

LIBERATION

VOL. XVII NO. 2 PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE PHILIPPINES MARCH-APRIL 1969



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**Moving on
to the
final stretch**

Unite against US intervention

(Statement of the National Democratic Front on the occasion of its 16th anniversary, April 24, 1989)

In the past sixteen years, under the banner of the National Democratic Front, the various revolutionary organizations of the people of the Philippines have wrested hard-won victories in the struggle against foreign and feudal domination.

Today, organs of political power are being established across the Philippine archipelago through the efforts of these revolutionary organizations. We are building the solid foundation of the sovereign people's democratic government, which can be reasonably expected to emerge within the next decade, to crown the total victory of the national democratic revolution.

One of the decisive requisites for a rapid advance to total victory is the continued expansion of the national revolutionary united front.

All NDF territorial units and sectoral organizations must strengthen themselves and enhance their capacities for intensified allround revolutionary work, specially in building the organs political power from the municipal to the national level until the Provisional Revolutionary Government is proclaimed.

At the same time, greater attention must be given to the improvement of the people's socio-economic welfare, so their living standards may improve and they are materially enabled to increase their participation in the revolutionary struggle.

While confident that our present complement of revolutionary people's organizations and the New People's Army, given the impetus of their sustained, cumulative growth, can carry the revolution to total victory, we are ever ready and willing to broaden the national united front by welcoming other political parties, organizations, groups and individuals in opposing US imperialism and the ruling system it maintains in the Philippines. These parties, organizations, groups and individuals can enter into formal or informal organizational arrangements with the NDF or choose various modes of mutual cooperation and coordination.

The direction of all these united front efforts is the formation on the eve of total victory or upon its attainment, of a people's national consultative council that will draw up the basic elements and mechanics of establishing



the people's democratic coalition government.

Although it is committed to establish a *revolutionary* coalition government which can come into being shortly before or after the total victory of the national democratic forces, the NDF is open to the possibility of a *progressive* coalition government — short of destroying the reactionary state — if the interests of the Filipino people so demand. A sharp but positive turn in the national situation could pave the way for such a progressive coalition. For instance, major traditional parties and independent groups could form an alliance with the national democratic forces for the immediate dismantling of the US military bases and total opposition to US intervention in the nation's affairs.

The NDF has always stood firm on the principle of seeking peace and national unity and reconciliation. But this peace must be based on justice; it must be guaranteed by the fulfillment of the

masses' basic demands and upheld by the people's sovereign will.

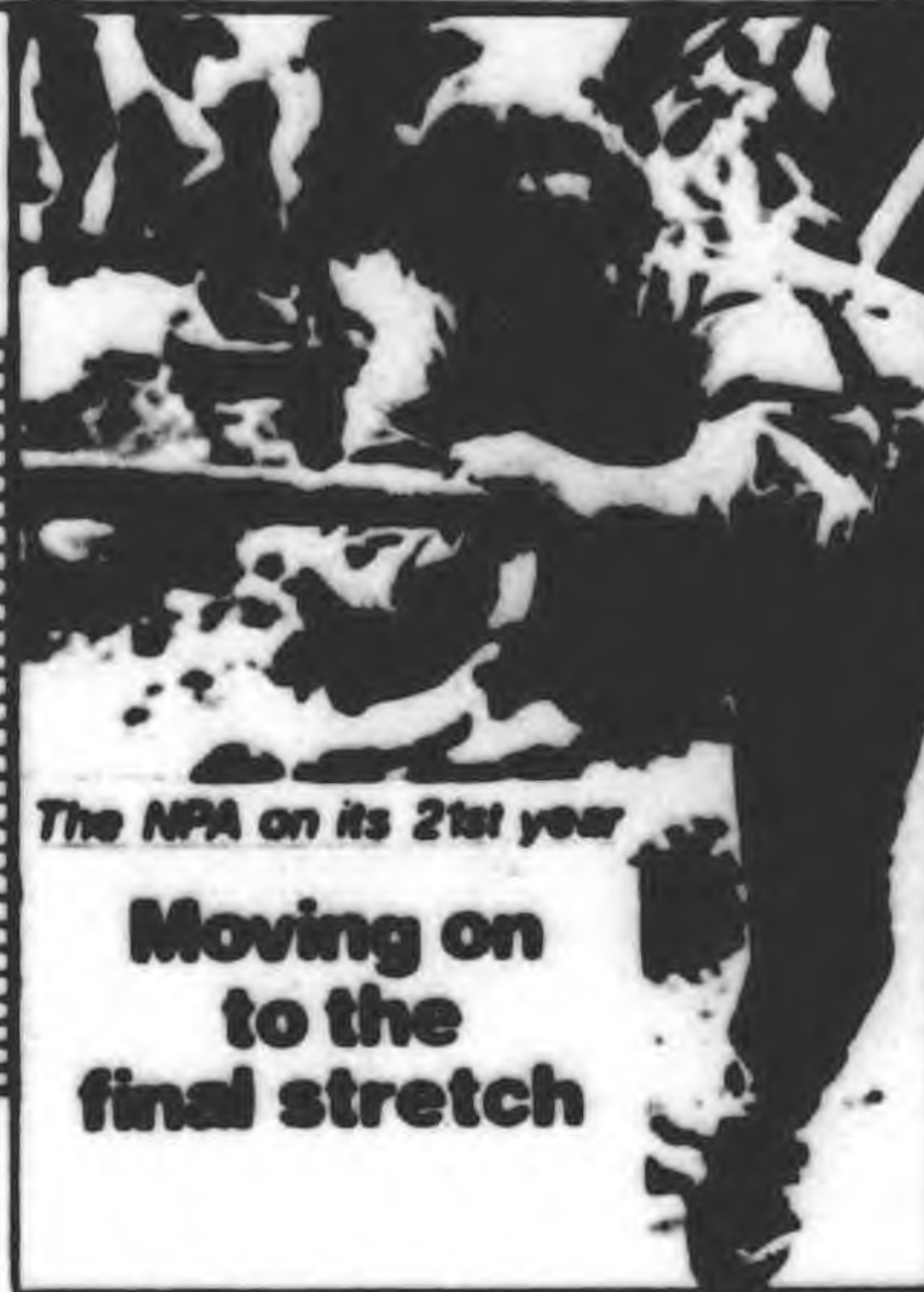
The Aquino government has shown no seriousness whatsoever to work for a peaceful and principled settlement of the civil war. It continues to reject the people's demands for, among other things, an end to US and other foreign economic domination and US politico-military intervention, for genuine land reform, and for genuine popular participation in government.

Mrs. Aquino has consistently spurned the NDF's initiatives for peace, invoking spurious and inane excuses. She relies on the use of armed force to resolve her government's fundamental conflict with the people. Mrs. Aquino and her advisers in fact prefer to continue the civil war and serve American interests, rather than entertain the people's clamor for peace and justice.

It is the Aquino regime — instigated and supported by US imperialism — that is pressing for war.

The revolutionary forces are not daunted by the regime's threat to intensify the war, nor by the US' moves to escalate military intervention and thus transform the civil war into a fullblown national liberation war. They have for so long resisted and at several turns frustrated this unjust war; they are ready to fight until total victory is won.

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As the NPA marks 20 years of unrelenting armed struggle against the people's enemies, it is ever mindful of its duty to ensure the safety and well-being of civilians. In this issue, *LIB* cites how international humanitarian laws of war correspond to the NPA's own rules of discipline. Also featured are the NPA's most recent salvos against US intervention and local reaction.

Photo by GATILYO

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LIPNOTER/En Rama



Loved by the masses: NPA's discipline and concern for civilians' welfare make it a true people's army

We declare the readiness of the New People's Army (NPA) to adhere to international laws and agreements that will protect the conditions and welfare of the people in the midst of civil war." Thus stated the NPA in an interview broadcast over the NDF's Radio Sierra Madre January 30 last year.

In that interview, the NPA said

that the people's welfare and interests are primary considerations in planning and launching military actions. "We do not implement plans which could harm the welfare and interests of the people," said the NPA. "Thus, our units have long been respecting and implementing the essential points of international covenants and laws such as Protocol U of the Geneva Conventions.

Earlier, the National Democratic Front (NDF) also formally declared in a statement issued December 10, 1987 that it abides by these same provisions.

With these statements, the NDF and the NPA have the distinction of being the only liberation forces in the world that have formally declared their adherence to international humanitarian laws of war.

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Law of Geneva

The Geneva Conventions are international agreements on the rules of war to which many governments have formally bound themselves. Arising from agreements adopted during conferences held in Geneva, Switzerland in 1864, 1906, 1929 and 1949, the four Geneva Conventions provide for the protection of wounded and sick soldiers in the field; the sick and shipwrecked at sea, including survivors of downed aircraft on land or at sea; prisoners of war; and civilians. The Conventions, which covered conditions of war between states and between a state and a belligerent force, were signed by 61 countries on August 12, 1949 in Geneva.

In succeeding years, however, wars of decolonization became widespread in the Third World. Because such conflicts were not covered by the Protocols, they were largely unregulated. This prompted the International Committee of the Red Cross, a humanitarian organization engaged in relief work, to call a series of conferences to draft laws that would ensure respect for human rights in such a setting. The result was Protocols I and II, which were formally appended to the Geneva Conventions in 1977. The four Geneva Conventions together with Protocols I and II are collectively known as the Law of Geneva.

Protocol I pertains to armed conflicts of an international character. Specifically, it covers situations where a nation has risen in arms against alien occupation or colonial domination. On the other hand, Protocol II pertains to armed conflicts of a non-international nature. At present, the armed conflict between the Philippine government and the NDF falls under this category.

Protocol II is moreover applicable when

► the armed conflict takes place within the territory of a Party (signatory) to the Protocol;

► the conflict is between the armed forces of a Party and a dissident armed force or other organized armed group;

► the dissident armed force or group is under a responsible command; and

► the dissidents exercise sufficient control over a part of the territory to enable them to carry out sustained and concerted military operations and to implement the Protocol.

The Protocol does not consider as armed conflicts, situations of internal disturbances and tensions, such as riots, isolated and sporadic acts of

violence and other acts of similar nature.

Protocol II shall equally apply to all persons affected by the armed conflict without any distinction as to race, color, sex, language, religion or political belief, national or social origin, wealth, birth or other status, or any other similar criteria.

In the Philippines, Protocol II came into effect in July 1987, six months after the Aquino government ratified it in December 1986. "All the material conditions for the application of the Protocol exist," said Vincent, a member of an NDF cell for lawyers and para-legal activists. "When the Aquino government conducted negotiations with the NDF leadership in 1986-87, there was recognition by Cory and the AFP itself that they were dealing with a national organization with a central and responsible leadership directing both military and political operations on a national scale."

Fundamental guarantees

Protocol II prohibits the doing of violence on the life, health, physical and mental well-being of civilians as well as combatants who have ceased to take part in the hostilities (e.g., those who have surrendered, been captured or incapacitated in some way). In particular, murder, torture, mutilation and other forms of corporal punishment are prohibited. Those who have ceased to take part in the hostilities are called *hors de combat*.



To the rescue: NPA fighter cradles his head by enemy shrapnel

Civilians are defined as persons who do not take a *direct part* in the hostilities. According to an International Symposium on Guerrilla and Humanitarian Law held in Antwerp, West Germany in February 1984, persons shall be deemed to have taken a direct part in the hostilities only if they have committed acts "aimed at injuring the enemy by killing or wounding its soldiers or destroying its objects." Other acts, like giving shelter to guerrillas, hiding arms, transmitting messages and participating in political activities in support of the opposing party should be regarded only as *indirect or passive* participation in hostilities. Said Vincent: "Civilians, therefore, who participate in these activities should not be subject to attack, or at least should not be deprived of the fundamental guarantees provided by Protocol II."

Based on the above definition, the NDF and the NPA consider the following as *non-civilians* and therefore, valid targets of military operations:

- members of the AFP;
- members of the police involved in counter-insurgency activities;
- members of paramilitary units or private armed groups involved directly or indirectly in counter-insurgency operations; and
- members of the US armed forces within Philippine territory.

Protocol II also explicitly prohibits the use as methods of combat, such standard AFP counter-insurgency operations like food blockades, mass evacuations and hamletting. The Protocol moreover proscribes the sabotage of dams and nuclear plants, which could unleash widespread destruction; and the destruction of objects and monuments which are part of the cultural heritage of a country. In addition, hostage-taking, collective punishments, acts of terrorism, rape, enforced prostitution, slavery, pillage and threats to commit such acts are also prohibited.

Should civilians be captured, or their liberty restricted in any way for reasons related to the armed conflict, they shall be entitled to the following rights:

- proper medical treatment, if wounded or sick;
- individual or collective relief;
- practice of their religion and if requested and appropriate, to receive spiritual assistance from persons such as chaplains performing religious functions;

► sending and receiving letters and cards, the number of which may be

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limited by competent authority if deemed necessary; and

► if it is decided to release persons deprived of their liberty, necessary measures to ensure their safety shall be taken by those deciding.

Special protection

Children and women are given special protection under Protocol II. Under its provisions, children below 15 should neither be recruited into the armed forces of groups nor allowed to take part in hostilities. They are also entitled to receive proper education; should be reunited with their families as soon as possible; and whenever possible (with the consent of their parents), they should be evacuated temporarily from an area where hostilities are taking place.

Children below 15 years of age shall be entitled to such special protection even if they take part in hostilities or are captured.

The death penalty, on the other hand, should not be meted on persons under 18, or on pregnant women and mothers of young children. Women prisoners should be segregated from the men and should be under the immediate supervision of women. Women and men of a family, however, may be accommodated together.

Also under the category of "specially protected persons" are medical personnel. Under Protocol II, medical personnel are defined as any and all persons engaged in medical activities, whether licensed to practice or not. Protocol II provides that medical personnel must be respected and granted all available help for the fulfillment of their task, and shall not be compelled to carry out any act incompatible with their humanitarian mission.

"Thus, laws such as Executive Order (EO) 212, which penalize medical personnel who treat dissidents," said Vincent, "tend to compel the former from exercising their right and duty to treat the sick and the wounded regardless of political affiliation. EO 212," he said, "is violative of the spirit of Protocol II."

Aside from medical personnel, Protocol II extends protection to medical facilities such as field medical hospitals and buildings or areas offering medical treatment, as well as all machines and implements found therein. Medical transport includes all land, water or air transport vehicles used for collecting and transporting the sick and wounded. Medical units and transport should be identified through emblems visible even at nighttime, to give warning to combatants of the

neutrality and protected character of the persons, vehicles and units.

However, medical units and transports may be subject to legitimate attack if these are used for hostile purposes (i.e., killing or disabling of the enemy's troops and logistical resources) but only after warning is issued by the attackers and after the lapse of time allotted to give them opportunity to cease such hostile activity (that is, if circumstances permit the giving of such time frame).

Iron discipline

Even before Protocol II was adopted in 1977, the NDF and the NPA have been complying substantially with international humanitarian laws. "What we are waging is a pro-people struggle, a people's war," said Vincent. "This means that we have been protecting the people from all forms of oppression even as we rally them to wage a revolutionary war to overthrow the present ruling system which is oppressive and exploitative."

Through its "Three Rules of Discipline" and "Eight Points of Attention," the NPA exercises conscious, iron discipline. Among others, the "Three Rules of Discipline" prohibit the NPA from taking "even a single needle or a piece of string" from the masses. The "Eight Points of Attention" require the NPA to pay for everything they buy, to return everything they borrow and to pay for everything they damage. Adhering to these points of attention, in effect, corresponds to observing Protocol II's prohibition of pillage. The prohibition of causing damage to crops automatically precludes from the NPA's tactics the practice of food blockades and "scorched earth" methods, where crops are destroyed to cut off the enemy's and the masses' food supply.

Still another provision which states, "Do not take liberties with women" is in accordance with protocol II's prohibition of rape. The admonition to be "polite in speech and manner" and to never "hurt or insult others" applies in all cases, but especially with the NPA's dealings with the masses.

Above all, the NPA consciously adheres to the tenet "not to maltreat captives."

As the NDF has declared, "(We have) not - and will not - conduct forced evacuation of families and entire communities, enforce food blockades nor allow our armed forces to steal from the people, rape women and commit torture and salvaging,

With respect to captured combatants, the NDF has treated them humanely, tended to the wounded, and released them unharmed, as proven by instances in Quezon, Ilocos Norte, Bicol and Samar and other areas." (see sidebar)

On the other hand, the NDF is also now codifying in its areas, a revolutionary judicial system so as to standardize the delivery of justice in NDF



NPA: Exercising conscious, iron discipline

territories nationwide and establish a definite judicial procedure that shall ensure the observance of due process.

The NDF and the NPA, however, welcome Protocol II and the Geneva Conventions as additional safeguards to ensure the welfare and protection of the Filipino people from the deprivations of the US-Aquino regime. For it is the Aquino government that has been consistently violating the terms of the Protocol. "On our part," said Vincent, "we also welcome Protocol II as a means of refining our long-established rules of discipline for the NPA. In fact, we have come up with a Filipino translation of the most pertinent provisions of the Protocol and disseminated copies to guerrilla units nationwide. In contrast," he said, "the Aquino government ratified the Protocol without much fanfare and without disseminating copies of it to the AFP and other government units.

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This glaring omission manifests the regime's lack of seriousness in abiding with an international covenant which it has ratified."

"In the end," said Vincent, "it is our active compliance with Protocol II and with our established rules of discipline that shall show the humane character of the revolutionary war the NDF is conducting and the atrocity of the counter-revolutionary war the US-Aquino regime is leading."

Nicole Felipe



POWs flushed by Southern Tagalog's Ka Roger (right) and NPA guard

"Ayos angtrato sa akin"

Following are excerpts from a *LIB* interview with C2C Emilio Torres, a consubscript soldier who was captured during an NPA ambush last January 29, 1989 in San Rafael, Romo, Mindoro Oriental. Torres' case provides concrete example of how the NPA adheres to standards of international humanitarian law in its treatment of captured combatants.

Q: Maaari mo bang kahayag kung paano ka nabigla?

A: Ako si C2C Emilio Torres, PC, Serial No. 798765, naka-assign sa 271st PC Company, Romo, Mindoro Oriental. Noong Enero 29, 1989 nangyari 'yang ambush sa San Rafael, Romo, Mindoro Oriental. Morong lang barangay captain sa luma ng mga NPA; ang kanyang arwa, nagpunta sa luma ng PC para mabigla kung pagkakatula doon sa kanyang misa sa barangay captain. Doon nagpunta sa police station ang misa nito at doon nagpunta. Noong panahon sa iyon, ang OIC ng police station ay lung tagapunta ng PC; kaya, nagpa ng 15 lalake (nalong yuta at 12 PC) sa pangat. Sabay sa luma sa sikatay (sa-ambing wala) pagkatapos San Rafael. Noong makitangay luma ng San Rafael pangat sa ng San Rafael, nangyari sa iyang ambush. Pagkatapos na. Pagkatapos noon, ang mga luma ko, 'yang ko patay sa kama, tapos, ang isa, ang tagapunta...

Q: Nangyari sa iyo?

A: Hindi. Nalipagabaw din ako - nakubet pa ng ako ng apat sa magisa.

Q: Nalipagabaw ka?

A: Hindi. Wala si nangyari sa luma ko hindi naman sila nakita. Pansay ang bago ng luma ng pangat. Malalake sa luma ng luma ang din sila apat at sila naman sila.

Pagkatapos, iyang opisyal naman, si Lt. Castillo, at sila lang luma at sila ako - nagkalamang luma - pero iyang dalawa wala sa. Tapos, mabigla si Lt. Castillo, hindi sa luma; naman sa luma ng luma. Tapos, iyang dalawa, hindi sa pangat luma ng mga NPA luma may tama. Ako lang ang wala sa. Kaya ako lang ang luma lang din. Pagkatapos, iyang luma ng mga luma ko, 'yang may mga magat, pinapanat sa ng pangat ng mga NPA. (One of the wounded refused to take any medication fearing it was laced with poison; he later died at the hospital due to massive loss of blood.) Tapos, din sila sa ng sila ako - sila ko, tapos sa ako mag buhay; e. Pero ayos naman pala ang pagtrato sila sa akin.

Q: Kung ano, kung buwan ka nang bilag?

A: Dalawang buwan at dalawang arwa ngayon (Marso 31). Ang magat na, ano? Pero, wala naman silang makorokiamo sa luma...

Q: Nalipagabaw ka sa iyo ng pangat?

A: Hindi pa, pero nakatamp naman sila ng ano...

Q: Nagkalamang luma sa iyo?

A: Hindi pa. Pero ayos naman sila dito. Pag luma'y umalila, nakapang ako. Mga luma buwan at luma, lagi akong nakapang noon. Pero ngayon, luma sa sila. Sa gibi sa luma ako nakalaga ng pangat, pag tagapunta na. Ayos naman ang trato sila sa akin dito.

Q: Wala lang katanggap-de-valor?

A: Wala naman. Bata may gwarya lang ako. Lagi may ka-buddy akong gwarya. Masya din ako ang mga luma. Lagi sila akong kinakamp para malibang-libang. Hindi naman ako masyadong nagpang - lagi naman buong... luma mo ang luma sila, luma din ang kinakamp ko.

Q: Umawala ka lang mawala pa?

A: Oo, naman pa ako.

Q: Nalipagabaw ka ng luma sa iyo?

A: Wala. Ang gawa lang yata sila, tinatong lang iyang mga tao sa Romo. Ayos naman, wala naman iyang rekord sa naman. Kasi tinatong sila luma may rekord sa naman - luma obando lang magisa...

Q: Ngayon, hindi ka sa nangyari ng pangat sa iyo?

A: Hindi sa. Sila pa, sa-valor sa ako noon lang hindi lang pangat iyang luma 9 (luma ng luma sa luma ng luma lang mga naman ng luma ang luma naman lang lang pangat sa luma ang pangat sa luma.) Pero ngayon, ayos sa naman.

Q: May pangat ka sa iyo?

A: Wala. Sila pa ako. Tapos-Cebu, Laguna.

Q: Sila sa iyo pangat?

A: Oo. Tapos sa sila.

Q: Nalipagabaw ka sa luma sa luma?

A: Oo, dalawang buwan sa luma nakatamp, pati sa mga magisa ko't luma.

Q: Nalipagabaw ka sa luma?

A: Oo, naman din sila.

Q: Pinapanat ka sa luma ng mga pangat sa iyo?

A: Oo.

Q: Nalipagabaw ka sa luma sa iyo?

A: Oo, luma naman. Pag sa luma luma'y hindi naman pangat ng mga luma din. Hindi sa luma din, hindi sila pangat. Kama sa luma ng luma dito. Maki noong bago pa lang, kama sa ako sa budyet ng sigulyo, pagkat, abon pampaligo, toothbrush... @

"We abide by Protocol II"

An interview with the General Command of the New People's Army

Q: With the NPA's "Eight Points of Attention" and "Three Main Rules of Discipline," is it still necessary to abide by the Geneva Conventions and Protocol II?

NPA: The "Three Main Rules of Discipline" and "Eight Points of Attention" are internal rules of discipline for the NPA. All officers and members of the NPA abide strictly by these rules. We also make known these rules to the people in our territories to further promote unity and cooperation between the NPA and the masses. Protocol II, however, is part of international law. Nonetheless, because its objective is to ensure the safety and well-being of non-combatants, which the NPA has long been doing, we also abide by Protocol II.

This is where we see the difference between the NPA and the AFP and its master, the US-Aquino regime. The latter keep on saying that they respect human rights and abide by the law but they continuously violate Protocol II which the Aquino government ratified in 1986. We can cite cases of massacres, arson and other atrocities committed during AFP operations; manhandling, torture and salvaging of persons captured by the military; zoning raids on communities; forced evacuations, etc. All these show that the US-Aquino regime is worse than the Marcos dictatorship when it comes to the number of human rights violations.

Q: What sanctions does the NPA impose on guerrillas who violate international humanitarian laws?

NPA: Any guerrilla who has violated the rules on discipline of the NPA is meted a corresponding form of disciplinary action. This is meted out only after a thorough investigation, and after the circumstances surrounding the incident have been examined. The forms of disciplinary action given vary with the nature and gravity of the violation.

Q: What about criticisms regarding the taking of "POWs" when the AFP refers to as "hostages"?

NPA: First of all, captured combatants belonging to the AFP are not "hostages." We consider them prisoners-of-war (POWs) because they are part of the AFP and they actively participate in counter-insurgency operations. It is only AFP propagandists who call these captured combatants "hostages." This is part of their effort to picture the NPA as "terrorists," and in so doing, they hope to swing public opinion in their favor. What is strange, though, is that they never refer to comrades whom they have captured, as "hostages."

Q: What is the NPA's answer to criticisms or accusations that it is engaged in terroristic activities targeting "civilians" such as policemen, CAFGU elements, religious functionaries, vigilantes, warlords, private armies and deep penetration agents? What about US troops?

NPA: It is clear that those you have mentioned are *not*

LISPHOTOS/AYP



Unity and cooperation: Red fighters parade with barikade

"civilians." Policemen and CAFGU elements are integrated into the AFP. They are trained, paid and armed by the AFP. In fact, they are part of the so-called "new military strategy" of the AFP, which is what they call their counter-insurgency program nowadays. The vigilantes, warlords and their private armies, deep penetration agents and counter-revolutionary sects are no different. They are also trained and armed by the AFP and have direct or indirect links with the military. All of them actively and directly take part in AFP military operations against the revolutionary movement. We do not consider them civilians.

As for US troops in installations and bases in the Philippines, they are actively engaged in counter-revolution because they provide training and intelligence information to the AFP, and even accompany local troops during patrols and military operations. Because of such intervention, the CPP-NPA and the NDF have already announced that US troops are military targets for the NPA as are US installations in our country.

Q: How does the NPA ensure an accused person's

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Interview . . .

right to due process and trial by an impartial court?

NPA: As we have earlier explained, we follow due process before meting out punishment or disciplinary action on anyone who has violated our rules.

First, there is to be a thorough investigation, which should include hearing the testimony of the accused, witnesses and others involved in the case; consideration of mitigating or aggravating circumstances; and detailed examinations of the entire incident. Judgment is also done collectively, in consultation with those involved in the case.

Of course, our judicial system is not yet fully developed. There are many things we have to study and refine. The same is true with our rules, laws and ordinances which we are now implementing in our municipal- and barrio-level provisional revolutionary governments. We are still in the process of developing and improving our judicial system. But we should distinguish between a military court inside the NPA and the civilian courts of the people. Nonetheless, in both cases, we always make sure that due process is observed in investigations and in the delivery of justice.

Q: Is it true that the NPA includes among its "special military targets" top bureaucrats, churches and hospitals?

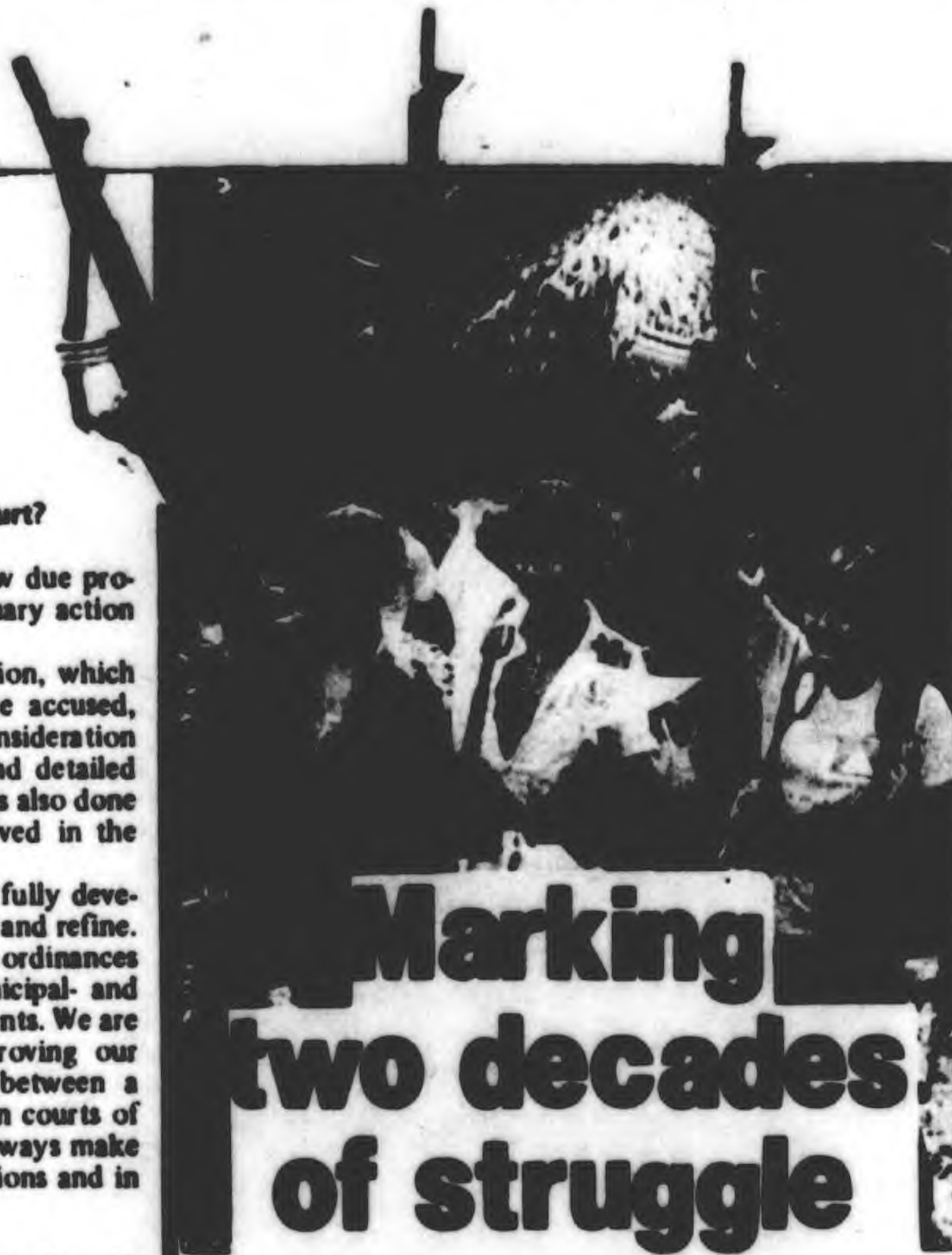
NPA: We do not include churches and hospitals in our list of military targets. This is clearly stipulated in the rules laid down by the CPP's Military Commission in 1984.

Q: Is the NPA or NDF seeking belligerency status? What significance would the attainment of such status have for the revolutionary forces?

NPA: On the whole, we are advancing the people's revolutionary struggle towards the attainment of genuine national freedom and democracy. As we grow in numbers and strength inside our country, so will the support and sympathy we receive from our overseas friends grow stronger. As this happens, the US-Aquino regime will have no choice but to recognize the strength and levels that our struggle has reached. At present, the attainment of a status of belligerency can be a great help in our efforts to humanize the war, because that may compel the Aquino government to abide by the provisions of international humanitarian laws.

Q: Does the NPA adhere to the provision prohibiting persons below 15 years of age from becoming combatants?

NPA: The NPA has very clearcut rules and guidelines on recruitment. We do not recruit persons below 15; also, recruits should be in good health, and should have had prior experience as barrio-based activists or must have been members of any of the revolutionary mass organizations in the area. They should have good moral character and be recommended by our cadres, activists or organizers based in the barrio. ■



Marking two decades of struggle

Statements of support and solidarity
on the New People's Army's 20th year

The New People's Army marked its 20th year as a popular revolutionary armed force in jubilant celebrations held in guerrilla fronts nationwide. As the masses and Red fighters commemorated the event in the guerrilla zones, statements of support and solidarity poured in from various revolutionary organizations. The National Democratic Front, to which the NPA belongs, hailed "the accumulated victories of the popular armed revolutionary struggle (led by the NPA) against the US-Aquino regime" and called on the people to "rally around this patriotic and democratic struggle, push it forward to early victory, and thus end US imperialist domination and the prolonged oppression and exploitation by the local ruling classes."

The Communist Party of the Philippines, which leads the NPA, reiterated that "it is reasonable to aim for total victory in the national democratic revolution in the next 10 years." Adding that "the ground for armed revolution is ever more fertile than before," the CPP averred that "ultimately, the NPA will win because it fights for a revolutionary and just cause and enjoys the support of the broad masses of the people."

The Alex Boncayao Brigade, the NPA partisan unit in Manila-Rizal, saluted their "comrades-in-arms in the struggle for national freedom and de-

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mocracy." The ABB moreover called on the Filipino people to "actively resist the 'total war' policies and stratagems of the US-Aquino regime."

In its own statement, the NPA General Command cited the results of its national assessment on the military situation. Through its Chief-of-Staff Rolly Kintanar, the NPA unit said that the people's army "has withstood the US-Aquino fascist regime's military offensives, further managed to strike heavy blows on the enemy and continuously expanded and strengthened itself."

Following are the press statements issued by the NDF, NPA, CPP and the ABB:



Red fighters in celebration: Marking the NPA's accumulated victories

No more illusions

The National Democratic Front hails the accumulated victories of the popular armed revolutionary struggle against the US-Aquino regime and greets the New People's Army on its 20th anniversary on March 29, 1989.

The NDF calls on the Filipino people to rally around this patriotic and democratic struggle, push it forward to early victory, and thus end US imperialist domination and the prolonged oppression and exploitation by the local ruling classes.

It is time to banish any and all remaining illusions that the Aquino regime can still be persuaded to change its ways and to work truly for the people's welfare and interest.

Three years have been enough to prove beyond doubt the unmitigated puppetry of this regime to US imperialism worse than that of Marcos, in fact. Witness the regime's utter subservience to IMF-World Bank dictates that increase the nation's already unbearable economic burden, its repudiation of the anti-nuclear arms provision of its own constitution, and its transparent "option" to retain the US military bases beyond 1991.

More than these concessions, the Aquino regime unconscionably allows the United States to intensify its military intervention in pursuance to the "total war" or low-intensity conflict policy that is wrecking unprecedented harm and misery on the people.

Three years have been enough to show up the blatant bias of the Aquino regime in favor of the elite. Witness its actions as regards implementing genuine land reform, protecting workers' rights and improving their livelihood, ameliorating the urban poor and other underprivileged sectors in Philippine society.

The conditions of the majority of the people increasingly worsen under laws and policies implemented by the Aquino regime. Hence, the workers and peasants, the sturdy legs of the national democratic revolutionary united front, are out front in protest and struggle.

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Other sectors, through their mass organizations, link up with the workers and peasants to form the broad based defensive flank against the regime's armed and political attacks.

Only the revolutionary forces' perseverance in the armed struggle, along with the open democratic mass movement, has kept alive the people's hope for liberation both from US imperialist domination and local ruling class oppression.

This persistence in struggle pays off in accumulated victories and scare US imperialism, the Aquino ruling clique and other reactionaries. Hence, the desperate "total war" with all its bloody aspects visited on the people. Hence, the increasing palpability of US direct intervention in this antipeople war. The NPA and all the democratic and progressive forces within and alongside the NDF are determined to frustrate this inhuman "total war." With the unflagging support of the broad masses of the people, victory will certainly be ours.

National Democratic Front

Dealing heavy blows

The General Command of the New People's Army (GC-NPA) said today, March 27, 1989, that the people's army has withstood the US-Aquino fascist regime's military offensives, further managed to strike heavy blows on the enemy and continuously expanded and strengthened itself.

Through Rolly Kintanar, NPA Chief-of-Staff, the GC-NPA cited reports from various regions throughout the country showing that the people's army has, on the whole, frustrated the reactionary AFP's military campaigns and offensives.

The GC-NPA said this puts into ridicule the projections made both by President Aquino and Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos that the regime's "total war" policy would decisively defeat the revolutionary forces "within three years," or by the end of Aquino's term of office in 1991.

The GC-NPA made its national assessment on the military situation even as the people's army prepares to commemorate on Wednesday, March

29, the 20th anniversary of its founding.

Reports from Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao uniformly indicate that the NPA generally has withstood the enemy's massive assaults in spite of setbacks in some areas where the AFP had concentrated large troop formations, helicopter gunships, armored personnel carriers, howitzers and mortars against the revolutionary forces and the people.

But on the whole, the GC-NPA said, the NPA is succeeding not only in preserving its forces, but also in dealing heavy blows on the enemy. Furthermore, it continues to advance in the much larger areas of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

In the Visayas, from October 1988 to January 1989, NPA units launched 69 tactical offensives such as raids, ambushes, harassment operations, arms confiscations, employment of land mines, establishment of checkpoints, and partisan operations.

In these offensives, which saw the increasing use of land mines and explosives, the Red commanders and fighters confiscated three mortars, two machine guns, 70 high-powered rifles, 20 handguns, and communications equipment. They also damaged two Sikorsky helicopters, a Scorpion reconnaissance vehicle, a weapons carrier, and a military jeep.

The AFP also suffered 128 dead (regular troops and Alsa Masa fanatics, vigilantes and other paramilitary units), 92 wounded and seven captured. The dead included a PC-INP major, several lieutenants of the Philippine Army and PC, a PC-INP station commander, and several sergeants.

On the other hand, the NPA units lost 21 high-powered rifles, four handguns, and four anti-tank land mines. They also suffered 38 dead while 25 others were wounded.

In Luzon, Northern Luzon took the lead in frustrating the enemy's scheme and sustaining the advance.



NPA d-III: "We have continuously expanded and strengthened ourselves"



On target: Gearing for bigger battles

From July 1987 to October 1988, while the AFP was launching its massive military campaigns, including "Redbuster IV," NPA forces in Northern Luzon managed to strengthen themselves not only in terms of new recruits and military formations but in the number of high-powered firearms of the enemy confiscated and in the number of expansion towns and barrios.

In that period, there were new recruits in Northern Luzon to compose a battalion, and the number of company formations increased by three, the number of platoon formations by two, and the number of squads by 14. There was a net increase of 674 firearms, 575 of these being high-powered.

While some barrios in the NPA's guerrilla fronts had to be left temporarily due to AFP pressure, the NPA managed to expand to 468 new barrios and five new towns.

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In Mindanao, NPA units have largely recovered from the setbacks of 1985 and 1986, and have reconstituted guerrilla formations which had been reduced for a time. On that island, the NPA has regained its previous strength and is now in fact stronger than before and ready to launch more and bigger tactical offensives.

In 1988 alone, NPA units in Mindanao seized at least 200 high-powered rifles from regular and paramilitary forces of the AFP in various tactical offensives.

From all indications, the GC-NPA said, the US-Aquino regime's prediction of victory in three years "is nothing but an empty boast typical of the dichard reactionaries' bluster."

Overall, the GC-NPA reported to the Military Commission of the Communist Party of the Philippines and to the Central Committee itself that the NPA now has 10,000 guerrilla fighters armed with high-powered rifles and another 20,000 guerrilla fighters with inferior weapons. It said these operate in more than 60 guerrilla fronts in 65 out of the 73 provinces in the country, 800 out of 1,500 cities and municipalities and in 12,000 barrios.

NPA General Command

Fertile ground for revolution

The ground for the armed revolution is ever more fertile than before."

This is one of the highlights of a comprehensive statement issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the New People's Army which falls on March 29 this year.

Taking account of national and international conditions, the CPP Central Committee reiterated its earlier statement that "it is reasonable to aim for total victory in the national-democratic revolution within the next 10 years."

In this connection, it cited the "aggravation of the crisis of the ruling system — an irreversible process which is itself induced by the continuous growth of the revolutionary movement

— ensures the development of all positive forces for the further acceleration of the armed struggle."

It added, however, that if 10 years are not enough to attain total victory, "then the NPA is ready to continue fighting for another 10 or 20 years or whatever length of time is necessary for defeating the enemy."

The CPP leadership's projection of total victory in 10 years pooh-poohs the US-Aquino fascist regime's own prediction of the defeat of the revolutionary forces by 1991.

The Party Central Committee said that although the AFP today continues to be on the offensive, "the enemy cannot use his military superiority to prevent the growth of the NPA, much less crush it, because it is blinded by its reactionary interests and gropes in the dark for the people's army and attacks the people wildly."

"Ultimately," it added, "the NPA will win because it fights for a revolutionary and just cause and enjoys the support of the broad masses of the people. On the other hand, the AFP is bound to lose because it fights for the reactionary and anti-people interests of the ruling classes."

In this connection, the CPP Central Committee traced the growth of the people's army from 1969 when it started with only 60 Red fighters armed with only nine high-powered and 26 inferior firearms operating only in the second district of Tarlac.

Today, it said, the NPA has 10,000 guerrilla fighters armed with high-powered rifles and another 20,000 guerrilla fighters with inferior weapons, operating in more than 60 guerrilla fronts in 65 out of the 73 provinces in the country, 800 of the country's 1,500 cities and municipalities, and in 12,000 barrios.

It pointed out that it has been in times of intense fascist repression, as in the incumbency of the US-Marcos fascist dictatorship, that the flames of revolutionary fervor were fanned, accelerating the rapid growth of the revolutionary forces.

Assessing the national situation, the Party Central Committee said the euphoria over the downfall of Marcos and the rise of Aquino to the presidency is gone, and that "the stark realities, especially the fundamental problems which brought about the fascist dictatorship, confront everyone."

"There has been merely a change from one puppet ruling clique to another," it said. "US imperialist domination and the class rule of the comprador big bourgeoisie and the landlord class persist. The Filipino people continue to suffer increasingly acute oppression and exploitation."

It added:

"Even as the fascist dictator has been overthrown, the same coercive apparatuses of the counterrevolutionary state remain and the same fascists in the military continue to attack the people at an accelerated rate and serve the exploiting classes and their corrupt politicians.

"The very same socio-economic and political crisis that brought about the rise, decline and fall of the Marcos dictatorship continues to worsen and undermine the US-Aquino regime.

"This new puppet regime is in a far worse situation than the old regime economically and financially. It is ever begging for new loans and debt re-schedulings just to keep up with the ever mounting foreign debt service payments."

Citing figures, the Party Central Committee said the accumulated foreign debt is at the level of \$30 billion



Training pays off: Guerrillas practicing field maneuvers

COVER STORIES

and debt service is at \$3.5 billion annually, or more than 60% of the export earnings mainly from the raw-material exports of the agrarian economy.

Regarding the Aquino regime's claims to a higher growth rate in the gross national product (GNP), the Party Central Committee said this was due to consumption-led expenditures, especially by the government. There had been no development of the productive system beyond that of raw-material production-for-export and import-dependent manufacturing, it added.

It also pointed out that government budgetary appropriations are gobbled up by foreign debt servicing to the extent of 44% and by military expenditures to that of 22% to include military items concealed under departments other than that of national defense.

Other data referred to by the Party Central Committee are:

► Because of lack of national industrialization, unemployment runs at the rate of at least 45% "if correct measurement is done." Inflation continues to cut down real wages and other incomes of the working people. A heavier tax burden is imposed on the working people and the middle social strata.

► More than 70% of the people subsist below the poverty line and suffer the pangs of hunger and deprivation. The urban workers, the peasants and farm workers and even the middle social strata are increasingly being immiserated and, consequently, social unrest is intensifying.

► Amid the immiseration of the people, the corruption of the new ruling clique is conspicuous, made even more conspicuous by the fact that bureaucratic crooks and cronies of those in power are looting a government in deeper financial bankruptcy.

► The contradictions among factions of the same exploiting classes are becoming more and more acute. The previous attempt of Marcos to monopolize the instruments of violence has given way to a factionalization of the AFP and the rapid arming of private reactionary groups.

On the other hand, the Party Central Committee said the revolutionary movement continues to be seen as the just and necessary course for the broad masses of the people "because the constitution, institutions and processes of the ruling system effectively exclude them and run counter to their rights and interests."

"The ruling system continues to

run on a general course of disintegration through the bitter conflicts of the reactionaries themselves," it said. "Fascization is a fact behind the flimsy bourgeois-democratic facade of the big comprador-landlord regime."

On the international situation, the CPP leadership said the world capitalist system is in a deep-going crisis of overproduction, and that the United States is in general decline as an imperialist power and as head of the capitalist alliance.

Pointing out that Third World countries and peoples are under the strain of the worst form of finance capitalism at the hands of the US and other imperialists, it added that "the Filipino people have every right to wage a revolution against US imperialism and the puppet regime."

CPP Central Committee

Hail to our comrades-in-arms!

Today, March 29, 1989, the New People's Army celebrates its 20th anniversary.

The members and supporters of the Alex Boncayao Brigade Metro Manila-Rizal Partisan Front salute our comrades-in-arms in the struggle for national freedom and genuine democracy.

In line with the revolutionary program of advancing the people's war, the NPA initiated partisan operations in the urban areas where the State wields an iron hand of repression against people's organizations seeking a better life for the masses. Metro Manila has always been the nerve center of this repressive State, the headquarters of the political and economic power of the Filipino elite as well as of foreign monopoly capital, and the home base of the fascist Armed Forces of the Philippines.

It is in this context that the ABB Metro Manila-Rizal Partisan Front was born on May 24, 1984, with the primary objective of launching armed partisan warfare in the heart of enemy territory, defending the interests of workers and urban poor communities bearing the brunt of urban militarization, and in the process preparing the masses for participation in insurrectionary activities that shall form a cru-

cial part of the decisive revolutionary counter-offensive.

The ABB has consistently moved only against selected targets – military and police personnel, reactionaries and anti-social elements in the community – who have committed grave crimes against the people, and whose punishment was carried out only after a thorough investigation with the cooperation of the aggrieved community.



At play: ABB partisan and brother

The ABB continues to enjoy acceptance by the masses because it has proven itself reliable in defending their interests. ABB operations have effectively served as a foil against demolition of urban poor communities, as well as violent actions by capitalist minions against workers' picket lines and strikes. The ABB is the people's armed response to state terrorism in the urban areas.

We call on the Filipino people to actively resist the "total war" policies and stratagems of the US-Aquino regime and to push more vigorously on all fronts the struggle to realize their nationalist, democratic and just demands.

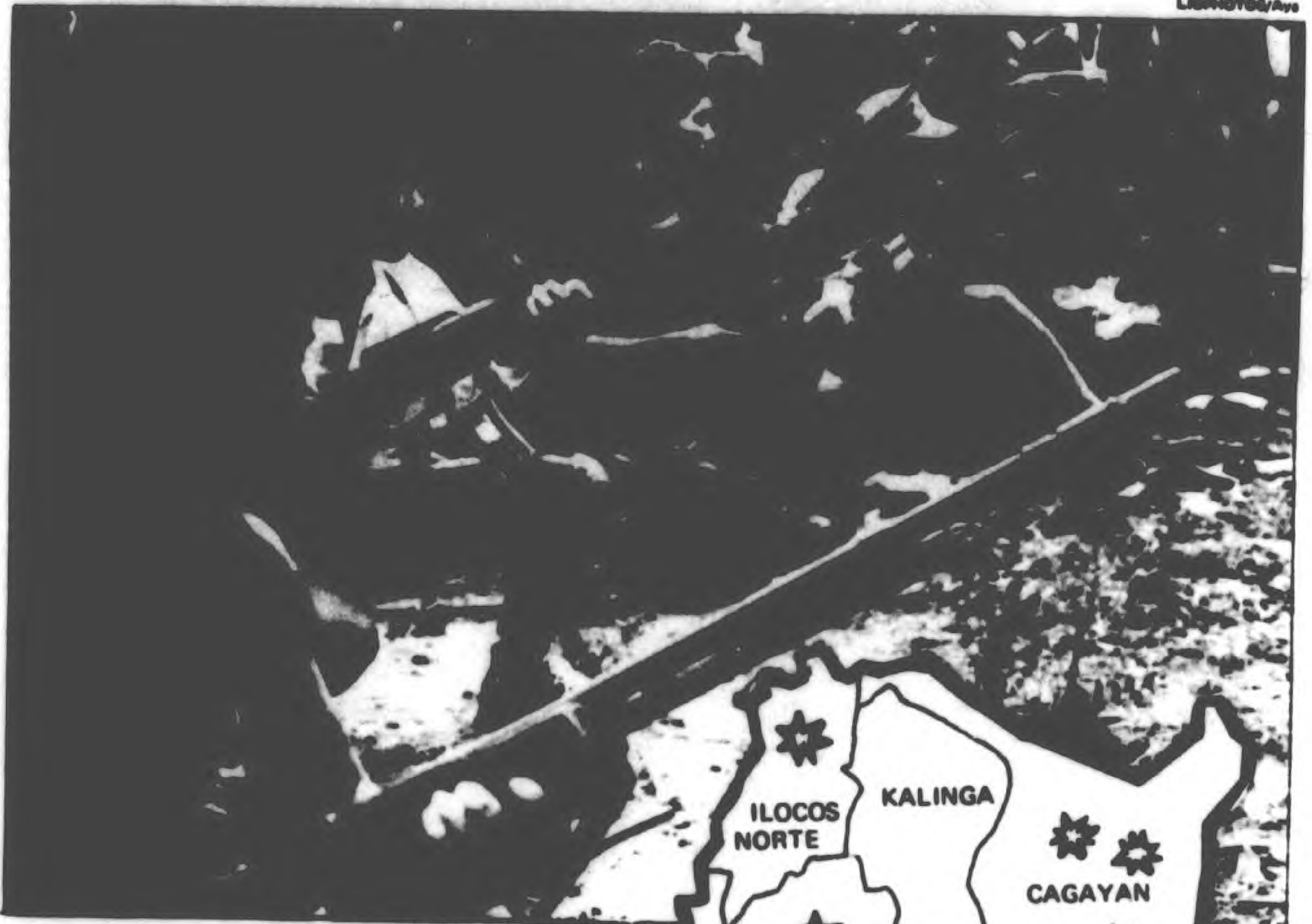
We call on the officers and men of the AFP and of local police units, as well as officials of local government in the region to desist from taking an active role in the regime's counter-insurgency and anti-people operations, or suffer the consequences of their fascist acts.

Alex Boncayao Brigade

A string of victories

Northern Luzon NPA scores dramatic advances despite intense militarization

LICPHOTO/Asa

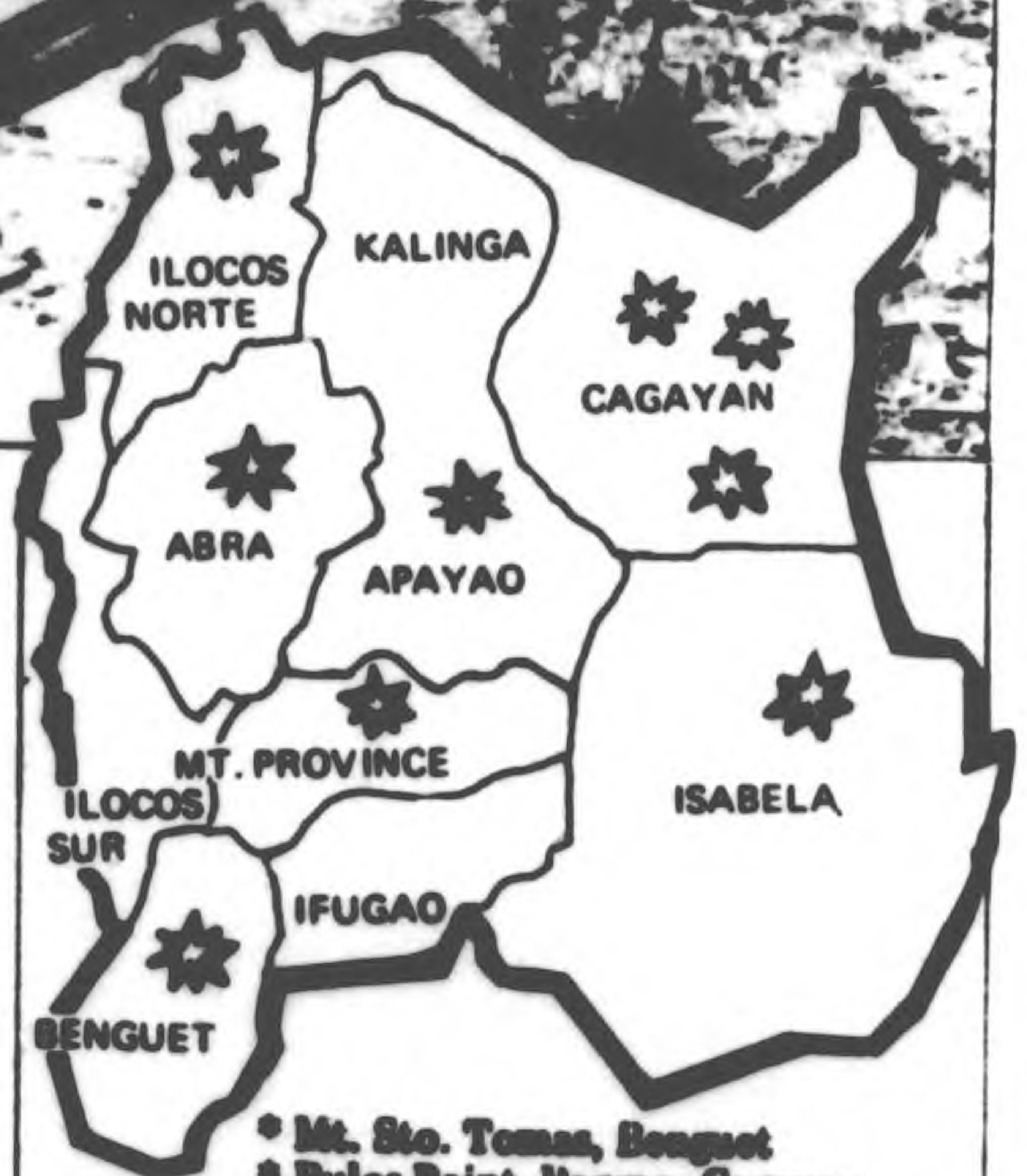


In fighting form: Red fighters in ambush positions

Like the deafening beat of Indian war drums signalling an impending attack, the message sent by Red fighters in Northern Luzon to US imperialism was loud and clear: Stop intervening in the country's internal affairs or suffer the consequences.

At exactly 3:45 PM of April 9, 25 high explosive devices went off in unison, destroying vital US naval communications equipment located in Mt. Sto. Tomas, Benguet. Destroyed were the giant radar-like antennae, the metal communications van and four satellite radars. The bombed military facility is vital in maintaining communications with the US Pacific fleet.

The commando operation went like clockwork: Without firing a single shot, an NPA unit entered the US



- * Mt. Sto. Tomas, Benguet
- * Bulos Point, Nagano, Cagayan
- * Mainit, Bontoc, Mt. Province
- * N. Luzon Timber Corp. - Cagayan
- * San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte
- * Rizal, Cagayan
- * Eastern Isabela
- * Abra
- * Tinglayan, Kalinga-Apayao

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compound at midnight without alarming the US and AFP military personnel and their guard dogs. The NPA commandos also made sure that the explosives were situated away from the houses in the compound to prevent civilian casualties.

In a statement sent to the media four days later, NPA Chief-of-Staff Rolly Kintanar said, "The latest tactical offensives (TOs) of the New People's Army against US military installations and personnel serve notice once again of its readiness and capability to carry out policies of the CPP which are directed against escalating US military intervention in our country. These tactical offensives," he said, "are meant to punish US imperialism for its arrogance, insolence and abuse against our people and other peoples of the world."

The commando operation in Mt. Sto. Tomas is only one of the latest in a string of successful offensives launched by the NPA in Northern Luzon.

Last March 30, Red fighters in Cagayan raided the camp of the 120th PC Coy and the Civilian Armed Geographical Unit (CAFGU) in Bulos Point, Baggao town. Three notorious CAFGU elements were killed in the raid.

The day before, the Chadli Molintas Command, the NPA unit operating in the Cordillera, ambushed an AFP unit in Mainit, Bontoc, Mountain Province, killing a lieutenant and five enlisted men. Seized during the ambush were an M60 light machine gun, two M16s, two M14s and a radiogram.

Last March 25, the Cagayan NPA launched a sabotage operation against the North Luzon Timber Corp. (NLTCO), destroying a logjam and three bulldozers. The NLTCO is owned by big businessman Alfonso Lim and his partner, Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile.

In a lightning raid January 15 that lasted only three minutes, the Zacarias Agatep NPA Command in Ilocos Norte swooped down on the town hall of San Nicolas and seized two M16s and five .38 pistols from the startled town mayor and policemen.

In January 5, five CAFGU elements were killed and their weapons seized in an ambush by the NPA in Rizal, Cagayan.

The series of offensives are a fitting follow-through to the record performances of the Northern Luzon NPA in 1988. The Crispin Tagamolila Command, which oversees NPA operations in the whole of Northern Luzon, reported that 748 high-powered rifles

(HPRs) were seized last year from various tactical offensives conducted in the region. This includes 214 HPRs confiscated in 65 TOs launched by the Dr. Juan Escandor Operational Command in Isabela; and 80 HPRs seized by the Cordillera NPA that same year. The Cordillera NPA also killed 150 enemy troopers in 1988.

The Northern Luzon guerrillas' achievements for 1988 attain greater significance because they were accomplished despite a series of massive counter-insurgency drives by the AFP. Reported the NPA newspaper *Pulang*

Good harvest: NPA Area warrior shows off seized machine pistol (right); hauling in captured rifles (below)



COVER STORIES

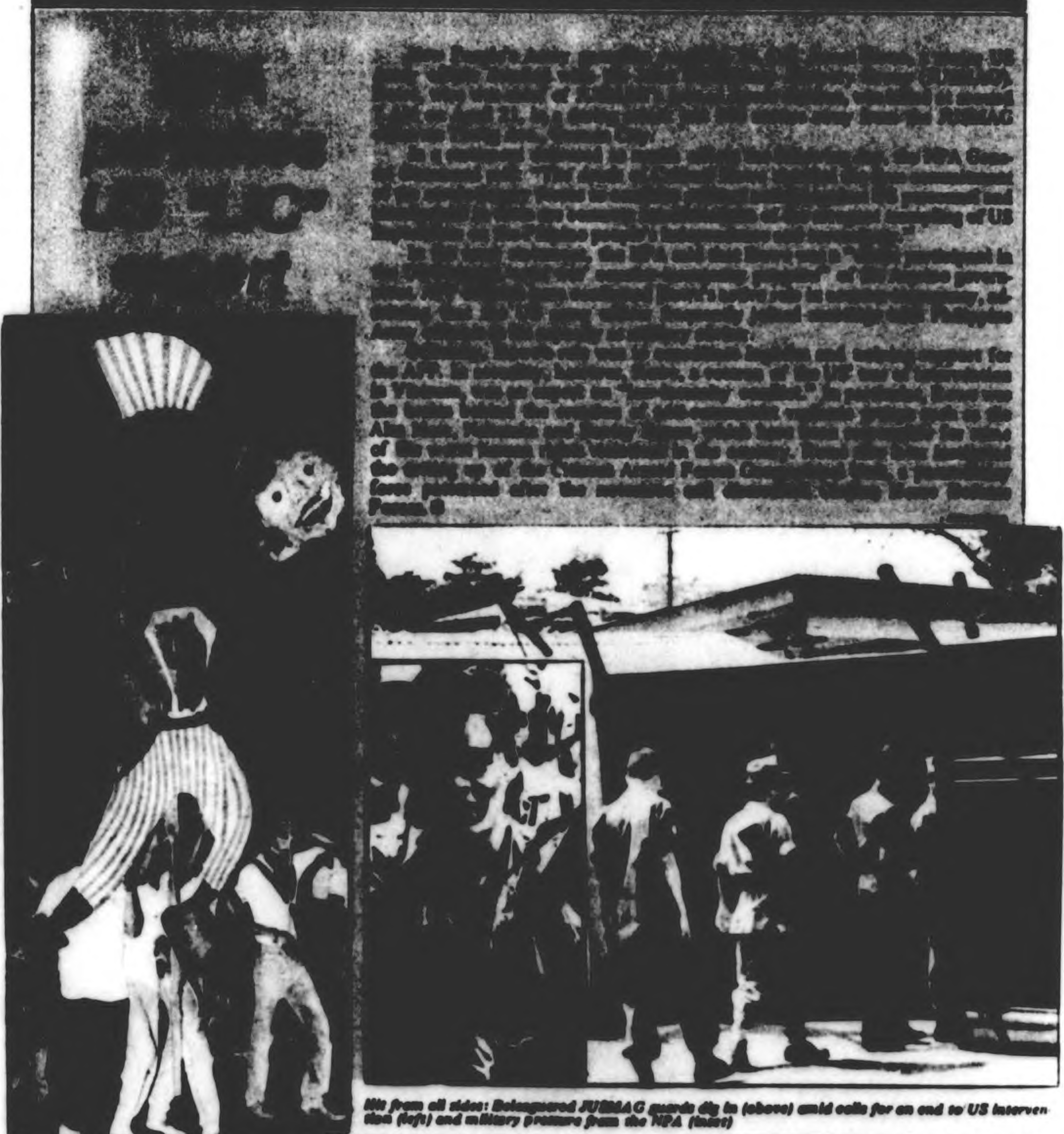
Bendila: "Rumaragasa pa rin ang ar-
madong pakikibaha sa habla ng mala-
king konsentrasyon ng lagamitan at
trope ng kasway sa Hilagang Luzon na
sinlaki halos ng pinakamatinding ope-
rasyon noong 1972-74 na umabot sa
15,000 trope." At present, brigade-
size troops under the AFP's Northern
Luzon Command are undertaking
operations in Central-Eastern Isabela
and Nueva Vizcaya-Quirino. The AFP

continues to bomb and pepper with ar-
tillery fire suspected NPA bases in San
Mariano, Isabela.

But the NPA in Northern Luzon
are hardly fazed by the enemy's on-
slaughts. Just this March, sniper fire by
militia and regular NPA units felled
dozens of soldiers attempting to pen-
etrate Isabela's forested region. "Mahi-
git isang platoon ang nalipol," said a

report from *Pulang Bendila*. The NPA
had also successfully disarmed ele-
ments of the Cordillera People's Libe-
ration Army (now functioning as the
CAFGU in the Cordillera) in Abra and
Tinglayan, Kalings-Apayao.

Said *Pulang Bendila*: "Patuloy na
bibiguan ng DHB ang mga operasyon
kontra-insureksyon at kontra-mamama-
yan ng AFP sa Hilagang Luzon." ■



The NPA's Army... (The text in this section is extremely faint and largely illegible, appearing to be a continuation of the article's content.)

Men from all sides: Besieged JUBMAG guards die in (above) amid calls for an end to US interven-
tion (left) and military pressure from the NPA (right)

MAINSTREAM

Developments in the people's movements

A salute to sisters in struggle

True spirit of March 8 lives in MAKIBAKA's Program of Action



(See story next page)



Heavy weaponry: Red fighter samples weight of armed 1969

LIBERATION

Daring strikes launched in Mindanao

The presence of mind of a woman guerrilla saved the day for a company of Red fighters in Banzagay Siby, Cebu, Mindanao Occidental last February 6. According to correspondence reports received by LIB, AFP troopers aboard a six-wheeler truck rolled into Siby and spotted two Red fighters playing basketball in the barrio. The soldiers jumped out of the truck and immediately opened fire, killing the two guerrillas instantly.

Unknown to the troopers, how-

ever, was the presence of other Red fighters in the vicinity. Taking the initiative, a woman guerrilla climbed up the soldiers' six-wheeler truck, took hold of a machine gun which was left unattended, and started the soldiers. Eleven of them died on the spot and 20 others who were seriously wounded later died.

The woman Red fighter's quick response made it possible for the NPA's defensive stance to end in a tactical victory. Seized from the out-

stretched soldiers were one 1960 machine gun, one brace of 1960 bullets, three M14s, a .38 pistol, four radio receivers, 12 blouses and 60 military backpacks containing food and medical supplies.

Angry at their defeat, the AFP took reprisal against civilians in the area. Residents of Siby and other neighboring barrios were harassed and intimidated by the military. A farmer, Guiderado Collado and his son were beaten mercilessly while being interrogated, resulting in the elder Collado's death. One hundred twenty-six families have since fled the area for fear of more reprisals from the military.

Meanwhile, two Metropolitan traffic policemen in Davao City notorious for their anti-people activities were killed February 15 by partisans of the Edilberto Canoy Command, the NPA unit in the city. The two policemen were involved in counter-insurgency operations as well as in a long collection ring that victimized low-income market and sidewalk vendors, journey drivers and mother-and-son businessmen.

The operation was the partisans' second major offensive since their unit was formed September 21 last year. That day, the Edilberto Canoy Command conducted a dawn raid against a well-guarded Constabulary-Almaza detachment in Lanasag, Davao City. Five PC troopers and Almaza elements were killed in the raid. The assaults have sent shockwaves among the military and other reactionaries, who thought that Davao City had been rid of the NPA. □



On the frontline: Women lead indignation rally against fascism

The 8th of March (International Women's Day) is a historic day for sisters in struggle the world over. On that date, 123 years ago, thousands of American women workers took to the streets of New York City to decry the oppressive conditions in the sweatshops of Industrial America. It was an act of courage and defiance that was echoed in the organized strivings of women elsewhere to rise above their abject status.

In recent decades, Filipino women militants and revolutionaries have also been commemorating March 8 by calling attention to the plight of the country's women and raising demands in pursuit of their sector's interests and welfare.

This year, however, the Aquino regime sought to steal the thunder away from the traditionally militant commemoration of International Women's Day by launching the "Philippine Development Plan for Women" via a ceremony at Malacanang and declaring March 8 as "Women's Rights Day" and March as "Women's Month."

These developments could have easily disarmed less discerning women's groups. For what could be better for Filipino women than to have a woman president under whose term a women's equality clause in the Constitution has been included? What could be more auspicious than to have a red-letter date in the history of the women's struggle inscribed in the country's official calendar? What could be



On the rise: Women victims of "total war"

more propitious for Filipino women than to have an entire development plan built around their needs and aspirations?

The women of the Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan (MAKIBAKA), however, saw through the irony of the situation. "Kung kailan lumalala ang pagsasamantalala at pang-aapi sa kababaihan, ngayon pa gagamitin ang Marso 8 para pagtakpan ang tunay nilang kalagayan," was the bitter remark of a MAKIBAKA organizer.

The so-called Philippine Development Plan for Women calls for the enactment of laws and the implementation of various programs designed to better the plight of Filipino women.

Close scrutiny reveals, however, that both the called-for laws and the budgetary needs for the different programs for women still have to go through the legislative and bureaucratic wringer before the PDPW can see fruition.

As with land reform and all other government programs ostensibly addressed to the poor and disadvantaged sectors of Philippine society, the PDPW commits the glaring error of believing that Filipino women still have the luxury to wait for basic changes to touch their lives.

Plight of women

For the overwhelming majority of Filipino women, patience is a virtue they can ill afford.

From the time Corazon Aquino announced her regime's policy of "total war" against the Filipino people, women victims of massacres, summary executions and disappearances have more than doubled in number. Countless others suffer in zoning operations, military and paramilitary raids, and within detention centers. There are now at least 70 women political prisoners, said the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines, a human rights watchdog group. Militant women's organizations such as GABRIELA moreover point out that rape, sexual assault and other forms of human rights violations are being systematically used against women at a mounting rate in government counter-insurgency drives.

MAINSTREAM

Over a million women have joined the ranks of the unemployed since the US-Aquino regime came into power. Many more are underemployed in jobs that offer little respite from grueling conditions. In 1988, the labor force participation of women stood at only 46.3% (compared to 82.8% for men). About two-thirds of the unemployed and underemployed are women.

More than 80,000 Filipino women employed as "entertainers" and 76,000 as domestic helpers abroad are not assured of protection by the Aquino government.

AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases continue to spread around US military facilities and tourist areas, with no firm and comprehensive government policy for containment of the diseases nor for the treatment of the afflicted women and their families.

Malnutrition, maternal mortality, infant mortality and homelessness con-

Learning from history

"From the outset," states the introduction to MAKIBAKA's six-point program adopted during its Congress in November last year, "women's expectations from governments have not been met. For instead of using the powers of the bureaucracy and the military to advance and defend women's and people's interests, these governments serve as instruments to maintain the continuing control and domination of the ruling class . . ."

For this reason, MAKIBAKA has chosen to abide by the lessons of history. Said the women's revolutionary organization, "Historical experience teaches us to rely on our own strength."

The empowerment of Filipino women begins with their swakening to their oppressed conditions and their willingness to change them. Thus, MAKIBAKA's central political task is to

arouse, mobilize and organize women to launch and participate in struggles for the overthrow of the US-Aquino regime whose policies have been proven to be anti-people and anti-women. Towards this end, MAKIBAKA promotes and supports the emergence of women's campaigns that attack and expose these policies.

MAKIBAKA believes, however, that women's, along with people's empowerment, cannot be fully realized unless the people have seized political power and have set up the democratic coalition government. Along this line, MAKIBAKA upholds the continuing establishment of organs of political power from the barrio to the national level. Inside and outside these organs, MAKIBAKA will fight for and advance the proper representation of women in government, as well as the massive participation of women in politics. MAKIBAKA will also fight for the abolition of exploitative, repressive and discriminatory laws against women. Instead, it will struggle for laws that would protect women and guarantee equal rights for all sexes in the different fields of endeavor.

Economic emancipation

The subordination of women in society is also largely a function of their poverty and marginalization from social production.

Those fortunate enough to find work, however, do not usually enjoy job security; are discriminated against in hiring, training, promotion and pay; and are prone to sexual harassment as well as work-related accidents because of the absence or inadequacy of measures to ensure their safety.

In the countryside, aside from suffering from the burdens of landlessness and usury, many women work in the farms up to 16 hours a day, but are not compensated for their labor. In many cases, women agricultural workers receive only a fraction of what male workers get for doing the same job.

On the other hand, many unemployed women end up being bound to the home and isolated from the mainstream of events in society. Thus isolated, they are prone to conservatism and are unable or unwilling to become politically involved.

The continued marginalization of women in effect not only demobilizes half of society's productive forces; it also impedes the attainment of unity of the oppressed against their oppressors.

Thus, the massive participation of women in social production is seen as



Rising up: Urban poor millions (above); women professionals (below)

tinue to make the lives of women miserable. There are up to 80 maternal deaths per 1,000 live births in the Philippines, one of the highest rates in the world. Half of the total number of lactating mothers have been found to be deficient in protein and iron rich food.

Skyrocketing prices of basic commodities, services and utilities are straining the housewives' purse strings to the limit. A 1988 study involving 538 women from 10 sectors in Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao revealed that average household monthly income was P742.82, way below the poverty line of P2,500.

"These," said MAKIBAKA, "despite a much-flaunted 6.7% growth rate," and all the other token measures by the regime to promote women's rights and welfare.



MAINSTREAM

a key factor in the achievement of women's emancipation and in harnessing their potential towards the development of the country's economic and political life.

To realize this, however, a comprehensive land reform and national industrialization program has to be implemented to remove the impediments to women's economic emancipation. Side by side with this, MAKIBAKA will ensure that women's economic rights are promoted and protected, including the right of peasant women, especially widows, to own the land they till; and the participation, administration and election of women in peasant organizations and cooperatives.

MAKIBAKA shall also work for the creation of training programs for women, the provision of sufficient maternity and paternity leaves, the proper protection of mothers and pregnant women in the workplace, and just punishment for sexual harassment. The establishment of child care services and day care centers for working parents will also be sought.

Arena of culture

It has often been said that "women are the last proletariat." Even with the dismantling of oppressive and exploitative political and economic structures, there remain decadent ideas and oppressive values that women will have to do battle with.

MAKIBAKA shall bring this struggle to society's basic cultural institutions — the mass media, the churches, the schools and the family. In the mass media, MAKIBAKA will oppose the depiction of women merely as domestic slaves, objects of lust or targets of violence. Instead, MAKIBAKA will encourage the mass media to highlight

the victories that women have attained in their revolutionary struggles.

Along this line, MAKIBAKA also calls for the broadest and fullest participation of women in the armed struggle. Said MAKIBAKA: "Limiting women to traditional 'women's work' must be opposed." Entering non-traditional fields such as military work, said MAKIBAKA, makes it possible for women to shatter the time-worn image of being weak and suited only for housework.

In the churches, MAKIBAKA will expose and combat the subordination of women to the authority of men, and the use of religion and superstition to render women fearful and passive to authoritarian power.

In schools, MAKIBAKA will fight for non-sexist education as well as

equal opportunities for women to education and to all courses.

Within the family, MAKIBAKA also rejects the subordination of women and children to male authority. MAKIBAKA shall launch education campaigns to make the people aware that building and maintaining the family is not the sole responsibility of women; rather, it is a responsibility borne equally by couples and complemented by support services from the state. The new family, said MAKIBAKA, shall be one governed by unity, equality, love and mutual help, where women's and children's rights are recognized.

Substance of women's rights

Even now, the MAKIBAKA Program is being lived in areas where the people exercise political power through their revolutionary governments.

In these areas, March 8 is celebrated not merely through officious proclamation. Said MAKIBAKA: "Recognition of the rights of women comes without fanfare but with substance from the ranks of people who even now continue to offer their lives to make women's rights real:

- ▶ "through revolutionary mass organizations carrying women's demands in their struggles;
- ▶ "through peasant activists involving women in agrarian revolution;
- ▶ "through urban and rural freedom fighters training women leaders in this non-traditional field;
- ▶ "through popular revolutionary governments requiring women's representation at all levels; and
- ▶ "through the programs of revolutionary organizations guaranteeing the liberation of women in all spheres."

Victoria Manalo



"Women's 18": Struggling for equality in the home, in the church, in the workplace, and in non-traditional fields

MAINSTREAM



On the march: Women guerrillas show that they've got what it takes to succeed as fighters and commanders

Women vanguards

First NPA women's platoon established in Far North Luzon

While the Aquino regime thrives on token endorsements of women's rights, a group of young women Red fighters in Far North Luzon has surged tenaciously in pursuit of their own liberation by forming the first NPA women's platoon in the country.

Of the 34 guerrilla women comprising the platoon, one-third perform leading functions as platoon commanders, squad leaders and team leaders. Almost all are of peasant origin, with ages ranging from 16 to 24.

The heavy influx of women into the NPA in Far North Luzon started in 1977. At that time, the young women guerrillas were fielded with the male Red fighters under one formation. They either served as members of Armed Organizing Teams or worked as medics, kitchen aides, supply distribution officers, finance officers, or were involved in other technical or auxiliary tasks.

The years 1984 and 1985, however, saw the further crimsoning of revolutionary ardor among women in the Far North. Following the NPA's successive victories during its assaults in key town centers and military camps which garnered scores of high-powered rifles (HPRs) for the NPA, membership in the revolutionary army ballooned. Many among the new recruits were women. The rise in the number of guerrillas resulted in the promotion of many of the experienced women fighters to squad leaders.

Majority, however, of the women fighters were still in technical and military staff work. In 1986, with the rising number of women in the NPA, problems concerning their total performance as Red fighters started to demand the attention of the NPA high command in the area. The women asserted that when it came to higher levels of military work, they were not performing at par with their male

counterparts. Hence, the Far North Regional Command formed a committee to determine the factors that affected women revolutionary fighters especially when, as fulltime guerrillas, they married and had children.

After a thorough review of the women's conditions in the male-dominated army, two significant points were raised:

First, the perception that women were subordinates instead of equal partners and capable guerrilla fighters still persisted and was prevalent among the majority of the men.

In the battlefield, men continued to cling to the belief that women were feeble creatures dependent on men and therefore had to be sheltered and protected. Thus, during military crises, women guerrillas were generally expected to maintain a low profile and were placed in the most secure positions while the men deliberated the unit's plan of action.



Women platoon members: Facing life's obstacles with ease and confidence



Second, in the allocation of tasks, routine and technical staff functions such as typing, cooking, doing the laundry, first-aid application, book-keeping and the like were more often than not regarded as the women's inherent concern and domain.

When women fighters married and had children, the full responsibility of child-rearing automatically rested on the women; thus, they were often relegated to assuming supplementary tasks in the NPA.

On the other hand, the women fighters were also largely unaware of the detrimental effects of male chauvinism on their performance as guerrillas. They themselves lacked consciousness on how women could enjoy a status equal to men in all endeavors. Because of their low levels of gender consciousness, there was a tendency for the women fighters to passively accept the dominance of men in the NPA and in other aspects of community life.

In an effort to break this vicious cycle, the committee recommended the banding together of all women guerrillas under one formation. In an interview with *LIB*, Ka Veron, a leading NPA woman cadre explained that the move is based on the realization that women fighters tend to find more strength and unity when they are grouped together. Because of their common experiences, the women fighters readily understood one another. Thus, they were able to function more effectively and to maximize their potentials. Also, the absence of the factors that tended to limit or discriminate against the women inevitably led to the development of self-confident, independent and creative women revolutionary fighters.

MAINSTREAM

Months after rigorous military training, the women became vigorous and sturdy combatants. Even the most timid and languorous among them were soon transformed into aggressive and self-reliant fighters. After a while, all of the women wanted to serve as commander of their platoon.

On March 8 this year, the first women's platoon of Far North Luzon was formally established.

The momentum that has been gained in the women's participation in the NPA caps many instances of women's gallantry in battle. Among the best remembered stories is that of Ka Mayly, a young and brave Isneg woman fighter.

The youngest of three children and the only girl in the family, Ka Mayly was the daughter of humble peasants. After finishing Fourth Grade in a public school, she became a part-time revolutionary. Along with three other young girls, she assisted NPA guerrillas by serving as a courier and later, as a member of an Armed Organizing Team.

Inspired by other comrades, Ka Mayly joined a regular NPA unit in February 1983 at the age of 15. It was not long before she mastered the art and technique of assault and jungle

fighting. In her first ambush experience with 15 other guerrillas in Luna, Kalinga-Apayao, the AFP lost nine men and 10 high-powered rifles. Months later, she joined 17 Red fighters in Flora, Apayao and was part of the first unit to wipe out an entire platoon of enemy soldiers on foot patrol. In October 1984, she earned the rank of a squad leader at the age of 16 and went on to win a series of raids on other village and town centers and AFP detachments. She advanced swiftly to become the platoon leader of an assault team at 17.

In the last quarter of 1985, her platoon was sent to Isabelia for a joint operation. On this assigned mission, her team conducted four major offensives with another NPA platoon. Ka Sandra, Ka Mayly's long-time buddy, recalls how they once raided a PC detachment that was secured by a squad of PC troopers:

"There was heavy exchange of fire in the first minutes of fighting. Shortly after the firing subsided, two soldiers escaped from the camp. Ka Mayly then directed her team to clear the camp and seize the M30 machine gun inside the detachment. But the members of the assault force hesitated. They were biding for more time. Ka Mayly knew, however, that they could

not afford to waste a single second. She knew they had to enter the camp before the remaining soldiers could escape with their rifles, but more so, before the troopers could carry away the machine gun.

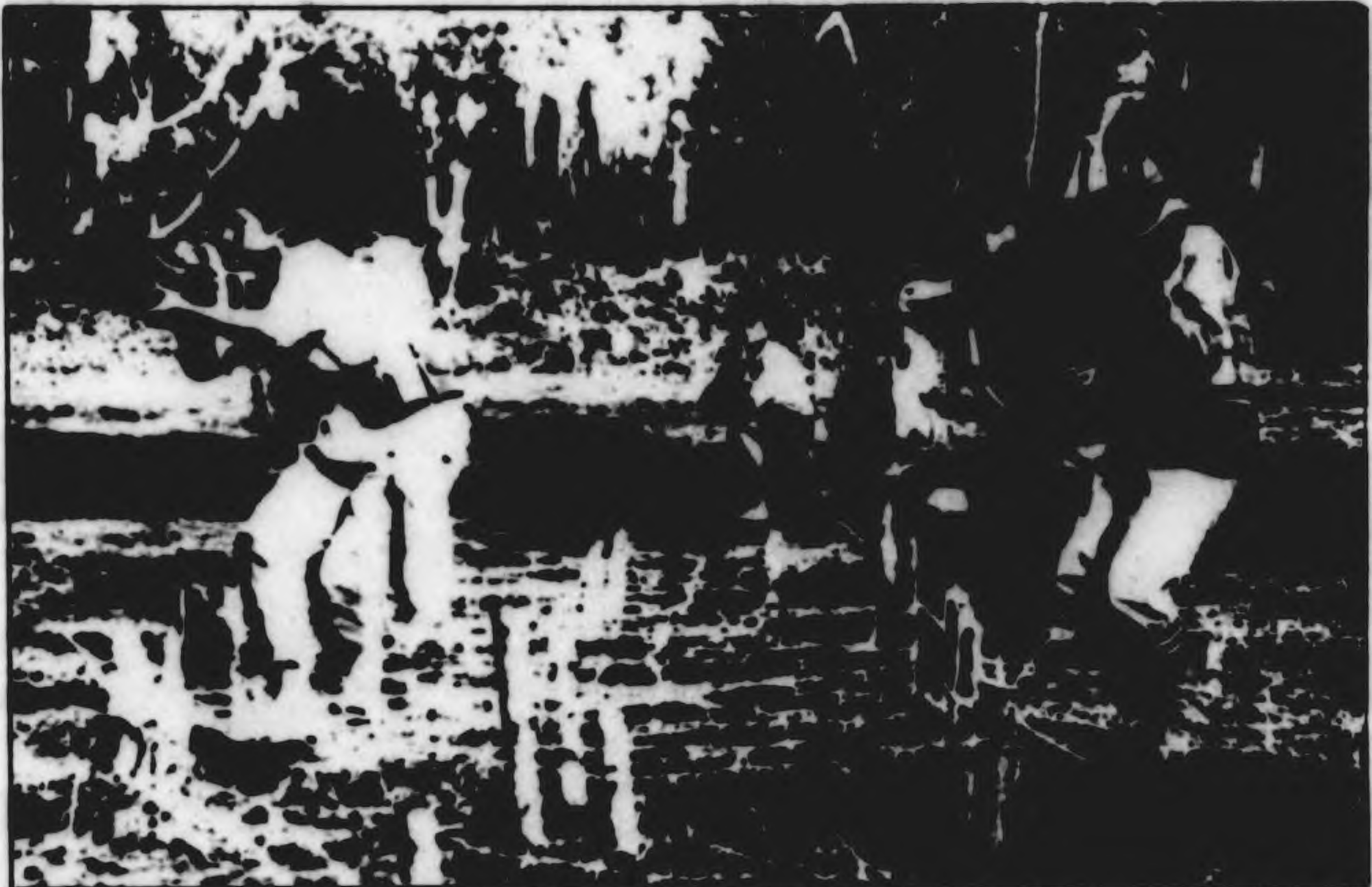
"In a flash, Ka Mayly stormed the camp on her own, laid siege to the detachment, and in minutes, cleared the area. After locating the machine gun, she ran out of the barracks to call her comrades to carry away the M30 and five HPRs. The M30 was the first machine gun seized by the NPA in Isabelia."

After the mission, Ka Mayly and her platoon returned to their home-base in Cagayan. On the way, however, while commanding an assault in Gonzaga, Cagayan, a bullet hit her in the chest, hurling her body to the ground. She died at 18.

Ka Sandra expressed her sense of loss over her buddy's death: "We all miss her. Mayly served consistently with high spirits. She had this flaming courage that refused to flicker even in the wind and storm of the revolution."

As women fighters like Ka Mayly take a bold step forward by forming their own platoon, they are breaking ground in the overall struggle for women's and people's liberation.

Martino del Fuego



Women Red fighters: Treading boldly through the thorn-strewn paths ahead

Land to the landless

NDF-Negros distributes 467 hectares of land to poor peasants



A graduation with a difference: Peasants receive land titles from NDF-Negros

Instead of the annual elementary graduation exercises scheduled for Wednesday, the 15th of March 1989, a unique kind of adult "graduation" ceremony took place in a schoolhouse in Barrio Matahum (not its real name), a village located in a lush valley in southwestern Negros. It was, as a gaily colored souvenir program announced, a National Democratic Front (NDF) land-titling ceremony.

Two hundred and sixteen farmer-beneficiaries were to receive their "diploma" — an NDF certificate of land ownership covering 467 hectares of prime agricultural land. The barrio school headmaster and her flock of young graduates gladly gave in to the NDF's more pressing affair and postponed their own summer exercises to a later date.

In a way, the land titling ceremony presided over by NDF-Negros chairperson Frank Fernandez, was a graduation exercise. "It signalled the formal culmination of two decades of hard agrarian struggle of the Negrense peasants and marked the beginning of a new era of struggle for consolidating the peasants' hold on their own economic and political power," Fernandez explained.

It was actually the second land-titling ceremony to be held in Negros. In November 1988, in a formal ceremony attended by more than 600 people, the NDF-Negros, acting in behalf of the Provisional Revolutionary Government, distributed 2,000 hectares to 250 beneficiaries in Barrio Talwas, also in Negros Occidental.

The March 15th affair started past noon with a ceremonial parade by a guerrilla platoon. After a brief show of command-and-rifle executions, the platoon smartly saluted with their rifles in front of the NDF flag and the banners of the Communist Party, the New People's Army, the Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid, the Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan and the Kabataang Makabayan as the first militant notes of the Internationale began to pour into the valley. And as the solemn crowd picked up the beat, the flag and banners were hoisted, proudly waving in the summer wind.

"Today, we celebrate another hard-fought victory," Fernandez declared in his message. "But we must also be vigilant and be prepared against the expected brutal repression of a desperate fascist state as we reach new heights in our agrarian struggle, in the building of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and in our armed struggle."

Fernandez's words of caution amidst the peasant masses' festive mood that afternoon, had ample basis in fact. For Negros, with a population of 2,981,066, is an island garrison. Excluding the police and paramilitary forces, in 1981 there was a soldier for every 4,500 Negrenses. Now, there is an AFP automatic weapon "protecting" every 298 Negros residents. Or one fascist bullet for every civilian on the island.

As of late 1988, Task Force Sugarland under Col. Rene Cardones, had

scored an impressive headcount in its counter-insurgency drive:

- ▶ over 7,000 unarmed civilians directly affected in 12 massacre cases;
- ▶ 20 hamletted barrios;
- ▶ 365 houses burned;
- ▶ eight houses directly hit by indiscriminate bombings;
- ▶ 12 barrios starved by recurring food blockades;
- ▶ 264 cases of illegal arrests and detention;
- ▶ 85 people summarily executed; and
- ▶ P15 million worth of property, work animals and grain looted by marauding military and paramilitary troops. Almost all of the victims were poor farmers and sacadas.

These military depredations on the Negrense peasants were a result of the US-Aquino regime's "nervous reaction" to a series of successful land confiscations, distribution and occupation by the revolutionary movement on the island, according to Fernandez. In Negros alone, over 12,000 hectares had already been given out free before the March 15th affair. And the NDF-Negros is planning to distribute another 15,000 hectares this year, "as soon as the requirements and preparations are met," said Fernandez.

The Negros revolutionaries' successes and their optimism prevail, despite massive militarization. These could only proceed from an undying trust in the poor farmers' and sacadas' firm resolve to carve their own destiny in Sugarlandia. ☐

SPARKS

Newsbriefs about people's struggles

PEACE TALKS HELD IF BASES SCRAPPED

The National Democratic Front (NDF) expressed its willingness to declare a unilateral ceasefire and hold peace negotiations with the government if the Aquino regime makes a definitive declaration of terminating the US bases agreement after 1991. In a statement dated April 16 and signed by Satur Ocampo, the NDF said the bases have been instrumental in imposing and maintaining "the prevailing system of social injustice, economic backwardness and undemocratic government." The NDF further pointed out that the bases are a "major stumbling block" to the attainment of "true national sovereignty, independence, national unity, progress and peace."

The NDF said that by rejecting any move to extend the stay of the bases, Aquino would be able to redeem herself from her blatant puppetry to US dictates. The NDF warned, however, that if the government "continues to abdicate its responsibilities to the nation," it would call on the people to dismantle the bases themselves. Citing the NPA bombing of US communications facilities in Benguet last April 9, the NDF stressed: "(This) demonstrates the increasing effectiveness of a revolutionary army that enjoys the people's full support."



CPDF HOLDS FOUNDING CONGRESS

The Cordillera People's Democratic Front (CPDF) launched its founding congress last March 17-21 somewhere in Kalinga-Apayao. One of the 13 member-groups of the National Democratic Front (NDF), the CPDF is the revolutionary organization of the various ethno-linguistic groups around the Cordillera mountain ranges.

The founding congress gathered 35 delegates from among the territorial and sectoral groups in the region. Among them were representatives from the Chadli Molintas Command, the youth group DATA-KO, and delegates from tribes and clans.

The five-day congress, which tackled the pressing issues confronting the revolutionary struggle in the Cordilleras, likewise included an in-depth discussion of the CPDF 10-point program.

In a message, the NDF called on the CPDF to "continue giving flesh to the aspiration of genuine autonomy and people's empowerment through the establishment of Provisional Revolutionary Governments in the villages and municipalities."



KIT ON PEACE QUESTION OUT

The NDF published this April a compilation of its major statements and interviews on the peace question from February 1987 to April 6, 1989. In releasing the 34-page booklet entitled "Towards a Just and Enduring Peace," the NDF said, "the issue of a just and enduring peace and how it is to be achieved remains a crucial matter for the public to ponder and take sides on. For this reason, the NDF is presenting its views on how the various political, economic, military and social issues underlying the armed conflict could be resolved." The booklet contains, among others, excerpts from recent interviews with NDF officials Satur Ocampo and Luis Jalandoni and political analyst Jose Ma. Sison.



NPA PUBLISHES MEDIA MONITOR

The Public Information Office of the NPA released the first issue of its official publication *Media Monitor* last January 15. *Media Monitor*



is published quarterly and responds point-by-point to the black propaganda against the revolutionary movement being disseminated by the US-Aquino regime and the AFP among media people. Addressed particularly to media workers, whose exercise of responsible journalism creates a significant impact on the making of public opinion, *Media Monitor* also encourages columnists to express their personal thoughts on such matters as the conduct of the war between the AFP and the NPA. *Media Monitor* also urged professional journalists and mass communicators to verify information contained in press releases emanating from Malacanang and the AFP before writing or airing the news.



NEW PKM PAPER PUBLISHED

The Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid (PKM), the national democratic underground mass organization for the peasantry, published last January the maiden issue of its official monthly newsletter *Katipunan*. Now on its third issue, *Katipunan* said of its aims: "Tungku-lin nitong pukawin ang di-wa't pagkilos ng masang magasaka, patas-in ang antas ng kanilang kamulatang pampulitika at patibayin ang bigkis ng kanilang pagkakaiba."

KATIPUNAN

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SPARKS

NPA PUNISHES ANGELES BUSINESSMAN

The Mariano Garcia Brigade (MGB), the NPA unit operating in Angeles City, claimed responsibility for the slaying of businessman Remigio Nepomuceno last March 8. In a statement issued March



12, Aryel Miranda, spokesman of the MGB, said that Nepomuceno forced women into prostitution and gave them as gifts to his military friends in exchange for favors and privileges. Contrary to earlier reports, Nepomuceno's death had nothing to do with his pro-US bases sentiments, Miranda said. The MGB also cited Nepomuceno's other crimes such as the murder of a student activist, the rape of three women and soliciting funds and actively supporting and arming vigilantes in Pampanga.



INTERNAL STRENGTH IS DECISIVE - MRYL

The Moro Revolutionary Youth League (MRYL), the national democratic underground mass organization for Moro youth and students, welcomed the move by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) to apply for membership in the Organization of Islamic Conference but cautioned the MNLF against overreliance on external support. In a special issue of its official organ *Jabbidah* dated March 18, the MRYL



said that the Moro people's armed struggle had earned the recognition of international communities even during the Marcos dictatorship. "(We) welcome and value all the support (we) can get from foreign friends," said the MRYL, "(but) the sum and substance of (our) struggle will depend on (our) own strength."

In the same issue, the MRYL commemorated the 21st anniversary of the infamous Jabidah Massacre, where at least 20 Moro youth were murdered in Corregidor on orders of Marcos. The MRYL said that as the Jabidah Massacre "gave birth to Moro consciousness," it now "continues to serve as a rallying point to arouse, organize and mobilize the Moro masses toward victory."



FLAG HITS KILLING OF HR LAWYER

The Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG), an organization of human rights lawyers and para-legals, condemned the killing of FLAG member Atty. Oscar Tonog, 37, in Catarman, Samar. In a statement issued March 25, FLAG said "the murder of Attorney Tonog only continues to belie the claim of this government that it protects the democratic and human rights of the Filipino people." Tonog, who was shot by a suspected military man March 21, is the sixth human rights lawyer to be murdered since Aquino came into power.

LETTERS

Comments from readers

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

FOR NON-SEXIST EDUCATION

In Paragraph 12 of the Introduction, insert "women" after "peasants."

In Paragraph 18 of the Introduction, instead of using "other indigenous people and national minorities," use "autonomist" and for "women emancipationists" use "feminists." This is to make all categories consistent with sectors of various ideological persuasions.

In Point 2 (Wage a People's War to Win Total, Nationwide Victory), clarify the distinction between the democratic coalition government (DCG) and the provisional revolutionary government (PRG).

In Point 4 (Uphold and Promote the People's Basic Democratic Rights and Establish a New System of Political Democracy), the phrase "popular means of supervision" is vague. Please clarify.

Regarding Point 5 (Build the National Democratic Economy Based on Self-Reliance, Genuine Development and Social Justice), we understand "national democracy" as a political line; but "national democratic economy"?

Also on Point 5, Paragraph 9, change "The DCG shall support and protect private initiative and entrepreneurship, since the national interest is served (underscoring ours-LIB) by the development of productive capacity and the implementation of technological advances..." to "... as long as the national interest is served..." The development of productive capacity and technological advances is not axiomatic to national interest.

Still on Point 5. In Paragraph 11, why contrapose a non-producing bureaucracy with economic planning that relies on markets? Is it a choice between one and the other?

Also, why avoid mentioning national democracy's socialist perspective?

In Paragraph 4 of Point 10 (Adopt a Comprehensive and Progressive Social Policy ...), expectant and nursing mothers should not be lumped together with "socially disadvantaged groups;" with "vulnerable groups," yes. And please include "single parents" also in this grouping. We suggest that you separate "socially disadvantaged groups" from "vulnerable groups."

In Point 11 (Promote Patriotic, Scientific and Popular Culture and Build a Free and Universal Educational System), insert the word "non-sexist" after "scientific." Also include a paragraph on sexism in culture and education.

In Point 14 (Advance the Revolutionary Emancipation of Women in All Spheres), delete the last sentence of Paragraph 6 ("The old family has to be transformed into a new family where women and men share domestic chores and child-rearing"). The new family cannot be defined just by sharing of domestic chores and child-rearing.

Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan

ON MIGRANT FILIPINOS, GAY RIGHTS

There is need to relate the problem of outmigration with massive unemployment, and to discuss more lengthily the NDF's program for migrant Filipinos.

The issue of homosexual rights should also be tackled.

A comrade in international work

COUNTERCURRENTS

The Philippine government and the US

"For a mess of pottage"

Government's Letter of Intent to the IMF makes a mockery of economic sovereignty



CB's Fernandez



Finance's Jayme



NFA's Gabaldon



Protests mount while officials lock horns over LOI

►target increases in the volume of exports and imports;

►the privatization of government corporations, including two subsidiaries of the National Food Authority (NFA); and

►a 50-centavo increase in the price of rice sold by the NFA and the elimination of budgetary support extended by the national government to this agency.

Extending to over 33 pages of document, the letter of intent sets government targets in the generation of funds from sources in and out of the country. Already, the contents of the letter of intent have raised a howl of protest from various sectors and individuals, including from Aquino's own Cabinet. For one, Economic Planning Secretary Solita Monsod has gone on record saying that the outlined methods for achieving the economic targets amount to "stiff and heavy conditions."

Dire scenarios

In a letter to Aquino, Monsod warned that the targets would cause economic difficulties for the people. And in case of shortfalls in these targets, she said, "the government may have to adopt new tax measures or cut expenditures, or both." In fact, all these are likely, she added, because the targets were "unrealistic."

The government has taken pains to deny that the agreement with the IMF would push up the prices of goods and services, cut government expenses for social services and force the government to levy new taxes.

But each day, such a scenario only becomes more real. For example, barely a month after the LOI was signed, the government stood helplessly as the price per kilo of rice rose steeply from P7 to P9-P16. Traders hoarded and jacked up prices as soon as NFA Administrator Pelagio Gabaldon revealed that rice was in short supply, that the government plans to import the commodity and that the IMF has imposed a freeze in the NFA budget. Gabaldon was summoned to the palace after his disastrous slip, but by that time, the price of rice had already doubled.

Within weeks of the signing of the agreement, Aquino also backed out of a pledge not to impose new taxes.

The scenario is chilling: the price of rice soaring uncontrollably; a new round of price increases of oil and utilities setting off the costs of everything from toothpaste to tuition fees; new taxes; and finally, wages running out long before the next payday.

Despite strong denials by government, a galloping cost of living is inevitable in the next two years. A new economic program signed by Central Bank Governor Jose Fernandez and Finance Secretary Vicente Jayme pledged to the US-dominated International Monetary Fund (IMF) in exchange for new loans, seeks to raise the maximum amount possible for the Aquino regime, not only to cover its

deficits but principally, to allow the government to pay off its staggering \$28.3 billion debt.

The three-year program outlined in the letter of intent (LOI) provides, among others

►the elimination of government tax subsidies for fuel beginning 1990;

►a target increase in savings of over 5% of gross national product (GNP), a large part of which should be generated by the public sector;

►the rationalization of the tax system for more efficient collection and administration;

►the early retirement of government employees, and a freeze in hiring and wage increases;

COUNTERCURRENTS

Schools have asked for higher tuition fees, and the National Power Corporation has announced that new increases in oil and power are inevitable. The world oil price is going up, the oil price stabilization fund — which subsidizes sudden increases in world oil prices — is running out, and the IMF has put a lid on government intervention to control the price of oil products.

"We are trying to work out something so that whatever increases will be made will be done at a minimum," Aquino said uncomfortably at a news conference. But the President has been unable to reassure a restive public. Newspaper reports warned of a scenario similar to Venezuela, where IMF austerity measures sparked riots that have left over 300 people killed.

Fuelling the public's unease is the likelihood that labor's demand for a P36-increase in the minimum wage would be rejected by government — a move that is sure to trigger strikes and massive protests.

In the light of these ominous developments, Monod has issued a warning: "The government," she said, should be "aware of all its (IMF program) pitfalls and implications, both economic and political."

Badly strapped for cash, the Aquino government has chosen to turn a deaf ear to such dire predictions and has gone ahead with the signing of the LOI. In exchange, the government is supposed to receive \$1.3 billion in new loans over the next three years, broken down to \$900 million in extended fund facility and \$400 million in contingency financing to cover sharp fluctuations in the prices of traditional exports.

With the signing of the LOI, the IMF, the World Bank and other lending institutions are assured of continued debt payments, which already eats up more than 40% of the country's GNP. In addition, the signing of the LOI paves the way for talks with commercial banks that would enable the government to negotiate \$1.6 billion in new money.

One of the main reasons for the government's capitulation to IMF conditionalities, however, is the "seal of good housekeeping" that it grants the Philippines. Put in plain and simple terms, the letter of intent was one of the conditions for the approval of the Philippine Aid Plan (PAP). Similar to the Marshall Plan that rebuilt a devastated Europe after World War II, the Aquino government hopes to raise through the PAP, some \$10 billion from major capitalist countries, pri-

ncipally Japan and the United States, to rehabilitate the Philippine economy.

Trading away sovereignty

The Aquino government's mad scramble for funds gives the lie to claims of "success" in its development strategy. Often cited as proof of such "success" is the 6.7% GNP growth rate achieved for 1988. Economic analysts, however, say that last year's growth was artificial and therefore, not likely to be duplicated in 1989.

"For one," said Nestor, a member of an NDF collective of businessmen and economists, "this growth rate cannot be sustained in the medium-term because it is based on debt that has to be repaid." Moreover, the government's growth strategy "lacks a coherent industrial plan on which to build self-sustaining development. Based mainly on primary and semi-processed products exports, it is destructive of the fragile natural resource base of the country."

"This," said Nestor, "is the kind of economic strategy that the Aquino government has pledged to continue in its letter of intent to the IMF."

Nestor also cited the anti-people bias of the strategy, saying that whatever growth has been attained has mainly benefited the rich and certain sections of the middle class, not the many who are poor. "Poverty levels have been at their highest since Aquino came to power," he said. "And although the economy grew at respectable rates, the number of people living in poverty has grown to over 70% of the population. What we are now going through is no less than a crisis," he stressed.

But if the short-term effects of the IMF-sponsored economic program are frightening, what it can do to the economy in the long run is a nightmare.

The Aquino government's response to the economic crisis is to borrow more money; and yet, it is the country's huge foreign debt that has been draining the country of resources badly needed for its economic development. "What could be more ridiculous than to borrow under stringent conditionalities merely to cover a fiscal gap resulting from a yearly hemorrhage of \$3 billion in interest and amortization to an immoral debt?" Nestor asked. "By allowing the IMF to dictate austerity measures in exchange for loans, the Aquino government has traded away our economic sovereignty for a mess of pottage."

Pen Guerrero



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Turning military aid against Filipinos

OUR NATION'S DEBT BUYS WEAPONS FOR OUR NATION'S DEATH!



there money for hospitals to heal the victims of these military operations. For US TNCs like Boeing, Westinghouse (the builder of the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant) and General Dynamics, the most profit-

able operations come from military contracts funded by US aid.

Economic Support Fund (ESF): \$160 million/year. Economic support funds seldom support the economy. Indeed, the US State Department brazenly states the objective of ESF as "to support US economic, political and security interests." Since this type of aid is a simple cash transfer from the United States to the Philippines, it can be used for whatever the government here wants. Often, these funds end up with the military.

In the early 1980s, Marcos used a lot of his ESF funds for propaganda in support of the bases. A 1984 US government report disclosed that Marcos used nearly two-thirds of ESF money in the early 1980s to build roads, schools and other facilities near the US bases. The report concluded that a major objective was to make "Filipinos aware of the economic benefits derived from continued US use of the bases."

This time around, there is talk of using some of the ESF money to retire a small portion of the Philippine debt. Even if approved by the US Congress, only a maximum of 2-3% of our enormous debt would be eliminated, still leaving us with far more debt than we can repay.

No one is talking of using the money for projects conceived by and geared toward poorer Filipinos.

Development Assistance (food, development, housing): \$121 million. The biggest portion of this, \$50 million, is set aside for food aid. "Food aid" sounds like a good thing but, ironically, this is one of the most destructive forms of US aid. Its main purpose is to find markets for surplus US food production, often to the benefit of huge US corporate farms. The food is then sold at low prices by the Philippine government and, like the recent imports of cheap apples and oranges, it undercuts local Filipino farmers.

Another \$46 million is set for "development assistance." Here again, the name "development assistance" camouflages the reality. Many studies have shown that much of US development assistance actually makes the lives of the poor harder by strengthening landowners and others that oppress the poor. A lot of this aid goes toward building rural roads which benefit the military most of all. Some of it is used to build dams and other projects that lead to damage in the environment. Overall, the biggest problem is that the poorer majority are never included in the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects. Until this occurs, aid will be used against the people who need it most.

A final \$25 million is set for housing investment guarantees. The Philippines has a sad history of using housing loans to build structures that only wealthier Filipinos can afford. Again, this aid widens the gap between rich and poor.

As with military aid, the big gainers of all this aid are American firms who get the contracts to produce the goods and services for the aid.

"Creative portion": corporate loans, guarantees and insurance: up to \$250 million/year. The United States also pledges up to \$250 million a year from two government agencies: the Export-Import Bank and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC). These two agencies were originally set up to help finance the overseas expansion of US transnational corporations. The first, the Export-Import Bank, should be well known to Filipinos - for it directly financed or guaranteed almost half the loans for the mothballed Bataan Nuclear Power Plant. The US TNC Westinghouse made millions off this deal; the Filipino people now have to repay up to half a million dollars a day to foreign creditors (led by the Export-Import Bank).

Similarly, OPIC operates entirely for the benefit of US TNCs, which depend on its risk insurance to protect their investments in foreign countries. Big TNCs like Del Monte and Texas Instruments can be expected to take advantage of this new insurance to exploit Filipino workers producing for overseas markets.

In conclusion, the bases agreement, which reduces our security and increases our dependence on the United States, is not in the interest of the majority of Filipinos. Against our interests, it once again enriches a repressive military and strengthens the grip of foreign firms over our economy. ■

Bakit Pula ang Mukha ng Araw?

*Kapag pula ang mukha ng araw,
May digmaan.
— Kasabihan*

Pulang-pula ang mukha ng araw
sa pag-aagawan ng gabi at liwanag
sa pagluluksa ng takipsilim
kaya't maging sa pagkalat ng dilim
ang hiram na liwanag ng buwan
ay kulay pula hindi dilaw
sa maagang dapithapong humahabol
sa paglubog ng araw sa kanluran

Sa tuktok ng bundok ay iisang anino
matayog na bantayog sa dilim ang natatanaw
di na madaraan ng matitibay na paang
bibitin-bitin sa mga baging

Ka Enyong, maniniwala ba ako sa matatanda?
Kung bakit sa pula ng araw, pinawi ng digmaan
ang buhay mo gayong dapat sanang nailigtas mo
ang hininga ni Ka Greg na nagwakas dahil wala,
wala ka ritong aming doktor?

Nakapagngingitngit isiping nasawi ka sa kamay
ng malulupit na pasistang walang isip
nadakip sa patibong ng mga buktot
na hiwaga sa likod ng dilim ng pulang
lumulukob sa mukha ng araw

Totoo ang sinabi mong humiram ng silahis ang buwan
sa ngayo'y pulang-pulang araw
Tulad ng tanglaw ng prinsipyo mong mula sa Isabela
hanggang Bikol ay naglingkod sa mga api

Pula ang mukha ng araw dahil may digmaan
pula ito dahil nagnangalit ang mga mamamayan
Patuloy na tatanglaw ang buwan sa madilim na landas
na iyong tinahak at naiwan
sa landas ng mga mandirigmang di tumitigil
sa pakikibaka
hanggang matiyak ang tagumpay

Ruth Firmeza



"Bakit Pula ang Mukha ng Araw?" is one of the featured poems in *STR: Poetry of People's War in the Philippines* compiled by the People's Art, Literature and Education Resource Center (MAB-STREAM) and published by the Bureau of Publishing of Rebo-Intervencyang Pambansa at Unibersidad ng Maynila (UNAM). *STR*, which was launched on March 25, 1970, also features poems by other post-revolutionaries, including Wilfredo Garcia, Emmanuel Lanza, Fernando Magallon, Juan Montano and Ed Montano.

MERDEKA!
by Amir Ablang



Historic injustice in Moroland: Poverty and hunger abound while MNCs grow fruit exports

An autonomy devoid of substance

Over the last few months, the Aquino regime's landlord and big business-dominated legislative arm, has been holding marathon sessions in order to come up with an Organic Act for the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao.

The result of these sessions is an emasculated form of autonomy anchored on national oppression. Close scrutiny of the Organic Act shows that it provides for an autonomy that has no substance. It is an autonomy that does not cater to the basic and historical issues of injustice, poverty, discrimination and marginalization facing the Moro people. Therefore, this brand of autonomy will only institutionalize the exploitation and oppression of the Moros — a process that has been going on for hundreds of years.

Injustice. The bitter experiences of the Moro masses during the height of the Marcos regime's genocidal campaign against them are being repeated today, so much so that mistrust and hatred of the Aquino government is widespread among the Moro people. They have sensed that the Aquino government has no intention of healing the wounds of mistrust and injustice. For instance, no single military man found to have committed offenses against the Moro masses has been convicted and sent to jail. During the Marcos era, injustice was seen in the formation of the Ilaga terrorist gang by landgrabbers in collusion with the AFP. Today, under the Aquino regime, the Ilaga has given way to the CAFGU, the government's armed-to-the-teeth killing machine primarily tasked with counter-insurgency. The formation of the

CAFGU means another round of harassment and terrorism inflicted on the Moro masses.

Poverty. Perhaps, it is only the Moro masses who, amid a bounty of natural resources still wallow in the valley of poverty. A poverty-stricken people, they have been further pushed into hunger with the continued non-recognition of their rights to own the land they cultivate. Not a single provision of the Organic Act addresses the food crisis in Moroland. Obviously, this is because the authors of the said law represent the landlords and the multinationals who benefit from the exploitation of the Moro resources.

Discrimination. Marginalization. The Moro masses' continued refusal to accept the established norm of the majority has resulted in hundreds of years of discrimination and marginalization. In factories, particularly those that can be found in Moroland, workers are brought in from other areas. Hence, Moros find themselves isolated in terms of job opportunity. Or in some cases, factory owners themselves refuse to allow Moros to be part of the workforce because of the lack of technical know-how — result of their lack of formal education. (The Moro areas suffer the highest rates of illiteracy in the country.)

As these facts make clear, the Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act is bound to fail as it does not address the historical problems of the Moro masses. The so-called Muslim Mindanao that the Act has created will provide a new setting for the Moro people's struggle for self-determination. ■

**KAMTIN
ANG**

KALAYAAN!

*Nasa atin ang suporta ng masa
Nasa panig natin ang kasaysayan
Subalit kailangan ka, kasama
Upang ating makamtan ang kalayaan
mula sa paghihikahos
mula sa kaapihan
mula sa paghahari ng dayuhan*

**Sumanib sa
Bagong
Hukbong
Bayan!**

Kung ikaw ay :

- ▶ 15 taong gulang pataas
- ▶ may malusog na pangangatawan
- ▶ kasapi ng isang rebolusyonaryong organisasyong masa
- ▶ may mahusay na rekord ng pagkatao
- ▶ nais maglingkod sa pinakamataas na antas ng pakikibaka



**Magtungo at magpatala
sa pinakamalapit
na tanggapan o kumand
ng BHB sa inyong erya.**