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# LIBERATION

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# Curtains fall on bases revue

With the signing of the amended Military Bases Agreement between the Aquino government and the United States, the curtain rings down on the first act of an elaborate farce which is meant to extend the rights of the US on its bases here beyond 1991.

In spite of the posturings and playacting, there was no doubt about the eventual outcome of the review of the bases agreement. And the slick way by which the final phase of the review and signing of the agreement was effected in Washington just goes to show how the United States was in full control every step of the way. This makes Corazon Aquino's maintenance of her "options open" stance on the fate of the bases beyond 1991 a truly laughable second act to this ongoing drama to deceive the people.

To divert the people's attention from the more fundamental issues concerning our national sovereignty and integrity, the US-Aquino regime took a mercenary approach to the bases issue. Even then, the Philippines obtained a compensation package which is not only way below its asking price. It is one that is on a "best effort" basis admixed with "soft" components that do not benefit the people at all.

In fact, a close examination of the compensation package reveals that its biggest component is military aid for the AFP. In exchange for the assurance of continued military, political and economic dominance in the Pacific, the US government has enhanced the Aquino regime's wherewithal for repressing the legitimate struggles of the Filipino people. The huge military package is no less than a package for waging intensified war against the people demanding land, economic upliftment and genuine sovereignty, which are conditions for an enduring peace. Maintaining

the US bases, in effect, is proving to be the biggest deterrent to peace in the country.

To top it all, the Aquino government has also flouted its own constitution by agreeing to provisions in the amended agreement that would allow the transit of nuclear-capable aircraft and ships in Philippine territory and permit the likelihood of storage and installation of nuclear weapons in the bases. Thus has the Aquino regime allowed itself to become a party to the nuclearization of a country it had vowed to keep nuclear-free and the potential annihilation of a people it had sworn to protect from a nuclear holocaust.

With all its theatrical twists and turns, the drama that was the RP-US Military Bases Agreement review could have been funny except for one thing: it is the Filipino people who are being made to pay dearly for the whole show.

But the Filipino people refuse to be mere passive spectators to this farce. In ever increasing numbers, they have been expressing their disgust over US impositions, especially as this was manifested in a most blatant manner in the course of the military bases agreement review. Many have joined the growing ranks of the anti-bases movement. In vast areas in the countryside and cities, the masses, through their revolutionary organizations, are resolutely building a democratic coalition government that shall have the political will to decisively dismantle the US military bases and pave the way for a society that truly enjoys justice, sovereignty and enduring peace.

The US-Aquino regime can stage and star in as many extravaganzas as it wants. Soon, the curtains will fall on its trite and tiring acts. Meanwhile, the Filipino people take center stage in the real-life drama of history unfolding.



## IN THIS ISSUE

Cover: "Ani" (Painting by Jess Red and Andres Magbanua)

**Cover story:** The Panbansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid (PKM) continues to lead agrarian struggles and reap gains for the peasantry in vast areas of the countryside. In this issue, *LIB* recounts how the organized masses in a barrio in Panay achieved successes in rent reduction, land confiscation, and cooperative development, leading to improvements in their livelihood.

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The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDF) serves as the organizational framework and channel for the unity, cooperation and coordination of all anti-imperialist and democratic forces in the Philippines and for progressive Filipinos and solidarity groups abroad. It traces its beginnings to the establishment of the Preparatory Commission for the National Democratic Front on April 24, 1973. *LIBERATION* is the official publication of the NDF.

COVER STORY

On today's significant issues and events

# A harvest of hope

PKM-led agrarian struggles improve the lives of peasants in a Panay barrio

Nestled in the plains of Panay island, the barrio of San Simon (not its real name), at first glance, resembles any other Philippine village. Small nipa houses dot the expanse of green. The land, a sea of palay, is occasionally broken by clumps of bamboo and banana growing in natural profusion. In the fringes of the barrio, the land rises to form a wall of gently rolling hills.

But San Simon is no ordinary village. It is one of those that have steadily come under the influence of the National Democratic Front (NDF) during the last several years. It is also one that has reaped modest successes in the implementation of the agrarian revolution program spearheaded by the NDF-affiliated Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid (PKM).

### History of struggle

The gains, both economic and political, that the people have been reaping were not made possible overnight. The fruits were harvested only after years of patient, solid organizing and active mobilizations.

Indeed, the struggle has come a long way since 1981 when the first NDF Propaganda Organizing Team or POT came to this remote village. The members of the team discussed with the people the prevailing social condition at the time. From these discussions, the POT learned early enough the problems confronting the farmers and the farmworkers.

San Simon from way-back and up to the late '70s was a producer of sugarcane. Barriofolk who worked in sugarcane plantations received only P7.00 for every ton of sugarcane that they cut and loaded in the trucks. The measly amount certainly was not commensurate to the labor expended by the farmworker. The amount he earned everyday was not even enough

to feed and clothe his family, much less send his children to school.

In the process of social investigation conducted by the POT, it became evident that the issue of low wages of farmworkers must be urgently addressed. The team lost no time in explaining to the masses the significance of their economic condition and how it was related to larger social problems.

Not long after, an organizing group (OG), composed of the most politically advanced peasants was formed in the barrio. From then on, it was the OG that took the task of arousing, organizing and mobilizing the people until such time that a solid mass base was developed.

In the consecutive meetings that were convened by the OG and partici-



Solid partnership: Red fighters and NDF activists mingling with peasants

pated in by the barrio people, it was decided that a campaign for the increase of farmworkers' wages should be launched. At the helm of the planning was the OG. The actual negotiation, however, was led by a peasant leader. The group of farmworkers talked to the *encargado* or administrator and presented their demand. The *encargado* in turn relayed the demand to the landlord. The latter, in the beginning, refused to accede to the demand but the masses' resoluteness far outweighed his resistance. Not only did the farmworkers insist on their demand. They refused to harvest the sugarcane as well. Because of the sugarworkers' concerted move, wages were raised from P7.00 per ton to P10.00 per ton in late 1981. Subsequent increases were effected in 1982. In 1983, wages were increased to P12 per ton, then P15 per ton and finally, P17 per ton.

Today, with sugar gone and rice replacing it as the primary crop, farmworkers still form a significant portion of the barrio's agricultural population. And it is with the same zeal and determination as when the first campaign was launched that the people continue to advance and protect the farmworkers' interest.

In 1986, the need for a mass organization that would unite the farmers and farmworkers in the struggle became evident. While the people had been politicized to a relatively high level, there still existed no formal organization that would serve as a venue for more concerted and militant actions. Thus, in the same year, the PKM was formed in the barrio level. Today, it has a general membership of 57. Of these, 17 belong to the Council of Leaders. The rest of the members belong to any of the five committees of

the organization, namely finance, education, health, defense and communication.

From the very beginning, the organization had to face four urgent matters:

- ▶ occupation of idle land;
- ▶ land rent reduction;
- ▶ irrigation; and
- ▶ usury.

#### Land occupation

The crash of the sugar industry in the late '70s left many of the sugar plantations idle. Landowners who suffered the crippling effect of the crash and who could no longer afford the shift to rice production simply abandoned their land. Tenants and farmworkers, on the other hand, were rendered jobless.

Thus the campaign to occupy and cultivate idle land was launched in San Simon and many other barrios in Panay.

The first organized negotiation in

the masses would forcibly occupy his land and cultivate it. The organized peasants made good their "promise." Using the landlord's tractor, they plowed the land while the local militia patrolled the perimeter in anticipation of any reprisal from the landlord.

Seeing the firm stand of the masses on the issue, the landlord finally buckled under pressure. Twenty hectares of idle land and two hectares of ricefields were given to them to farm. The terms of sharing the harvest was a matter the landlord left for the masses to decide.

#### Land rent reduction

A meeting was held immediately after the occupation to determine who the direct beneficiaries of the land should be. Priority was given to those who did not own any piece of land. Fourteen landless farmers eventually got their portion of the land. Each was given an average of one hectare.

After the first cropping, the farmers gave two-thirds of their palay harvest to the *encargado* following the *terciahan* sharing system widespread in the barrio. Under this arrangement, one-third of the harvest went to the tenant while two-thirds went to the landlord.

This left the farmer very little to provide for his family with basic necessities such as food, clothes, medicine and education for the children.

In 1986, the organized farmers decided that they would surrender only one-fourth of the harvest. A year later, however, the farmers moved to confiscate the entire harvest.

The action was precipitated by the landlord's move to form a vigilante group in the barrio. In retaliation, the farmers seized the landlord's farm implements, including the key to his warehouse. Learning about the confiscation, the landlord sent for a military team to oversee the harvesting in his farm. At noon, when the military team was taking a bath in the river, 50 farmers took one sack of palay each and deposited these with sympathizers living in the vicinity. The other sacks were brought to town aboard a delivery truck owned by sympathetic rice dealers so as not to arouse the suspicion of the military.

The soldiers later intercepted the vehicle. But since the sacks bore no marks identifying them as the landlord's possession, the vehicle reached the town safely. The whole operation was completed in not more than 15 minutes.

So successful was the operation that the landlord, fearing a repeat of that remarkable action, asked members of the Regional Special Action

66 Using the landlord's tractor, the organized peasants plowed the land while the local militia patrolled the perimeter in anticipation of any reprisal from the landlord. 99

the barrio was conducted on the same year that the PKM was formed in San Simon. Fifteen PKM members approached the *encargado* with the request to farm the landlord's idle land. The landlord, the richest in the barrio with 105 hectares to his name, excluding other properties in other barrios ordered his *encargado* not to allow the farmers to till his land. Two more negotiations were conducted, but the landowner gave the same reply. The fourth time around, the *kaupod* (comrades) warned the landowner that if he still refuses to accede to their request:



In the vortex of change: PKM farmers working on communal farm

Force (RSAF) to supervise this year's harvesting. But the masses, refusing to be daunted by such a scheme, have turned to another tactic. They bloated the cost of production in order to lessen the landlord's portion of the harvest.

#### Building an irrigation system

The year 1986 proved to be a very productive year for the PKM in San Simon. Aside from the campaigns for higher wages, land occupation, land rent reduction and confiscation of harvest, equally laudable was the construction of an irrigation system.

With nothing but their sheer determination and strength as capital, plus the simple tools they had, 37 farmers pooled their efforts together to construct an irrigation system.

It took them all of two months to complete it but the rewards were more than enough to compensate for the back-breaking work they undertook. True, the system was not a work of engineering genius. The whole system consisted of bags of sand piled one on top of another, which served as a dam and a stretch of canal dug by the farmers themselves. Such was its construction that heavy rains cause it to collapse every so often.

This minor problem proved to be no obstacle at all in making the land productive. Some 70 hectares of land now receive water from the irrigation system, benefiting almost all of the farmers. More significantly, the farmers are now assured of three croppings every year instead of just one or two. This means additional income which translates to more food, more change of clothing and even education for the children.

In order to facilitate the management of the irrigation system, the farmers formed an organization which takes charge of fee collection, tapping of volunteers and the hiring of workers to do repair work on it.

To avail of the irrigation system, each beneficiary pays P1.50 for every sack of palay he harvests every cropping season. In an interview with Ka Nando, a member of the irrigation association council, he revealed that the organization now has net earnings of P4,000.00. This amount they have earmarked for the repair and construction of a concrete irrigation system.

Members of the irrigation association are mostly PKM members and supporters, although there are some landlords. In fact, the present chairman of the group is a small landlord sympathetic to the cause of the landless farmers.



One with the masses: NPA guerrillas help prepare food for PKM mass meeting

Still to be resolved in San Simon is the problem of usury. In the barrio, it is the landlords and rich peasants who are also the usurers. From them, the farmers borrow either cash or farm inputs. The peasants are charged an interest rate of 7% per month.

No direct action has been taken against these usurers because most of them (except for the landlord whose

maintaining P5,000, they agreed to pay by installment from the money they will earn by renting out the pump. At present, they only have P2,000 left to pay before the organization can claim the pump as its own.

In the meantime, the water pump is rented out to farmers. The rental charged depends on the amount of gasoline used. Each user pays P25 for every liter of gasoline consumed. This amount is P10 lower than the prevailing rate of P35 per liter being collected by the three other pump owners (who are also rich peasants). Every year, the organization earns P1,000 from this venture.

**66 With nothing but their sheer determination and strength as capital, plus the simple tools they had, 37 farmers pooled their efforts to construct an irrigation system. 99**

land was occupied and whose harvest was confiscated) are *ka-alyado* or allies of the revolution.

However, the PKM has included in its program for the coming months, the reduction of interest rates to 5% and eventually to 3%.

#### Other projects/programs

The PKM in San Simon has consistently proven itself worthy of the trust and support of its members and sympathizers. Though still in its infancy as an organization, it has already initiated projects that have not only strengthened the people's political will, but have catered to their most immediate needs.

The organization now boasts of one thresher and one water pump which are now both readily available for the farmers' use.

A nun who was a PKM supporter gave P10,000 to the organization in 1986. With this amount, the PKM paid the initial installment for the water pump which cost P15,000. The re-

The thresher, on the other hand, was given to the PKM by an ally. This, like the pump, is being rented out to farmers. For every 18 sacks of palay threshed, two go to the harvester, 15 to the landowner or tenant, as the case may be, and one goes to the thresher. The amount accumulated is also used to pay for the motor.

In March 1988, however, an incident occurred which almost ended this enterprising effort. The military confiscated the pump and the thresher, alleging that these were owned by the NPA. The PKM members wrote a petition letter demanding the immediate return of the farm machinery, testifying that these were owned by the farmers. The letter was signed by the farmers, the dealer, the nun who donated the money for the thresher and even the town's vice mayor. The military filed a case in court but it was dismissed a month later. Clearly, the case was filed to harass the farmers and deter them from organizing themselves to fight for their rights.

### Economic and political gains

The implementation of the agrarian revolution program has helped the peasants in no small way.

One full meal a day was all they could afford then. Two full meals were rarities. Today, the additional income derived from the second and third croppings assures them of three regular meals everyday. If all they could afford before was rice and *bugoong* and salt for viand, now it is not uncommon to find fish on their dining tables. Even sugar and coffee are no longer alien to them. Marketing, an activity the people could not afford before, could now be done twice a week.

Parents now have the means to send their children to either the elementary school in the barrio or even the secondary school in town. Figures cited by residents confirm that all children of school age attend elementary school, 95% attend high school, and some 5%

ly acknowledge the crucial role of the revolutionary forces in initiating changes and improving their living conditions. Armed struggle as a component of the national democratic revolution is also widely accepted.

The enthusiasm and warmth with which the masses receive the *kasapod* show only too well the massive support the movement enjoys in the barrio. An example of this support was manifested when the policy was made asking beneficiaries of the land occupation program to give 2% of their net income from paly production to the PKM. The masses not only readily agreed. They even suggested that 5% would still be reasonable and that they would be willing to give that much to the organization aside from the P1 membership fee they pay every month.

It is not difficult to understand why those in the revolutionary movement have earned the support and respect of the people. In this barrio, as in many other barrios where the revolu-

assume a greater role in the community. Even if the local barangay set-up is still intact, the organization has begun to function as the local political authority, taking charge of education and defense matters, aside of course, from settling disputes that range from agrarian to marital and personal.

At present, the peasant mass organization is concerned with consolidating the gains it has reaped through the years. It also looks forward to forming its own production cooperative. As envisioned by the members, the cooperative will provide inputs such as seeds, fertilizers and pesticides to its members and will serve as alternative to the agriculture input dealers who charge exorbitant prices for their products.

To finance the project, the organization has begun a series of activities that, hopefully, will provide them with part of the needed capital. Last summer, the PKM sponsored a *baile* or dance, netting P1,000 from the P5-tickets sold. Another finance project is the *flores*. Members serenade fellow farmers in their homes with revolutionary songs and native ditties and ask for contributions to the organization. Obviously, these fund-raising activities cannot provide the sufficient amount, but members are not in the least daunted as they continue to find other means of financing this undertaking.

Today, the PKM continues to play a major role in the implementation of the NDF's program for agrarian revolution in San Simon.

Without the PKM, the task of implementing the agrarian revolution could not have been done as comprehensively and rapidly. Rallying under the banner of the PKM, the masses are able to project their economic demands without leaving the political aspect of the struggle. It is to the PKM's credit that the struggle in San Simon has not degenerated into mere economism.

From their base in San Simon, the peasants plan to form PKM chapters in other barrios and on the municipal level so that a coordinated campaign on issues can be launched more successfully. For instance, the problem of usury has not been eradicated since the usurers from whom farmers from San Simon and other barrios borrow their capital are found in the town center. It would take the concerted action of farmers in the barrios concerned before this problem can be resolved. But on the verdant, fertile plains of Panay, the organized peasants' steely determination will bear fruit as surely as the sturdy stalks of *paly* give life to the people.

Isidro Labrador



Pleasant encounter: NPA meets farmer on the way to the field

are enrolled in two-year vocational courses.

The economic gains, however, become all the more significant when one sees the political gains that have come with them.

The people have achieved higher social and political consciousness. They have seen the power that a united and organized people can do and this has boosted their confidence and steeled their determination. They are no longer cowed into submission by the landlords because they know their rights. In fact, during negotiations with the landlord or the *encargado*, it is the masses who unhesitatingly confront them.

This higher political consciousness has translated itself into a deeper understanding of the revolutionary movement. While not all the farmers in the barrio are PKM members, they have been consistent supporters of the revolutionary movement. They open-

tionary forces have massive influence, the people, in practice, are part of the movement in as much as campaigns are launched by the people themselves. The revolutionary forces initiate political education sessions and give guidance to the mass organizations. But in the main, it is the masses who directly manage and implement the activities of the campaign.

No one would deny, however, that the NPA, including the local militia, has had a significant role in protecting the gains of the organization. Without the guerrillas and the pressure they exert, it would have been so easy for the landlords and their paid goons to sabotage the harvests and thus demoralize the masses. The presence of the NPA and the local militia and the vigilance of the masses have prevented them from causing serious damage to the organization and its activities. Cattle rustlers, for instance, are caught and punished.

The PKM, for its part, has begun to

## MAINSTREAM

Developments in the people's movements

# "Freedom of religion is an inalienable right"

An interview with a member of the Christians for National Liberation National Council

This October, LIB interviewed Fr. Aaron de Iglesia, a CNL cadre from the Visayas and asked him the 10 most asked questions about the NDF and the CNL's views on religion, the church and their place in the national democratic state. Excerpts:

**Q: Will there be religious freedom under the national democratic state?**

**A:** Yes. The freedom to profess religious faith as an inalienable human right shall be fully respected and guaranteed by the national democratic state. On the same plane, the ND state shall also fully respect and guarantee the freedom of citizens to have no religion at all. The ND state shall also promote the conditions for the cooperation and participation of believers and non-believers in building a national democratic society.

The above is very explicit in the NDF Program and shall continue to be upheld by the Democratic Coalition Government (DCG) and eventually by the People's Democratic Republic of the Philippines (PDR).

It is important to stress the points above in the face of the enemy's desperate moves to spread lies and deceive the people on the NDF's program. The enemy is now propagandizing that freedom of religion will not be respected or that religion will be persecuted by the "communists-atheists" once they take over the government. Or that what the NDF now is saying about respect for the freedom of religion is only a "come-on" which shall be taken back once they are in power. These are utterly false. What is said in the NDF program will continue to be upheld and guaranteed by the DCG and the PDR.

**Q: What is the NDF's policy on church property?**

**A:** No definite policy has yet been formulated by the NDF on this particular matter. But, I believe, this shall be resolved within the framework of social justice and development as a national goal and which incidentally the church also upholds. Thus, this question shall be governed by more encompassing policies such as those relating to agrarian, urban and other structural reforms as well as fiscal policies among others. The NDF (and later the DCG) guarantees, however, that it shall never discriminate against nor give special treatment to any entity on religious grounds.

**Q: Will the church-run schools still enjoy a tax-exempt status under the ND state?**

**A:** This question will again be dealt with under the principles enunciated above particularly by the fiscal policies that will be formulated by the DCG.

**Q: Will the church still be allowed to operate schools, seminaries, hospitals and other institutions?**

**A:** First of all, it is the DCG/PDR that has the prime responsibility to educate and deliver the basic social services to the citizens. The DCG guarantees free and universal education as well as social services accessible to all espe-

cially the poor.

But the DCG shall not prevent private entities and the churches to help in the delivery of educational as well as social services to the people. It shall, however, endeavor to eliminate all forms of elitism and commercialism in these institutions even as it does its best to upgrade the government's social service delivery system to the people.

As for the seminaries, they shall definitely be allowed to operate.

**Q: What about relations with the Vatican and other international centers of various religious faiths? Will this be allowed?**

**A:** From the point of view of the DCG, the matter of the nature of the relationship between a local church with its international center of authority, as in the case of the Philippine Catholic Church with the Vatican, is for that particular church to decide. The relationship, however, of the DCG to the Vatican as a state will be governed by the former's foreign relations policies. In the main, I think, the DCG will maintain good relations with all international centers of the Christian and other faiths, such as the Vatican and the World Council of Churches. Obviously, the DCG will not allow the Vatican or any other religious center to interfere in the internal affairs of the Philippines.

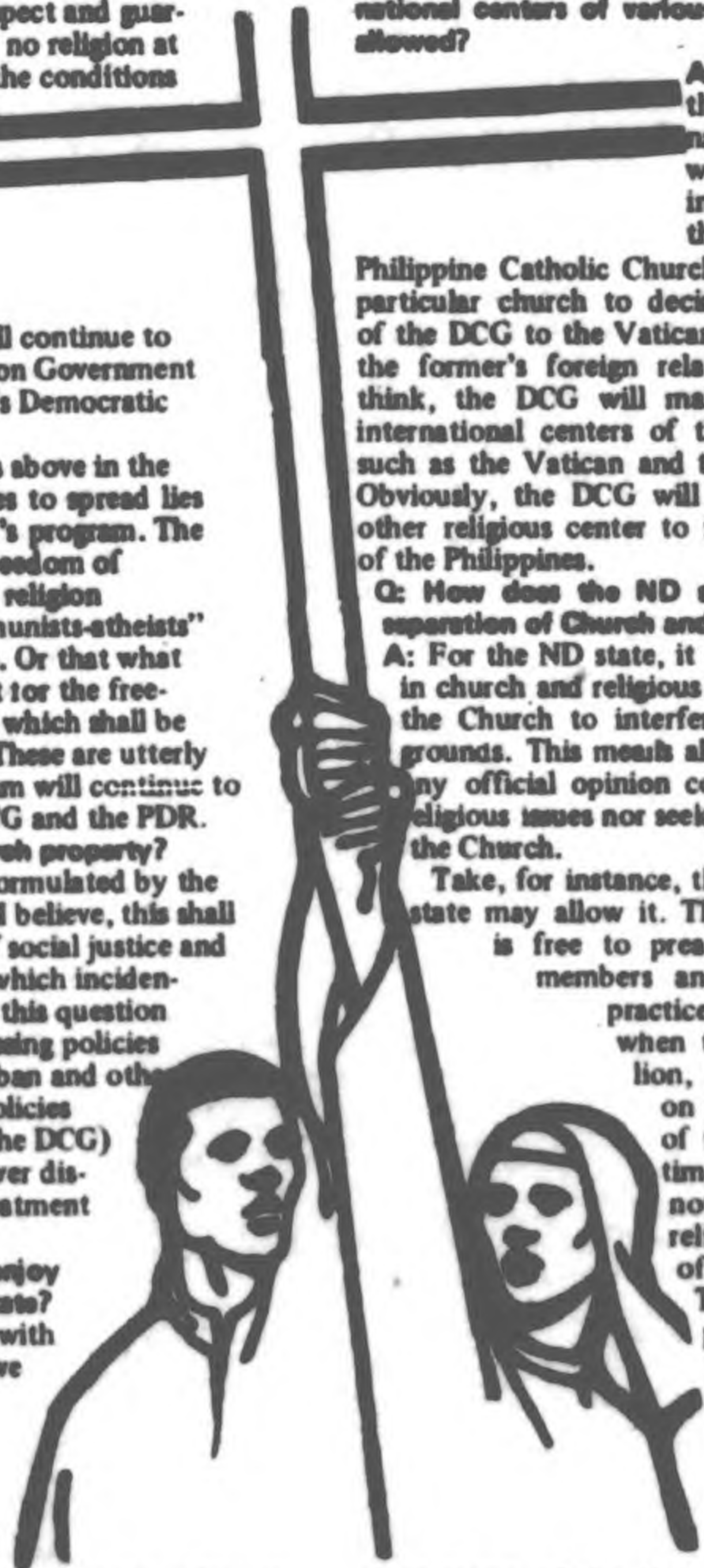
**Q: How does the ND state interpret the principle of separation of Church and State?**

**A:** For the ND state, it means that it will not interfere in church and religious matters, just as it will not allow the Church to interfere in State affairs on religious grounds. This means also that the State shall not pass any official opinion concerning the interpretation of religious issues nor seek any religious legitimation from the Church.

Take, for instance, the question of divorce. The ND state may allow it. The Church, on the other hand, is free to preach against it and convince its members and non-members alike not to practice it on religious grounds. But when the Church starts inciting rebellion, for example, against the State on religious grounds or on account of the divorce issue, it will be the time for the State to come in — not to interfere with the Church's religious convictions but because of its evidently political activities. The State will deal with this particular Church activity on political grounds.

**Q: What is the relationship of the CNL with the institutional church?**

**A:** The CNL is a revolutionary underground organization of Christians and is a member-organization of the National Democratic Front (NDF). Being so, the institutional church does not have any direct or indirect relationship with, nor sanction or even tolerate, it. The CNL's interest is directly opposed to



the dominant interest of the institutional church being one of the avid defenders of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. It is not surprising then that the institutional church, especially its most reactionary leaders, is doing its utmost to suppress and repress the revolutionary movement within it even to the extent of suppressing and repressing genuinely progressive trends within. In spite of this, many CNL members, activists and cadres continue to pursue their revolutionary tasks within the institutional church even if it also has other tasks outside it, among the broad Christians, for instance.

**Q: What does the CNL think of Jaime Cardinal Sin and other leaders of the institutional church?**

**A:** Although the institutional church's dominant interest is aligned with the interest of the ruling classes in our semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, not all the individuals and groups within it identify with the interest of the institutional church very closely. Yet, majority of the church leadership still tend to take on the dominant reactionary interest of the institutional church even to the point of some becoming outright reactionaries.

Cardinal Sin belongs to this latter category. He is a staunch defender of the present societal set-up even if he may favor one faction of the ruling class more than the others. He has also shown his true color of being a clerico-fascist when he lent moral legitimacy to the declaration of "total war" by the US-Aquino regime. In so doing, he seems to be following the footsteps of Cardinal Obando who gave his blessings to the US-backed Contra war against the Nicaraguan people.

It is significant to note, however, that there is a sizable number of church leaders who are genuinely pro-people and progressive, with some even sympathetic and open to the NDF and CNL programs. We appreciate and encourage this trend even as we endeavor to maintain in some ways close relationships with them as friends and allies.

**Q: What have the progressive and revolutionary religious contributed to the church? To the revolutionary struggle?**

**A:** Within the churches, the progressive and revolutionary religious have significantly contributed to the progressive trends in religious outlook and practice, leading others to revolutionary commitment and involvement. They were also very instrumental in arousing, organizing and mobilizing church people and Christians in general on democratic issues of the basic masses, especially the workers and the peasantry, and on various issues of democratic reforms within the churches.

With regards to the CNL's contribution to the revolutionary struggle, it is one of the founding member-organizations of the NDF. CNL has contributed significantly and in various ways to the advance of the people's revolution in the different stages it has undergone. Aside from being members of CNL, others have joined the NPA or have taken assignments within the guerrilla fronts. We have also a long list of members who are martyrs of the revolutionary struggle.

CNL's present stress in its revolutionary task is the creation of a broad political mass movement of Christians supportive of the total revolutionary war effort. We are also giving more attention to the development of revolutionary religious signs and symbols in the cultural field in opposition to the reactionary church people's effort to coopt religious signs and symbols for the counter-revolutionary interest of the ruling classes.

Our efforts then help erode the power of one of the supporting pillars of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal state — the reactionary church — and create the condition for the overthrow of reactionary state power, the seizure of political power by the revolutionary forces and the people and pave the way for the establishment of the DCG.

**Q: What changes will be instituted in the Church under the ND state? Will the Roman Catholic Church policy on celibacy be maintained?**

**A:** Lest we be misunderstood, let it be clear that the ND state will not institute any changes on the churches on religious grounds and for religious purposes. We always keep in mind the principle of the separation of the Church and State.

The face of the churches in the future society will depend much on how it is changed in the process of struggle. While we envision a national and democratic church, we could not as yet figure out how in actuality it will be.

I think the role of the progressives and revolutionaries within the churches and the development of the progressive grassroot Christian communities will have a significant impact on this.

The ND society, however, will offer and open new opportunities for the churches to be truly of service to the poor and the needy. The ND society will also challenge the churches to renew their lifestyle, give up many of their present privileges for the sake of the welfare of the poor and the needy. ■



Church as reflection of society. Ruling class advocate Sin (left); progressive religious (right)



# Battered but unbowed

Woman worker braves all odds to pursue her revolutionary commitment

She was baptized "Carmencita" — little Carmen. But she has since dropped the "Carmen" in favor of the simpler, more unassuming "Cita." It was a decision indicative of her character: humble, soft-spoken, and unaffected. She was also a frail-looking woman who stood no more than four feet and ten inches.

But the saying that looks can deceive has never been more true in Cita's case. For beneath her seemingly fragile appearance was a person so steeled by hardship and struggle as to imbue her with a spirit that was truly indomitable.

At 18, Cita was an apprentice worker at a textile factory in Marikina. She should have been granted permanent status and started receiving the minimum wage after working at the factory for six months. But when her time came, she was told that her performance was "unsatisfactory" and that she would have to work harder before she could become a permanent employee. For 18 months, she worked under sweatshop conditions and received a mere pittance for her labors. Two Christmases passed before she was to receive an adjustment in wages and become eligible for thirteenth month pay.

Long before she became a permanent employee, Cita began attending courses offered by the union. But it had to be kept a secret, lest the company find out about it. As an apprentice worker, Cita could not legally join the union.

What she learned in the courses on Genuine Trade Unionism perked her interest. "Parang nagliwanag bigla ang mga bagay-bagay," she recalled. As soon as she became a permanent employee, Cita formally signed up with the union and quickly became one of its most enthusiastic members.

Shortly after, the union struck over the company's non-compliance with the Collective Bargaining Agreement. The company countered by locking out the strikers and sending hired goons to harass them and attack their picketline. Meanwhile, a protracted legal battle ensued. The case dragged on for eight months before it was decided by the labor department in favor of the company. In retaliation for the strike, the company fired all union officers and about half of the union members. Cita was one of those who were laid off.

But being jobless at 21 was to be the least of Cita's problems. Back

home, she had a stepfather who ruled over the family with an iron hand and two brothers, both army sergeants, who violently disapproved of Cita's union activities. For her termination, Cita received a bitter tongue-lashing from them.

Undaunted, Cita made a momentous decision. Instead of looking for another job, she accepted an invitation to join the Rebolusyongyong Konseho ng Kilusang Unyon (RKKU), the national democratic underground mass organization for trade unionists. To her, the transition was inevitable.



"Sa kstusan nagmumula ang aking sigla"

"Saan pa nga ba patutungo kaming mga manggagawa kundi sa pagrerebolusyon? Malinaw na sa amin na kulang ang pag-uunyon lamang para maipaglaban namin nang husto ang aming interes." She plunged head-on into full-time organizing work for the RKKU. Later, she became a candidate member of the Communist Party.

As expected, Cita's underground activities often kept her away for days. Coming home was always an ordeal. "Karaniwan na yung nakakatikim ako ng magdamag na pagmumura at magasawang sampal at suntok," said Cita.

But there was more to come. After seeing that insults and blows on the face were no good at reining in their defiant sister, Cita's brothers locked her up in a room on the second floor of their house. Due to attend an important meeting of her collective, Cita left home in the only way she could — by jumping out the window. None the worse from the fall, save for a slight limp, she made it to the meeting.

The members of her collective, however, were apprehensive. Once too often, they had seen Cita come to meetings with bruises on her face and eyes swollen from having cried all night. They urged her to leave home for her own safety. Cita agreed.

That night, carrying a bag containing her few personal belongings, Cita quietly announced before her aston-

ished family that she was moving out to live in an underground house. Cita's calmness contrasted furiously with her brothers' and stepfather's anger. Just as she had stepped out of the door, her brothers blocked her path. "Hinila ang buhok ko at pinagtulungan akong sampalin." This time, Cita fought back, not with reason, as she had done before. She tried to parry the blows with her frail fists and threw a small wooden bench at her attackers.

Enraged, her stepfather grabbed a piece of wood and mercilessly pounded her body. "Dos por dos ang ipinanghataw sa akin," she recalled. "Sinigawan ako. Pinagmumura. Kung ayaw ko raw magsimba nang may bulak sa ilong, dapat daw tigilan ko na ang aking pagkilos," she continued, her voice barely audible. The beatings stopped only when neighbors rushed to her aid and carried her battered form to a hospital.

This latest beating left Cita with one tooth missing and a spinal injury that required her to have a body cast and be in traction for six months at the hospital's orthopedic ward. The first few weeks, the pain was so unbearable that Cita could hardly make it through the night without being sedated. But her friends, fellow unionists and collective mates took turns watching over her. Others solicited funds from sympathetic allies to help pay her hospital bills. It was the most trying period of her life, but she received all the moral support she needed.

Now almost fully recovered, Cita is raring to get back to the thick of things. "Miss na miss ko na ang pag-oorganisa. Parang doon talaga nagmumula ang sigla ko. Sa aking pagkilos." But wasn't she afraid that her stepfather and brothers might hunt her down and stop her? "Hindi na magpakita uli ang mga iyon," she said. "May narinig kasi silang tsismis na tatargetin daw sila ng mga partisano dahil sa ginawa nila," she laughed.

The beatings have taken their toll on Cita. She can no longer carry heavy loads, or walk long distances with her co-workers during rallies. She will occasionally suffer from back pains for the rest of her life. But despite her troubles, she remains as indomitable as ever. They have broken her body, but not her spirit.

"Kailanman, hindi naman ako nada-la sa bugbog at pananakot," she said, "dahil alam kong nasa tama ako. Kahit seguro sampung tiyuhin at kuyang tulad nila, haharapin ko, huwag lang akong matigil sa pagkilos." Though said so tenderly, one knew that the words carried weight because they were spoken by a brave young woman named Cita. ■

## SPARKS

*Newsbriefs about people's struggles*

### 12 TROOPERS KILLED, 6 CAPTURED IN QUEZON

Renewed offensives by the NPA in Quezon in late September netted 12 soldiers killed and six captured.

On September 25, 10 soldiers belonging to the Philippine Army's 51st Engineering Battalion were killed instantly when the truck they were riding hit a land mine planted by the guerrillas on a zigzag road in Sta. Catalina, Atimonan, Quezon. The attack also left eight other troopers wounded. The explosion created a six-foot-wide crater and hurled the soldiers' six-wheeler truck 20 meters from where the mine exploded. Shortly after, five soldiers were also captured at an NPA checkpoint near the scene of the ambush.

Three days later, on September 28, the Red fighters also killed two soldiers and two militiamen and captured an army corporal in a raid in San Andres, Quezon. The NPA offensives were the first to be staged in Quezon since the release in mid-August of five prisoners-of-war who were held captive for 75 days.

## NEW MORO YOUTH PAPER OFF THE PRESS

The Moro Revolutionary Youth League, (MRYL), the national democratic underground mass organization for Moro youth recently came up with the maiden issue of its newsletter *Jabidah*. Said the MRYL: "(Our) official organ (will operate) in the mould of what a revolutionary newspaper should be: a collective propagandist, collective agitator, and collective organizer." *Jabidah*, said the MRYL, will be "a venue for comprehensive analysis which (it hopes) will compel all Moro activists to take collective action, to evince the truth about the life of the oppressed and exploited Moro masses and other struggling peoples and to actively participate in the overhaul of the prevailing system." *Jabidah's* September 21 issue featured an article on low-intensity conflict in Moroland.



## CRACKS

*Indicators of political and economic crisis*

### NUCLEAR "DEBT BOMB"

Don't look now, but despite having been mothballed for the past two years, the 620-megawatt Philippine Nuclear Power Plant (PNPP) in Morong, Bataan is still a veritable time bomb, nearing the government's coffers to disaster as the minutes tick away. Documents submitted by the Philippine government to the International Monetary Fund review mission that recently visited the country show that as of end-1987, the Aquino government owed a total of \$2.667 billion as a result of having assumed responsibility for the nuclear plant's loan. The amount comprises almost a quarter of the national government's outstanding debt of \$11.303 billion



For this year, the government will be paying about \$209.439 million consisting of \$93.925 million in interest payments and \$115.514 million in principal amortizations. This means that by the end of 1988, servicing the PNPP's foreign debt will have cost the government an average of \$397 per minute.

By 1989, foreign debt servicing for the PNPP is expected to reach \$262.128 million. On top of the foreign debt, the government is also shouldering the PNPP's domestic debt, which, for this year runs up to P2.167 billion.

**"MORE... MORE BLOOD!"**

To continue its "all-out war against insurgency," army chief Maj. Gen Mariano Adalem told Congress in a hearing last September that the military should get *one-fourth* of the national budget. In the proposed 1989 budget submitted for review by Aquino and her Cabinet to Congress last July, defense accounted for P20.13 billion or 9.2% of a total package of P218.8 billion.

Adalem found ready allies in land reform foe Hortensia Starke and KBL man Roquito Ablan, who promised to seek ways of chipping off the budget allocations for social services, economic services, general public services and debt servicing to provide more funds for the military.

### THE COMMISSIONER IS A DEVOUT TAOIST

Taoists teach that the way to achieve things is to do nothing. This makes the controversial Human Rights Commission chairperson Mary Concepcion Bautista an expert in the Taoist way of protecting the people's human rights.

Amnesty International's annual global survey has listed the Philippines as among 24 countries in Asia where human rights violations such as political killings, torture and detention without trial remain widespread. The report said as of the past year, military and police forces, and vigilante and paramilitary units under their command have killed more than 100 left-wing political activists and members of left-wing labor unions and peasant organizations in the course of the government's anti-insurgency campaign.

**"... AND MORE POWER!"**

As if to complement the AFP's demand for an increase in its wherewithal for repression, a new Executive Order (EO) grants Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos more power and authority over the 160,000-strong AFP and the 54,000-member Integrated National Police (INP).

EO 392, signed by Aquino last year, is scheduled to take effect this November. Under this new directive, Ramos will have full supervision over the INP, which is currently under the Office of the President. AFP chief of staff Gen. Renato de Villa will also report to both Aquino and Ramos. Ramos' expanded powers in effect make him the vice commander-in-chief of the AFP. With his new authority, Ramos will also head the reactivated General Military Council which will now be composed entirely of military men. In the past, the President had the power to appoint civilian members to the council.

Insiders aver that Ramos had a big hand in drafting the new Executive Order — another calculated move, they say, in the crafty defense secretary's bid for the presidency.



## COUNTERCURRENTS

The Philippine government and the US

# "Everyone is making money here"

Graft and corruption under the Aquino regime rivals Marcos dictatorship's record

On February 25, 1986, shortly after an American plane evacuated the Marcos family, Margarita "Tingting" Cojuangco parked her car across the presidential palace. A mob had surged through the gates of Malacanang, but Tingting, sister-in-law of newly sworn President Corazon Aquino, eyed the house across the palace. The house once sheltered Margot Fonteyn, Cristina Ford and many other friends of the Marcoses, and inside, priceless antiques and jewelry, artworks and furniture glistened in the cracking dawn.

Tingting stepped out of her car and entered Imelda's guesthouse. She told a lady doctor who had taken care of the house that everything in the house would be inventoried, then brought to the Central Bank. The most important articles in the house, however, were never seen. This included Imelda's famous diamond rosary and her crown of precious stones. This was how the orgy of looting and corruption began with the new family in power.

Ricardo Lopa, another presidential brother-in-law, was not to be outdone. Just six days after Cory came to power, Lopa moved to acquire 36 companies sequestered by the new government from Marcos crony Benjamin "Kokoy" Romualdez. Lopa paid only P250,000 for the companies, which were valued at \$6.5 million.

Instead of calling for an investigation, Corazon Aquino defended the move, saying Lopa and her other relatives for that matter, were just re-acquiring the wealth seized from them by the dictator and his cronies. Worse, an angry Corazon Aquino told her radio listeners one Sunday that charges against her relatives were disguised attempts to "erode my credibility."

"I really felt that I have to speak in so far as these attacks on my relatives are concerned," she said, "because it is very clear to me, it is not really my relatives that they are hitting, but me. They want to erode my credibility."

If anything, Cory's lame excuse only encouraged her family. Her cousin, Rep. Emigdio Tanjauto, has since received hundreds of thousands of dollars in payoffs from two government-sequestered corporations.

Her uncle, Rep. Francisco Sumulong, the powerful former governor of Rizal, exerted his influence over port officials to obtain lucrative cargo-

handling contracts for his firm

And Tingting, encouraged by the President's defense of her relatives, sought to acquire, in behalf of an Australian firm, control of several casinos in the country. The deal could have earned for her huge commissions and bribes had it not been exposed by the press. Soon, when it was all out in the newspapers despite desperate calls by her and her husband to pub-

In a short while, the couple had become involved in and had gained effective control over a flourishing barter trade in Mindanao as well as various landgrabbing schemes in Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat (see p. 14).

In Manila, Peping owned and operated gambling joints such as cockpits and casinos. But these days, the man to whom senators and businessmen



lishers and editors to kill the story, Tingting came up with a ridiculous tale. A woman who looked like her, she said, a "double" who wanted to besmirch the family reputation, had actually made the deal with the Australians.

Meanwhile, Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, younger brother of Cory Aquino and husband of Tingting, saw no reason to stop his wife's mindless accumulation of wealth. Tingting's affair with Moro traditional politician Abdul Khayr Alonto was bad news for Peping. But he learned to turn the other way because Tingting was bringing in a lot of money from Mindanao.

wrote for favors, is busy with other things. The presidential brother who has made and unmade congressmen, governors and mayors, is busy building the political party Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP) which, by all appearances, reminds many people of the discredited Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (KBL) of Marcos.

### Graft: inherent in the system

Peping is a veteran of power politics. Even when Marcos was in power, he knew the value of political organization, of machinery, of money and guns. Most of all, he knew that in this country, power and corruption

always went together. Whoever gets elected into office gets a chance to loot government coffers — whether through winning lucrative contracts from government corporations, through extorting bribes, or through outright looting of government funds.

To preserve his hold on power, Peping knew that Cory must be re-elected in 1991. Or at least somebody who could keep Peping's men in key positions after every election — from the barangay level up to Congress — should win the presidency. In this country, power and corruption were synonymous.

But neither the Cojuangcos nor the Marcoses invented corruption. When the United States granted farcical independence to the Philippines in 1946, the Americans found it expedient to control elections by funding campaigns of those who could be relied on to protect US interests. It comes as no surprise then, that to this day, few politicians take a strong position against the US bases. Fewer still reject repatriation of profits by American investors, import-liberalization or other conditions of the IMF-World Bank tandem.

Elections being the dirty contests that they are, only the rich landlords and businessmen could run for office. Only the Marcoses, the Cojuangcos and their kind could buy votes, bribe their way to the bureaucracy and control the fate of the people. With nothing in common with the masses of the poor, they could not be expected to look after the Filipino people's welfare above their own selfish interests.

And so, political dynastic families like the Marcoses, the Cojuangcos, the Roxases, Quirinos, Quezons, Laurels or their representatives fought each other to gain control of the government. And other politicians merely shifted allegiance from one faction to another.

Today, the Cojuangco-Aquinos are attempting to build a strong political base through the LDP. There is an attempt to revive the traditional two-party system in politics, which simplifies the contest and divides the players on the basis not of ideology, but narrow selfish or factional interests.

Enrile's and estranged Vice President Salvador Laurel's UNA (Union for National Action), a grand coalition of opposition groups, is a promising rival to the LDP. But many members of Marcos' KBL have joined the LDP and another emerging political bloc against the administration party: Senate President Jovito Salonga's Liberal Party, which is supported by the Roxases, Aranetas and other powerful landlord-comprador clans.

#### Pres'l Commission on Graft in Gov't

People say Salonga has presidential timbre. He lost his job in the Senate when Marcos declared martial law. Salonga fought Marcos during the anti-dictatorship struggle. Then when Aquino became president, he was appointed head of the Presidential Commission on Good Government which was tasked to recover the ill-gotten wealth of Marcos and his cronies.

Salonga was a politician who knew how to play the game. He had his eye on the Senate while head of the PCGG, and he did what he could to bring money to the Liberal Party, to fund his campaign for the Senate elections.



In late 1986, Salonga sent former PCGG Commissioner Rodrigo to Hongkong and negotiate with Marcos' crony Roberto Benedicto. There, Rodrigo made a deal, as he was told. The PCGG, while it was under Salonga, would "go slow" on Benedicto, who in turn contributed to the Liberals' campaign fund. Millions of pesos intended for the government were believed laundered in Hongkong and rechanneled to Salonga's party. When Salonga became Senate President, he again kept his word to Benedicto. The LP's presidential hopeful asked Teofisto Guingona, head of the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee which is investigating the PCGG, to "go slow" on the case involving Benedicto.

From here, the PCGG's fate took colorful twists for the worse. Last July, Francisco Chavez, the young Solicitor-General who took instructions from Peping Cojuangco and his ally, PCGG Commissioner Jose Laureta, attacked the PCGG's incompetence, graft, corruption and inefficiency. Fiscal agents of the PCGG have been known to have put them-

selves in key positions in sequestered corporations to enrich themselves.

But the real target of Chavez' attacks was PCGG chairman Ramon Diaz, a Liberal. What followed was scandalous mudslinging that led to Diaz' resignation, the reinstatement of Chavez after his one-month suspension by the palace, and the arrest of PCGG Commissioner Quintin Doromal.

Juan Ponce Enrile took advantage of the aggressive press coverage of the whole episode and hurled his own often unsubstantiated charges. Enrile, who himself accumulated millions in logging concessions and real estate during his two-decade career as Marcos' defense minister, was accusing the new family of graft! Suddenly, everybody was washing dirty linen in public and the Filipino people were watching a disgusting show of mudslinging, all done as part of the traditional political parties' mad rush for supremacy in the 1992 polls — for to the victor would go the spoils of public office.

#### Corruption from top to bottom

Enrile, the Marcoses, Romualdez, and the Cojuangcos are the Big-Time looters. At all levels of the government and in all branches — military, judiciary, legislative — their acts are duplicated by thousands of public officials and government employees.

It was no longer surprising to many therefore when it was reported that Presidential adviser Emmanuel Soriano, once the righteous street parliamentarian against Marcos, had deposited \$2 million in bribes in his private bank account. Or that Human Rights Commissioner Mary Concepcion-Bautista had sought P30 million from Jose Balde (head of a PCGG task force handling the sequestration of 37 firms) for her own personal use.

Manila police chief Gen. Alfredo Lim is a big-time smuggling boss, in the same way that generals and military officers lead and control carnapping syndicates, gambling networks, prostitution rings, gunrunning activities and drug trafficking. Lim is big-time, and a true leader of his troops of policemen who live on bribes from sources that range from the Yakuza of the underworld to the hard-earning jeepney drivers on the streets. Even a number of Supreme Court justices, who appropriated for themselves Mercedes Benzes of the former regime, have interfered in graft cases filed against their close friends.

Former PCGG Commissioner Mary Concepcion-Bautista has been the most candid about it all. Bluntly, she has declared before the Senate Committee investigating graft charges against her: "Everyone is making money here." **Pen Guerrero**

# A scheme to divide Morolandia

US-Aquino regime's blueprint for an "autonomous Muslim Mindanao" a sham

Last April, the Aquino regime created a Regional Consultative Commission (RCC) to "help" Congress draft an organic act to implement the constitutional provision on the formation of a "Muslim Mindanao." For this, the RCC was granted a budget of P20 million.

Today, six months after its formation and a few weeks before Congress

is scheduled to formally announce the creation of an "autonomous Muslim Mindanao" in November, the RCC has not even finished drafting crucial portions of the organic act such as that on the economy and patrimony. Instead, RCC members spent months debating on the "propriety" or "accuracy" of the term "Muslim Mindanao." With the drafting of practically the entire organic act now in the hands of Congress, what is expected to come out in November will be a slightly modified version of the US-Marcos regime's provisions on "cultural autonomy" which it imposed on the Moro people after the Marcos dictatorship subverted the terms of the Tripoli Agreement of 1976. Aquino's creation of the RCC was nothing more than a circus, a show staged to cloud the real issues confronting the Moro people and derail the fulfillment of their genuine aspirations.

The creation of the RCC was a unilateral move on the part of the Aquino regime. Although there were a number of sincere elements appointed to the RCC, their efforts to consult the people of Mindanao and clarify the issue of autonomy eventually came to naught. The RCC created by the Aquino regime was dominated by traditional politicians and other ruling class elements who could never be expected to take into account the basic interests of the Moro masses. The result: the RCC became a venue for the personal and financial aggrandizement of politicians and the ruling elite of Mindanao.

Nonetheless, the creation of the RCC fits perfectly into the US-Aquino regime's policy of waging "total war" against the Moro people. As the conservative and reactionary elements within the RCC went through the motions of "discussing" the issue of autonomy, the government was able, for a time, to appease the Moro people. At the same time, the RCC

Brigade was beefed up with more men, along with the creation of the Cotabato Integrated Defense Command. Eight battalions of the Philippine Army have been deployed to Jolo since September 29 to reinforce the Marines and the Philippine Constabulary's Task Force Cobra already stationed on the island. No encounters with the Moro National Liberation



was expressly created to provide a "coordinated civilian response towards threats to peace."

Obviously, what the US-Aquino regime considers as "threats to peace" are threats to the government's continued dominion over the Moro people. In short, it is the Moro people's struggle for self-determination and democracy that constitutes a threat to the US-Aquino regime's "peace."

To enforce this "peace," the Aquino government has ordered the deployment of more AFP troops in the Moro areas of Mindanao. In Cotabato, the Philippine Army's 6th

Front (MNLF) have taken place, but the troopers have already started abusing and harassing civilian residents.

Part of the US-Aquino regime's "total war" against the Moro people is the use of classic "divide-and-rule" tactics. The Aquino government thus lost no time in infiltrating the leadership and the rank-and-file of the MNLF and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in an effort to subvert these two organizations from within and alienate them from the Moro masses. These infiltrators thereupon engaged in various anti-social activities to foment the disillusionment of the Moro masses over the two organiza-

tions The Aquino regime has taken advantage of this situation, in its attempt to tilt the balance of public opinion in favor of the government's version of "autonomy."

The US-Aquino regime's divide-and-rule tactics include attempts to buy out the top leaders of both the MNLF and MILF by means of political and economic enticements. Through Aquino's sister-in-law Margarita "Ting-ting" Cojuangco, the government is trying to establish direct links with some members of the Central Committee of the MILF. She has even tried to recruit MILF forces to serve as security guards in her vast sugar plantations in Buldon and other areas of Maguindanao as well as Sultan Kudarat. In the meantime, an AFP composite battalion was deployed in Buldon recently to secure the area for a new logging concession owned by Jose Consunji, who is known to be a dummy for Mrs. Cojuangco. Such a thing could not have been possible without the blessings of top Moro traditional politicians, specifically Maguindanao

Gov. Zacarias Canlao, who boasts of close links with some of the MILF top brass.

Meanwhile, the government is also trying to work on the MNLF through another presidential relative, Sen. Agapito "Butz" Aquino, as well as presidential adviser Norberto Gonzales and AFP vice chief-of-staff Gen. Eduardo Ermita.

In trying to appease the MNLF and MILF, the government is offering them their own "turfs" within the proposed "autonomous" Muslim Mindanao. Thus, Region IX is being "reserved" for the MNLF while Region XII will be "given" to the MILF for governance.

Aside from offering the MNLF and the MILF their own "fiefdoms," the government plans to create a Region XIV to be composed of Misamis Occidental, Lanao del Norte, Zamboanga del Norte and Zamboanga del Sur. The new region will be handed over to the Christian traditional politicians, specifically Rep. Mariano Li Badelles, Sr. of Iligan City and Rep. Antonio H. Cerilles of the 2nd District

of Zamboanga del Sur, who proposed the idea in the first place.

Reserving an extensive area for the Christian traditional politicians is a scheme designed not only to promote Muslim-Christian disunity but to ensure the US-Aquino regime's direct supervision and control over Mindanao's rich resources. As much as 60% of the funds earmarked for the implementation of the government's five-year national economic program are slated to come from the proposed region's coal mines, rich fishing grounds and other resources. Also located in the area is the Mindanao station of the National Power Corporation.

The creation of the RCC and the US-Aquino regime's much-vaunted "commitment" to autonomy for the Moro people are thus all in consonance with the "total war" strategy of utilizing political, economic and psychological warfare to divide the Moro region and people and thwart the Moro revolutionary struggle.

Jihadya Merdeka

## CULTURAL PAGE

Art and literature in the movement

# "Dynamic guideposts in history - unfolding"

Review of *The Filipino People Will Triumph!*, 1988 62 pages

"The reactionary state is in the process of rapid disintegration as the US-Aquino regime continues to lead the country to greater misery and destruction. In the long run, the Filipino people, resolute and determined in struggle, will triumph."

Thus did Servando Labrador, a member of the Political Department of the NPA General Command, describe the objective and subjective factors vis-a-vis the Philippine revolutionary movement in the current period. Julian Banaag and Armando Liwanag of the Political Bureau and Central Committee of the CPP, respectively, say as much in interviews given in late 1987 and early 1988. The interviews are contained in a small volume aptly entitled *The Filipino People Will Triumph (Conversations With Filipino Revolutionary Leaders)*. Released early this year, the collection is one of the latest to emanate from the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) Central Publishing House.

Labrador situated the current level and prospects of people's war and discussed the conduct and rules observed by the people's guerrillas in the course of the armed struggle. Banaag tackled "questions concerning analysis of the situation and party tactics" as well as "questions concerning organ-



Fireside chats with revolutionary leaders

ization." Liwanag for his part expounded on the nature and conduct of the CPP's international relations.

In the main, Labrador stressed in the interview which came out October 1987 in *Ang Bayan*, that although the AFP still enjoys "overwhelming military superiority" over the NPA, revolutionary forces remain intact and have in fact expanded. He cited "some tens

of company formations spread out in all the major guerrilla fronts in over 60 provinces... supported by an even bigger number of independent platoons and squads plus armed propaganda units..." The strategy remains that of protracted people's war. "Revolutionary armed struggle in the countryside is still the main form of struggle we wage at the present time." Labrador recognized however that "people's war entails the combination of all forms of armed and unarmed struggle to weaken and eventually smash the entire reactionary state apparatus."

In an interview published in the December 1987 issue of *Ang Bayan*, Banaag answered criticisms that the Party is isolated because of alleged "persistent dogmatism" and "myopia" over the current situation. He emphasized that "debate within the Party regarding the primacy of the principal form of revolutionary struggle at present (armed struggle)" does not exist. But, he explains, "Upholding the primacy of armed struggle does not mean minimizing the importance of unarmed forms..." He admits, though, that there are differences within the Party about tactics; among the "broad progressive movement which includes not only forces supportive of the

armed struggle but also the open and legal national democratic forces as well as those essentially reformist or parliamentarist groups or elements who espouse nationalist and democratic causes. . . . debate about the principal form of struggle is to be expected."

But as Banaag later acknowledged in a second interview, "(the) intense internal debates . . . have been conducted according to the demands of Party unity." Overall, "firm and militant unity" is consistently maintained, he said, and he continued with an explanation of how the Party works. This part is especially informative as it provides the reader a more than skeletal portrait of the "Party organization." Banaag's description is as far from the cold-blooded anonymity and ruthlessness that state propagandists

attribute to the Party, (as seen in military-sponsored TV propaganda serials) as it is from the cified peregrinations of romanticists and the "true-to-life" action films that movie directors indulge in.

The last interview, that of Liwanag, gave an update on the international relations of the CPP. It outlined the Philippine revolutionary movement in the context of the international revolutionary struggle. "The victory of the Filipino people in the national democratic revolution will mean a major defeat of US imperialism in the Asia-Pacific region and the whole world." The task therefore of the Party is to continue waging its struggle while actively seeking solidarity and assistance from progressive forces all over the globe. Liwanag responded further

to questions regarding the international situation, the world proletarian revolution and anti-imperialist struggle and relations among various communist and workers' parties the world over.

*The Filipino People Will Triumph!* (published in Pilipino and English) is thus seen as "a contribution to the overall effort at further strengthening the unity of the revolutionary ranks around the analysis of the present situation and the tactics and tasks necessary for the revolution's leap to the next higher stage." It is a historic document in the company of *Philippine Society and Revolution, Specific Characteristics of People's War in the Philippines*, and *Our Urgent Tasks*, all of which are dynamic guideposts in history-unfolding.

Manolo Tierra

## On the prospects of the armed revolution



NPA squad: Excellent conditions for advancing guerrilla warfare"

**Q: In the immediate future, how do you foresee the development of people's war?**

**Servando Labrador:** With the objective conditions prevailing, the people's revolutionary war is bound to intensify.

Right now, people's democratic power is mushrooming in our guerrilla bases and zones with the basic mass organizations providing the solid foundation. In certain areas, organs of the revolutionary government have been established at the municipal level. Even in a number of urban centers, we now have the capacity to set up quasi-organs of political power. Current efforts are directed at establishing these at the provincial, regional and eventually at the national levels.

In the guerrilla bases and fronts, we will continue to implement revolutionary agrarian reform while undertaking various socio-economic projects to improve production and social services, and therefore the living standard and conditions of the masses. At the same time, we vigorously carry out national-democratic education and propaganda to further raise the political consciousness of the people. In so doing, we continue to lay the foundations of the new democratic order that responds to the people's interests and welfare. In the process, we also develop our own self-reliant war economy, maintain and even heighten the capacity of the masses to sustain and support, and raise the level of their mobilization for the revolutionary war effort.

The intensity of the economic crisis, coupled with the regime's brutal attacks on the struggling masses, is bound to engender widespread peasant uprisings and more wor-

kers' strikes. And the open democratic movement, tempered in the previous anti-dictatorship struggle, is sure to forge ahead in the face of the regime's increasing fascist onslaughts. The united front of progressive, democratic and nationalist forces continues to broaden and expand and draw political, material and financial support from friends and sympathizers in the country and abroad.

These provide relatively stable bases and excellent conditions for further spreading and intensifying guerrilla warfare and developing regular mobile warfare in the countryside and the cities. The coming periods will see the rapid formation and expansion of regular guerrilla companies, local guerrilla forces, people's militias, armed partisan units and people's self-defense corps. In the face of the enemy's heavy and sophisticated weaponry, the people's army will have to improve and raise the level of its arms and equipment while further developing its own infrastructure and support network. There is, for instance, the urgent need to secure heavier arms like mortars, anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons. So far, our use of land mines and sabotage actions have made up for the absence of such, albeit insufficiently of course.

The enhancement of our capabilities for both defensive and offensive actions will enable us to deal harder blows on the reactionary war machinery. The revolutionary armed struggle, in combination with the various forms of popular struggles, will shake the very foundations of the ruling state to a point where the reactionaries will find it hard to recover.



**PARA SA KALAYAAN NG BAYAN  
AT NG MASANG KABABAIHAN**

They are women revolutionaries,  
sisters in struggle bound by a common  
cause: to work for the liberation of  
the Filipino people and the masses  
of Filipino women.

In the countryside, in the factories,  
in schools, offices, homes  
and communities,

they are striving to build a society  
free of oppression and exploitation.  
Where all Filipinos, women and men,  
shall become equal partners  
in all endeavors.

They are the women of the



**Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan  
(MAKIBAKA)**

