

LIBERATION

VOL. XI NO. 1

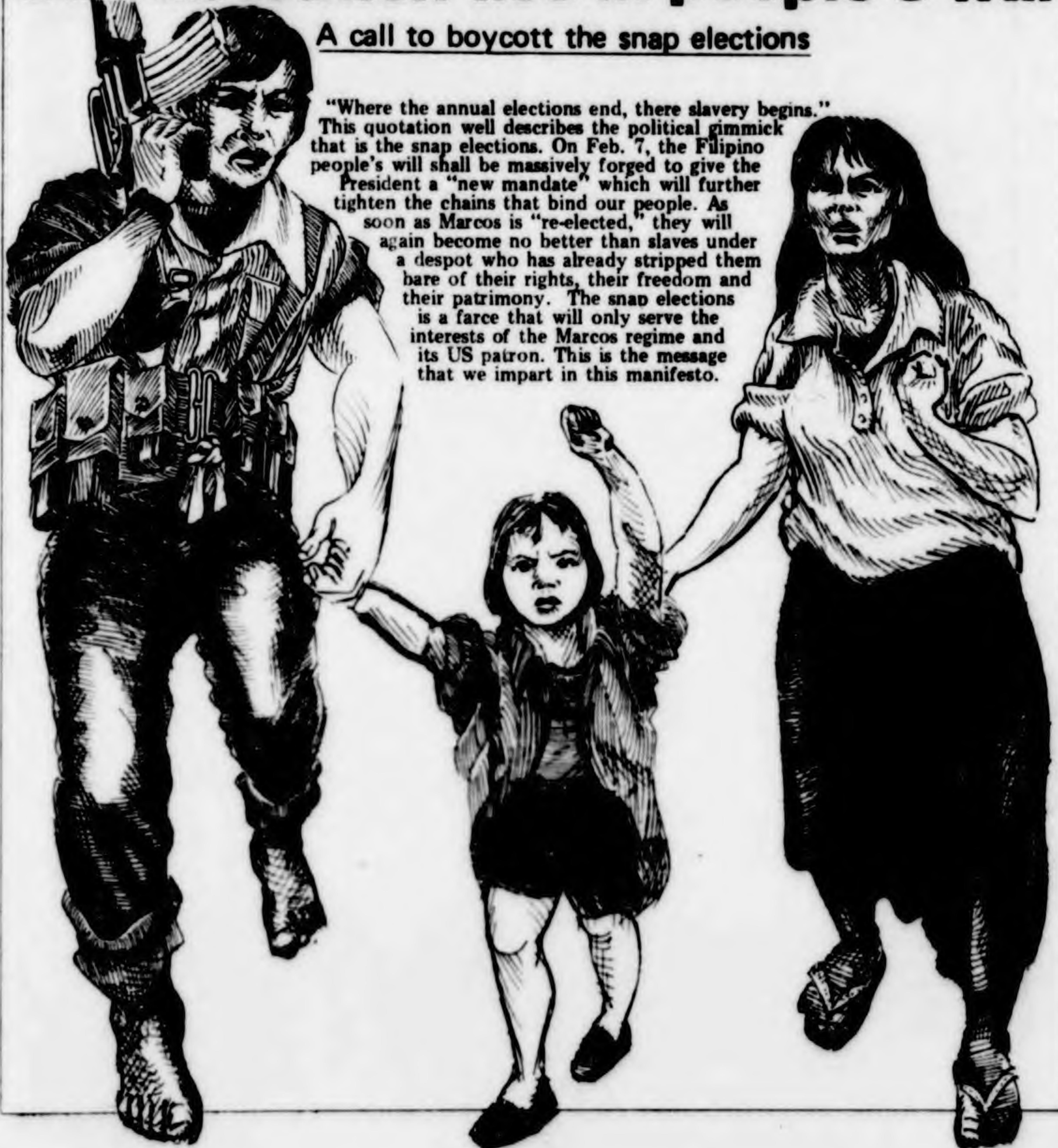
PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE PHILIPPINES

JANUARY 1988

Our liberation lies in people's war

A call to boycott the snap elections

"Where the annual elections end, there slavery begins."
This quotation well describes the political gimmick that is the snap elections. On Feb. 7, the Filipino people's will shall be massively forged to give the President a "new mandate" which will further tighten the chains that bind our people. As soon as Marcos is "re-elected," they will again become no better than slaves under a despot who has already stripped them bare of their rights, their freedom and their patrimony. The snap elections is a farce that will only serve the interests of the Marcos regime and its US patron. This is the message that we impart in this manifesto.



Demystifying the snap election

Speaking on American TV, the dictator last Nov. 3 announced the holding of yet another election, accelerating the Marcos-mandated 1987 presidential polls by more than a year. What motivated Marcos to call the early elections? The Marcos dictatorship's own political and economic crisis provides the most accurate gauge in determining the motives, the direction and ultimately, the outcome of the forthcoming polls.

Despite successive attempts to embellish its image and perk up renewed confidence in its sagging fortunes, the Marcos dictatorship continues to be mired in an economic quicksand.

The much-bruited "economic recovery program" of the IMF has done little to lift the economy above severe crisis levels. It has failed to placate the broad masses of the people who are increasingly up in arms against commodity shortages, spiralling prices amid depressed incomes, massive unemployment and even starvation, as in Negros and parts of Mindanao.

At present, three out of every five persons in the labor force are either unemployed or underemployed. The threat of line-wide layoffs has become a virtual certainty as the dictatorship pushes the IMF-sponsored import liberalization program through its final stages. Even the regime's natural constituency of big compradors, big landlords and the different levels of the civil bureaucracy and the military has not been spared the effects of the worst economic crisis in Philippine postwar history.

Instead of remaining stagnant at 1984 levels as the IMF and the dictatorship had earlier predicted, the 1985 GNP will most likely drop another 4.5%. And instead of increasing 10% this year as had earlier been projected by the IMF, exports have actually plunged by 15%. Still, the regime has to meet the stringent debt service requirements imposed by the country's imperialist creditors — an obligation that is already eating up a full 50% of the country's export earnings and at least 25% of the national budget.

Unless the Marcos dictatorship acquires additional infusions of foreign aid from the US, independent economists project that 1986 will be at least as poor as 1985 despite new loans and trade credits. At the very least, any major improvement in economic performance in 1986 will not mean improved living standards for the people. Neither is a significant rise in local business activity expected, as business continues to be plagued by depressed local and international markets. In sum, the bleak economic picture over the next two years will continue to gnaw away at the US-Marcos dictatorship's already eroded political base and contribute further to the regime's extreme political isolation.

To compound its problems, the current tide of popular dissent combined with the steady growth of the armed resistance continues to push the dictatorship against the wall. The escalation of military terrorism in both city and countryside as exemplified in the Escalante, Tatalon and Taft Ave. massacres has only fueled the people's wrath.

Far from submitting to tyranny, the past year has seen the people's militant activities spilling over into new major and secondary urban centers in a series of people's strikes (*welgang bayan*) and other forms of vigorous mass protest. The groundswell of anti-fascist and anti-imperialist activity and the regime's openly terrorist methods of dealing with the "insurgency" have been instrumental in strengthening even the traditional opposition's resolve to finally oust the hated regime.

Viewed from this perspective, the announced snap polls loses its mystique. The Marcos regime badly needs a shot in the arm — in its own words, a "fresh mandate" — not from the Filipino people whose rights and livelihood it is prepared to run to the ground, but from US imperialism, its staunchest supporter and ally.

The US hand

That the very announcement of the snap polls was first aired



Accursed pair: FM. Imelda lambasted in women's rally

over American TV, with US policy makers as the main target audience, exposes at once Marcos' real intention. The snap electoral scheme is obviously a calculated bid by Marcos for continued US support. By winning a "fresh mandate," Marcos hopes to prove to his US masters that he is still their main and most reliable puppet in the Philippines.

In its own interest, US imperialism (the Reagan administration in particular), has readily acceded to Marcos' gambit. It sees the coming polls as an opportunity to further strengthen Marcos' faltering rule and to convince the American public and US financial and political allies that the Marcos regime, despite its faults, is still deserving of support. To paraphrase President Reagan: "The alternative is a communist takeover."

Contrary to certain oppositionists' views, encouraged in large part by the US' thoroughly hypocritical stance of appearing to back reforms, US imperialism continues to operate within the framework enunciated by the US policy paper, the National Security Study Directive: that though Marcos is part of the problem, he is also a necessary part of the solution. US strategic interests, therefore, presently demand continued US support for the Marcos regime which currently stands as the chief political instrument and protector of US interests in the Philippines.

Let us consider the following facts, each of which shows up the hypocrisy and duplicity of US policy in the Philippines.

1. Originally, US imperialism had made a lot of noise about conditioning its continuing support for the Marcos regime on the fair and impartial disposition of the Aquino murder trial. Except for a few squeaks from known Marcos critics in the US Congress, however, the Reagan administration has by and large accepted the Sandiganbayan's twisted verdict exonerating all 26 military personnel accused in the case.

It has even hurriedly sought to project a hands-off policy on the immediate reinstatement of Gen. Ver and company, despite its earlier criticisms of Ver. As of late, it has welcomed the ongoing revamp of the AFP, regardless of the fact that this reorganization is being spearheaded by Ver himself whom certain US policy makers had wanted crucified — or so, the US wanted

LIPPHOTOS/Fidel Srub

it to appear.

2. Then, there is the US' vaunted pressures on Marcos to institute reforms. These much ballyhooed pressures, however, fly in the face of the US' general approval of Marcos' succession formula, the nominal dismantling of crony monopolies and cosmetic electoral reforms – all done under the dictator's terms.

3. Even as certain agencies of the US government feign some support to the opposition, US imperialism as a whole continues to underwrite the regime's entire operations. Recently, the US Congress voted to grant Marcos another \$155 million in economic and military aid. The US makes much of the fact that the greater portion of this amount goes to economic projects. This is a lot of hogwash, however. Who is to deny for instance, that the Economic Support Fund under Imelda Marcos' hand will be used in part as pork barrel to boost the dictator's massive vote-buying in the coming elections?

For its part, the IMF recently agreed to raise the government's budget deficit ceiling from P6 billion to P13 billion. This, in effect, serves as a virtual license for the Marcos dictatorship to go on another spending spree at the expense of the Filipino people. And lest we forget, the IMF program for 1986 includes new trade, fiscal and monetary measures such as new sales taxes, tariff reduction for a host of foreign goods and the further depreciation of the peso to ensure US monopoly capital's stranglehold on the economy. These various measures are already underway.

4. In tandem with its client regime, US imperialism is presently supporting the former's virulent propaganda drive to vilify the national democratic movement in particular and the growing popular resistance in general. Despite all its loud rhetoric about human rights and democracy, US imperialism has no qualms in using ruthless measures to suppress political dissenters, especially the armed revolutionary forces like the New People's Army. To this end, it has given unqualified logistical and technical support to the Marcos regime's counter-insurgency campaign, in the name of anti-communism. At the core of this campaign is the US objective to crush the broad anti-dictatorship movement whose nationalist and democratic program poses a threat to US strategic interests in the Philippines.

These are the facts. And on the basis of these facts, the real motive behind US imperialism's ready acquiescence to the Marcos-initiated snap polls comes to the fore. It is not, as some have surmised, to effect a peaceful transfer of power away from a problematic regime.

On the contrary, the snap elections is a US-Marcos maneuver to strengthen and consolidate the Marcos regime and widen



Marcos and Uncle Sam: Real forces behind snap polls

its political base. It seeks to draw the pro-imperialist section of the opposition, specifically the conservative wing, into a peaceful modus vivendi with Marcos and thereby prevent factional political conflict among the ruling elite.

In this way, the US hopes to better position itself and the Marcos regime for a military and political offensive against the people and their revolutionary movement. In truth, US imperialism is setting up the traditional opposition – not for an electoral victory in the snap polls – but as a mere prop to shore up the Marcos dictatorship and the entire ruling system. The snap elections is nothing more but a US-Marcos exercise to stabilize the volatile political situation, stop the momentum of the anti-fascist movement and push the elite opposition into a common front against the growing revolutionary movement.

Such was the story behind the May 1984 polls for the puppet parliament. And such is the rationale for the snap elections.

Fraud and terrorism: the master plan

Already, the dictatorship's massive machinery is gearing up for a landslide victory in the forthcoming elections. Its fraud-oriented agencies are even now working doubletime to ensure the "accuracy" of election quick-counts, the "integrity" of ballot boxes and the "efficiency" of final election tallies. It is hardly surprising that the recent two-day registration period was less an opportunity to enfranchise new voters than an underhanded maneuver to enlist thousands of "flying voters."

Reliable sources within the regime's bureaucracy itself have confided that at least P92 million of the people's money have so far been spent, merely to see to it that new voters' lists are adequately "secured." The frenzied pace with which the AFP revamp is being implemented further bodes ill for the free exercise of the right of suffrage. Given the dictatorship's historical penchant for massive fraud and terrorism, the military's vow to "safeguard" the elections is hardly reassuring. With the massive resources at its disposal, the Marcos regime is all set to play out its role in another wholesale mockery of the electoral process.

Despite the lessons of the past and the perils of the present, a number of traditional opposition stalwarts have, however, dubbed the coming polls as yet another "last hope for democracy." They operate in the vain hope that US imperialism is about to transfer its allegiance from the Marcos government to them. They are doubtlessly being egged on by certain agents of US imperialism who are tasked with keeping them in line, particularly with regard to upholding US strategic interests, notably the US bases and so-called "insurgency" issues.

The pro-imperialist diehards in the anti-Marcos opposition are at the forefront of the campaign to peddle the illusion that the forthcoming polls hold substantial hope for the broad



Aquino and Laurel: Mere props in a US-Marcos drama

masses of the people, in the face of all evidence to the contrary. The dominance of these few over the entire electoral campaign of the opposition has effectively pushed the patriotic and democratic segment of the legal opposition to the background. It has also resulted in the deliberate obfuscation of the people's basic demands for national independence and democracy. Bowing down to US interests, they have watered down the people's demands into meaningless compromises, which insult the people's consciousness and only benefit their own and the US' vested interests.

The majority of the legal opposition, on the other hand, are naturally suspicious of the US-Marcos intentions with regard to the polls. Their involvement in militant popular struggles these past few years has convinced them of the need to combine various forms of political struggle, if the general effort to dismantle the US-Marcos dictatorship is to succeed. Many of them have recognized the essentially violent nature of the Marcos dictatorship and some have even, in varying degrees, recognized the need for armed struggle.

It would certainly do good for the entire legal opposition to be wary of the coming polls and to keep in mind that elections under the present dictatorship will only serve to legitimize the dictatorship's open terrorist rule. Last year's legislative elections is a case in point. It is a sad lesson on how Marcos has cunningly made use of the opposition into playing his dirty game to legalize his anti-people schemes.

Despite government allegations to the contrary and the opposition's 61 seats, the Batasang Pambansa's legislative performance is already a matter of public notoriety. Without the benefit of Marcos' decree-making powers, the Batasan recently enacted a Public Assembly Law in blatant mockery of the basic rights of free speech and peaceful assembly. It created the legal basis for the militarization of schools through the infamous National Service Law. It passed an unprecedented P90 billion Appropriations Act, giving the regime greater elbow room to incur larger deficits and carry out even more massive suppression campaigns; this, at the expense of an already overburdened tax-paying public. To cap its dismal performance, the Batasan enacted the snap election law, under conditions and within a time span that clearly favor the regime and undermine the opposition's chances at even mounting a credible challenge in the polls.

The snap election, with its objective of further legitimizing dictatorial rule, will likewise work to the Marcos regime's maximum advantage. To participate in it, therefore, is tantamount to supporting the US-Marcos dictatorship and its bankrupt schemes. To participate in it is to give the ailing regime a new lease in life and further entrench tyranny. Far from securing the desired basic changes in the present system, participation in the snap election will only prolong the life of the entire oppressive ruling system and intensify the sufferings of the broad masses of our people.

A call for boycott

In this light, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines calls on the Filipino people to boycott the forthcoming farcical snap elections and thereby directly repudiate the US-Marcos dictatorship. We believe that the boycott is the correct, principled option to take to frustrate the US-Marcos scheme to fool the people and prolong its despotic rule.

We reaffirm our stand that elections alone can never solve or alleviate the people's fundamental problems which are deeply rooted in the semi-colonial and semi-feudal system. Only with the complete overhaul of the oppressive system can we bring about genuine and far-reaching changes. And only by waging a people's war, which entails the total mobilization of the entire people and the combination of various forms of struggle, can we win victory over the Marcos regime and US imperialism.

Even as we urge the people to boycott the polls however, we call upon those who are participating in it to sharpen their attacks against the dictatorship, to support the nation-



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Students in rally: Bannering the genuine path to freedom

alist and democratic demands of the people and to consciously link their own struggles with the people's war presently being waged to overthrow the dictatorship. We particularly call upon the sincerely patriotic elements within the opposition not to be taken in by US-Marcos blandishments at sharing, let alone, giving up political power.

We urge everyone to resolutely support and work for the establishment of the true revolutionary alternative to the US-Marcos dictatorship — the democratic coalition government. As we have stated in the NDF Program, the democratic coalition government will be composed of the genuine representatives of the democratic classes and sectors and their organizations, as well as all sincere individuals and groups that have contributed to the downfall of the dictatorship. It stands upon a genuinely nationalist and democratic platform of government, which upholds the following key tasks:

- a. the unconditional dismantling of all US military installations in the country and the abrogation of the US-RP Military Bases Agreement as well as all other unequal treaties;
- b. the repudiation of all onerous loans, particularly the IMF's impositions, and to work for the nationalization of all strategic industries in order to put the country on a sound and self-reliant economic footing;
- c. the implementation of genuine land reform based on the policy of land to the tiller, to fulfill the majority of our people's basic democratic demand;
- d. the abolition of all repressive decrees, the unconditional release of all political prisoners and the guarantee of the people's democratic rights;
- e. the guarantee of the right to employment and the promotion of the people's living standards and social services as well as free public education and a patriotic, scientific and pro-people culture;
- f. the recognition of the right of the Moro people to secession and the right of all ethnic minorities to genuine autonomy under self-rule; and
- g. the adoption of an independent and self-reliant foreign policy that puts the national interest as primordial and brooks no foreign interference in the country's internal affairs, while extending the hand of friendship to all regardless of ideology or social system.

As long as we persevere in the revolutionary path of struggle, nothing can stop us from attaining our objective to topple the hated dictatorship and establish the democratic coalition government. Our path to liberation lies in people's war.

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT (NDF)

"To boycott is to repudiate the regime"

An interview with the NDF information officer on the snap elections

Q: Would you care to comment on that statement made by Min. Blas Ople to the effect that a boycott is a vote for Marcos?

A: The decision of the NDF to call for a boycott of the snap polls takes into account two overriding considerations. First, that the polls are a Reagan-Marcos gambit meant to strengthen and prolong dictatorial rule and give the ailing regime a respite from the groundswell of popular protest that has continued to push it against the wall. And second, that the patently lopsided conditions under which the snap elections are being held are not conducive to the ventilation of the popular will.

Elections sponsored by a dictatorial regime that holds practically all the aces constitute a mockery of the basic right of suffrage. Furthermore, the Marcos government fully intends to use its victory, replete with a preprogrammed large voter turnout, as an endorsement of its terrorist and openly corrupt reign. We have an appropriate expression for this in Pilipino: "*Niluluto tayo sa sariling mantika.*"

In other words, to boycott these polls is an act of militant repudiation of the US-Marcos dictatorship. It is aimed at preventing the restrengthening of a severely weakened regime. And it is active because it will seek to bring to the people the issues involved in these elections as well as the more basic problems which the polls precisely seek to sweep under the rug.

Q: Don't you perceive the danger of isolation by taking a boycott stand?

A: The apprehension about being isolated has unfortunately been based on the narrowed limits of the snap polls, rather than on the relative strengths and weaknesses of the forces involved within the broader context of the general effort to dismantle dictatorial rule. The revolutionary movement has taken deep root among a broad cross-section of the population who continue to suffer dire poverty and extreme repression with or without elections. Its call to repudiate the polls is precisely geared towards highlighting the basic ills of society which have been exacerbated a thousandfold under the US-Marcos dictatorship.

All things considered, the national democratic movement has taken a boycott position because this is the principled and politically correct stand to take. It would have been easy to ride on the spontaneous wave of protests alone or the traditional drawing power of elections. But this would not necessarily be the "better" position, considering the farcical nature of the elections *ab initio* and given the fact that the US-backed Marcos regime, while acutely isolated, retains enough power and ruthlessness to use these snap polls as an endorsement of its autocratic rule.

Q: What is behind the regime's current black propaganda campaign against the communists and other revolutionary groups?

A: It has been more than 13 years since the US-Marcos regime engineered the imposition of martial rule. We recall the intense antipeople and anticommunist hate campaign the government waged prior to the formal declaration of martial law.

The communists and the national democratic movement become the regime's favorite whipping boy everytime it wishes to deflect the people's attention from the serious problems that years of Marcos rule have caused. But there is method to this madness. An inveterate veteran of the smokescreen and the squid tactic, the regime seeks to clear the way for its intended offensive against the revolutionary forces.

Those in the opposition who bite the Red bait are playing a fool's game. They are only helping the regime pave the way for still another round of fascist offensives which brook no opposition. Twenty years of US-Marcos rule should have driven home this point.

Q: Is it true that the revolutionary forces are supporting Cory Aquino in the current electoral campaign?

A: We are willing to support any political leader who firmly and unequivocally espouses the people's democratic and patriotic demands in a fair fight against the forces of tyranny. However, as stated earlier, we believe that these polls are merely being used to shore up a sagging regime. We cannot, in all conscience, enter a match where referee, judge and arena have been bought and paid for by one corner, even if many among the paying public are spontaneously rooting for the underdog. We believe in the sincerity of Ms. Aquino and many among her leaders in wishing to get rid of the dictator. But history, especially ours, shows that life and death struggles against autocratic and savagely violent regimes are not won on sincerity alone, much less through electoral contests controlled by the very same autocracy we are all striving so hard to get rid of.

"Niluluto tayo sa sariling mantika."

Q: What can you say about Cory Aquino's softening stand on some nationalist and democratic demands such as the US bases and land reform?

A: It is unfortunate that Ms. Aquino has decided to play the American game rather than to take clear-cut positions on the side of the people's basic democratic and nationalist interests. From an unequivocal stand on the bases question which she had signed as a member of the Convenor Group, she now sadly fails to recognize that the presence of US bases in this country is a clear infringement on Philippine territorial integrity and sovereignty. Her current stand on land reform reduces her to a position of granting some if not total success to the bogus land reform program of the regime. The recently concluded Unido-Laban Minimum Program makes no mention of the need to redistribute large landholdings, reduce land rent or abolish usurious practices even as a basic measure of social justice, let alone a matter of economic and social necessity.

On the whole, her wavering on these and other fundamental issues betrays the overriding dominance of a few rabidly anti-communist and pro-US elements in the electoral opposition.

But we continue to hope that Ms. Aquino will readopt her original commitment to the basically patriotic and democratic platform she had put her name to, barely two years ago.

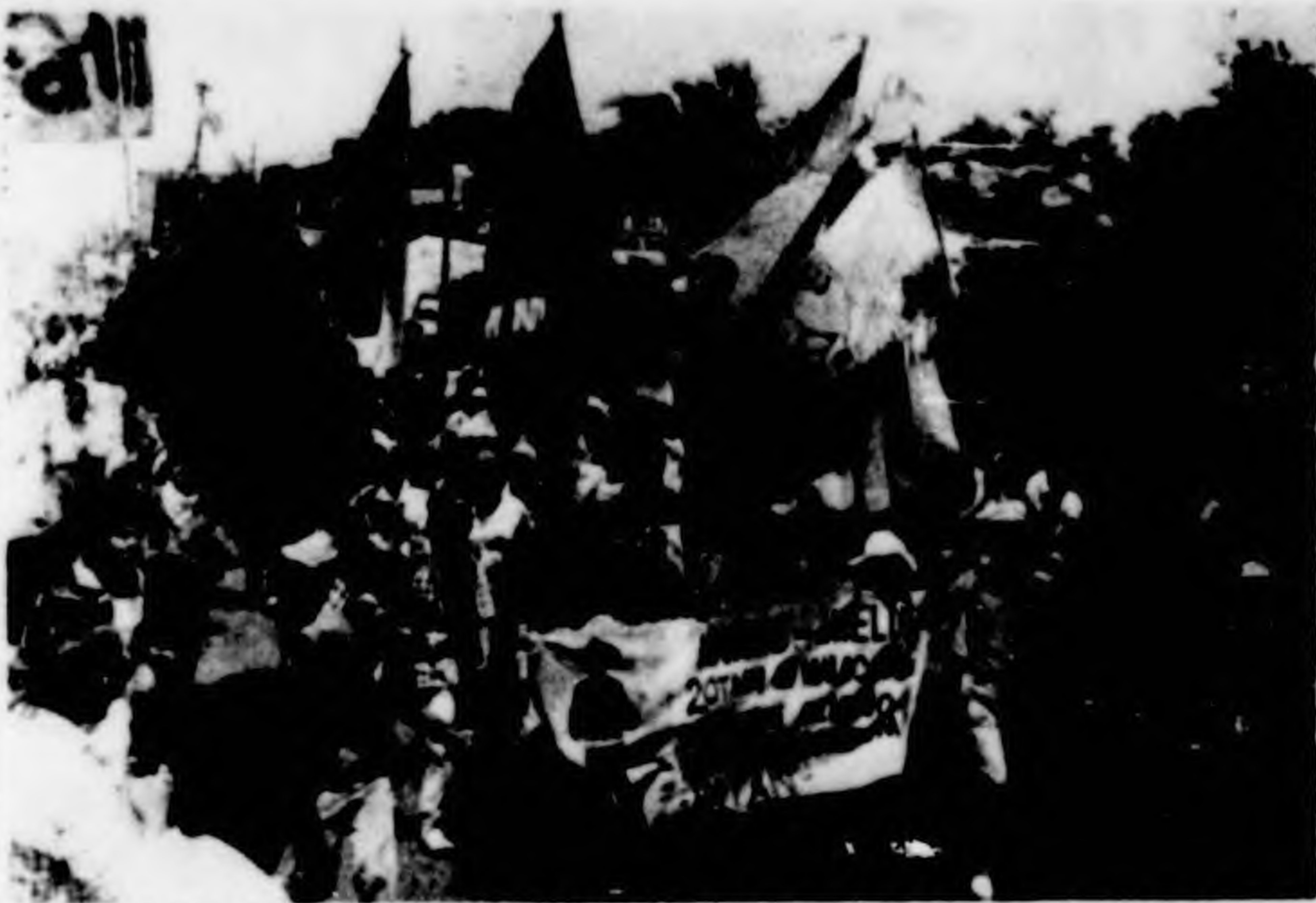
Q: What do you think of Cory Aquino's offer of a six-month ceasefire and laying down of arms by armed rebel groups?

A: As regards a ceasefire, we estimate that much will depend on the political basis for agreement, inasmuch as many have opted for armed means based on the recognition to thoroughly dismantle the structures of tyranny, foreign domination and feudal bondage.

The revolutionary forces are certainly open to discussion concerning possible cooperation in a post-Marcos government.

Specifically, we are open to the possibility as well as the viability of a coalition government in the post-Marcos era, provided the basis for such a coalition is at least nationalist and committed to the basic tenets of political and economic democracy.

But let us not put the cart before the carabao. The entire opposition whether in the open or underground, armed or non-armed, still have to hurdle the acid test of fighting this hated regime in a united effort through means other than those dictated by the dictator. As we said earlier, we do not believe these polls will result in any measure of political advantage for the traditional opposition, much less for the broad masses of our people. □



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Gearing for boycott: BAYAN members protest dictatorship

Countering a big lie

Escalating NPA offensives disprove Marcos claim on crushing "insurgency"

"Counter-insurgency expert." This is one of the 10 or so labels that campaign strategists have chosen to pin on Marcos in an effort to project him to the fore as the better candidate. Beyond the flak, however, what has Marcos' record have to show?

For one, 17 of his 20 years in office have witnessed the rise of the New People's Army as the fastest growing insurgent force in Asia. He ordered a series of severe suppression and encirclement campaigns against the NPA in the early years of martial law, but these too, the guerrillas weathered. More than that, the Red fighters only had to point to the concrete acts of terror committed by the military during such campaigns to prove the fascist character of the Marcos regime. In the process, martial law even served as the best teacher, by negative example, of the need to overthrow the regime by force of arms.

By the time Marcos began his third term and proclaimed his New Republic in 1981, the NPA in turn had already succeeded in laying the groundwork for guerrilla warfare in all major regions of the archipelago. The revolutionary war entered a new phase — the advanced substage of the strategic defensive. The transition signalled the further expansion and intensification of guerrilla warfare nationwide, and for the next four years, its progress has been unimpeded. But it is year 1985 that more than ever, showcased Marcos' dismal record as "counter-insurgency expert."

As early as March last year, revolutionary forces successfully foiled food blockades imposed in several provinces of northern Mindanao and entire barrios which had also been subjected to shelling, hamletting, searches, arbitrary arrests and salvaging. The military campaign, which was most intense in June in the town of Claveria, Misamis Oriental, failed in its avowed purpose to crush the NPA and isolate it from its mass base. Instead, military troops became prey to ambushes and sniper fire by the Red fighters. At least 24 troopers were killed during the week-long "base-denial" campaign.

In Kalinga-Apayao and other mountain provinces in Northern Luzon, the NPA staged its biggest tactical offensives in 1985 to counteract strafings and bombings of barrios suspected by the military as NPA

Boycott move mounts

Cause-oriented groups issue call to spurn snap polls

The move to boycott the Feb. 7 snap presidential elections continues to catch fire two weeks to election day.

Mass organizations of workers and students lit the spark in a massive rally Dec. 10, while multisectoral alliances firmed up their positions early this month. The Kilusang Mayo Uno and the League of Filipino Students brushed aside Red scare charges by the regime and unfurled a giant streamer calling for an active boycott of the polls in Mendiola on Human Rights Day. Both groups said the elections could only give Marcos a fresh mandate and prolong his oppressive rule.

The Nationalist Alliance for Justice, Freedom and Democracy (NAJFD) greeted the New Year with a call to "cast away illusions" that the snap elections could bring substantial changes, and to boycott the precincts on Feb. 7. "While it is true that dislodging Marcos is a victory for the anti-fascist movement, retaining US domination will not alter the substance of state rule in the country," NAJFD said in a statement.

The election is not only meaningless, the group said, "but also deceptive for it tries to project Marcos as the sole problem of the Filipino people and his ouster as the cure-all solution to the people's miseries." What will bring meaningful changes in Philippine society, said the NAJFD, is the "direct, actual combat with the fascist state, in the various arenas of struggle in the cities and countryside."

Church people joined the chorus, saying the dictatorship's new election game is "dis-

turbingly reminiscent of Rome's infamous Nero watching in bored amusement the hapless Christians battling, then being devoured by the lions." The group called on "all believers and people of good will to opt not to vote as a moral and theological option in protest and condemnation against the immoral system of using people as pawns to play their unending game of manipulation and oppression."

For its part, the multisectoral federation of people's organizations, the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN), announced its much-awaited decision to actively boycott the polls. Disappointed with Marcos' response to give in to a four-point demand and with the legal opposition's platform, BAYAN's national council voted down a motion to reconsider the boycott drive by an 84 to 6 count in a meeting early this year.

BAYAN leaders, who negotiated with opposition standard-bearer Corazon Aquino to incorporate 15 nationalist and democratic demands in her program, expressed dissatisfaction with the opposition's stand on the US bases, genuine land reform and other issues.

Other progressive groups which called for a boycott are the Kilusang Magbubukid sa Pilipinas, the Communist Party and the Moro National Liberation Front.

With boycott campaign plans to roll soon, the boycott movement is expected to gain momentum before election day and invigorate the open mass movement beyond Feb. 7. □

bases. On Feb. 9, more than 200 Red fighters and people's militia raided the townhall of Sadanga, Mt. Province and seized 43 assorted firearms — one of the largest hauls in the Cordilleras. Barely a month after, on March 8, 34 out of a 38-man combined force of PC troopers, policemen and CHDFs were killed in an ambush by NPA guerrillas in Masi, Pampuna, Cagayan, near the province's border with Kalinga-Apayao. Again, this was one of the year's biggest operations, in terms of the number of enemy casualties.

The regime was also forced to admit the NPA's growing capabilities when the latter succeeded in blasting 35 transmission towers of the National Power Corporation in a series of commando operations launched from June to August in Bataan. On other occasions, the NPA proved its mastery of guerrilla tactics not only by successfully outmaneuvering the regime's troops but also by inflicting heavy casualties on the latter. On Feb. 27, in an encounter with enemy forces in Cauayan, Negros Occidental, the guerrillas killed 20 troopers and wounded 11. On June 25, they killed more than 30 enemy soldiers in a counter-encirclement operation in Libon, Albay.

A number of raids in 1985 also showcased the NPA's growing capability to employ complicated tactics and maneuvers in defeating an enemy superior in arms and number. On May 26, Red fighters in Negros staged a simultaneous attack on the 3rd Scout Ranger Company headquarters and the police station in Isabela town. Killed in the daring raid were 11 Scout Rangers, including their commanding officer, one CHDF and two policemen. Total arms haul: 68, 63 of which were high-powered rifles (HPR), plus 10,000 assorted bullets, 30 grenades and other military supplies.

But even without firing a single shot, the NPA has been able to add to its growing firepower. In one such operation on Jan. 5 last year, the townhall and armory in Tabina, Zamboanga del Sur yielded 102 firearms and thousands of bullets.

Armed struggle also expanded to new areas in 1985. On Feb. 20, southeastern Negros was opened to guerrilla warfare with an NPA ambush on a PC foot patrol in Sta. Catalina, Negros Oriental. On July 10, northwestern Samar also saw its first guerrilla operation when a military convoy was ambushed in San Isidro, Northern Samar.

The so-called Solid North also suffered more cracks from NPA offensives that were launched with increasing frequency in 1985. Partial reports from the NPA operational command in Northern Luzon said a total of 126 arms were confiscated in tactical offensives launched from January to July in several towns of Cagayan, Kalinga-Apayao and Ilocos Norte. Already, this six-month arms haul surpasses total



People's armed might: NPA platoon in morning drill

arms confiscations for 1984 (124). Offensives launched from June to July alone account for 52 arms seized and 30 enemy forces killed.

Even large urban centers became staging grounds for spectacular NPA assaults in 1985. On March 25, 429 HPRs were seized when a combined team of armed city partisans and regular NPA fighters raided the Visayan Maritime Academy in Bacolod City. This feat was followed up on Oct. 24 with another raid, this time on a hacienda just 500 meters away from the 331st PC Company headquarters in Bacolod, which yielded nine HPRs.

Frequent reports of NPA offensives in provinces adjacent to the National Capital Region also indicate that guerrilla warfare is now advancing closer to the regime's

seat of power. In nearby Kalayaan, Laguna, NPA fighters raided a well-entrenched enemy camp last Nov. 28, killed nine troopers and wounded four, and made off with seven HPRs before retreating. In Central Luzon, NPA offensives from July to October alone resulted in 70 enemy forces killed and 68 firearms seized.

On at least two other occasions, the NPA made the headlines here and abroad. Local and foreign newspapers carried photographs taken by newsmen who covered an actual NPA raid on a military communications outpost in Guinayangan, Quezon last May 12. In August, Red fighters raided facilities of the Australian-funded Northern Samar Integrated Rural Development Project, which caused the Australian government to vastly scale down aid to the Marcos regime.

As the year ended, newspaper reports indicated that the storm of NPA offensives have showed no signs of abating:

► On Dec. 2, NPA guerrillas ambushed a payroll truck of an hacienda owned by Marcos crony Eduardo Cojuangco in Himamaylan, Negros Occidental.

► On Dec. 14, another ambush was sprung, this time on a military convoy in Tabbrak, Sadanga, Mt. Province. Big stones and boulders were rained on the soldiers, killing 13 and injuring 11.

► On Dec. 30, Ifugao PC-INP chief Lt. Col. Juanito Flores was killed along with other troopers in an ambush in Banawe.

As if in answer to this, the regime bared plans to activate six more AFP maneuver battalions, bringing to 77 the number of combat battalions engaged in counter-insurgency operations. The announcement is an indirect admission of the AFP's many setbacks in 1985 — something even Marcos, with his much-vaunted counter-insurgency "expertise," is powerless to stop. □



Winning battles, winning smiles

Poll fools

The snap elections campaign has called forth a great creativity on the part of the Marcos planners. Did you know that a special technique has been mastered to save his hand from over-shaking? When you think you're shaking the Presidential hand, it's actually a bodyguard's hand you're shaking - cleverly slipped under his, beside his body. In the crowd, you think you've touched greatness, *pala*, it's only a muscleman!

Also creative is the bare-faced fibbing FM is doing - about the opposition making deals with the MNLF, about the dead Ninoy being a founder of the CPP, about the inexperience of anybody else but Marcos, about all the governors and leaders who have turned balik-KBL, about the enthusiastic crowds (who've been hauled there)! Next, he'll be accusing Cory of having her husband killed by Galman who's supposed to be a communist.

Imee Marcos-Manotoc is reportedly peeved at the NMPC's "pangit" (na) TV coverage of KBL rallies. She's complaining that the audience does nothing but gossip, don't clap when they're supposed to, shout "Beinte! Beinte!" instead of "Marcos! Marcos!" and only wait to get paid afterwards. Well, what does she expect from a rally full of "hakots"?

Imelda says that if you vote for Marcos, you'll get her as the "bonus." Not Tolentino, not the billion-peso debt, not the Sari-sing Sikap and the "Kanya-kanyang Kurakot" (KKK), but Imelda herself! And she sings too!

Thousands of pesos are reportedly being paid to actors and actresses who appear in FM's campaign rallies. In Davao, people who waited for Sharon Cuneta griped when FM arrived instead. One famous actress who refused to attend a rally (she was sec-

retly for the opposition) - was promptly investigated by the BIR for her tax record.

Do you know why FM and Tolentino wear the same clothes in rallies? It's because these shirt-jacs are "pang-panalo," or so says the super-superstitious Imelda.

Malacanang inhabitants are boiling mad over the thousands of people who mobbed the Cory-Doy tandem in Baguio, Tacloban and Negros. As a result, they sent every cabinet member and government official from these places back there - to add to the KBL rallies, what else?

KBL rallies are raining T-shirts nowadays. People are grabbing five shirts each to give away to friends. But can these T-shirts translate into votes? That's another matter.

The papers show FM always being carried to the platform by "enthusiastic" supporters. Actually, they're bodyguards especially trained - in the US, they say - to carry him, because he can't walk.

In truth, Marcos is so sick that he keeps slipping from his chair when somebody else is speaking in a KBL rally. In fact, media persons swore that in one KBL rally, Marcos pissed on his pants! His aides had to carry him to a nearby van to clean up the mess.

But if you ask us, Marcos doesn't have to piss on his pants to make a mess. Just look at the Philippine economy!

We've got a suggestion for the ailing dictator. With his "pusong bato" and "mukhang singkapal ng bato," all he has to do is to get some rocks from his stone bust in La Union to replace his kidneys. That way, he'll make it to the Guinness Book of World Records as the first man ever to have a "batong bato" (kidney).

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