

ORGANIZING OUR ANTI-BASES, ANTI-IMPERIALIST OFFENSIVE

(We are devoting the editorial page of Ang Bayan to this article based on the March 1989 Politburo resolution on the bases question. The article aims to provide a general framework and particular guidelines for the ongoing campaign to dismantle US military bases in the country.)

A great and crucial battle is at hand on the issue of US military bases in the country.

With the expiry of the US-RP Military Bases Agreement barely two years away, the issue of whether or not to extend the term of the bases beyond 1991 has been thrown to the forefront of the national agenda. All the various classes and forces in Philippine society cannot but respond in one way or another and clarify their respective positions, for this is one issue that lies at the heart of the national question and concerns the survival of the nation.

The US military bases have long been and continue to be a vital instrument in perpetuating US domination over the country and in maintaining US political and military hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region. For US imperialism, insuring the continued stay of the bases here has become the overriding concern in its policies and activities related to the Philippines at this time. It is taking a direct hand and putting in massive resources in a comprehensive scheme to secure a new long-term bases agreement or treaty at the soonest possible time. The US bases not only guard the strategic and specific interests of US imperialism but also the entire system of semicolonial and semifeudal rule in the country. As such, all factions of the local ruling classes, whether in the Aquino coalition or those opposed to it, are united on the question of maintaining the bases -- even indefinitely, if they are to have their way. These reactionaries also use the bases issue to wangle for themselves and their respective factions greater economic benefits and political support from their common imperialist master. But no matter the variety of postures and rhetoric they make on the issue -- from Mrs. Aquino's "open options" line to those advocating a gradual withdrawal -- they all realize the bottomline: without the bases, they have no US support and without US support, they are nothing.

Thus, the whole state machinery -- the executive branch, both houses of Congress, the repressive armed apparatus, local governments -- is being mobilized in the campaign for the bases' retention. Even the seemingly strong anti-bases wind in the Senate could turn in the opposite direction upon the application of pressure from Aquino and the ruling party and the proper "incentives" or threats (or a combination of both) from US imperialism.

Major parts of the superstructure are also being harnessed to swing public opinion for the bases -- the mass media, churches (the conservative Catholic and Protestant hierarchies and the fundamentalist sects), chambers of big business, cultural institutions and the academe.

It is a fierce fight, with long-term consequences and deep implications, that faces the revolutionary and nationalist forces of the Filipino people from now until 1991.

But the tide of history is in their favor. Through the years, the anti-bases, anti-imperialist consciousness of the people has steadily risen -- a process stimulated by years of struggle against a fascist dictatorship instigated and propped up by US imperialism, accelerated by the popular antifascist uprising at EDSA and invigorated in recent months by the mass struggles against a worsening economic crisis triggered by increasing imperialist impositions.

Not only among the militant masses is this trend rapidly developing but even among the urban intelligentsia and other sections of the petty bourgeoisie, where US influence has been quite pervasive in the past. The trend is so strong that it has drawn even elements from within the ruling elite -- not only the few who have consistently advocated nationalist causes but also those previously apathetic to such causes -- and spurred the growth of nationalist tendencies within the traditional political parties and nationalist blocs within the reactionary Congress. And it has penetrated the very backbone of pro-imperialism itself -- the puppet AFP -- where patriotic sentiments are stirring among the officers in those services long neglected because of overdependence on the US security umbrella.

The current debate on the bases issue reflects how powerful and irresistible the anti-bases trend has become. In the main a deceptive formula to blur the demarcation line between pro-bases and anti-bases proponents, the "gradual withdrawal" scheme attests to the fact that the outrightly pro-bases position has become increasingly indefensible.

The Aquino constitution itself contains concessions to the growing anti-bases, anti-imperialist mood of the people. Though the reactionary majority in the 1986 Constitutional Convention inserted so many loopholes into the provisions prohibiting foreign military bases and nuclear weapons on Philippine territory, these provisions are themselves cracks in the armor which can be exploited by anti-bases advocates. For one thing, the constitutional provision on the bases makes it more difficult to resort to a mere executive agreement to extend the stay of the bases and such ploys as a "referendum" to give legitimacy to this kind of agreement.

Developments in the international situation are also on the side of the anti-bases, anti-imperialist forces. The Cold War myths which conjured fears of imagined Soviet expansionism and Chinese Communist aggression have broken down. Peace initiatives from the socialist camp and anti-imperialist peace movements in the advanced capitalist countries and in the Third World are further undercutting the basis for the presence of US troops and US military bases on foreign soil. Even in Southeast Asia, where US imperialism still holds sway, the concept of a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality has gained acceptance from most of the governments in the region.

A battle of strategic significance

Mighty forces on both sides are gathering all their strength and reserves for the battle that is shaping up. For it is a battle of strategic significance in the long historic struggle of the Filipino people to overthrow the oppressive rule of US imperialism and its puppets.

The bases issue lies at the core of the national question and is a key issue of the anti-imperialist struggle. With the coming termination of the bases agreement on Sept. 16, 1991, it will become a focal point of the struggle between US imperialism and the puppet regime, on the one hand, and the patriotic forces of the Filipino nation on the other hand.

The contradiction between US imperialism and the Filipino nation is bound to sharpen and with it, all the other fundamental class contradictions in the semicolonial and semifeudal system. So historically intertwined are the interests of US imperialism and the local reactionary classes that the traitor classes are also the exploiting classes in Philippine society.

The present situation is already rife with potentially explosive elements -- the shocks of the unabated economic crisis, rising popular discontent, continuing civil war between revolutionary and reactionary forces and worsening factional rivalries among the ruling classes. With national and class contradictions heating up in the battle over the bases, a major national crisis may very well erupt. This will certainly hasten the revolutionary process.

By itself, the present struggle against the bases may not suffice to achieve their removal by 1991. Through manipulation and repression, US imperialism and its puppets can still force on the Filipino people a new arrangement for the continued stay of the bases. But the anti-bases struggle can render the political basis and support for such an arrangement so narrow that it will become starkly clear that the US bases are an imposition on the nation maintained through sheer imperialist might.

Beyond this, however, the political, military, propaganda and diplomatic battle on the bases issue can greatly weaken in a strategic sense the neo-colonial state and the power of US imperialism in the country. A big blow against the bases is also a major blow against imperialist rule and the puppet regime that it maintains.

So important is the current anti-bases struggle in both strategic and tactical terms that it deserves to be a priority concern in the Party's program of revolutionary struggle for the next three years. Any major move by US imperialism and its puppet regime to insure the retention of the bases such as the holding of a "referendum" or the signing of a new treaty requires that the revolutionary forces should shift all-out attention to and get ready for all-out mobilization on the bases issue. Considering the strategic importance of the bases battle, the revolutionary forces should also prepare for possible scenarios that may follow it. Should the anti-bases movement become truly broad and powerful, US imperialism might even instigate a coup d'etat and the restoration of naked fascist rule. This possibility must be taken into account.

Main line of attack

The task of the Party and the revolutionary forces that it leads is to use the anti-bases struggle as the focal point for mustering the widest and most militant participation of all patriotic classes, sectors, forces, organizations, groups and individuals in a determined struggle against US imperialism and its puppet regime. We should harness the force and energy created by the patriotic movement to hasten the advance of the revolutionary people's war for national democracy to a higher strategic stage.

The main line of attack in our propaganda and agitation is to focus on the bases as the key instrument and symbol of US imperialist control over the country and show what US control has done to deprive us of national sovereignty and unity; to cause the economic crisis, worsening poverty and extreme backwardness of the country; and to instigate the total war which has spawned divisions and devastation throughout our land.

A secondary though vital line of attack on the bases and US imperialist rule is to expose the threat to national survival posed by US nuclear weapons in the bases, and the social and moral damage that the presence of these bases has wrought on our nation and people.

Internationally, we can stress the importance of our antibases struggle to the advance of the worldwide struggle against imperialism by projecting the US bases in the Philippines as the rampart and staging ground of US intervention and one of the main nuclear arsenals in the Asia-Pacific region and the need to dismantle these bases in the interests of nuclear disarmament and world peace.

Our central slogan should demand that there be no more extension of the US bases and no more US domination; that the rule of US imperialism and the puppet regime be put to an end; and that national freedom, national progress, and national unity and peace be achieved.

The main themes of our anti-bases campaign are: end US neocolonial rule and assert the total independence of the nation; end US control of the economy and solve the economic crisis and the poverty of the people; end the US-instigated total war and work towards a lasting and genuine peace and national unity; free the nation from nuclear peril and the US bases; end the moral debasement and cultural domination of the Filipino people.

Particularly important to broadening the anti-bases struggle is the linkage of the bases issue to the issue of US economic domination, which is at the root of the severe economic crisis and underdevelopment of the country. Through this, the antibases movement can draw into its ranks the massive numbers who participated in the recent outbreaks of protest on economic issues.

Such linkage is also the most forceful way of countering the puppet regime's central argument that the US bases should be retained because they are necessary to our economic survival and of exposing the folly of bartering national sovereignty for more US aid and investments.

The US bases as an impediment to the search for genuine and lasting peace is another theme that connects the bases issue to the issues that affect the daily lives of the masses. The bases serve as an excuse for channelling more military aid to the AFP, thereby providing the wherewithal for prolonging the war (way beyond the capacity of the local ruling elite to sustain) and making it more destructive. They also are a conduit for direct US intervention in the war: US special forces and war materiel are stationed there for quick deployment not only to defend US interests in areas of international conflicts but also to back up counter-insurgency operations of its puppet regime within the country.

The proposal of the National Democratic Front, which offers a unilateral ceasefire should the Aquino regime adopt a policy of dismantling the bases by 1991, is the sharpest formulation of this bases-total war linkage. Since the bases issue is indissolubly linked to the entire question of US economic, political, cultural and military domination of the country, the bases' removal is a major step towards the resolution of a fundamental problem behind the raging civil war today. By taking a firm and comprehensive anti-imperialist line, we can galvanize the patriotic united front and effectively counter such opportunist ideas as the gradual withdrawal line of the reactionaries which some well-meaning nationalists are seriously considering.

Coordinated politico-military offensive

To effectively combat the still superior might of US imperialism and the reactionary state and their all-out, synchronized, highly-financed propaganda, psywar and repression campaigns, the united forces of all patriotic classes and sectors must avail of all the weapons and resources at its command, gather together all its strength and reserves, and take advantage of the smallest split within reactionary ranks.

The strength of the anti-imperialist forces can be most amplified where they situate themselves on the offensive position and where they enjoy the widest latitude for their initiatives -- in the arena of direct popular action, outside the narrow processes offered by the reactionaries. The most powerful antibases struggle can be developed by combining the people's revolutionary power (now concentrated in the guerilla bases and zones and the fighting units of the people's army), the mass movements and the broad united front -- all in a coordinated politico-military offensive.

The armed revolutionary forces represented by the NDF can place themselves at the forefront of the anti-bases, antiimperialist movement by enunciating a comprehensive antiimperialist program anchored on the people's yearnings for national independence, national progress, national unity and peace and supporting it with bold initiatives on the political, military and diplomatic front.

The NDF's anti-imperialist proposal for peace is one such move. The proposal highlights imperialist control as a fundamental problem of the nation, exposes the puppetry of the Aquino regime and enables the NDF to gain the upperhand on the peace question.

On the basis of the anti-imperialist program, the NDF forges unity and engages in joint actions with other political forces on various levels: formal and informal, bilateral and multilateral, legal, illegal and extralegal.

Complementing the armed revolutionary front, the Party, the people's army and the underground revolutionary mass organizations are the various legal multisectoral and sectoral alliances, legal mass organizations, and allied formations whose efforts are directed towards open mass mobilizations, open propaganda and parliamentary actions.

The legal national democratic people's federation, the trade union center, federations and unions, peasant mass organizations, and various sectoral mass organizations of the middle classes and sectors form the core of the anti-bases, anti-imperialist open mass movement.

The legal anti-imperialist movement must stretch as far as possible its areas for maneuver and action by going into the extralegal arena of struggle, which is a higher level of expression of the people's initiative where the illegal and the legal conjoin. One example is open support and promotion of the NDF's anti-imperialist proposal for peace. Another possibility is orga-nizing an open colloquium for all anti-imperialist forces, armed and unarmed.

The most basic and most important ingredient of the antibases struggle is the mass movement. If the mass movement is weak, we can only achieve limited gains in the other arenas and forms of struggle, and US imperialism and the puppet regime will have more room for their maneuvers and deceptive schemes. Essential to the development of the mass movement is grassroots propaganda and agitation. With their control over mass media, the reactionaries can mount a tremendous pro-bases propaganda barrage. Equally tremendous should be the efforts of the revolutionary forces in explaining the bases issue among the masses and clarifying to them the correct line and calls for action. We should stress popular forms of propaganda that can reach the masses directly and widely while fully exploiting -- though not confining ourselves -- to the limited space offered by the bourgeois mass media.

The mass actions and protests of workers, peasants, students and youth, teachers and other sections of the intelligentsia, and other sectors of the middle classes should be developed to reach massive proportions and highly confrontational levels. This can be done by standing on the basis of the levels already attained by the various class and sectoral movements in previous political mobilizations and harnessing the potential of the various sectoral protest actions on economic and democratic issues. The workers' movement can take the lead in intensifying the anti-bases struggle by using the paralyzing power of a general workers' strike. We can also tap the potentials in the mass movements of teachers, students and government employees and the present capability and possibilities in the peasant movement. All these should be geared towards generating a nationwide people's strike at the peak of the anti-bases, anti-imperialist offensive of the people.

Our propaganda campaign should be aggressive, creative, widespread, synchronized and intensive, stirring up the soul of the nation. Protest actions, especially those with paralyzing effects, and dramatic military actions deliver our propaganda line with the most impact. But, in shaping public opinion in favor of the anti-imperialist campaign, the middle classes and sectors, particularly the intelligentsia, play a significant role. With their numbers, prestige and ability to articulate, they can carry the battle of ideas to every branch of the superstructure -- in the church, media, business and professional organizations, academe, cultural institutions, health and scientific establishments -- creating cracks in the armor of the reactionary system.

We must organize the broadest patriotic front to express the fight of the entire Filipino nation. The broad mass and the organized forces of the working class, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie and progressive wing of the national bourgeoisie form the bulwark of the united struggle of the people against US imperialism and its puppet regime. But a wide spectrum of individuals, groups and forces, including sections of traditional political parties, of bourgeois institutions and even of the military, stirred by nationalist sentiments in varying degrees, can be won over to the united front and take their proper place in it. The united front expands the strength of the mass movements and gives them greater leeway against enemy attacks and harassment.

At present, the unity of the anti-bases, anti-imperialist forces is expressed on the legal plane. But the NDF can forge unity with other political forces on an informal, secret and bilateral level. It can also explore multilateral, extralegal arrangements with them.

Within the broad united front, the revolutionary forces must maintain their initiative and independence to ensure that they have the widest latitude in carrying the struggle to a revolutionary direction. At the same time, they should uphold unity by waging the most determined struggles against the enemy by watching out for opportunist and divisive moves emanating from vacillating elements within, and by promoting democracy and respect for each other's integrity and interests in the process of decision-making and implementation of agreements within the united front.

US imperialism will certainly do everything it can to weaken and divide the united front. A familiar CIA ploy which was used during the anti-dictatorship struggles was to smuggle in Trojan horses into the broad alliance and to sow intrigues, confusion and anti-communist hysteria within. But so long as the revolutionary forces keep firmly to the anti-imperialist line and to the correct principles and conduct of united front work, such divisive schemes cannot but fail.

Selective, dramatic military actions should be launched, targetting and highlighting crucial points in the network of US control and intervention and its scheme to retain the bases. The scale and intensity of such actions must be calibrated, in line with the development of the political and diplomatic struggles. Especially when done within the context of continuing tactical offensives, these operations clearly and vividly demonstrate what the armed struggle is for and project the New People's Army as the patriotic army of the people in the struggle for national independence and democracy.

Opening the issue of peace and political negotiations is an arena of struggle which contributes to the overall effort to link the bases issue to the resolution of the fundamental problems of society and to the question of state power. As stated earlier, the NDF's anti-imperialist proposal for peace highlights the bases and the entire system of US control as a basic problem at the root of the ongoing civil war and therefore as a major stumbling

block to the attainment of peace and national unity. It exposes the state and the present regime as the armed apparatus for imperialist domination and shows the need for armed struggle as the decisive means to win national liberation. We must link our anti-bases, anti-imperialist struggle to the worldwide struggle against imperialism and for nuclear disarmament and peace, and enlist the support of the peoples and nations of the world -- the socialist countries, independent and anti-imperialist countries, friendly and sympathetic governments, Marxist parties, labor and other progressive parties, progressive people's organizations, national liberation movements, the peace movement -- to our anti-imperialist cause. We can use various channels for solidarity -- people-to-people, Party-to-Party, and relations between the NDF and revolutionary and progressive governments, movements, parties and organizations. International gatherings, whether convened by us together with friends and sympathizers or called by allied organizations, are venues for exposing the bases as an instrument of US imperialist domination and intervention and expressing solidarity with the Filipino people's anti-imperialist struggle.

Our efforts in the political, military and diplomatic spheres, as those in the area of negotiations, must also be geared towards breaching the phalanx of reaction. Elements from the upper strata of society, including leaders of reactionary political parties and institutions who take an anti-bases stand, must be encouraged to support specific initiatives of the patriotic mass movement and to counteract the maneuverings and schemes to railroad the extension of the US bases. We should be keen to and adept at taking advantage of even the smallest rift among the reactionaries concerning the bases issue and of other complications brought about by factional rivalries within the ruling classes that may have a bearing on the anti-bases struggle.

Members of the anti-bases blocs in both houses of the reactionary Congress must be challenged to be consistent in their stand and to support efforts to ventilate the issues and expose the schemes of the imperialists and their puppets. We should also seek to neutralize non-diehard pro-bases elements in the reactionary parliament.

Let us appeal to the sense of patriotism of those within the Church hierarchy, mass media, business circles and other major reactionary institutions and call on them to support the nationalist movement and to prevent US imperialism from manipulating them against their own countrymen. The stamp of treachery to our nation and people must be put on those who resist the popular tide and collaborate with US imperialism. The anti-bases campaign also provides an opportune occasion to start nationalist agitation among the officers and men of the reactionary armed forces.

The anti-bases, anti-imperialist campaign is a nationwide campaign with every region playing specific roles. Regions with major US installations and facilities or large-scale US projects with a counterinsurgency orientation have a larger role in the campaign.

The general tactical framework must be so designed as to place the revolutionary forces and the entire anti-bases movement always on the offensive. This involves a planned set of initiatives aimed at maximizing our advantages and minimizing our weaknesses. This requires centralized planning with enough flexibility for creative execution.

Initiatives by revolutionary forces and the anti-bases movement on all fronts and levels of struggle must be synchronized towards a steady build-up and calibrated intensification. Engaging the enemy in tactical battles must result in concrete gains that enhance our offensive position and contribute to the attainment of the overall revolutionary objectives in pursuing the anti-bases, anti-imperialist struggle. We are on the threshold of a historic fight against US imperialism. Mustering all our strength, all our energies, all our skills and all our determination, let us march into battle and deal the imperialist aggressor and his cohorts powerful blows which will shake the very foundations of their rule.

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US IMPERIALISM SCALES UP GAMEPLAN TO EXTEND BASES LEASE BEYOND 1991

"The fact that I have agreed to talk means there is a possibility that there could be a new agreement because if I had not agreed to talk, then that would have been the end of it."

-President Aquino in an interview with the US TV show "Good Morning, America"

Washington couldn't have awakened to a sunnier morning than with this promise of Philippine lackey Corazon Aquino last October 15. But hopeful as Aquino's greeting may be, Washington appears to be wearying of her coy remarks and worrying more about growing popular opposition to an issue very close to the imperialist heart -- the future of the largest and most important US military installations overseas, Clark Air Base and Subic Naval Base, whose lease expires barely two years from now. Increasingly, the US is taking a higher profile in its offensive to pro-long the stay of its strategic bases. It is now accelerating a comprehensive gameplan to renew the RP-US Military Bases Agreement (MBA) before this expires on Sept. 16, 1991 and to neutralize the heightening anti-bases opposition. The US gameplan covers a wide spectrum of operations -- political, economic, diplomatic, propaganda and military. Utilizing overt and covert, conventional and unconventional methods, its one conspicuous thrust is "psy-ops" and media manipulation in order to influence attitudes and behavior favorable to US objectives. Towards this end, the gameplan brings together the experience of the Pentagon, CIA, USIS and other US agencies in a concerted effort to "win hearts and minds" for the bases.

In this regard, the plan complements the US-designed lowintensity conflict strategy of waging "total war at the grassroots level." It highlights the use of intervention as a primary tool of US foreign policy, and shows that every day that the US bases are allowed to remain, US imperialism will always find an excuse to meddle in Philippine affairs. However, while the gameplan appears "offensive" in character, it really is a defensive action to counter-act and frustrate the popular antibases and anti-imperialist movement.

Applying political pressure on little brown sister The Philippine ruling classes, knowing that their interests lie with the US, have rallied behind the imperialist gameplan. Big business, big landlords, the church hierarchy, bureaucracy, military and media capitalists are mobilizing their reactionary institutions and resources to support the bases' retention. To US annoyance however, discordant voices have begun to arise from within the ruling elite. In reaction to the snowballing popular anti-bases movement, patriotic sentiments are resonating in the halls of Senate and Congress, the pulpits of churches, columns of leading newspapers and inner councils of the academe. For the US, Aquino's compromise formula of "open options" on the bases has only added to the babel of confusion because of its ineffectual stance.

It is in this context that the US is now pushing one major political prong of its gameplan. This is to press Aquino, as head of the neo-colonial state and foremost US puppet, to assert the primacy of US strategic interests by openly declaring her commitment to renew the bases agreement and formally starting right away the process to fulfill this obligation. This way, Aquino can take the lead in making the ruling classes speak with one forceful voice while muting and even silencing opposition to the bases. However, this would entail that Aquino abandon her insipid "open-options" policy, which has rapidly run its course in the face of mounting nationalist sentiments.

This was the message delivered by J. Danforth Quayle, US vice president and George Bush's personal emissary, during his September visit to Manila. The message, contained in a letter of Bush which Quayle hand-carried to Malacanang, was terse and commanding: "Begin negotiations on the US military facilities before the end of the year."

Immediately, the US was able to score points as Aquino acceded to the start of "exploratory talks" this December. This is a change from Aquino's position early this year when, in a show of feigned independence, she had tried to delay the inevitable and resisted US pressure to set a new round of talks. The presidential change of heart is evidently related to her state visit to Washington in November; Aquino knows she can bargain for more aid in exchange for an agreement to immediately return to the conference table.

On the side of Washington, it wants formal negotiations to start soon in the hope of sealing a new treaty before the presidential term of its lackey ends in 1992 and before the antibases movement gains more strength in the last two years of the MBA. The US fears that unless it wraps up a new treaty at least one year before the expiration of the MBA, it may lose the initiative and maneuverability in its battle for the bases. The US has indeed reason to worry. The anti-bases and antiimperialist struggle -- drawing nationwide support from organized labor, students, significant sections of the urban middle class, intelligentsia and some senators -- is increasingly polarizing Philippine society, a large section of which was once solidly pro-US and pro-bases. According to the conservative Social Weather Station, while a plurality of Filipinos still support the US presence (because of years of colonial miseducation and imperialist brainwashing), the percentage in Metro Manila has fallen from 52% in 1987 to 37% today.

However, to ease her imperialist master's worries and prove herself ever the loyal little brown sister, Aquino has quietly made it known that she will stick by her commitment to Washington. No less than Quayle confirmed this after a 50-minute meeting with Aquino: "I was confident before and I continue to be confident that we will be able to reach a mutually acceptable conclusion about the future of Clark and Subic bases."

Bush's court jester then triumphantly bared the real issue at stake in the forthcoming bases talks which Aquino has vainly tried to cover up from the people with her deceitful "open options" policy. Chirped Quayle: The main issue is no longer the retention of the bases, "but the duration of a new bases agreement and the amount of assistance and economic benefits the Philippines can get."

More US political maneuverings and the referendum ploy However, despite its well-placed confidence in its handmaiden, US imperialism is not relaxing the pressure on Aquino, or giving up its bases gameplan. A tricky point the US wants to quickly resolve before the bases negotiations start is the issue of compensation. At present, this is the only overriding concern of the nationalist pretenders in government. Chief among them is presidential brother and behind-the-sceneplayer Congressman Jose Cojuangco Jr. who dreams of getting \$2 billion a year for the bases rent, to make a total of \$10 billion from 1992 to 1996.

But as Quayle himself noted in an interview, "We (want to) point out that there are limits to our resources and that a longterm US presence in the Philippines serves the interests of our two nations." Indeed, the realities of US budget deficits and slow growth will make it difficult for the US to pay more than the \$740 million a year it is already paying the Aquino government.

According to Heritage Foundation, a most influential thinktank in Washington and a known CIA front, the US can offer a "best efforts" pledge of \$2.5 billion for the next MBA five-year compensation package. But in return, the foundation stressed: "The Aquino government should offer to do its best to preserve US access beyond 1991." Otherwise, as Quayle warned, "In the unlikely event that the talks fail to produce an agreement, there are other locations in the Asia-Pacific region to which (our) facilities can be moved to accomplish our mission."

In truth, the even is indeed unlikely, and the US threat has more bark than bite to it. High costs of transfer (\$5 to \$10 billion) and the time it would take (5 to 10 years), combined with the bases' present favorable location, function, facilities, cheap workforce are factors that weigh heavily against their relocation to other parts of the Pacific. The US' own agencies support this conclusion. Admitted the US Department of Defense in numerous hearings before the US Congress in early 1988: "There is no single location or combination of locations in the Western Pacific that can replicate all the advantages we currently enjoy in the Philippines."

However, the US bluff has found willing dupes in the country's corridors of power. Days before Quayle's arrival in Manila, leading government officials went into a frenzy of US flag-waving (the more graphic Filipino term for it is "sipsip"). They -- Speaker Ramon Mitra, Vice President Salvador Laurel, Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos, Congressman Jose Cojuangco Jr. et al -- tried to outdo each other in offering the best proposals to please the Americans.

But in the end, it was still the US who ruled the day as its minions in Congress resurrected the US-backed proposal for a bases referendum. On grounds of "letting the people decide", the Aquino-dominated Lower House last Oct. 21 passed Bill No. 15113 calling for a "national referendum or consultation" within 60 days after a new bases treaty is negotiated but before it is submitted to the Senate for ratification.

The obvious objective: to preempt and undercut the Upper House where at least 15 of the 23 senators have declared they would reject a new bases pact. Ironically however, by bypassing the Senate, Aquino violates her own Constitution which states that a referendum can only be held after two-thirds of the Senate ratifies a new treaty. Aquino's barefaced move shows the extent to which she is prepared to transgress the very laws she has sworn to uphold in order to fulfill her commitment to Washington. To be sure, the US has the most to benefit from any referendum on the bases. A favored ploy during the Marcos era, it fits in the US gameplan to overcome strong opposition to the bases and railroad an agreement favorable to US interests and yet blessed with the "people's mandate." With the entire electoral machinery and processes controlled by the Aquino regime, and mass media controlled as well by reactionary monopolies, the referendum results can easily be manipulated in favor of a probases vote.

Even now, it is likely that the stage is already being set to rig the referendum in overwhelming favor of the bases' retention. Just as it is likely that top-level meetings are already secretly underway to settle the remaining issues of contention between the RP and US negotiating panels before talks start in December. And just as it is most likely that Aquino herself, in her forthcoming pilgrimage to Washington, will seal the terms under which national sovereignty shall be bartered in exchange for the "right price."

The deceptive line of gradual phaseout and PAP The changing political climate, however, has forced reactionary politicians to adopt deceptive formulas to deflect rising nationalist sentiments. Embodied in the slogan "gradual phaseout," it has found tacit support in Washington which, while continuing to press for a "long-term" US presence, sees the formula as a euphemism for the continued stay of the bases. Today, the "pragmatic and practical" option of "gradual phaseout" is rapidly replacing Aquino's "open-options" cliché. It is also becoming the favorite line of US imperialism's lackeys and mouthpieces on both sides of the reactionary political fence, who do not want to appear totally obsequious to Uncle Sam. This formula has many variants -- "negotiated withdrawal," "medium-term withdrawal," "short-term retention," "orderly transition." All mean the same thing, however, and work for the same objective: the renegotiation of the bases treaty, which could occur every 10, 15 or 25 years. Or on and on in a perpetually renewable lease to maintain and protect the fulcrum of US imperialism's strategic interests in the Philippines and Asia-Pacific region.

To engineer this about, Washington has craftily tied up the renewal of the MBA to US economic aid for Aquino's cash-strapped regime. The US message is blunt and simple: no bases, no aid; and we'll give you only what we can afford. The economic leverages in the US gameplan include threats on the loss of the Economic Support Fund as well as "repercussions" on US investments and loans, on Philippine exports to the US and on debt relief talks with the World Bank, IMF and other creditor agencies and countries.

In particular, Washington has inextricably linked the bases' retention to the Philippine Assistance Program or PAP, the US-initiated plan ostensibly designed to foster economic recovery. The disclosure of the PAP proposal was thus timed only after the bases review had gotten underway in April last year. Stephen Solarz, one of the four principal architects of PAP and chairman of the US House Subcommittee on Asia and Pacific Affairs, couldn't have put it better in a report submitted last April: "The successful implementation of the plan would certainly be extremely helpful in terms of creating a favorable climate in the Philippines for the renewal of the bases agreement." The Solarz committee report also stressed that the "multilateral aid initiative (MAI, the earlier name of PAP) is not intended to be a cash transfer program in which the US and other donors have absolutely no say as to how the funds will be utilized."

"To the contrary, the subcommittee views the basic concept behind MAI as a quid pro quo . . . rather than being a blank check." To this effect, the Solarz committee then

introduced an amendment to the PAP bill, providing for the relevant committees in the US Congress to be "precisely informed" before its funds are committed. This is to ensure, Solarz explained, "some additional control over it."

To further step up the pressure on the Aquino regime, the US is actively using public diplomacy as a critical adjunct to its gameplan to garner support for the bases. It is mobilizing US allies to tie their aid and investments to the bases issue, especially Japan and the ASEAN member-countries who also benefit from the "protective umbrella" of the US bases in the Philippines. Singapore has strongly responded to the US call by noisily lobbying for the bases' retention in the interest of "regional stability and security."

The propaganda and 'psyop' components of the gameplan The US interventionist gameplan got underway in 1986 following the sudden change of government. Washington foresaw a gruelling battle ahead as patriotic elements in the constitutional convention pressed the inclusion of an antinuclear weapons provision in the new Constitution and required a treaty instead of a mere executive agreement (as in the time of Marcos) to govern the continued stay of the US bases. The Reagan administration increased the budget of the CIA station in Manila to P10 million and its roster of CIA agents from 115 to 127. According to the West German magazine Top Secret, this pack of spies is led by no less than US ambassador to the Philippines Nicholas Platt. Working with him under similar diplomatic cover are 36 other officers of the US embassy in Manila, most of whom are attached to its political section. The CIA's bag of dirty tricks or covert operations is part and parcel of the bases gameplan. These range from propaganda manipulation to economic destabilization, counterinsurgency activities, formation of paramilitary groups and outright political assassinations of leftist leaders.

On the propaganda front, the United States Information Service has launched an intensive public relations campaign to project US presence in the Philippines in the best possible light. Financed with a "limited budget" of \$25,000 a year, according to US embassy spokesman Gerard Huuchel (one of the identified CIA agents), the USIS campaign involves the massive dissemination of printed, audio and visual materials to influential persons and groups, as well as to schools and public and private libraries across the country.

An essential theme of the media blitz is the usual US hype about "Russian aggression" and "a communist takeover" once the bases leave, the dire warnings about the deleterious economic effects of a US withdrawal. Its subthemes include character assassinations of prominent anti-bases activists and senators, black propaganda against progressive and revolutionary organizations, and disinformation reports about alleged sightings of "foreign sub-marines" and "helicopters" on arms-landing missions to "communist insurgents."

Vested interests in media and US-paid hacks are covertly coordinating their activities with the US effort in a variety of ways. Some, by writing articles and columns endorsing the US position, or by fronting their news agencies for CIA-written or -inspired articles. Others, by downplaying or outrightly censoring news and statements from the anti-bases movement. The US blitz to sell the bases "like selling Coca-Cola" is being synchronized with other psychological operations or "psyops". One form of these is civic action program targetting local populations at all levels. Sponsored by USAID and other US agencies, these civic actions include infrastructure and health and sanitation projects, food and medicine doleouts, school book donations and relief work to calamity and poverty-stricken areas. Other forms of these "psyops" include all-expenses-paid trips to the US for national and local government officials, "cultural exchange" invitations to media people and educational grants for students and professors.

To further prepare the ground for the bases' retention, US officials in the Philippines are now making the rounds of senators and other key opinion leaders. Through a combination of bribery and intimidation, they seek to influence the more obdurate ones to moderate their position. As the US intensifies its "PR" drive, and some "nationalist" senators begin to show their true colors, it would not be surprising if the US gets the two-thirds vote needed to ratify the bases pact.

The CIA in our midst: fighting America's dirty little war As in its past operations, the Central Intelligence Agency and other US imperialist agencies are using different organizations active in the Philippines to cover its agents and activities and buttress the bases gameplan. Among them are the Asia Foundation, Asian-American Free Labor Institute, Asian Development Bank, Causa International, Export-Import Bank, Free Trade Union Institute, Summer Institute of Linguistics and Wycliffe Bible Translators.

The CIA is also tapping existing organizations of the local ruling classes to unequivocally endorse the bases' retention. The CIA has also created front organizations -- like the wellfunded Pro-Bases Secretariat and League of Concerned Citizens -- to serve as a counterfoil to the popular grassroots anti-bases movement.

Working hand in glove with the CIA are its assets in place within the Filipino community. They are the new Makapili, who owe allegiance not to their mother country but to Mother America. Heading the list is top contender Enrique Zobel de Ayala. A supporter of the fascist Falangist regime of Franco and that of Marcos until their downfall, he was recently identified as a top CIA operative active in funding and forming rightwing vigilante groups. Zobel has made no secret of his pro-bases position. No less dangerous but more low-key are the CIA moles within the Aquino government -- who, significantly, are also members of the newly formed Presidential Committee on the Bases that will formulate and recommend decisions to be made during the December talks. They are National Security Adviserr and former AFP general Rafael Ileto and Presidential Adviser Edilberto de Jesus. Last year, both attended an international

conference in Singapore on the US bases, which was sponsored by the Naval War Foundation, a known CIA front.

Another is Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos, who like Ileto is a product and beneficiary of US military training programs supportive of US geopolitical and security interests. Still nother is the very head of the bases negotiating panel -- Foreign Affairs Secretary Raul Manglapus. In 1980, a suspected CIA front, the Hudson Institute, named him as a "CIA resource person" and "expert" who could be invited by the US government to convince socialists around the world not to support the "extreme left" in El Salvador. In 1966, Manglapus was elected senator, thanks in part to money and backing from the CIA.

With the likes of Manglapus at the helm of the Philippine negotiating panel, how cannot even a mere undeling at the White House thus predict this early the "successful" outcome of the bases talks? Said one Roman Popadiuk, the deputy presidential spokesman for foreign affairs, early this month: "We don't envision any obstacles. I think there will be very serious negotiations and both sides will agree."

Military actions: tighter and tighter in the US' deadly embrace Buttressing the political offensive of US imperialism are military actions to neutralize and suppress the anti-bases and anti-imperialist move-ments, especially the revolutionary movement which serves as its core. With the escalation of antibases protests, these have entailed the violent dispersal of every US embassy demonstration in Manila by the fascist minions of the Aquino regime.

Even rallies in the provinces have not been spared the truncheon blow and police arrest. In Tacloban City last Oct. 23, the 45th anniversary of the landing of MacArthur in Leyte, policement dispersed 200 anti-bases protesters with water cannons because they had no rally permit. Explained the city mayor why he refused to give a permit: "It (the rally) would be shameful to the Americans."

But nowhere is the ruthless character of the US gameplan more highlighted than in the bloody scheme codenamed "Oplan Jericho." Leaked by patriotic elements within the AFP, this CIAinstigated plan calls for violent attacks against leaders of legal and revolutionary organizations at the forefront of the anti-bases struggle. Psy-war operations designed to sow intrigues, foment disunity or create the impression of intense power struggles within the ranks of the revolutionary movement serve to prepare the ground for carrying out assassinations of its key leaders by CIA-sponsored military or vigilante death squads.

Certainly, the US gameplan to hold on to its bases provides a convenient cover to pursuue "counterinsurgency operations." In fact, the US is not relenting in all-out support for its

client regime's total war campaign, and in the process boosting the Philippine military's capability to defend Clark and Subic. Early this month, Quayle announced that the Bush administration is considering asking the US Congress to let the Aquino government directly use US aid to beef up "internal security".

In effect, this would entail waiving a provision of the US Foreign Assistance Act that prohibits the spending of US aid for police and other security measures. Only one US aid recipient -- wartorn El Salvador -- has such a waiver at present. "By increasing the (Aquino regime's) internal security, American lives will be better protected," Quayle noted, as he unwittingly (or wittingly?) touched on the actual US motive in directly bankrolling the regime's total war against the Filipino people.

What Quayle doesn't say, however, is that US weapons of destruction are already finding their way into the AFP arsenal -- thanks to the bases pact. Last September 5, AFP chief of staff Gen. Renato de Villa revealed that the US will deliver a dozen MD-500 helicopter gunships and 35 fast patrol craft by next year. These, de Villa said, are part of the war materiel the US government is committed to deliver under the Military Assistance Pact, an MBA complement.

Armed, funded and indoctrinated by US imperialism, it has not taken much for the puppet and mercenary AFP to consider America's enemy its own enemy, and to be easily drawn into the vortex of its real and imaginary wars. At this very moment, AFP troops and facilities could in fact be already neck-deep in a US-led war exercise codenamed "PACEX". Billed as the biggest ever in the Asia-Pacific region, this two-month strategic war game will involve US forces from the US mainland and Hawaii together with the national armies of Japan, South Korea, Singapore and the Philippines.

Its target (as you guessed it): the Soviet Union, America's avowed enemy. Its immediate objective: the theoretical destruction of Soviet naval bases in the region, especially those in the coastal city of Vladivostok. And central to this overall escalation of war readiness are the US bases in the Philippines, being the primary headquarters, training area and logistics support base for the US military forces in the Asia-Pacific.

Evidently, as anti-bases and anti-nuclear groups point out, "PACEX" is meant to draw the Philippines ever more tightly into the deadly embrace of US imperialism's strategic defense plan. In this age of the post-Cold War, it constitutes not a simple "peacetime" exercise but an outright provocation of war, with the US bases in the country as the staging ground and the Philippines as the sacrificial pawn.

Notwithstanding the clear threat posed by the presence of US bases to national survival and its clear violation of national sovereignty, Aquino is still intent on playing the US

game, wagering the bases for the highest stakes and gambling the country away with a toss of the dice loaded in favor of US imperialism. Who benefits? who loses in this gameplan? "It's difficult being the president," an Aquino spokesman once remarked. Indeed, 'tis tough being Corazon Aquino. But tougher still being a Filipino under her regime of "collaborators and traitors ready to exchange freedom for money."

Next time around, when Aquino returns to American TV towards the close of the RP-US negotiations on the bases, what can we expect her to say? "Good morning, America. Breakfast is served: the US bases in the Philippines." * * *

CHINA CELEBRATES 40 YEARS OF STRUGGLE TO BUILD SOCIALISM

The Communist Party of China (CPC) and the whole Chinese people marked the 40th year of the founding of the People's Republic of China last October 1. It was four decades ago when the Chinese people under the leadership of the Communist Party triumphed over the US-backed reactionary Kuomintang regime. On that day, Chairman Mao Zedong declared to the world that "the Chinese people have stood up!" It marked the beginning of the Chinese people's long and arduous march to build a new China along the socialist path.

A formidable challenge confronted the Chinese people. China then was a backward agricultural country with hardly any heavy industry to speak of. In 1949, the country's economy was left in shambles due to the devastation caused by the War of Resistance against the Japanese invaders (1937-45) and the National Liberation War against the reactionary Kuomintang regime (1946- 49). All these initial barriers and difficulties failed to dampen the Chinese people's spirit and determination. Led by the Communist Party and guided by the teachings of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, the Chinese people surmounted all the difficulties and problems that came their way. Because of their inexperience in socialist revolution and construction, mistakes were committed and setbacks were encountered along the way. But the Chinese people's resoluteness and spirit of self-reliance enabled them to overcome these setbacks and to achieve significant successes in building socialism.

Relying mainly on their own efforts, the Chinese people have transformed their country into a powerful and developing socialist state. The standard of living of workers and peasants, which comprise the majority of China's vast population, was greatly improved. Agricultural production was increased tremendously to achieve self-sufficiency in food. The socialist industrialization drive has successfully built heavy and light industries throughout China.

Today, while China may not have reached the level of economic growth achieved by some of the more advanced capitalist countries, the Chinese people have certainly gone a long way since 1949. Presently, the 1.1 billion Chinese people are struggling towards socialist modernization. Efforts are focused on modernizing agriculture, industry and national defense by advancing science and technology.

While China may be suffering from current political and economic difficulties, the Communist Party of the Philippines is confident that the Communist Party of China and its entire membership will rise to the challenge and overcome these problems. The experience of the Chinese people in the last 40 years has shown that so long as the people closely adhere to the four cardinal principles of "keeping to the socialist road, upholding the dictatorship of the proletariat, upholding the leadership of the communist party, and upholding Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought," the Chinese people will surely continue to move forward in their march to build a powerful socialist China.

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Communist Party of the Philippines and the entire Filipino people extend their warmest greetings to the Communist Party of China and the Chinese people.

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