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GRP "peace plan"

**Iron hand,
velvet glove**

Towards a liberating peace

The social crisis in our country has reached unprecedentedly serious proportions. The people's suffering has become ever more acute. The people are gearing for gigantic protest actions as intensified armed offen-

sives are being carried out by revolutionary forces. At the same time, the civil posture of the administration is threatened by militarists from within and from without.

In the face of the crisis confronting the nation, peace initiatives are being explored by some elements of the administration, who calculate that talks about peace or even peace talks are merely a device for riding out the current grave crisis, to confuse the ranks of progressive forces and preempt the more conservative political opponents of the ruling faction of the elite.

For its part, the NDF has been fighting for total victory in the national democratic revolution to achieve the optimum conditions for a liberating, just and lasting peace. Still, the NDF is open to explore the possibilities of negotiating with the government at any time so long as the national and democratic interests of the people can be served.

In fact, the NDF has expressed its willingness to reopen bilateral talks with the government since the start of 1989. In proposing the reopening of peace talks,

the NDF has not set any substantive preconditions. However, the peace process can proceed more smoothly if the Aquino administration undertakes steps to improve the atmosphere and conditions for such talks.

The NDF shall enter into talks without prejudice

to the initiatives and actions of the the revolutionary forces in defense of the people's rights and interests. The NDF cannot allow the people to remain defenseless against the government's anti-people actions and policies.

Through the peace process, the NDF hopes to lessen the cost of the civil strife, both in terms of human lives and destruction and damage to property. In this regard, the revolutionary forces would like to achieve an agreement on human rights and the observance of Protocol II and other international laws of war between the government and the NDF, and between the AFP and the NPA.

But the overall objective, albeit a much more difficult one to achieve, is a com-

prehensive political settlement addressing the fundamental issues of the Filipino people - land reform, the US bases, the external debt and other basic problems.

It is the resolution of the people's fundamental problems that will ultimately bring justice, peace and progress to our troubled land. ■



**IN
THIS
ISSUE**



Cover stories

The Aquino government has begun floating the idea of peace talks with the NDF in a bid to ride out the ruling system's worst political and economic crisis since the Second World War. The NDF has indicated its openness to bilateral negotiations but stressed that talks can only prosper on the basis of an agenda addressing the people's fundamental problems. In this issue, *LIB* also unmask the reality behind the so-called "peace zone" in Sagada, Mountain Province.

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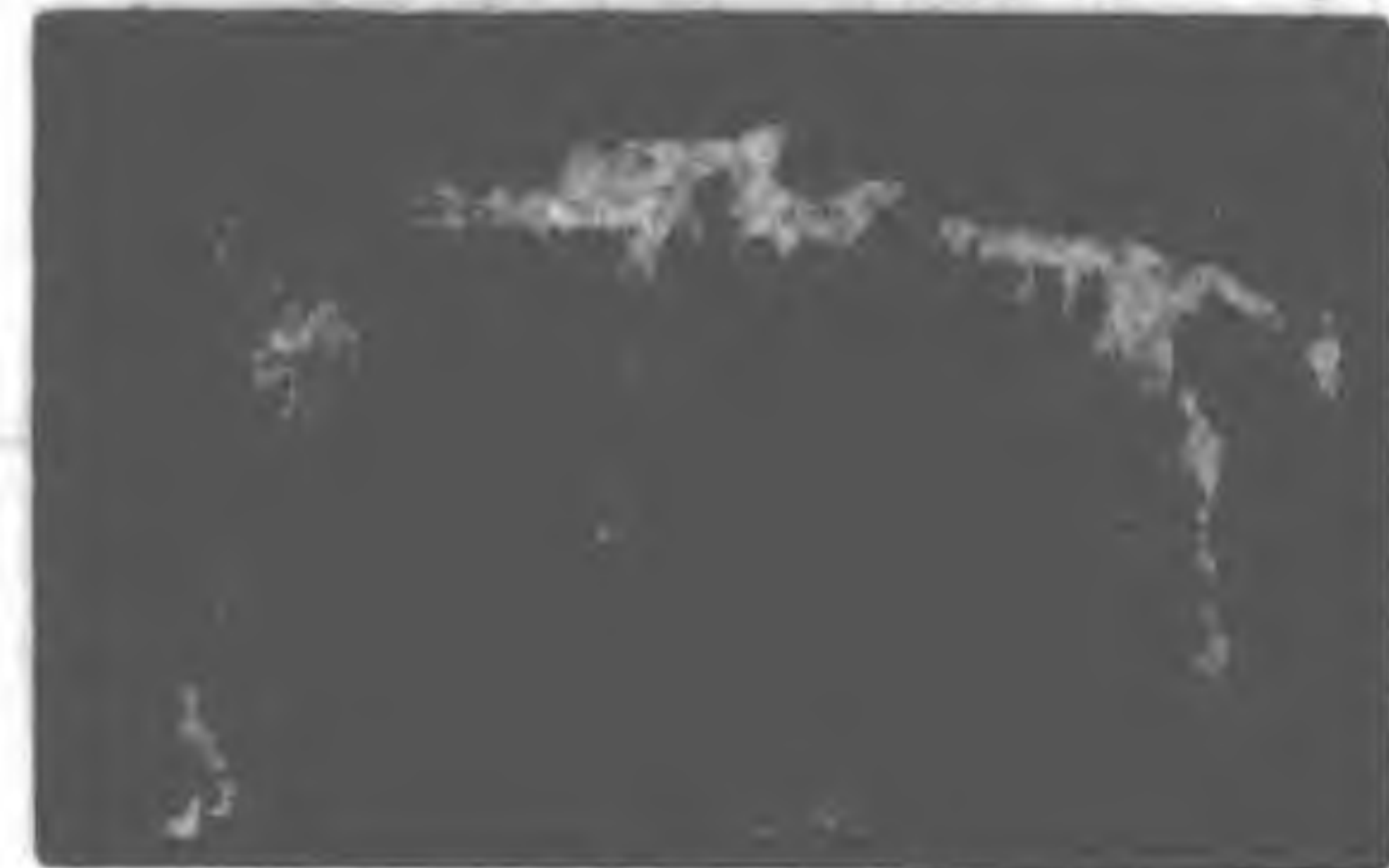
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An agenda for our times

NDF proposes bilateral talks with GFP based on people's agenda to solve the national crisis

The headlines stunned the nation: "Government okays bid to hold peace talks." "Multi-sector meet on truce approved." "Palace meeting to study ceasefire."

After months of spurning peace proposals from the National Democratic Front (NDF) and various other sectors and political groups, the Aquino government's Cabinet Committee on Political and Security Affairs (also known as Cluster E) suddenly announced that it would meet with peace advocates to explore the possibility of holding talks with the Left. Queried on this turnabout, government spokesmen said they were "responding" to a Senate resolution urging the immediate declaration of a ceasefire with all armed groups and to the growing clamor for peace.

Trapped in a quagmire

An examination of the context in which the "peace offer" was made would suggest, however, that the change in government policy has been motivated less by the regime's magnanimity than by its desire to ride out the worst crisis the ruling system has suffered since World War II.

As of mid-1990, the country's Gross National Product had posted a dismal 1.1% growth rate, prompting the regime to revise this year's growth targets from 5.5% to as low as 2%. The balance of trade, which registered an unprecedented \$2.6 billion shortfall in 1989, is expected to balloon to \$3 billion this year — the biggest deficit in postwar history. The government's budgetary

deficit is also expected to zoom to P55 billion by year's end, way beyond the previous estimate of P33 billion. Aggravating the economic



downslide **Aquino: Going for peace?** is the Middle East crisis and the series of natural disasters which have left a wide swath of destruction in various parts of the country.

With the economy on the verge of recession, splits and factional struggles among the ruling classes have further intensified, plunging the Aquino government into its worst political crisis ever. Since the December 1989 coup attempt, not a single month has passed without the regime being threatened by another power grab from rival ruling class factions. The regime's growing inability to ensure the continued rule of the elite and secure the retention of the US military bases has also worried US imperialism, prompting political analysts to predict heightened US intervention in domestic affairs.



Municipal-level PRG in Northern Luzon: Building foundations for a durable peace

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Under the circumstances, say observers, it would not be farfetched for the US to push for the "reorganization" of the national leadership, should the situation worsen any further.

1991. The NDF assailed the US bases as "both symbols and concrete manifestations of US imperialism's infringement of our sovereign will." Pinpointing neocolonial relations as being largely responsible for the

ize the oil industry.

To shield the most vulnerable classes and sectors from the effects of spiralling inflation, the NDF has also called for adequate wage adjustments for workers, government employees and teachers.

Also high on the NDF's *Nine-Point Agenda* is the implementation of genuine land reform. With no self-respecting peasant group reposing its trust in the regime's agrarian reform, the NDF has called for the immediate implementation of the People's Agrarian Reform Code or



Cluster E's Drilon, Ramos, de Villa (l-r): Raising calls for surrender

With its political survival at stake, the Aquino government has fallen back on classic divide-and-rule tactics by offering to "talk peace" with the revolutionary forces and in the process isolate its militarist rivals. Once the militarists have been neutralized, however, the regime could then train its guns against the Left.

An emerging consensus

Ranged against the regime's opportunism is the growing consensus among various people's organizations that the first step to genuine peace involves the resolution of the country's most pressing problems and the alleviation of the current crisis. For its part, the NDF has submitted its own proposals to resolve the current crisis (see p. 32). Said the NDF: "It is time for the Filipino people to stand up and fight for their own agenda — one that addresses the root causes of their sufferings and provides immediate relief as well as basic solutions."

Foremost in the NDF's *Nine-Point Agenda to Bring Immediate Relief and Solve the National Crisis* are proposed measures to assert national sovereignty and remove all US military bases and troops by

backwardness of the country and the deepening poverty of the broad masses, the NDF also called for the scrapping of the regime's Memorandum of Agreement with the IMF and other imperialist-dictated economic arrangements.

The gravity of the economic crisis has moreover prompted the NDF to propose measures that would give priority to economic relief and to laying the basis for economic emancipation. Along this line, the NDF has called for a moratorium on debt service payments for the next five years and the selective repudiation of foreign loans to immediately free massive resources for national reconstruction and industrialization. To protect domestic industry from the onslaught of massive importation, the NDF has batted for the scrapping of the import liberalization program.

The continued rise of domestic oil prices has likewise prompted the NDF to push for the abolition of the Oil Price Stabilization Fund, the implementation of bigger cuts in oil taxes and the adoption of centralized procurement for oil imports to eliminate added costs. Eventually, said the NDF, measures would have to be implemented to national-

PARCODE which it says, does not essentially differ from the revolutionary agrarian reform program currently implemented in NDF zones. Said the NDF: "Gains from initiatives already taken by peasants' organizations or people's revolutionary organs of governance, such as land occupation and confiscation should be recognized in the face of continued government inaction."

With respect to human rights, the NDF called for, among others, the repeal of all repressive laws, the release of all political prisoners and a halt to bombings, forced evacuations, food blockades, summary executions and other human rights violations. The NDF has also batted for the formation and strengthening of people's organizations and the adoption of political and electoral reforms to ensure the greater participation and role of the workers, peasants and other politically marginalized sections of the population. Towards the people's empowerment, said the NDF, the organs of political power which have been formed in the revolutionary zones should be recognized, as they "embody the popular aspirations of the masses in the locality and are fully bound to implement their just

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and legitimate interests." The NDF likewise underscored the need for reforms in the military to cleanse it of human rights violators and corrupt and criminal elements. The people's civil liberties can never be guaranteed nor threats of fascist attacks disappear so long as the AFP remains as the "elites' iron arm." The NDF called for the formation of a patriotic and pro-people army.

As for graft and corruption, the twin evils that have been the hallmark of every reactionary Philippine government, the NDF assailed the present administration's "rate of uncontrolled plunder of public resources which has already surpassed any other regime before, and in only four-and-a-half years." The NDF demanded the immediate prosecution and removal from office of corrupt officials and the return of public resources they have stolen while in office.

Batting for the right of the Bangsa Moro, the Cordillera peoples and other indigenous peoples to self-determination, the NDF has reaffirmed their right to decide their own destiny, to free themselves from national oppression, exploitation, chauvinism and discrimination. Their claims to ancestral lands will be respected as will their cultural, historical, religious and legal traditions. The NDF also called for genuine autonomy which shall provide full guarantees for self-governance "within the framework of people's democracy and a structure that ensures full people's participation."

The NDF has also bewailed the massive ecological damage that has threatened the sustainability of the people's livelihood and wrought havoc upon the lives and property of

the US bases, the foreign debt, the suspension of the government's land conversion scheme, wage adjustments, graft and corruption, the suspension of public school teachers, the right to peaceful assembly and human rights and international humanitarian laws, among others.

Through its *Nine-Point Agenda*, the NDF has raised anew the urgency of addressing the substantive issues that are central to the attainment of a just and lasting peace. Explaining that "it does not wage war for war's sake," the NDF said that it has always been open to a peaceful resolution of the armed conflict, should such an opportunity arise.

Thus, in December 1988, the NDF first raised the offer of a unilateral ceasefire should the Aquino government decree the removal of all US military facilities in the country by September 1991. The offer, along with an articulation of the urgent need to address other fundamental problems of Philippine society, has since been raised on several occasions and endorsed

by various individuals and organizations — only to be rejected by the government at every turn.

Reviving a time-worn formula

Government's response to the rising clamor for radical and comprehensive change has indeed been disappointing, to say the least. For starters, even while Aquino spokespersons fill the air with the rhetoric



Peasant march: Clamoring for a genuine agrarian reform

USPHOTOS

the population. In response, the NDF proposes a 25-year ban on commercial logging, and the institution of rehabilitation programs where communities are enjoined to actively participate in the management of forests and other resources in their areas.

The multi-sectoral peace advocates led by Sen. Wigberto Tanada have also cited a broad range of issues they want covered, including

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of peace, Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos has declared that no negotiations could take place unless the revolutionary forces first lay down their arms. AFP Vice Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Rodolfo Blazon has in effect echoed Ramos' call for surrender by demanding that the framework for talks between the government and the NDF must be the regime's constitution. In a public forum held at the Manila Hotel last September 17, however, former NDF lawyer Romeo Capulong and Prof. Edmundo Garcia, a leading peace

advocate, countered that such a conditionality would only prejudice the peace process because it would not be acceptable to the revolutionary forces. Pointing out that "any revolutionary movement operates outside of the legal political framework," they said that "the insurgents should not be compelled to recognize the constitution during the peace negotiation."

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NDF agenda: Upholding the right to self-determination

PHOTO

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With its insistence on ceasefire and surrender, the government has given no thought to the resolution of the issues raised by the NDF and other peace advocates. In a meeting held September 28 between Cluster E and the multilateral

peace talks." Apparently stung by the NDF's subsequent release of its *Nine-Point Agenda*, the government also defensively dismissed its contents as a "hodge-podge of hoary communist slogans and shibboleths." To date, however, the government has failed to come up with a comprehensive proposal to match that of the NDF or even the multisectoral peace advocates, for that matter.

Affairs Luis Jalandoni said that the revolutionary forces have asked President Aquino "to take certain steps to create a favorable atmosphere for dialog in accordance with national sovereignty and democracy, within the framework of her own constitution and within her executive power and responsibility. No substantive preconditions," he said, "have been set that are one-sidedly beneficial or costly to any side."

Jalandoni made the formal offer through Rep. Jose Yap, chairman of the House Committee on National Defense, who traveled to Utrecht, The Netherlands this October to meet with NDF officials. Aquino has yet to respond to the offer.

Meanwhile, the NDF's initiatives are being complemented by efforts of various progressive political and non-



NDF call to GRP: Create a favorable atmosphere for talks

peace advocates, the latter once more urged the government to include in their discussion "substantive issues that have direct bearing on the peace process." Even the conservatives among them were shocked and dismayed to hear the Justice Secretary intone that "national issues are beyond the scope of the

For its part, the NDF has formally declared its willingness to enter into bilateral peace negotiations with the Aquino government "before a multilateral audience of advocates truly committed to a just peace." In a statement sent to Philippine dailies this October, NDF Vice Chairperson for International

governmental organizations to open the gates to a comprehensive settlement of the civil war. It is the force of a determined people that may yet compel the Aquino regime to abandon its opportunist tack and finally come to terms with the rising clamor for a just and lasting resolution of the armed conflict. **Nicole Felipe**

On the critical situation in the Philippines

by Jose Ma. Sison
September 8, 1990

A grave crisis is now gripping the Philippines. Conditions are ripe for unprecedentedly gigantic mass actions and even for an unarmed mass uprising capable of causing the downfall of the reactionary ruling clique.

The Aquino ruling clique is increasingly isolated and is in desperation as a result of its servility to foreign interests, its rapacity in favor of narrow family, factional and class interests and its violent reaction to the national and democratic demands of the broad masses of the people.

The Aquino regime is mortally afraid of the upsurge of mass resistance by the oppressed and exploited people; and the coup threats of armed rival factions within the same rotting ruling system of big compradors and landlords. Thus, the regime has

made rhetorical pleas to both its revolutionary and reactionary opponents for dialog, truce and cooperation with the calculated objective of defusing the explosive situation and riding out the crisis.

As they uphold their integrity and stand for the national and democratic rights and interests of the people, the patriotic and progressive forces have no choice but first of all to launch powerful mass actions and other forms of offensives against the ruling reactionary clique and its foreign master, the United States.

This is the only way to further strengthen the people and the progressive forces and increase their weight in any kind of negotiation. Without the upsurge of the mass movement against them, the Aquino regime and the Armed Forces of the Philippines will continue to be ar-



Sison: "Powerful mass actions"

rogant, demanding that the revolutionary forces surrender principle, people, territory and arms.

Upon the upsurge of the mass movement, the crisis of the ruling system will certainly further worsen; and there are a number of probabilities. Aquino might declare martial law and will be undercut by her own vice commander-in-chief Gen-



People's strike in Mindanao: Strengthening leverage in peace negotiations

NGF-Mindanao



Anti-base rally: Nationalist upsurge

UPI/OTOS

eral Ramos. The armed reactionary factions might intensify their coup threats and actually carry these out. Ramos might make his own coup in the guise of a counter-coup. The US and the Catholic Church might also try to work out a compromise among all or most of the reactionary factions.

These probabilities, especially the ones involving the threat of martial law and barefaced military rule, should not frighten the progressive forces into paralysis or clinging to the skirt of the floundering Aquino regime. It is a matter of obligation to the broad masses of the people, especially the workers and the peasants, that the progressive forces carry out ever larger mass actions and other forms of offensives on a wide range of anti-imperialist, antifeudal and antifascist issues in order to gain strength in the course of struggle. To do otherwise is to lose initiative, be in default and lose the support of the people. In this way, the Aquino regime has the chance of muddling through and wreaking havoc on the lives of the people until 1992.

At this point in time, most people should be disabused of the illusion that the Aquino ruling faction is necessarily better than those

reactionary factions which threaten to launch one more coup attempt; and in that connection the progressive forces are automatically obligated to become the ally or camp follower of the Aquino regime at whatever cost. The record shows that the policies and actions of the ruling reactionary faction have done more harm to the people than the armed reactionary factions that wrought destruction in their 1987 and 1989 coup attempts. Aquinoism is Marcosism without Marcos.

The point here is not to speak better of the anti-Aquino reactionary factions but to stress that the people and progressive forces owe nothing to the Aquino regime and ought to exert their own efforts to mobilize the people and push forward the movement for national liberation and democracy before considering how any reactionary faction can be dealt with in a new way.

The progressive forces and the people can take advantage of the split among the reactionaries either by finding common cause with one faction against the other or simply letting the two factions slug it out without the need to side with one against the other. The reactionary factions of the ruling system may also act as they may decide in com-

mon or separately. They can temporarily settle their contradictions by violent means or by compromise. Either way the crisis of the ruling system will continue to worsen and make the ground fertile for the further growth of popular resistance.

The high costs of the policy of maintaining a large military organization and launching of anti-communist campaigns of suppression have already weakened the reactionary system to the very core as never before. The imposition of martial law and outright fascist dictatorship on the people will only aggravate the all-round crisis of

the ruling system. Whichever reactionary force rules the Philippines can only aggravate the crisis.

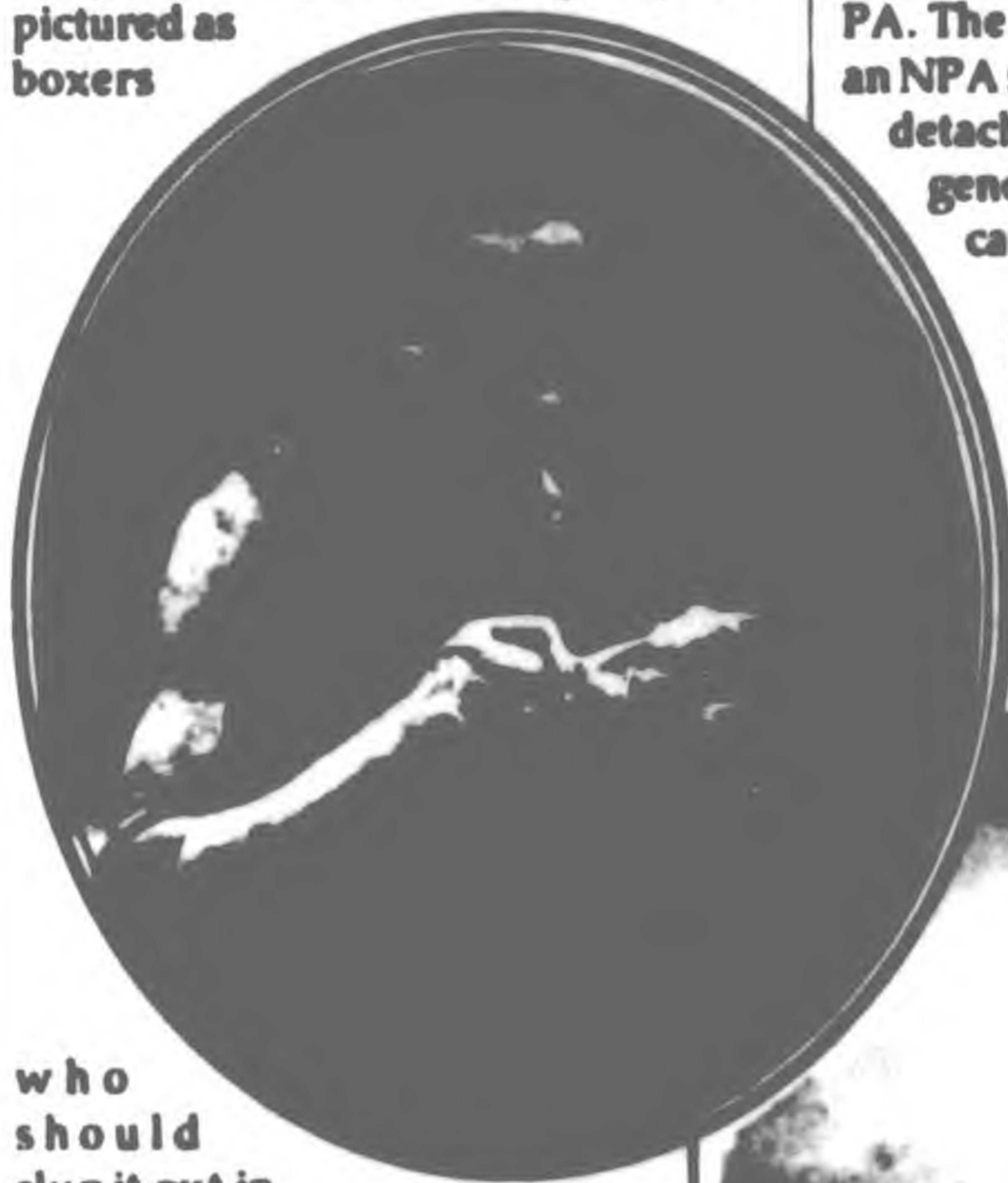
The fundamental problems of the people, the grave social crisis can neither be solved nor allayed to any significant extent without the agreement and participation of all the patriotic and progressive forces, especially the revolutionary movement, in a consensus of national unity against US domination and the worst evils of the social system. Such a consensus becomes feasible only after and not before the clear demonstration of the strength of the people and the progressive forces who are constantly looked down upon, repressed and subjected to schemes of deception.

Upon the clear demonstration of the strength of the people and progressive forces and the recognition of this strength by other forces, I hope that conditions for my return to the Philippines can arise so that I can contribute what I can to the cause of promoting and realizing the best interests of the entire nation and the people. I intend to return to the Philippines when the conditions permit, and if the further advance of the cause of national liberation and democracy can be aided by my return.

Tried and found wanting

Why the peace zones in Sagada failed

"Zones of peace," according to current proposals by the Coalition for Peace (CfP), are areas where the stationing and movement of all armed combatants within their boundaries would be limited, if not prohibited altogether. In effect, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the New People's Army (NPA) would have to fight elsewhere, and leave the civilian population "in peace" to go about their daily business. The armed groups are pictured as



who should slug it out in the ring, with the people watching unharmed. The CfP formulation would make it appear that the people are "neutral" and not active participants in the civil war.

Sagada: Shattered showcase

The case of Sagada, Mountain Province is often cited as proof that zones of peace can work. Since 1989, this Cordillera town has been a pilot area

of the CfP and its regional counterpart, the Movement for Autonomy and Peace.

A month before the CfP entered the scene in January 1989, a campaign had been launched by the municipal council and other concerned citizens who later passed a resolution calling on both the AFP and the NPA to pull out of Sagada. The people had been angered by a series of AFP abuses, particularly the killing of two youths by elements of the 50th IB-PA. The death of a young boy in an NPA sniping attack on the army detachment afterwards lent urgency to the demilitarization campaign.

The NPA Leonardo Pacsi Command (LPC) of Mountain Province immediately expressed its deep regrets over the incident and pledged that it would not hap-

pen again. Issuing a self-criticism, the LPC also announced that it would conduct an investigation and that the commanding officers of the guerrilla unit that had undertaken the attack would be subjected to disciplinary action for violating a standing NPA policy to avoid military operations in the town center and other populated areas. In the same statement, the NPA command assailed the 50th IB for maintaining a detachment in such a heavily populated area. To make sure that the people were informed of their position, the LPC and the Cordillera People's Democratic Front (CPDF) called mass meetings in several villages.

The NPA investigation later revealed that the sniping incident was in fact a deliberate attempt to isolate the NPA from the people. The guerrilla unit that had undertaken the assault had been led by Armando Arias, a suspected deep



Cordillera highlands: Behind the idyllic setting rages the people's valiant struggle against oppression

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penetration agent. Arias' status was later confirmed when he bolted the NPA and joined AFP troops in succeeding military operations in the province.

The CPDF and NPA in Mountain Province later released a joint statement agreeing to pull out their military units with only unarmed civilian cadres and activists remaining to conduct political work among the people in the town center and barrios — provided that the AFP would do likewise. The two revolutionary groups, however, reminded the people that unless the conditions which breed war are decisively resolved, there can be no just and lasting peace.

The CfP rode on this situation. It immediately adopted Sagada as its showcase, mustered vast resources and initiated "peace building" activities such as seminars, immunization for peace and socioeconomic projects.

The AFP, however, refused to budge. At a multisectoral dialog held in the highland municipality on June 29, 1990, then PC chief Maj. Gen. Ramon Montano announced that the AFP would not pull out of Sagada. Neither would the AFP allow unarmed activists to continue conducting political work among the people. In fact, military operatives accompanied by Arias later launched massive operations to flush out suspected NPAs. Villages were bombed and strafed, causing the forced evacuation of hundreds of barrio folk. Many

suspected civilian supporters of the revolutionary movement were arrested or harassed. To appease the people, the AFP made the cosmetic move of replacing the dreaded 50th IB-PA with PC contingents.

In the face of massive AFP operations, the CPDF and the NPA had no choice but to issue a statement withdrawing their agreement to pull out of Sagada. With the AFP continuing its military op-

erations were no longer operational. The CfP, curiously enough, was silent about the Oplan Pakilala military operation then raging in the province and in the whole region.

The fact is that the AFP has never pulled out of Sagada. It has merely transferred notorious detachments from one place to another within the municipality.

Meanwhile, military abuses continue. Just this April, drunken soldiers killed another soldier at a private house in the village of Am-



Ex-PC chief Montano (inset) and AFP troopers on combat operations: No pull-out

erations with impunity, said the CPDF-NPA, it was the duty of the revolutionary forces to defend the people.

The CfP, however, assailed the CPDF-NPA decision. In an open letter, it challenged the National Democratic Front (NDF) to order the CPDF and NPA out of Sagada. The CfP even tried to create intrigues by claiming that the regional CPDF and NPA command had merely overruled their local units, who were supposedly agreeable to a withdrawal. The CfP moreover claimed that the AFP had already pulled out of Sagada because a few detach-

ments were no longer operational. In accordance with local customs, the owner had to perform expensive rituals to cleanse his house of the evil that had taken place.

To date, the AFP maintains the 192nd PC Company and the 1st Special Forces of the Philippine Army in the area. The latter has its headquarters elsewhere but conducts military operations in Sagada — something which the CfP has not denounced.

Repackaged hamlets

From the Sagada experience, it would appear that the rationale behind the creation of zones of peace

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is in fact no different from the logic which underlies the conduct of many classic counter-insurgency tactics.

As far as the CFP is concerned, it is enough to have the NPA out of an area for a zone of peace to be created, allowing the AFP to prey on the populace. By leaving government authority and its coercive mechanism intact within the peace zones, however, its proponents in effect condone the systemic state violence inflicted on the people.

The peace zone's objective has never been to demilitarize an area but to isolate the revolutionary forces from their mass base — or as counter-insurgency tacticians would put it, "to separate the fish from the water." As such, the peace zones are nothing but a repackaging of the notorious strategic hamlets concept and fall squarely within the general framework of the US-instigated low-intensity conflict strategy.

The practice of bypassing the national leadership by dealing directly with local revolutionary units in creating zones of peace is moreover a deliberate attack on the NDF's central authority over its local forces and is another way of operationalizing the standard divide-and-rule formula of counter-insurgency.

The composition of the CFP, especially at the local levels, would also put to doubt the sincerity and neutrality of many of the peace zone proponents. Not a few have been exposed as opportunists and saboteurs masquerading as genu-



NPA on the march: Duty-bound to defend the people

USAP/OTAS

ine peace advocates.

For instance, the Kalinga Bodong Council, a branch of the CFP, includes intelligence officers of the AFP and members of Conrado Balweg's Cordillera People's Liberation Army (which has since been integrated into the military as part of the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit or CAGU). In the name of the CFP, these forces have been conducting smear campaigns against the revolutionary forces and calling for the surrender of Red fighters and members of revolutionary organizations. This, to them, creates zones of peace. In Sagada, one of the leading proponents of the peace zone is a school official being investigated by student activists for corrupt practices.

The peace zones concept also provides for the conduct of seminars and the implementation of so-

do-economic projects, much like the psychological warfare and civic action components of US-sponsored AFP counter-insurgency programs. Despite such projects, however, there has been no change in the Sagada townsfolk's economic conditions. Far from the idyllic resort that it is often pictured to be, Sagada is a place where 85% of the population live below the poverty line. It is a town where 81% of households have rice supplies that hardly last from one yearly harvest to another; where agricultural products are undervalued by middlemen and users who siphon off as much as 79% of the value of such produce; where even banks charge interest rates of up to 27%; where 30% to 60% of funds for gov-

ernment projects go to the pockets of corrupt officials; where the prices of prime commodities continue to rise steeply; where 47% of the population is illiterate because of government neglect; and where the AFP's relentless total war has long been exacting a heavy toll on the people.

Not only has the Sagada experience been shown to be an experiment in futility. It is a ploy to deceive the people from the path of revolution to counterrevolution. Replicating it cannot possibly help lay the basis for a comprehensive settlement of the civil war. Ultimately, it is not "zones of peace" but the resolution of the people's fundamental questions which shall bring justice and peace to Sagada and the rest of the country.

Jason Montano
Correspondent

Stoking the fires of protest

US-Aquino regime's pro-imperialist policies trigger widespread mass actions nationwide

The key issues of sovereignty and people's economic welfare took center stage in recent struggles between the people and the US-Aquino regime. Already the continuing intransigence and pro-imperialist bias of the government in its recent policy decisions have stoked the fires of massive people's protests.

Anti-bases bid builds up

The struggle to dismantle the US military bases took a higher

of Philippine-American relations.

This time around, the US panel also tried to camouflage its position of seeking continued unhampered use of the bases by concocting the term "phasedown." The term turned out to be a mere variant of the old proposal to "phase out" the US bases in 10 years' time. Not to be outdone, the Aquino administration also tried to disguise its mendicant posture by calling for the "shutdown" of Clark Air Base and several minor facilities should no new treaty be signed by September 1991.

Militant actions by anti-imperi-

verish lobby to gain more political and economic aid and in the halls of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) where the Aquino regime continued seeking US support to gain further loans.

The strength and consistency of progressive and anti-imperialist organizations were reflected in the daily actions held to expose this farce. Militant protests were launched in US facilities nationwide. Defying the Aquino regime's policy of brutally suppressing mass actions, at one time, protests were even held at the US embassy in the morn-



Wolfgang Bayon in Davao: Amusing the regime's acts of national betrayal

AP/Wide World

note this September, when the Aquino administration and the US government conducted another round of negotiations dubbed the "Philippine-American Cooperation Talks" or PACT. Following the first round of "exploratory talks" last May, the panels this time tried to "broaden" their negotiations towards the forging of a new treaty that would supposedly cover the whole range

alist forces, however, put the lie to this latest scheme to deceive the people. The retention of the US bases, said the militants, was already a fait accompli and the ongoing talks were mere bargaining sessions. Exposing PACT as a mere "sideshow," progressive forces pointed out that the main event was being held at the US Congress where the Aquino administration was conducting a fe-

ing and again in the afternoon.

Oil price hike opposed

No sooner had the Aquino regime gone further in its latest ploy to maintain the US bases in the country when it announced that same month its decision to increase domestic oil prices. The oil price



People's cry: "Give us rice, not repression!"

hike reflected the regime's contempt for the Filipino people's welfare and once more highlighted the government's bias in favor of multinational corporations and foreign institutions.

The latest round of increases in the price of oil came amid the continued suffering of a people who have had no respite since the devastation wrought by the July 16 earthquake and the man-made calamity known as the Aquino government's Memorandum of Agreement with the IMF.

Preceded by announcements on the planned deregulation of the oil industry, the hike in fuel prices hews faithfully to the conditions imposed in the Memorandum of Agreement. Such deregulation would tie local fuel prices to the vagaries of the international market. Deregulation would also abolish any form of government subsidy on oil prices and shield the oil multinationals from possible price fluctuations by passing on the full burden of any price increase to Filipino consumers.

In justifying its decision to hike fuel prices, the Aquino government has pointed to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, saying that this has pushed up oil prices in the international market and undermined the value of the peso in relation to the US dollar.

Government spokesmen, however, consistently fail to cite the regime's unreasonably high rates of taxation on oil as a major factor behind the price increase. As part of the package of economic "reforms" it has promised the IMF, the government imposes huge taxes on such basic necessities as oil to raise revenues to pay its gargantuan debt to foreign banks and lending institutions.

The government's pro-imperialist policy of insuring the profits of foreign oil companies and debilitating debt payments to foreign lending institutions at the people's expense was met by strong protests from militant groups. Even before the announcement of the actual increase, people's organizations launched mass actions to pressure the government to stop the planned

increase. Right after the announcement was made, labor organizations immediately led tens of thousands of workers in militant strikes and demonstrations that paralyzed operations in hundreds of factories nationwide. The National Democratic Front (NDF) also issued a statement deploring the government's decision to "yield to US multinational and IMF demands to increase oil prices" and warned that the move only succeeded in jeopardizing the prospects for peace.

Teachers take to the streets

Reeling from the effects of the economic crisis, teachers once more took to the streets to press for a P5,000 minimum pay and the implementation of legislated salary adjustments and other benefits due them since the previous year.

Trying at first to resolve the issue through negotiations, teachers' organizations faced a blank wall when a session with Education Secretary Isidro Carino, who agreed to meet the restive mentors only once, yielded no results.

Thus, after months of waiting for the government to implement



Mindanao teachers: Undaunted by the regime's repressive measures

UP-Mindanao



Women strikers: Against debilitating debt payments

Daily Express

on the root cause of their economic woes: the continuing subservience of the Aquino regime to foreign lending institutions as shown by the Memorandum of Agreement between the government and the IMF. Thus, in unison with other sectors, they have called for a moratorium on the payment of foreign debts as well as the repudiation of onerous loans and demanded that the government reserve the highest budgetary allocation for education.

Sharpening contradictions

its own laws, the teachers decided to pursue the issue through militant action. From September 17-23, more than 10,000 teachers participated in a mass leave of absence. In the first week, teachers from more than 60 schools in Metro Manila and Central Luzon joined the protest action. In the second week, the number of schools affected increased to more than 75.

Instead of addressing their legitimate demands, however, the Aquino government moved fast to issue orders suppressing the teachers' strike. Carino, without even facing the teachers in a second round of negotiations, immediately issued dismissal orders to 292 teachers. President Aquino was herself quick to express approval of Carino's suppression policy against what she termed as an "illegal act of striking".

As of mid-October, almost 2,000 teachers had been issued suspension orders while more than 200 teachers have been dismissed. Undaunted by the repressive measures of suspensions and dismissals taken by the government, the teachers have remained steadfast in their militant actions. Already they have stepped up the pressure to con-

tinue to assert their legitimate demands.

To show their defiance, the teachers held a mock trial dubbed "hukumang guro" (teachers' court) where Carino and his underlings were found guilty of repressing the rights of teachers and students. The teachers demanded the ouster of Carino along with his equally repressive supervisors and principals. In addition, a million signatures are now being gathered to press for Carino's dismissal. Numerous democratic and progressive organizations and personalities have also expressed their support for the legitimate demands of the teachers. In an open letter, the NDF saluted the teachers' "steadfastness in the face of escalating dismissals and other forms of punitive action by (the) anti-teacher and anti-people government." Saying that the striking mentors were teaching the people "lessons in life and struggle," the NDF also called on the studentry, their parents and all Filipinos to stand firmly behind the teachers in their just struggles.

The teachers' strength lies not only in their unity and militancy. They have also correctly zeroed in

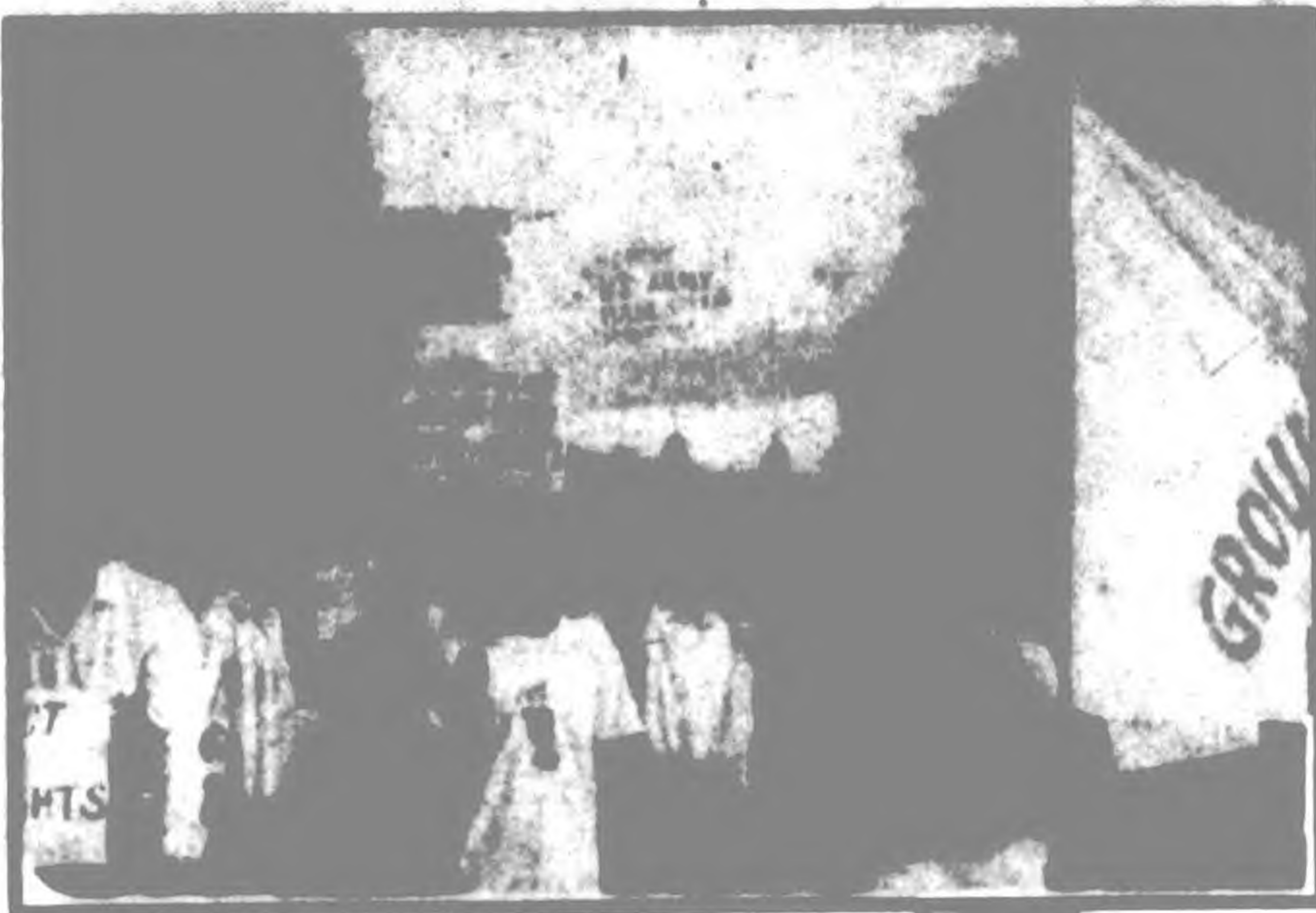
The rising militancy of the people's movement reflects the sharpening of the basic contradictions in Philippine society. As the present crisis confronting the people intensifies, people's initiatives to struggle for their interests and aspirations take on a bolder and stronger character. The US-Aquino regime at the same time grows more and more insensitive to the people's plight and seeks only to preserve its political and economic dominance.

The revolutionary forces have actively supported and exerted efforts to further strengthen the popular movement and assist and lead the people in their just struggles. Efforts to address the crisis confronting the people remain the priority in the NDF's *Nine-Point Agenda* to resolve the national crisis and bring immediate relief to the people.

Meanwhile, the growing momentum and upsurge of popular initiatives and mass protests reflect the rising revolutionary fervor of the masses against the reactionary elite in Philippine society and cannot but spark a prairie fire in the revolutionary mass movement.

Sol Borres

Nepalese people support RP anti-US bases struggle



mod Kaphley, Coordinator of GRINSO Philippine Chapter, pointed out that the "continued presence of American military bases in the Philippines has been the obstacle for the development of human rights, social justice and democracy in that country. Expressing our solidarity with the people of the Philippines," Kaphley said, "we would like to put forward our earnest demand to the United States of America for the immediate removal of the military bases from the Asia-Pacific region in general and from the Philippines in particular, which would be a just step to respect the human rights of the peoples of this region."

GRINSO, organized on May 15, 1990 by progressive Nepalese intellectuals, aims to express the solidarity of the Nepalese people with the "struggle of oppressed peoples of the world who are fighting for human rights, social justice, and democracy." Its programme pledges support

The Group for International Solidarity (GRINSO) in Nepal spearheaded mass actions in Kathmandu last July 4 in support of the Filipino people's demands to dismantle the US military bases by 1991. Part of the activities sponsored by GRINSO was a forum held at the Amrit Science campus. Among the speakers were Devi Ojha, Chairman of the Asia-Pacific People's Forum for Peace and Development; Prakash Kaphley, Secretary General of the Forum for the Protection of Human Rights; B.K. Mainali, a leader of the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist); and Basu Bhatt, spokesperson for the Nepal



Congress. The forum was followed by a protest rally at the American embassy in Kathmandu, the capital.

In a letter addressed to the US ambassador in Nepal, Pra-

to peoples' struggles in any part of the world against imperialism, hegemonism, apartheid, racism and other social evils, as well as any act affecting the world's environmental balance. ■



**An
ignoble
cause**

NDF statement on the coup attempt staged by AFP mutineers in Mindanao

*by Elias Floridel
NDF-Mindanao*

Public attention was drawn recently to the "daring" 50-hour military stakeout of renegade Lt. Col. Alexander Noble and his fledgling band of 200 followers at Camp Evangelista in Patag, Cagayan de Oro City.

The Noble mutiny unfolded a drama of tragicomical scenes that merely reemphasized what low depths of ineptness and stupidity the Aquino regime and the reactionary AFP have sunk into.

Before this, the reactionary AFP launched a costly two-month military campaign called Oplan Highlander, ostensibly to get Noble "at all cost" but which only inflicted irreparable harm on hundreds of farmers and their families in the mountains of Agusan. Then, on October 4, the hunted became the pursuer as Noble and his men

marched down the national highway from Butuan City to the streets of Cagayan de Oro virtually unmolested.

The recent turmoil that rocked the Mindanao region and the whole nation only dramatizes the worsening political and economic crisis gripping the ruling system. Factional strifes deeply divide the AFP. The economy has plummeted, wreaking havoc on the people's livelihood. At the time of the Noble misadventure, the Filipino people were grappling with spiralling prices, the new round of oil price increases, tax hikes, the serious breakdown of basic services and rise in criminality.

In a desperate attempt to appease and deflect the attention of the people from their basic problems, the Aquino regime as usual, points an accusing finger at insurgency, the Middle East crisis and

natural calamities as the sole sources of the people's present sufferings. But the people only know too well that it is the regime's anti-people and anti-nationalist policies, the inherently greedy social system and the unmitigated graft and corruption in high government and military circles that bring this nation to this insufferable state.

What do we learn from this latest in-fighting within the ruling system?

The Aquino regime has been proven more ineffective and weak even in dealing with its own kind. Aquino and the whole leadership of the ruling class have become more inutile as each day passes and have lost control over the affairs of government everywhere.

At no other time in the history of the fascist AFP has there been more factions and bitter in-fightings within,

MAINSTREAM

with the military plotting to grab power and institute its own rule. Many mavericks led by the RAM-SFP have US connections and it will not be a surprise if one military faction is able to mount a coup in the future, more successful than the past ones. It is to the advantage of US imperialism that it takes care of many horses in its stable.

The present AFP, to say the least, is the prime instrument of the reactionary regime in serving the interests of the ruling class. Under the Aquino regime, the AFP has grown into a ferocious monster made to assault the people.

The AFP sows terror throughout the land - killing and looting with impunity, robbing banks, fronting for prostitution houses, pushing drugs and spreading lies. There is no atrocity or crime that the military has not committed. As everybody knows, graft and corruption within the AFP continue to flourish.

However, we believe that most of the soldiers in the AFP, who come from the toiling masses, do not relish these abuses by the military on the people. There are also officers who come from the petty bourgeoisie or the middle class who are imbued with democratic ideals and nationalist feelings.

We welcome therefore all patri-



Pro-government troops in Cagayan de Oro City: Divided ranks

Admas

otic and sincere actions from them, if these are all for instituting basic changes within the AFP.

We call upon them - these soldiers who are called upon to defend and uphold the interests of the people - not to allow themselves to be

used by either those motivated by selfish interests or by the present AFP leadership in unleashing violence on the people. Instead, they should launch their own genuine democratic and nationalist movement within their ranks. And, together with

other democratic and revolutionary forces, fight for true freedom and independence.

We call upon the government officials in Mindanao and elsewhere, to reject all deceptive ploys by the present ruling class to short-change the people's gains by pursuing pro-people and nationalist policies in their own localities. Reject the regime's total war policy which only causes undue suffering on the people and slows the pace for genuine peace in our land.

We call on the people of Mindanao to be vigilant and remain steadfast in the face of the maneuverings of pseudo-revolutionary and pseudo-democratic groups which ride on the present sufferings of the people. To solve the country's social problems, we must address squarely and head-on the fundamental issues of US imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism and work together for an independent, free and prosperous country. ■



Rebel soldier: No support came

Admas

And they all came tumbling down

NPA forces blast AFP communication towers in Central Luzon



Red fighters mail assault plans: Outmaneuvering the enemy

PHOTO BY

The New People's Army Arcadio Peralta Command (NPA-APC) operating in Nueva Ecija, Maria Aurora and Eastern Pangasinan saluted its recent formation with a blast. A series of tactical operations from September 10 culminating with the raid and sabotage of the Bureau of Telecommunications repeater station and the GHQ Commel Power Relay station in Barangay Tayabo, San Jose City last October 18 marked its first major offensives in the area.

In an interview with *LIB*, NPA-APC spokesperson Javier Mendiola said that the two military communi-

cation stations were completely destroyed by fire, effectively isolating the entire AFP Northern Luzon Command from its general headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City. Killed in the firefight were S/Sgt. Renato Curucungan and Air Force 1st Class (A1C) Armando Patayan. Four were wounded: team leader Capt. Leonardo Santos, T/Sgt. Edgardo Espinosa, C2C Apolinario Ramores and A1C Jesus Dasalla. Five others surrendered. Confiscated from the vanquished troopers were one 30 caliber machine gun, five M16 rifles, one M203 grenade launcher, one URC radio transceiver and boxes of live ammunition. Mendiola esti-

mated damages to military infrastructure at P100 million.

To keep the enemy off-balance and confused, according to Mendiola, three- to five-man assault teams were formed to stage a series of harassment operations on military detachments spread throughout the guerrilla front:

The Red fighters' sniping attacks killed two constabulary troopers and two paramilitary men. They wounded four others.

Despite the intensified militarization of the area and military claims that they have dismantled the local political infrastructure of the revolutionary movement, Mendiola said that the NPA offensives show their "capability to outmaneuver vicious enemy attacks on our ranks and the people." The October 18 raid was also launched as a punitive action against the AFP for the cold-blooded murder of two gold panners, Hermogenes Tawasin and Mario Peralta, in Sitio Pinggan, Parista, Lupao last October 16, Mendiola emphasized.

The Arcadio Peralta Command was named after an NPA commander who was killed in action at the Zambales-Pangasinan boundary last September 21, 1989. Arcadio Peralta was born in Bongabon, Nueva Ecija, served the revolution for a good 15 years of his adult life and was well-loved and known to the masses as Ka Ryan, Ka Rading and Ka Joe. ■

Gearing for war

NDF warns against escalating tensions caused by US military buildup in the Gulf

The National Democratic Front (NDF) condemned the US-led military buildup in the Gulf and the war threats emanating from Washington and other Western capitals. In a statement issued last September 3 by its international office based in Utrecht, The Netherlands, the NDF deplored the deployment of tens of thousands of US troops in the Gulf and the positioning of deadly high-technology US war machines, saying that these are intended for offensive operations. Contrary to its posture as self-styled international policeman, the US' policy and military buildup in the Gulf fuel the escalation of tension, obstruct the search for a viable comprehensive settlement of the crisis and increase the danger of war, said the NDF.

The massive military buildup in the Gulf started after the Iraqi invasion and annexation of neighboring Kuwait in August. In an earlier statement, the NDF National Executive Committee had expressed its deep concern over the incursion of Iraqi troops into Kuwaiti territory, saying that this has disturbed regional peace and unity among Arab countries. The Iraqi action has also been condemned by the United Nations (UN), which has called for a trade embargo and other sanctions against Iraq.

Meanwhile, the NDF saluted Arab efforts to find a political solution to the crisis. The unleashing of force to settle disputes with a neighboring country, said the NDF, is "uncalled for." The NDF underscored the need for nations to have mutual respect for each others' sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and to resort to the peaceful resolution of inter-state conflicts.

Fears have been raised, how-

ever, that Arab initiatives to arrive at a comprehensive political solution to the crisis without foreign intervention may come to naught with the increasingly provocative actions taken by the US and its Western allies. Often riding on UN resolutions to legitimize its unilateralist and interventionist policy, the US maintains a so-called Rapid Deployment Force whose sole mission is to intervene militarily in conflicts involving the Middle East and other Third World countries. Said the NDF: "History has shown that the US has shamefully invoked 'international law' and 'principles' to camouflage its brutal intervention and aggression in Grenada, Panama, Libya, Lebanon, the Philippines and other countries. (But) the strategic alliance between the US and Israel for regional hegemony in the Middle East, US support for Israeli expansionism, possession of nuclear weapons and brutal repression of the Palestinian people's struggle," said the NDF, "unmask the real US intention in the Gulf and the Middle East: access to and control of cheap oil through constant diplomatic, political and military pressure to weaken and divide the Arab people."

For its part, the NDF has warned the Aquino government against allowing the US to use its bases in the Philippines as staging grounds for military operations in the Gulf. The NDF said that such a move would seriously jeopardize the safety of hundreds of thousands of Filipino contract workers in the Middle East and only give further impetus to the movement for the immediate dismantling of the bases.

The NDF called on all peace-loving forces in the world to expose and oppose US war intentions and preparations in the Gulf and to support the search for a lasting and comprehensive peace in the Gulf and the Middle East. ■



Iraqi soldiers, US troops in Gulf: Looming confrontation

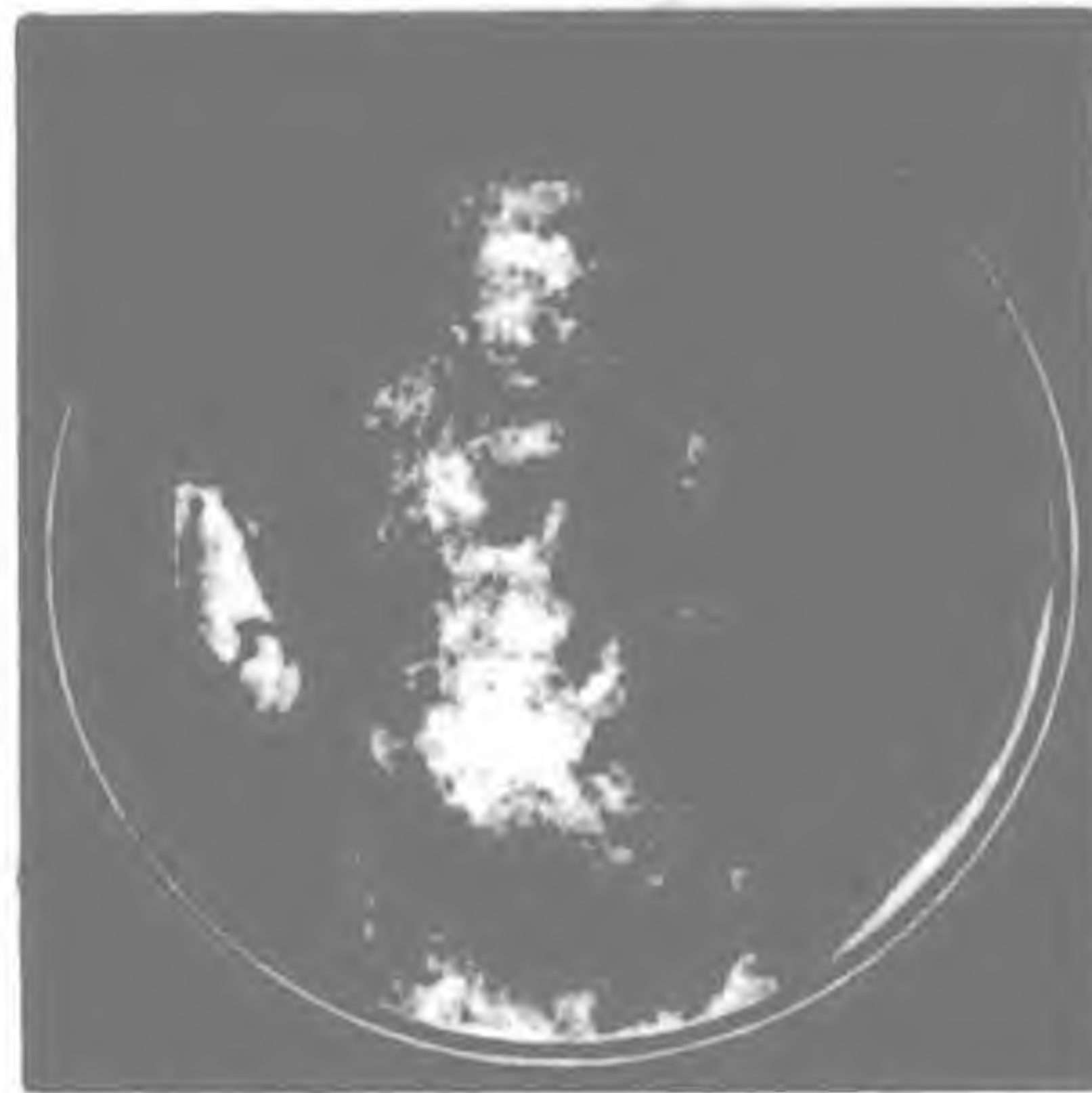
A chronicle of greed

The bitter truth behind Hacienda Luisita

The history of the Cojuangco family's most prized possession — the Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac — vividly illustrates why a national democratic revolution is inevitable: the landlord class will never voluntarily relinquish their lands to the peasantry. Even the Cojuangcos' acquisition of Hacienda Luisita is a graphic representation of the classic interdependence among the landlord class, bureaucrat capitalists and the imperialist moguls of international finance in perpetuating a semicolonial and semifeudal society.

An examination of the history of Hacienda Luisita will show how the Cojuangcos systematically defrauded their peasants of the right to own the lands they have tilled for decades. It was a process inextricably linked to the Cojuangco family's quest for supreme political control in the country.

Almost two decades of the Mar-



Peping Cojuangco: Kingmaker



Danding Cojuangco: Estranged cousin

cos dictatorship had virtually reduced the Aquino-Cojuangco dynasties (excluding their estranged cousin Danding) to economic and political insignificance. In fact, it was only in 1986 that the political and economic fortunes of the Cojuangcos took a sud-



Cory Aquino: In the seat of power

den upturn when the widowed Co-razon unexpectedly landed in the very seat of political power: Malacanang. Not long after, her younger brother Jose (Peping) Cojuangco Jr. emerged as the main power broker and kingpin of the La-



US-Aquino government in office: Reactionary, pro-landlord

USP/OTC

COUNTERCURRENTS

ban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, the pro-administration political party dominated by the landlord and comprador classes. The powers of the executive branch had become one with the resurrect bastion of landlord reaction: Congress.

But what good is political power if it remains untranslated into economic power to acquire even greater political power? Obviously, the wisdom of this fountainhead principle was not lost to the Cojuangcos. After all, history has shown that this was how earlier oligarchs maintained control over a social order fraught with injustice and oppression.

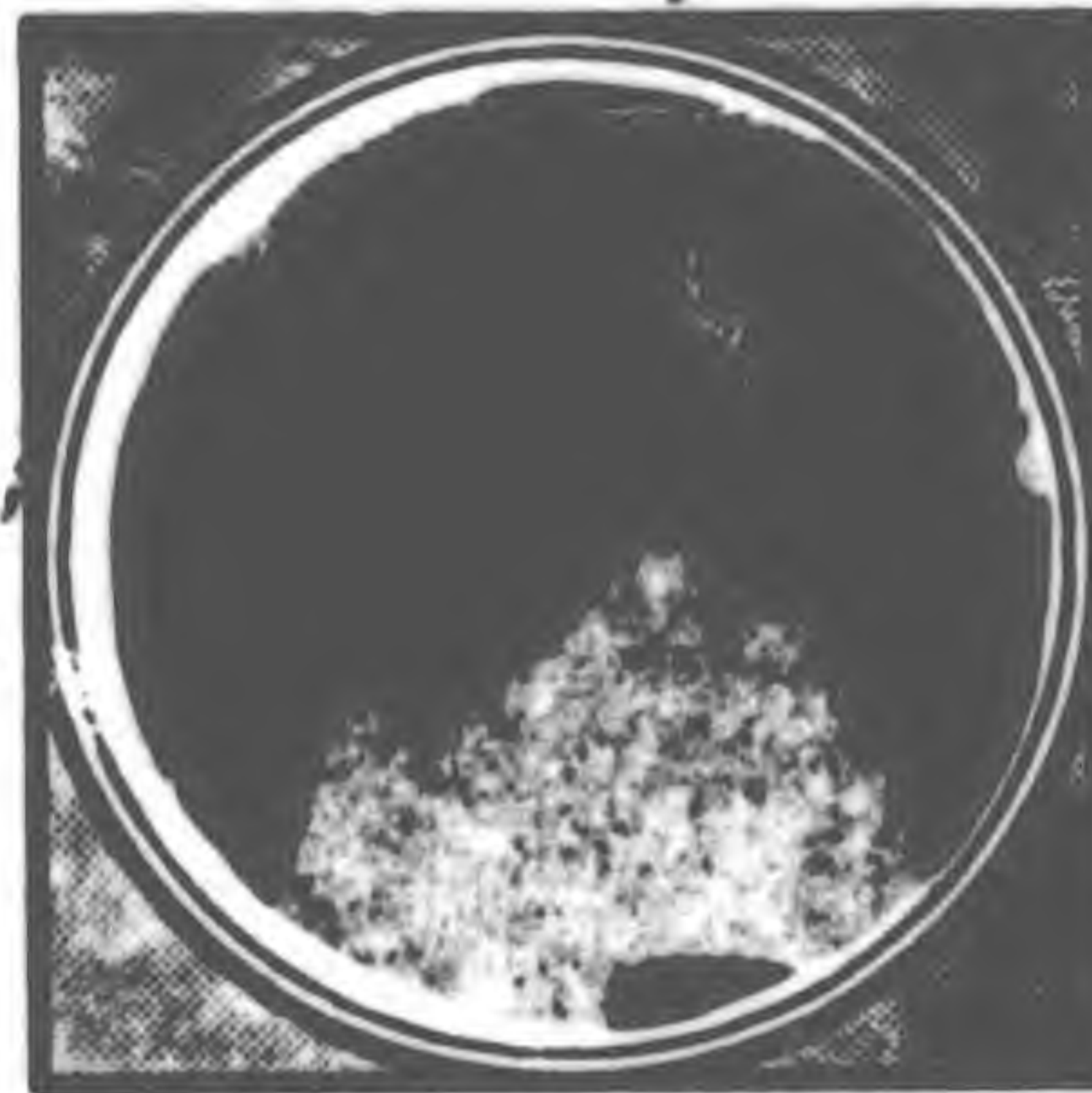
Hacienda Luisita, politics and international finance

The Cojuangcos' acquisition of Hacienda Luisita in 1957 was partly brought about by the political rivalry between then Pres. Ramon Magsaysay and the influential Lopez family and bankrolled by the financial resources of the Manufacturers Trust Company of New York.

A year earlier, the Lopezes had bought the nearby Pampanga Sugar Mill from the American sugar company Spreckles, and were setting their sights on the assets of the Compania General de Tabacos de Filipinas or Tabacalera in Tarlac. At that time, Tabacalera's sugar mill and sugarcane plantation in Hacienda Luisita were beset with labor unrest. Due to his conflicting political interests with the Lopez family, Magsaysay prodded Benigno (Ninoy) Aquino Jr., a Cojuangco in-law who was then mayor of Concepcion, to help prevent the Lopezes from acquiring Hacienda Luisita.

With the political clout enjoyed by Magsaysay, the Cojuangco fam-

ily was able to secure a P5,911,000 loan from the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) and a loan from the Manufacturers Trust Company worth \$2,128,480. Out of this total amount, P9.6 million went to the Tarlac Development Corporation (TADECO) which was set up as a holding and management company for the 6,431-hectare estate while the balance went to the purchase of the milling facilities of the Central Azucarera de Tarlac. As a precondition for the approval of this financing scheme by the Central Bank's Monetary Board, the Cojuangcos agreed to a clause in the contract calling for the distribution of the



Ninoy: First Hacienda Luisita manager



Magsaysay: Cojuangco patron



Jobo Fernandez: A debt to collect

hacienda to its tenants within 10 years.

The foreign funding of the acquisition was set up by Jose (Jobo) Fernandez who was then Vice President of the Philippine Bank of Commerce, a financial institution established in 1938 by would-be hacienda owner Jose (Don Pepe) Cojuangco II and his three brothers

Eduardo, Juan and Antonio. This was not the only occasion wherein the Cojuangcos, particularly the side of Don Pepe, sought the help of international banks.

With the rise of Roberto Benedicto, himself a sugar magnate and arch crony of former Pres. Ferdinand Marcos, the Hacienda Luisita complex almost folded up as the Philippine National Bank, to which the Cojuangcos were heavily indebted, cancelled their credit lines and raised the interest rates on their outstanding loans.

Even at this early stage, it is believed that Jobo Fernandez already maintained close ties with the Cojuangco family and helped them gain access to foreign lending institutions like Citibank and domestic banks as well. The Cojuangcos were also able to borrow from the World Bank's Agricultural Loan Fund a 15% interest loan even as the prevailing rate in 1985 was pegged at 20%. In mid-1986, a few months after Corazon Cojuangco Aquino assumed the presidency, she signed an executive order calling for the immediate release of P500 million to enable sugar planters and millers to pay loans which were left unpaid during the previous administration.

Realizing Jobo Fernandez's early association with the Cojuangcos, it becomes easy to understand why the Aquino government opted to retain a key archi-

tect of the hated dictatorship's economic policies as Central Bank governor in 1986. They were merely paying a debt of gratitude. Also, because of its own indebtedness to international financial institutions, the Cojuangcos, through Malacanang, influenced the adoption of a policy for the country to honor all foreign loans incurred during the Marcos regime.



Anti-CARP rally: Rejecting the regime's farcical land reform

UPIPHOTOS

the request of President Garcia in 1958, later facilitated the establishment of a covert camp within the hacienda to train army officers who were plotting the overthrow of Indonesian President Sukarno. It is highly possible that this operation, including the setting of a reported radio network, was the handiwork of the US Central Intelligence Agency (In fact, the

Benigno Aquino, USAID and post-Magsaysay administrations

The unfolding of events clearly indicates that there is more than meets the eye regarding Hacienda Luisita. Definitely, it was not just one of the many sugarcane plantations in the country. Hacienda Luisita was the focal target of pressures from the political enemies of the Cojuangcos and fast-rising political star Benigno Aquino Jr. It was also the political capital that enabled the Cojuangco and Aquino families to pursue their political battles with other sections of the Philippine elite.

Sometime in late 1957, months after the death of Magsaysay, the GSIS Board granted a smaller loan to the Cojuangcos but added a new condition on top of the earlier clause which read: "That the lots comprising the Hacienda Luisita shall be subdivided by the applicant corporation among the tenants who shall pay the cost thereof under reasonable terms and conditions." It is alleged that this new proviso was imposed on the Cojuangco family due to a rift between Aquino and

Pres. Carlos Garcia.

However, a new resolution was issued by the GSIS Board on February 5, 1958 which placed a legal loophole on the distribution clause of 1957, specifically: "That the lots comprising the Hacienda Luisita shall be subdivided by the applicant corporation and sold at cost to the tenants, *should there be any*, and whenever conditions should exist warranting such action under the provisions of the Land Tenure Act." But it seemed then that the Cojuangcos regarded these conditions as mere acts of formality.

Similarly, they were previously informed by then Tabacalera lawyer Juan Ponce Enrile that there were no tenants in the hacienda prior to the sale. Enrile had been hired by the Cojuangcos to serve as their new legal counsel after the sale had been consummated.

Immediately after the Cojuangcos acquired the property, Benigno Aquino Jr. proceeded to become the first manager of Hacienda Luisita and was responsible for diffusing the labor unrest in the estate. According to Nick Joaquin, author of *The Aquinos of Tarlac*, Aquino, upon

Voice of America, the radio network which broadcasts American propaganda worldwide, is located within the Cojuangcos' Hacienda Luisita in Concepcion, Tarlac). It was also Aquino, then Tarlac governor in the early 1960s, who invited the US Agency for International Development to the province to test "development models" in largescale plantations for application in similar sites in other Third World countries. The close relationship between the Cojuangco and Aquino families was to continue after Pres. Ferdinand Marcos, who was then considered the arch nemesis of the Tarlac clans, assumed the presidency in 1965.

The Marcos years

For all his legal wizardry, Marcos evidently failed to dispossess the Cojuangcos of Hacienda Luisita despite the existence of a legal basis providing for the distribution of the estate to its tenants.

In March 1967, 10 years after the Cojuangcos acquired Hacienda Luisita, Conrado Estrella, then governor of the Land Tenure Admini-

COUNTERCURRENTS

stration, sent a letter to the Cojuangcos regarding the resolution of the Monetary Board in 1957 requiring them to subdivide the hacienda and sell the plots at cost to the tenants. The Cojuangcos merely replied that there was nothing to implement since the hacienda had no tenants. This was repeated sometime in 1978 when the Central Bank's Monetary Board inquired about their plans for the distribution of the property. The answer given was the same one given 11 years earlier. At that time, Aquino, who was on his sixth year of incarceration after the 1972 declaration of martial law, announced his candidacy for the Interim Batasang

Pambansa elections.

The government's treatment of the Hacienda Luisita issue changed when it decided to file a case against the Cojuangcos sometime in May 1980, the same time Ninoy Aquino was released from detention and allowed to undergo a heart bypass operation in the US. Subsequently, the case never seemed to progress in court and was overtaken by the Aquino assassination in August 1983. The political storm whipped up by the Aquino assassination signalled the change in the political fortunes of the Cojuangcos. But Marcos, the consummate politician that he was, pulled a hat trick and revived the

case of Hacienda Luisita and sought to make political capital out of the issue. Out of the blue, the concerned trial court where the case was pending issued a decision in favor of the government. And Marcos' flair for drama was very evident — the decision was rendered on December 3, 1985, a day after the widowed Corazon Aquino filed her candidacy for the 1986 snap presidential elections. Unfortunately for

Marcos, the decision was overtaken by more significant events which saw the overthrow of his dictatorship in the February 1986 EDSA revolt.

Had Marcos succeeded in legally disenfranchising the Cojuangcos during his 21-year rule, the Cojuangcos would never have been resurrected politically to the point of being able to mount a serious challenge to his dictatorial regime.

The Cojuangco family goes to work

Early into the presidential campaign, the Cojuangco family reportedly began "serious" discussions on how to implement agrarian reform in Hacienda Luisita, one of the key campaign promises made to the electorate by the presidential aspirant Corazon Aquino. In fact, the discussions were serious in that the family wanted to go through the motions of complying with the campaign promise without any substantial loss of its property.

As subsequent events later demonstrated, the Cojuangcos had never really seriously entertained the idea of submitting their prized hacienda to genuine land reform. Corazon Cojuangco Aquino was not to be a traitor to her class. Nor was she about to disturb the centuries-old feudal setup in any other plantation in the country.

For if Corazon Aquino were really serious in fulfilling her campaign pledge, she would have announced Hacienda Luisita's distribution to the tenants immediately after she was declared president. If she were seriously interested in freeing the peasantry from their bondage to the soil, she would have declared a thoroughgoing and radical land reform program while she still wielded legislative powers instead of allowing a landlord-dominated Congress the opportunity to enact a totally emasculated agrarian reform code.

On July 22, 1987, Aquino signed Executive Order No. 229 or the Com-



Marcos with wife Imelda: Failure to dispossess the Cojuangcos proved fatal

COUNTERCURRENTS

prehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) as a "centerpiece" program of her regime. This order defined two modes of land transfer — direct land utilization by the tenants and the issuance of shares of stock to farmworkers. These provisions were the very same ones availed of by the Cojuangcos who were the first applicants to evade the actual distribution of lands covered by the hacienda. Section 10, Chapter III of EO 229 reads: "Corporate landowners may give their workers and other

pensation they currently receive, provided that such individuals or entities are not obligated to pay more than 100% of the regular annual compensation of the farmworkers."

On September 17, 1987 Solicitor General Frank Chavez filed a motion with the Court of Appeals to suspend proceedings on Hacienda Luisita "in order to ascertain whether the plaintiffs were still interested in pursuing the case." Chavez argued that the case brought against the Cojuangcos was a mere "act of po-

the House Committee on Agrarian Reform, he was believed to have been instrumental in emasculating the Malacanang-sponsored Agricultural Land Reform Code in 1963.

The pro-landlord provisions inserted by the landlord bloc into CARP included higher retention limits, the postponement of coverage of large tracts of land, granting of longer leases to multinational corporations engaged in agribusiness and the creation of provincial agrar-

ian reform coordinating committees.

By the time that the proposed bill went into third reading in Congress, its original proponents had walked out of the session hall to protest the total emasculation of the Agrarian Reform Bill they had sponsored. Among those solons was Batanes Rep. Florencio Abad who



Cojuangco-Aquino clan: Tricky maneuvers to retain Luisita

qualified beneficiaries the right to purchase such proportion of the capital stock of the corporation that the land assets bear in relation to the corporation's total assets, and grant additional compensation which may be used for this purpose." Further, Sec. 16 of the same chapter says: "Individuals or entities owning and/or operating under lease agricultural lands with gross sales in excess of P5 million per annum are hereby mandated to execute a production sharing plan whereby at least 2.5% of the gross sales from the production/cultivation of such plans are distributed as compensation to the farmworkers over and above the com-

litical vendetta" and that the hacienda will be covered by CARP under the new administration. On March 7, 1988, Chavez along with the Central Bank, GSIS and the Department of Agrarian Reform moved for the dismissal of the case. The motion was finally approved by the Court of Appeals on May 18, 1988.

Meanwhile, in Congress, Rep. Peping Cojuangco exerted his vast influence on the landlord-dominated chamber to substantially water down the original provisions of CARP. That was not the first time Cojuangco participated in agrarian reform legislation. During the Macapagal administration, as Vice Chairman of

would later be appointed Secretary of Agrarian Reform only to be denied confirmation by his former colleagues in Congress for being too pro-farmer and adopting a confrontational approach to agrarian reform. The resulting Republic Act No. 6657 or the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL) was as farcical as it was toothless.

The stock distribution hoax

Since the CARL provides that agrarian reform beneficiaries have the right only "to purchase such proportion of the capital stock of the corporation that land assets bear in

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After stocks deal: As oppressed and exploited as ever

USP/OTOS

relation to the corporation's total assets," the stock distribution scheme offers a gaping loophole that allows landowners to retain overwhelming control of their corporation and their lands. All they had to do was "show" that their land assets were less than their non-land assets. And this was precisely what the Cojuangcos and other landowning families had in mind. On August 1, 1988, the Cojuangco family set up a new company, Hacienda Luisita Inc. (HLI), to facilitate the stock distribution plan under CARL.

The new company retained all the agricultural lands previously listed under TADECO which, in turn, retained its holdings in other family corporations and a majority share in HLI. In addition, HLI acquired all the equipment necessary to operate the hacienda. And here, the Cojuangcos made their biggest killing.

While HLI was reported to own total assets worth P590.6 million, only P196.6 million or 33% were represented as agricultural land. Thus, by the time TADECO, HLI and the farmworkers signed a memorandum of agreement on the hacienda's stock distribution scheme on May 11, 1989, the Cojuangcos had clearly maneuvered that workers would only receive one-third of the stocks while the majority would remain under the family's control.

At the same time, the Cojuangcos also considerably reduced the actual area of the hacienda placed under the coverage of CARL by claiming in the signed agreement that only 4,915.75 hectares out of the original 6,431 hectares were agricultural land. Lands identified to have been devoted to non-agricultural purposes were those occupied by the Luisita Golf and Country Club (70 hectares) and Luisita Realty Company (120 hectares). But this still left some 1,300 hectares unaccounted for.

Further, the agreement provides that one-third of the HLI stocks will be given to some 7,000 workers over a period of 30 years — i.e., a mere one-thirtieth of the workers' share will be distributed each year. Linked with this stock distribution scheme is a production sharing plan where HLI will give to its workers a minimum of 3% of its annual gross sales. But while HLI declared gross sales

of P291 million at the time the memorandum agreement was signed, this figure represented only 63% of the value of raw sugar cane it delivers for milling to the Central Azucarera de Tarlac. The latter receives 35% of the value of milled sugar as its fee. Thus, when the hacienda distributed 2.5% of its gross sales covering the period August 29, 1987 to June 14, 1988, each of the 4,683 farmers listed in the hacienda's payroll during these months received only P1,172 based on such understated figures.

Obviously, the Aquino government would like the farmworkers and peasants to believe that under the stock distribution scheme, they would emerge as real co-owners of corporate farms. In fact, however, the Hacienda Luisita experience points to the exact opposite, and the bitter reality is that there has been no significant change in the socio-economic status of the peasantry. Notwithstanding the practically worthless shares of stock that promise illusory benefits, the truth is the peasants remain exploited and oppressed under the same feudal relationship between landlord and tenant.

The Luisita deal: More questions

While HLI declared total assets amounting to P590,554,220 during the signing of the stock distribution agreement in May 1989, TADECO, in 1986, reported that its "property and equipment," including all the land, were only valued at P138,656,201. In the agreement, the government approved a valuation of P40,000 per hectare of the Cojuangco estate, thus raising the nagging question of how the value of the land could have increased severalfold in only two years. Even assuming that the equipment of the hacienda had been modernized to the tune of P138 million, the value of land and equipment would still be P60 million less than the value of the

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land alone in 1988. Obviously, the Cojuangcos were able to pull off a neat accounting trick by undervaluing their land in 1986 and proceeding to overvalue their non-land assets in the HLI statement. Based on the provisions of CARL, the more a family corporation undervalues the worth of its land assets relative to the total worth of properties placed under CARL coverage, the more they can retain majority control over the corporation.

While the design of the stock distribution program would reveal that the values of land and equipment could easily be manipulated to serve the interests of the landowning class, there are other loopholes within the scheme which ensure that overall profits could be understated so that dividends due to farmer-stockholders could be reduced to a mere pittance. For instance, since TADECO controls the majority of stocks under HLI, it can easily inflate the worth of non-land assets owned by HLI by merely increasing the

value of accounts "due from an affiliated company" like the Central Azucarera de Tarlac. Simply defined, these accounts represent the balances of various trade transactions and intercompany billings due for a current year. In the same manner, these companies could bill HLI and thus reduce its overall levels of profit to be shared with the workers. Second, counted as among a corporation's non-land assets is the standing crop for each year — a highly variable item due to factors like international prices, the weather and even the yearly production plan of the company. In 1986, the

hacienda's standing crop represented as much as 30% of TADECO's total assets; its value is believed to have increased since due to the rise of sugar prices abroad. Again, this proportionately reduces the value of the company's land assets and consequently, the farmworkers' share in the dividends.

Hacienda Luisita: A rosier future



Overworked hacienda laborer: Paping's horses have it better

The stock distribution scheme allowed under CARL not only enabled the Cojuangcos to maintain control over HLI. More importantly, it allowed the more profitable sugar central to remain untouched. This has encouraged the Cojuangcos to expand the hacienda's cane milling capacity from 50% to 100%. The family has also reportedly started negotiations with the Central Azucarera de Tarlac Planters Association which supplies the balance of the mill's cane requirements to lease more land from other sugar producers.

Since 1964, the Cojuangcos have

also been restructuring their portfolio. They have been setting up holding and marketing companies to ensure that the family keeps within its grip the expanding wealth of the clan. In 1980, it established the Luisita Realty Corporation which owns 120 hectares of industrial land beside the hacienda.

At present, the clan is inviting businesses to locate in their industrial estate. They are also eyeing the establishment of a vocational school

on the site to train potential manpower for industries that will locate in the area. Also, they plan to build condominiums around the Luisita Golf and Country Club.

The Cojuangcos have grandiose plans to develop Hacienda Luisita into a new bustling city, with an eye at some profitable business that may come with the projected construction of an east-west highway to link Infanta, Quezon with Subic in Zambales. Similarly, the extension of the North Diversion Road to Carmen, Pangasinan,

which is expected further north towards the Ilocos region in 1993-1994 will hit the Cojuangco property by next year. With the help of the Sumulong, Tanjuatcos, Oretas, Aquinos and their extended families who now all hold political power, more lucrative deals could be clinched by other members of the Cojuangco clan involved in banking and finance, manufacturing, real estate, construction and other industries.

A "trapo" had once exclaimed, "What are we in power for?" It is a dictum the Cojuangco family has been taking to heart since its ascent to dominance in 1986. ■

Visions of tomorrow

Review of *A People Rising*, 1990, 100 pages

Although the struggle to bring about thoroughgoing change in Philippine society began over two decades ago, relatively little of what the Filipino people have achieved so far in shaping a new future has filtered to the outside world. The photo documentary book *A People Rising* brings to light little-known facts about what is happening in various areas of the country where the revolutionary movement, led by the National Democratic Front (NDF), wields significant political influence. More important, it helps provide a deeper understanding of the various dimensions of the sweeping changes taking place in the NDF's zones of popular control.

In many parts of the archipelago, the NDF is laying the groundwork for a new and better society for all Filipinos. Its vision of a new Philippines is already evident in areas where the broad confederation has established its presence. Here, people from all walks of life are actively engaged in the task of building the foundations of a just, humane and prosperous social order. What they have achieved so far is a testament to the determination of the Filipino people to chart their own destiny and to shape a new future.

In communities where it has extended its influence, the NDF has created - and is creating - new mechanisms for self-governance. By giving the people the opportunity to decide on matters that affect them, and providing the widest possible latitude for the exercise of their political freedoms, the NDF seeks to make genuine participatory democracy flourish at the grassroots level.



Through the establishment of the organs of political power in the zones of popular control, genuine people's empowerment has become a reality. Here, the people learn the lessons of self-governance and collective decision-making to promote their interests and assert their rights. This further strengthens the people's resolve to make freedom, dignity and humanity flourish in vibrant communities where they have established structures which they, together with the NDF, have built.

Apart from encouraging grassroots democracy, the people's revolutionary organs of governance (PROG) are helping bring about a new economic order based on cooperation, mutual help and self-reliance. The objectives are clear: to overturn patently inequitable economic structures; put an end to the grinding poverty that has left many Filipinos on the edge of despair; ensure self-sufficiency in basic needs; and create conditions for a strong and robust economy that will not only help sustain the war effort but

also advance the revolutionary struggle to final victory.

In areas where the revolutionary movement has taken deep root, the PROG's education committees are leading a determined campaign to eliminate illiteracy, provide rudimentary but meaningful education to both young and old alike, and have rekindled the people's desire to learn new ideas. Lessons in literacy and numeracy are creatively combined with political courses to provide the people with a better understanding of the various processes they have to go through to significantly change their lives.

Health is also a primary concern in the zones of popular control. This is expressed in the health committees' programs and projects concerning health education and disease prevention, as well as information dissemination about proper nutrition and physical hygiene. Western medical procedures are combined with alternative methods like acupuncture and herbal medicine. Paramedics can easily cope with common medical emergencies

MERDEKA!
Abuhayna Mohaber

Ang pagsulong ng pakikibaka ng mamamayang Moro



Rebolusyonaryong kabataang Moro: Patuloy ang pag-angat

MPVL

Sa kasalukuyan, ang mamamayang Moro ay patuloy sa pakikibaka para sa sariling pagpapasya. Ang paggawad ng reaksyunaryong rehimeng US-Aquino ng "awtonomya" sa Muslim Mindanao ay lalo lamang nagpatindi sa taktikang divide-and-rule sa pagitan ng mamamayang Moro at mamamayang Kristyano. Patuloy ang *ethnic chauvinism* at pangangamkam ng kabuhayan ng mga Moro. Isinasantabi ang kanilang mga karapatang pampulitika at pantawna hanggang ngayoy hindi nabibigyan ng hustisya.

CULTURAL PAGE

and can even perform minor surgical operations whenever necessary.

NDF initiatives in the political, economic and social spheres must go hand in hand with advances in the cultural field. The new culture that is evolving in increasingly larger areas of the Philippine countryside is one that takes into account the history and traditional values of the Filipino people. It reflects a keen appreciation of the sacrifices of the people's revolutionary heroes and martyrs.

Apart from disseminating hitherto little-known information about recent developments in the NDF's zones of popular control, *A People Rising* has succeeded in bringing together the most graphic and inspiring images showing how people in these areas strive to lead normal lives under the most abnormal conditions.

Although the text provides revealing insights into some of the issues and problems arising from a

fledgling day-to-day governance, it is the photographs which succeed in evoking powerful emotions - mainly awe - that make the people shown in them loom larger than life. The effective interplay of light and shadow in many of the images added just the right amount of drama to the photographs.

The book's main chapters were divided into sections corresponding to the tasks assigned to the key committees of the PROG - organization, livelihood, education, health and defense. Structuring the book in this manner simplified the task of focusing on its principal objective: to depict in the most graphic terms, using text and image, the significant changes that the people in the zones of popular control have achieved under the leadership of the NDF.

The section on History, however, seems to have been collapsed a trifle too much. Surprisingly, too, no mention was ever made of how

the EDSA Revolution has affected the lives of the people in the NDF-influenced areas. The absence of corresponding text on post-EDSA developments made the latter part of the section on History appear a bit too contrived.

Everything depicted in the photo-documentary occurs in the midst of a situation where the Aquino regime has unleashed the full force of its military might to preserve the existing social order and prevent the advance of the revolutionary movement. And to defeat an unjust war, the people must defend themselves, persevere in their struggle and secure their hard-earned gains.

A comprehensive and well-crafted publication like *A People Rising* will definitely succeed in bringing to the attention of a wide audience both here and abroad the continuing struggle of a people who are shaping their future today.

Armando Jose

MERDEKA!

Umugting ang militarisasyon sa kanilang mga komunidad.

Sa ganitong kalagayan ng Bangsa Moro, nangungunang porma ng pakikibaka ang armadong pakikibaka. Kasabay nito ay ang pagtatatag ng mga base kapwa sa kanayunan at sa kapatagan, maging sa mga sentrong lungsod kung saan may mamamayang Moro. Sa kasalukuyan, binibigyang-pansin ang Central Mindanao Region, ang tabin-dagat at syudad sa prubinsya ng Zamboanga del Sur, at ang mga syudad ng Davao at Maynila.

Ang Moro Revolutionary Organization (MRO) at ang Moro Revolutionary Army (MRA) ay rebolusyonaryong organisasyong nagtataguyod at nagsusulong ng pambansa at demokratikong linya, na may perspektibang sosyalista, sa hanay ng mamamayang Moro. Sa proseso ng pagkilos nito, nasisiguro ang pagpapatupad sa mithun ng mamamayang Morong kamtin ang karapatan para sa sariling pagpapasya [right to self-determination].

Ang pagtatatag ng MRO ay pinano noong 1982 sa isang pulong ng mga kasamang humaharap sa gawaing Moro. Nagbunga ito ng isang Moro Manifesto, na naglalahad ng katangian ng MRO at ilang tungkulin nito. Mas napatibay pa ito noong 1988, sa Mass Work Conference tungkol sa gawaing Moro, kasabay ng pagpipirmi ng MRA bilang rebolusyonaryong hukbo ng mamamayang Moro.

Batay sa naging karanasan at mga teoretikal na pag-uusap hinggil sa usapin ng pambansang minorya, nabuo ang oryentasyon at programa sa pagkilos ng MRO-MRA, at ang paglalapat ng wastong linya sa mga problemang kinakaharap ng mamamayang Moro. Prinsipal na gawain nito ang pag-oorganisa sa hanay ng masang Moro, upang mapalahok at mapakilos sila sa pambansa at demokratikong rebolusyon na isinusulong ng mamamayang maapi at pinagsasamantalahan sa buong Pilipinas. Nilinaw ding ang pakikibaka ng mamamayang Moro

ay hindi hiwalay sa pakikibaka ng iba pang mamamayan sa buong Pilipinas; manapa, ito'y magkakaugnay at magkakawing sa isa't isa. Hindi magtatagumpay ang pakikibaka ng mamamayang Moro kung hindi magtatagumpay ang pakikibaka ng buong sambayanan. May epekto sa mabilisang pagsulong at pananagumpay ng pakikibaka sa buong Pilipinas kung ang mamamayang Moro ay magpapaiwan, mananatiling hindi organisado at hindi

Cotabato, Maynila, Lanao del Sur at Zamboanga del Sur. Kinokonsole rin ang Pambansang Kaisahan ng Magsasakang Moro at ang Makabayang Kilusan ng Kababaihang Moro. Ganito rin ang diin ng gawain sa mga pormasyon ng MRA sa mga prubinsya ng Sultan Kudarat, Zamboanga del Sur at Lanao del Sur.

Iginagalang ng MRO ang relihiyon ng mamamayang Moro. Tumutulong ito sa pagpapaunlad ng



Pwersang Moro at NDF sa Mindanao: Kapwa nagtataguyod sa pambansang demokrasya

kakilos para sa pambansang kalayaan at demokrasya.

Kasama din dito ang patuloy na pakikipag-alyansa sa lahat ng rebolusyonaryong Moro upang mapagkaisa ang layunin tungo sa pagresolba sa mga problema ng mamamayang Moro.

Malaking gawain ngayon sa Moro ang pagpapaunlad at pagkokonsolida ng mga rebolusyonaryong organisasyong masa sa lahat ng lugar na nabanggit. Ang organisasyon ng kabataang Moro, ang Moro Revolutionary Youth League ay patuloy na umuunlad ngayon sa

mga progresibo at mapagpalayang pananaw ng Islam at ng kulturang Moro. Sa kasalukuyan, pinapalalim ng MRO ang pag-aaral tungkol sa Islam at kung paano ito maisasakonteksto sa pagpapabilis ng pakikibaka ng Bangsa Moro.

Ang MRO-MRA ay kahalintulad ng NDF at NPA, sa pagtataguyod nila kapwa sa pambansang demokratikong rebolusyon. Malaki ang tulong ng NDF, bilang pangunahing kompederasyon ng lahat ng pambansa at demokratikong organisasyon sa buong Pilipinas, sa pagkilos at pagtatatag ng MRO at pagtataguyod sa programa nito. ■

NDF Agenda to Bring Immediate Relief and Solve the National Crisis

- 1.** *Assert national sovereignty and remove all US military bases and troops by 1991.*
- 2.** *Provide immediate economic relief and lay the basis for economic emancipation.*
 - a.] Declare a moratorium on debt service payments for the next five years and implement selective repudiation of foreign loans to immediately free massive resources for national reconstruction and national industrialization.*
 - b.] Abolish the Oil Price Stabilization Fund, implement bigger cuts in oil taxes and adopt centralized procurement for oil imports as well as measures to nationalize the oil industry.*
 - c.] Assure adequate wage adjustments for workers, government employes and teachers.*
 - d.] Scrap the import liberalization program.*
- 3.** *Implement agrarian reform.*
- 4.** *Uphold human rights.*
- 5.** *Uphold people's empowerment.*
- 6.** *Reform the military.*
- 7.** *Weed out graft and corruption.*
- 8.** *Uphold the right to self-determination and genuine autonomy.*
- 9.** *Stop the massive destruction of the environment.*

