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LIBERATION

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December 1989 coup

Road to perdition

BAR 13 1989

Carry forward the people's revolutionary struggles

The recent coup is the latest outbreak of violent confrontation between the Aquino clique and its rival factions in the ruling classes.

The coup plotters' invocation of glittering catchwords like "freedom," "democracy" and "good government" could not conceal their true intention: a naked grab for power. This mercenary private army of a faction of the ruling elite struck just as the Aquino government announced a new round of oil price hikes, in effect preempting the militant struggle of the people for their rights and



welfare. In fact, the coup plotters struck in the wake of a growing people's movement against the retention of the US bases and massive protest actions against the government's unjust salary standardization scheme and other anti-people policies of the Aquino regime. The recent confrontation was nothing but a contest on which faction could best stem the tide of the people's revolutionary movement and ensure the interests of US imperialism and its local allies.

The Aquino clique has resisted this challenge from its ruling class rivals with equal ferocity. Thus, the warring factions, virtually utilizing the splintered ranks of the AFP as their private armies, have locked themselves in combat, unmindful of the depredations against civilian lives and property.

Such wanton disregard for the people's lives and safety is not surprising, coming as it does from a regime and a military force that has long been waging "total war" against the Filipino people. The indiscriminate firing and bombing runs that characterized this latest coup merely brought to the city the bombings, strafings and forced evacuations which the US-Aquino regime, through the AFP, has been unleashing against the people in the countryside.

Above all, the coup bared to all and sundry the utter dependence of the Aquino government on US imperialism. The call for US military assistance, made as a knee-jerk reaction to the challenge posed by the regime's ruling

class rivals, reveals how the Aquino-Ramos - de Villa clique could shamelessly barter away the nation's sovereignty to ensure its own survival and hold on power. With this singular act of puppetry, the Aquino government has become even more beholden to US imperialist dictates. Worse, it ensures the retention of the US military bases in the Philippines and opens the door to higher levels of US intervention in the country's internal affairs.

The Aquino faction claimed victory over its ruling class rivals at the expense of the nation's sovereignty and

the sufferings of thousands of Filipinos. Massive though the toll has been, the recent coup is fraught with lessons that shall not be lost on the Filipino people. For now, it has been made clear that the Filipino people's salvation from imperialist domination, poverty and oppression lies not with the Aquino faction nor with any of its rivals in the ruling class. National sovereignty and the interests and welfare of the Filipino people can only be upheld by the people themselves, united and empowered by their collective strength.

The NDF calls on the people to carry on their militant mass struggles for their economic upliftment and democratic rights and bring their struggle to all fronts — armed and unarmed, legal and illegal, in the cities and countryside.

It calls on the people to persevere in building and consolidating their revolutionary mass organizations and resolutely pursue their nationalist and democratic aspirations.

Above all, the NDF calls on the Filipino people to work for the establishment of a revolutionary government that shall truly embody their interests and ensure their welfare.

- Build genuine people's organizations and carry forward revolutionary mass struggles!
- Overthrow US imperialist-landlord-comprador rule!
- Build a genuine people's army!
- Establish the people's democratic government!

IN THIS ISSUE



December 1989 coup
Road to perdition

The latest coup attempt has seriously threatened the survival not only of the Aquino regime but of the entire reactionary ruling system. Faced with this threat, the Aquino faction has declared a state of national emergency as a preparatory stage to open fascist rule — all to stem the regime's and the ruling system's hopeless disintegration.

EDITORIAL

COVER STORIES

- NAT'L EMERGENCY ACT : Looming shadow of martial law 4
- NDF STATEMENT ON THE NEA : History replayed 9

MAINSTREAM

- PKM : Bountiful harvests 10
- DAR : Tool for counter-insurgency 13
- SURIGAO NPA : Humanity in the midst of war 14
- CORDILLERA PEOPLE : Resistance to "Oplan Pakilala" 15
- NDF STATEMENT : On genuine autonomy for the Moro people 16
- NL, MINDANAO NPA : Frustrating the enemy 18

LETTERS

COUNTERCURRENTS

- U.S. BASES : Playing dirty 20
- NDF STATEMENT : Situating the anti-bases struggle 23

VIEWPOINT

- N.D. REVOLUTION : Forging a higher level of unity 24

COLUMN

- HEALTH PULSE : On the Generics Act 31



COVER STORIES

On today's significant issues and events

WORK & TURN

A looming shadow

National Emergency Act presages declaration of martial law



Belleguered clique : Aquino-Ramos-de Villa faction faces toughest challenge to date from ruling class rivals

Lipphotos

The announcement came as no surprise. As mutinous soldiers lay siege in Makati on the sixth day of the coup, a stone-faced Cory Aquino, trying very hard to look and sound tough, issued Proclamation No. 503, declaring a "state of national emergency." Later passed into law as Republic Act No. 6826 or the "National Emergency Act" (NEA), its adoption was a virtual admission by the Aquino regime that it could no

longer rule through the use of liberal democratic facades. In the face of the latest, most serious challenge from its rival factions in the ruling elite, the Aquino regime must now invoke openly fascist measures in order to stem its hopeless disintegration and survive.

Violent ruling class rivalries

The sixth in a series of coups de etat that have rocked the Aquino regime in its less than four years of

existence, the December putach highlighted as never before the deepening crisis of the ruling system and the violence that characterizes the struggle for power between ruling elite factions.

After the collapse of the Marcos dictatorship, the Aquino faction proceeded to consolidate its own rule, but at the same time tried to appease the disenfranchised factions of the ruling class and the fractious and increasingly demoralized military

COVER STORIES

establishment. Towards this end, various power-sharing schemes were effected: Elections were held from the national down to the barangay levels. Scores of old political rivals, including high-ranking military officials from the Marcos era were also accommodated into government and given their own economic niches.

But the Aquino clique's own rapaciousness in grabbing for itself the juiciest morsels from an ever shrinking economic pie has rendered such power-sharing schemes inutile.

Neither was the Aquino regime able to consolidate the military establishment that had grown all powerful during 14 years of martial rule. Just before the coup, military analysts assessed that the AFP was broken down into at least four factions: 10% was said to be loyal to Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos; 10% to Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile; 10% to the late dictator Marcos; 40% to Aquino; and 30% remained "uncommitted."

For some time, the probability of a successful coup was dismissed as unlikely, with no single group appearing to have the capability to pose a serious enough challenge to the government.

As early as the bloody August 1987 coup attempt, however, reports had already filtered in about the financial and logistical support extended by a number of disenfranchised politicians and wealthy businessmen to the plotters' cause. After the failure of the 1987 coup, these anti-Aquino forces merely regrouped to build an even broader base within the military.

Faced with the deterioration of the ruling system under Aquino's stewardship, it was not difficult for the disgruntled elite groups and AFP factions to find common cause with

each other. Thus, in the recent coup, the Aquino regime was confronted with what the AFP brass described as an alliance between Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) putschists, the Marcos loyalist Soldiers of the Filipino People (SFP), and a group that called itself the Young Officers' Union (YOU). The RAM-SFP-YOU combine was bolstered by the financial backing of several prominent businessmen and politicians.

The demoralized sections of the AFP ranks go well beyond the official estimate of 2,000 soldiers who directly participated in the coup. Even as the power grab attempt fizzled out, some 40 officers based in Cagayan de Oro, including three battalion commanders and an executive battalion officer of the Army 4th Infantry Division resigned en masse to dramatize their sympathy for the RAM-SFP-YOU. To date, AFP troops continue to barricade exits from Cagayan Valley for fear that military units loyal to former

colonel now Cagayan Gov. Rodolfo Aguinaldo would break through and head for Manila. Aguinaldo had earlier threatened to reinforce rebel troops in Manila with two armored divisions under his command.

Reports of unauthorized troop movements in Mindanao continue to pour in. On the other hand, other military units commonly known to be sympathetic to the coup, such as forces under Ilocos Norte Vice Gov. Rolando Abadilla, a former colonel, have maintained a mysterious silence, seemingly biding their time.

Coup leader Gregorio Honasan has summed up the rationale behind such silence. In a recent interview with the US television network CBS, he said: "That is where our strength lies. They do not know who we are, where we are or how many we are."

No less than National Intelligence Coordinating Authority chief Rodolfo Canieso, however, has provided an estimate of how deep a base the anti-Aquino reactionaries now have in the military. In a testimony before a Senate subcommittee hearing this December, Canieso disclosed that 60% to 70% of the AFP would be willing to support any government that emerges after a coup.

Evidently, the Aquino regime has not seen the last of such coup attempts. For with the ruling system tottering to its very foundations, threatening the existence of all elite factions, the old bourgeois electoral process no longer sufficed to keep intra-ruling class rivalries at bay. The last two coup attempts provided



Leopoldo

Enrile with anti-Aquino forces: Common cause with military adventurists





unmistakable signals that the power struggle between rival elite factions had already entered into the arena of violent armed confrontations.

System in crisis

Indeed, the task of maintaining its position as the dominant ruling clique, not to mention preserving the entire semi-colonial and semi-feudal order, is proving to be more and more difficult for the Aquino regime.

The most blatant indicator of the regime's and the ruling system's crisis is the continued deterioration of public services, typified by the severe transport and power shortages that have hit the populace these past months. Before the year's end, government agencies also gave dismal reports of the country's economic performance. Central Bank authorities bared a \$1.89 billion trade gap for the first nine months of 1989 reflecting a whopping 102.8% increase over the \$936 million trade deficit reported for the same period last year. A balance of payments (BOP) surplus of \$170 million in the first three quarters of 1988 has also given way to a BOP deficit of \$541 million for the same period this year. The Central Bank moreover bared that the BOP deficit would have hit \$1.42 billion had it not been for the rescheduling of the country's foreign debts.

By December, inflation raged at 14%, the highest recorded in three years. Yearend figures also saw the peso-dollar rate deteriorate to as low as P23 : \$1.

The outlook for the country's labor force was no less bleak. As of the first half of 1989, the unemployment rate had risen by almost 50%, with the number of jobless Filipinos increasing from the previous year's 19.2 million to 28.7 million, according to figures from the Department of Labor and Employment. The legislated minimum daily wage stood at P52.81 for agricultural workers and P69.33 for non-agricultural workers, but real wage rates were pegged at P13.75 and P11.08 respectively because of inflation.

To make matters worse, corruption was as rampant as ever in the highest levels of government and the military. Reports before a Congressional hearing last November showed that as much as 70% of funds meant for the construction of public works and highways is lost through corrupt practices. The Senate Defense Committee had also bared the names of several high-ranking military officers involved in illegal logging, gambling and drug syndicates. PC-INP chief Maj. Gen. Ramon Montano, himself linked to these scandals, also admitted that there were 152 private armies in the country comprised of provincial guards, policemen and soldiers assigned to provide security to politicians and businessmen.

Fuelling the fires of the system's innate political and economic crisis were the revolutionary and progressive mass movements, which, despite the "total war" unleashed against them by the state, persevered in exposing the regime's bankruptcy and pressuring it



Fuelling the fires of crisis: Urban poor protest demolition (left); peasants small militarisation (above)

to deliver on the people's legitimate demands.

The December coup has made it virtually impossible not only for the Aquino faction but also for the entire ruling system to find a way out of this political and economic morass. The loss in terms of military weaponry and facilities alone already runs to the billions of pesos. The regime's counter-insurgency war has moreover suffered a setback as many of the AFP's ablest officers and fighters have either had to be confined to barracks or are in hiding for their role in the failed coup.

Clearly, the situation differs from what Cory Aquino had written in the "report card" she had brought with her on her state visits to the US and Canada last November. With the regime's much-vaunted political and economic stability proving to be no more than a pipe-dream, Aquino's enticements to foreign businessmen to invest in the Philippines, where "great riches await" them, have now come to naught.

COVER STORIES

Act of desperation

The declaration of a state of national emergency is the desperate act of a dying regime. In fact, the last ace up the crisis-ridden Aquino government's sleeve is the outright imposition of martial rule.

In this, however, Aquino faces a serious dilemma. For one, she risks international opprobrium and isolation, as a martial law declaration would certainly demolish the last vestiges of the regime's liberal democratic facade. Another practical consideration is the matter of who would enforce martial rule. With the AFP's loyalties under question, the Aquino faction is understandably hesitant to entrust the military with sweeping powers to implement martial rule.

For now, the Aquino regime intends to exhaust all the possibilities of the reactionary Congress and the Constitution to provide a cloak of legitimacy to its actions. Sure enough, Aquino's supporters, including some so-called staunch defenders of civil liberties, have risen as one in defending the National Emergency Act's repressive measures.

Meanwhile, the Aquino clique has been trying to consolidate its weakening hold on power. Saying that the coming year is a time to "reflect on our own shortcomings,"

Aquino reshuffled her Cabinet, firing, among others, three of her most unpopular and incompetent appointees: Rainerio Reyes of the Department of Transportation and Communication; Lourdes Quisumbing of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports; and Carlos Dominguez of the Department of Agriculture.

At the same time, Aquino has been making what appears to be her boldest move ever to subdue her rivals. Before year's end, rebellion charges had been filed against several active and retired military officers and prominent anti-Aquino politicians, including Enrile himself.

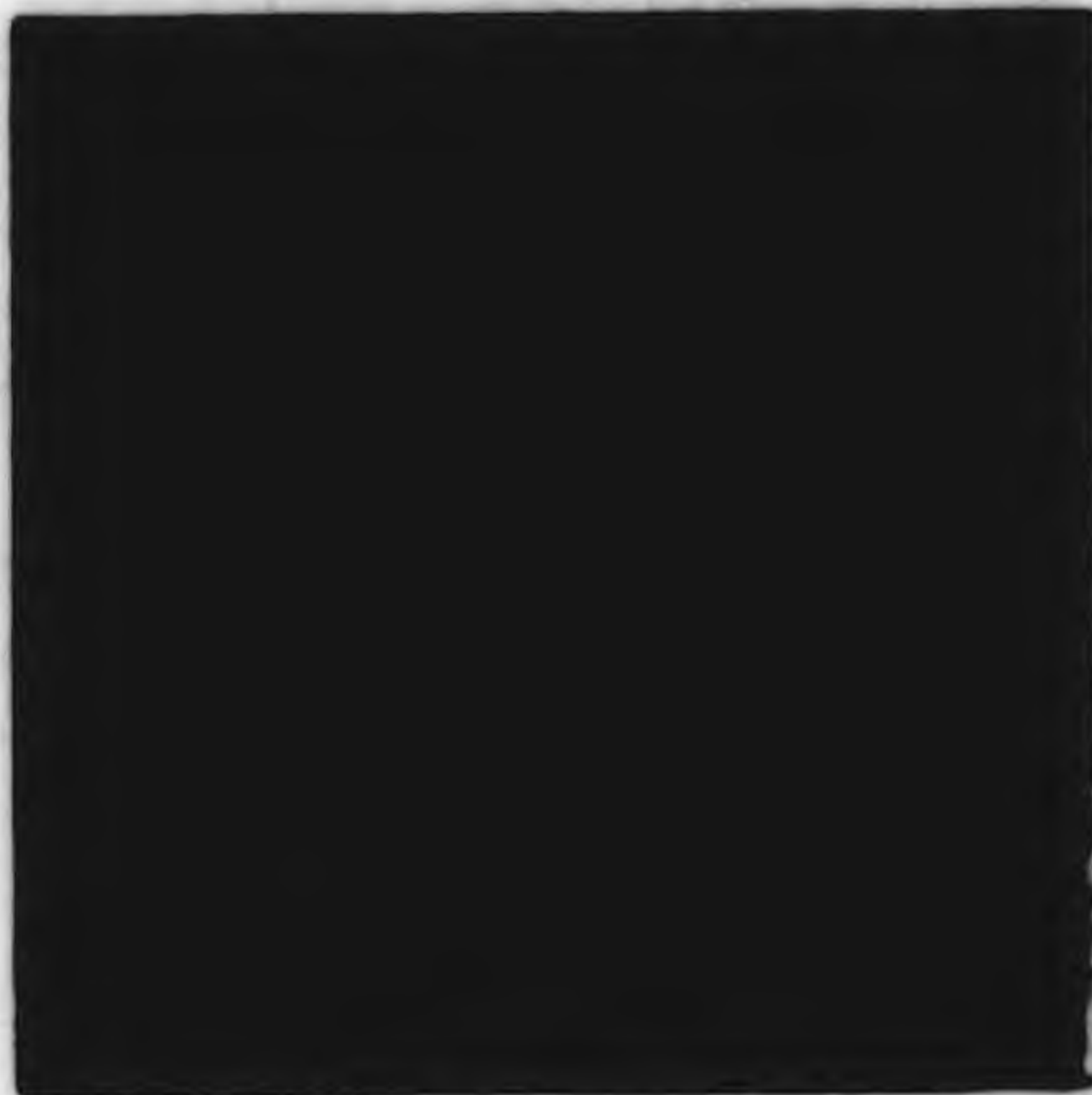
But despite the official backing she has received for these measures, Aquino can never be too sure of the loyalties of others within her clique. Already, she has dismissed her erstwhile favorite, Miriam Defensor Santiago, from her post as Agrarian Reform Secretary. Although the reasons remain undisclosed, sources say that it was Santiago's emerging alliance with defense chief and presidential hopeful Fidel Ramos, her inclusion by the RAM in a list of officials that would compose a proposed military-civilian junta and her ties with former immigration chief Bienvenido Alano that caused her to lose favor with Aquino. Santiago had recommended Alano, one of the founding members of RAM, to replace her as immigration commissioner when she became Agrarian Reform Secretary. Alano was also swept away in the recent revamp.

Aquino, though, has also been trying to win over the thousands of disgruntled AFP men by adopting a more lenient attitude towards the rank-and-file who participated in the coup. Aside from guaranteeing the same benefits to families of soldiers who died fighting on opposite camps, she also raised all AFP troopers' daily subsistence allowance from P18 to P30.

But nothing, not even Aquino's frantic efforts to save her floundering rule, can stem the system's worsening political and economic crisis. As conditions deteriorate, so will the Aquino regime move inexorably on the road to open terrorist rule. No matter how hard the government wants the public to believe that the National Emergency Act is "totally different from a martial law declaration," the very measures that have been imposed under the NEA would point to its true intentions.

Real targets: the Left

Although the avowed and immediate targets of the National Emergency Act are the Aquino faction's rivals who participated in the coup attempt, its eventual and real victims are the political forces in the open and underground Left. No matter how murderous intra-ruling class rivalries become, it is the revolutionary and progressive forces, with their nationalist and pro-people stance on a broad range of issues, who continue to be at loggerheads with the reactionary



Post-coup sweep: Aquino sacks erstwhile favorite Santiago (above left), files charges against Enrile

Libphotos

COVER STORIES

ruling system. In the end, the distinctions between the open and underground Left will not be important to a ruling system intent on crushing all those who oppose its interests.

In fact, the coup d'état and the declaration of a state of national emergency preempted the holding of militant mass struggles to protest the recent oil price hike and other anti-people policies of the regime, and came right after the formation of a broad people's movement against the retention of the US military bases.

Already, there are indications of an impending crackdown on mass actions, with former labor secretary Franklin Drilon warning trade unions to desist from calling strikes and work slowdowns.

AFP chief of staff Gen. Renato de Villa himself has given the public an idea of what he wants done under a "state of national emergency." In a

tion and sue any newspaper that "supports military rebels or incites to rebellion."

With these initial steps, the Aquino regime had tested the waters for the eventual imposition of more stringent measures. Finding itself drowning in a sea of hostility, the restrictions on the broadcast media were later lifted — but not before the NTC aired threats that it would reimpose them "should conditions warrant such measures."

Decisive US role

Such hemming and hawing on the part of the regime do not in any way diminish the eventuality of martial rule. For in the face of any hesitation by Cory Aquino, it is US imperialism itself that shall step in to resolve the impasse.

ment guarantees that Honasan would not take any moves against Aquino. If anything, the deal indicated that the coup leader was at the disposal of the State Department and could be called upon any time to put pressure on Aquino.

Sure enough, US officials critical of Aquino's ability to protect US interests have become more vocal in expressing their views. Most telling were the words of US Rep. George Darden of the House Armed Forces Committee. In an interview last December 5, Darden expressed "real doubts that (Aquino) has the strength and leadership to continue to rule the Philippines." Saying that the insurgency from the Left "seems to be gaining in strength," he urged the US government to "take a long, hard look" at its policy of supporting Aquino. An unnamed US official also later cited RAM accusations that



Preservation of military bases: Bottom line for US imperialism

December 15 letter to Aquino, de Villa recommended that the then proposed NEA should empower police and military personnel to conduct raids, searches and arrests without warrants; suspend the writ of habeas corpus; close down all newspapers; and prohibit mass actions by suspected "communist front organizations."

Leaked to the press, the confidential letter caused an uproar from media practitioners and human rights advocates, and prompted a newspaper editor to remark, "What they (the military) really want is martial law."

As part of the emergency measures, the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) also banned the airing of "rebellious or terrorist propaganda," closed down two radio stations and placed under close watch various other AM and FM stations nationwide. Radio stations also complained of receiving frequent calls from the military regarding reports that the AFP found objectionable. Later, Aquino herself threatened to close down any radio or television sta-

The United States' open and active role in the recent coup has shown that it is US imperialist intervention that shall decide the outcome of future outbursts of factional rivalry.

As US officials have already pointed out, there have been "no fundamental changes" (*underscoring ours — LIB*) in the US' policy of looking out for its military and economic interests in the Philippines. What has changed, however, is the US' choice of which ruling class faction to support. For US imperialism, the bottom line has always been to prop up whichever clique could most effectively preserve US interests and subjugate an increasingly restive populace.

In fact, despite the Bush administration's open support for Aquino, US complicity in the recent coup could not be discounted. Last September, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* ran a story about a secret deal forged between Malacanang and the US State Department where the Aquino government agreed "not to touch" Honasan in exchange for State Depart-

Aquino "ignored the army and had not fought seriously enough to defeat the NPA." Said the official, "Mrs. Aquino must do a better job of solving the grievances of her military, or else, her days could be numbered." To all indications, these statements are tacit demands for Aquino to scale up the brutality of her regime's "total war" against the people, or risk the withdrawal of US support for her government.

Meanwhile, there are growing debates in Washington over Aquino's continued usefulness to US imperialism and the propriety of preserving her regime's liberal democratic facade.

Sooner or later, the debates will give way to decisive action. As it had been in the past, US imperialism shall be the final arbiter in the bloody contests between rival factions of the ruling elite. And as it had done in 1972, it is US imperialism that shall push for the imposition of open terrorist rule to arrest the ruling system's rapid decline. **Victoria Manalo**



Never again! : Thousands mass up to denounce NEA declaration

An inverse replay of history

The National Democratic Front views the declaration of national emergency and the National Emergency Act as the most blatant and decisive measures thus far taken by the US-Aquino regime to restore fascist dictatorship in the country. By these measures, the regime has shed off a major part of its democratic garb, leaving only a thin veil over its true autocratic and terrorist face.

History is repeating itself in our country today, but this time in an inverse replay. Aquino is actually doing a "Marcos" in reverse. Marcos started with an outright declaration of martial law and later embellished it with democratic trimmings such as the fake lifting of martial law and the convening of a rubber stamp Batasang Pambansa in 1984.

On the other hand, Aquino started with a "Freedom Constitution" replete with liberal democratic phraseologies and the election of a full-fledged Congress mandated with co-equal powers. Barely a year in power, however, it has wantonly violated the very civil liberties enshrined in its own constitution as it posted record highs in human rights violations. Moreover, the declaration of national emergency and acquisition of a package of powers formally allows the president to ignore civil liberties at will and to usurp the legislative powers of congress, an arrangement akin to that in the latter years of the previous regime. These steps are clearly being undertaken to systematically install a US-backed de facto fascist dictatorship.

Even the rationale of both regimes

in instituting draconian measures run along similar lines. Madame Aquino's avowed objective of "saving democracy and solving the root causes of rebellion and mutiny" is but a variation of Marcos' alibi of "saving the republic from a rightist-leftist conspiracy and building a new society."

The declaration of national emergency and the passage of emergency powers demonstrate the unprecedented magnitude and unresolvable nature of the crisis besetting the present ruling system. In fact, the socio-economic and political crisis gripping the nation has so deteriorated that in such a short span of time after the dictatorship's fall, the ruling class can no longer rule with the luxury of democratic trimmings and has found itself hard-pressed to return to an open terrorist rule.

Dreams of reforms and justice nurtured by the February 1986 people's power uprising all turned into nightmares as the situation worsened under Madame Aquino's administration. As a result of pro-US economic and political policies of the Aquino government, the immiseration of the ordinary Filipino, the rapid decline of the deformed and fledgling domestic economy, the sufferings of the populace under the "total war" policy of the regime, and the rampant graft and corruption practised by new Aquino cronies have intensified and converged, transforming the nation into a rumbling social volcano.

Against the backdrop of this crisis and the regime's mismanagement, rabid corruption by relatives and cronies invites military adventurists and

political rivals to engage in bloody coups such as the most recent and bloodiest one.

With US prodding and support, the Aquino-Ramos clique in its desperation to cling to power, has found in coup attempts a very convenient excuse to cast off some of its democratic embellishments. While the declaration of national emergency and the legislation of emergency powers are purportedly directed against the coup plotters, the real intent of this new fascist order is to give the regime a freer hand in suppressing an increasingly restive people and to buttress its predilection for power monopoly.

If history is repeating itself with regard to the restoration of fascist dictatorship, it will surely repeat itself, too, with regard to the latter's fate. The democratic aspirations of the people, the very source of the present regime's former popularity will become the same source of its massive repudiation in the near future.

As the people have rejected and dismantled the fascist dictatorship of Marcos, so will it reject and dismantle a new fascist dictatorship. No amount of sweetness and double-talk can save it from this inevitable doom.

Our people have learned their lesson well during the past regime of terror.

Never again shall the people allow martial law!

Never again shall a fascist dictator sit in Malacanang without inviting the people's most determined armed and militant resistance!

National Democratic Front

Bountiful harvests

PKM-led agrarian struggles score advances nationwide



Bumper crop: Reaping the fruits of agrarian revolution

The land rose, fell and rose again in a gentle slope. A mass of tall cogon grass covered the easterly slopes while across to the west was what had been left of a rain forest where even now the famed *tamaraw* and *simaron* (wild buffalo) could be seen roaming. From afar, the peasants watched as a jampacked passenger jeepney conked and swayed on the potholed dirt road that dissected the expanse of green on its way to town.

It had been a cattle ranch. Fifty years ago, the provincial government in Mindoro granted it at a hundred-hectare concession to an enterprising *hantoro* from Quezon City. The original settlers who had cleared the forest and farmed the land were forcibly driven out to give way to a hundred

heads of cattle. The cattle grew fat as did the horse-riding and carbine-toting cowboy who soon after built a concrete bungalow where he brought his women and friends from the big city. But the economic crisis under the Marcos dictatorship swept away the rancher's luxurious lifestyle and in 1983, the ranch was abandoned. By 1987, the land was crying in idle sorrow.

Land occupation

For the *damuong* (settler) peasants of Mindoro, such idleness is criminal. For to see only the tentacles of a dusty provincial road strangle the vast expanse while they whose toil make the soil's bounty remain landless and hungry, is to witness their own death.

They had no land in Panay, or Bohol, or nearby Batangas. So they came, whole families in tow, to this island looking for a new beginning. Now they could not bear to see this opportunity for a life and a future slip by their hands. So they decided to act.

Bonding themselves together into a legal farmers association, they occupied and surveyed the land. Adeptly pinpointing those parts suitable for *kaingin* and those that were not, they then segregated a forested area as a reservation so that spring water would not dry up. Then they started subdividing the land.

With an old abaca rope cut to a meter long, the farmers' land reform team painstakingly measured two hectares per plot, planting a tree on the

MAINSTREAM

four corners to serve as the legal boundary for each plot of land. After one week, the team had 50 plots ready for distribution to the pioneering batch of 50 farmer-beneficiaries.

To avoid quarrels, the farmers agreed to draw lots as the proper method of distribution. And so, on an old piece of Manila paper, a crudely sketched map dated August 1987 lists the names and delineates the boundaries of each plot of land that the farmers of Sitio Araw now own.

But the peasants' struggle did not end there. For soon after, the Aquino government declared all such land occupations illegal and actually sent troops to harass the farmers. In Sitio Araw, the AFP Mindoro Occidental/Oriental Command, on the pretext of launching counter-insurgency operations, bombed and strafed the area. Several families left their farms and hid in the forests. Even the neighboring Mangyan community was not spared by marauding troops. A local peasant leader was abducted and killed by the military to cap its campaign of terror against the militant farmers on the island. Yet despite direct threats to life and limb, the peasants of Sitio Araw boldly resolved to strengthen their ranks and fight to preserve their gains.

It was about this time that local organizers of the NDF-affiliated Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid (PKM) visited the area. Naturally, and with great enthusiasm, the farmers established their own PKM chapter and a local militia squad for self-defense. It was then that they finally came to know of the agrarian revolution which they spontaneously started, and of the PKM which spearheads the struggle.

Ka Inting, chairman of the PKM village chapter of Sitio Araw explains his knowledge of the peasant struggle for land. "Agrarian revolution is the answer to the centuries-old land problem in our country today," he began. "This problem started in 1521 when Spain colonized the islands it named after its king, Philip II. (I learned this when we studied *Philippine Society and Revolution* by Amado Guerrero two weeks ago, by the way.) So feudalism was brought here through the encomienda and hacienda systems.

The grave exploitation and oppression this system wrought on the peasantry in turn gave rise to more than 300 scattered uprisings against colonial and feudal rule. The Revolution of 1896 gave the peasants' clamor for a thorough overhaul of the land system a national character."

But the victory of the old national democratic revolution was snatched away by US imperialism, added Ka Inting bitterly. Although the peasant struggle for land did not wither away with the defeat, it was only when the correct line of the national democratic revolution was defined that the revolu-

shall guarantee the right to own property, including land. Smashing the feudal system would in turn propel the political, economic and socio-cultural development of the country, Ka Wayan concluded.

Thus, agrarian revolution, grasped by the peasant masses in their own life-and-death struggle for land, as in Sitio Araw and elsewhere, has become a mighty sword unsheathed against the ruling semi-colonial and semi-feudal order.

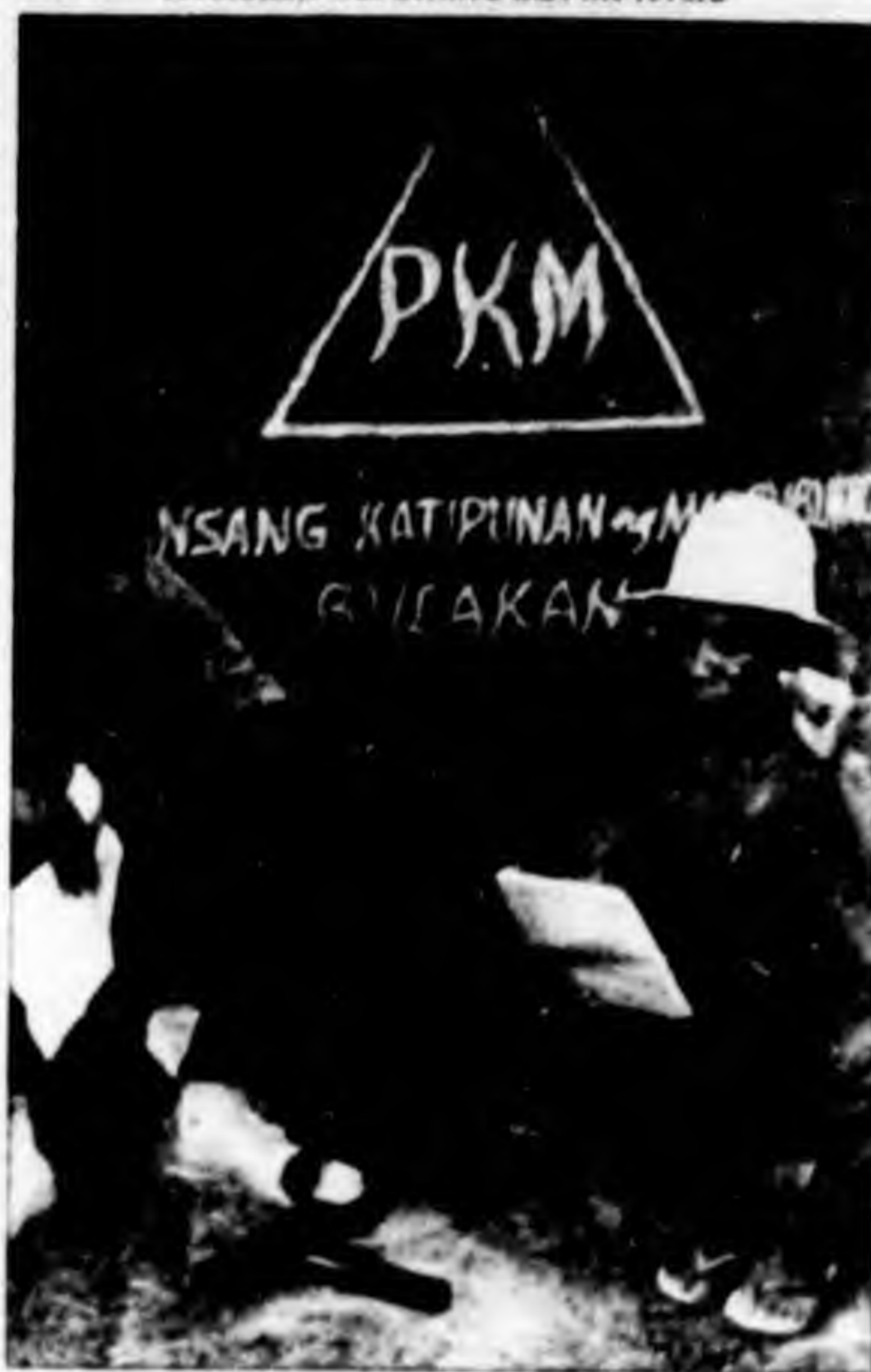
Gains in agrarian revolution

Today, across the archipelago, in the 69 NDF zones that have been established, the PKM is painstakingly building its grass-roots chapters and spearheading the implementation of the NDF's program of agrarian revolution. According to *Katipunan*, the PKM newsletter, it is the minimum program of agrarian revolution (reduction of land rent and elimination of usury) that is still being implemented nationwide. But there have been several instances, such as in Sitio Araw, where land confiscation and distribution have been tried.

In the guerrilla zones of Central Luzon, the revolutionary peasant movement has succeeded in lowering land rent from 24 cavans to five cavans. In several towns of Pampanga and Nueva Ecija, the rate of interest on loans has also gone down. In areas where sugarcane and palay dominate agricultural production, farm workers now enjoy higher wages. As of late 1986, more than 300 hectares of agricultural land had been confiscated by the PKM with the help of the NPA,

and distributed to farmer-beneficiaries. Mass insurrectionary actions such as land occupations and confiscation of farm animals and properties from abusive landlords have also been successfully launched several times.

In Vizcaya-Quirino, more than 30 victorious insurrectionary actions have been launched since January 1988 resulting in the confiscation of hundreds of heads of livestock as well as farm implements. Thousands of poor farmers have also been given land certificates by the Provisional Revolutionary



Solid gain: New PKM member takes his oath

tionary peasant movement reached new levels. For national democrats, the peasants' hunger for land was more than an issue that could win over to the side of the revolution the vast majority of Filipinos in the countryside. It is, according to Ka Wayan, an NDF cadre in Mindoro, the objective situation of our times: for ours is essentially a peasant struggle that is aimed at freeing the vast majority of our people from the fetters of feudal oppression in order to give birth to a new democratic system that, among others,

MAINSTREAM

Government in several towns of Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya and Cagayan.

In the Visayas, particularly in Negros, another 150 hectares of abandoned sugarcane fields have been confiscated and distributed to farmers who have planted them to food crops instead of sugarcane. Thousands of poor farmers have now received certificates to their land ownership under the Provisional Revolutionary Government in the different towns of the island.

In Samar, hunger-stricken peasants are taking destiny into their dilapidated *payags* (nipa huts). In every village where there is an active landlord, the poor peasants know by heart the ABCs of operation *sukot* (OPSU), which involves the enforced lowering of land rent without the landlord's knowing it. This they do by deliberately hiding a predetermined part of the harvest, say one-half of the entire take for the season, and showing only the other half to the landowner. The peasants then divide this according to the landlord's rule, that is 70%-30% in favor of the landowner. The *agaron* (landlord) then goes home happily thinking he had again put one over his *saop* (tenants) when in fact, what he has gotten is only one-third of the harvest.

OPSU is used only when the PKM is at its initial organizing stages in the village. By the time a chapter has been established, the peasants usually no longer need to hide part of their har-

vest. For even the landlord would by then voluntarily relinquish his exorbitant share of the harvest, or at least, ask for whatever the peasant association would deem fit to give him, if at all. In cases where the landlord would adamantly refuse to negotiate with the local PKM over the just lowering of land rent, the peasants would simply refuse to pay.

Through these methods, land rent has been successfully reduced to as low as 50% of the harvest in many villages. In addition, the peasants have also launched successful campaigns to raise farm wages by as much as 50% to 100% and increase the prices of farm products such as corn and palay; lower rent for farm animals, especially carabaos; and reduce usurious interests rates by 50% to 100%. But in most hinterland villages in Samar, including some coastal barrios, farmers have simply refused to pay rent. Two-hundred forty-five hectares have also been occupied and some 1,000 hectares confiscated by the PKM.

In the island of Cebu, local PKM chapters have reported the confiscation of farm animals, livestock and rice from despotic landlords.

In the heart of Panay, the PKM is currently engaged in consolidating its gains in the implementation of the minimum program. At the same time it is preparing the stage for more daring actions that shall propel the agrarian revolution on the island to a higher stage. Currently, the standard sharing

system being practiced is 75%-25%. Interest rates on loans have also been reduced by 50% and farm wages increased by 50%. In land rent reduction mass struggles, peasant groups now openly confront landlords, businessmen-usurers and government agencies. Over 30,000 hectares of public lands, mostly in consolidated guerrilla bases, are now under NDF control.

Meanwhile, in Mindanao, mass struggles for land rent reduction; lowering of rent imposed by ricemills, irrigation and farm implement owners; and increases in farm wages and prices of agricultural products also characterize the peasant movement in the island. In two guerrilla fronts in Western Mindanao, the PKM has confiscated and distributed several hundreds of hectares of prime agricultural lands.

The vigorous advances that have been made in the implementation of the minimum program of agrarian revolution manifest not only the peasantry's burning desire for radical change in the agricultural relations of production. They also show that final victory can be achieved more swiftly with the participation of a politically charged and thoroughly organized peasant class, whose revolutionary dedication shall remain unshaken because of the agrarian revolution's solid gains.

As Ka Inting of Sitio Araw would put it: "*Ang tanong ngayon ay hindi kung saan patutungo o bakit o papaano, kundi kung kailan na ang tagumpay.*"

Tara Go-Mios



Marching ahead: Officials of a barrio PKM chapter meet to plan a campaign to lower land rent



Satur scores Santiago

DAR as counter-insurgency tool

Briefly upstaged by the coup, the controversial Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) Secretary Miriam Defensor-Santiago once more attained front-page status last December when she disclosed that "communist cadres" out to sabotage the government's agrarian reform program had "infiltrated" several offices of the DAR. Santiago also said she had already informed the Department of National Defense on this matter.

With this, the DAR secretary has unwittingly let out her fears about the inevitable failure of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). This early, she has already chosen her scapegoats: the "communist infiltrators" within DAR who have yet to be ferreted out.

Santiago's announcement confirmed the strengthening tie-up between the DAR and the DND, with the DAR emerging as an out-and-out instrument for counter-insurgency.

Raising the communist bogey within the DAR followed the signing of an interdepartmental agreement between Ms. Santiago and defense secretary Fidel Ramos to reclaim tens of thousands of hectares of land already distributed by the NDF to poor peasants, and to impose restrictions on farmers who would like to hold meetings on land reform.

Detained NDF official Satur Ocampo comments on DAR's counter-insurgency bias:

The interdepartmental agreement signed last October between Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos and acting Agrarian Reform Secretary Miriam Defensor-Santiago tied up the Aquino regime's "comprehensive agrarian reform program" to its "total war" counter-insurgency program. The agreement formally harnessed the Department of Agrarian Reform as an instrument, complementing the military to frustrate the organized peasantry's increasingly effective drive to attain social justice and genuine democracy for themselves,

through their independent collective efforts.

Anti-peasant

The full text of the DND-DAR agreement has not been published, but based on newspaper reports, two of its stipulations as cited by Ms. Santiago stand out for being anti-peasant. These are:

1. A plan for the DND and DAR to "reclaim some 33,000 hectares of government and private land reported to have been distributed by the National Democratic Front to the farmers under its own version of the land reform program currently being implemented in at least 15 provinces"; and

2. Farmers and nongovernmental groups who would like to hold meetings on land reform in the provinces will have to ask permission from the local units of the military and DAR.

The reason cited for seizing the lands given to poor peasants under the NDF land reform program is that the latter "is operating outside of the legal ambit of the CARP law." Ergo, Ms. Santiago reportedly declared, the DAR "will not under any circumstances validate or give any kind of valid benefits (sic) to any document issued by the NDF."

I am not surprised by Ms. Santiago's assertion. The Aquino government can hardly be expected to recognize the genuine results of the NDF's land reform program, when it has nothing to show for its own CARP.

Confiscation

It is one thing for the Aquino government to deny recognition to NDF-issued land titles or even to deny assistance in terms of support services to the beneficiaries. But it would be another matter for the government to reclaim — that is, confiscate — the land already redistributed to the

peasants and now being tilled by them.

Instead of venting its spite on these peasants who are merely asserting a right denied to them by one landlord-dominated government after another, the Aquino government should concentrate its energies on fulfilling its own promises to the people.

Unlike the bogus CARP/CARL, which has proven its blatant pro-landlord bias in the case of the Cojuangco-owned Hacienda Luisita and its being a veritable minefield for graft and corruption as evidenced by the Garchitorena and other scams, the NDF land reform program directly redresses the peasants' historic grievances. It is anchored on justice and democracy — in the best sense of these ideals that have been debased and mangled by elitist politics for generations.

The land being redistributed (for free) by the NDF at this point is either idle public land, abandoned by absentee landlords, or land grabbed by big landlords and politicians. The land has been redistributed to the most needy and most deserving peasant families ready to till it themselves, under a priority list drawn up by the local peasant association. The land cannot be sold or transferred to another family without the approval of the peasant association.

Cooperative support

Cooperative support services, although beleaguered by militarization of the countryside, are being eked out to insure the productivity of the redistributed land. The owner-tiller family gets the entire harvest after contributing a modest share to the peasant association's common fund/stock. Should bad times strike, the peasant association sees to it that no family is left to fend for itself.

The Filipino peasantry has a long history of defending their land tenaciously, to the last drop of their blood. Beneficiaries of the NDF land reform program have even more reason to resist the Aquino government's attempt to rob them of what is rightfully theirs. They know that their struggle for land is an integral part of the entire people's revolutionary struggle to rid our country of centuries-old oppression and to move forward to a more prosperous future.

How then will the peasants react if Ms. Santiago, in the company of PC soldiers or Gen. Ramos himself,

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tells them that they have to yield their hard-won land to the government in compliance with the CARL, and that to retain "ownership" and gain "valid benefits" from government they have to pay through the nose?

Is it worth it?

Ms. Santiago may get her highs by confronting "missions impossible," but this is one arena where she ought to ask herself if accomplishing her

mission (granted that she could) would be worth the cost of it all.

As for requiring a permit from the local military unit and DAR before farmers and NGOs can hold meetings on land reform in the provinces, what is this but virtual denial of their right to peacefully assemble for redress of grievances and to free expression? Given the highly militarized condition in the countryside, peasant assemblies are already being discouraged if not outrightly banned. The DND-DAR agreement merely legitimizes the

military's arbitrary acts and abuses against the peasants and NGOs to serve the interest of the landlords.

It was not so long ago that Ms. Santiago publicly denounced some AFP units for protecting landlords in land disputes, thereby sabotaging the implementation of the CARL. Now she has engaged these same armed forces to "insure that CARL orders are carried out in the field." But that is how it goes under the Aquino regime, and that is one reason why the CARP or CARL will fail. ■

Humanity in the midst of war

Surigao del Sur NPA frees seven POWs in accordance with Protocol II

Libphotos



Surigao NPA's Fr. Frank: "The enemy soldier is a human being deserving of respect"



How effortless the whole negotiation was. Unbelievably easy! No demands made, no ransom given."

Fr. Irineo Amantillo, Bishop of Tandag, Surigao del Sur and the others in his party could not conceal their pleasant surprise at the way the talks progressed on the release of seven prisoners-of-war (POWs) captured by the NPA in May and August. Six of the POWs (2Lt. Bienvenido Arquiza Jr. and Pfc.'s Diosdado Mancio, Rogelio de los Santos, Edgar Cabriades, Alfredo Canatoy and Sandalio Gonzales) were captured during a tactical offensive last May 2 in Lianga town. The seventh, Pfc. Carlos Salinas, was taken prisoner last August 20 during an NPA ambush in Barangay Adlay, Tago town. All troopers belong to the 58th IB of the Philippine Army.

Before the POWs' release, the NPA command in the province headed by guerrilla-priest Fr. Frank Navarro, proposed to Bishop Amantillo and Surigao del Sur Gov. Salvacion Cejoco that a province-wide suspension of AFP operations be implemented from September 7-10 to pave the way for negotiations.

The military, however, refused to honor the NPA's proposal and agreed only to a limited, negotiated ceasefire on the local level. To preempt the negotiations, the AFP even resorted to spreading disinformation, citing so-called "intelligence reports" that the prisoners were already dead.

Nonetheless, the NPA command sent word that talks on the prisoners' release could be held on the 8th of September. Between 9:00 and 10:00 a.m., said the NPA, the bishop and his party (including families of the soldiers, who had also been informed of this matter) would be met by guerrillas somewhere in the highlands of Diatagon, Lianga town, from which they would be told where to proceed.

Meanwhile, the military was informed that the group of 40 led by the bishop and the governor, was on its way to the mountains. The AFP had earlier barred Governor Cejoco from accompanying the group, saying that it was "too dangerous" for her. The governor stood pat on her decision and joined the bishop and the others, and the caravan of seven vehicles slowly made its way up a rugged logging road towards the agreed place.

Halfway up the mountain, at the intersection of two logging roads, the

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caravan was stopped by NPA sentries, who inspected the group's provisions. Fifteen minutes later, the sentries radioed their comrades who were waiting at the appointed place, and signalled the caravan to take the other road.

After another 15 minutes uphill, the group sighted Fr. Navarro and other Red fighters standing in front of a dilapidated hut. Furious handshakes and exchanges of greetings between the two groups served to dispel tensions. The bishop and his party opened their provisions and shared their lunch with the guerrillas. Said the bishop "The meal wonderfully restored our calm and Fr. Navarro suggested that we start the short program."

During the ceremony, a document signed by the soldiers attesting to their humane treatment at the hands of the NPA, was read aloud. Speeches were given by Bishop Amantillo and a representative from the Red Cross. Meanwhile, a Red Cross vehicle was borrowed by the guerrillas to fetch the prisoners. As the vehicle arrived, laden with seven smiling soldiers, the program was briefly interrupted when relatives rushed to embrace the long-lost men. The troopers also later received a routine medical check-up, after which they were pronounced to be in good physical condition.

In an interview held after the program, Fr. Navarro explained why the NPA released the prisoners: "We captured those soldiers during gunbattles with the AFP. But we later released them because we knew we did not have the right to kill them," he said.

"Paragraph I, Article 4 of Protocol II prohibits the issuance of commands such as 'There shall be no survivors,'" said Fr. Navarro. "This means that we are duty-bound to accept the surrender of whoever wants to surrender and be a survivor. Our code of discipline in the NPA also states that we should accept the surrender of enemies, and that we should not maltreat captives."

He continued: "Our record as an organization attests to our strict adherence to this rule. When we find an enemy soldier wounded after the fighting, we carry him to safety and give him medical treatment. We don't simply leave him without at least providing him some medical attention, because he might die. We do this," he explained, "because even the enemy soldier is a human being who deserves respect." ■



Able fighting force: Cordillera NPA with mass supporters

Libphotos

Defending the highlands

People and revolutionary forces in Cordillera resist "Oplan Pakilala"

The people of the Cordillera are up against a new counter-insurgency drive dubbed as "Oplan Pakilala." Started in mid-May this year, "Oplan Pakilala" is now on its second phase.

Last October 15, Regional Strike Forces from the AFP's Recom 14 were airlifted from La Trinidad, Benguet to the hinterlands of Tabuk, Selegseg, Lubuagan and Balbalan in Kalinga-Apayao. Scout Ranger battalions have also been dispatched to Marag Valley, Luna in Kalinga-Apayao and Besao, Sagada, Sadanga and Tuba in the Mountain Province-Abra borders. On October 23, Philippine Air Force helicopters strafed and bombed the barrio of Langiden in Abra. Nine days later, two T-28 ("Tora-Tora") planes bombed the village of Secsecan in Balbalan town.

"Oplan Pakilala's" avowed purpose is to crush the revolutionary movement's political infrastructure in the Cordillera and establish a strong military presence in areas where the organized masses have set up Provisional Revolutionary Governments (PRGs). In Abra, the AFP's focus of attention are the contiguous towns of Tineg, Lacub, Malibcong and Baay-Licuan, long suspected by the military as the revolutionary movement's most stable base areas in the province. The municipalities, which are mostly populated by Tingguian folk, are found in northwestern Abra. Another reason for concentrating on these towns is the AFP's and the ruling elite's desire to take hold of the rich gold deposits in the area.

In May 15 this year, a composite AFP contingent composed of the 65th IB-PA and the 125th, 123rd, 135th and 137th PC companies plus police and CAFGU elements pulled out from

their camps near the capital town of Bangued towards northern Abra. The military contingent split into two forces, with one travelling northward towards Tineg and the other travelling southward towards Malibcong. The objective: to encircle northwestern Abra and suppress the people's revolutionary organizations in the area.

Early enough in the counter-insurgency campaign, the military made known its objectives with savage brutality: five suspected NPA and militia members captured in Tineg were cruelly tortured and burned alive. In Barrio Bayabas, Malibcong town, and in many other barrios, residents complained that soldiers stole their chickens and eggs and uprooted their *labong* (bamboo shoots). The village councils in the area had banned the uprooting of *labong* to prevent the depletion of bamboo, which is crucial to their economic survival.

Military operations have also prevented the people from going to their *kaingin* areas and disrupted the planting of palay. Indiscriminate firing by soldiers as they entered the villages has resulted in some work animals killed. In Malibcong, the military detained two high school girls who were on their way to enroll, accusing them of gathering intelligence for the NPA.

The AFP had planned on converging in Lacub after rampaging through the villages north and south of this town. But resistance from the Abra NPA disrupted the military plans. On May 17, while the AFP contingent was still in the southern town of Daguioman, they were ambushed by a platoon of Red fighters. In a fierce fire-fight that raged for a day, three soldiers were killed and several wounded. There were no casualties on the NPA side.

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Their plans foiled, the AFP troopers instead spent a week in Barrio Mataragan in Malibcong. Later, apparently fearful of further NPA attacks, the soldiers attempted to leave Mataragan for the Malibcong town center secretly, under cover of darkness. So edgy were the troopers that a misencounter ensued between PC and army elements during their midnight retreat. Three enemy soldiers were killed in what was later made out to be a gun-battle between the troopers and the NPA.

Resistance to "Oplan Pakilala" has recently intensified with the raid last September 1 of a PC camp in the town of Tineg (see p.18). According to reports from the Far-North Luzon NPA newspaper *Nalabaga a Gerilia*, (Red Fighter), the guerrillas succeeded in destroying the PC camp.

"Oplan Pakilala" is the AFP's second major attempt since late 1988 to penetrate northwestern Abra. In December 16 last year, a day-long gun-battle raged in Lacub when AFP troopers from the 125th and 137th PC companies reinforced by CAFGU and INP elements attempted to sabotage graduation rites for two NPA companies that had been in training. Coming a day too late, the AFP's presence provided the newly graduated guerrillas with their first taste of battle.

By afternoon of the 16th, 19 troopers lay dead. The NPA seized five M16s, one M14, one M60 and more than 1,000 assorted bullets. The fiasco so embarrassed the AFP high command that it ordered the relief of then Abra PC provincial commander Lt. Col. Jesus Gerson.

Meanwhile, the organized masses

in Abra have been forging ahead in their bid to build up their political and economic power. The National Democratic Front is now active in at least 30 villages, with municipal-level PRGs set up in three towns in the province. The PRGs have embarked on projects designed to improve the living conditions of the people, who up to now, depend on slash-and-burn cultivation, marginal palay production and occasional gold panning for their livelihood. Foremost among these projects are irrigation systems, labor cooperation and *payao* expansion, where hitherto idle lands are planted to palay and root crops.

With the military deadset on thwarting these advances, the AFP can expect even more intense resistance to "Oplan Pakilala" and all other AFP counter-insurgency drives to come.

Andrea Firmeza

Only under a democratic state can genuine autonomy be achieved

Statement of the NDF on the Organic Act Creating an Autonomous Muslim Mindanao

Divide and rule

Contrary to Mrs. Aquino's claims that the organic act aims to unify the various peoples in the island, RA 6734 is an attempt to destroy the broadening unity that has been achieved by the peoples of Mindanao in their struggle against decades of exploitation and neglect by chauvinistic national governments.

For centuries, the Moro people have tenaciously resisted the onslaught of foreign invaders and the local ruling classes into their lands. In the process, the Moro people have evolved a consciousness of being a nation, with the qualitative leap in this development reflected in the emergence in the '70s of the revolutionary struggle for self-determination and secession led by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). This struggle demonstrated the Moro people's united political will to fight for their aspiration to be recognized as a nation. The right to secede, inherent to a people recognized as a nation, is asserted when the bigger nation is oppressive and exploitative, as in the case of the US-Marcos dictatorship then, and the US-Aquino regime today. The Moro people's



Moros oppose regime's autonomy law

The Organic Act creating an Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (RA 6734), which will be subject to a plebiscite on November 19, is nothing but a scheme to perpetuate and intensify national and class oppression against the Moro people and other minority groups in Southern Philippines and, in the process, strengthen the reactionary rule of US imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism.

RA 6734 contradicts the very essence of autonomy because it does not grant basic state and governmental powers to the peoples in the 13 provinces of Mindanao but only to the local comprador big bourgeoisie and the landlord classes. Hence, full control of Mindanao by the central government and the ruling classes will be further consolidated. The rights and welfare of the oppressed and exploited peoples of Mindanao will not be guaranteed through the equitable distribution of resources and services because state and governmental powers will continue to be the monopoly of US imperialism, big compradors and big landlords.

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struggle for self-determination is also the logical expression of their struggle against national and class oppression in every form.

Like the Moro people, the *lumad* have also persevered in their struggle for self-determination against national and class oppression. Even if these socio-historical communities of peoples do not yet possess the requisites for becoming nations, the right to self-determination and genuine autonomy also applies to them. This means that they too have the right to determine how they should resolve all their internal problems related to their development as peoples, as well as the right to choose their own social and political systems.

Today, the Moro people's struggle for self-determination and genuine autonomy is being carried forward by a broad united front of revolutionary, patriotic and democratic forces, which include the NDF, the MNLF, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and other patriotic groups and individuals from among the Moro people. Deeply rooted among the Moro workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie, this broad front reflects the developing unity of progressive Moros, *lumad*, and the various classes and sectors from the majority people all over Mindanao, who are all bound by their common struggle against the regime's oppressive and exploitative policies. By peddling its own version of autonomy, the US-Aquino regime hopes to coopt this growing movement and isolate the revolutionary and progressive forces from the Moro masses, the *lumad*, and the exploited classes and sectors of the majority people in order to prevent the realization of genuine autonomy and people's democracy.

More and more, the divisive intents of RA 6734 are becoming evident. Fanning the flames of historic tensions and prejudices among the various peoples in Mindanao, the regime's organic law has succeeded only in spreading enmity and suspicion among them. On top of this, the regime is also deliberately confusing the people by using to the hilt, MNLF and MILF surrenderees as well as government agents and reactionaries within these two organizations to promote the government's organic act.

Brandishing their "affiliation" with the revolutionary and progressive groups, these poseurs, along with the old traditional politicians, are guaranteed their own niches of power once the autonomous regions are set up. Through them, the US-Aquino regime will have consolidated a stable power

base in time for the 1992 elections, and ensured the continuity of reactionary rule in Mindanao. The US-Aquino regime can then better train its guns against the revolutionary forces and concentrate on the country's other "trouble spots."

Dubious vs. genuine autonomy

The storm of divisiveness and confusion being raised by the regime serves yet another purpose: to deflect the attention of the Moro people, the *lumad*, and other oppressed classes and sectors from the highly anomalous provisions of RA 6734.

What the Aquino government chooses to call "autonomy" entails the creation of local legislative bodies whose powers are so circumscribed



Growing people's unity in Mindanao

that whatever laws they may produce are automatically subject to the prior limits set by national laws. These local legislatures will not even have the power to review or declare exemption from local application, national laws that are harmful or unsuited to the region.

Under RA 6734, national laws on land and eminent domain will remain virtually untouched. Disposition of strategic minerals, national reserves and aquatic parks as well as energy sources shall remain under the control of the national government. The national government shall also retain control over major economic activities like industry, mining and forestry. Local economic control will be confined to the traditional barter trade and small- and medium-scale industries.

Most of all, RA 6734 mocks the very essence of meaningful autonomy with its failure to guarantee the representation of the different peoples, classes and sectors in the local organs

of political power and its non-recognition of the particularities and geographical concentrations of the various groupings in the 13 provinces of Mindanao. Instead, what RA 6734 will manage to accomplish is the hopeless gerrymandering of the island — a situation that can only be of use to the traditional politicians' and local ruling classes' partisan interests.

The National Democratic Front is committed to the unification of all oppressed classes, sectors and minority peoples in the Philippines for the overthrow of the reactionary rule of US imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism through a people's revolutionary war, and to establish the people's democratic state and government.

This new democratic state and government will represent the organized political power of all oppressed classes, minority peoples and sectors and will guarantee the realization of their fundamental interests. The Moro people's struggle for genuine autonomy and their right to secede under conditions of national and class oppression, and other minority people's struggle for self-determination are part of the overall national democratic struggle.

Within the framework of the new democratic state, the right of the Moro people and other minority peoples to decide their own destiny; to free themselves from national and class oppression, exploitation, chauvinism and discrimination; to achieve genuine democracy; to rule themselves; and to pursue social progress in an all-rounded way and in accordance with their specific conditions will be guaranteed. In this regard, the new democratic state and government shall guarantee that the Moro people, especially the toiling masses among them, and other minority peoples, shall have rightful representation and participation in all appropriate levels of state and governmental organs from the local up to the regional and national levels while at the same time assuring them of their right to local and regional autonomy. In areas where they constitute the majority, they will have the dominant voice in the state and governmental organs. In areas where there are various peoples, they will be guaranteed proportionate representation.

Genuine autonomy can only be achieved with the attainment of full national freedom and people's democracy by the entire oppressed and exploited classes, sectors and minority peoples in the Philippines. For it is only under the new democratic state that their fundamental interests will be fulfilled and safeguarded. ●

Frustrating the enemy

NPA in Northern Luzon, Mindanao thwart AFP counter-insurgency drives in their regions

Guerrilla forces of the New People's Army (NPA) in Northern Luzon and Northern Mindanao relentlessly thwarted the counter-insurgency campaigns of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in their respective areas through successive tactical offensives (TOs) launched from August to November.

In these offensives, the NPA killed at least 24 enemy forces, wounded three and seized scores of high-powered firearms.

In Northern Luzon, the NPA dealt heavy blows against the AFP's "Lambat Bitag" (gradual constriction) campaign even as government troopers formed 41 companies of the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) in Isabela, Cagayan, Ilocos Sur, Nueva Vizcaya and Quirino to supplement the AFP's brigade-size force deployed in these provinces.

guerrilla unit killed eight troopers, wounded three and seized seven high-powered firearms in an ambush last September 7 at the national highway in Subongcogon town. Among the casualties was PC Capt. Inocencio Ledesma, the troop leader. According to correspondence reports from *Insurreksyon*, the revolutionary mass paper in Northern Mindanao, the soldiers, who belonged to the Regional Special Action Force, were aboard a vehicle which was waylaid by NPA guerrillas posted at the highway. Confiscated during the ambush were four M16s, three M14s and four pistols.

Meanwhile, *Nalabaga a Gerilla* (Red Fighter), the NPA newsletter in Far-North Luzon, reported eight successful tactical operations launched by the NPA from August to September:

August 2. Raid on the Integrated National Police headquarters and the

camp owned by big businessman Alfonso Lim and Congressman Domingo Tuzon of Cagayan;

September 15. Punishment of three CAFGU guides of the 41st Infantry Battalion (IF) conducting "Operation Highlander" in southern Isabela;

September 24. Sniping operations against the 21st IB camp in Barangay Mauanan, Rizal, Cagayan; and

September 25. Ambush of troopers from the 21st IB in Bullagao, Tuao, Cagayan.

These operations are the latest in a series of successful tactical offensives launched in Northern Luzon since January this year. In the past nine months, enemy forces suffered 324 dead and 160 wounded in nearly a hundred TOs waged in various provinces of the region. Seized in these offensives were 105 assorted firearms.



Planning maneuvers: NPA commanders in Cagayan study enemy movements before an ambush

Last October 9, Red fighters wiped out a 13-man unit of the 190th PC company in an ambush staged in Sitio Kayapis, Barangay Kakulungan, Buguias, Benguet. The battle, which raged till dawn of the next day, came closely on the heels of an NPA raid last September 29 on a CAFGU detachment in Barangay Ballay, Kabayuan, Benguet. All firearms and hundreds of rounds of ammunition were seized, and the detachment razed in this firefight.

Over in Misamis Oriental, the local

mayor's residence in Pilar, Abra;

August 23. Raid against a PC camp in Lubuagan, Kalinga-Apayao, which yielded six high-powered firearms, including an M203;

August 28. Raid on a CAFGU camp in Barangay Vindira, Garasi, Ilocos Norte, and another raid on a PC-CAFGU camp in Sumang, Tabuk, Kalinga-Apayao;

September 1. Raid on a PC camp in Tineg, Abra;

September 9. Raid-sabotage operation against the METCO logging

The guerrillas also heavily damaged four helicopters and 12 military vehicles, including one V-150 FV tank.

Fourteen enemy camps were destroyed and 18 army troopers captured during this period. The captives have been released, in accordance with the provisions of Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions.

Through incessant blows inflicted on the enemy, the NPA shall continue to frustrate the AFP's counter-insurgency drives.■

LETTERS

Comments from readers

Following are comments on the 1988 Draft Program of the NDF received by the NDF Provisional Secretariat. Readers are welcome to send in any additional suggestions and comments for improving the program.

LINAWIN ANG UGNAYAN NG MGA KASAPI NG NDF

Pangkahalatang mungkahi. Bigyang diin ang mahalagang papel at tungkulin ng iba't ibang lihim na pambansa-demokratikong organisasyong masa na nakapaloob sa NDF sa pagpapatupad ng mga ispesipikong bahagi ng Programa. (Halimbawa, anu-ano ang tiyak na papel ng ARMAS sa pagpapatupad ng Punto 11 [tungkol sa edukasyon at kultura]; ng MAKIBAKA sa pagpapatupad ng Punto 14 [tungkol sa pagpapalaya sa kababaihan], atbp.) at ang ugnayan ng mga organisasyong masang ito sa isa't isa. Isang paraan ito para mabigyan ng "laman at dugo" ang NDF bilang isang rebolusyonaryong prente. Paraan din ito ng pagpapamalas ng kanyang identidad, at pagpapakita ng kanyang dinamismo na kakaiba sa Partido Komunista at Bagong Hukbong Bayan.

Hinggil sa Punto 5 (Itayo ang Pambansa-Demokratikong Ekonomya...). Paano sa kongkreto ipinatutupad ang pagbigay ng "full play" sa operasyon ng "market forces"?

Hinggil sa Punto 6 (Ipatupad ang Tunay na Repormang Agraryo...). Paano ang ugnayan ng Puntong ito sa ipinapatupad nating rebolusyonaryong pagbubuwis at paano ang magiging implementasyon ng rebolusyonaryong pagbubuwis sa rebolusyong agraryo?

Hinggil sa Punto 11 (Itaguyod ang Makabayan, Siyentipiko at Popular na Kultura...). Hindi angkop at "consistent" ang paggamit dito ng salitang "spiritual" yayamang isang bagay na binigbigyang-diin sa Punto 11 ng burador ng programa ang pagtataguyod at pagpapalaganap ng siyentipikong pag-iisip at kultura. Nakapagbubunga rin ng pagkalito ang paggamit ng salitang "spiritual". Mungkahing tanggalin na ang salitang "spiritual" sa pangungusap.

Naobserbahang hindi na tuwirang tinukoy ang Filipino bilang pambansang wika, di tulad ng sa mga naunang programa ng NDF.

Katipunan ng mga Gurong Makabayan

GUARANTEE RECOGNITION OF ANCESTRAL LANDS

On the General Program of the NDF. Add something on the protracted nature of the people's war and mention the gains in the past 20 years as well as the outlook of the revolution.

On Point 3 (Establish a Democratic Coalition Government...). Why not specify the people's democratic republic as the People's Democratic Republic of the Philippines (PDRP)?

Also, will the democratic coalition government (DCG) subscribe to a multi-party system? Please clarify what exactly is meant by "political pluralism." And add something on the rights of a people (collective rights) such as rights to ancestral lands, distinct identity, etc. Clarify the nature of politics (e.g., "new politics") under the new system.

On Point 5 (Build the National Democratic Economy...). Add "autonomous regions" to p. 16, Paragraph 2

Under the DCG: Right to ancestral lands ensured

MDF

Line 7.

On Point 6 (Implement Genuine Agrarian Reform...). Add something on the recognition of particularities of areas in the course of implementing agrarian reform (for example, something on the recognition of ancestral lands and corresponding forms of ownership and forms of organization in working the land).

On Point 12 (Guarantee the Freedom of Religion...). Why should there be a separate point for freedom of religion? Why not subsume this under the point on people's democratic rights (Point 4?) Furthermore, this point refers to NDF policies, unlike other points where the reference is to the DCG and the PDRP.

On Point 13 (Terminate All Forms of National Oppression...). Add "And Equality" after "... Struggle for Self-Determination".

In the heading, use Cordillera Peoples (plural) instead of People (singular).

In p. 31, Lines 3-4, the phrase "indigenous brothers" is sexist; change this to "peoples." In Paragraph 4, Line 8 of the same page, change "neglect" to "denial."

Still on Point 13. In p. 32, Paragraph 3, Line 10, instead of saying "preservation of their way of life", say "respect and develop...towards forging national unity".

To the entire Point, add something on promoting mutual respect and understanding between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples to forge stronger unity.

Suggested alternative presentation of Point 13. Enunciate first the principles and points for all indigenous peoples and then dwell later on the particularities of the Bangsa Moro and Cordillera peoples. For one thing, the term "Cordillera people" is always appended with "other indigenous peoples". As to the particularities regarding the Cordillera peoples, it should include the nature of genuine autonomy in the light of the CPDF program for autonomy; adjustment in the land reform implementation with respect to ancestral lands; institutional rectification of discrimination through legal, educational, economic and cultural mechanisms, legislations, decrees, etc.

Cordillera People's Democratic Front

COUNTERCURRENTS

The Philippine government and the US

Playing dirty

US imperialism steps up covert operations to counter growing anti-bases movement

It was an eerie reminder of years past. In 1972, mysterious bombings that rocked the city created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty among the populace — and presented the perfect foil for Ferdinand Marcos to establish a military dictatorship and

the late Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr., as among the bombing's masterminds, raising the specter of Plaza Miranda had the effect of discrediting and destabilizing the present regime as well.

But the bombings were not all that lay siege to the Aquino govern-

attempt by Rep. Nicanor de Guzman, a crony of the President's brother Jose 'Peping' Cojuangco. Weeks later, came the explosive expose that Presidential sons-in-law Eldon Cruz and Manolo Abellada, had been involved in influence-peddling when they recommended the appointment of two officials of the National Telecommunications Commission who later blocked the granting of operating franchises to two other communications companies. The latter's entry would have broken up the monopoly of the Cojuangco-controlled Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. over the tele communications industry.

Before long, it became apparent that there was a logic behind the seemingly puzzling "confluence of events." The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), US imperialism's evil wizard, had once more dipped into its bag of dirty tricks.

Boosting Ramos' stock

The mysterious bombings, the resurrection of the Plaza Miranda case

prolong his hold on power.

Almost 17 years to the day martial law was declared, another wave of bombings hit the metropolis. This time around, the series of grenade blasts that rocked Quezon City, Pasig, Manila and Makati claimed the lives of two persons and injured at least 30 others, seriously putting to question how much the Aquino government was in control of things.

Meanwhile, in what seemed to be an uncanny coincidence, American journalist Gregg Jones, in his recently published book *The Red Revolution: Inside the Philippine Guerrilla Movement*, raised anew the Marcos regime's old accusations that it was the revolutionary movement that had masterminded the August 1971 bombing of a Liberal Party rally at Plaza Miranda. Jones' allegations, which disregarded disclosures by several of Marcos' own men that the bombing was part of an elaborate plot hatched to justify the declaration of martial law, were obviously meant to malign the revolutionary forces.

Interestingly, since Marcos had also accused Cory Aquino's husband,

ment during this period. At about the same time, disgruntled government functionaries leaked out details of government irregularities and bureaucratic corruption, many of which involved Cory Aquino's closest relatives and associates. Foremost among such cases was the discovery of a gun-smuggling



Libphotos



The CIA's hand: Bombing case against Sison revived; Cory sons-in-law's shenanigans hared; Ramos' star rises



COUNTERCURRENTS

and the continued airing of governmental corruption all bore the marks of a CIA destabilization scheme. Serving as a potent reminder to the Aquino regime of its own weakness and vulnerabilities, the destabilization process has consequently boosted the stock of other contenders to Aquino's position. In an interview with media, Aquino herself had admitted the possibility that the "chain of events could be part of a scenario set by some sectors who would like to grab power."

The NDF International Office was more forthright in saying who stood to profit most from the destabilization move. In a statement sent to media outlets early last September, the NDF said that shifting the blame for the Plaza Miranda carnage from Marcos to the Communist Party of the Philippines is intended not only "to rouse up all upper class factions into an anti-communist frenzy," but to "white-wash the complicity of Gen. Fidel Ramos with Marcos in the ... bombing and martial rule and boost (Ramos') presidential ambitions." (underscoring ours - LIB)

Long known as the fair-haired boy of US imperialism, the West Point-educated former general has indeed emerged from the recent factional war as the man most likely to succeed Aquino as president. As events of 17 years past show, Ramos may just as likely use the destabilization process as the perfect foil for his own grab for power.

To Cory Aquino, US imperialism's message was unequivocal: Move faster on the bases or else.

Oplan Jericho

On another level, the AFP and the Joint US Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG) have hatched up their own destabilization moves against the progressive forces through "Oplan Jericho," a bloody three-phase plan designed to "preempt the anti-bases bid and peace initiative" of the NDF. The oplan was drawn up after the NDF announced its willingness to declare a unilateral ceasefire if Aquino agrees to terminate the bases treaty by 1991 and disallow the forging of a new treaty.

Leaked to the NDF by sympathizers inside Malacanang, "Oplan Jericho" calls for the assassination of leading personalities from the NDF, the CPP and the legal movement who are opposed to the US bases.

Disclosure of the oplan explains in part the intensive vilification campaign

waged in the media against the revolutionary forces in recent months. Characterizing the first phase from February to April 1989 is the play up of "communist terrorist atrocities, bloody purges and killing fields" by a group of newspaper editors and columnists who are advocates of a civilian-military junta as an alternative to the Aquino government. The media-men, said the NDF, were wittingly or unwittingly used for this purpose.

Massive military surveillance of "communist-led organizations" and the arrest of its leaders, including those from legal anti-US groups will happen during the second phase, said to be from May to August, or before Aquino's state visit to the US.

The third phase involves the undertaking of "SMOs" or "special mission orders" (assassinations) against "communist terrorist targets in the

Growing anti-bases front: Target of "Oplan Jericho"



order of battle, open and underground," and blaming these as "offshoots of factional rivalries."

The entire oplan aims to "inspire and spread intrigues" within the ranks of the revolutionary movement by playing up so-called power struggles between "hardliners" and "moderates" within the CPP Central Committee. Calling for the "maximum use of DPA (deep penetration agent) materials," the ultimate objective is to "isolate the hardliners and destroy the credibility of the entire [revolutionary] leadership."

The NDF has denounced the AFP-JUSMAG oplan, calling it a "repulsive scheme which in the end only betrays the Aquino and US governments' fanatical desire to maintain the bases here at all costs."

Showdown on the bases

Overtly, the US and Aquino governments have made a number of decisive steps towards the bases' eventual retention. Acceding to a "request" from US President George Bush for early talks, Aquino has announced the composition of the RP bases panel that shall represent the Philippines in the "exploratory talks" on the future of the military bases in December or early next year. The "request" was contained in a one-page letter hand-carried by US Vice President Dan Quayle during his visit to the country in late September. Quayle's departure statement, where he expressed confidence that a "mutually acceptable agreement on the future of (the) facilities here in the Philippines" would be found, would indicate that much more



Menace from the bases: Cultural activist acts out the slow death resulting from nuclear contamination

than the holding of early exploratory talks had been agreed upon.

Sure enough, Aquino shed off her old "open options" stance. In an interview last October 15 on a US television show "Good Morning, America," she said: "The fact that I have agreed to talk means there is a possibility that there could be a new agreement because if I had not agreed to talk, then that would have been the end of it."

Aquino then later expressed support for House Speaker Ramon Mitra's proposal to hold a "consultation" on the US bases before a new treaty is submitted to the Senate for ratification. The move is clearly intended to undermine the Senate, which has time and again come out with statements critical of the bases' extension. Through the "consultation," the regime hopes to influence and harness votes from broad sections of the population who are largely uninformed of the hard issues surrounding the bases.

Significantly, though, Aquino has called for a "non-binding consultation," wary perhaps of survey results from the Social Weather Station that the number of people with pro-bases sentiments has diminished by almost 50% over the past two years.

Aquino's subsequent visit to the US in November merely served to clinch the bases deal. In a statement,

the NDF assailed the visit, saying that: "Talks on aid, trade and investment, on which the visit was focused, actually (formed) part of the bargaining process that (determined) the Aquino regime's final asking price for the renewal of the bases treaty." Bush himself stressed that continued US aid to Aquino hinged on the renewal of the bases treaty: "A new agreement will preserve bipartisan support for continued economic and military aid."

Meanwhile, groups and individuals opposed to the bases have grown in strength and number.

Last October 26, two senators, seven congressmen and 17 members of the 1986 Constitutional Commission launched a campaign for the closure of the US bases in the country. Led by Rep. Bonifacio Gillego of the Congress nationalist bloc, the group said it hopes to gather more than one million signatures in support of the campaign.

Last November 5, the National Economic Protectionism Association (NEPA), an organization of small- and medium-scale businessmen, assailed the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry for issuing a pro-bases statement. Citing the results of a survey, NEPA vice president Jorge Sibal said only 10% of the country's business community, mostly multinational

corporations, favored the retention of bases after 1991.

Two weeks later, several cause-oriented groups and prominent anti-bases activists launched a broad movement known as Anti-Base Koalisyon Demokratiko (ABAKADA). Drawing in groups and personalities of varied political persuasions, ABAKADA is the broadest people's organization yet to emerge in the struggle to oust the US military bases from the Philippines.

International solidarity for the anti-bases movement also received a boost when the US Peace Council, an organization that counts as members some Nobel Prize winners and Harvard University professors, voted to work for the dismantling of the US bases in the Philippines. The council issued the resolution during its congress, which was attended by 200 American intellectuals in Boston, Massachusetts last November. The council condemned the US bases' role in promoting wars of intervention in Asia.

Confronted by a steadily growing anti-bases front, US imperialism and its local allies can be expected to resort more and more to covert, unconventional methods (the CIA's "dirty tricks") to eliminate all those who stand in the way of the bases' retention.

Nicole Falipe

Situating the anti-bases struggle

As a major component of the national democratic revolutionary struggle these past many years, the popular movement to dismantle the US military bases has won support of a broad spectrum of society. Through its mass information drives and popular mobilizations, the anti-bases movement has fairly well succeeded in exposing the bases as direct instruments for perpetuating US imperialist domination of our economic, political, military and cultural affairs. The campaigns have heightened popular concern over the perils to the nation posed by nuclear arms kept or moved in and out of the bases; the spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases; the exploitation of Filipino women; and the maltreatment of Filipino base workers and those living around the US bases.

But despite these solid gains, the anti-bases movement still needs to convince the vast unpoliticized section of the population that is either unaware of the bases issue or indifferent to it. It is this manipulable section besides its own partisans, that the US-Aquino regime relies on to "endorse" the retention of the bases in a referendum (or "consultation").

At the same time, the anti-bases movement needs to resist and frustrate the scheme instigated by the imperialists to discredit the movement for being a "communist project." The pro-bases campaign aims to break up the broad tactical alliance of progressive and patriotic organizations and to deter the middle forces from actively joining the militant anti-bases mass campaigns and mobilizations. This malevolent scheme only points out the effectiveness of the anti-bases movement and the need to forge stronger unity within the broad front.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Aquino has agreed to open formal

talks with the US after her state visit to Washington D.C. With a track record of zero when it comes to asserting Philippine sovereignty, Mrs. Aquino will likely accede to extend the stay of the US bases. This abject obsequiousness to whatever the US wants stems from the fact that the economic, political and military interests of the Aquino regime — and the ruling elite it represents — conjoin the interests of US imperialism which are what the bases are protecting. With its political fate basically dependent on US government support, the Aquino regime will not do away with the bases. And while popular pressure from the anti-bases movement may lead to the closure of some unimportant facilities, the total dismantling of the bases cannot be expected.

Only a thoroughgoing national democratic revolutionary struggle can fully dismantle the US bases, liberate the nation from imperialist domination, and enable the country to embark on a beneficially self-reliant path of national development and progress.

But the full-force of pro-bases pressure — utilizing the massive resources of the foreign and local reactionaries — cannot be resisted, much less countered, by the sheer courage and tenacity of the largely urban-based advocates of national sovereignty. The breadth and staying power of solid political organizations, grassroots-based and enjoying the support of various sectors, must be developed and deployed to express and implement an enlightened political will for the Filipino people to be masters in their own land.

Second, however major an obstacle the bases may be towards the attainment of full freedom and democracy, scrapping them will not automatically bring us peace and prosperity. The anti-bases movement, to deliver what it promises, must be firmly situated within a revolutionary program that will do away with foreign control of the economy and foster national entrepreneurship within the ambit of central planning, implement genuine land reform and develop agricultural and national industrialization side by side. All these within a general restructuring of the political and social system that insures the people's sovereignty and genuine democracy.

Third, the people must be able to count on a genuine people's army — not a puppet armed forces like the AFP — to defend their revolutionary gains and national interest. With the people's army the people can effectively counter the US' dirty tricks and military interventionism with politico-military action. And in the event of full-scale US military aggression, the people can rally around the people's army to wage a defensive war of liberation.

The call for immediate dismantling of the bases was raised by the NDF right from the start, and continues to be amplified and brought nearer to realization by the revolutionary forces and their allies. The NDF program locates the anti-bases struggle within the context of the revolutionary effort to overcome foreign domination and control and to begin constructing now the political and material foundations of a national democratic society in the Philippines.

However, the NDF extends its help and support to all other political forces seeking the removal of the US bases outside the NDF agenda. For a truly broad national — and international — anti-bases united front can hasten the realization of our common goal. **National Democratic Front**



Battle lines: Anti-bases militants confront military phalanx

Forging a higher level of unity

Challenges and prospects of the national democratic revolution



Bars do not a prison make: Detained NDF leader Satur Ocampo reaches out to the people

From our isolated detention cell here in Fort Bonifacio, I have agreed to participate in the lecture-dialog. There are, however, obvious constraints to my effective participation, first of which is my inability to be physically present to answer your questions.

The other constraint is that the military has filed an assortment of cri-

minal charges against me and my wife. Although all of these are without basis in fact, I still insist on addressing them with seriousness because through them, the military seeks to blacken my name and that of my wife. Therefore I am restrained from delving more deeply into some issues lest I prejudice our lawyers' efforts to defend me in court.

Notwithstanding these constraints, I hope to contribute to a fruit-

ful dialog through these notes. I have set down here some of my "personal views, thoughts and speculations" (as Third World Studies Center head Randy David specified in his letter to me dated September 4, 1989). From behind these high walls and iron bars, I reach out to you as a Filipino, searching together with you for concrete solutions to our long-festering national problems.

The brief sent to me by the Third World Studies Center states in part: "Recent events, if they are to be sufficient indicators of the state of the Philippine movement, certainly point (...) to a disturbing trend not only for the revolutionary Left but also for those who have opted to make use of the relatively more tolerant conditions in the political scene. The ongoing thrust of military propaganda in the media, subsequent to and after the capture of alleged top CPP leaders Satur Ocampo and Bobbie Malay, has clearly created a great part of this trend, but that is not to say that the idea of a troubled Left is fictional. It is also short of saying that the Left is actually confronting a crisis."

In my view, the disturbing trend is

that the reactionary forces frenziedly at work in the country — namely US imperialism, the local ruling elite and the Armed Forces of the Philippines that US imperialism controls and manipulates, and the ultra-conservative church elements — are gaining ground in their campaign to whip up a general climate of fear. Fear of progress, of social change, and of nationalism and genuine people's power — all in the guise of fighting communism and so-called communist-led forces. Under this climate, the reactionaries instigate increasing violence and lawlessness, all the while fomenting intrigues and deceptions through the media. More and more the situation tends to approximate, and may even exceed, the pat-

tern of killings and other human rights violations wantonly visited on the people of El Salvador in the early 1980s.

The fascist terror that reified under the US-Marcos dictatorship has returned with a vengeance, after a very brief interregnum in 1986. A popularly acclaimed government took power with promises of democratic reforms, clean government, justice for all and the protection of every citizen's rights. Soon it had slid into flaccid toleration of Marcos-vintage fascism in the military and police forces. Subsequently this government adopted the prescriptions of US imperialism's "low-intensity conflict" strategy, thereby itself assuming direct responsibility for height-

VIEWPOINT

ening the climate for irrational distrust and political paranoia. No doubt, the Aquino regime has betrayed popular expectations for change; it has turned — or bared its essential character, if you wish — to become the people's oppressor.

Surmounting problems

Unfortunately, just when the reactionaries were going into high gear in their terror campaign, some sections of the revolutionary movement committed serious political and military errors, starting in Mindanao in late 1985 to early 1986, up to the more recent ones. In acknowledging these errors, the revolutionary leadership took decisive measures to rectify these mistakes, and the damage they caused, and lead the people's struggle forward, the wiser for the experience. The reactionaries, however, have seized what they perceive to be the opportunity to cause utmost damage to the revolutionary movement and to the progressive forces in general. They are using every means at their command to discredit the leadership, and destroy the principled unity and fraternal solidarity that have been forged over the years by the revolutionaries and progressives advancing together in the struggle.

Despite the political losses it has had to absorb, the revolutionary underground has withstood the relentless attacks of reaction. The underground organizations and mass base are generally intact where they have been firmly established in strategic areas all over the country.

The current problems that are being worked out by the revolutionary movement are essentially problems of sustaining growth and advance. While organizational expansion and consolidation are attended to as a matter of course even under intense enemy fire, new and more complex questions have to be confronted and resolved. These pertain to the institution and nurturing of people-based structures, particularly in the most economically depressed areas, that will handle and upgrade the delivery of agricultural support services, emergency relief, health services, education and culture and defense, as well as develop independent systems of agrarian reform, justice, legislation and public finance. Organs of political power are being set up at municipal, district up to provincial levels, and considerable effort must be exerted to ensure their growing viability amidst the ravages wrought by the US-Aquino government's "total war".

There is an acute need for sea-

soned cadres to perform fulltime governmental tasks, even as thousands of new ones are needed to reinforce cadres who are having to cope up with a multitude of functions, especially at the grassroots where the breakthroughs are being made. Specifically, cadres and activists from the urban working class and intelligentsia are in great demand in the countryside. Because of the fast pace of territorial expansion in the last few years, activists are readily assigned to jobs of a challenging sort, and "OJT" (for on-the-job training) has been some kind of a buzzword for some time. The tasks keep growing more difficult and more sophisticated, but in many areas, cadre development can hardly keep up with the higher requirements of the work at hand. This problem is partially being solved by transferring experienced cadres to the priority areas, and this by the way helps to correct the tendency of homegrown cadres to think and act exclusively within the local framework.

Throughout the country, efforts are being redoubled to produce tens of thousands of new cadres and mass activists to confront the multiplying tasks in both the countryside and urban areas. Cadre schools are being developed and recruitment is intensi-



NDP paramedic at work (left); adult literacy class (right): Delivering basic services to the people



Same essence: Policies of Aquino, Marcos reveal no basic differences

fied among the industrial workers and the intellectuals. The youth and student movement faces the big test of meeting this demand, just as it did during the upsurge leading to the First Quarter Storm.

Lively debates

As to the military's claim that "power struggle" and "factionalism" afflict the revolutionary movement at the top and various levels below, I affirm before you that there is no basis in fact for that claim. Except for the factional problem in Negros in 1987, which has already been resolved, no similar situation has been manifested anywhere in the movement.

What does pervade the leadership bodies and the rank-and-file is a spirit of give-and-take of ideas which has been officially encouraged since early 1986. As you might expect, the quality of the debate is somewhat uneven. Then also, the atmosphere can get to be acrimonious — as you in academe know from your own experience — but I assure you that it has never degenerated into the unprincipled infighting that the enemies of the revolution would like to see. On the contrary, democratic debate has revitalized the dynamic and the substance of decision-making, ensuring a broad and

solid base of consensus-building, on the one hand, and the wholesome exercise of criticism and self-criticism, on the other. On the other hand, the achievement of a certain level of theoretical proficiency has also resulted in greater self-confidence and initiative at various levels. And then of course we must remember that the practice of the Philippine revolution has progressed to such a point that its original formulations must be rethought, reworked, refined and refurbished to the satisfaction of us all, in full view of us all — including most of you here today.

Renewed political unity was achieved throughout the underground Left in 1987 after a period of "temporary disarray" of views concerning the government that had just come to power, and how to "reposition" the revolutionary forces in a situation where the new government still enjoyed considerable support. Concluding that the new regime is basically no different from the US-Marcos regime in its line, program and policies, the national democratic movement upheld the continuing validity of the people's democratic revolution. However, room has been made for more flexible tactics in accordance with shifts in the national political situation and the specific conditions in every territorial unit and line of work. Optimal use of all possible forms of organization and

methods of struggle, in the open and underground, is encouraged.

Basis for optimism

The general thrust of the struggle continues to be to arouse, organize and mobilize the broad masses of the people — the workers and peasants along with the urban poor, intellectuals, professionals, businessmen, government employes, pro-people officials, honest and patriotic soldiers — to support and carry out the general program of the National Democratic Front. The end-goal is to liberate the nation from the oppressive and exploitative rule of US imperialism and the local ruling elites. A revised draft of the NDF program, incorporating new provisions and elaborating on old ones, is now being circulated for comments and suggestions from as broad a popular base as possible.

The pro-imperialist and anti-people path of governance that the Aquino regime has trodden up to now reinforces the conviction regarding the validity of the national democratic line and tactics. We are aware that outside the national democratic organizations, the progressive forces continue to debate the appropriateness of this general line, and particularly its perceived emphasis on one form of struggle (even as the reactionary character of the US-Aquino regime has been generally recognized). Discussions within the national democratic movement, on the other hand, now focus on which tactics or combination of tactics—the forms of organizations and methods of struggle—would constitute the line of advance to total victory within a reasonably short period of time.

There are two founts that feed this well-considered optimism in the revolutionary movement. The first is the high level of performance of the revolution's corps of cadres, Red fighters and activists, who are steeled by hard struggle and moved by their firm commitment to the people's revolutionary cause. Thanks to this precious resource, the movement has been able to recover fast from every tactical setback in the past, and will continue to do so now and in the future. The second is the steadfastness of the consolidated mass bases—the people's organizations and their organs of political power in various parts of the country—in the face of ruthless enemy attacks and destructiveness. While some areas had to be abandoned temporarily (in accordance with the guerrilla nature of the war at this

VIEWPOINT

point), these same areas are recovered in due time through a combination of painstaking work, creativeness and daring, and the people's unflagging support. Even in areas where the AFP maintains a strong presence (with combat unit headquarters, CAFGUs and vigilantes), the masses keep their secret organizations and their resistance alive.

Of course, the proven ineptitude and corruption of the Aquino government and its abhorrent obsequiousness to US imperialism, foreign bankers and investors drive ever larger sections of the people to deeper disaffection and disgust. Reality quickens the revolutionary impulse all over the land, and validates the revolutionary vision.

Progressive open mass movement

Then there is the progressive open mass movement. Notwithstanding the near-evanescence of the promised democratic space and the onslaught of military and vigilante killings of numerous mass leaders and activists, the open mass movement has tended the flames of protest and struggle. Led by the militant organizations of workers and peasants, with increasing though still timid support from the middle forces, the open mass movement has contributed immensely to registering in the consciousness of the unorganized, unpoliticized sectors the urgent need for fundamental changes in Philippine society and government. It has facilitated popular enlightenment on such complex issues as genuine land reform and national industrialization, the foreign debt conundrum and foreign control of the national economy, and the US military bases.



Bomb shelters: Steadfastness under enemy fire



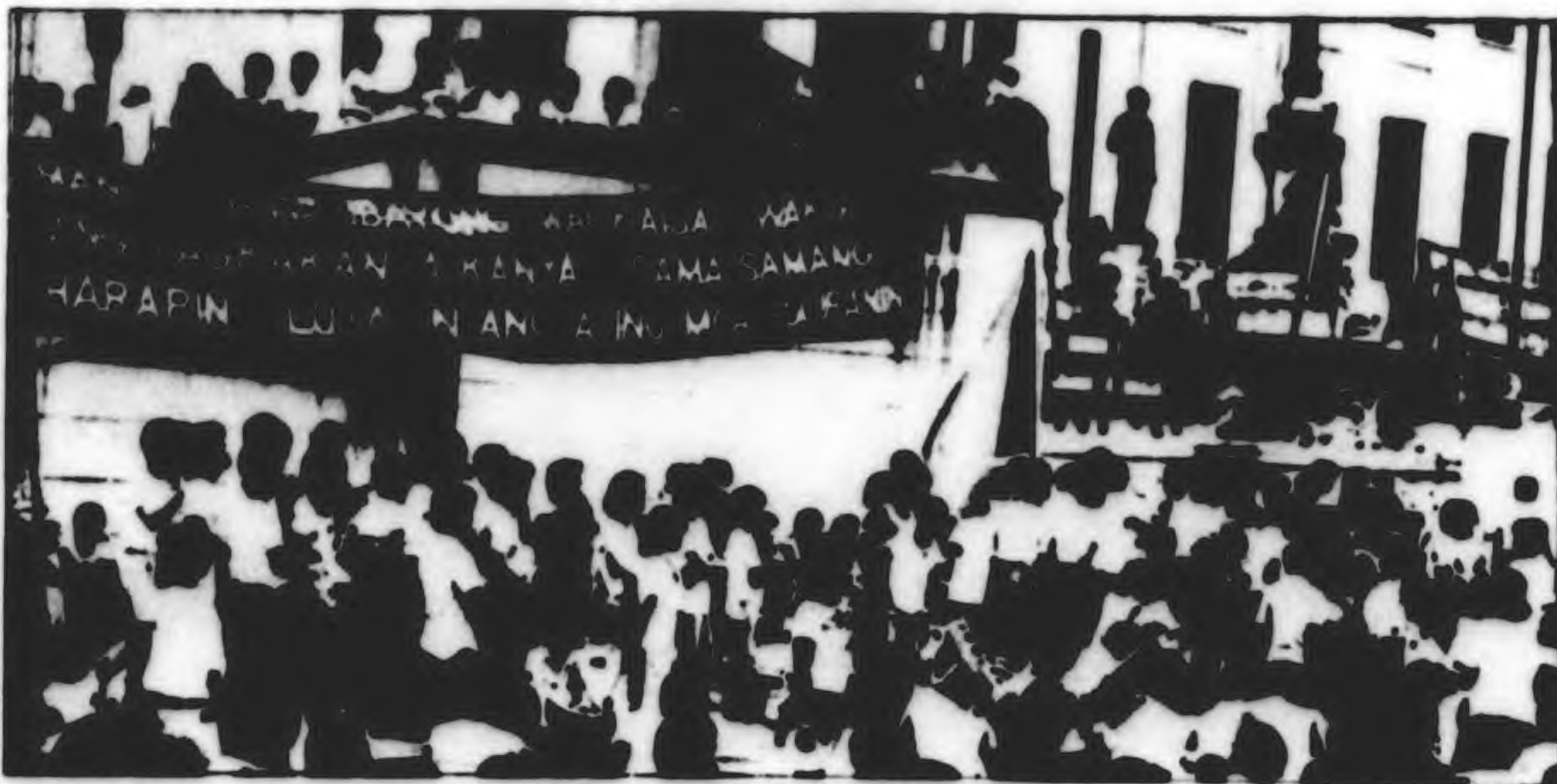
Peasant struggles: Moving forward

The open mass movement broadens the popular base of the struggle for fundamental change. United front efforts among progressive organizations and groups have been working out quite well, despite the occasional disputes between disputatious friends.

These united front efforts can be further developed, from the tactical issue-based coalitions to the broad anti-fascist and anti-imperialist movement-type formation of varied coalitions, towards a comprehensively programmatic national united front. I believe that based on the track record of the numerous endeavors since the last years of the Marcos dictatorship and our common appraisal of the nature and direction of the present government, there is ample ground to work out a comprehensive common program at this stage of the struggle. That is, given that we eliminate certain subjective hindrances.

For one, there is a need to overcome on the part of some organizations the fear—a consequence of the reactionaries' campaign that I have earlier discussed—of identifying with or supporting some aspects of the revolutionary underground's program lest they be marked out as "red" or "red-influenced". If it is a question of self-preservation for open organizations against becoming targets of reactionary attack—both political and physical—I believe the right step is not to cop out but rather to close ranks, the better to defend themselves and to mount an effective counter-attack.

We must realize that by now the reactionaries no longer make a distinc-



Militant labor front: Raising public awareness on the need for fundamental change

VIEWPOINT

tion among the revolutionary and progressive organizations. We must fight together: the open organizations devising modes of operation to safeguard themselves while fighting to assert their rights to democratic freedoms, and the underground providing sanctuary for those who wish to change their mode of operations.

Anti-bases alliance

While it may take a little time to work out a common program of action of strategic character, we can work on broad tactical alliances. For instance, a stronger and broader anti-imperialist



Series of protest rallies seek to undercut US imperialist domination and intervention in the Asia-Pacific region: Through the years, the struggle continues



national united front, bigger than the now-existing formations, for the immediate dismantling of the US bases and, in opposition to the clear tendency of the Aquino regime to extend the stay of these bases.

No better opportunity has opened up for all revolutionary, progressive and patriotic Filipinos to undercut US imperialist domination and intervention in the country and the Asia-Pacific region. The level of public awareness of the implications of the US bases in our national life is now higher than ever before, but it needs to be further raised. Favorable external factors can also be harnessed in our favor,

VIEWPOINT

such as the trend towards nuclear arms reduction by the Soviet Union and the US, the troop withdrawals and reduction of conventional weapons deployment by the Soviet Union in Europe and Asia, the Gorbachev offer to stop using facilities in Vietnam if the US withdraws its troops from the Philippines, and the wide international endorsements by governments and peoples for these developments

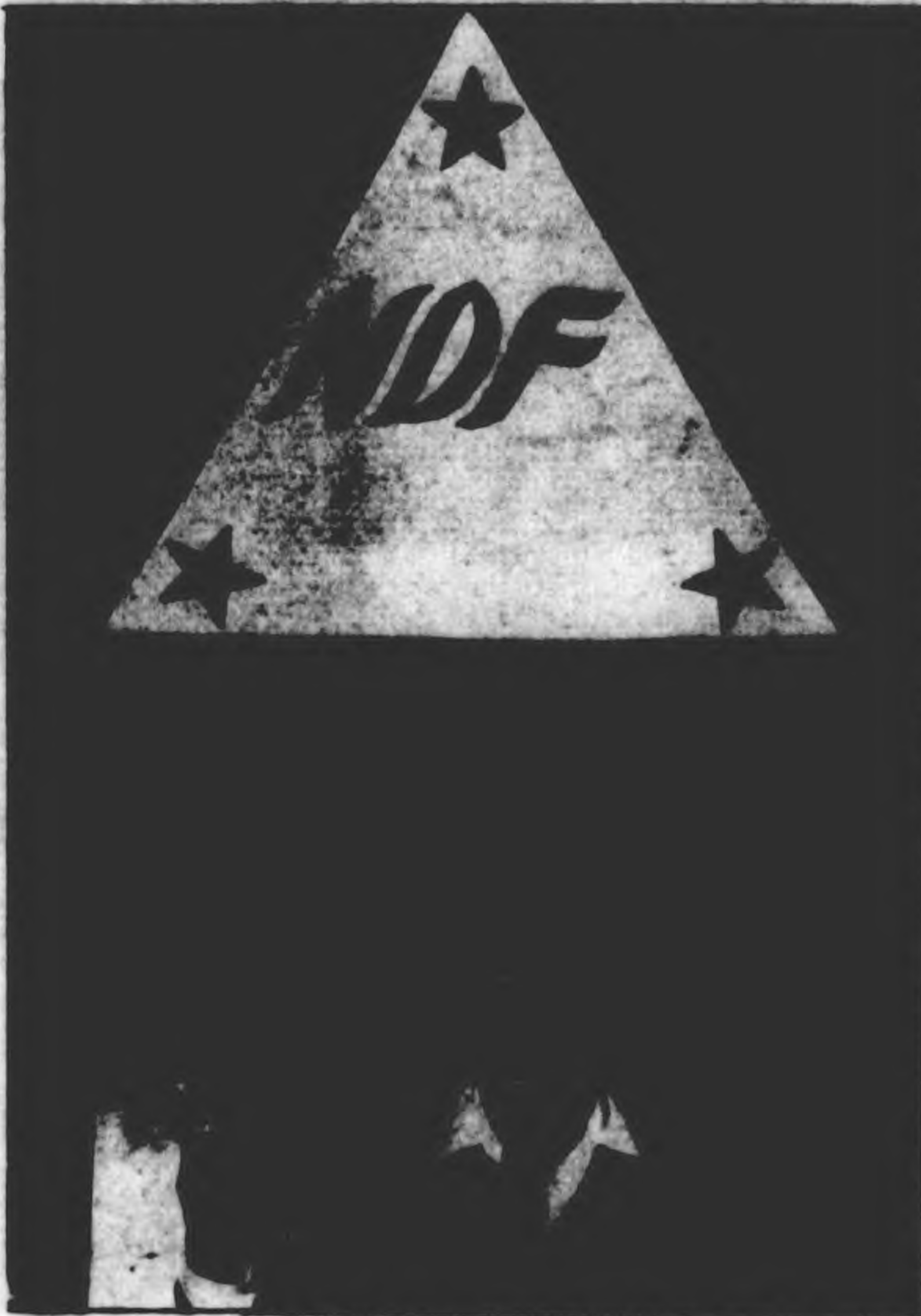
In this regard, I would like to call attention to the offer of the NDF to call a unilateral ceasefire if President Aquino makes an executive declaration that the US bases will not be allowed to stay beyond 1991 (that is, the current agreement will end and no new treaty will be negotiated in its stead). This is a serious offer that the Aquino government peremptorily brushed off and continues to ignore despite its reiteration shortly before my arrest last July 27, and a few weeks after. In answer to a questionnaire from the *Manila Times*, I had occasion to clarify on this offer:

"The proposal is not a precondition to peace talks, as some quarters would interpret it. But the Aquino regime's positive response to it could greatly facilitate earnest negotiations for a lasting peace, since an important impediment to peace in our country—the US military bases—shall have been definitely dealt with. This is a very good starting point to work out agreements on other important questions." (*Manila Times*, August 27, 1989).

Luis Jalandoni sounded this proposal in mid-August from the NDF International Office in Utrecht, The Netherlands. He also expressed readiness to open new peace talks with the Aquino government. But the prospects for peace talks are dimmed Jalandoni pointed out, by the unchanging precondition of the Aquino regime for the revolutionary force to lay down their arms or surrender before talks can begin. He elaborated

"Without our armed guerrillas without the revolutionary armed struggle, we cannot even have the basis and capability to talk with the (Aquino) government. The movement is working for peace as a matter of basic policy—not merely any kind of peace for the Filipino people. Without the armed struggle, what leverage do we and the rest of the people have to even put forward serious proposals for peace talks?" (*Manila Times*, August 11, 1987).

I have never doubted the sincerity of the leadership of the revolutionary movement to seek, as an alter-



Luis Jalandoni



Anti-imperialist peace offensive: International representative Luis Jalandoni explains NDF proposal (above); meets with foreign dignitaries in Utrecht (below)

VIEWPOINT

Daily Globe

native to protracted armed struggle until total victory, a peaceful avenue through negotiated political settlement beneficial to the people. I do not doubt the NDF's sincerity in venturing to call a unilateral ceasefire if Mrs. Aquino commits her government to do away with the bases by 1991. I also believe that Mrs. Aquino's positive response to this offer, which would be a virtual commitment to begin an earnest break-away by her government from US imperialist control, would lead to a significant and favorable turn in the political situation. And should the Aquino regime respond equally to the NDF unilateral ceasefire the atmosphere could be created for serious negotiations towards a comprehensive political settlement that could end the civil war.

But is this now wishful thinking?



Raising prospects for peace: Kabataan Makabayan activists articulate NDF demand in lightning rally (above); Ocampo addresses Batson peace rally in 1986 talks



Concerned citizens whom I had the chance to consult on the viability of linking a call for unilateral ceasefire and the peace question to the dismantling of the US bases endorsed the idea. At the same time, they expressed little hope that the Aquino govern-

ment would respond favorably. They believe to a man that Mrs. Aquino is irretrievably committed to the wish of the US to retain its bases here.

I leave this question for you to mull over. Can we not muster a broad anti-imperialist united front (or a

broader tactical anti-bases front) to stop the Aquino regime from proceeding to sell out Philippine sovereignty all over again, and from letting pass the chance to explore seriously the road to a just and lasting peace? Or might we lose this fight by default or diffused efforts?

Beyond tactical alliances at present, how shall the revolutionary and progressive movement hurdle the current obstacles and march forward? The national democratic revolutionary forces have never assumed that they can or will win the struggle all by themselves; neither, I think, does any other formation. I, for one, believe that there is urgent need for all Filipino patriots, nationalists, socialists, and communists to forge a higher level of unity through a process of honest self-appraisal, comradely criticism and balanced assessment of common experiences. Don't we have much more in common than we tend to think? The forces of reaction that grip the nation are surely powerful, but our concerted blows over time have greatly weakened them.

We need to be stronger for the next and final rounds of the struggle, dear comrades and friends, for the sake of our people and ourselves, for the sake of the future. **Satur Ocampo**

Dr. Satur Ocampo is Secretary of the Communist Party of the Philippines and a member of the National Democratic Revolutionary Front. He is also a member of the National Studies Commission of the Philippines.

HEALTH PULSE
Dr. Joey Buenavista
(National Council Member, MSP)

The Generics Act is not a panacea

"In a democracy, there is freedom of choice." So goes a yellow Department of Health poster promoting the Generics Act, which supposedly will bring down drug costs and promote rational drug use from the doctor's prescribing to the patient's final "choice."

It is deceptive for the Health Department to drum up the Generics Act as the solution to the country's problems with pharmaceuticals. *This merely conceals the Health Department's and, ultimately, the Aquino regime's inability to deal with other more urgent issues related to imperialism.*

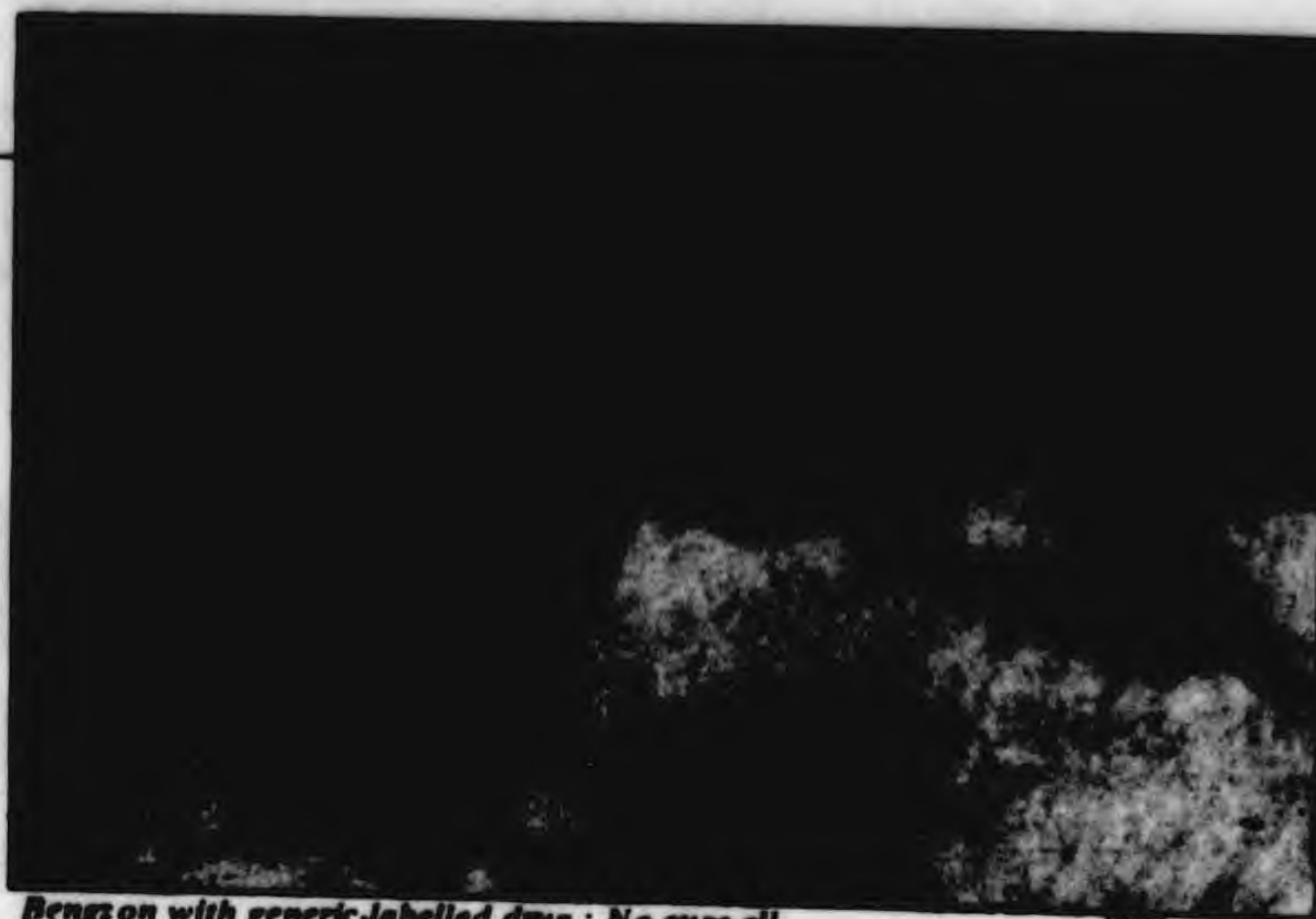
More than 100 drugs that have been banned in other countries are still available in the Philippines. The Health Department's Bureau of Food and Drugs cannot ban the drugs because multinationals have sued them for "lack of due process."

These drugs constitute only a small percentage of the many unsafe and ineffective drugs in the country. To monitor these drugs, the government has given the Bureau of Food and Drugs a budget of only P16 million, smaller than the health service budget of the Armed Forces of the Philippines' General Headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo. It is no wonder that the Bureau of Food and Drugs cannot keep up with problems including fake drugs.

The Generics Act is probably the best example of a progressive piece of legislation that will not be able to achieve its objectives because the system will not allow it to prosper. Signed into law in September 1988, it will not go into full implementation until January 1990. Meanwhile, the Health Department has made many compromises in drawing up guidelines for implementing the Act. For example, it issued one circular allowing industry to practice "self-regulation" in promotions and advertisements of drugs. Companies therefore continue to promote their brand name products, with outrageous claims about safety and effectivity while consumers and physicians remain ignorant of generic names of drugs.

The Health Department has also issued a circular on "physician-guided consumer's choice" that basically allows the physician to make the final decision on the choice of the drug, under the guise of the "patient's decision." The circular was issued as a concession to the reactionary Philippine Medical Association, which even now has a pending lawsuit in the Supreme Court challenging the legality of the Generics Act. The Health Department also postponed implementation of generic prescribing by four months — from September 1, 1989 to January 1, 1990. In return, the Philippine Medical Association agreed to "cooperate." But in reality, it continues to spread misinformation on generics.

The Philippine Medical Association's well-funded misinformation campaign would not be possible without support from powerful multinationals that control the



Bengzon with generic-labelled drug: No cure-all

country's drug industry and which have, through the years, corrupted physicians through their unethical promotional strategies. These multinationals have been backed by the US government, which has continuously sent warnings to the Aquino government to "slow down" on the Generics Act and other proposed reforms. No less than the US State Department has warned about repercussions for US economic assistance.

While the Health Department, notably Secretary Alfredo Bengzon, has projected an image of courageously battling the multinationals, it is becoming clear that what we are witnessing is the abortion of a broader National Drug Policy needed to assure people's access to drugs. While claiming self-sufficiency as one objective, the Health Department has been silent on proposals from other sectors to abolish patents on drugs. These patents have contributed to the high cost of drugs because they give the patent holders, almost always foreigners, a monopoly on the drug for 17 years at a time.

When asked to comment on self-sufficiency, Health Department officials will cite the promotion of herbal medicine as if this would solve the problem of a lack of access to drugs such as antibiotics, for which herbal medicine cannot be a substitute. But even herbal medicine projects have been commercialized — again a reflection of national policies and the trend to "privatize" even social services. As a result, the few herbal medicine preparations that are produced are even more expensive than Western medicine.

The Aquino government has done nothing to regulate the multinationals' trade and marketing practices. No attempts have been made to even investigate these practices, including transfer pricing — where the mother company in the US or Europe overcharges local subsidiaries. Yet, other countries have been able to force the companies to open their books and to submit to strict regulations.

The Generics Act cannot be successfully implemented unless there are adequate supplies of generics products on the market. This has not happened and the few companies producing generics (including multinationals who opposed the Act!) are already cashing in on the Act by increasing prices of their products.

But for most Filipinos, discussions about "essential drugs" and "rational drug use" are academic. What matters most is being able to afford to buy that bottle of dextrose or antibiotics for a dying child.

Drugs cannot continue to be peddled as commodities. In the final analysis, the only solution is to nationalize the drug industry to insure that the country has safe and effective drugs and that people have access to these drugs. ■

*Ako'y
may
pangarap...*

*Na sa lupang aking sinilangan
Magwawakas din ang paghahari
ng mapagsamantalang dayuhan
Walang mga reyna't mga hari-harian
Ni pangkating buktot na nagpapaligsahan
sa pag-agaw ng kapangyarihan.
Ako'y may pangarap . . .
Na sa lupang ito'y aking magigisnan
Ang pagyabong ng tunay na demokrasya't
wagas na kasarinlan.*

