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EDITORIAL

PREPARE FOR THE MANEUVERS OF THE REACTIONARIES

These days, the air is thick with all sorts of talk about new coup attempts against the Aquino government. Reports that Aquino will call for a snap presidential election due to intense US pressure are spreading like wild-fire. At the same time, agitation for a change from the present presidential system to a parliamentary system has surfaced within the halls of Congress.

Of course, we must not be taken in by every rumor we hear. But all these bits and pieces of news -- whether confirmed or not, whether serious or specious -- can give us clues to what the reactionaries are plotting and where their maneuvers are leading. They are signs of the growing turmoil among the ranks of the reactionaries and their frantic, desperate search for a solution to the precarious situation into which the reactionary state has been plunged.

Such reports must be seriously examined in relation to other kinds of data and the trends we have been able to pinpoint through a thorough study of the political situation. This way, we will not be caught by surprise and instead can prepare ourselves for any sudden turn of events or shift in the situation. We will also not be easily carried away by the disinformation being spread by US imperialism and its local agents.

Take the snap presidential election. It is interesting to note that such a report emanated from the US media and some elements in official Washington circles. It is an indication that the US is thinking of changing horses and how this can be done through a "popular mandate."

The only problem with this scheme is which horse should replace the old Aquino nag. Among Mrs. Aquino's rivals, no one has as yet emerged who has the capability to wield a broad enough consensus among the ruling classes. There also has to be a process for putting the new horse into the frontline. One other thing is the danger that a snap election may spark greater infighting among the reactionaries. The Aquino faction will surely fight with all the resources and tricks it can command -- against a set of rivals also quite skilled at dirty games.

A scenario akin to this is the proposal to change the present presidential system of the reactionary government to a parliamentary system. Most likely, its purpose is to manipulate a new power-sharing arrangement without having to resort to violent means to throw out the Aquino faction. It also seeks to show popular support for the change in horses.

But will the Aquino faction and its allied civilian and military factions be that willing to junk the presidential system from which they have profited so much? And will this satisfy the militarists whose dreams of setting up a military dictatorship through a coup d'etat shall never die? Furthermore, this formula may take some time to realize because of the legal processes it has to go through. But the weakest point in this scheme is that it might provoke even greater instability at a time when the reactionary state is in the throes of crisis. At the slightest jar in the parliamentary system, an election has to be called. At the slightest change in the alignment of factions, the government is thrown into crisis.

In the face of all these schemes being bruited about, does our analysis that the country is undergoing a transition to a new form of rule still hold? The snap election scheme, for one, is consistent with our analysis. Whoever comes out as president can readily declare martial law. The proposal for a parliamentary system, however, does not fit all that well. It is rather difficult to see this taking place at a time when the state is in crisis and the revolution is advancing, although it is possible for a fake parliament to arise after a successful coup d'etat. But this is a different point.

As has been said, there is a host of complications even in a snap election. That is, if they can hold it before everything falls apart. The state already is in grave crisis. So is the economy. The threat of a coup d'etat by the militarist and reactionary rivals of Aquino is ever present. The issue of the US military bases could also trigger a crisis. Mass struggles are erupting and conditions are becoming more favorable for the advance of the revolutionary forces. There are more and more factors pushing the US to force its own resolution of the crisis of the reactionary state.

The most immediate and realistic possibility -- and one which is most consistent with the interests of reaction to abate the crisis and quell the revolution -- is the reimposition of fascist rule through a military dictatorship. But the success of this solution lies in US support and in the capability of the military faction or coalition of military factions to launch a coup d'etat which can win over or neutralize the larger part of the reactionary armed forces.

In this scenario, the Aquino faction will be booted out of power. In a position to take over will be any one of the military factions now contending with each other -- the RAM and its anti-Aquino allies; the military forces within the Aquino coalition like the Ramos-de Villa clique; or a new combination of militarists and political factions from both camps.

Nonetheless, the possibility that Aquino will remain in power until 1992 cannot be discarded. But this will arise from an impasse or temporary stale-mate in the political situation. This could happen if great damage can be inflicted on Aquino's fascist rivals, if the

revolutionary movement suffers big losses, and if Aquino is able to push through a new treaty on the US military bases without setting off a crisis. But for all these to materialize would be a windfall of good luck for Aquino.

Whichever reactionary maneuver prevails, the revolutionary forces should always prepare to sustain its strength and take advantage of the excellent situation to inflict the most damage on reaction and advance the revolution.

It is true that the opportunities for advancing the revolution are staggering. But in the short term, we do not aim for great leaps in the politico-military struggles. Our efforts, at present, are still concentrated on the tremendous and long-delayed work of consolidating the revolutionary forces while continuing to lead the masses in their struggle. But if there is a big and sudden change in the political situation, we must be ready to shift gears and respond to the people's need for active revolutionary leadership.

Even now, we must prepare the revolutionary forces to intensify the politico-military struggles in the event of a coup d'etat. The armed forces in the countryside and in the cities must be primed to launch military operations when the fascist military is in turmoil and battling each other. Our mass forces must learn various ways of fighting against and inflicting damage on the reactionary army and government during a coup d'etat. We must also move swiftly to form an anti-imperialist and democratic front that will bind together the broadest ranks to fight for the interests of the nation and confront the threat of a new fascist dictatorship.

Should the reactionaries resort to other maneuvers, such as those previously mentioned, we should be flexible in our tactics but situate them within a framework that correctly defines the targets and political aims of the revolution. We should also become adept at forming many and appropriate combinations of various forms and arenas of struggle.

The coming year is pregnant with the possibility of abrupt and great changes in the situation. Let us closely monitor and comprehensively analyze developments, be good at leading the masses and be determined in strengthening the revolutionary forces ideologically, politically, militarily and organizationally.

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CPDF REJECTS CORDILLERA ORGANIC ACT AS A BIG FARCE

On January 30, more than 500,000 voters in the Cordillera region

will decide whether to ratify or reject the Cordillera Organic Act (COA). The COA provides for the establishment of the Cordillera Autonomous Region in the provinces of Abra, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga-Apayao, Mountain Province and Baguio City.

The local minority ruling classes and a couple of politicians within the Aquino coalition are vigorously campaigning for the ratification of the COA. Also in favor of the law is the reformist section of the minority middle forces, who argue that "it is better to have limited autonomy than no autonomy at all."

However, the forces working against ratification are quite strong. On one side, there are the diehard reactionary forces among the majority Filipinos, like the big compradors and traditional politicians, who oppose not only the COA itself but the very concept of autonomy for the minority peoples of the Cordillera. On the other side are the revolutionary and progressive forces, such as the Cordillera People's Democratic Front (CPDF) and Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA). They reject the COA because it is ridden with basic flaws that make its version of autonomy nothing more than a farce.

In a document issued last November 1989, the CPDF made a comprehensive analysis of the COA, which became the basis for its principled stand. The following article is a condensed version of this document.

The Cordillera People's Democratic Front rejects the Cordillera Organic Act (COA) and the "regional autonomy" it promises as a farce. The law is a smokescreen to hide continued oppressive rule in the region.

Autonomy for the region is supposed to ensure the Cordillera people's right to "secure for themselves their ancestral domain, develop their economy, promote their cultural heritage and establish a system of self-governance" within the framework of the Constitution, national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Philippines.

Let us see what kind of "self-governance" the COA institutes within the framework of the present political system.

No broad democratic basis

The "autonomy" being offered by the COA has no broad democratic basis and no one but the ruling classes will benefit from it.

The COA is granting a degree of political autonomy, not to the broad masses of the Cordillera people, but to the reactionary forces who will control the Cordillera Autonomous Region or CAR. There is no doubt that the ruling classes will dominate the CAR because they have tight control over the present state machinery and processes, both nationwide and in the localities, and through this, they are able to

deny the people their democratic rights.

Substantial reforms to institute people's democracy, especially political and civil rights for the masses, are a basic condition for genuine regional autonomy. Yet the COA offers nothing new in this respect, only a rehash of abstract principles and general policies on people's rights which are "enshrined" in the Constitution but routinely violated by the state itself.

One example is the indifferent treatment of the issue of human rights. There is no mention whatsoever of specific violations by the state (or other political institutions) of people's civil rights, especially the collective rights of indigenous peoples.

Despite the usual lip service paid to the principle of "all government emanating from the people" and "exercised with their participation, representation and consent," the COA cannot offset the bias of the electoral system in favor of the moneyed and powerful elite.

Worse, the COA even directs the CAR to set "guidelines and accreditation standards to define the conditions required of people's organizations" -- which is nothing but illegal government intervention in legitimate mass-organizing initiatives.

Only administrative autonomy

What the COA actually grants the CAR is not genuine regional autonomy but only administrative autonomy from the national executive branch.

The so-called "autonomous region" is merely a complete version of the present administrative region and a refinement of the two fake "autonomous regions" in Mindanao devised by the Marcos regime. That the new CAR is granted the powers of "autonomy" and of a "municipal corporation" is nothing new, because all other provincial and municipal governments have long enjoyed the same powers.

A regional governor, assisted by a cabinet, will exercise executive functions at that level, instead of the President's office and regional units of national agencies coordinating with so many local government units.

A Cordillera Assembly, composed of at most 32 members, is empowered to make regional laws, but limited to routine matters of local government that Congress can safely delegate, such as: a code of customary laws; "development" and social-service programs and policies; the regional budget; sources of revenue; creation of new agencies, including special courts; a local government code; a few electoral mechanisms; etc.

The CAR only has jurisdiction over the following: administrative

organization of the government; creation of sources of revenue; ancestral domain and natural resources; personal, family, property and tribal relations; socio-economic development; educational policies; preservation and development of the cultural heritage; and some others.

Excluded from CAR's jurisdiction are: foreign affairs, national defense and security, administration of justice, general auditing, civil service and elections, fiscal and monetary policies, foreign trade, customs and tariffs, transportation and communications that affect areas outside the region, and a few others.

The clause "consistent with the Constitution and national laws" is repeatedly tacked on in cases where the COA allows regional laws on major social issues relevant to the region but already covered by national legislation.

Except on two minor items, every major regional law is automatically delimited by national laws covering the same subject.

CAR: a huge milking cow

The ruling classes are delighted with the "autonomy" being offered by the COA because it gives them a huge milking cow.

As the main branches of the regional government, the regional governor, his cabinet and the regional assembly can together wield tremendous economic and political power to benefit their own factions and the entire ruling class.

The COA empowers the CAR to create its own sources of revenue and exercise fiscal autonomy. The regional government can levy taxes, fees and charges, aside from those imposed by local governments. The CAR is also entitled to a 60 percent share of national internal revenue collections within the region and to an annual P1.5 billion aid for five years from the national government to support its infrastructure projects. It can also contract foreign and domestic loans and receive block grants, donations and other forms of foreign assistance.

The power to appropriate funds, create sources of revenue, appoint officials and personnel, reorganize agencies, gerrymander local territories, manage natural resources and public land disposition, enter into contracts for public works projects, regulate private businesses and operate government corporations -- all these are major areas for graft and corruption, patronage and private army-building.

For the traditional politicians who are scrambling to have the COA ratified, this is what autonomy really means -- more and greater channels to build up private wealth and overlord power.

With the CAR as these rascals' milking cow, our people have to

shoulder the burden of bigger budget deficits, increased local taxation, paralysis of social services and deeper addiction to foreign loans and aid.

AFP, protector of fake autonomy

The repressive instrument of the state -- the AFP -- secures the Cordillera region for the oppressors and their fake autonomy.

The COA assures the AFP of unhampered stationing and deployment of troops in the region. Through this, the ruling system can preserve its control over the Cordillera through armed force.

The COA pays lip service to the "supremacy of civilian authority at all times" yet allows military personnel to be appointed or designated to any civilian position in the CAR under a state of emergency.

The COA even plays the old counter-insurgency game of "making Igorots kill Igorots." It provides that "inhabitants of the Autonomous Region shall be given preference in assignments" to AFP units stationed in the region. This is a crude attempt to entice soldiers of Cordillera origin to use their knowledge of the local terrain and population in terrorizing their own people.

Nevertheless, the COA gives sufficient satisfaction to the Cordillera bureaucrats' craving for an official armed force under their wing. A regional police force will be created under the Cordillera governor but this will remain under NAPOLCOM administration and supervision. This dashes the hopes of Conrado Balweg to make the CPLA the official regional peace-keeping force. He has become so isolated that the present dispensation can now afford to risk his displeasure and is instead striving to win over the traditional politicians to support the COA.

Of course, the COA is absolutely silent about a question very significant to most of Cordillera's indigenous communities -- their right to bear arms in collective and individual defense and for hunting purposes. But despite the reactionary government's restrictions, many indigenous communities have held on to their arms.

And this is the only correct thing to do. So long as the Philippine state remains oppressive, the Cordillera people's assertion of their right to self-determination requires their participation in all kinds of mass struggle, including armed struggle.

Token concessions to customary law

The COA contains a token concession to the indigenous peoples -- the recognition of their customary laws.

But such recognition is reduced to a cheap formality, since the

COA declares that "customary laws affecting personal, family, tribal and property relations in the Cordillera shall be recognized among members of the indigenous tribal group or cultural community." In other words, the state merely acknowledges what has been freely practiced anyway by generations of indigenous communities among themselves.

Note that these laws do not apply to cases where one party does not belong to any "indigenous tribal group" or "cultural community." By implication, the civil and penal codes of the reactionary state which are national in scope shall apply in cases not covered by customary laws, or in cases of conflict between customary and national laws. In property-related cases, for example, settling the dispute will be governed by "the customary laws of the place where the property is located" -- but only if both parties agree to this stipulation.

Big corporations and absentee landlords will hence find it as easy as ever to sidestep local customary laws in their land disputes with indigenous communities.

Customary law is thus prevented from serving as a remedial weapon of the indigenous masses against legalized abuse by big exploiters and oppressors. The ruling classes can always turn to the more advantageous national codes whenever they are involved in civil or criminal disputes with indigenous peoples or communities.

Of what use then is the COA's mandate to formulate a "Cordillera Code of Customary Laws"? The COA does not explicitly allow this regional code to at least partially substitute for the national and civil codes. Such a body of "customary law" may well turn out to be a mere artifice to camouflage the continued imposition of oppressive national laws on indigenous peoples.

The COA also attempts to superimpose reactionary courts, disguised as "tribal courts," on indigenous structures. This disregards the fact that disputes involving customary law have been traditionally settled through community-determined councils or juries of elders, mass meetings, *bodong*-related processes and other indigenous mechanisms of much local variation and flexibility.

Ancestral land, unresolved question

Instead of standing up for the indigenous people's right to their ancestral lands, the COA legitimizes the massive landgrabbing of these ancestral lands for the past decades and significantly narrows the definition of such lands.

The COA defines ancestral lands as consisting of "lands under communal or tribal ownership," where ownership is exercised by "a group of people belonging to a definite indigenous cultural community, *ili* or village." Family-owned and individually-owned lands of

indigenous peoples, which form the bigger part of their farmlands, are not considered ancestral lands. All of these continue to be governed by such provisions of existing laws as the Torrens title system, which are prejudicial to ancestral land rights.

Only two categories of ancestral lands are recognized. The first are "lands in the actual, open, notorious and uninterrupted possession and occupation by an indigenous cultural community for at least thirty years." The second are lands and resources "in the constructive or traditional possession" by an indigenous community, subject to confirmation by a "competent tribunal."

Hence, those indigenous communities dispossessed of and entirely displaced from their ancestral lands these past decades cannot legally reclaim such lands -- now that these are "national parks and reservations," or occupied by government infrastructure, mining and logging companies, or former "resettlement areas" grabbed by big landlords. The COA provides no clearcut mechanism for undoing the massive and forcible dislocation of communities and families during the long period of US rule or at least during the past four decades of the puppet republic.

Other provisions dilute the guarantees to ancestral land rights supposedly accorded by the issuance of title under the COA. For example, Section 3 states: "The foregoing provision [on the titling of ancestral land] notwithstanding, titles secured under the Torrens system and rights already vested under the provisions of existing laws shall be respected."

This means that indigenous communities cannot contest the government-granted leases and concessions that allow mining and logging companies, ranches and capitalist farms, to operate within their homeland, even if these are already eligible for and later covered by ancestral land titles. This provision also encourages landgrabbers to secure Torrens titles, or at least lease or concession papers, to preempt ancestral land-titling over their ill-acquired lands.

Ancestral domain -- not delineated from public domain

The provision on ancestral domain is also very deceptive.

The COA recognizes ancestral domain as "all lands and natural resources in the Autonomous Region that have been possessed or occupied by indigenous communities since time immemorial, except when prevented by war, *force majeure* or other forms of forcible usurpation" and, of course, "subject to the Constitution and national policies."

The problem with this provision is that it balks at providing a clearcut delineation of the ancestral domain's extent, because this would impinge on the concept of "public domain." The clause "subject to the Constitution and national policies" actually settles the issue:

untitled lands of the ancestral domain will be considered still part of the public domain.

The Constitution clearly states that lands and natural resources of the public domain are state-owned and inalienable except for agricultural lands of limited size. This by itself will severely restrict whatever rights are to be granted the indigenous peoples with respect to their ancestral domain.

In principle, we do not reject the existence of public or state-owned lands within the autonomous region. Certain lands and resources in the Cordillera are best owned by a people's democratic state and administered by government bodies of the autonomous region at appropriate levels, for the maximum benefit of the masses of our people.

What we oppose is the present state's abuse of the "public land" concept, enabling it to dispossess the indigenous people of their untitled ancestral lands, deny them access to major resources and deliver their collective patrimony to big exploiters.

The COA, in fact, empowers the regional assembly to allow non-members of indigenous communities (which, in practice, means corporate business entities) to exploit, utilize and develop natural resources within the ancestral domain. The only prerequisite for the assembly's approval is to "hold consultations with the cultural community concerned" -- an entirely different matter from getting that community's formal consent.

Control of resources, still with big business

The natural resources and important industries in the region remain under the control of big local and foreign business.

The 1987 Constitution allows only the state to directly explore, develop and utilize natural resources or "it may enter into co-production, joint venture or production-sharing agreements" with Filipino citizens or "Filipino-owned" enterprises. It also authorizes Congress to allow only *small-scale* utilization of natural resources by Filipino citizens and cooperatives, with minimal state control. These provisions are supposed to reserve the nation's patrimony for the benefit of small-scale Filipino users and protect it from large-scale foreign plunder.

But the COA allows all Filipinos and "at least 60 percent Filipino-owned private enterprises" (the standard loophole for imperialist-controlled firms to operate freely within the country) to undertake these projects entirely on their own. This opens the door wider to foreign and big comprador firms' large-scale plunder of our natural resources, by freeing them from the formal obligations of joint-venture arrangements with the state.

The COA tries to cover up the state policy of relying on big foreign and comprador capital by talking boldly about "regulation of foreign investments" and "measures against monopolies in public utilities, development, trading and similar concerns." But in practice, the government has already tied itself (as expressed in its Letter of Intent to the IMF) to refrain from "undue intervention in private business," and to "privatize government corporations."

The COA in fact discourages the regional government from directly operating vital industries, except so-called "pioneering public utilities" (such as electric companies) which could or would eventually be sold to private enterprises. Thus, the CAR can only engage in routine functions of regulating private business, such as issuing permits and licenses, price control, pollution control and the like.

"Strategic minerals such as uranium and others as may be defined by national law" are also exempt from the regional government's jurisdiction. Nothing can prevent big mining companies, engaged for example in gold or oilwell operations, from being covered by this clause and thus remaining under the national government's proven mantle of protection and incentives.

Misdevelopment, instead of self-reliant growth

The COA is peppered with such noble phrases as "people-oriented" development to ensure "equal access," "democratic sharing" and "minimizing disparities," "respect for indigenous concepts, processes and institutions," ecological concerns, appropriate technology and the like. Its economic policies seem to indicate an enlightened "development strategy."

In truth, the government's real strategy boils down to two points. One, economic progress is equated with the further development of a cash economy. And two, foreign investments and other forms of foreign assistance are considered as the motive force in developing the cash economy.

In this strategy, the imperialists and big compradors want to gear agricultural and other small-scale production in the region mainly to the needs of the wider national and export markets, not to the food and other basic daily needs of the masses, especially the rural folk. They want more rural areas turned into commercial gardens, orchards, ranches and sweatshops producing specialized cash crops, other farm products and handicrafts.

Such products are bought dirtcheap from small producers and easily sold at doubled prices outside the region or abroad. Compradors can control the trade in output produce and input supplies, tie down small producers to contract-growing and subcontracting arrangements and offer complementing financial schemes. The big imperialist and comprador firms can then skim the thickest cream of

superprofits from such operations.

With the rural masses firmly trapped in specialized commodity production, they are gradually dragged down by low prices of produce, high prices of inputs, usurious lending rates, etc. Food production and handicrafts for local consumption are soon marginalized.

With no self-sufficient agriculture, the call for genuine industrialization in the region remains empty. "Industrialization" will simply mean opening up new corporate mines and export processing zones which exploit cheap labor, serve the export market and deliver superprofits only to imperialist and comprador capital. They suck wealth out of the region and the country more than they create local employment and basic goods for the people.

Empty promise of cultural development

The cultural development being promised by the COA is specious.

The COA does not identify the myriad obstacles posed by the present colonial, feudal and chauvinist culture of the ruling classes to the unhampered development of local cultures. It cannot see the forces in the ultra-conservative schools, mass media, churches, the bureaucracy itself and society at large which suffocate, distort or commercialize our region's cultural heritage.

It vaguely mentions the "development of a common regional language." Yet, it continues to promote the tyranny of English and a puristic variety of Filipino as *exclusive* official languages in higher education and government.

This only worsens the disadvantages of the indigenous peoples in gaining equal access to social rights and opportunities.

Autonomy scheme: divisive of people

From the start, the process of drafting the Organic Act was divisive and undemocratic.

The workers and peasants had not a single representative in the Cordillera Regional Consultative Commission (CRCC). Most of its members may have come from the middle classes in economic terms, but their reformist approach dovetailed with the reactionary framework of the Constitution. Entirely excluded were the legal democratic forces which were and still are in the forefront of the mass movement for indigenous peoples' rights. In fact, while the CRCC held its sessions, these mass organizations were being subjected to intense attack, including the murder of several leaders, by the neo-fascists of the Aquino regime.

The result was a very questionable final draft, although some

provisions somehow tried to reflect progressive ideas, albeit in diluted and distorted form. But when Congress took up the CRCC draft, even these reformist concessions were purged.

As provided by the Constitution, "The creation of the autonomous region shall be effective when approved by the majority of the votes cast by the constituent units in a plebiscite called for the purpose, provided that only provinces, cities and geographic areas voting favorably in such plebiscite shall be included in the autonomous region."

The plebiscite gives the peoples of the Cordillera a false choice between two evils, creating confusion and division. If the "no" votes win because the people reject the COA, the present setup continues and the reactionaries will use it to conclude that "our people do not want autonomy after all." If the "yes" votes win and the people accept a flawed COA on the assumption that it can become a first step on the way to genuine autonomy, then they are stuck with a monstrous fake.

Moreover, the process of determining the area of autonomy is itself, to say the least, highly questionable. It prepares the ground for a drastic reduction of the CAR's boundaries.

First of all, the COA defines the constituent area of the CAR (the areas where people will be allowed to vote in the plebiscite) as consisting of the whole provinces of Benguet, Mt. Province, Ifugao, Abra, Kalinga-Apayao and Baguio City. This effectively excludes several municipalities of adjacent provinces such as the Kalanguya and Ayangan areas of Nueva Viscaya, the Kankanaey-Amburayan-Bago areas of La Union-Ilocos Sur and the Isneg areas of Ilocos Norte -- all of which meet the criteria set by the Constitution for inclusion in an autonomous region.

Furthermore, since only the votes of *entire* provinces determine whether or not they are to be included in the CAR, contiguous clusters of municipalities voting "yes" in a province where the "no" votes predominate are automatically disqualified from being part of the autonomous region.

Self-determination, not recognized by reactionary state

All these prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that the reactionary Philippine state has never conceded and will never concede the right of the indigenous peoples to self-determination -- and definitely not to the extent of secession or federalism. The ruling classes equivocate even on the issue of regional autonomy for fear that this might loosen their political-military grip over wide areas and give way to the people's democratic empowerment in the localities.

They may allow the carving out of virtually autonomous fiefdoms by regional and provincial overlords. They certainly allow such foreign enclaves as gigantic US bases and multinational corporations to diminish the country's territorial integrity and national sovereignty. But never will they allow indigenous peoples the real exercise of self-determination through genuine autonomous regions because this will open the floodgates to mass initiatives for self-empowerment.

On the same plane, the reactionary state refuses to address and resolve the problem of chauvinist oppression. It reduces the plight of the indigenous peoples to a narrow question of "ethnic, cultural or religious differences among Filipinos," "vestiges of past historical conflicts," or at most, plain mismanagement resulting in government neglect of hinterland populations.

In truth, chauvinist oppression is a historical problem rooted in the present semicolonial and semifeudal system. Only a total overhaul of the system can create conditions for the elimination of chauvinism.

The essential condition for the peoples of the Cordillera to fully exercise their right to self-determination is the attainment of full national freedom and genuine democracy by the entire Filipino people. The path to genuine autonomy is through a national-democratic revolution, not by relying on the ruling system's promises to reform itself.

Hence, the only principled stand which can be taken by the Cordillera People's Democratic Front (CPDF) and other revolutionary forces in the Cordillera is to reject the entire US-Aquino autonomy scheme and the Cordillera Organic Act. For us to endorse the COA would mean endorsing the continuation of oppressive rule in the region, dressed in new garb. It would mean endorsing deception.

The CPDF is waging a determined campaign to expose and criticize this deceptive scheme and to propagate our national-democratic program, especially our platform for the attainment of the indigenous peoples' right to self-determination and of genuine regional autonomy.

The CPDF is also intensifying the people's revolutionary struggle on the main fronts. We continue to strengthen our armed and unarmed forces, using both illegal and legal channels, to fight for our people's aspirations and achieve revolutionary gains at every stage.

As the CPDF and mass organizations, the people's army and local councils of people's government advance, genuine democratic power can flourish at the grassroots. This will serve as the stable foundation for the step-by-step establishment of a revolutionary autonomous government of the Cordillera peoples within a sovereign democratic government.

Front

Cordillera People's Democratic

November 20, 1989

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TENACITY OF SAMAR GUERRILLAS UNDENTED BY ENEMY CAMPAIGNS

It took a presidential birthday to bring one of the country's most destitute areas into the government map of priorities, even if only for a day. On January 25, her 57th birth anniversary, Corazon C. Aquino suddenly awakened to the forlorn plight of Samar, jetted to the city of Calbayog and pledged a gift package of "roads, electricity, potable water, schools and jobs."

Declaring "total war on poverty," she unveiled the one-billion peso Samar Integrated Development Program as the first showcase of the US- and Japan-supported Philippine Assistance Program (PAP). "Beginning today," she trumpeted, "there shall be no more excuses for the poor quality of life among our brethren here, typhoons or other forms of *force majeure* included."

What Aquino didn't mention, however, was the real *total war* already raging in the country's third largest island. To Samareos -- 60 percent of whom live below the poverty line -- that war of the US-Aquino regime has done more to inflict greater hardship and cruelty than any typhoon or caprice of nature. To them, Aquino's "war on poverty" is but the civilian component of her repressive regime's total war strategy, the bejewelled scabbard to cover up her bloody "sword of war."

The forces of total war vs. the revolutionary forces

Since August last year, military troops of the regime have cut a swathe of destruction across Samar in an attempt to subdue the revolutionary forces. Instead of flying food and medicines on missions of mercy, Sikorsky and Huey helicopters unleashed as many as 30 rockets a day in the interior of the island. Houses were razed to the ground, barrio folk forcibly evacuated and suspected NPA supporters beaten up. (see **AB**, Nov. 1989)

Those lucky enough to survive were subjected to an even more cruel weapon of war -- starvation. The military refused to let food supplies enter NPA-controlled areas for fear these may go toward feeding the guerrillas. In Rawis, a sitio in the town of Basey, they set up a detachment near the mouth of Golden River, the major route of transportation in the village, to enforce a food blockade. Peasants

had to trudge 10 to 35 kilometers a day to bring in food for their families already malnourished by drought and poor harvests.

But the military onslaught has only served to feed the people's hatred of the US-Aquino regime and firm up their resolve to fight it harder. In the same month of August, NPA guerrillas launched military actions to defend their mass base which had received the brunt of enemy blows. They followed these up with a string of tactical offensives from September to November, punishing 14 enemy forces in all, according to *Ang Gerilya*, the NPA newspaper in Samar-Leyte. Most prominent of these offensives was the raid on November 20 on the army detachment at sitio Rawis.

At four o'clock that morning, combined forces of the Regional (RGU) and Front Guerrilla Units (FGU) crept toward the camp and trained their rifles on the sleeping soldiers. Upon the command of their CO, they opened fire and were able to control the camp within 15 minutes. The NPA captured one M60 machinegun, two M16s, two M14s, one M1, one .38 pistol and many bullets. Four were killed: two soldiers, one CAFGU and a civilian who was hit inside the camp. The successful offensive was a blow to the military who had earlier boasted of wiping out "more than 100 NPAs from August 15 to 31."

Red fighters also routed the enemy in two operations in San Jorge town, northwestern Samar. On September 19, they sprung an ambush on the Alpha Company of the 62nd Infantry Battalion (IB) in barangay Kalundan who were planning to raid an "NPA training camp." The soldiers had barely reached their destination when they were struck down by a hail of gunfire. Two army men and one CAFGU were killed instantly. The next day, the soldiers returned to the barrio to wreak vengeance on the masses. They beat up the barangay captain and a teacher, stole chickens and eggs and burned a house. But snipers of the NPA quickly caught up with them, killing three soldiers.

On October 1, an FGU raided the detachment of the 62nd IB in neighboring barangay Mabuob. Upon seeing the Red fighters, a squad of soldiers manning a 30-caliber machinegun did nothing but turned tail. The FGU seized one M14, a radio transceiver, seven haversacks and bullets. This tactical offensive is part of the continuing campaign to drive out enemy troops from the guerrilla front in northwestern Samar.

On September 22, Red fighters harassed troops of the 34th IB on the road between Anagasi and Sto. Nio, near Paranas town. One soldier was killed, another wounded. Failing to kill any NPA, the troops set afire ten houses and slew a farmer's carabao. In Sto. Nio, they mauled the barrio captain and two peasants, stole 1,000 from PTA funds and 120 from the church collection, plus chickens and eggs, clothes, blankets, plates and spoons, even children's panties. "*Siguro kung madadala pa nila ang mga bahay, tatangayin rin nila,*" said *Ang Gerilya* in disgust.

In October in the town of Motiong, the regime's fascist army suffered more humiliating defeats. NPA snipers punished three soldiers of the 34th IB and another trooper in San Jose de Buan. With no money to buy food (the money was pocketed by their CO), the soldiers were forced to return to camp at midnight, heavily demoralized.

Political work firms up the people's army

In contrast, morale is high in the people's army. Even in the midst of war, the Red fighters found time last quarter to celebrate the wedding of two guerrilla couples in a simple ceremony, to hold joint birthday celebrations and to greet the birth of a child to a guerrilla couple.

To ensure the fighters' constant high morale, and their closeness to the people they serve, the Party pays close attention to political work in the NPA. This marks one big difference between the fascist AFP and the people's army. While the enemy resorts to terrorism and coercion resulting in its isolation from the people, Red fighters hold on to the mass line in political and military actions to ensure them of continuous mass support. *Ang Gerilya* cited the current main political tasks of the NPA in Eastern Visayas:

> *among the people*: continuous mass work and propaganda work, inculcating the concept of *people's war* to check confusion and other problems that may crop up in the course of revolutionary struggle.

> *in the ranks of Red fighters*: consolidation work and firming up of their consciousness, discipline and morale through education, DGs (discussion groups), literacy classes, economic/political/military situationers, the three check-ups, etc.

> *in the ranks of officers*: stress on "leadership by example" to enable them to provide inspiration to their men and strengthen the NPA organization by adhering to SOPs, being industrious and brave in battle.

Through continuous political work, the NPA in Eastern Visayas has withstood the desperate hammerblows of the regime, expanded several fold and developed a fighting capacity that continually bewilders the enemy. Today, regular people's army in Samar-Leyte has reached the size of two battalions if concentrated all together. These consist of the RGU and the FGUs. The RGU's task is to seek and annihilate enemy units throughout the region, while the FGUs are charged with fighting the enemy in their respective fronts, their areas extending deep into the enemy's rear at the town centers.

Ka Ligaya, a member of the political staff of the Regional Operational Command of Eastern Visayas and a Samareo, exemplifies the resiliency and fortitude of the guerrilla in that region. Last December 1, 1988, her husband, the political officer of Bravo Company, was killed with six other fighters in a raid in San Jorge. The military dragged his body around the town and dumped it in a mass grave. But her husband's death has further tempered Ligaya and steeled her determination to persist in the revolutionary struggle.

Ligaya, a cheerful cadre who punctuates many of her sentences with laughter, has a special appeal to people of petty bourgeois origins like her in the movement. "It's high time for them to join the people's army, specially in Samar. This is a peasant army; many are illiterate. Meantime, the level of struggle is escalating and we need to raise our study of military science too. We need cadres to train our fighters on tactics and techniques, as well as to teach them reading, writing and arithmetic."

Indeed, as the US-Aquino regime intensifies its total war and dissimulates this with new deceptive slogans, there is a great need for more cadres to beef up the political work of the NPA and sharpen its all-round fighting capability. By volunteering for the people's army, Party cadres like Ligaya are setting the pace for others to follow.

It is fighters like them that the US-Aquino regime is up against. Ironic-ally, they are the ones that Aquino may have described most accurately in her birthday speech: "The resiliency and tenacity characteristic of the Filipino flow in the Samareo's veins. We know that the hardship posed by the forces of nature are no match to that Waray spirit that we have all traditionally viewed with awe and respect. We have faith in the Samareo."

In truth, the sudden placing of Samar in the immediate national agenda denotes the regime's panic over the big headway made by the revolutionary movement in the island. Aquino's trip is a last-ditch effort to salvage a losing situation. But for all their efforts, they are bound to fail because of the high level of strength and experience reached by Samar's revolutionary forces. The difficulties being posed by the regime's total war strategy will only further challenge and strengthen the determination of the Party to fight with greater vigor and intensity and accelerate the people's war in Eastern Visayas. Party cadres in the army like Ligaya exemplify this tenacity.

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**THE UNFLAGGING SPIRIT OF THE
FIRST QUARTER STORM LIVES ON**

Exactly two decades have passed since the historic First Quarter Storm of 1970 shook Philippine society. On January 25 of that year, a demonstration of students and workers in front of the Philippine Congress was brutally dispersed by police and military troops. This enraged the people and signaled the start of massive mass actions up to the end of March 1970, participated in by tens of thousands of people.

Since then, several generations of revolutionaries have emerged and grown. All of them bear the legacy of the FQS, as it has come to be popularly called.

Here we recall the significant legacy of this golden chapter in our history.

First of all, the FQS was a powerful propaganda movement for national freedom and democracy. It sharply exposed the three fundamental problems of Philippine society that lie at the root of the people's poverty and oppression -- imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism. It clearly chartered the line of the people's democratic revolution as the sole solution to these problems.

The FQS' upsurge of activism dramatized the leading role of the youth and students, especially the intellectuals, in sowing new and revolutionary ideas. It underscored the principle that to achieve genuine revolutionary change, the youth must go to the toiling masses, integrate and link up with them and rouse them for the revolution. The worker and peasant masses form the foundation of the people's united front which is crucial in hastening the overthrow of the bankrupt system and the establishment of a new and just social order in its place.

The FQS was likewise a mighty ideological storm. It rocked the colonial and feudal superstructure and the cultural bastion of anti-communism with unequalled intensity and magnitude. Activists boldly raised Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought as the standard-bearer of the revolutionary march to freedom.

Raising high Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought

This ideology heightened the division of Philippine society into two opposing camps: the ruling classes and the ruled classes.

The ruling classes are composed of the landlords and comprador bourgeoisie. Both are nurtured by imperialism under the leadership of the US. Because the ruling classes hold economic power, they also control political power. They are in control of the present state -- the executive, legislature, judiciary, police and military -- which is presided over by bureaucrat capitalists. They use these instrumentalities of the state to safeguard the interests of the ruling few against the interests of the exploited and oppressed

majority.

Marxism also explained that the exploited and oppressed majority could rely on no saviour other than themselves, through the strength of their own unity. That the armed overthrow and smashing of the pro-imperialist and comprador-landlord state was extremely necessary and decisive in liberating the people. And that based on the application of Marxism-Leninism on the concrete conditions of the Philippines, protracted people's war was the form of revolution in a semicolonial and semifeudal society.

Marxism-Leninism was successfully propagated along with the intense struggle, criticism and rejection of modern revisionism as represented by the Lava clique which ruled over the old moribund Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas.

This revisionist line stressed parliamentarism as the basic means for oppressed peoples to seize political power from the ruling classes. It rejected protracted people's war which is mainly based on agrarian revolution, in the mistaken idea that feudalism would be liquidated by imperialism anyway.

It became clear that genuine Marxism-Leninism could not prosper and prevail without thoroughly exposing the fraudulent ideology of revisionism.

Revolutionaries were tempered in the use of the Marxist-Leninist standpoint, viewpoint and method for integrating theory and practice to advance the revolution, for uniting with the masses and undertaking criticism and self-criticism. Their revolutionary abilities were further sharpened through assessment and summing-up of experiences in revolutionary struggle and the vigorous rectification of errors and weaknesses.

Defeating reformism

The national-democratic movement grew and became stronger through persistent struggle against the twin ideologies of revisionism and reformism.

Reformist organizations called "moderate" brandished the idea that society could be changed through peaceful means. Like the revisionists, the reformists waved the flag of parliamentarism as the answer to the basic problems of the people -- by means of a "non-partisan" constitutional convention or "clean" elections or by calling on or pressuring politicians to "change heart."

According to the reformists, these methods could solve the problems of the people while avoiding bloody armed revolution and "communist" rule.

Many reformists were sincere in their desire to work for social

change. However, the ruling classes remained indifferent to their line. The reformist line in fact fostered such falsehoods that the society, unjust and corrupt as it is, could reform itself for the good and betterment of the majority.

It was direct experience in struggle that ultimately taught many reformists about the bankruptcy of reformism. Many of them bolted out of reformist organizations in order to enlist in radical and revolutionary mass organizations. Among these former reformists who later distinguished themselves as revolutionaries are our martyred comrades Edgar Jopson and Manny Yap.

Intrepid activism

Forces promoting the national-democratic line grew bigger and bigger during the FQS period. Many Party cadres and mass activists emerged in open revolutionary mass organizations.

They were the forces who dared to struggle against the three evils of Philippine society. They dared to serve, to live and to die for the oppressed and exploited. They indefatigably propagated national-democratic analyses and calls. They remained unflinching in the face of obstacles and sacrifice in order to fulfill various revolutionary tasks. They rejected individualist bourgeois ideology and upheld selfless proletarian ideology.

To arouse, organize and mobilize the broad masses of the people for the revolution, cadres and mass activists, most of whom came from the student sector, enthusiastically integrated with workers and peasants. They participated in workers' strikes. They conducted social investigation among the ranks of the peasant masses. They learned from the rich practical experience of the basic masses in their struggle. Together, revolutionary intellectuals, workers and peasants studied and taught each other the theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism and the people's democratic revolution.

They performed these revolutionary tasks on their own initiative and with creativity -- whether under strong or weak guidance from their higher organ, whether under orders or not from their "HO."

The most important thing was their firm grasp of the national-democratic line. They strove to carry the revolution forward -- based on the concrete application of the revolutionary line onto concrete conditions.

The most important thing was their bold assumption of responsibility and obligation for their every deed and every word. Their revolutionary experience developed in the course of upholding what was correct and rectifying what was wrong. They were able to do this through continuous assessments and summings-up of their practical experience in the national-democratic struggle.

Revolution takes a big leap since then

Thanks to the generation of revolutionaries produced by the First Quarter Storm of 1970, the national-democratic movement which was small and weak in the sixties grew bigger and stronger in the next decades. The Communist Party of the Philippines and its guiding ideology Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought rose to national prominence. A measure of their solid influence today is the inclusion of Marxist-Leninist terms in everyday popular vocabulary -- such as "masa," "burgis," "imperialism," "fascism" and many others.

Today, January 1990, two decades since, the seeds sown by the FQS for the propaganda movement for the people's democratic revolution have blossomed into a material force.

Revolutionary armed struggle has spread throughout the archipelago. Peasant masses and farm workers are now reaping benefits from agrarian revolution. The revolutionary united front which binds the mass base in the cities and countryside and unifies the basic masses, petty bourgeoisie and other middle forces towards one revolutionary goal has been established and is ever expanding.

The continued growth and strength of revolutionary forces in the past two decades are proof enough that more and more people are repudiating revisionism and reformism and embracing the revolutionary cause. Thousands of cadres and mass activists are mushrooming in the cities and countryside, ready to defend and fight for the people's democratic revolution.

Indeed, the First Quarter Storm is like a star whose brilliance and beckoning call must never wane or fade. It will forever remain a legacy and guide for millions upon millions of oppressed people until they finally achieve fundamental changes in their condition.

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REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE ADVANCES IN EL SALVADOR

The civil war in El Salvador, the smallest country in Central and South America, has been raging for ten years now. Despite massive support from US imperialism, the reactionary regimes which have ruled El Salvador for many years have failed to suppress and defeat the revolutionary struggle waged by the Salvadoran people under the leadership of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN).

On many occasions, US imperialism has declared that the Salvadoran revolutionary forces have lost ground and been rendered

impotent. But the spectacular three-week military offensive launched by the FMLN in November last year has clearly shown that the revolutionary struggle continues to surge forward in El Salvador.

Mounting repression under rightist regime

The latest offensive of the FMLN, a coalition of five political-military organizations, came in the wake of mounting repression by the rightist regime of Alfredo Cristiani. A leader of the rightwing National Republican Alliance (ARENA), Cristiani took his oath of office in June 1989 as El Salvador's president. Since then, there has been an escalation in assassinations, disappearances and arrests of civilians suspected of supporting the leftist revolutionary movement throughout the country.

Upon assumption into office, the fascist ARENA Party vowed to conduct a "total war" against the leftist revolutionary movement. ARENA was organized by the notorious ex-Major Roberto D'Aubuisson -- the mastermind behind the

16 / January 1990 / ANG BAYAN rightwing death squads as well as the assassination of San Salvador Archbishop Oscar Romero in 1980. Prime target of the military and rightwing death squads is the militant Salvadoran labor movement.

Last September 5, the union hall of the National Trade Union Federation of Salvadoran Workers (FENASTRAS) was hit by an anti-tank rocket. On the same month, 61 union members were arrested, beaten and tortured. Several of the women arrested were raped. This incident happened only days after representatives of the FMLN and the Cristiani regime met in Mexico City for peace talks mediated by San Salvador's Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas.

On October 31, the office of FENASTRAS was again bombed by rightwing forces, killing ten people and injuring 35 others. One of those killed was Febe Elizabeth Velasquez, secretary for international relations of the federation. During the same day, another bomb exploded at the office of the Committee of Mothers and Family Members of Political Prisoners, Disappeared and Assassinated of El Salvador (COMADRES), injuring four people. It was this incident which prompted the FMLN to announce its withdrawal from the next round of peace talks with the Cristiani government scheduled in November.

From June 1989 to September, human rights organizations in El Salvador have recorded 453 assassinations, 75 disappearances and 603 arrests.

Spectacular FMLN offensive rocks US-backed regime

In the face of the regime's brutal assaults on the people, the Salvadoran revolutionary forces launched their military campaign against the fascist Cristiani regime. Last October 30, homemade mortars, mounted in a truck and covered with garlands of paper

flowers, fired sixteen mortar shells towards the direction of the military compound housing the Defense Ministry and the headquarters of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

This daring attack signaled the start of a new military campaign against the fascist regime. Radio Venceremos, the official radio of the FMLN, boldly announced: "All (unite) against ARENA and the Tandon!" Tandon is the class of officers who graduated from the Salvadoran Military Academy in 1966 and are currently in command of the Salvadoran armed forces.

But the biggest and longest military offensive was yet to come. On November 11, the FMLN launched coordinated attacks across the country, shaking one of the most bloodthirsty of all US puppet regimes to its very core. The simultaneous attacks succeeded in spreading thinly the forces of the military, preventing them from reinforcing each other. With great courage and brilliant tactics, the FMLN guerrilla forces fought to a standstill the US-trained and -equipped Salvadoran military for almost three weeks.

An estimated 1,500 guerrilla fighters descended from the San Salvador volcano and linked up with FMLN urban commandos. They took up positions in the densely populated communities of workers and urban poor in the capital city before attacking the residence of Cristiani, the headquarters of the general staff, the military barracks, military airbase and other targets.

At the same time, major assaults were also launched on government positions in Santa Ana and San Miguel -- the second and third largest cities -- as well as on other smaller provincial capitals. Altogether, more than fifty targets came under simultaneous attack.

Fighting from trenches, behind barricades of burnt-out cars or on rooftops, the FMLN guerrillas repeatedly turned back the military's counter-attacks, inflicting heavy casualties on the government side. The FMLN forces succeeded in controlling several districts which make up almost one-third of San Salvador.

US imperialism was badly shaken by the boldness of the FMLN offensive, especially after a dozen US Green Berets were trapped in their Sheraton Hotel rooms during an FMLN assault last November 21. After the FMLN guerrillas withdrew from the hotel premises, the US Green Berets scampered away in shame from the hotel.

On November 25, FMLN commandos again attacked the wealthy Escalon neighborhood, the luxurious lair of the "14 families" and top military officers that dominate El Salvador's economy and politics, and nearby San Benito, where many American personnel live. The impact was dramatic as FMLN forces seized the homes of a US "senior intelligence officer" and the embassy chief of security, while the US ambassador's mansion was shot up.

The offensive demonstrated once again not only the great courage of the FMLN fighters but also their tactical ingenuity. The guerrillas countered the army's massive aerial superiority by using underground sewers and connecting tunnels to move undetected from one place to another. By occupying the rich enclaves of the ruling elite, the FMLN forces rendered the regime's air power impotent as the military hesitated in bombing the FMLN positions for fear of inflicting damage on the lives and properties of the elite.

Ruling regime holds on by relying on air power

For months, US imperialism has been saying that the FMLN insurgency is isolated, weakened and finished. But for the first time in the decade-long civil war, the Salvadoran ruling elite felt the heat of battle within the safety of their very own mansions. The Salvadoran armed forces were stunned and demoralized. They had to rely mainly on air power to defend themselves from the latest FMLN offensive.

A-37 Dragonfly attack planes made continuous sorties to drop rockets and 500-pound bombs in the densely populated working-class neighborhoods where the FMLN guerrillas enjoy wide support. Helicopter gunships and AC-47 airplanes equipped with high-velocity Gatling guns made strafing runs. In the process, hundreds of civilians were either killed or wounded.

But despite the regime's high-tech death machines, the Salvadoran military was relatively ineffective against the FMLN guerrillas on the ground. An American official commented: "The Salvadoran armed forces are not trained in urban combat. They have been taught to make contact with the enemy, retreat, and call down fire from the rear." Here is a 56,000-man army -- a recipient of some \$3.6 billion aid from the US government in the last ten years, US-trained and assisted by some 100 US military advisers -- maintaining its superiority by relying on air power.

Brutal repression bound to fail

In its frustration and anger, the Salvadoran ruling regime moved to exterminate anyone and everyone considered sympathetic to the revolutionary cause. A reign of terror was unleashed throughout the city of San Salvador. A 24-hour curfew was enforced in many areas with shoot-to-kill orders against anyone still out in the streets at night.

The most prominent victims of the military during the three-week offensive were the six liberal Jesuit priests connected with the Central American University. They were taken out of their house and murdered by uniformed soldiers.

The latest terror campaign unleashed by the reactionary regime following the FMLN offensive will certainly fail in intimidating and

subduing the Salvadoran people. They have been tempered by their long history of heroic and valiant struggle against economic exploitation, political repression and US intervention. Brutal repression has only strengthened their resolve to further advance their revolutionary struggle until they shall have put an end to the oppressive rule of the US-backed reactionary regime. And in their struggle, the Salvadoran people have the full support of all freedom-loving peoples and anti-imperialist forces everywhere.

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