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## EDITORIAL

### ON THE RESURGENT MILITANCY OF THE INTELLIGENTSIA

From June to August this year, there were mass outbreaks of protest among the nation's urban intelligentsia. First to erupt was the students' nation-wide boycott movement against tuition fee increases and in assertion of the youth's right to education. Then came the public school teachers' nation-wide strike for higher pay and in coordination with them, the massive protests of government employees in many major offices of the bureaucracy and of health professionals and workers in public hospitals.

Great magnitudes were involved: the students and teachers in hundreds of thousands, the government employees in tens of thousands. The protests were sustained with a significant number carrying out actions for as long as three weeks, and in the case of the students and teachers, bigger and more powerful than any in the past. For the teachers, these were unprecedented in the entire history of their struggles, and for the government employees, an impressive breakthrough.

The June-August mass protests of the intelligentsia were essentially fueled by economic demands, but they quickly took on a distinctive anti-imperialist and antifascist content. The students, teachers and government employees sharply addressed their demands to the state, exposed the regime's indifference to their worsening plight and its subservience to imperialist dictates, and defied its repressive actions and threats.

The anti-imperialist character of the protest movements laid in the conscious linkage of specific economic issues (the teachers' and government employees' demand for higher wages and the students' demand for state subsidy to education) to the entire range of IMF-World Bank impositions and the foreign debt burden. And their antifascist character showed itself in the bold defiance of state repression -- in the students' continuing assertion of their right to assemble and demonstrate in the face of police brutality and reprisals from capitalist educators, and in the teachers' and government employees' assertion of the right to strike despite government threats and harassments.

These mass outbreaks reveal a major feature of class polarization in our society which is engendered by the ever-worsening economic crisis. Among the nation's intelligentsia, an increasingly large mass comprising the big majority become more and more proletarianized. With the value of their salaries deteriorating by the day, they suffer growing immiseration. As a result of the economic squeeze that forces them to engage in ceaseless struggle for survival, their conditions of work have become demeaning. Their mental labor has been deprived of any creative character, heightening their alienation from their work and reducing them to mere cogs in the bureaucratic machinery.

The protest of the students is an outcry against this bleak future awaiting them. With ever-increasing tuition fees and other costs of education, more and more drop out of school, swelling the ranks of the downtrodden in society, with no hopes of improving their lot. Even those who are able to get college education face the prospect of unemployment or are forced to endure conditions of work here and abroad not much different from those of menial workers.

The upheaval in the nation's intelligentsia is a development replete with significance. The huge mass that broke out in protest represents the over-whelming majority of the intelligentsia and a significant portion of the urban petty bourgeoisie. Not only their numbers but the prestige invested by their educational attainment and professions and their manifold linkages with the other sections of the middle classes give them the capability to exert a decisive influence on the political attitudes and behavior of the entire petty bourgeoisie and some elements of the ruling classes. Moreover, they constitute the main force in many vital branches of the superstructure, like the administrative machinery, the educational system, the health establishment, cultural institutions, and media. As such, they have the power to shake and weaken the whole superstructure and the reactionary state.

Thus, any great movement of the nation's intelligentsia is bound to create a turning point in the revolutionary process, especially when conjoined with major advances in the workers' and peasants' mass movements. The First Quarter Storm of 1970, spearheaded by students and teachers, was an earthshaking cultural revolution that laid the ideological, political and organizational basis for succeeding big leaps in the national-democratic revolution. The upheavals of the middle classes after the Aquino assassination in 1983 tilted the balance against the Marcos fascist dictatorship and

hastened its overthrow.

We can boldly say that the mass outbreaks we have just witnessed in the past three months are the precursor of a new level of revolutionary awakening and struggle of the intelligentsia -- an anti-imperialist and democratic movement that will have a profound impact on the entire revolutionary struggle.

There are several factors that conjoin to bring this about. More and more, as the socio-economic crisis intensifies, the nation's intelligentsia are driven not only to fight in defense of their own particular interests but to search for the root causes of their problems and the lasting solutions to these. With their trained intellect, they can quickly grasp that only a revolutionary alternative can solve the chronic ills of Philippine society.

The advancing workers' and peasants' mass movements and the revolutionary armed struggle in the countryside also continue to bring to the fore the fundamental issues that beset the nation. The militant and determined struggles of the basic masses not only inspire the intelligentsia but also provide them with valuable lessons in the conduct of their own struggles, and more importantly, clarify the revolutionary road that must be taken to achieve fundamental changes in society.

The intelligentsia had developed a certain level of anti-imperialist, antifeudal and antifascist consciousness during the years of mass struggles under the Marcos dictatorship. Their continuing struggles today in the economic, political and intellectual spheres will further raise their consciousness.

Note that the intelligentsia along with the rest of the middle classes have been critically supportive of the Aquino regime, despite the mounting signs of betrayal of the people's hopes as expressed in the EDSA uprising. But the continuing frustration by the present regime of the intelligentsia's demands for reform and a better life, for democracy and national freedom, is impelling greater and greater numbers among them to take a critical and confrontational attitude towards the Aquino government and the bankrupt social system over which it presides.

A key element in the growing political consciousness of the intelligentsia is the existence of nationwide mass organizations within their ranks which have a militant and progressive orientation. These organizations have consistently shown the capability to channel the intelligentsia's discontent into organized and powerful movements of protest that are linked to the struggles of the entire Filipino people.

The revolutionary transformation of the intelligentsia will not come of itself. Crucial to this development is continuing national-democratic agitation and propaganda, the constant linkage of their particular economic issues to the general issues of the nation. The protest movements of the intelligentsia must also be firmly linked to the workers' and peasants' mass movements and harnessed in support of the whole revolutionary movement, especially the armed struggle and the building of revolutionary bases in the countryside.

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**TEACHERS' THREE-WEEK NATIONWIDE STRIKE:  
A WATERSHED IN THE TEACHERS' MASS MOVEMENT**

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On August 3, 1989, a young Filipina died of pneumonia. News reports identified her as Theresa Marie Almazan, a public school teacher at Don Mariano Marcos High School in Quezon City. In a country where deaths due to pneumonia are very common, Theresa's death ordinarily would not have merited an item in the national dailies.

But Theresa's death was not an ordinary one. Her death came several hours after coming home exhausted. Theresa, who was asthmatic, had just attended a teachers' rally in front of the Senate. Not minding the scorching heat of the sun nor the heavy rains, she actively participated in the various teachers' protest actions since July 24.

Theresa's death underscores the gravity of the teachers' plight, the justness of their demands, and the resoluteness of their struggle to seek adequate compensation. For her fellow teachers, Theresa is a martyr to the cause of the Filipino teacher and epitomizes the new breed of teachers emerging in this country.

**Teachers fight for economic welfare**

In the wake of the worsening economic crisis, the spiralling prices of prime commodities and the deterioration in the teachers' living standards, public school teachers launched a nationwide mass campaign and struggle to fight for their economic welfare and democratic rights.

"Enough is enough!" was the rallying cry of their three-week mass struggle, from July 24 to August 11, 1989. It was the biggest and longest teachers' strike to date, more sustained and intense as well as sharper in political dimension than the nationwide teachers' struggle in 1984 and 1987.

Adding more power, scope and significance to the mentors' strike was the struggle of other government employees in many agencies of the government, including a sizeable contingent of health workers in public hospitals. The struggle of other government employees erupted during the same period and was developed in coordination with the teachers' strike.

The teachers struck to demand an increase in their monthly basic pay from P2,464 to P4,500, which is the estimated monthly income needed by a family of six to live decently. In relation to their economic demand, the public school teachers also expressed their opposition to the Aquino government's Letter of Intent (LOI) which contains the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) conditions responsible for the government's refusal to grant salary increases.

For three weeks, protesting public school teachers were a sight to behold-- going on mass leave and protest fast, wearing black ribbons, marching and rallying come rain or shine, breaching the barricades in Mendiola to rally in front of Malacanang, lobbying and picketing, articulately presenting their demands in dialogues and congressional hearings, boycotting Aquino's call for a dialogue, and engaging in other forms of militant protest like sit-downs, noise barrage and human barricades.

#### **Widespread and militant protests erupt**

An estimated 200,000 teachers from some 1,000 public schools in 10 regions of the country participated in the various protest activities. The biggest mobilization was experienced in Metro Manila which registered a 100% paralyzation in the secondary and primary levels. Teachers, from as far north in the Cordillera and as far south in Southern Mindanao, also engaged in different forms of mass actions to dramatize their demand for higher salaries.

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#### **S T R I K E !**

While Metro Manila was the focal point of the teachers' mass struggle -- being the center of government -- widespread protests also erupted in other areas, as shown by these partial reports:

- > Baguio City: 3,500 teachers went on mass leave
- > Pampanga: 80% paralyzation of classes
- > Bulacan: almost 100% paralyzation
- > Bataan: 100% paralyzation
- > Quezon: 2,700 on mass leave
- > Ligao, Albay: 600 on mass leave
- > Camarines Norte: 3,000 on mass leave
- > Naga City: 1,400 on mass leave
- > Iloilo City: 2,700 went on a work slowdown
- > Cebu City: 3,000 wore black ribbons and staged a sit-down strike
- > Davao City: 3,000 went on mass leave

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The nationwide teachers' struggle was spearheaded by militant and progressive teachers' organizations -- Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), Manila Public School Teachers' Association (MPSTA) and the Teachers and Employees Consultative Council (TECC). Through effective alliance work, other independent teachers' organizations were also drawn into the mass actions.

On July 24, the first day of protest, some 11,000 teachers marched to and rallied in front of the Senate. During the march, two of their leaders were arrested by policemen. The teachers, however, remained undaunted, forcing the police to release the two. They also succeeded in pressuring the government to recall the "no permit, no rally" policy.

On the second day, mobilization grew bigger and reached 20,000. This time, the

militant teachers marched and demonstrated outside Malacanang to demand a dialogue with Aquino to present their demands. But she arrogantly snubbed the mentors' request. Instead, the Budget Secretary met the teachers to tell them that the government had no funds for their salary increases.

Mobilization reached a peak of 35,000 on August 1 when teachers and other government employees declared a National Day of Protest. Demanding higher salaries, both sectors jointly rallied in front of the Senate where the Salary Standardization bill was being deliberated. Leaders of the teachers and government employees estimated total mobilization nationwide at 700,000.

On August 3, some 100 teachers began their protest fast to further dramatize their demand for higher salaries. A funeral march was held on August 7 during the burial of their fellow teacher, Theresa. On August 8, human barricades were put up around the Senate building for one hour to further pressure the Upper House to heed their demands.

During the second and third week of the protest actions, some 3,000 to 5,000 mentors joined the regular mass-up in front of the Senate. In the scheduled big activities each week, no less than 10,000 teachers participated. Teachers from nearby regions like Central Luzon and Bicol also sent delegations to the mass actions in front of the Senate and Malacanang.

### **Teachers defy threats and other obstacles**

Before and during the teachers' three-week protest actions, the Aquino regime did everything to intimidate and stop them. Aquino, Sec. Lourdes Quisumbing of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS), and the Civil Service Commissioner all declared the mass action illegal and warned striking teachers of administrative sanctions. The regime also announced the enforcement of the "no permit, no rally" policy. The Supreme Court later followed suit by declaring on August 10 that teachers and other government employees did not have the right to strike. Despite these threats, the militant public school teachers persisted with their mass actions.

What made the teachers' protest action doubly challenging was the fact that it was conducted at a time when a stormy weather hovered over Metro Manila. But unmindful of the heavy rains, public school mentors continued with their mass-up in front of the Senate.

### **Winning popular support**

Despite government attempts to create animosities between the striking teachers and their students and parents, the teachers were able to assure the latter that if the teachers' demands were granted, this "would not only inspire them to teach students with competence, but will also subsequently upgrade the quality of public education." The teachers were also able to win the support of their fellow government employees and private school teachers, as well as the sympathy of other sectors of Philippine society. Their huge mobilizations as well as comprehensive and sustained propaganda work helped swing public opinion to their favor.

Their struggle for economic welfare was understood well by other sectors who were also reeling under the increasing prices of food and other commodities. The teachers correctly linked their demand for higher salaries to the government's subservience to the dictates of the IMF-World Bank through the conditions contained in the LOI. According to one leader of the teachers' mass action, they succeeded in exposing "the IMF imposition as the biggest stumbling block to the granting of decent pay to the 1.7 million government employees" which include the public school teachers.

The teachers' protests turned the whole strike into a big classroom where their economic demands and other related issues were extensively discussed. Sectoral projection was effectively sustained throughout the three weeks. The issues raised by the teachers were projected well in radio, TV and print media.

By timing their struggle for higher salaries during the period when the national budget was up for deliberation in Congress, the teachers succeeded in exposing the Aquino regime's subservience to the IMF-World Bank and its undue budgetary priority to debt servicing and defense over education, health and other social services for the people.

Even while the teachers were out of their classrooms, they continued to impart knowledge to their students. Through their actions, the teachers taught their pupils the values of critical thinking and of asserting their rights. They showed their students the fine qualities of sacrifice, courage and determination, and the powerful

force found in unity and in collective and militant struggle.

### Economic gains through hard struggle

Although they did not get their maximum demand of P4,500 monthly basic pay, the public school teachers succeeded in pressuring the Aquino government to give in to their other demands. Monthly basic pay of public school mentors was increased from P2,464 to P3,102. Effectivity of the salary increases was moved retroactive to July 1, 1989 instead of October 1 as stipulated in the LOI-MEP that the Aquino government committed to the IMF.

The government also agreed to maintain the teachers' local fringe benefits granted under the Special Education Fund Act. And because of the teachers' protest, the government was compelled to freeze the salary increases of congressmen, senators, cabinet members and other high government officials.

The teachers achieved these economic gains, though small, through the strength of their unity and collective action. They succeeded in pressing the government to backtrack from its hardline "no funds available for salary increases" and "no permit, no rally" positions.

From the very start, the government had made it clear that there were no funds available for salary increases. It berated the teachers for betraying their profession and that if they could not accept the salaries paid to public school teachers, then they might as well look for other jobs or professions. But the mentors refused to be intimidated or deceived.

To express their indignation over Aquino's lack of concern for their plight, they decided to boycott the dialogue she called on August 11. The invitation for a dialogue was made after Aquino already made her stand clear that the government cannot grant the teachers' demands and warned that they face administrative sanctions if they failed to return to their classrooms by August 14.

The protest actions would have continued despite threats of disciplinary action but democratic consultation with the masses of teachers resulted in a decision to end the teachers' strike. Consolidation work now had to take precedence in preparation for bigger struggles ahead.

### Significance of struggle

The three-week nationwide teachers' protest action is a historic victory. It is the biggest and most powerful teachers' strike to shake the country's educational establishment and the reactionary state itself. What delivered the blow was not only the magnitude and scope of the protest action, but more importantly, the correct linkage of economic demands to political issues.

The conscious effort to advance the economic struggle in relation to pressing political issues proved effective in exposing the true character of the state and the root cause of the economic crisis besetting the nation. By denouncing imperialist impositions on the economy through the LOI, the teachers succeeded in exposing the Aquino government's basic antipathy to people's demands and its pro-imperialist bias and puppetry.

The teachers' disgust over the government's anti-people and pro-imperialist stance was sharply delivered when they refused to attend a dialogue called by Aquino herself towards the end of their three-week mass action.

However, exposure of the true character of the US-Aquino regime could have been sharper and more profound had the issue of the huge military budget and the regime's bias for bigger defense spending been also projected. The anti-people character of the regime's "total war" policy should also have been brought to public attention. Public school teachers, especially in the rural areas, are living witnesses to the inhumanity and violence of this policy -- the use of school houses as temporary evacuation centers, children dying in these centers, the indefinite disruption of classes, etc.

The teachers' three-week protest action clearly indicates a new level of political consciousness in their ranks. This is a marked departure from 1986 when a big section of the petty bourgeoisie, which include the teachers, swung their support to the yellow banner of Cory Aquino, hoping that meaningful changes would be carried out by her government. The recent massive teachers' struggle shows that they have become critical of the Aquino regime and more aware of its collaboration with US imperialism. Speeches delivered by scores of teachers before the Senate building sharply criticized Aquino's

indifference to the people's plight and her subservience to US policies.

The developing anti-imperialist consciousness among teachers and their growing criticism of US imperialist impositions like the LOI show favorable prospects of developing into more direct and stronger waves of protests against US imperialism, particularly against the US military bases.

The teachers' tremendous display of unity, militancy and dedication points to the effective leadership by progressive teachers who possess a clear democratic and nationalist orientation. As they persevere in struggle, more leaders of the progressive type will surely arise from the ranks of mentors. Together with other government employees, the teachers can greatly influence the urban petty bourgeoisie and the broad masses to fight against exploitation and oppression and to take the road of democratic and anti-imperialist struggle.

### Prospects of the teachers' struggle

The signs are there that the next round of teachers' struggles will be met with greater suppression by the reactionary state. Given its growing incapacity to provide concessions because of IMF impositions, the regime will have no other recourse but to set aside its policy of accommodation towards the teachers. The Supreme Court decision banning strikes in government service and the repeated threats from Aquino and DECS are further warnings that the teachers' militant actions may no longer be tolerated.

Hence, the political character of the teachers' struggle will be more marked. But suppression will only further heighten the political dimension of the teachers' struggle as this assumes a more comprehensive anti-fascist and anti-imperialist line.

At this stage, political consolidation of the teachers' ranks through national-democratic education and propaganda is very important. The national-democratic revolutionary mass organization of teachers, Katipunan ng mga Gurong Makabayan (KAGUMA), should be strengthened and expanded. The whole network of the National Democratic Front (NDF) within the teachers' mass movement should serve as the core of leadership and backbone of the legal movement. The legal democratic mass organizations of teachers should be strengthened and expanded further. There should be tighter coordination with the organizations and struggles of other oppressed classes and sectors -- workers, peasants, youth and students, government employees and the middle forces.

These are the tasks and challenges facing the teachers' mass movement. The valuable experience and lessons the teachers gained during their recent nationwide strike should stand them in good stead as they prepare to launch bigger and more militant struggles in the future.

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### **STORMS OF STUDENT PROTEST BLAST AQUINO REGIME**

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Brig. Gen. Alfredo Lim is the superintendent of Metro Manila's Western Police District under whose jurisdiction falls the country's largest institutes of learning. He is also a stockholder of the University of the East (UE), the Philippines' biggest private university.

Josephine Cojuangco Reyes is a capitalist educator at the helm of Far Eastern University (FEU), one of the top 1,000 corporations in the Philippines. She also happens to be a blood sister of Cory Aquino under whose government tuition fee hikes occur every school year.

With the likes of Lim and Reyes, the students knew who and what they were up against. But they remained undaunted.

Having gone through the grind of commercialized education for years and refusing to be made grist to the diploma mills once more, they let out their burning desire for a free, nationalist, democratic and scientific education, ready to confront state violence and deception.

In their mass struggle, the students, under the combined leadership of the National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP), College Editors Guild of the Philippines (CEGP), Student Christian Movement of the Philippines (SCMP), League of Filipino Students (LFS), and Kabataan para sa Demokrasya at Nasyonalismo (KADENA), won for

themselves immediate and concrete victories like reduction or rollback in tuition fee increases and later, resounding votes for progressive representation in many student councils.

### Storms of mass protest break out

At the school opening this year, hundreds of thousands of students stormed out into the streets in nationwide protests against tuition fee increases. Boycotts and walkouts, marches and rallies, pickets and barricades, street occupation and street classes went on for weeks. It turned out to be the largest and longest-running student protest campaign in recent years.

In Metro Manila, a total of 300,000 boycotted classes. For three straight weeks, students of UE, FEU, Feati University, Technological Institute of the Philippines (TIP), Adamson University (AU), National College of Business Administration (NCBA), Manuel L. Quezon University (MLQU), and AMA Computer College (AMACC) in Quezon City deserted their classrooms and stood by their school gates. They also organized a march-rally of 10,000 to confront the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS).

In Baguio City, street occupation was the order of the day. About 15,000 to 20,000 students from St. Louis University (SLU), University of Baguio (UB), Baguio Colleges Foundation (BCF) and UP-Baguio walked out, held a series of rallies and occupied streets for two weeks. Led by local NUSP chapters, they protested against 35% to 47% increases in tuition fees and demanded a 20% rollback.

In Iloilo City, students walked out and raised barricades, virtually crippling University of San Agustin (over 10,000 in student population), Western Institute of Technology (8,000), Central Philippine University (more than 10,000), UP-Visayas (over 3,000), and University of Iloilo (over 10,000). Their protests were supported by fellow-students in Iloilo Doctors College, Western Visayas College of Science & Technology, and Western Visayas State University.

In Davao City, over 30,000 boycotted seven schools and attended street classes instead. Walkouts, pickets or vigils overwhelmed San Pedro College, Holy Cross of Davao College, Ateneo de Davao, and University of Mindanao.

In Cotabato City, students paralyzed Notre Dame University and held alternative "people's schools."

As usual, state violence visited student protesters: barricades and picket lines were broken up; march-rallies were dispersed with truncheons and teargas; campuses were violated by military men to effect arrests.

Lim's running dogs continually hounded and pounded on students who were in the forefront of the mass protests. One of them, Col. Romeo Maganto, even had the gangster bravado of chasing and beating up students heading march-rallies, in full view of television cameras.

On the same side of reaction, the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities (PACU), a cartel of capitalist educators, retaliated against student protests by locking up their schools.

But the students held on to their just grounds. Meanwhile, Maganto had to be hidden from public ire; PACU member-schools had to eventually re-open for fear of compromising their profitability.

### Aquino's deception exposed

Since taking power in 1986, the Aquino regime has hiked tuition fees thrice. Last year, it allowed an average increase of 5%. This year, it set a new round of increases by as much as 10 to 20% in high schools and up to P80 per unit in colleges. In all these, it relied and improved on the Marcosian rationale in the Education Act of 1982 of ensuring "quality education" at a price; thus, letting commercialized education run its course.

Controlled as it is by a big private cartel (55% of students in high schools and 80% in the tertiary or collegiate levels go to private schools) and abetted by big bureaucrats through policy sponsorship, commercialized education takes a heavy toll on the Filipino youth: 10 million out of 25 million have dropped out of school, deprived of their right to education. Every percentage rise in tuition fees invariably means tens of thousands more joining the ranks of the out-of-school youth.

Yet the Aquino regime persists on shirking its responsibility to provide education to the youth. Education allotment in the national budget, for instance, only comes after foreign debt servicing (over 40%) and military and "total war"-related spending (21%). Given this priority, education is left to the squabbles of capitalist educators and private investors.

Moreover, the Aquino regime commits itself to foreign obligations which all the more make it difficult for the broad masses of people to have access to education. The Letter of Intent (LOI) submitted to the IMF last March (see "*PHILIPPINE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: THE LATEST MONEY-MAKING HOAX*," p. 14) was one bitter experience. Parents maintaining their children in school were hard put dealing with the general price increases spawned by the LOI which came right after this year's school opening.

#### **Subsidy Law subsidizes commercialized education**

The best the Aquino regime came up with to answer the students' clamor for a halt to tuition fee hikes and the commercialization of education was a poor stopgap measure called Subsidy Law. The law provides subsidies to the amount of P150,000 for each private school supposedly to cushion the impact of any tuition fee increase on students.

Clearly, the intention of the law is neither to stop nor reduce tuition fee increases. In fact, it legalizes commercialized education by allowing tuition fee increases to the extent private schools may avail of subsidies. Rather than give subsidies direct to students, the law offers these instead to private schools. The subsidy scheme would benefit at most 3% of the total student population (about 40,000), but the projected tuition fee increases would displace 300,000! Private schools pocket the subsidies and scoop the profits on legalized increases in tuition fees.

The same law requires democratic consultations (school authorities, parents, teachers and students all together) before any raise in tuition fees is made. But DECS resorted to squid tactics in support of beleaguered schools. One time, the DECS Secretary was quoted as saying it was illegal to raise tuition fees without democratic consultations. Another time, she was telling the exact opposite.

The students refused to be deceived. With one voice, they exposed the Aquino regime's deceptive position of "we can't do anything about tuition fee increases because this is based on the Education Act of 1982." They denounced the Subsidy Law as subsidizing commercialized education. Their call to the Filipino youth and studentry to "Unite and Fight for their Right to Education" reverberated throughout the nation.

#### **Students win resounding victory**

Unite, fight and win they did. The storms of mass protest the students unleashed forced capitalist educators and other school authorities to seek shelter in prudence and compromise. Consequently, tuition fee increases were either cut down, delayed or rolled back.

Thus, did the student struggle end in resounding victory. Some immediate and concrete gains were reported:

> In Metro Manila, delays attended the implementation of tuition fee hikes in AU, NCBA, AMACC, University of Santo Tomas, San Beda College, and St. Scholastica College.

In Northern Luzon, increases were reduced in SLU, from 47% to 13%; BCF, from P13.50 to P12.00 per unit; and UB, from P13.00 to P12.00 per unit.

(Later, having proven their mettle in political leadership and earned the respect and trust of the masses of students, those in the forefront of struggle swept to victory a significant number of student council elections. In Metro Manila alone, NUSP and LFS-backed slates won at least 11 student councils.)

The student victory is a step forward in the struggle for the right to education -- an education that is free, nationalist, democratic and scientific. Exactly twenty years ago, the same student struggle and victory nurtured in the campus-based student reform movement ushered in the now historic First Quarter Storm of 1970 (FQS) which shook the very foundations of semi-colonial, semi-feudal Philippines. Today's student movement is inseparable from this whole train of history.

#### **Advancing history**

And in order to push history forward, the student movement should develop into a more significant movement for social change.

Thus, the studentry should constantly but creatively conduct agitation and propaganda on issues affecting not only their sector but also the whole of society. They should link the problems borne out of the educational system with the other issues of the day like the LOI, "total war" policy and defense spending. They should lead in projecting the people's stand on issues of national significance like the continued presence of US military bases and the debt crisis. Here, the role of national democratic organizations and activists is vital.

Being part of the influential intelligentsia, the studentry should muster all their power to combat pernicious ideological and political influences like social-democratic reformism, petty-bourgeois socialism and eclecticism and propagate the scientific ideology of Marxism-Leninism.

They should foster closer links with the basic masses and together with other oppressed and exploited sectors form the mainstay of a united front in the struggle to transform society.

Only thus can the student movement advance history in the fine tradition of FQS.

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#### **GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES DEMONSTRATE PARALYZING POWER**

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*"We have tried everything. We made position papers and statements. We sought dialogues and negotiations. It seems the only venue left for us is the streets."*

So down the streets marched thousands of government employees in a nationwide campaign to demand a salary standardization plan anchored on a minimum monthly base pay of P2,800.00.

Over 20,000 government employees directly participated in various mass actions staged in the streets of Metro Manila and other regions from June to August. Thousands more -- including the unorganized ones -- went on mass leaves or simply did not report for work particularly during times of major mobilizations.

Their mass actions -- never before seen in the history of the mass movement in the public sector -- totally paralyzed or disrupted in a big way operations in national departments, bureaus and agencies, financial institutions, public hospitals, government corporations, post offices and trial courts.

#### **The power to paralyze**

A series of mass actions kicked off the campaign during the first week of June: a rally of 3,000 to the Senate (June 2); nightly vigils (June 5-8); walkout by 800 employees of the National Housing Authority (June 6); and another rally of 8,000 to Malacanang (June 7).

A second wave of mass actions rolled on July 24, in the opening session of Congress. About 10,000 employees of the Metro Manila Commission and 4,000 other state employees and teachers marched to Congress as Aquino was delivering her state of the nation address.

Mass actions intensified in August as the campaign took on a national character and the struggle entered a higher stage. A National Day of Protest was declared on August 1, setting off mass leaves, walkouts and slowdowns nationwide. That single event dramatized government employees' rebuke to the insistence of the Department of Budget and Management that "P1,700.00 was the most that the government can afford as minimum base pay."

From then on until the campaign wound up on August 11, hardly any day passed without government employees somewhere, somehow massing up to press their demand for salary increases.

### A chronicle of paralyzing power

Here are the highlights of the three-month campaign:

\* Workers completely paralyzed operations at the Central Bank Minting Office and Home Mortgage Finance Corporation. They partially paralyzed the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation. Together with colleagues in other government financial institutions like the Philippine National Bank, Land Bank of the Philippines, Development Bank of the Philippines and Pag-Ibig Fund, they joined demonstrations to publicize the plight of low-salaried civil servants.

\* Postal Employees Union of the Philippines struck August 2, disrupting mail delivery and other services in many of the country's 2,195 post offices. In Manila alone, some 4,000 joined the strike. In Makati, only one post office went on normal operations. In Davao, 250 walked off their jobs a week later. (Postal employees are among the lowest paid public servants, with mail carriers and sorters receiving only P846.00 monthly basic pay).

\* Mass walkouts hit the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. Supervisors and managers themselves had to man vital divisions, i.e., mechanical, electrical and pass control.

\* Mechanics and drivers effected a partial work stoppage at the Metro Manila Transit Corp.

\* The 800-strong Makati Association of Court Employees simultaneously filed two-day leaves of absence and over 500 court stenographers in prosecutors' offices in Manila, Quezon City, Caloocan City and Pasay City staged mass walkouts, enforcing silence in court sessions in Metro Manila.

\* Health workers paralyzed in varying degrees operations at the Philippine General Hospital (80 %), Tondo Medical Center, San Lazaro Hospital, National Orthopedic Hospital, Jose Reyes Memorial Hospital, Tala Leprosarium, Veterans' Memorial Hospital, and Quezon City Children's Hospital. Other health institutions in Laguna, Bacolod City, Davao City and Bukidnon likewise adjusted to work stoppages. Wearing of black ribbons, fasting and mass walkouts marked the Health Workers' Day of Protest and Fasting on August 9. During these walkouts, however, the protesters left behind skeletal workforce in hospitals' ICUs, critical units and emergency sections.

\* Mass leaves and mass walkouts spared neither the Department of Labor and Employment (instrumental in the suppression of many an industrial strike) nor the Civil Service Commission (which later recommended that sanctions be imposed on government strikers).

\* Mass walkouts completely paralyzed the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration.

\* Protest actions also hounded the National Housing Authority, National Food Authority, Philippine Port Authority, Philippine Fisheries Development Authority, Department of Agriculture, Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Local Government and Community Development, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Commission on Elections, Philippine Nuclear Research Institute and Metro Manila Commission (2,000 Metro Aides joined the strike).

\* Mass protests rocked other government offices in Regions 1, 3, 4, 6 and 8. Ribbon wearing, streamer hanging, mass petition signing, symposium and radio barrage became favored forms of protest in the Cordillera, Bacolod City, Tacloban City, La Union and Iloilo. In the latter two provinces, mass rallies were successfully held on August 1 and 10. The Association of Concerned Employees in Regional Offices (ACERO) rallied in Cagayan de Oro City. NFA employees in the same city staged a work stoppage simultaneously with their colleagues in General Santos City. In the president's home province, 350 municipal employees of Tarlac town went on mass leaves of absence too.

\* Government employees and public school teachers joined hands in demanding salary increases and condemning the Letter of Intent (LOI) submitted by the Aquino government to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) last March. Among others, the LOI opted for delays in the implementation of the salary standardization scheme for government employees as a way of conserving resources for the country's external debt servicing.

### Wielding the power

An alliance of nine organizations embracing some 300,000 civil servants spearheaded the campaign. These are: Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees (COURAGE); Alliance of Health Workers (AHW); Alliance of Government

Financial Institutions Employees (AGFIE); Philippine Government Employees Association (PGEA); Makati Association of Court Employees (MACE); Consultative Council for Public Sector Unionism; All-UP Workers Union; Manila Public School Teachers Association (MPSTA); and Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT).

The Caucus of Independent Unions (CIU) and the Public Sector Labor Integrative Center (PSLINK) did not join the alliance but instead held separate mass actions.

Progressive organizations, as most of the members of the alliance are, provided strength and direction to the campaign. Their leadership was inspiring even to the unorganized. Their presence effectively thwarted attempts by other groups to create rifts (by advancing lower salary demand) and confusion among government employees and seize control of the campaign. Moreover, the opportunism of bogus mass leaders and non-striking organizations led by the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) and the Confederation of Government Employees Organizations (COGEO) was exposed as these scabs rushed support to the Aquino regime's unyielding stand for a lower pay increase.

Favorable conditions now prevail for genuine organizations of government employees with progressive leadership to arise nationwide.

### Power delivers gains

It was the victorious May 1989 general strike of workers in the private sector which inspired government employees to take the path of militant mass struggles to advance their own economic welfare. Thus, when threatened by Aquino and her big bureaucrats with administrative sanctions, government employees and public school teachers alike remained steadfast in their fight for higher salaries. In pursuing and even intensifying concerted actions, the once-passive civil servants hurdled such state restrictions as the "no permit, no rally" rule and the ban on mass actions especially strikes in the public sector. Their collective power tied the repressive hands of the Aquino regime whose own bureaucracy was already embroiled in widespread unrest.

For the employees, there is unmistakably a connection between the IMF and the Aquino government's refusal to grant their salary demands. It has also become clear to them, and to the masses in general, how the government policies and program embodied in the LOI affect their livelihood.

The campaign also exposed the Aquino regime's anti-people and anti-worker character and its insensitivity to the worsening economic hardship faced by the rank and file in the government service. The government's strong endorsement of a much lower salary increase and its defense of the IMF conditionalities already being condemned by low-paid civil servants have once again unmasked Aquino. Debt servicing for Aquino takes precedence over the welfare of the masses of employees in her own backyard. Her divisive tactic of inviting to Malacanang the sector's pseudo-mass leaders while thousands of employees and teachers seeking a dialogue with her never got beyond the Mendiola barricades further alienated the striking government workers. Such politicizing experience in the hands of the ruling elite at the minimum prepares the masses of government employees for a deeper understanding of the unjust and decadent social system and the need to wage a revolution in order to change it.

The widespread protest actions forced the Aquino government to reconsider its original position and to compromise, dropping its P 1,700-base pay proposal and adopting the Congress-approved P 2,000 minimum base pay. Although their demands were not fully granted, the campaign brought tangible economic gains for the rank-and-file civil servants such as the following:

- o a P1,100-increase in the salary of the lowest paid government workers (Grade 1 salary level) from P 900 to P 2,000 a month, thus setting the daily minimum wage at P 90.90 in the public sector
- o retroactivity of the salary increases and standardization to July 1, 1989 instead of October 1989 as contained in the LOI and MEP submitted to the IMF
- o freeze in the salary adjustment of top government officials (Grades 25 to 33) while higher percentages of increases were allocated to lower level positions

Over and above the economic benefits brought by the campaign, however, are the new opportunities for organizing work and a new arena for tactical battles in the future.

Now deeply impressed in the consciousness of government employees and the Filipino masses is the power of unity, concerted action and militant struggle as effective weapons for advancing their economic and political interests. With this awareness,

public employees are prepared not only to push their demand for additional benefits, to protect recent economic gains from the onslaught of a looming oil price hike, and in general, to pursue the fight for salaries that would afford them the minimum standards of decent existence; but they are also prepared to protect their right to organize, to participate in collective bargaining, and to strike -- even if this means hitting the streets again.

\* \* \*

**PHILIPPINE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM:  
THE LATEST MONEY-MAKING HOAX**

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*PAP is a gigantic hoax ... Only \$251 million of the \$3.5 billion pledged in Tokyo is new money. -- Solita "Winnie" Monsod, former Economic Planning Secretary*

*\$1.4 billion is new money. -- President Corazon Aquino*

*PAP's \$3.5 billion is all new money. -- Roberto Villanueva, PAP Coordinating Council Chairman*

*Only some \$800 million is new money. -- Filologo Pante, former Acting NEDA Director-General*

*Japan's \$1.015 billion pledge to PAP is all new money. -- Japanese Embassy in the Philippines*

Yes, Winnie, the Philippine Assistance Program (PAP) is a hoax but there's gigantic money in there.

Japan has the yen and must have the yen for figures in making the pledge. Without massive cash infusion, the Philippines may go under and may well fall into communist hands. Is this not what strategic aid is all about? (see "Japan's Official Aid: Who's Really Aiding Whom?" **AB**, July 1989)

PAP is a hoax all right, not because it is mostly old money; certainly, not because its role in foreign aid generation is ineffective or its mission to raise \$1 billion yearly beyond normal official aid flows to the country is impossible.

It is a hoax because PAP is billed as a "Philippine Agenda" when it is a US initiative and US-Japan undertaking to share the burden of maintaining their hegemony in this part of the Pacific; particularly, to raise bribe money for the retention of US military bases in the Philippines.

It is a hoax because PAP is being put up under the signboard (for the country's) "Sustained Growth and Development" to build economic infra-structures for foreign enclaves, enlarge the financial base of big comprador-landlord rule and subsidize counter-revolution.

And it is a hoax because PAP, "as designed to mobilize the level of external funding required to sustain Philippine economic growth and development," will only bring in more miseries to the Filipino masses and push the Philippines further into the abyss of indebtedness.

**PAP is US-Japan strategic aid to the Philippines**

In recent years, US and Japan have been coordinating their strategic aid to countries where their comprehensive security interests are most imperilled. PAP is one distinctive product of this coordination.

In November 1987, a bipartisan group of influential members of the US Congress endorsed a mini-Marshall Plan for the Philippines. Named "multilateralaid initiative" (MAI), it was hailed as "part of a proud tradition of bold and imaginative (US) foreign policy responses to situations abroad in which vital American interests have been threatened."

(Rising from the ravages of World War II as the undisputed chieftain of the

imperialist camp, the US devised the Marshall Plan to rush aid to Western European countries to help them recover from war and strengthen their defenses against the socialist camp. The US plowed in billions of money, in the process creating captive markets for its surplus products and new fields of investment, while softening the ground for the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or NATO and US military bases in Western Europe.)

The mini-Marshall Plan for the Philippines specifically called on Japan, the world's leading aid donor, to prime its assistance to the Philippines:

"Japan and other countries in the region which rely on our security commitments to them should have a strong interest in fostering stability and economic recovery in the Philippines. Our bases in the Philippines play an important role in enabling us to fulfill our defense commitments to Japan and our other friends and allies in the Asia and Pacific region."

A year later in Hawaii, US and Japan firmed up their intention to launch MAI by 1989. The support of Japan and the capitalist world was emphasized as "Japan and other countries stand to lose as much as (the US) if the Philippines slides into disorder and economic disaster." This collaboration was formalized during the US-Japan summit in February 1989.

In the same month, a US-Japan joint mission met with the Aquino government to discuss the launching of MAI. (Meanwhile, Philippine response to MAI had evolved from the Polysectoral Program for the Philippines or PPP into the Philippine Aid Plan or the original PAP, and then into the Philippine Assistance Program or the current PAP.) In the same convergence in Hawaii, the US, Japan and the Philippines formed the Joint Forum for Philippine Progress as a private sector complement to PAP.

The three countries sought agreement with the IMF-World Bank two months later in Washington on PAP's comprehensive policy framework and funding scheme. By May in Tokyo, the group finally worked out the program for PAP and its demonstration projects. The pledging session was set in July with the IMF-World Bank as convenor and Japan as host.

Thus, PAP's international framework was laid down, bearing US-Japan cooperation "to make every effort" to launch PAP in support of "democracy and sustained growth and reform in the Philippines."

#### **PAP, the bribe money for US Bases**

From the very start, PAP has been a part of an overall plan to retain US military bases in the country. It is seen as having "security implications for the US." No less than an author of MAI cited that the "progress in the MAI will build on this agreement" (a two-year base review) which provided "for short-term stability in security ties and additional resources to the Philip-pines." MAI developed later into PAP.

It was made clear that the US was leveraging its own aid with others for PAP with a view to striking compromises for the retention of its military bases in the country. US Ambassador to Japan Michael Armacost said it well: all negotiations for the bases' extension should be finalized prior to PAP's full implementation. After PAP's launching, Monsod made a disclosure to the same effect: the US was using PAP to force an immediate conclusion of the review of the RP-US Military Bases Agreement (MBA).

Monsod also disclosed that a \$25 million grant from the Economic Support Fund (ESF), which is considered "rental" or "compensation" for US bases, was being re-allocated to the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to pay for PAP's expenses. For this, \$3.5 million had already been readied for disbursement. Early on, USAID extended a \$99,000 grant to the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) for a project study on PAP's strategy and program of action.

While it was shown to have hedged on its funding commitment for PAP on account of slowness on the MBA review, the US acted with dispatch in proposing an additional \$75 million military sales financing for the Philippines "to enhance (its) counterinsurgency effort and to accommodate the annual \$200 million best efforts commitment under the base rights extension agreement."

The PAP-US base connection could hardly be missed. What could be more telling than the bribe money being dangled through PAP for the retention of US military bases in the country?

#### **Japan greases a puppet's palm**

The bribe money was forthcoming in the best tradition of Japanese big business.

For the PAP pledging session in Tokyo last July, Japan put in nearly half of the \$3.5 billion kitty for the first year of PAP's four-year program. PAP's main component will therefore be Japanese official development assistance (ODA).

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**PAP DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS**

LOCATION	NATURE OF PROJECT	PROJECT COST (\$M)	TIMETABLE (YEARS)
1. Samar	Social infrastructures	9.87	3
2. Panay-Negros	Agro-industrial processing zone	84.00	3
3. Gen. Santos	Agro-port processing center	55.00	4
4. Cag. de Oro	Regional industrial center	194.60	5
5. CALABAR	Economic infrastructures	735.00	10

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The first demonstration projects of PAP show where the bribe money will be best applied. The two biggest projects, one in the Cavite, Laguna, Batangas and Rizal area (CALABAR) and another in Cagayan de Oro around the PHIVIDEC Industrial Estate in Misamis Oriental, account for the bulk of project funds.

The CALABAR project, costing \$735 million over 10 years, consists of building economic infrastructures for about 18 export processing zones and industrial estates. The Cagayan de Oro project, on the other hand, costing \$194.6 million over five years, aims to develop a regional industrial center where some 65 new firms are expected to invest \$2 billion. At the forefront of these projects are Japan's leading zaibatsu -- Mitsubishi, Marubeni and Mitsui and their subsidiaries.

PAP projects will spawn multi-billion peso public works and building contracts and joint ventures with Japanese and other transnational corporations which will be doled out among the country's most-favored big comprador-landlords, the so-called private sector complement of PAP. Small wonder then that Roberto Villanueva, the chairman of the PAP coordinating council, is no less than "an eminent representative" of that class.

Likewise, well-placed bureaucrats will be tending their own milking cows. PAP's proposed projects are awash with yen loans which, "in the traditional bias of Japanese aid program" plus business sense will be applied mostly for energy, power and electrification (24.58%) and transportation (26.27%). As in Marcos' time, when yen loans come, can graft and corruption be far behind?

With big comprador-landlords and bureaucrats amassing fortunes, PAP in effect will be subsidizing the social base of counter-revolution while opening up the country to more extensive intrusion of foreign monopoly capital. Painfully, all at the people's expense.

**With LOI, PAP is misery multiplied**

But the bribe money would not be that simple to partake with. The US and Japan, in conspiracy with the IMF, made PAP operative on IMF impositions contained in this year's Philippine Letter of Intent-Memorandum on Economic Policy, better known as the LOI. Supposedly, the LOI will ensure that the Philippines stays afloat while servicing its debt.

Thus, the Aquino government, representing the big comprador-landlords and bureaucrats who would benefit most from PAP, submitted last March its 1989-1992 economic program (LOI-MEP) to the IMF for approval. The program set forth specific growth targets and objectives and indicated an international debt financing strategy without which the country, it is said, can't move on from economic recovery to sustained growth. PAP bases itself on this program.

For a pittance of debt relief, the Aquino government committed itself to each and every IMF imposition (i.e. targets and ceilings on savings, expenditures, borrowings, taxes, subsidies, fuel and other commodity prices). Rather than brave out imperialist bluster and blackmail, it chose, just like all its post-war predecessors through which 19 other IMF-imposed program had passed, to pass on the onerous burden to the nation.

Consequently, between 1989 to 1992, the Filipino nation will have to bear the brunt of LOI-generated increases in the prices of rice, fuel and other petroleum products, power and water rates, port tariffs, land and maritime freight rates; additional taxes; freeze on government hiring; delays in government salary standardization; and further import liberalization.

Already, the LOI has wreaked tremendous havoc on the life and livelihood of the Filipino masses. Price increases and austerity measures blamed on the LOI precipitated storms of protests from May to August this year, clearly demonstrating the anger and the fighting mood of the basic masses and the resurgent militancy of the middle forces. The LOI, the economic framework of PAP, was roundly rejected.

While peasants, workers, students, teachers and government employees -- a broad array of society -- are already reeling from the disastrous impact of LOI measures, the promise of LOI and PAP on growth and development, on poverty alleviation and income redistribution remains over the rainbow. This year, GNP growth rate is falling short of the 6.5% target. Inflation is now running on double-digit rate, a far cry from the 8% limit. The worst of the hoax is yet to come.

With PAP, the Filipino masses suffer more and will be asked to defray the cost of their sufferings. In the course of sowing mass discontent, attracting the depredations of foreign monopoly capital and dispensing bribe money for the retention of US military bases, aside from allotting sums to graft and corruption, PAP will accumulate foreign debt at a rate of \$3.5 billion a year if maintained and to that extent will add up to the Philippine debt burden.

By yearend 1988, the country's total accumulated foreign debt had reached \$27.9 billion. With PAP's four-year borrowing binge, it is estimated to hit \$40 billion. Between now and 1992, debt servicing without PAP still, already entails a yearly average of \$4.4 billion. Yet at this level, debt service already accounts for over 40% of the national budget or the equivalent of some 76% of export earnings on annual basis. How much more with PAP?

### **The hoax is on the people, but...**

Now comes the Aquino government bannering PAP as the newest "Philippine Agenda for Sustained Growth and Development." Onto the shoulders of the people is piled the burden of this hoax.

Yet PAP can be no heavier than the truth: PAP is a US initiative to dangle bribe money for the bases' retention; it is a product of US-Japan coordination of strategic aid to prevent the country from going under; its main component is Japanese ODA which will be shared among big comprador-landlords and bureaucrats and used as a facility for foreign monopoly capital; its economic framework is an onerous but rejected LOI; it is an extender to the debt crisis; it brings in more miseries but its unintended effect is to cause people to make revolution.

Nothing is nearer the truth than the recent storms of mass protests spawned by LOI and which caught up with PAP. And nothing can be clearer than the rising demand to totally reject this latest anti-national, anti-people hoax.

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### **AFRICA'S NAMIBIAN PEOPLE'S STRUGGLE HEADS TOWARDS VICTORY AND INDEPENDENCE**

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The people of Africa are on the way to achieving another great victory over the forces of colonialism and racism in the African continent. South Africa's colonial rule over Namibia (formerly called South West Africa) is finally ending. After experiencing a military debacle in its aggression against the independent state of Angola, the South African racist regime has now agreed to implement United Nations Resolution 435 which calls for the establishment of the independent state of Namibia.

Namibia's coming independence is the fruit of over 70 years of struggle against South Africa's colonialism and racism. Since 1915, the Namibian people have opposed and resisted South Africa's brutal occupation and exploitation of Namibia, a country rich in mineral resources. In 1960, the Namibian struggle marked a major turning point when the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) was organized to effectively lead the independence struggle.

Despite severe repression and violence, the Namibian people's liberation movement has expanded and has been consolidated over the years. Tortures, imprisonment and executions failed to suppress their patriotic and revolutionary struggle. Instead,

SWAPO and the Namibian people heightened their resistance against the brutality and terror of the white supremacist regime in South Africa by initiating armed actions in 1966. Through the years, the Namibian people's heroism and determination succeeded in gaining international attention and support for their freedom struggle.

In 1978, the UN General Assembly, in recognition of the just struggle of the Namibian people, passed Resolution 435 calling for an end to South Africa's colonial rule and the establishment of the independent state of Namibia. The United Nations recognized SWAPO as the "sole authentic voice of the Namibian people." However, the South African white-dominated government -- censured by many countries for its apartheid policy of racial segregation of the privileged white minority and the deprived black majority of the population -- has arrogantly stalled the resolution's implementation for the last ten years.

For several years, the South African racist regime has waged a war of aggression against the neighboring country of Angola, a staunch supporter of Namibian independence and steadfast opponent of US imperialism, colonialism and racism in Africa. In collaboration with US imperialism, the South African regime has even hired foreign mercenaries to reinforce the counter-revolutionary UNITA forces in their futile effort to topple Angola's independent government and to crush the SWAPO revolutionary forces.

Responding to Angola's call for assistance, socialist and other anti-imperialist countries everywhere have extended all-round support to it. The Socialist Republic of Cuba, in the spirit of internationalism, has sent thousands of volunteer soldiers to assist Angola repel South African aggression.

Last March 1988, the combined forces of Angolan troops, Cuban volunteer soldiers and SWAPO guerrillas scored a major and decisive military victory over the arrogant and brutal forces of South Africa in the Angolan town of Cuito Cuanavale.

South Africa's defeat in Angola finally compelled the South African racist regime to withdraw their forces from Angolan territory and to open talks in May 1988 for a peace settlement. After several months of talks, South Africa finally signed on December 22, 1988 an agreement with the governments of Angola and Cuba for a peace settlement of the Namibian issue and the conflict in Angola. The signing of the peace accord, witnessed by diplomats representing nearly 100 countries, paved the way for a ceasefire between the Angolan forces and the South Africa- and US-backed UNITA forces, as well as the implementation of UN Resolution 435 in Namibia.

The implementation of UN Resolution 435 calls for Namibia's transition to independence beginning April 1 and the holding of the UN-supervised national elections on November 1 this year. During this period, South Africa will gradually reduce its estimated 50,000 troops and 24,000-man territorial force in Namibia to 1,500 by July 1989. A UN peacekeeping force and civilian administrators will help supervise the country's affairs until a new Namibian government is formed after the national elections in November.

While running into some problems, the process of transition so far has remained on course according to the agreed timetable. Since May this year, leaders and members of SWAPO, and other Namibian patriots forced into exile in the course of the struggle, have begun their triumphant return to their homeland amid the welcoming cheers of their jubilant countrymen. SWAPO and the 1.3 million Namibian people now face the momentous task of preparing for the November national elections where SWAPO candidates are favored to win overwhelmingly. SWAPO president Sam Nujoma, who is scheduled to return this September, is expected to be chosen as the first president of the independent state of Namibia.

The victory of the Namibian people adds another bright chapter to the saga of the African people's epic struggle against colonialism and racism. This victory will further strengthen the anti-imperialist front in Africa and in the world and will greatly weaken the racist ruling regime in South Africa. The Communist Party of the Philippines and the entire national democratic movement hope that the victory of the Namibian people will likewise lead to the abolition of apartheid and to the realization of the African people's sovereign birthright to their homeland in the whole southern region of Africa.

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