

547 04.74

LIBERATION

NEW!
A Column by
Satur C. Ocampo

VOL. XV NO.4 PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE PHILIPPINES AUGUST 1987 P3.00



Gov's land reform program

Harvest of despair

JANTE L. AMBROSIO
KOLFKSYON

"Is it all a question of political will?"

In her first state-of-the-nation address to the reconstituted bicameral legislature, Corazon C. Aquino railed against foreign creditors for virtually blackmailing her government into acceding to terms of the country's debt restructuring program that were "far short of our expectations, and more importantly, of our urgent needs." Mrs. Aquino may have deserved the applause when she vowed "never again to let the patrimony of the nation lie at the feet of these noble houses, that have finally shown the true face of foreign finance."

But, as in earlier instances when she had expressed disappointment over the failure of foreign governments — specifically the US government — to deliver on promised assistance, Mrs. Aquino fell short of calling for resolute and definitive measures to redress the blatantly slurred national dignity and to assert national independence and sovereignty. Had she done so, she could have deserved the people's encomium.

Instead, Mrs. Aquino came away with nothing more than an anguished cry, with what amounted to a confession of helplessness at the heels of rapacious international finance (a facet of imperialism). Indirectly, she tossed to the new legislature the task of facing up to the financial dragon, in the style of St. George, to save the distressed damsel of her government.

In no way did Mrs. Aquino hint that she had reconsidered her declared position to honor all foreign debts, as though to go back on her promise would sully the vaunted honesty of her government. This, even as Mrs. Aquino distressedly pointed out that net repayments on the \$28-billion foreign debt each year would take up 5% of the gross national product, 40% of government expenditures, 45% of export earnings, and 27% of total foreign exchange income. All told, \$20.4 billion to be paid in the next six years.

Mrs. Aquino's stand betrays a continuing lack of political will to grapple with and resolve the basic problems of the nation. She had shown a similar lack of political will when she grudgingly signed an executive order on land reform (EO 229) that leaves to the largely conservative, landlord-dominated legislature the manner of implementing it. (Even in the case of the numerous executive orders she had signed before the formal opening of the legislature, Mrs. Aquino said she had provided between 60-day to one-year effectivity dates "to give Congress time for a second look.")

The Aquino regime's pattern of governance is to defer action as long as possible on festering national problems, or to take short-term, palliative measures only to allay public concern or partially to meet popular demand. Consequently, the national problems worsen, as witness, among many others, the peace and order situation in both city and countryside, the unsatisfied demands of organized labor, the restiveness of government employes; and yes, the peasants' clamor for genuine agrarian reform, and the lack of resolution of the foreign debt crisis.

It is now obvious that the Aquino regime works within, and loathes to go beyond, the narrow parameters of the traditional mode of bourgeois rule — thus putting to naught the revolutionary means by which it had taken power in February 1986, and dashing popular hopes for real change after the downfall of the Marcos dictatorship.

In the case of the foreign debt problem, the Aquino regime's realization of the "true face of foreign finance" went no further than the latter's refusal to give the Philippines similar treatment as Mexico and Argentina, that got better terms on their debts. Hence, the regime's general reaction is effete to seek "better terms," or terms similar to those given to the two countries.

Nowhere in the Aquino regime's agenda is there any consideration of fully freeing the nation from the fetters of international finance, no matter how exploitative and oppressive its terms of dealing with governments of poor nations. That would be unthinkable for a government that adheres to the tenets of private enterprise, and the foolish premise that the national economy must depend on foreign loans and investments for survival and progress. It is precisely this chronic adherence to capitalist notions that keeps the country within the "debt trap" of international finance, options blazed by independence-bent countries notwithstanding.

Is it all then a question of political will, or the lack of it? More fundamental than the question of political will is the fact that the Aquino regime is restricted by its very class base and composition — a regime of the big bourgeois-comprador and landlord classes collaborating with US imperialism — from initiating and pursuing genuine policy changes that would benefit the majority of the people. Such changes are anathema to the ruling classes.

IN THIS ISSUE

Cover: Anguished face of a Nueva Ecija peasant

Cover stories: Contrary to its claims, the Aquino regime's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), which it launched last July 22, fails to redress the historic injustices suffered by the Filipino peasantry. In this issue, *LIB* exposes the serious deficiencies of CARP. Also featured is a short article on how the NDF's minimum program of agrarian reform is benefiting barriofolk in western Pangasinan.

EDITORIAL	2
COVER STORIES	
An edict for those to the	
error born	3
"Rising from the hard earth"	6
MAINSTREAM	
MAKIBAKA: From the personal	
to the political	8
NPA: Taking captives in	
Cagayan	9

NPA: Dating strikes in	
Central Luzon	10
SPARKS	11
LETTER	11
COUNTERCURRENTS	
Wielding the sword of a	
only we	12
THROUGH AND BEYOND	
The pathman is in error	16

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. **LIBERATION** is the official publication of the NDF.

COVER STORIES

On today's significant issues and events

An edict for those to the manor born

Aquino regime enacts pro-landlord "agrarian reform" program

After more than five months of indecision and at least 15 draft proposals, the government of Corason Aquino, last July 22, finally issued Proclamation No. 131, "instituting a comprehensive agrarian reform program," and Executive Order No. 229 (EO 229), which provides the mechanism for implementation of the program.

As expected, the executive order is a much-watered down version of the previous drafts. By leaving to the landlord- and comprador-dominated Congress the decision on priorities and land retention limits, EO 229 essentially upholds the primacy of landlord interests. At the same time, the EO expressly favors the corporate and agribusiness interests by exempting them outright from the scope of land distribution, by providing other options. Worse, EO 229 openly attacks the militant and organized peasants who, because of the Aquino regime's own foot-dragging on the land issue, have taken the initiative to implement their own kind of agrarian reform.

Landlord-comprador rule

Contrary to what has been widely projected in the bourgeois mass media, the principal issue is not whether a land reform program promulgated by the executive is better than one legislated by Congress. The truth is that both branches of government are committed to the protection of landlord and comprador interests. The seeming contradiction between the "social reformers" in the Aquino Cabinet on the one hand, and the spokesmen of the propertied classes in the legislature on the other hand springs from the fact that, by and large, the landlord class has not reconciled itself to the reality that a legislated agrarian reform is its best alternative to being swept away by the people's agrarian revolution.

Proponents of agrarian reform in the Aquino Cabinet, in contrast, were conscious of the growing threat to the exploitative rule of landlords and compradors. This was clear in the strong counter-insurgency pitch they gave to



Unheeded pleas: Peasant rallyists lobby for genuine land reform decree

the proposed land reform program especially immediately after the breakdown of the ceasefire negotiations with the National Democratic Front (NDF). Thus they strongly favored a land redistribution program, albeit one that compensated landlords at "fair market value" and afforded them considerable time to make adjustments to circumvent whatever stipulated retention limits.

In the same vein, the World Bank, which represents the global interests of US monopoly capitalism, criticized the earlier and speedier implementation of the reform in non-rice and corn areas and lower retention limits (seven hectares). The overall preservation of the monopoly position of US imperialism in the Philippine economy is the primary objective; and in the calculus of finance capital, small-sized owner-cultivated farms need not necessarily constitute an impediment.

Opposition to the proposals drafted by the Aquino-controlled Cabinet Action Committee (CAC) soon snowballed as economically powerful and politically influential vested interests lined up against land reform. The big landowners of large haciendas and plantations, specifically in the coconut and sugar sectors, vehemently registered their objection to land reform,

threatening to destroy standing crops and actually activating their private armies to resist the break-up of their estates. Large corporate farms and agribusiness firms (many of which are multinationals) also objected to the draft proposals invoking the advantages of economies of scale in their operation, a disputable assertion. Not long after, these forces were joined by the banking sector which, with its substantial exposure to the sugar and coconut industries, argued that land reform would spawn major problems relating to valuation of land collateral and foreclosure of lands larger than the legislated retention limit.

Within the Aquino Cabinet itself, the anti-land reform forces had also gathered. Executive Secretary Jeter Arroyo favored a waiting game, recommending that Congress legislate land reform. Arroyo reportedly owns vast tracts of coconut lands in Bicol. Trade and Industry Secretary Jose Concepcion meanwhile objected to the retention limit (the proposed seven hectares) with the claim that its imposition would jeopardize the promotion of non-traditional export crops produced by corporate farms and agribusiness firms. And true to form, Finance Secretary Jaime Ongpin and Central Bank governor Jose Fernandez backed up the objections of the bank-

ing sector and the landowning class. Taking as premise the full compensation of landlords, Ongpin's argument against land reform was that the government did not have the funds to finance the program in the scale that it was originally proposed. This argument found support in the expressed reluctance among foreign creditors (notably the World Bank and the Japanese government) to support the financial requirements of the government's proposed land reform program, a substantial component of which was compensation for landowners.

Against the strong lobby of landlord-comprador and financial groups,

The only thing that is comprehensive in the government's "comprehensive agrarian reform program" (CARP) is the power of the landlord- and comprador-dominated Congress to assert their class rule over the Filipino peasantry. While Section 1 of EO 229 provides for coverage of all public and private agricultural lands irrespective of tenurial arrangement and commodity produce, Section 2 provides that implementation shall be subject to the priorities and retention limits prescribed by Congress.

In effect, the executive order merely passes on to Congress the responsibility of deciding on land reform. Con-

terms and conditions acceptable to both parties." With this provision, it is easy for landowners to create fictitious beneficiaries and thereby circumvent land reform altogether. Section 10 considers as "compliance with the land redistribution requirements of the CARP" the sale by corporate landowners of shares of their capital stock to workers and other qualified beneficiaries. However, nothing more is said about the mode of payment and what happens in the event that no worker in the corporation decides to exercise his "right to purchase."

How long it will take for the Aquino government to complete even a limited land reform is certainly a big question. EO 229 is at best vague on this matter.

For example, Chapter II on Private Land Acquisition states that within 15 days from the publication of the DAR's decision to acquire the land and due notification of the landowner, the latter shall notify DAR about his acceptance or rejection of the offer. In the case of rejection or when no response is obtained, DAR shall conduct proceedings to settle the matter together with the landowner, the Land Bank and other interested parties. A period of 15 days is stipulated for all interested parties to submit evidence relevant to compensation for the land. Section 5 states that "after the expiration of the above period, the matter is deemed submitted for decision" without, however, specifying any definite length of time for an actual decision to be made. Moreover, Section 18 states that "acquisition shall not be implemented until all the requirements are met, including the first payment to the landowners concerned" (underscoring provided).

“The only thing that is comprehensive in CARP is the power of the landlord- and comprador-dominated Congress to assert its class rule over the Filipino peasantry.”

the Aquino government could only respond with more drafts of an executive order, each successive draft more pro-landlord than the previous one. As the lobby to entrust to Congress the task of legislating land reform took shape, the issue had been so badly distorted that it appeared to be solely a question of Cory Aquino's "political will" in signing an executive order. Only the militant and organized peasantry in the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) and the Congress for a People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR) read the situation correctly and sharply pointed out that the substance of an agrarian reform program is more important than a signed executive order.

The "substance" of EO 229

Corazon Aquino did sign an executive order but, what she exercised was the "political will" of the more conservative section of the landed elite. EO 229 is not even one of the weaker versions of the land reform drafted by Aquino's CAC. In the course of the debate between the "reformist" CAC and the openly pro-elite Cabinet members and bankers, an alternative draft was prepared by a group led by Deogracias Vistan of the Land Bank, whose members, ironically enough, were also members of the CAC. EO 229 is more faithful to the latter draft even while it incorporates some minor elements from the CAC version. Aquino herself together with Arroyo, Vistan, Presidential Special Counsel Teodoro Locsin, Deputy Executive Secretary Catalino M. Carraig Jr., National Resources Secretary Fulgencio Factoran Jr., Justice Secretary Sedfrey Ordonez and Constitutional Commission member Adolfo Azcuna reportedly put EO 229 in its final form.

Considering the pro-landlord bias already expressed by some members of the Congress, it is almost certain that big plantations and haciendas will one way or another escape prioritization or even inclusion in the program scope. As a token move, however, rice and corn lands might be retained in the priority list, possibly together with some public lands. Rice and corn landowners do not have as much political clout, while the suitability for production and extent of public lands has yet to be determined.

Chapter III of EO 229 on Land Transfer, Utilization and Sharing outrightly exempts certain lands from the scope of land reform. Under the voluntary land transfer mechanism provided for in Section 8, landowners may enter into a voluntary agreement for "direct transfer of their lands to appropriate beneficiaries, under the



Landlord resistance: Private army gears for war in a Negros hacienda

Since the first payment presumes that the total amount of compensation has been settled, and since there is no definite time period within which to resolve this matter in case of disagreements (Section 5), then the bottom line really is that the speed and extent of implementation of the land reform program depends on the willingness of the landowning class to liquidate itself, or on how fast it wishes to commit class suicide.

Will this come to pass — the landowning class liquidating itself? No way! Already, landlords have organized themselves and put their private armies on war-footing, asserting that they will not abide by the EO's provision on compulsory land registration (Section 4), the initial step in the whole land reform process.

Because the crux of agrarian reform is the redistribution of wealth and the reshaping of property relations, the issue of "just compensation" takes center stage. At the minimum, for there to be any wealth distribution at all, landowners should in principle expect only partial compensation. At the maximum, no compensation is justifiable especially for big landlords, compradors and bureaucrats.

Under EO 229, however, full compensation is assured. "Just compensation" is defined as "fair market value" which is determined based on the landowners' sworn declaration of the "current fair market value" that he wishes to receive under the program. Moreover, Section 6 on Compensation to Landowners stipulates that "at the op

tion of the landowner," the mode of payment may be "direct payment in cash or kind by the farmer-beneficiaries and landowners and subject to the approval of the DAR" (Sec. 6b).

This option is certainly an added concession to landlords who will generally prefer this mode of payment over the alternative, which is 10% of the agreed upon value in cash and 90% in 10-year Land Bank bonds with 10% interest. Aside from being protected against inflation, the direct payment option affords them the opportunity to "bargain" directly with the farmers, coerce them and take advantage of them through means such as output underpricing.

This option can also be used by landowners who want to evade land reform. All they need to do is create fictitious beneficiaries who would also opt for the direct mode of payment. More importantly, EO 229 is silent on what happens to the land when, under the direct mode of payment, the would-be beneficiary defaults. Under the mode which involves the Land Bank, the land is mortgaged to the Land Bank and the mortgage is foreclosed when the unpaid and past due amount reaches the equivalent of three annual amortizations (Section 12). In the first case, does the landowner get to keep the land? In the second case, how will the Land Bank dispose of the foreclosed land? Or is this a loophole whereby landowners can surreptitiously re-accumulate agricultural lands?

According to EO 229, land reform beneficiaries shall pay for the land in 30 equal annual payments at 6% interest per annum, with 2% interest rebate for amortizations paid on time, and provided that the annual payments do not exceed 10% of the land's annual value of gross production. Many protesting farmers still consider these terms onerous. Because of the leeway given to landlords to set the price they want to receive as compensation, the would-be beneficiaries will be paying a higher absolute amount annually notwithstanding the seemingly concessional terms. In this respect, the present land reform program is viewed as worse than Marcos' PD 27 which based the land price on "normal harvest." Given the high cost of inputs which the farmers now have to shoulder fully, it is doubtful that a significant number will ever get to own the land they till.

A patently anti-peasant provision in EO 229 is Section 22 on Permanent Disqualification. This provision states that "persons, associations, or entities who prematurely enter the land to avail themselves of the rights and benefits" under the government's



Anti-CARP rally: Burning hatred for unredeemed promises

land reform program are "permanently disqualified from receiving benefits and forfeit their rights" under the same land reform law.

While this provision is rationalized by the DAR secretary as necessary to "prevent anarchy", its real target is the organized and militant peasants who have launched their own land seizure campaigns. These farmers now occupy an estimated 50,000 hectares of idle and abandoned land. About 40,000 hectares of such land is now productive. These include lands of Marcos cronies which the Aquino government has sequestered as well as other foreclosed or foreclosable and expropriated properties, the utilization of which this government is taking such a long time to decide on while thousands of peasants and their families suffer from poverty and malnutrition.

Finally, even with the little that it can offer, it is doubtful that the Aquino land reform program can deliver. The P50-billion Agrarian Reform Fund (Section 10) created to cover the cost of CARP from 1987 to 1992 is expected to come from the proceeds of the sale of the assets of the Asset Privatization Trust as well as sale of the ill-gotten wealth recovered by the PCGG. The Aquino regime has no control over the timing of receipts from these two main sources. As the limitation arising from the availability of financing imposes itself on the

CARP, the program is sure to bog down and landlord resistance is expected to stiffen all the more. But that would be the price for making promises and not delivering.

The national democratic alternative

In the national democratic framework, agrarian reform is an integral part of the overall reorientation and restructuring of the economy, especially the property relations within the economy. As such, agrarian reform is not possible without dismantling the structures of feudalism, semi-feudalism and semi-colonialism in Philippine society and promoting the all-rounded development of agriculture and industry, based on the principle of national self-reliance. But to accomplish this requires mobilizing and organizing the masses of workers, peas-

ants, youth, professionals and nationalist businessmen to confront and overthrow the forces of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism in this country.

A land reform program's objectives should be the alleviation of the poverty of peasants and farm workers and the attainment of income levels for them sufficient for economic viability, the creation of a strong domestic demand for both agricultural and industrial goods, and the development of a thriving rural sector that will increasingly allow industries to grow all over the country. All of these critically depend on creating the conditions that enable the peasants and farm laborers to increase their incomes. In this light, landlord compensation schemes of the past and the present government land reform programs are



Peasant militants: Taking the initiative through land occupations

"Rising from the hard earth"

Thoroughgoing changes are not wrought by rulers with the stroke of a pen nor by blazing newspaper headlines, but by the daily, painstaking struggles of a people united by a noble cause.

In the tiny village of San Nicolas (not its real name) in western Pangasinan, the barrio folk bear witness to this truth. Far removed from the acrimonious debates that ring within the Aquino Cabinet and the halls of the landlord-dominated Congress, the peasants of San Nicolas, through the Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid (PKM), are quietly but surely implementing step-by-step, a genuine, pro-people agrarian reform program under the guidance of the NDF.

Already, their efforts have borne fruit. With the help of the NPA unit in the area, the PKM chapter in the barrio has led delegations and petitions, confronting the local landlords with their demands. Through these mass actions, the peasants have successfully brought down the landlords' exorbitant share in the harvest. From a high 30 cavans per hectare in 1980, this went down to 25 in 1983 and 15 in 1984. By 1985-86, the landlords' share had been whittled down to a mere four to eight cavans per hectare. This program has benefited not only the farmers of San Nicolas but also those in neighboring barrios as well. As many as 15,000 peasants in western Pangasinan now enjoy greatly increased shares in the fruits of their labor as a result.

Interest rates on loans have also been brought down over the past three years. In 1983-84, farmers paid interest in kind of five cavans for every P1,000 cash loan. With the establishment of the PKM chapter in San Nicolas, the farmers now pay a reduced interest of only two cavans.

Farm workers now also receive higher wages for services ranging from seeding and plowing to harvesting. In 1980, hired hands in the farm, who worked from 4 a.m. to 4 p.m., earned an average of only P8 a day. As the PKM chapter gained strength and influence over the years, this was

Activity	Previous wage	Present wage
Planting/ Harvesting	P12.00	P35.00
Threshing	P21.00	P42.00
Plowing	P35.00	P60.00

Source: *Almagalit*, July 1987

Increased incomes: Evidence of change

not any different from land rental payments that impoverish the peasants.

Land distribution is but an element in a genuine and thoroughgoing agrarian revolution. The breakup of monopolies in trading and credit through the organization of peasant marketing and credit cooperatives should be a part of the strategy. Otherwise, small owner-cultivators shall be exposed to the risk of falling prey to the monopolistic practices of traders and usurers, risking loss of their lands — thus

defeating the objective of agrarian reform.

Because land is limited, agricultural production cannot be expected to employ the country's growing rural labor force. As productivity increases, less labor will also be needed in farms to produce the same amount of output. This means that job creation outside of the agricultural sector in both rural and urban areas must be ensured. Hence the crucial complementary role of a program for nationalist industrialization. Aside from absorbing the

country's labor force, industrialization should also result in the production of the agricultural sector's requirements: chemical inputs, farm tools, light machinery and equipment. The gains from the agrarian revolution in terms of better incomes and improved livelihood can only be sustained through the mutually reinforcing growth and development of the agricultural and industrial sectors.

Today, even as the US-Aquino regime tries its best to hoodwink the peasant masses through a bogus land reform, peasant organizations in the countryside are implementing their revolutionary land reform program (see sidebar). Through a minimum program of rent reduction or non-payment and through the lowering of usurious interest rates on credit, the NDF-led peasant organizations are showing the benefits to be gained from organizing, seizing the initiative and not relying on this government of landlords and compradors for land reform.

The struggle is long and difficult, and suffering for incurring the wrath of the landlords and their defenders in the military is a natural consequence. But the Filipino peasants' struggle for land is a truly just struggle. And so the national democratic revolution marches on.

Federico Campos



Harvesting rice: Guerrillas also do production work

raised to P12 in 1983, P20 in 1984 and P24 a year later. Today, average daily wages on the farm range from P30 to P35 (see table).

What the farmers of San Nicolas have been implementing is the NDF's minimum agrarian reform program, which consists of breaking the stranglehold of landlords and usurers

over the peasants by lowering or abolishing land rent and interest rates and raising the wages of farm workers. The farmers are themselves empowered through the establishment of their own mass organizations, the formation of farming, credit and marketing cooperatives and the adoption of improved farming techniques.



PKM in action: Peasant cooperative members elect their officers

In one case, however, the organized peasants in San Nicolas decided to go beyond the minimum program and confiscated more than 300 hectares from an absentee landlord, who grabbed the land from the peasants in the '70s. The confiscated land is now being managed by the PKM-run peasants' cooperative; every step in the production process is a team effort, from plowing to harvesting. In turn, 50% of the harvest goes to the cooperative, 25% goes to the PKM while the remaining 25% goes to the individual farmers.

Unaccompanied by fanfare, all these small but sure changes have been rising, as if from the hard earth, like the sturdy rice plants patiently nurtured by the quietly heroic farmers of San Nicolas. ■

MAINSTREAM

Developments in the people's movements

The personal becomes political

MAKIBAKA Program works for the total liberation of Filipino women and society

"Pauunlarin ko ang aking rebolusyonaryong kamulatan at mamahalin ko ang masang Pilipino Ipagtagtagol ko ang kanilang kapakanan, lalo na ang kapakanan ng kababaihan."

(I shall develop my revolutionary consciousness and love the Filipino masses. I shall defend and fight for their welfare, especially the welfare of the

women) These words, part of an oath, were spoken by Zeny, a Red fighter from Quezon. A 20-year-old mother of three, Zeny is also one of a growing number of women who have joined the MAKIBAKA (Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan), the national democratic underground mass organization for women.

All over the country, MAKIBAKA leads in organizing and mobilizing women from all sectors of society to join the national democratic revolution. In southern Quezon alone, said Zeny, there are now 10,000 MAKIBAKA members operating in about 450 barrios spread over 16 municipalities.

"Ang kababaihan sa Timog Quezon, tulad ng sa ibang bahagi ng Pilipinas, ay kabalikat ng kalalakhian sa pagsusulong ng pambansang demokrasya," she said. (The women of southern Quezon and other parts of the Philippines stand side by side with the men in advancing the national democratic struggle)

Women's and people's liberation

Comprising half of the country's population, the participation of women in the revolutionary movement is indeed significant, if not decisive. Women as a sector have a stake in revolutionary victory. The MAKIBAKA believes that the continued exploitation and oppression of Filipino women is rooted in the semi-colonial and semi-feudal system that is at the root of the entire Filipino people's oppression. Therefore, unless women participate in the overall struggle to remove the stranglehold of US imperialism and its local agents on the economic, political

and cultural life of the people, women will remain abused and oppressed. It is in the process of liberating the country from oppression that women lay the groundwork for their own liberation. For it is in their political participation that they are often able to break through male chauvinist traditions that confine women to the household.

of a genuine and comprehensive land reform program and nationalist industrialization. In this regard, the revolutionary women's group fights for the peasant women's right to own lands and for women workers' right to just wages and job security. MAKIBAKA believes that the full participation of women in production hinges on the recognition and protection which the

revolutionary movement provides to the rights and welfare of women.

In the cultural field, MAKIBAKA promotes and struggles for a nationalist and scientific culture. This is especially significant for women since

"(Ang) una at huling larangan ng pakikitunggali para sa paglaya ng kababaihan ay nagaganap sa larangan ng kultura sapagkat ang pagkilala sa mga karapatan ng kababaihan ay kailangan munang maipagwagi sa isipan bago maisakatuparan." (The first and final arena of struggle in women's liberation is in the arena of culture.

Recognition for the rights of women should first be won in the realm of consciousness before this could actually be achieved) The revolutionary culture which the national democratic movement upholds counters attitudes which promote feudal and bourgeois beliefs that women are only good at house-



Happy in the struggle: MAKIBAKA member from Quezon

Towards this end, the MAKIBAKA has adopted a seven-point program which it first presented during a press conference late last year in Quezon. In the political field, MAKIBAKA supports the establishment of people's organs of political power on various levels, which shall pave the way for the eventual formation of a democratic coalition government consisting of representatives from various sectors. MAKIBAKA seeks to ensure the participation of its sector through the establishment of women's mass organizations and alliances, both legal and underground.

In the economic field, the MAKIBAKA aims for a self-sufficient and independent economy. This can be achieved through the implementation

work and that they should always be subservient to men.

On the other hand, MAKIBAKA believes that women should also participate in the military aspect of people's war. Thus, it helps in recruiting women fighters for the armed propaganda units, people's militia, partisan units and regular units of the NPA. The national democratic movement, through MAKIBAKA, recognizes the ability and potentials of women for military work. Among the campaigns being launched by MAKIBAKA is military education for all women revolutionaries.

On marriage and the family, the MAKIBAKA Program states: *"Ang pag-aasawa at pagpapamilya ay mga institusyong pinagsisibulan at pinaghubugan ng pinakamainam na relas-*

yong makatao sa pagitan ng lalaki't babae at ng mga anak. Ngunit sa kalagayang malakolonyal at malapyudal ang lipunan, ang mga kalagayang pangkabuhayan ang kadalasa'y nagtatakda sa magiging katangian ng relasyon ng mag-asawa dahil sa problema ng kahirapan . . . ang pag-aasawa ay nagmistulang bilanguan para sa mga institusyon o para sa pang-aapi sa kababaihan, kung saan angtrato sa lalaki ay panginoon at ang babae naman ay alipin o tagapagsilbi lamang. Ang totoo'y sinasalamang lamang ng pag-aasawa at pagpapamilya ang katayuan ng kababaihan sa lipunan." (Marriage and the family as institutions can be the setting for the best human relationships among men, women and children. But in a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, where poverty is widespread, it is economic conditions that often determine the kind of relationship that a married couple will have. . . . marriage as an institution is like a prison, where men are seen as masters and where women are treated like slaves or servants. In reality, the status of women in marriage and within the family is merely a reflection of their status in society)

To change this exploitative system, MAKIBAKA promotes marriage and family relationships based on equal relationships between wife and hus-



Women have a place in the armed struggle band and among parents and their children. "Sa ganitong paraan, maiwawasto ang mapagsamantalang relasyon sa pagitan ng mag-asawa at sa loob ng pamilya . . . ang demokratiko at pantay na relasyong ito ay nagkakaroor ng katuparan sa pamamagitan ng rebo-

lusionaryong pakikibaka ng mga kundisyong pinag-uugatan ng pang-aapi ng kababaihan." (Democratic relations within marriage and the family are achieved by struggling against the conditions that give rise to the oppression of women)

Lastly, in the field of international solidarity work, MAKIBAKA promotes the cause of Filipino women by strengthening its ties with progressive and revolutionary women's organizations in other countries, particularly in the Third World. Through this, MAKIBAKA not only gathers political and material support for the revolutionary women's struggle but also for the entire national democratic revolution.

Thus, the MAKIBAKA program offers a revolutionary alternative to all Filipino women — an alternative where women have a bigger role and greater opportunities to defend the people, advance the people's war and lay down the foundations for their own liberation. Said Zeny: "Nakikibaka ako, hindi lamang para sa paglaya ng ating bayan, kundi sa paglaya ng aking sarili — ako, bilang babae." (As a woman, I am struggling not just to liberate our country but also to liberate myself) **Liz Beltran**

Captives in Cagayan

NPA in Far North Luzon adopts prisoner-of-war policy as guerrilla war escalates

Intensified and continuous military operations by the state armed forces in Northern Luzon has impelled the New People's Army there to adopt the conventional war policy of taking prisoners-of-war (POWs).

The Regional Operational Command of the NPA in Far North Luzon said that implementation of the policy was a natural development of the long-drawn guerrilla war.

Perceiving this development, Luis Jalandoni, international representative of the National Democratic Front (NDF), told newsmen during an international conference in Libya last year that the underground movement will adopt the policy of prisoner swap in dealing with its enemies.

Northern Luzon guerrillas, since April, have detained at least 12 prisoners-of-war taken in various military operations.

The POWs — mostly soldiers belonging to units known for their human rights abuses — were taken by Red fighters in retaliation to heightened counter-insurgency operations in

the region under the AFP's Oplan Red Buster III, an offshoot of Oplan Pegasus and its predecessor, Oplan North Star, the local version of the Marcos regime's Oplan Katatagan.

As of July, two of the prisoners-of-war were punished for their "blood debts and crimes against the revolu-

tion" before a people's court. Two who were found without such record were released, while eight are still being held in custody for further investigation.

Manolo "Luna" Evangelista, ROC spokesman of Far North Luzon, said in an interview with *LIB*, that most of



Humane treatment: NPA giving food to captured soldier

Daring strikes

Central Luzon NPAs stage town hall raid and other offensives

It was 4 p.m. of June 23 when two passenger jeeps loaded with men in fatigue parked in front of the Licab municipal hall in Nueva Ecija. As the vehicles came to a stop, out came a man whose face was smeared with blood.

From afar, the policemen manning the building saw nothing unusual — just government troopers bringing in a hapless farmer they had beaten up. Casually, the men in fatigue walked closer to the municipal hall with their "captive," and without arousing the suspicion of the policemen.

Then suddenly, the armed men positioned themselves to the right and left of the town hall. At that point, some of the policemen began to wonder why the town hall was being encircled by the "troopers." According to an eyewitness account by *Himagrik*, the revolutionary mass paper in Central Luzon, the policemen found out too late. By the time they realized that they were caught in the middle of a ruse staged by the NPA, they were already lying on the floor of the municipal hall and being disarmed by their attackers.

Seized during the no-shot raid were three M16s, four .38 revolvers and some office equipment. Documents found inside the building were also burned by the raiders. Ka Jimmy, who led the operation, explained why: "Kailangan yan para sa mamamayan. Halimbawa, sa mga di makatarungang utang, mahihirapang singilin ang mga tao." (This is necessary for the people. For example, now the government will find it difficult to collect unjust debts from them) Bystanders

who witnessed the raid could not help but wave at the Red fighters and applaud.

After the operation, the NPA guerrillas swept through the town of Licab to visit the houses of abusive local landlords, local officials and military men. During one visit, they warned Jose Tinio, a landlord, to stop exploiting the peasants. The Red fighters were also able to confiscate a .45 pis-



Licab raid: Front page news

tol, a .38 revolver, a rifle and office and communications equipment from these raids.

The raid on the Licab town hall was only one of several NPA offensives in Central Luzon last June.

Last June 25, Lt. Alberto Solano and his bodyguard Reymundo Aguilar of the 60th IB-PA, who were respon-

sible for the Lupao Massacre, were captured by the NPA in San Isidro, Lupao. Taken from the prisoners were two M14s.

Solano was killed two days later when he attempted to escape. The Red fighters later turned over Aguilar to the custody of his parents and some local officials.

On that same day, three soldiers were killed by the NPA in a tactical offensive in Saging, Dinalupihan, Bataan. Seized were one M203 and two M16s.

Last June 6, NPA guerrillas killed two AFP troopers and an abusive police chief and disarmed several CHDF men in separate incidents in Bataan and Pampanga:

► In Limay, Bataan, two soldiers were slain while buying food in the public market. Taken was a .38 revolver.

► In Orani, Bataan, one M16, a .45 pistol and two .22 revolvers were seized during a disarming operation.

► In Sta. Ana, Pampanga, Sgt. Dionisio Angeles, the town's abusive chief of police, was killed by the NPA while he was aboard a minibus.

► In San Miguel, Lubao, Pampanga, three CHDFs were disarmed of two carbines and a Browning Automatic Rifle.

► In Mexico, Pampanga, five paramilitary men yielded three M1s, two M2s and a shotgun to the NPA guerrillas.

Last June 15, two baby Armaletes, a .45 pistol, an airgun and two .22 revolvers were confiscated by the NPA from a certain Vistan, a landlord in Macabebe, Pampanga. The Red fighters fled using a motorboat.

In Central Luzon, the NPA is advancing the armed struggle with a daringness derived from knowing that they possess the most vital weapon to ensure victory — the people's support.

the POWs are being held captive in cells built seven feet (2.12 meters) below the ground. These provisional prison cells are resorted to in the absence of regular detention centers that have yet to be built.

Two of the captive soldiers, Pfc. Alfredo Santos, 24, of the Bravo Coy of the 54th Infantry Battalion, and Constable 2nd Class Loretto Batalla, 29, of the 186th PC Coy, both of whom were taken prisoner last May 29 at an NPA mobile checkpoint in Claveria town, are being kept in separate cells in a secret camp somewhere in Cagayan Valley.

A team of newsmen, however, were let into the secret camp last June and allowed to take photos of the two soldiers. One published photograph showed a young man (Santos) sitting inside a wooden cage, while another

one showed an NPA guerrilla handing a plate of food to Batalla inside a cell that looked like an air-raid shelter.

The two POWs were quoted as saying they were being treated well, eating the same food as their NPA captors, and bathing in a nearby stream every other day.

The NPA camp commander said that access to the detention camp was limited to top commanders and assigned NPA guards. At least three underground cells were built in a month's time for POWs in the area.

Asked if taking prisoners was an effective policy, Evangelista noted that the POW method has both military and propaganda value.

For one, the NPA can extract valuable information on the enemy from the captured soldiers and civilian in-

formers through intensive interrogation and suasion, Evangelista said. The NPA can also exacerbate the splits or factionalism within the military organization by educating the POWs on the fascist and corrupt character of the AFP and the government it serves.

If NPA demands for the release of the captive soldiers are ignored by the government, this increases the demoralization and disenchantment of the soldiers, Evangelista said. "It highlights the state's uncaring attitude towards its soldiers."

Captured soldiers found innocent of war crimes or human rights violations are being won over to the side of the revolution, Evangelista said. Some have actually joined the movement, while the others who have been released left the military service. ●

SPARKS

Newsbriefs about people's struggles

KGM HITS CONGRESS OPENING



LIBERATION

"New" parliament: Peddling illusions to the people

"A no-celebration affair designed to fool the people." This was how the Katipunan ng mga Gurong Makabayan (KGM) described the opening of the "new" Congress last July 27. In a statement issued that day, the KGM said that the opening of Congress is actually "an important step towards full consolidation . . . a part of the Aquino government's scheme to deceive the Filipino people into believing the illusion that Congress could solve the country's basic problems."

In an earlier statement, the teachers' national democratic underground mass organization also praised their colleagues in the public school sector when 40,000 of them went on mass leave to demand the revision of Executive Order 189 and Executive Order 180. EO 189 "nationalizes" all public secondary schools but is unclear on the issue of source of funding for teachers' cost-of-living allowance and other fringe benefits. EO 180 on the other hand, prohibits government workers' full exercise of their right to strike.

The KGM said that this recent experience not only "tempered (the teachers') will and determination to fight (but) also raised their awareness as to the real character of the Aquino government."

AQUINO'S PRO-U.S. BASES MANEUVERS SCORED

Revolutionary forces in Central Luzon have branded the Aquino regime as "Janus-faced." In an article published in the July issue of *Himagsik*, the revolutionary mass paper in the region, the Central Luzon revolutionary forces said the Aquino government was "patriotic in speech but pro-imperialist in deed." *Himagsik* cited the Aquino regime's maneuverings to legalize the US-RP Bases Agreement in the 1986 Constitution and its moves giving the pro-imperialist Senate and Congress full freedom to negotiate for the bases' retention after the treaty expires in 1991.

Together with the US, the Aquino government has also been whipping up the "Russian invasion" scare and alleged economic benefits from the US bases to gull the public into supporting their position. The Central Luzon paper also warned that it will no longer take another 20 years before the people unmask the Aquino regime's puppetry to US interests.

ABB NEWSLETTER OFF THE PRESS

The Alex Boncayao Brigade (ABB), the NPA unit operating in Metro Manila, came out last July with the maiden issue of its newsletter *Ang Partisano*. The ABB's mimeographed publication comes out monthly and includes an editorial; "Talakayan," a features section; "Mula sa Larangan," a section on partisan offensives; and "Tutok-Kalabit," a humor page.

In its maiden issue, *Ang Partisano* introduced itself as a "forum for reporting the ABB's activities and views on major issues confronting the people and the revolution." Its features section carried a short article on the "low intensity conflict" doctrine of the US-Aquino regime.



LETTERS

Comments from readers

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO TALIBA NG BAYAN?

Dear *Liberation*,

I wrote you to raise a very important matter. It is rather disconcerting that at a time when the general public is hungry for information on the National Democratic Front, the official Pilipino publication of the NDF, *Taliba ng Bayan*, has been discontinued.

The publishers must have good reason, but the absence of *Taliba ng Bayan* gives cause for anxiety.

The audience of Pilipino readers is rather broad, especially in Luzon, and the NDF seems to have defaulted in attempting to reach them by withdrawing its support for a Pilipino-language publication.

One is also tempted to surmise that the NDF publishers are biased in servicing its English-speaking or English-moded audience as proven by its consistent support for *Liberation*.

To further needle the point, one may even suspect that the NDF publishers are catering to the taste of the middle forces to the unhealthy extent of neglecting its Pilipino readers. No doubt the middle forces constitute a significant audience, but it is risky to assume that all of them or most of them would like to read in English.

All I'm saying of course, is that the revival of *Taliba ng Bayan* has become a necessity in this phase of the struggle. This makes good sense when taking into account the varied readerships we have to reach in order to counter the disinformation campaign being waged by the US-Aquino regime against the revolutionary forces. Only by knowing and understanding the information needs of our different audiences can we hope to enlighten them.

Julian Paredes

Thank you for raising some very valid points about the need for a Pilipino newspaper for NDF forces. We, too, miss our sister publication. We've brought the matter to the attention of the comrades concerned and we hope to publish their answer in one of our forthcoming issues.

COUNTERCURRENTS

The Philippine government and the US

Wielding the sword of a costly war

Aquino regime's counter-insurgency operations financed by US imperialism

One V-150 armored personnel carrier costs P60 million, enough to pay for the cost of elementary education of 113,703 pupils for a school year.

One Sikorsky helicopter costs P200 million, equal to the daily wage of more than four million workers.

The price of one IF-SE fighter jet, P100 million, is equivalent to the cost of complete medication for 33,333 tuberculosis patients.

Yes, the cost of pursuing a war is formidable. But the Aquino government is not all that worried in launching a "total war" against the New People's Army and its popular support.

US military aid to the Aquino regime for 1987 has been doubled to \$100 million to "enable it to fight the burgeoning revolutionary movement and other threats," said the US embassy in a statement. A second grant of \$50 million in military aid, part of a supplemental security assistance package which President Aquino had sought during her September 1986 state visit to the US, was recently signed into law by US President Ronald Reagan. The first grant of \$50 million financed equipment needs of the military, while the second grant was intended for priorities identified by the US-RP military, especially equipment to enhance mobility. Last August 4, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the US House of Representatives voted to give the Aquino government an additional \$110 million in military aid. This latest infusion is part of a package which includes \$124 million in "economic aid" and \$50 million for "agricultural reform."

"US security assistance is designed to ensure that the Armed Forces of the Philippines has the military wherewithal to defend Philippine democracy against threats to peace and order," said the embassy statement. It added that "US confidence in the leadership of President Aquino and her military advisers has been central to rapid increases in military assistance levels."

Too soon has the Aquino regime



Mincing no words: Youth activists target AFP's bankroller in US embassy rally

fallen into the wrong notion that its war against the "insurgents" can be won by increased infusion of US military hardware. Since it took power in February 1986, the regime has consistently asked the US for increased military aid. This shall prove its own undoing, though.

Hard-selling US Congress

The increased US military aid came at the heels of the misleading background given by US Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Armitage before the US House of Representatives Sub-committee on Asia and the Pacific of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. Armitage held that the "most serious problem confronting both ourselves (US) and the Philippines is complacency," as he batted for a bigger US share in the upkeep of the Aquino government's armed forces. Despite an earlier reduction in military assistance, Armitage averred that "(US) efforts to accelerate the acquisition and delivery process in the year following the Aquino accession resulted in the highest volume of security assistance deliveries to the Philippines in the past five years."

That means more than \$40 million

in military aid, including 665 trucks, 626 radios and telephone sets, \$2.3 million in combat uniforms and a wide variety of spare parts added to the inventories of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). As Armitage exulted, the new military material accounted for a higher rate of operational readiness for helicopters, trucks and communication equipment. Helicopter flying time improved from seven to 21 hours per month. The Philippine Navy, likewise, quadrupled its steaming time.

More changes are in the offing. The "ineffective and obsolete" F-8 aircraft are being eliminated, but as Armitage said in his Congress testimony, "the financial drain from the (Philippine) air defense system has been reduced." The Philippine Navy is cutting its fleet from 200 to 90 ships and craft. Most of the Philippine Army's division and brigade headquarters have been moved out of the cities into the countryside "where the government's presence was weak and non-existent." Armitage added that with minimal additional funding, the Philippine Army has initiated a unit training cycle that has retrained four battalions in counter-insurgency operations from November to March 1986.

"Reform" in the AFP

As prescribed by US advisers, other "reforms" in the AFP are on stream. The notorious Civilian Home Defense Forces units have been reduced and in their stead, a national network of vigilante groups directly supervised by the AFP has been put in place. A national training center for military men has been set up as a means of promoting professionalism and combat effectiveness. Pay for enlisted personnel was increased by 14%, and that of the officers, by 9%.

Armitage even claimed that as a result of training courses and command control, human rights abuses by the AFP have declined, noting that the AFP "cooperated" in the investigation of the Mendiola and Lupao Massacres.

There remains "massive deficiencies" which require intensified US military assistance, though. Logistical support and maintenance capabilities are critical. Defense officials estimate that there may be a maintenance backlog that could consume approximately \$1 billion in spare parts and supplies. Truck deficiencies are calculated to be about 40% to 50%. Helicopter deficiencies range from 40% to 60%. Only about 50% of Philippine Navy ships are seaworthy. The shortfall in radios is about 45%.

But the Aquino government has been assured of continued US funding. The US Department of Defense and the AFP have jointly developed procurement programs which continue to emphasize maintenance and logisti-

cal support from the US. US Defense authorities estimate that at least 65% of military assistance during FY 1985 to FY 1987 has been or will be committed.

Air Force reorientation

The capital infusion from the US government has sparked a major reorganization of the AFP. To accommodate US military counsel and since the new counter-insurgency thrust would concentrate more on air mobility and firepower, the Philippine Air Force has initiated major logistical changes that would enable its airmen to fight as foot soldiers. Admittedly, the move would give less priority to the defense of the country's air space, but then, this is not the priority of the Aquino government.

Maj. Gen. Antonio Sotelo, PAF commander, said that the air defense system will be downgraded with some types of aircraft to be scrapped and several major units to be reorganized "for more operational effectiveness."

Single-wing bases have been created at Sangle Air Station and at Mactan Air Base. Changes in the Philippine Air Defense System (PADS) were made by shutting down marginal radars and scrapping the F-8H "Crusader" aircraft from the PAF inventory. Budget savings will be utilized for PAF internal security operations which Sotelo said is of "higher priority." Air Force soldiers are now being trained for combat, as in the final analysis, "airmen may have to fight a ground war."

The PAF has also contracted Philippine Air Lines for the Inspection and Repair as Needed (IRAN) of their F-27 aircraft at half the cost of sending the same to Amsterdam, as was previously done. The local IRAN costs the PAF P11 million while an Amsterdam job costs P22 million.

All told, the AFP is preparing for intensified war. Savings derived from the 1986 budget are now being used to procure fatigue clothing for soldiers, including caps and combat boots.

Costly military operations

Employing its improved war materiel and US-dictated counter-insurgency plans, the Aquino regime has pursued several military offensives directed against the people and the people's army. In the Apayao sub-province north of Manila, the regime's expenses had already reached P20 million as of mid-March. The cost alone to the people's livelihood had reached P2 million, but more telling of the Aquino government's destructive forays were the 50 lives lost in the first six weeks of operations.

The military offensives, tagged as "Operation Red Buster III" began late March as the nation prepared for the senatorial and congressional elections. The area of operations covered the valleys of Paco, Marag and Zinundangan in Apayao. The daily bombing sorties were concentrated in forested and sparsely populated mountains, dislocating the affected residents of at least eight Apayao towns nestled in



LIBERATION

these valleys. The victims included minority groups like the Aggays, Isnegs and Malaweses.

Operation Red Buster III involved the movement of some 1,200 troopers from four battalions, daily heli-gunship attacks, the use of T-28 or Tora-Tora reconnaissance and jet planes, armored personnel carriers, tanks, trucks and jeeps, and barrages from howitzers and 150 mm cannons. The Aquino government's military bill of P20 million included some P4 million in soldiers' salaries and combat pay, some P10 million in fuel and another P6 million in ammunition, including bombs and rockets.

The Aquino government did not at all bother with the cost to the people of the military incursions: damage to property estimat-

Weapons of death: Ten new US helicopters turned over to the AFP

ed by the victims at P2 million; P1 million in destroyed croplands; P800,000 in slain animals; and P200,000 in razed crops, houses and other property.

Deeper CIA involvement

At the time Armitage was arguing for greater military subsidy for the Aquino administration, US President Reagan had approved a \$10-million two-year plan for increased CIA involvement in the Aquino government's anti-insurgency campaign. This campaign would include technical intelligence assistance and covert political action, according to American sources familiar with the plan quoted by Phil Bronstein of the *San Francisco Examiner*. President Aquino had expressed acquiescence to the CIA plan, the report pointed out.

This blueprint for expanded US involvement in the Aquino government's military adventures took the form of a secret intelligence "finding" signed by President Ronald Reagan either in January or February this year. A "finding" allows a US military agency to undertake actions recommended in the document that might otherwise be prohibited.

The finding primarily involves helping the Philippine military with its intelligence-gathering, providing them with computers, computer training, detailed maps — the kind of things the AFP doesn't have now which they deem essential in fighting the people's revolution. "We would reach out to different groups, hire (Filipino) nationals to gather information, that sort of thing," according to a source interviewed by Bronstein.

Bronstein's source added more ominously, "There is nothing in there like assassinations or direct covert military actions" as "Filipinos already know how to blow up bridges themselves."

CIA personnel stationed in Manila will also be increased by 10%, according to American sources, amidst fears that these moves will spark another Vietnam-type war in the Philippines.

In the Armitage testimony, it was mentioned that the US administration is pursuing "a broad range of initiatives" to help President Aquino to succeed and to preserve vital US interests in the Philippines.

The total aid package is misleading though. Couched in such words as "humanitarian assistance," and "economic aid," the US assistance package reflects the new tack of counter-insurgency by both the US and the Aquino governments, the low-intensity conflict approach, or "total war."

The low-intensity approach calls for a less visible US military involvement in combatting a war for national liberation being waged within a US neocolony and greater infusions of aid and capital for economic and military projects. At the same time, there would be perceived "privatization" or shifting of the responsibility to fight the revolutionary forces to the hitherto unmilitarized private sector. Hence, the low-intensity approach would call for the creation of private vigilante groups to serve as the first line of defense and offense of the military sector and create the illusion that the US-propped war against national liberation movements is mass-supported.

Ronald Reagan also approved the US Department of Defense's request to transfer \$10 million of their medical supplies and equipment to the AFP. By the end of March, more than half of this commitment or



Schultz: Aquino's main arms procurer

around \$6 million, had been dispatched. This assistance included \$769,000 in drugs and medicines, \$2.2 million in medical supplies and equipment and 54 ambulances. Within several months after the Armitage briefing in March, the rest of the remaining \$4 million would be sent.

In a second US Department of Defense program, Filipino civilians received \$13 million worth of drugs donated by the Americas Foundation, a known conduit of the Central Intelligence Agency, and transported to Manila by US Air Force aircraft.

By the end of May, the US Navy hospital ship USS Mercy, also provided medical care for both civilians and military personnel in seven ports of call in the Philippines. But the "humanitarian" mission of the USS Mercy was belied by the sight of howitzers it unloaded in Cebu.

Taken altogether, this "humanitarian aid" package of the US would total \$40 million, over and above US economic and patently military assistance to the Aquino government.

Softselling the US bases

Recent US economic assistance to the Philippines is directed towards achieving greater public acceptance of the US military facilities in the Philippines. Hence, there have been signs that procurement officers at Clark and Subic have been increasing their purchases of Philippine products and services, paying less and gaining more in terms of propaganda mileage.

They are also coopting the conservative segment of the business sector. Two seminars were held under the sponsorship of the US-ASEAN Center for Technology Exchange. A "Buy-local" task force of Navy and Air Force officials expanded the source list of local suppliers by more than 400 firms.

Presently, a joint working group of officials from the facilities and the Philippine Ministry of Trade and Industry is studying the quality and pricing of Philippine products, and the US Defense Logistics Agency has already granted the US Navy and Air Force authority to use local suppliers for products that are normally procured through the US Defense Logistics system.

According to Armitage, the US Department of Defense has increased its local purchases from \$53.4 million in 1985 to \$57.4 million in 1986, or a 7.5% increase. He added that he expects this trend to continue and that this would have a "lasting effect."

The trend towards increased procurement of Philippine goods for US military facilities in the Philippines began in September 1986 when US Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger directed US defense purchasing activities to expand their procurement of Philippine goods and services consistent to US statutes. In reality, this is taking advantage of cheaper purchases.

Aside from getting cheaper purchases from local producers, the US also got a bonus: the Filipino businessmen supplying the goods are now most avid in sponsoring pro-US bases rallies, together with some local prostitutes and gangsters.

The Aquino regime is clearly on the warpath. With its US imperialist ally supplying it with the wherewithal for counter-insurgency operations, the Aquino government is gearing for an escalated campaign of death and destruction in the cities and countryside. As usual, it is the Filipino people who will be bearing the brunt of these fascist attacks. Alexandra Kitonglad

Through and beyond

Satur C. Ocampo

The gentleman is in error



NDF officer and chief negotiator Satur Ocampo has graciously accepted a long-standing invitation to write a regular opinion column for LIB. This is his first.

Recently, a very popular figure in the open progressive movement cautioned the Left from attacking the Aquino government and the new legislature because, he reportedly said, such a move could isolate the Left from the people. "What the Left should now do is to join the people's organizations and try to apply pressure on Congress to enact laws that would really serve the interest of the majority," the gentleman was quoted as saying.

Interviewed by a foreign wire service, the gentleman was further quoted thus:

"The more the Left acts radically now, the more they (sic) will be isolated. It should try its best to maintain or strengthen its place in the mainstream. They (sic) should participate in the open mass struggle so that they will not be branded as ultra-Left or isolationists One must go down to the level of the people's consciousness."

On the new legislature, the gentleman reportedly said that it is useless to attack it because "it doesn't stink yet. . . its interest has not been exposed." He predicted that it would take 10 to 15 years before Filipinos realize what kind of Congress they have.

Knowing the gentleman and his highly regarded standing in the national democratic revolutionary struggle until recently, we would like to think that he had been misquoted.

“A true revolutionary's duty is to raise the level of the people's consciousness.”

But in the absence of a denial on his part, and considering his previous public utterances of similar bent, we cannot let his "comradely" advice to pass without critical comment.

Moreover, we cannot let the occasion pass without cautioning the gentleman to beware of bourgeois reformist illusions, so glaringly reflected from his statements and to beware of further becoming unwittingly (?) an instrument for the reactionaries to confuse the people.

Although the gentleman's advice may have been well-meant, it has an erroneous basis. If heeded, it is fraught with dangers for the Left (read: the revolutionary forces within the National Democratic Front and those working with it); dangers not of isolation from the people but of retrogression into bourgeois reformism, tailism and, ultimately, defeat.

The erroneous basis of the advice is that it falsely assumes that the Left is no longer integrated with the people; furthermore, that the Left is *apart from* the open mass struggle and does not account for people's organizations (unless the gentleman and we refer to different sets of people's organizations).

The fact is that the Left has never been apart from the open mass struggle (the "underground" struggle is not its only sphere of action). The seminal issues and basic people's demands that have been consistently carried forward in the open mass struggles, both under the Marcos dictatorship and the Aquino regime, either germinated from or are

akin to those embodied in the NDF general and specific programs. (This fact itself speaks clearly of the NDF program's widespread acceptance by the masses of workers, peasants, urban poor, lower petty bourgeoisie, and a considerable section of the middle forces).

It is facetious, therefore, for anyone to advise the Left to "participate in the open mass struggle" (unless this is to be interpreted as a subtle urging that those in the "underground" must go "aboveground" — a risky proposition, things being as they are.)

The danger of bourgeois reformism lies in the advice to "try to apply pressure on Congress to enact laws that would really serve the interest of the majority," and to avoid criticizing the legislature at this time. Not that there is any harm in trying to apply pressure, but the historical record is that applying pressure had not worked with the old Congress; and going by its composition and initial performance, the "new" Congress holds the promise of replicating the old. To say that the legislature cannot be assailed because it "doesn't stink yet" is to be carried away by petty bourgeois illusion, and to ignore the historical truth already established about the class character of this legislature. Why wait 10 to 15 years before exposing its class bias and pro-imperialist leaning? Haven't the Filipino people already become aware of the cupidities and inanities of most of the elected legislators?

Which brings us to the last, and most important, point.

The political thrust of the gentleman's advice is found in his statement: "One must go down to the level of people's consciousness." Does this mean that, if the general level of consciousness of the people is that low (as deduced from the assumption that it will take 10 to 15 years for the people to realize what kind of Congress they have), the Left must go down to that level so as "to maintain or strengthen its place in the mainstream" and avoid becoming isolated?

That would be tailism of the first order, if that's what the gentleman's advice to the Left meant (we hope not!) It flies into the face of the well-held revolutionary principle that a *true* (not "pragmatist," as the gentleman reportedly calls himself) revolutionary's duty is always to *raise* the level of political consciousness of the people towards revolutionary level.

True, to be able to achieve this, a revolutionary must grasp the various levels of political consciousness among the various strata of the people and take these into account in setting strategy and tactics. But to go down to the level of the backward section and plod along or behind it rather than stand at the head of the advanced section of the masses in the (open) struggle, would be a sure-fire prescription for disaster for the revolution.

Sowing hope, reaping gains...



For generations, the peasants in the remote village of San Fernan* in Nueva Ecija had been mired in poverty. "Kailangang magtanim para kumain. At para mag-

tanim, kailangang mangutang dahil wala kaming kapital. Pag umani kami, kulang pa para sa isang buwang pagkain, at di pa lahat ng utang ay nabayaran. Kaya magtanim kami uli - utang

muli - mas malaki na ngayon, dagdag pa ang natirang utang."

"Para kaming nasa kumunoy. Kahit saan kami pumihit, hindi kami makawala at palubog lang kami nang palubog sa utang."

Then, in 1981, NDF activists helped the farmers form a chapter of the Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid (PKM) in the village. The peasants learned the value of collective action. "Ang kawayan ay mahina at yumuyuko pag nag-iisa. Pero pag itinali nang sama-sama, puwede pang gawing isang matibay na bahay."

Moving in concert, the peasants established their own retail and marketing cooperative as one of the first steps in their struggle to wrench themselves free of the clutches of exploitative merchant- and usurer-landlords. To protect themselves from the landlords' private armies, they formed a

people's militia and looked to the New People's Army for support.

The coming of the PKM to San Fernan became a celebration of hope. "Ngayon, may boss na ang maliit na magsasaka. May pag-asa na kaming rakaalis sa kumunoy"

Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid



*The name of the barrio has been changed to protect the inhabitants from military attack.