialism itself and all other remnants of the Marcos dictatorship from the face of Philippine society. "That is the gut question now facing the people and the many sincere and patriotic officials of the Aquino government. **Liz Beltran**

A legacy of crisis

New government faces an economy in shambles



Targeting the author of the economic crisis

After more than two decades of fiscal mismanagement, gross corruption and utter subservience to US interests, the Marcos dictatorship has been finally booted out by an enraged population. The month of February saw the rapid forging of a powerful mass movement that accelerated the downfall of a hated dictatorial regime amidst the flip-flopping of US policy. To the vast majority, the stark reality of the US "permanent interests" and the truth behind the US "bids for democratic processes" stood out, in stark contrast to the real democratic interests being pushed forward by the Filipino people themselves.

Today, as the new Corazon Aquino government assumes the mantle of leadership, tremendous efforts are needed to bail out the country from the economic morass left by the Marcos dictatorship.

According to official statistics, the Philippine economy experienced another year of decline in output in 1985. The reported decline can only reflect the enormous suffering experienced by the broad masses of the Filipino people under the previous regime. The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) estimated that GNP declined by 3.95% in 1985 after a 5.5% fall in 1984. On a per capita basis, this means that national output declined by 6.27% in 1985. It also means that since 1983, the economy's per person output dropped by 14.3%.

These developments can only be interpreted as a disaster in any economy. It is a catastrophe in an underdeveloped and oppressive economic system where 70% of the population do not have sufficient income to provide for their basic living requirements. It is an unmitigated disaster

for majority of the Filipino people because the economy's overall decline of about 4% is not experienced equally.

While many Filipino workers, peasants, urban professionals and small businessmen lost their jobs, their businesses, lands and a significant part of their incomes through taxation, high interest rates, levies and inflation, the small section of foreign capitalists, large monopoly companies and financial institutions, big landlords and big compradors as well as high government officials saw their incomes and wealth increase in the midst of the crisis. Thus, the fact that officially the income of all Filipinos fell by 4% can only mean that the income of the majority of Filipinos fell by at least 20% while the small group of oppressors especially the ousted Marcos family had been augmenting its wealth in the midst of the crisis.

The decline is more disastrous for the majority of the people since the official estimate can only be viewed as being on the optimistic side. The preliminary estimate will be recalculated in April 1986 at which point we can expect a downward revision to a rate not better than minus 4-5%.

An examination of the details of the official estimate reveals that declines were experienced in consumption and were especially pronounced in investment spending. Total consumption increased by barely 0.25% (less than 1%), which translates to a minus 2.17% on a per capita basis (a decline that is moreover unequally shared). The consumption decline forced businesses in food processing to close down, depressed prices of food and agricultural output and was the immediate cause of massive layoffs.

Agriculture, the traditional source of so much oppression, had managed to exhibit some positive growth of 0.80 and 1.27 for 1984 and 1985 respectively. This, however, still means a minus 1.67 and minus 1.2 on a per capita basis. If the agricultural sector produced only food (and it does not, since agriculture exports are significant), these developments mean that the country's capability to feed itself is being put under increasing risk.

The failed IMF program

The catastrophic economic record can only be laid at the door of an impoverishing IMF adjustment program that was assiduously prosecuted by the US-Marcos dictatorial regime, forcing the broad majority of our people to carry all of the adjustment. The IMF program has been and still is directed at servicing the foreign debt, which is nothing but the ser-

ving of the demands of foreign capital on the output of the Filipino masses.

Overall investment spending fell by 14.8% in 1985 after falling by 26.9% in 1984. This can only mean that in the future, the economy will have a diminished capability to provide for its own requirements as this capability is not being updated and improved to keep up with the growing population and to alleviate mass poverty. Construction declined by 26.9% in 1985, leading to a loss in jobs by many workers.

The decline in consumption and investment can only be interpreted as a whole-

gram was succeeding. The IMF program, dedicated towards the collection of foreign debt, continues to impose targets for the balance of payments, the inflation rate and money supply. The Marcos government achieved these targets but only at the expense of employment, incomes and business activity. A person can always repay his debt by starving to death - a reality which almost all Filipinos, except the very rich, experience first-hand.

The termination of the current IMF program by June 1986 will not see a restructuring of the economy towards sustainable growth, as claimed by program

shambles which the Marcos dictatorship left in its wake makes the economy more vulnerable to additional aid. Such aid will be provided by the US, Japan and their allies and through the World Bank and other international agencies.

This aid will be motivated not by the anguished cries of the Filipino people for relief but by the need to maintain the Philippines as a paradise for foreign capital and as a haven for US strategic military interests in the region. The motives by which the US propped up the Marcos dictatorship, by which it reluctantly let the discredited dictator go, and by which it now welcomes the present government, do not change. For this reason, it is expected that such aid, should it be given and accepted, will have as its principal *raison d'être* the suppression of the people's resistance and as its principal component the costs of a counter-insurgency campaign.

Thus, the projected post-election aid had two prongs: the propping up of the US-Marcos dictatorship, specifically to shore up a crashing economy and to suppress people's resistance. In any case, US imperialism has only two effective handles with which it can maintain its life-threatening grip on the Philippine economy: direct military intervention and foreign aid.

Today, the imperialist interest can be expected to attempt to cover up the economy's bankruptcy by pouring in massive aid to the country. This aid will benefit these interests in two ways. First, it will temporarily provide the economy with resources with which to rewrite its debt. This will prevent huge losses on the part of capitalist banks on their loans to the country. Second, it will delay the country's efforts at addressing its deep-seated structural problems which ultimately explain its bankruptcy.

The provision of these foreign resources, much of which will become the debt of the country as a whole, could permit the country to avoid the reallocation of property rights, except as these apply to the members of the Marcos dictatorship. This will allow the landlord and comprador-bourgeoisie classes, the agents of US imperialism, to continue to dominate the country's political processes.

The Aquino government should accept aid only in so far as such aid is consistent with the interests of the broad masses of the people and only in so far as this permits the country to address its structural problems. With such beneficial aid and informed economic management, the economy should be able to grow by 2.5% in 1986. But such an aid-financed growth rate, which translates to zero growth per capita, would be a delusion if the structural problems endemic to a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country remain unchanged. **NDF Businessmen's and Professionals' Collective**

PHILIPPINE ECONOMY



sale dismantling of the industrial and financial sectors of the economy. The official estimates reveal a 10% decline in industrial output for both 1984 and 1985. For manufacturing alone, the decline was 8% which was worse than the 7.1% fall in 1984.

Even in its own terms, the IMF program has been failing, since exports (a sector that is also the source of so much exploitation and oppression), did not increase as expected, after the enormous sacrifices through devaluations, inflation and tariff reductions that have been imposed to favor it. Instead of increasing by 10%, merchandise exports declined by 14% in 1985. The dismantling of industrial capacity brought about by the high interest rate policy endangers the prospects of long-term growth itself. For these reasons, the Marcos government men in its twilight years projected at best a 1.5% growth in 1986, which still translates to a minus 0.97% in per capita terms.

This did not prevent the Marcos regime from claiming that the IMF recovery pro-

ponents. It can only mean the start of a new round of negotiations for another IMF program, and the continuation of mass hardship as long as the present crisis-ridden economic system is permitted to continue. The maintenance of this system is becoming more problematical as the economy sputters, its domestically generated resources diminish and its access to foreign finance shrinks, especially as the people attain higher levels of struggle in their continuing desire to change the entire semi-colonial and semi-feudal setup.

Foreign aid for whom?

The shortfalls in exports and foreign commercial financing partly necessitated the staging of the rigged election exercise of Feb. 7 (which is by nature contradictory to the requirements of a sound economic recovery), to pave the way for greater aid inflow thereby making up for these shortfalls. Despite the emergence of a new government and the renewed sense of hope it is bound to bring, the



Human rights vigil: Swiss supporters protesting militarization

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY Resistance and struggles abroad

FM against the world

International solidarity helped in pushing Marcos' downfall

"People power" both here and abroad finally ousted the hated dictator Marcos. His downfall was the result of years of relentless struggle by the Filipino people, whose efforts were buoyed up by the solidarity of freedom-loving peoples of other countries.

But the final push that led to the dictator's hasty flight was the overwhelming pressure that had descended upon him from his own countrymen as he set out to accomplish what was to be his last but most brazen assault against the Filipino people — the fraudulent Feb. 7 snap election.

Assailing FM's sham victory

Already much-despised in his own country, Marcos' isolation further sharpened as the international community also rose as one in condemning his sham victory. One by one, diplomats from Canada, Australia, New Zealand and several Western European countries expressed concern about the controversy-ridden results of the snap polls. As Marcos' scheduled inauguration neared, they delivered another stinging blow when they indicated their refusal to attend the affair and did not send the congratulatory messages routinely given to newly elected heads of state.

From The Netherlands, NDF international representative Luis Jalandoni also assailed Marcos' sham victory as a "harmless abuse of the democratic process" and urged democratic governments, parties and organizations to declare Marcos' government illegitimate and to withdraw all aid from it.

In contrast, the US government stubbornly held on to the dictator they had been supporting for two decades. The US refused to categorically condemn the fraud-ridden polls even after it had received reports on this from US observer-teams.

Meanwhile, the Japan-based Association to Support the Liberation of the Filipino People (KAI) issued two strongly worded statements addressed to US President Ronald Reagan and Japan Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone which criticized the role of US and Japanese imperialism in propping up the Marcos regime.

Other Philippine solidarity groups abroad had also exposed beforehand the snap polls as a US-Marcos scheme to preserve the dictatorship. As early as Dec. 10, for example, the Alliance of Philippine Concerns (APC), an umbrella organization of about 50 US- and Canada-based groups of migrant Filipinos and North American friends issued a statement charging that the Feb. 7 election was a "thinly veiled attempt by the US to further consolidate the repressive rule of Marcos and pave the way for the approval of increased aid to a dying regime."

As protests escalated after Feb. 7 in the wake of massive election frauds and terrorism, a number of government officials abroad decided to wire in their support of the people's move to oust Marcos. Among the first to do so were Philippine consulate officials based in Honolulu and Los Angeles and the staff of the Philippine embassy in Madrid. International condemnation of Marcos peaked during the Feb. 22-25 siege as

the dictator lost all his legitimacy to rule.

Faced with the stark reality that its puppet was soon to be forced out of power by his own people, the US belatedly withdrew its support from Marcos, but offered him asylum and indicated that he may keep millions of dollars worth of cash, jewelry and financial papers spirited out of the Philippines when he fled. Meanwhile, Spain, once rumored to have been willing to accept Marcos as a political exile, firmly denied that such an arrangement had ever been made. Thus, in the end, as it had been for the past 20 years, it was Marcos and the US in each others' arms.

Within hours of the dictator's flight from the Philippines, messages of recognition and support for the newly installed administration of Corazon Aquino poured in from at least 13 foreign governments and international groups.

Two of Aquino's early well-wishers were the Filipino-Irish Group (FIG) and the Filipino community in Japan. Both expressed the hope that the new government would establish a "truly independent and democratic society in the Philippines." They also urged the immediate and unconditional release of political prisoners. In addition, the Filipinos in Japan called for the dismantling of "every remnant of the dictatorship," opposition to any US effort to maintain domination and control over Philippine affairs, and the affirmation of the people's power at the community level.

On March 3, the NDF international office based in The Netherlands also hailed the people's ouster of Marcos and welcomed the establishment of Aquino's government but also said that it was "deeply disturbed by the presence in the



Solidarity from Italy helped set them free

(new) cabinet of, among others, Enrile and Ramos who were the chief architects and consistent implementors of the martial law regime." Jalandoni, who signed the statement, expressed fears that the US may renew its attacks on the Filipino people under the guise of anti-communist hysteria through pro-US elements identified with the US-Marcos dictatorship who were left behind.

Human rights exposés

The Marcos regime's international isolation is part of a long process that began after Sept. 21, 1972 with the widespread exposure of the dictatorship's numerous human rights abuses. Just last December 1985, the Marcos regime's notorious human rights record was again the focus of international attention in activities sponsored by solidarity groups and Filipino residents in Europe and the US.

In Britain, the Philippine Support Group, together with the British Council of Churches, Amnesty International and Central American support groups held an ecumenical service at the St. James Church in London, the evening of Dec. 10. Attended by 250 people, the activity focused on the human rights situation in the Philippines and US-supported repressive regimes in Central America.

In Belgium, the regional support group for the Philippines in Overpelt organized an information and fund-raising campaign for political prisoners and their children, raising a total of 22,909 Belgian francs. Activities on the Philippines were also undertaken on Dec. 10 in at least four cities in West Germany.

In Dublin, Ireland, an ongoing picket in front of the US embassy entered its 150th day last Dec. 11. The picket is being held to protest the disappearance of Fr. Rudy Romano who was kidnaped by Marcos military men July last year.

In the US, the Washington Forum, a group of Filipinos based in Washington DC held a house meeting and a slide show on Dec. 6 to heighten people's awareness about the gravity of human rights violations in the Philippines and inform them about the escalation of the Filipino people's struggles against the US-Marcos dictatorship.

On Dec. 10 itself, activities were held almost simultaneously in four places across the US. These included a press conference in Los Angeles sponsored by the Philippine Resource Center and the APC and an ecumenical mass held at the St. Paul of the Shipwreck Church in San Francisco jointly sponsored by the church and the Political Prisoners Adoption Group.

All told, it was gestures of solidarity such as these, merged with Filipino "people power," that rapidly pushed the isolation of Marcos and hastened his downfall. ■

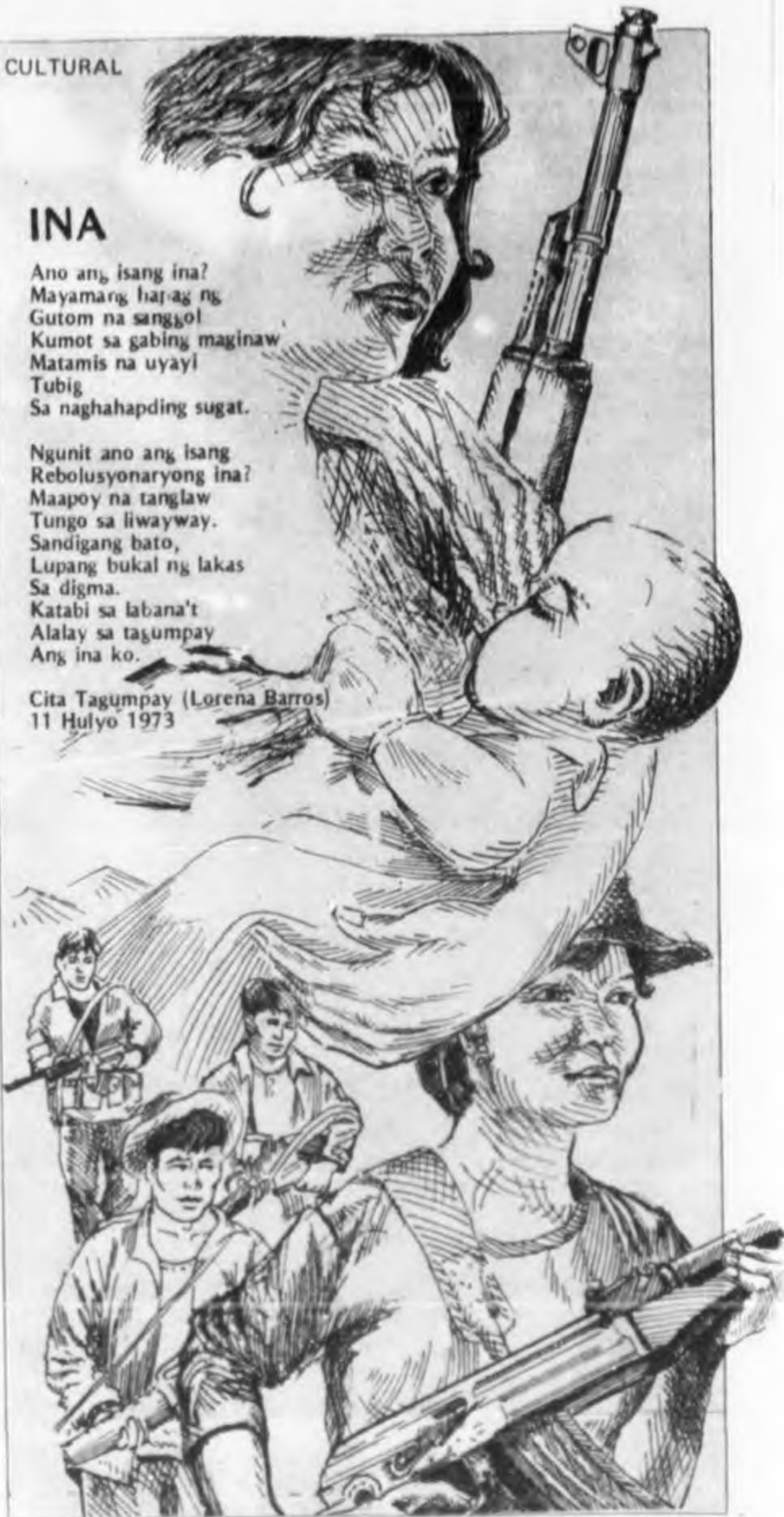
CULTURAL

INA

Ano ang isang ina?
Mayamang harap ng
Gutom na sanggol
Kumot sa gabing maginaw
Matamis na uyayi
Tubig
Sa naghahapding sugat.

Ngunit ano ang isang
Rebolusyonaryong ina?
Maapoy na tanglaw
Tungo sa liwayway.
Sandigang bato,
Lupang bukal ng lakas
Sa digma.
Katabi sa labana't
Alalay sa tagumpay
Ang ina ko.

Cita Tagumpay (Lorena Barros)
11 Hulyo 1973



POINTBLANK

SNAP HITS '86

ANG LAHAT NG ITOY DAHIL SA TOY

SAAN SAAN AKO MAGKAMALI



Spain
Indonesia
BRUNAI
SINGAPORE
Isla de
P...
?



DAMN YOU COMMUNIST!!!

WHAT CEASEFIRE??

