

# A N G            B A Y A N

PAHAYAGAN NG PARTIDO KOMUNISTA NG PILIPINAS  
PINAPATNUBAYAN NG MARXISMO-LENINISMO-KAISIPANG MAO ZEDONG

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## C O N T E N T S

EDITORIAL    p. 1

NEW YEAR OFFENSIVES IN QUEZON  
SIGNAL OPENING SALVO FOR 1989    p. 3

NPA ATTACK ON ENEMY CHOPPERS IN ILOILO  
SETS EXAMPLE FOR SAPPER OPERATIONS    p. 4

AQUINO'S 'OPEN OPTION' POLICY ON BASES IS  
REALLY DESIGNED TO KEEP US BASES & US SUPPORT    p. 8

CPP HAILS 30TH ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION    p. 13

LETTER    p. 16

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FACING THE NEW YEAR WITH NEW CONFIDENCE

The year 1988 has witnessed a severe test of the ideological, political, military and organizational strength and unity of the revolutionary forces led by the Communist Party of the Philippines.

It was the year when the Aquino regime, in collaboration with its US imperialist master, mounted what has so far been the most massive and intensified offensive against the revolutionary movement on all fronts -- military, political and ideological.

The AFP fielded bigger troop concentrations of battalion to division size to carry out sustained and intensive military operations against practically all major guerrilla bases and zones, using a combination of infantry, tank and aerial assaults.

The legal democratic mass movement and the urban underground were subjected to repeated crackdowns, arrests, salvagings and witchhunts. Some leaders fell into enemy hands. Others fell in a hail of bullets from fascist death squads.

Showing the vicious and desperate character of the enemy, the attacks against the revolutionaries and the masses went to the extent of throwing away the legal trappings of the regime and its pretensions of respect for human rights. Complementing the fascist attacks was an insidious psywar campaign which has all the marks of a CIA-orchestrated disinformation scheme designed to slander and sow intrigues against the revolutionary leadership, and distort before the public the goals, nature and methods of the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary ideology itself. The intent was to divide and confuse the leaders and members of the revolutionary movement, its mass following and its allies.

Thus, the standard and necessary practice of screening the Party organization and securing it from bad elements, particularly enemy agents, was blown up to make it appear that the revolutionary movement was deep into a bloody purge. The healthy and vigorous debates within the Party -- a mark of its democratic and scientific spirit -- were misrepresented as a bloody power struggle.

It was the US-Aquino regime, however, which had no qualms about shedding the blood of hundreds of Filipinos in its nakedly fascist campaign to destroy the revolutionary movement. Its bloody plots went hand in hand with a siren call for peace, mystified and emptied of any meaning, and claims of economic recovery founded on foreign debt and on government pump-priming techniques to fuel a temporary consumerist buying binge.

In the midst of such a campaign, a boastful Corazon Aquino, in her State of the Nation address on July 25, 1988, proclaimed 1988 as "the year the insurgency was broken."

But the US' chief puppet spoke in haste and in ignorance of social and political realities. For the grandiose AFP-CIA plan to deal the CPP and the New People's Army a crushing blow in the "year of the dragon" ended with a whimper.

Enemy offensive repulsed

At the close of 1988, it was obvious that the Party and the revolutionary movement were successfully repulsing the enemy offensive. Not only that, but the

revolutionary forces, principally the NPA, were making additional gains in the armed and other fronts of revolutionary struggle.

Most of the strategic and major guerrilla bases and zones succeeded in withstanding enemy assaults, giving the people's army the chance to improve on company-level operations and tactics. They continued to solidify the mass base, strengthening the basis for the democratic organs of political power to emerge at levels higher than the barrio and the municipality.

The urban underground was able to adjust to the more sophisticated techniques of enemy surveillance and infiltration and to foil crackdown operations, by immersing themselves deeper in the masses and developing better methods in security and technical work.

The legal democratic movement managed to sustain its activities and fight off enemy attempts to drive it out of the legal arena of struggle. Legal mass organizations persisted in their propaganda-education campaigns and organizational consolidation and expansion work. Progressive alliances of the basic masses and the middle classes continued to grow.

Against all attempts to sow confusion and disunity among them and undermine their morale and convictions, the Party leadership, the corps of cadres and the rank-and-file closed ranks, refused to be swayed by intrigues, viewed the situation with objectivity, and did not lose sight of the direction and practical tasks. They carried on their responsibilities with admirable grit and determination.

These fascist onslaughts against the revolutionary forces and masses have only served to fan revolutionary fervor and popular hatred against the reactionaries. With the deepening mass poverty and the eruptions of violent infighting among the reactionaries, this can only lead to a new intensification of the political and socio-economic crisis.

#### Prepare for bigger battles

The tests and trials of 1988 have shown the resiliency and solidity of the Party and the entire national-democratic movement's ideological, political and organizational strength built up and nurtured for the past twenty years.

While we can rely on this strength accumulated through the years in facing whatever challenges may come, there is further need to prime up and improve ourselves ideologically, politically and organizationally so that we can win the bigger battles of the coming years and the next decade, and bring the revolutionary struggle to a new level of strategic development, or even to complete victory.

For example, all signs point to a watershed, a confluence of events in 1991 - the year of the termination of the US-RP military bases agreement, the peak of preparations for a new presidential election, the supposed climax of the ambitious counterinsurgency plan, and a crucial point in the equally ambitious program to "bring the country into the ranks of the tiger economies of Asia." The period approaching 1991 will thus be years of intensifying political and military battles with the puppet regime and its US imperialist masters.

To put the Party into stronger fighting shape, there are certain crucial tasks that must be performed.

Ideologically, we must deepen our Marxist-Leninist understanding of the Philippine revolution by correctly summing up the rich, varied and enormous lessons of the past twenty years of revolutionary work and political developments

in the country. We must further consolidate the Party ideologically, politically and organizationally to make it a more effective vanguard of the entire people's struggle.

Politically, we must fully grasp and conscientiously fulfill all the prerequisites with regard to the armed struggle and the united front so as to advance the people's war to a new level of strategic development -- to the stage of strategic stalemate and ultimately to strategic victory.

Organizationally, we must build a bigger, more disciplined and united Party, more broadly and deeply immersed in the masses and constantly practicing criticism and self-criticism. We need to expand the Party membership on the basis of an effective and realistic program of consolidation, and to develop new cadres for the ever-expanding, varied and newly-opened fields of work.

All these require from every Party member the full cultivation of the Party spirit, more sacrifices, hard work, study, creativity and imagination, and better organization of our work and marshalling of our resources.

The whole Party stands ready to take on the many tasks and challenges that lie ahead. Like grains of rice that with each pounding become more pure and white, Party members are tempered in the midst of hardships. The Party faces the new year with a new confidence -- certain that we will win in due time the total liberation of our country and our people.

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#### NEW YEAR OFFENSIVES IN QUEZON SIGNAL OPENING SALVO FOR 1989

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The extensive use of explosives is fast becoming a hallmark of many an NPA ambush. Land mines, in particular, have become very effective in blowing up armored personnel carriers and battle tanks and neutralizing truck-borne enemy troops.

In the province of Quezon, NPA forces are carefully mastering the art of laying land mines inside culverts along the Maharlika national highway. Last year on September 25, they stuck explosives in a culvert at Malinao, Ilaya, Atimonan. Killed in the blast were seven army soldiers, including a captain.

Last January 5, NPA guerrillas in southern Quezon struck again. They planted a land mine inside a culvert of the Maharlika highway in barrio Binutas, Calauag town.

As they saw their target -- a Vulcan-150 armored personnel carrier -- churn down the road, the guerrillas crouching on the wayside immediately set off the mine. The detonation came too soon. But it sent the fat vehicle lurching into a large crater of upturned chunks of cement and stone.

Swiftly, the NPA fighters pummeled the stalled V-150 with a fusillade of M203 fire, killing two army soldiers. In the assault, reported an Ang Bayan correspondent, they took away one 50-cal. machine gun, one M60 machine gun, two M16 rifles and one M14.

Hardly had ten minutes passed when another APC arrived. But it quickly scurried back in its tracks when the NPA greeted it with a hail of gunfire. The APC returned with a Scorpion tank and a troop-laden truck in tow, and began to exchange fire with the guerrillas.

However, to avoid losses and still retain tactical initiative, the NPA decided to disengage from the battle without a single casualty. With them in their withdrawal was a sergeant of the 4th Light Armor Brigade whom they had taken as prisoner of war. Negotiations are currently underway for his release.

In retaliation, the 49th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army mounted air and ground assault operations. On January 9, one of its companies engaged a small NPA unit in a firefight in barrio San Francisco, Lopez town. However, the wily guerrillas outmaneuvered the army soldiers, who in panic abandoned two wounded CAFGU members. They also left behind three sacks of supplies of clothes, canned goods, chickens, plus rifle grenades, M60 bullets and a transistor radio.

On January 10, the NPA again sprung an ambush on a military vehicle cruising along the Maharlika highway in barrio Masin, Candelaria, some 100 meters away from the 237th PC Company detachment. Killed in the morning attack was a PC sergeant.

So alarmed are military authorities over these successive NPA operations that one commander, Quezon PC-INP chief Col. Reynaldo Wycoco, has ordered his men to make a full stop before crossing culverts along the national highway and check for land mines. He has also asked the Department of Public Works and Highways to identify the areas with culverts along highways in Quezon and to place warnings near them, or at least cover the culverts with iron grills.

But this may be a tall order for the public works department. The Maharlika highway from Plaridel, Quezon up to Sta. Elena, Camarines Norte has 97 culverts. District 2 of Quezon alone has more than 200 culverts, report district engineers. Moreover, Wycoco's order to his men would impede troop movements, especially fast reinforcements during combat operations.

In any case, the latest series of tactical offensives in Quezon belie Southern Luzon Command chief Brig. Gen. Alejandro Galido's claim that the NPA forces in Quezon have been driven from Mt. Banahaw and the Bondoc peninsula. The recent ambush at the town of Candelaria alone -- which lies at the foot-hills of Mt. Banahaw -- is enough of an announcement to puncture that boastful general's inflated claims.

And coming at the start of the new year, this string of NPA successes, combined with heightened political work, augur well for the revolutionary movement in that southernmost end of the Sierra Madre.

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#### NPA ATTACK ON ENEMY CHOPPERS IN ILOILO SETS EXAMPLE FOR SAPPER OPERATIONS

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They slipped into the camp undetected, the darkness of the night for their clothing and the stillness their mask. Not a shadow did they cast against the searchlights and not a murmur or a stumble did they make to alert the dogs. And there before them lay sleek and gleaming, like giant gray-green tadpoles napping under the evening sky, their objective: two Sikorsky and three Huey helicopters.

Swiftly, the five men broke up into two teams. To optimize the two explosive charges they brought with them, they decided to strike at the bigger and more lethal Sikorsky (S-76) helicopters which are armed with rocket launchers as well as M60 light machine guns. They rigged charges of two TNT kilos each underneath the engine of each aircraft.

The placement of the explosives and the actual detonation were timed at three minutes flat -- the interval of the on-and-off blinking of the search-lights at the watchtowers. The charges exploded one after another. They ripped through the fat bellies of the Sikorskies, set ablaze their flooring and interior, sending plumes of fire and smoke curling into the air that could be seen one-and-a-half kilometers away.

In all, the operation took 40 minutes, from 2:30 in the wee hours of the morning of December 18, 1988 until the NPA guerrillas safely withdrew from the burning scene. The enemy was literally caught napping. The PAFSECOM company assigned to the air force military compound inside the airport in Iloilo City failed to fire even a single shot at the NPA commando team.

According to Ang Bayan correspondents in Panay, the NPA guerrillas capitalized on every opportunity and weakness of the enemy to ensure the success of the operation. Three days earlier, the soldiers at the base had received their pay which they used up to go on a drinking binge. Some even went on leave to unwind following the red alert of December 10, Human Rights Day. As a result, security at the air force compound became lax. In the cold morning light of December 18, only the three Hueys could be seen at the tarmac. The blackened ruins of the Sikorskies were apparently towed inside the hangar of the air force, away from prying eyes. The press, except those from a pro-military radio station, were barred from the compound.

In an attempt to save face, the military ordered one Huey helicopter to lift off from the airfield and circle over Iloilo City. In the afternoon, a Sikorsky whirred into the city, together with a C-130 cargo plane, to continue the "flying" charade.

But the damage had been done -- to the Sikorsky heligunships and to the military's (literally and figuratively) air of superiority.

#### A breakthrough for NPA operations

The successful NPA operation in Iloilo City marks a breakthrough in neutralizing AFP combat helicopters and denting the seeming aerial might of the US-Aquino regime. Earlier in 1972, an NPA guerrilla unit that assaulted the AFP regional headquarters in Echague, Isabela also destroyed a military helicopter. But the Iloilo surprise attack is the first NPA operation ever to be principally directed at sabotaging enemy aircraft.

Increasingly these past years, US-supplied helicopters have been used in "counterinsurgency" operations against the NPA and revolutionary masses. They provide fire support for and reinforcement to AFP units in action, especially those under NPA siege. They are principally responsible for the mounting strafing and rocket attacks of many homes and barrios in the countryside.

Close air support to AFP ground troops are starting to pose considerable problems for NPA tactical offensives. The success of some raids and ambushes has been constrained by the air strikes of helicopter gunships in pursuit.

For instance, on April 20, 1987, the NPA overran the company headquarters of the 15th Infantry Battalion in barrio Bato, Sagay, Negros Occidental. Captured in the raid were 37 high-powered firearms, two 38-cal. machine guns, one M203 grenade launcher, two 60mm mortars and more than 30,000 rounds of ammunition, including 84 mortar rounds.

Upon their withdrawal, however, two armed AFP helicopters caught up with them, forcing them with concentrated rocket fire to abandon their vehicles. Consequently, the enemy recovered some of the heavy weapons and ammunition.

The NPA operation in Iloilo represents an important step in addressing the problem posed by combat helicopters: to destroy them right on the ground and within their home base. This action brings to light the importance of a special type of military operation -- sapper unit operations.

#### The sapper units of Vietnam

In a regular army, sappers are members of a military engineering unit that is organized, trained and equipped to handle mines and to erect or demolish field fortifications. During the Vietnam War, the revolutionary forces formed sapper units primarily to attack US and ARVN (South Vietnamese army) permanent and field bases and destroy their aircraft and artillery.

Composed of seasoned guerrilla fighters, the Vietnamese sapper units maintained contact and surprise at their own discretion, thereby controlling their losses. They developed a host of creative and innovative tactics to thwart superior US firepower and retain the overall strategic initiative.

Munitions storage sites were among their prime targets. In early 1969, one US base alone lost 12,000 tons. In 1972, the US-backed South Vietnamese army lost 24,000 tons, noted Gabriel Kolko in his book Anatomy of War.

However, it was the helicopter which became the favorite target of sapper attacks of the North Vietnam Army (NVA) and the People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF), the regular army of the National Liberation Front (NLF) in South Vietnam.

Of all the new weapons systems, the US relied most heavily on the helicopter. US Defense Secretary Robert McNamara regarded it as "the single most important key to counterinsurgency," while Gen. William Westmoreland, overall commander of US troops in Vietnam, claimed that without it a million men would have been required to accomplish the same task of transporting infantry into remote jungle lairs to locate and crush the NLF. By 1962, reported Kolko, the 11,000 US advisers in South Vietnam were more concerned with training the ARVN to use the helicopter than with any other task.

What the US sought to create, with the helicopter as a key component, was a massive aerial umbrella to provide ground commanders with vertical assault capabilities along with mechanized mobility. Part and parcel of this strategy were the bombing sorties against NLF forces in South Vietnam and the entire country of North Vietnam. US officials believed that such an intensified air war could reverse the military situation on the ground, which even then was turning against the US-RVN alliance.

The Vietnamese Communist Party and NLF responded to the new threat of the helicopters with careful study and analysis, after initial difficult and costly encounters with them. Discussions and experiments took place through-out the country. In 1962, the helicopter's main vulnerabilities (like its exposed gas tanks and pilots) were made known to all army units. Military cadres propagated the ways to shoot at helicopters and predict their landing zones, exposing the machines to preregistered mortars, upright bamboo poles and punji stakes.

In sufficient time, the revolutionary forces were able to prevail over the US war helicopters and turn this technological asset of the enemy into a weakness. They crippled more and more helicopters and even fixed-wing aircraft, turning them -- literally -- into smash hits.

#### Refining sapper tactics and techniques

As the war dragged on, some US officials now began to publicly acknowledge the grave faults of helicopter technology and its tactical premises. They decried its extreme vulnerability to ambush. Like tactical aircraft, the helicopter eliminated the element of surprise. Though it provided mobility, it also revealed troop numbers and location. While its battlefield losses ran high, its routine cost was even more of a burden.

Each hour in the air required ten hours of maintenance, and the choppers' fuel consumption was enormous. Moreover, the early UH-1 (the current model of the AFP's Hueys, of which it had 48 as of late 1987) could carry only eight to ten soldiers, while the US Army was requiring them in ever-growing numbers.

As the helicopter's weaknesses became more marked, American advisers turned to escorting transport helicopters with armed helicopters. But this proved even more expensive and complex as it entailed huge fuel supplies, extensive maintenance and increased troop protection against ground fire.

Revolutionary forces perceived this dilemma. They accelerated the tempo of sapper actions, striking right in the heart of major US air bases in Pleiku City on February 7, 1964 and at Bien Hoa on November 1. Even as they boosted their anti-aircraft capability, they increasingly refined the tactic of sapper operations into a major weapon. They adapted simple, low-cost yet highly ingenious and efficient methods.

One device, according to a military writer, had several grenades tied to a 10-foot board with a charge placed underneath. Guerrillas employed this technique with great effectiveness on the Cambodian border where there were so few suitable areas for landing helicopters that guerrillas could pick them out and prepare the device in advance.

As the helicopters descended for landing, a guerrilla set off the charge, which in turn tossed the grenades up to explode in the midst of the aircraft. Strong bunkers were dug around the periphery of open areas, ringed by command-detonated mines. American pilots soon expected every landing site to be "hot and mined."

This learning process reached a high point with the surprise attack at the major port city of Da Nang -- home to a giant US air base complex and a 5,000-man US Marine brigade. The air base perimeter was considered the general boundary between "friendly forces" and a strong pro-NLF population.

On July 1, 1965, at 1:30 a.m., a Marine sentry near the air base fence line heard a suspicious noise. He tossed an illumination grenade into the darkness. It exploded, triggering a furious NVA mortar barrage. A squad of NVA sappers dashed through the fence and heaved satchel charges into a number of parked aircraft.

As the demolition team scurried away, several groups of Marines scrambled over the concrete ramps toward the fence line. A brief gunfight broke out between the Marines and guerrillas, killing two Marines. A recoilless rifle round crashed into a bunker. Then suddenly it was over. Flares and burning aircraft lit up the broken wire and bloodied grass in the blazing aftermath of the spectacular sapper attack.

By 1969, the Pentagon found that there were an average of five sapper attacks a month on US bases, each causing at least \$1 million damage. The final South Vietnamese verdict on sapper activity was that it was "a very effective tactic" expertly carried out with a minimum loss of life for the attackers, but one which "gave the Communists maximum material and psycho-logical value," said Kolko.

"Fear of the sappers forced the Americans to reallocate a vast amount of time and resources to the static defense of US bases and installations."

#### Learning lessons from the Vietnam War

Thus did Vietnamese revolutionary forces -- the first army ever to have to fight an airmobile enemy -- expose to the world the profound limits of US power, not simply politically or morally but militarily as well.

They proved that a small and weak nation, moving together with one spirit and one aim, could defy and defeat the richest and most militarily powerful nation in the world. They proved that in the life-and-death struggle for national liberation and human dignity, a people will move heaven and earth to achieve what is rightfully theirs, no matter the cost. They proved that with creativity, resourcefulness, daring and constant study, one could outorganize, outmaneuver and outfight an enemy overwhelmingly superior in weaponry and technology. That, above all, as the popular line of a militant song affirms: "People not things are decisive."

These were key lessons of the Vietnam War, which the people of Vietnam were to repeatedly drive home through over 30 years of revolution, first against French colonialism then against US imperialist aggression.

By the end of 1972 -- a full three years yet before the end of the war -- the US lost 4,857 helicopters plus 3,689 fixed-wing aircraft valued at over \$10 billion, according to excessively conservative official Pentagon figures cited by Kolko. Official US analysts then and later felt that the war would probably have ended in Spring 1972 had the Americans not employed huge amounts of air power in South Vietnam.

But the air war and the entire US war machine took its greatest toll on the lives of the civilian population. Massive bombings were made not so much because the Americans still believed they could reverse the military situation, but more as a way of concealing defeats. Said Kolko: "The air war against North Vietnam (and the NLF) was a failure from the inception, and 80 percent of casualties were civilians."

To be sure, Philippine revolutionary forces have much to learn from the Vietnam War -- as the US has learned little from it. Even now, US-supplied helicopters and armored vehicles are steadily escalating their involvement in counter-revolutionary campaigns -- forsaking the lesson of the Vietnam War that the helicopter was never of decisive military value. In return, they are suffering the jarring blows of NPA attacks.

Last January 21, NPA guerrillas raided at early dawn the patrol base of the 334th PC Company in sitio Huevesan, Hiyang Hiyang, Cadiz City in Negros Occidental. They killed two PC enlisted men, a militiaman and a PC civilian agent; wounded two vigilantes and three other militiamen; and carted away an M60 machine gun and armalite rifle. They withdrew at daybreak -- but not before damaging a helicopter flying in reinforcements, hitting its rotor blades before landing.

A V-150 armored car rushing to aid the patrol base was also ambushed by an NPA blocking force in barrio Puey in Sagay.

In Negros Oriental, sketchy reports also revealed that on January 20, Red fighters shot a helicopter which was ferrying reinforcements to sitio Kakhan, Tatalac, Sta. Catalina where PC troops had been ambushed. The pilot was wounded. According to a newspaper, the helicopter was the "third helicopter to be hit by NPA rebels in Negros Oriental in three weeks."

Judging from the growing record of NPA hits against enemy aircraft, these operations will surely not be the last. By learning from the wealth of lessons and tactics of the Vietnamese sapper units, and summing up our own experiences in the use of explosives, the revolutionary movement can further strengthen its capability to cripple the wings of the regime's armed force and down more of its birds of prey for good.

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AQUINO'S "OPEN OPTION" POLICY ON BASES IS REALLY DESIGNED TO KEEP US BASES & US SUPPORT

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Since the latest review of the RP-US Military Bases Agreement (MBA) was completed last October 1988, the Aquino regime has been ominously quiet on the issue of whether or not to renew the pact after it expires on Sept. 16, 1991. According to the agreement, the US will provide \$481 million in economic and military assistance to the Philippines for the remaining two years of the MBA.

Despite great pressure from the US, the Aquino government declared that it was not eager for early negotiations on the renewal of the bases treaty. Once again, Corazon C. Aquino stuck to her now-familiar line of "keeping options open." She shrugged off 1991 as still too far away, that there was still plenty of time to ponder the various options before a final commitment is made to the US on the bases.

But there is a growing feeling among many sectors, whether opposed to or supportive of the regime, that the "open options" policy has run its course and that it should be dropped in favor of a definitive and forceful stand.

The truth about the "open options" policy

Anti-Aquino reactionaries decry the policy as yet another instance of the ambiguity, indecisiveness and incompetence that underlie every decision-making process in the Aquino regime. They insist that Aquino come out with her stand on the bases as soon as possible, demanding it as proof of firm leadership.

It is easy to understand why the "open options" policy puts the reactionaries in a quandary. Having committed themselves to the principle that US military bases are absolutely essential to national progress and absolutely compatible with national interest, they do not know how to attack the Aquino regime on the issue without undermining the very basis of their own position.

Within the Aquino camp, on the other hand, there are those who wish to put an end to the "open options" policy because they want the Aquino government to adopt a tough posture early on in the game of bargaining. They want Aquino to inform the US government that the bases treaty is due to expire on Sept. 16, 1991, with the subtle hint that the latter had better come up with a juicy enough offer for the renegotiations.

Both camps fail to strike at the heart of the issue -- which is that any self-respecting government of an independent nation does not make national sovereignty an "option." The assertion of national sovereignty is not a course that a nation may or may not take as circumstances dictate or permit. National sovereignty is not an item that can be traded off for what one leader perceives as the "national interest" or "public good" or "popular demand." The fact that the Aquino government considers national sovereignty to be a matter of choice

reveals much about itself: that it is a government beholden and subservient to another more powerful one.

The truth is: the Aquino regime has no options at all on the issue of the US military bases. This is not due to the regime's lack of a coherent policy, or its political naivete, or its vacillating nature. It is simply because the Aquino regime has made itself totally dependent on the economic, political and military support of the US to maintain its rule and the entire reactionary ruling system. It has been clearly and firmly committed to the policy of deepening and increasing that dependence for the past three years and for the next three more.

No one knows this better than the US government itself. In a session of the US Senate's foreign relations committee, new US Secretary of State James Baker lost no time in declaring that he was confident the US would success-fully negotiate a renewal of its "bases rights" in the Philippines.

Baker expressed the US' determination to maintain its military presence in the Philippines because the US has an "extremely large stake in the area" (Asia-Pacific region) and "it is very important to us in terms of securing the national interests of the US that we maintain the bases." (underscoring ours)

Earlier, outgoing Secretary of State George Shultz had proposed a 25-year extension of the Military Bases Agreement, as revealed by Sen. Leticia Shahani before the Philippine Senate's foreign relations committee. That Shultz had the gall to suggest this speaks of US imperialism's overweening confidence in the loyalty of its puppet regime in the Philippines and the little brown sister that presides over it.

#### Deeper into dependence

The US has a strong basis to expect as well as demand the loyalty of the Aquino regime. Economically, the regime is sinking itself deeper into the mire of dependence on the US.

Aquino argues that because of the plunder and devastation of the Philippine economy by the Marcos horde over the past two decades, the country has little choice but to continue to depend on loans, aid and investment from the US and its allies in order to enable the economy to recover and grow.

But the fact is that the Aquino government has committed itself to paying every single cent of the gargantuan foreign debt incurred by Marcos and his cronies, thus burdening the country with a huge debt service that eats up 30 percent of the national budget (as of 1988). It has implemented even further the policy of import liberalization, resulting in imports rising by nearly 80 percent over the past three years while exports went up by only 50 percent. It has deepened its subservience to the International Monetary Fund-World Bank combine and its prescribed development program, though the experience of many years has shown that this program has blocked the country from becoming self-reliant, tying it to an agricultural, export-oriented economy vulnerable to the vagaries of the foreign market and opposed to genuine industrialization.

Lately, as if laying the theoretical basis for its actions, the Aquinogovernment enshrined as national policy the idea that national salvation lies in our continuing economic dependence on the US and its allies.

In Philippine foreign policy, this is called "development diplomacy," a concept introduced by Foreign Affairs Secretary Raul Manglapus in a major foreign policy speech this January. Defined as using diplomacy to get economic and trade benefits for the country, "development diplomacy," however, is nothing more than the Aquino regime's policy of mendicancy.

The series of activities which preoccupied the Aquino administration this month are particularly revealing of this policy. Oblivious to the turmoil in Congress over imported guns, imported cars and buko exports, Aquino was busy holding talks with various officials from the IMF, WB, USAID and its Japanese equivalent, to put into place the US-sponsored \$10 billion Philippine Aid Plan or PAP. (The acronym is most apt, pap being the soft, mashed food fed to babies and invalids.)

That PAP is being accelerated can be seen from the systematic way in which the visits were timed. First, visiting IMF officials approved a \$1.3 billion credit facility to the Philippines, thereby giving the go-signal for the entire aid effort. Aid officials from the US and Japan, the two main sponsors of PAP, came to discuss their countries' contributions to the fund. Finally, the president of the World Bank, who is expected to be PAP coordinator and one its main contributors, was arriving in early February.

US leaders and officials have frankly admitted that PAP is inextricably tied to the issue of the bases. Aside from the US, the list of prospective PAP donors include Japan, Australia, Singapore, Taiwan, West Germany and Canada -- the governments of which have all stated at one time or another that the presence of US military installations in the Philippines is essential to the security and stability of a region where they have substantial investments.

The bases issue underpins all the developments with regard to PAP. The flurry of activities connected with PAP are highly indicative of a commitment being made or already made with regard to the US bases. These could be the signals of the groundwork for a new bases agreement, even of a definite commitment from the Aquino regime to renew the treaty after 1991.

New deceptive line: "Gradual withdrawal"

In the face of all these, the "open options" policy has been and is nothing but a farce and a cover-up. The bases renegotiations will merely be a matter of bargaining to raise the price of Aquino's betrayal of the Filipino people. One columnist, known to be influential in big business circles, accurately described what -- to the Aquino regime -- is the main issue: "The economic consequences ... of these bases should be the central issues under the new treaty."

To all intents and purposes, the rotting corpse of the "open options" policy is being given a quiet burial in the cemetery of schemes by the Aquino regime. For already, there are signs that a new policy, a new deceptive line is emerging to take its place.

Officially, this policy was enunciated by Manglapus in the same speech where he introduced "development diplomacy." In that speech, Manglapus stated that the government was preparing for the eventual closure of the US bases in the country and their conversion to civilian use. The idea of "gradual withdrawal" had earlier been espoused by Shahani but this is the first time that such a policy has been articulated by an official spokesman of the regime.

The "gradual withdrawal" line -- a much more insidious one than "open options" -- tries to blur the distinctions between pro-bases and anti-bases advocates. Following this line, everyone is a nationalist and a patriot and speaks for national interest. The only difference is between those who are pragmatic and practical in the pursuit of "national interest" (meaning, those who say they want the phaseout rather than the immediate dismantling of the bases) and those who are hotheaded, impulsive and blind to the reality of the country's total unpreparedness (meaning, those who say they want the bases pulled out at once or upon the expiration of the treaty in 1991).

In this manner, the "gradual withdrawal" line seeks to becloud the real issues why the US military bases should not stay one minute further on Philippine soil -- that they are an affront to and a violation of our national sovereignty, that they enforce the semicolonial status of the country, that they are the instruments for US strategic control over our nation and people, that they are there to protect US strategic interests.

With "gradual withdrawal" versus "immediate dismantling" as the focus of the conflict of views, the strategic and basic issues will be lost; everything will degenerate into a question of tactics, of methods, of timing.

Thus, it would not be strange for both pro-bases and anti-bases advocates to be concerned with the matter of "alternative uses" for the bases. But the former would approach it from the point of view of extracting greater "rent" from the US for the bases. As one "pragmatic" columnist lamented, after the signing of the Manglapus-Shultz agreement: "The magnitude of 'economic rent' for the use of the bases is not proportional to the foreign income that the alternative uses of the military installations could have generated." Pro-bases advocates would also refuse to see that a policy of self-reliance and genuine industrialization -- possible only by breaking the bonds of dependence enforced by the US bases -- is necessary to achieve a successful conversion of the bases to economic use.

The "gradual withdrawal" line is perfectly acceptable to US imperialism and consonant with its interests. The Military Bases Agreement could be renewed every 10, 15 or 20 years -- in perpetuity -- so long as a puppet regime holds power. And so long as national survival is made to depend on foreign investments, foreign aid, foreign loans, what government would have the strength to say, "Sorry, but we no longer want the US bases here"?

Watch out for the further trumpeting of this line of "gradual withdrawal" by other spokesmen of the Aquino regime and mouthpieces of US imperialism.

#### Low-key, soft-pedalled tactics

The succession of policy statements and activities related to the US bases issue has all been low-key and soft-pedalled, careful not to arouse any undue alarm among the people. They have all the earmarks of something being arranged in a surreptitious manner, in order to catch everyone flat-footed.

The national debate on the issue of whether or not to retain the bases has reached a high level and spread out to a broad spectrum of the population. Due mainly to the efforts of the revolutionary and progressive forces, the central issues at stake -- genuine independence, national sovereignty and self-respect -- have been pushed to the forefront of public awareness.

The defensiveness of the pro-bases advocates is shown by the fact that -- their arguments having crumbled to the dust -- they have begun to seek refuge in surveys (funded and organized by pro-US businessmen and social scientists) that supposedly show a majority in favor of the US bases. Thus, instead of answering the points raised by those opposed to the bases, they dismiss all arguments that come from the so-called "noisy anti-bases minority."

All these further underscore the gradual, steady build-up of anti-bases and anti-imperialist sentiments among the broad masses of the Filipino people. This is an irreversible trend.

And it explains the low-key tactics being used by the Aquino regime and US imperialism, as they prepare the ground for the renewal of the bases treaty beyond 1991. The US-Aquino regime's strategy on the bases talks will probably take the

following course. Formal negotiations will be held at a later time (although negotiations may already be going on). The period when the bases issue will be on the public agenda will be brief. The debate will be steered towards the false issue of "gradual withdrawal" vs. "immediate dismantling." Any open or prolonged bargaining over the "price" will be avoided. The PAP package will likely be wrapped up by then.

Such tactics are designed to blunt public awareness of and interest in the issues related to the US bases, to delay public reaction and discussion, and to prevent the accumulation of momentum for a nationwide and massive anti-bases protest, until it's too late. But as its duplicity on the matter is exposed, the Aquino regime will resort to greater fascist repression to quell the surge of anti-bases protest. This is evident in the AFP's vow to crush within the next three years the revolutionary movement that is taking the lead in the anti-bases struggle. The period during which a new bases treaty will be hammered into shape will be a period of intensified repression.

The stage is also being set for a "national referendum" to decide the fate of the US bases in the face of strong opposition to their retention. When the Aquino government is shorn of all its deceptive masks (from "open options" to "gradual withdrawal"), the "referendum" will be a convenient way to escape responsibility and the resulting people's anger for any pro-bases decision. This is an option which is especially attractive to Corazon Aquino, who still seems enthralled by the carefully nurtured myth of her popularity. In one interview by the Malacnang press, she revealed that her government's decision on the bases would be determined by the "public response."

#### Keep bases issue burning

All revolutionary, progressive and nationalist forces in the country who oppose the presence of US bases on Philippine territory and who seek the liberation of their country from US imperialism must place themselves on alert.

Taking into account the tactics being used by the US-Aquino regime, they must formulate a systematic, long-range, all-rounded plan to keep the bases issue burning, to place it ever at the center of public attention, to sustain it in the midst of the ebb and flow of various events. They must be keen at perceiving those developments which, though not visibly linked to the bases issue, are intimately connected to it. They must seize every opportunity to bring the issue to the fore.

The Asia-Pacific People's Conference on Peace and Development and the peace caravan that followed it this January are one event and form of protest which succeeded in bringing the bases issue out of the backburner to which it had been consigned by the Aquino regime. The stern warnings issued by no than top US boy Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos to the peace delegates, the harassment and surveillance to which the latter were subjected, and the whipping up of a pro-bases mob by local government and military officials to block the peace caravan on its way to Clark Air Base and Subic Naval Base -- all point to the fact that the regime wanted no national and global attention focused on the bases issue, and that it had obviously failed in this attempt.

Any extensive and broad propaganda-education campaign must be kept ongoing. The campaign should reach out to wider and wider sections of the populace, arouse their nationalist and patriotic sentiments, and explain to them the issues of the US bases, US intervention in the country, and the entire structure of US domination and exploitation of the Filipino nation and people.

The accumulation of many acts of protest and an unrelenting "prop-ed" campaign will bring about a higher level and intensity of the anti-bases, anti-

imperialist struggle, push forward the overall struggle of the Filipino people to assert national sovereignty and attain genuine independence, and hasten the day when the rule of US imperialism and its puppets will finally be overthrown.

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#### CPP HAILS 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF CUBAN REVOLUTION \_\_\_\_\_

The Communist Party of the Philippines greets the Cuban people and the Cuban Communist Party on the 30th anniversary of the victory of the Cuban revolution this January 1.

The Cuban revolution continues to serve as an inspiration to other revolutionary and liberation forces in the Third World, for it has shown that a united and determined people, under committed and able leadership, can achieve tremendous advances.

#### A history of patriotic struggle

The history of Cuba is an epic tale of the Cuban people's heroic and patriotic struggle against foreign domination. Cuba and the Philippines share parallel experiences in the hands of Spanish colonialism and US imperialism. The Cuban people heroically struggled against Spanish colonialism for many years. And when they were about to drive away the Spanish colonizers, US imperialism intervened. The United States occupied Cuba together with the Philippines and Puerto Rico in 1898 after defeating Spain during the Spanish-American war.

Although it granted "independence" to Cuba, US imperialism made sure that the country remained a US neocolony. In 1901, the US government imposed the Platt Amendment on the Cuban constitution which gave the US the right to intervene in Cuban affairs and to establish military bases on the island, including a naval base at Guantanamo Bay. From then on, US imperialism was to manipulate Cuban political and economic life until 1959.

In 1952, a military coup was staged which installed the dictator Fulgencio Batista into power. Under the Batista regime, the lives of the Cuban people further deteriorated. American big businessmen and racketeers dominated the economy together with the local compradors, big landlords and corrupt government officials. In the words of Comrade Fidel Castro, this was the situation prevailing in Cuba before the revolution:

"Eighty-five percent of the small farmers in Cuba (paid) rent and live(d) under the constant threat of being evicted from the land they till(ed). More than half of our most productive lands (was) in the hands of foreigners. In Oriente, the largest province, the lands of the United Fruit Company and the West Indies Company link(ed) the northern and southern coasts. There (were) 200,000 peasant families who (did) not have a single acre of land to till to provide food for their starving children...Ninety percent of the children of the countryside (were) consumed by parasites which filter(ed) through their bare feet from the ground they walk(ed) on. Society (was) moved to compassion when it hear(d) of the kidnaping or murder of one child, but it (was) criminally indifferent to the mass murder of so many thousands of children who die(d) every year from lack of facilities..."

Around 60 to 70 percent of the population were illiterate. The average educational level was second grade. Over 30 percent of the work force were unemployed or underemployed. Government health care was practically non-existent.

It was in Santiago de Cuba, the country's second largest city, that the revolutionary movement launched the July 26, 1953 assault on the Moncada military garrison. Although unsuccessful, this daring act signaled the beginning of the popular and armed struggle against the Batista dictatorship. In December 1956, Castro together with Ernesto "Che" Guevara and 80 other revolutionaries left Mexico aboard the small boat Granma and landed in Cuba.

After suffering a series of setbacks which reduced their forces to only 12 people, Fidel Castro and the remaining guerrilla force established their first guerrilla front in the Sierra Maestra mountains. For two years, Castro and his revolutionary forces withstood the onslaughts of the US-backed Batista dictatorial regime and resolutely organized and rallied the people towards achieving genuine independence and democracy for the entire country.

On January 1, 1959, the revolutionary forces finally emerged triumphant. With the attainment of national sovereignty and independence, they started the country moving on the road to fundamental changes. As Comrade Fidel Castro himself admitted in his National Day speech last January 1, 1989, "It has been an arduous but fruitful process, full of victories and errors along the way."

#### On the road to fundamental changes

Today, the Cuban people are masters in their own country.

As they march towards building a socialist society, they have remained steadfast in their struggle against US imperialism. Their efforts serve as a shining example for anti-imperialist forces in the Philippines and all over the world. We tremendously admire the example of Cuba, a country slightly bigger than the island of Luzon in the Philippines and with only a population of about 10 million people, in daring to resist the most powerful imperialist country in the world. In the past 30 years, Cuba, only 90 miles away from the United States, has faced and withstood various attempts by the US imperialists to destabilize and put down the Cuban revolution. In 1961, the Cuban people courageously fought off the invasion by US-supported Cuban counterrevolutionaries in the Bay of Pigs. Cuba also stood up to US threats of invasion during the October 1962 [missile] crisis. In the succeeding years, Cuba foiled several CIA-instigated assassination plots against Comrade Fidel Castro. Undaunted in the midst of these plots and threats, the Cuban people staunchly maintained their national sovereignty and independence.

In the economic field, the Cuban government and people have taken great strides in agriculture, industry, agrarian reform and cooperatives. They have successfully transformed a monocrop (sugar), import-dependent and US-dominated economy into a self-reliant, balanced and dynamic economy. Despite the economic blockade imposed by the United States, the Cuban economy has grown in the past 30 years at a rate higher than four percent a year.

Steel production, which is crucial to any country hoping to industrialize, has grown more than 16-fold in the past years. While sugar still remains Cuba's principal agricultural crop, the economy has gradually diversified its agricultural production. On the whole, agricultural and industrial production has increased.

On agrarian reform, Fidel Castro states, "The way in which we carried out our agrarian reform was truly creative. The historical precedent was that all countries that started to build socialism divided up the land into small parcels among millions of people and then collectivized little by little, more or less rapidly or abruptly, sometimes using more political methods, and at other times more coercive methods. That never happened in our country. We didn't divide the



The Philippine revolutionary movement hails the achievements of the Cuban people, under the leadership of the Cuban Communist Party!

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===== L E T T E R =====

#### REVOLUTION CAN WAIT?

I'd like to share my own thoughts on the subject of Ka Salud's letter ("Health can't wait," AB, November 1988). I agree with her that it is not good for a revolutionary to overdo any of the things she mentioned -- smoking, drinking coffee, and not taking meals at mealtimes.

However, I am rather disturbed by her seeming obsession with the preservation of health to the point of contraposing two things: "the revolution can't wait" and "health can't wait." I think she could have made her point without making the contraposition referred to.

As Party members, and given our concrete experiences over the last 20 years, we are fully aware that waging revolution is not anything resembling a picnic. Our own practice has shown that it entails a lot of sacrifices, perhaps not one of which is good for comrades' health.

Since 1968 when our Party was reestablished, and 1969 when the people's army was reestablished, many comrades and the masses that we lead have been arrested, tortured and imprisoned by the fascists. Not a few have fallen in battle or have been "salvaged" by the enemy. Some are still ill today as a result of malnutrition, disease and fatigue they had suffered while assigned in the hinterlands.

In her letter, Ka Salud said we should assiduously look after our health "...even in the midst of battle, terror and crisis after crisis." Resolute words. I'm afraid, though, that in actual practice, there are times when we cannot have both and may even have to make a choice between the two.

Still and all, I reiterate my agreement with Ka Salud that it is never good to overindulge in cigarettes, coffee, etc., and that we should eat our meals and sleep regularly whenever we can without sacrificing our revolutionary work. Let's take care of our health so we can better carry out our tasks!

Mabuhay ang rebolusyon!

Ka Henry

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