

Polarization over Land Issue

Two interconnected events have served to completely shatter whatever trust the public and the peasant organizations had in the Aquino regime's sincerity to push through with land reform: the NDC-Marubeni land conversion scheme in Dasmariñas, Cavite and the rejection by Congress of Abad's appointment as agrarian reform secretary. The two cases were a study in contrast and ample proof of where Aquino's bias lay. The former was a vivid example of government determination in catering to the interests of foreign capital and big landlords; and the latter, its lukewarm defense then outright abandonment of a decision perceived to be pro-peasant by the landlord-dominated Congress.

The Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL) was already full of loopholes by the time it passed Congress, yet wily landlords have still found a way to deprive the peasants of whatever benefits the latter could have derived from CARL. From the start, militant peasant organizations realized this and rejected the law. But others hung on to hopes that the meager concessions in CARL could be enlarged with the help of what they called "pressure politics" or the parliament of the streets.

It wasn't long before the landlord-compradors and their agents in the Department of Agrarian Reform dealt a final blow to such hopes.

The landlord-compradors first maneuvered to turn the voluntary-option-to-sell (VOS) program to their advantage. Implemented under the stewardship of then secretary Philip Juico, the VOS scheme enabled big landlords to sell their unproductive and non-cultivable lands to the government at outrageously high prices. But the scandalous Garchitorena land scam blew the scheme skyhigh, uncovering a pile of other anomalous VOS deals.

Next, they dreamed up the land conversion scheme. Large tracts of agricultural land were to be converted into agro-industrial estates, as in the NDC-Marubeni project in Bgy. Langkaan, Dasmarinas, Cavite. Not only would these lands be effectively removed from the scope of CARL's land redistribution program but peasants and farm workers tilling them would be displaced.

It's not hard to see that virtually none of the big landholdings that should have been a prime target of land reform would be touched. So far, there are already 257 petitions for land conversion, involving hundreds of thousands of hectares throughout the country. Apart from this, there is the "*Hacienda Luisita*" formula, through which huge plantations can become exempt from land redistribution by the simple method of selling part of the corporate stocks to farm workers, turning them into so-called "*part-owners*."

The Langkaan case stirred controversy and became a national issue when the farmers and their mass organizations actively resisted the scheme. It was also about this time that Aquino appointed as agrarian reform secretary Florencio Abad, a professed social-democrat known for having upheld the progressive position on land reform in Congress. Though Abad had opposed the badly mangled CARL in the halls of Congress, he retained a reformist outlook and accepted Aquino's offer in the hope that he would be able to accomplish something positive for land reform.

Abad and his supporters soon regretted that decision. When he objected to the NDC-Marubeni plan, the landlord-controlled Commission on Appointments moved to block his confirmation as DAR secretary. Worse, Aquino herself left him to twist in the wind, after having seen his reluctance to deodorize the landlords' maneuvers. It became obvious to political observers that Aquino's designation of Abad to the post was merely an attempt to cover up the rot in her land reform program and to divert public attention away from her shift to a further Right position after the failed coup d'etat of December 1989.

Not satisfied with their victory over Abad, the landlords and their representatives stepped up attacks on CARL itself. Aquino's brother and Tarlac congressman Peping Cojuangco proposed in a privilege speech in Congress that the implementation of CARL be turned over to local governments. He even had the gall to ask that the land retention limit be raised to 50 hectares!

But such unbridled landlord greed and arrogance has roused a counterforce in the countryside. Today, there has been an unprecedented broadening of the antifeudal front throughout the whole country. The entire range of peasant organizations -- from those led by the national democrats, the reformist Federation of Free Farmers and the social-democratic groups -- are now one in saying that there is no hope for genuine land reform under the Aquino regime and,

more importantly, that there is no other choice but popular action. It is a position shared in wide sections of public opinion, particularly active middle class circles.

With this, the peasant movement has been presented with an excellent opportunity to launch more aggressively and more militantly higher forms of struggle on the land issue and their other economic and political demands. Direct action by the peasantry, broadening and intensifying antifeudal struggles, carrying forward the revolutionary armed struggle -- this is the correct and only path to realize the age-old aspirations of the peasantry for land and democracy.

The Party and the revolutionary peasant organizations should redouble, even triple their efforts and their boldness in advancing the agrarian revolution and armed struggle in accordance with the line of people's democratic revolution. An important part of their tasks is militant struggle against any remnants of reformism in the peasant movement, such as the latest maneuver of some social-democrats to limit peasant action within the narrow framework of preparations for the 1992 elections.

In the great plains, coastal areas and lands traversed by highways, the agrarian revolution should be carried out widely and intensified. Big strides toward land rent reduction, elimination of usury, and reduction of the prices of agricultural inputs must be taken. Any land conversion scheme should be strongly resisted, in the form of barricades or even actual occupation of farmland.

In the midst of these struggles, recovery of guerrilla zones that had suffered heavily from enemy operations and expansion into newer areas will be facilitated. There will be a fresh impetus to the growth of mass organizations, Party organizations and fighting units of the people's army. As the mass struggles widen in scope, more advanced organizational structures of the Pambansang Katipunan ng Magbubukid, the National Democratic Front and local organs of political power will emerge and take shape.

In the mountainous and forested areas, invigorating agrarian struggles and raising them to higher levels are also crucial to the continued consolidation of guerilla bases and zones. It has been amply shown by experience that launching vigorous, sustained and organized agrarian struggles are the key to raising the fighting spirit and level of organization of the peasantry.

Moreover, such struggles -- side by side with military operations by the people's army to defeat the total war of the US-Aquino regime and the AFP -- will give rise to the flowering of mass initiatives in the countryside. Consolidation will advance through the continued expansion of guerrilla zones and bases and through the effective combination of agrarian struggles, mass struggles against militarization, and armed struggles.

The peasantry should likewise be actively mobilized for anti-imperialist struggles. In large parts of the country, agrarian struggles must target the big agribusiness corporations and plantations owned by foreign capitalists and the economic impositions of the IMF-WB which are bringing about the economic ruin of the peasantry. Such struggles stir up or add to the nationalist awakening in the countryside. By linking up agrarian issues and national issues such as the US bases and foreign debt, the peasantry is continuously developed and strengthened as the biggest anti-imperialist force in the nation.

The agrarian struggle should be carried over from the countryside to the cities to place agrarian issues squarely on the national agenda. Arousing and mobilizing the whole nation to uphold land reform and peasant struggles is a fundamental task in advancing the people's democratic revolution.

Armed Struggle in Mindanao Gains Momentum

The AFP had set September 1989 as its target date for crushing the revolutionary movement in the greater part of Mindanao. In line with this, it launched a ferocious military campaign in the island's wide countryside.

But once again, the AFP had to eat its own words. After the deadline, what faced them was not a defeated revolutionary movement but one that is resurgent and capable of dealing powerful blows. In the space of eight months in 1989, according to reports by *Ang Bayan* correspondents, the New People's Army in Mindanao carried out 20 military operations which added some 300 high-powered rifles to its arsenal.

The impact of these blows on the AFP was such as to cause a reshuffle of some military commanders and a stunned silence among a number of boastful military officials. And they are far from over -- the momentum of NPA tactical offensives continues to be sustained in 1990.

Stepped-up military campaign

In accordance with the total war program and the deadline set by the AFP, fascist troops lost no time in launching relentless military operations in the Mindanao countryside.

Many areas suspected of being guerilla bases, such as the mountainous areas of Davao del Norte, Surigao del Sur and Agusan, were heavily bombed and strafed, forcing thousands of barrio folk to evacuate. Food blockades were set up, causing thousands more to suffer from hunger and other hardships.

In Panabo, Davao del Norte, the 64th IB of the Philippine Army allowed only 20 to 30 kilos of rice to be rationed each day to hundreds of families living in the interior. Even the raising of pigs and chickens and the planting of vegetables were branded as activities for the revolutionary movement. The entry of pesticides into the barrios was also banned, since the military feared these chemicals might be used by the NPA to make mines.

The intensified military campaign gave rise to numerous cases of torture and slaying of civilians on mere suspicion that they were "*farmers by day, guerrillas by night*".

Until December 1989, 35 AFP battalions were concentrated in 30 fronts of the NPA in 18 provinces in Mindanao. Augmenting these was the 8,000-strong CAFGU force. More than 100 fanatic sects were also let loose to terrorize the countryside. Confronting these enemy forces were only 10 companies and two platoons of the people's army.

NPA strikes back

Despite the fascists' fierce attacks, the Red fighters and the revolutionary masses not only preserved their ranks but also hit hard at the US-Aquino regime's troops many times. The following are a number of their major tactical offensives in the past year:

1. At around 12 noon on May 2, an AFP platoon tried to penetrate the guerrilla base at Mt. Diwata in Surigao del Sur. The 16-member platoon led by a Lt. Arquiza was part of the 58th IB contingent assigned to apply "gradual constriction" tactics on the guerrillas in the area.

The fascists were unaware that they were being carefully monitored by the barrio folk. The masses had already sent information to the NPA on the location and armed strength of the platoon. Based on this, the guerrillas planned an ambush and staked out positions along the enemy's route. At a signal, they fell upon the AFP soldiers. After a ten-minute firefight, 10 fascists lay dead and five, including the platoon leader, were captured. Seized from them were 10 M16s, one M60 machinegun, two BARs, one M14 and one M203.

2. In Adlai, Tandag, Surigao del Sur, an NPA company encountered a platoon of the 2nd Bravo Coy of the 58th IB. The Red fighters were resting in a house when they espied the approaching enemy patrol. The latter chased the guerrillas, but the NPA took the initiative and, through a method called "encircling," outmaneuvered and surrounded the enemy troops.

In the ensuing battle, 25 AFP soldiers were killed and two wounded. Captured from them were 13 M16s, three M14s and three M203s.

Due to its losses, the AFP temporarily halted its military campaign in the area.

3. In Siloy, Calamba, Misamis Occidental, a small NPA unit was forced to fight against a bigger AFP formation. But it managed to inflict losses on the enemy, killing 11 troopers and confiscating eight high-powered arms.

4. The Regional Party Committee of Northern Mindanao reported that it was able to launch at least one tactical offensive a month. Last year, they hauled in a total of 120 high-powered rifles.

5. In Lantawan, Karomatan, Lanao del Norte, guerrillas ambushed forces of the 5th IB-PA and CAFGU last March. Eleven enemy soldiers were slain and their weapons, seized.

6. In Kimat, Tangub, Misamis Occidental, combined main NPA units raided a CAFGU squad in August. Five CAFGU members surrendered while one escaped.

Guerrillas took 11 high-powered rifles from them.

7. In a raid on the municipal hall at Marihatag, Agusan del Norte on June 10, the NPA got four M16s and two M14s.

8. Red fighters belonging to the Sandatahang Yunit Gerilya (SYG) ambushed a patrol of the Regional Special Action Force along the highway in Gingoog City, Misamis Oriental last September 6. Four M16s and three M14s were confiscated.

9. The NPA blew up an AFP tank with a landmine last March 21 in Lolutan, Dimataling, Zamboanga del Sur. This action is considered a breakthrough for the people's army in this part of Western Mindanao.

Apart from military actions, the revolutionary forces fulfilled major tasks in recovery and consolidation. Based on initial assessments of the regional Party committees in Northern, Western and central Mindanao, the former momentum of the people's war in the island is steadily being regained. The revolutionary movement has successfully recovered some strategic territories. In these areas, many elements belonging to the CAGFU, vigilantes and religious fanatic groups have been neutralized, if not won over. The diehards within their ranks who had caused great damage to the people have been punished.

All these reflect the upswing of the revolutionary armed struggle in the island, according to *Pasa Bilis*, the NDF-Mindanao bulletin.

Factors for victory

The revolutionary movement's gains in Mindanao are the end product of the Party's comprehensive approach in its ideological, political and organizational work.

In connection with its ideological work, Party committees carried out studies, assessments and summations of experience, criticism and self-criticism, and check-ups. They reviewed the lessons drawn from their experiences in mass work and tactical offensives and also in handling the problem of enemy infiltration.

Candidates and candidate-members of the Party went through the basic Party course. They assessed the work and operations of the people's army.

Efforts in organizational work were focused on firming up the spirit and principles of democratic centralism, setting up more appropriate command structures and formations of the NPA, and training in particular aspects of administrative work.

In Western Mindanao, a conference for political officers was held from August to September as part of the consolidation program of the regional Party committee. Designed to raise the leadership skills of the NPA cadre corps, the conference had 26 participants and approved a manual called "*Training Course for Political Officers*".

Military training programs for NPA units were undertaken in four regions, the learnings from which were put to full use during the period of intense enemy operations. In Front 4 in Misamis Oriental, for instance, the confrontation with a battalion of AFP troops served as war drills for guerrillas who had just completed their training in late 1989. Party committees in four regions also distributed guidelines related to SOT (Special Operations Team) activities in their respective areas.

In Northern Mindanao, NPA members, most of whom were new recruits and came from the peasantry, received training in various kinds of skills such as sniping, intelligence, reading and writing, typing, budget making and record-keeping, propaganda and others. Serving to inspire them were these words from comrade Mao: "*For a good communist, it is not only enough to be Red but also to become expert in many things.*"

In the political field, study sessions on the political situation, mass work, and Protocols I and II of the Geneva Conventions were held. There was also training in propaganda work.

"*Back to the masses, back to the basics*" was the slogan heard from some leading cadres in the regions *Ang Bayan* visited recently. In Western Mindanao, comrades stressed that a key to advancing the people's war is to firmly uphold the class interest of the peasant masses through agrarian revolution. They encouraged members of the Party and people's army to participate actively in mass work and renew the spirit of service to the people.

Towards this end, Party members and cadres and Red fighters took part in production work. The NPA likewise spearheaded mass campaigns for health care and

proper nutrition. Its members explained the value of herbal medicine and acupuncture.

Comrades engaged in tit-for-tat propaganda battles against the enemy. In various ways, they fought against the lies and intrigues being spread by the AFP and its paid agents in the mass media. One effective and innovative method they thought of was to use the VHF radio as a channel for revolutionary broadcasts. Red fighters became announcers, reporters, technicians or simple listeners in the five radio programs aired in 1989, reported *Struggle Mindanao*, NDF publication in the island.

Lessons from Mass Work in the Mindanao Countryside

Reproduced in the following article are portions of a document from a Mindanao conference on mass work in the countryside during the past two decades. The conference was held under the auspices of the Party.

Ang Bayan picked out those sections which contain assessments and lessons of revolutionary practice in the Mindanao countryside. It is hoped that these will contribute to Party members' understanding of the development of revolutionary work in various parts of the country and also to current efforts to advance such work.

We intend to follow this up with similar articles.

Regarding the Mindanao conference, it could have been much better if it had included a review and assessment of the rich experiences in mass struggles against multinational companies and anti-militarization campaigns, particularly in the years 1982-85. -- Editor

1. Grasping firmly the orientation of agrarian struggle in the peasant movement

When we talk of the rural masses, we refer to the peasantry. What we call the mass movement in the countryside mainly refers to the peasant movement. Since the main problems of the peasantry are the hunger for land and the various forms of feudal and semifeudal exploitation, the solution to these problems is agrarian revolution, in particular, and national democratic revolution, in general. This is the orientation of the mass movement we must firmly grasp to ensure that peasant struggles go in the right direction and that we are fighting for the true interests of the masses.

Throughout the history of mass work in Mindanao, the mass movement acquires vigor during periods of widespread and powerful agrarian struggles, such as those in the second stage (1978-85). These struggles have had such a deep impact on the masses, which cannot be uprooted because of the victories achieved. For wherever agrarian struggles were launched and land problems were given attention, the masses have remained firm in their support for revolution and have not capitulated to the enemy.

On the other hand, when agrarian struggles slow down, the mass movement becomes weak. During the third stage (1985-87), we lost a good number of barrios where we had been active, largely due to our failure to give importance to agrarian struggles during the latter part of the second stage and our almost total neglect of it in the third stage.

Other reasons were the inadequate skills of the local guerilla teams and semi-legal teams directly working among the masses and the lack of strong unity among the cadres on some questions related to feudalism. Moreover, there was the problem of finding the correct relationship with multisectoral mass mobilizations. On the whole, we were not able to take a firm hold of agrarian struggles and the comprehensive advance of the peasant movement.

Agrarian struggles picked up steam when our orientation on antifeudal struggles in the countryside was widely propagated. Front committees in certain areas gave stress to this orientation in special studies and training courses conducted for cadres and activists. Other territorial organs first made breakthroughs before large-scale application of the orientation. In some areas, implementation was linked to the establishment of full-fledged NDF chapters in the barrios. We learned that when the orientation, together with social investigation, was firmly grasped and strictly followed, we met no great difficulties in advancing agrarian struggles.

It is true that in the first stage (1971-77), we were able to take root among the masses despite the fact that agrarian struggles were not yet widespread. It must be understood, however, that we gained mass support because we focused on the land issue. For example, we confronted the problem of the forest guards and helped the masses resist landgrabbing. But this in itself was

not enough. Many other forms of feudal and semifeudal exploitation were not given due attention. The mass movement only gained ground when campaigns were launched to reduce land rent and milling fees, eliminate usury, raise farm wages and the prices of agricultural products, and distribute for free some tracts of land.

It is important to grasp the point that agrarian revolution is not waged purely for economic benefits, although these are in themselves direct and substantial gains. Agrarian revolution is waged to place power in the hands of the peasantry -- to be exercised against the landlords and other classes exploiting them. This means the building of organs of political power where peasants are the ones dominant. This also implies the launching, at an opportune time, of peasant mass uprisings.

On the other hand, while advancing the interests of the basic masses takes first place, it is important to hold fast to the united front policy in the countryside. Failing to keep to this policy has resulted in undesirable conflicts among positive forces in the revolution. It is correct to pay attention to this in order to win over the broadest force and isolate the few enemies.

2. Social investigation and class analysis

Social investigation ensures our adherence to the principle of concrete analysis of concrete conditions. It serves as a guide to correct methods of arousing, organizing and mobilizing the masses. It is the basis for applying strategy and tactics to practice.

In the first stage, when social investigation and class analysis were not systematically attended to, many problems in mass work arose. For example, in organizing work, poor, middle and rich peasants were lumped together. There was no thorough analysis of various forms of feudal and semifeudal exploitation. As the second stage began, initial systematization of the process of social investigation was undertaken, and it contributed to the improvement of mass work, the launching of agrarian struggles, and the implementation of the class line in the countryside.

Because the importance of social investigation in mass work was clearly seen, it was carried out on a wider scale. Guidelines were formulated and distributed.

But the social investigations were not completed soon enough for these to be of immediate use. This was due to the complicated methodology used in investigation and the slowness in making conclusions based on the data. Also, a lot of effort was wasted in accumulating unnecessary data. And there were cases where the work of investigation was not seriously implemented because its direction was not made clear.

In each territory, the leading regional body set down the work of social investigation according to its immediate needs. Attention should be given first to investigations at the barrio level so that we can immediately respond to the need for launching agrarian struggles.

The biggest problem encountered by our forces in social investigation work was how to organize the data, reach conclusions based on them, and document the results at the soonest possible time. To hurdle this problem requires analytical study and serious attention. In particular, the following can be of help:

First, make the guidelines for social investigation simple and clearly lay down the methods of gathering data. Pinpoint which data are necessary. Spell out the ways of summing up the data and when this must be done. Second, one must provide training and strive to make a breakthrough. Third, produce a written model.

3. Propaganda and education work

The masses will embrace the revolution and work actively for it only when their political consciousness is awakened and raised. For this, propaganda and education work among them is essential.

Our experience teaches us that when propaganda work is vigorous and political education is widespread, mass support grows, the mass base is strengthened, and the masses are not easily deceived by the enemy. Conversely, mass consciousness remains at a low level when systematic propaganda is lacking and political education is limited. Thus, not a few fall prey to enemy intrigues and deceptive schemes.

Our propaganda should be sustained and deepened. We must be creative in devising different forms of propaganda. And this must be linked to the daily lives and struggles of the masses so that they will find it easy to understand our ideas and principles. Revolutionary ideas and principles, according to comrade Mao, are transformed into a material force once they are grasped by the masses.

Political education should likewise be carried out on a wide scale. Studies on revolutionary principles should be deepened. Methods of teaching should be observed to ensure that the masses correctly grasp what are being taught. More reading materials should be distributed.

A specific machinery for propaganda and education work is necessary. Only those with sufficient skills should be assigned to this line of work.

4. Solid organizing

Solid organizing lays down a firm foundation for the organization. But the best guarantee for the solidity of an organization is the tempering it gets from mass struggles.

In solid organizing, we give priority to arousing and organizing those classes in the lower strata of society over those in the middle. It is only correct for the most exploited classes and sectors to assume the major role in the organization in order to ensure adherence to the class line. Based on our experiences during the setting up of the barrio organizing committees and up to now, when rich peasants gain entry into the organization and middle or upper middle peasants are allowed in too soon, they put a brake on the launching of agrarian struggles.

The solidity of a mass organization is also ensured by taking good care of the mass activists. Many of them are in the leading bodies of the organization. During periods of struggle, there are others who come forward, and we must be quick at recognizing and developing them. On the other hand, as time passes, some become inactive yet continue to be retained in the leadership. We should not limit ourselves to them. Though they should be given enough time to improve, if they continue to lag behind, they should be replaced by newly emerged activists. We have experienced cases where the entire leading committee could not meet simply because those who were no longer active had not yet been replaced, though there were already others ready to take their place.

In setting up the organization, we must grasp the basic essentials for its formation at every level. In this way, frequent changes or unnecessary setbacks can be prevented. We have had some negative experiences where the organization was reverted to the level of a liaison group after the chapter was abolished. More often than not, it is possible to reorganize the committee and once again set up groups.

In forming the mass organization, it is important to make its direction clear -- it is for struggle. Organizing for the sake of organizing should be avoided.

Regarding the PKM (Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid) as an organization, it should be recognized that not only men can become members but also women and the youth, so long as they are farmers. It is also necessary to organize these two sectors separately according to their own particular interests. But there should be one organizational structure that binds them all. Through this, we make sure that their class interest as peasants prevails.

Such may entail a few changes in our mass organizations. Moreover, the structure of the organizations should be simplified to facilitate the implementation of tasks.

In the past, the establishment of the PKM at the municipal and provincial levels was done mechanically and prematurely. It was not able to function and accomplish what it set out to do. Under conditions where the experience and capabilities of most of the mass activists remain at the barrio level, and there are no fulltimers in this kind of work, it comes as no surprise that when the PKM is set up, no one can be put in charge of it.

Even now, it is better to form just a temporary or ad hoc committee whenever coordination of struggles and activities in different barrios and municipalities is required. This suits the present capability of our forces, apart from the fact that it is easier to supervise and has a set of defined activities.

5. Mass character of mobilizations and struggles

The level of consciousness of the masses and the degree of solidity of the organization are tested in mass struggles and mobilizations. That is why there is no other objective for arousing and organizing the masses but for struggle.

It is important to link agrarian struggles to antifascist and anti-imperialist struggles in order to comprehensively advance the national democratic revolution.

To secure the demands of the masses, the greatest number should be mobilized to bind their collective strength. We should avoid putting Party cadres at the head of mass actions such as those for land rent reduction and instead rely on the masses. The results and the effects on the masses are different when they themselves are the ones who act in concert.

In mobilizations, the elements for victory should be grasped. For example, preparation of our forces, knowledge of the enemy or the target, an effective plan, calls to action, timely assessments of the progress of activities, and formulation of tactics are needed.

6. Consolidation, expansion and recovery work

A balanced approach to consolidation and expansion ensures that our mass base is both strong and wide. It ensures consolidated areas which can serve as launching pads for our actions and to which we can immediately shift and retreat during periods of intense enemy attacks.

In the first stage (1971-77) and the second stage (1978-85), when expansion proceeded at a fast pace and consolidation lagged behind, we lost a number of barrios to enemy campaigns. When consolidation is inadequate, many of our expansion areas are weak, our influence does not sink deep roots, and these easily buckle under in periods of enemy assaults. Moreover, it is difficult to sustain and raise the level of struggles there.

But in the areas where consolidation was well attended to, a guerilla base came into existence, strong mass support was ensured, and there was enough room for maneuver, however hard the conditions. These areas also served as venues for large meetings, studies, training and similar activities.

We were able to make headway in consolidation work when we made clear to our forces the importance and methods of doing it. To ensure that consolidation was not left behind, we set down the ratio of barrios to be consolidated to those targetted for expansion, based on the capability of our forces. The launching of various forms of mass campaigns bore fruit in the comprehensive advance of the mass movement. The campaigns in economic work, defense, health and education/culture paved the way for vigorous and sustained concerted mass actions. But because of a few remaining weaknesses and limitations, consolidation cannot be said to have been sufficient.

Before, most of our forces understood consolidation to mean the setting up of the organization. The aspects of education and mass struggle were not adequately appreciated. Thus, the work was not implemented comprehensively. It is important to grasp the importance and linkages of education, organizing and struggle in consolidation.

Now, there is a need to develop more consolidated areas because of the growth of our armed forces. The guerilla fronts should also be joined together to provide us with greater room for maneuver.

We can only say that an area is consolidated when the mass movement is sustained, mass organizations function well, and political education is widespread.

Regarding expansion work, we combine the leapfrog method with that of wave-upon-wave.

The leapfrog method is effective when the areas favorable for expansion have a broad expanse and are far apart, there are serious blocks in their midst, and there is a need for us to move immediately into them. This method of expansion requires comrades who are reliable, disciplined and full of initiative. And they also have to be creative, because they operate far from the center of leadership.

The wave-upon-wave method is applicable when there are no enemy blockades within the areas of expansion. Here, supervision by the leadership is easier and retreat areas are near. But we should be careful about our security and not become overconfident.

We used effective combinations of the legal and illegal, secret and open methods in expansion. Specific to legal yet silent expansion work is the establishment of legal institutions. We tried this method in recovering areas which had been abandoned. From the second stage (1978-85), it helped us to reposition ourselves in all the target areas. In this kind of work, Party guidance is of utmost importance and tight coordination with the front is required.

In expansion work, it is important to define the main direction in order not to diffuse our efforts and to maximize our limited forces.

Regarding the relation between consolidation and expansion, we must set down what is to be the principal stress in a particular period. On this will be based the disposition of forces and their tasks. We must always be conscious that expansion is based on our ability to consolidate, and consolidation gives rise to more rapid expansion.

It is best to rapidly expand when conditions are relatively relaxed and to make sure to consolidate during periods of vigor in the mass movement. Consolidation should not be neglected when the movement is vigorous, as has happened in the past.

Another point in the handling of territory is the improvement of recovery work. In many areas, recovery is a major task because in the past two years, only in a few of those barrios which had been abandoned have we been able to reestablish ourselves.

Recovery work has certain similarities with expansion work because working in areas which have to be recovered is like starting anew. The difference is that the masses have experienced what it is like with the revolutionary movement and with the enemy. Suffice it to say that the tasks and methods of work in each case have their own particularities.

There are two kinds of recovery areas -- those where enemy detachments have been positioned (either regular or paramilitary troops) and those where there are none. The latter can be further divided into those where the number of barrio folk has dwindled because of our mistakes and those where there remains a broad mass of the population we were forced to leave behind. The second is easier to recover. Often, in places affected by our setbacks, it is difficult to stir the masses once more into activity, since they harbor doubts about us. In such cases, we must analyze the circumstances and history of our mistakes and strive hard to explain these to them.

In places where enemy forces have positioned themselves, we must persevere in our work, including our military actions. We can arrange meetings with reliable elements among the masses outside the barrio and teach them the correct ways of operating within their localities.

In recovery work, cadres who had worked previously in the area should be the ones sent back to facilitate the process of reviewing the past. The HYG (fulltime guerilla unit) can also be mobilized to increase their capability to respond to dangers. The methods of reestablishing the mass organizations and mobilizing the masses should be based on our experiences and capabilities.

7. Improving the TLG (local guerilla team) and SLT (semilegal team)

It is important to pay close attention to the improvement of the TLGs and SLTs because these are the direct links in arousing, organizing and mobilizing the masses. They realize at the grassroots level whatever policies and decisions are taken. The condition of the TLGs and SLTs reflects the condition of the mass movement.

When the TLGs and SLTs are well taken care of from the beginning, mass work advances. When they are neglected, mass work falters. And the negative effects surface in the movement and among the masses.

Taking care of the TLGs and SLTs means continuously raising their ideological and political consciousness and providing them with a lively organizational life. Because many of them have limited experience and academic schooling, they should be trained step by step. It is also necessary to make constant and timely reviews of what they have so far learned to ensure that they internalize the points. They likewise need military training so that they are prepared to engage in military action and are not placed in a defensive position during periods of enemy operations. They should never be isolated from the masses even under the most stringent conditions.

Apart from their political needs, the personal needs of TLG and SLT members

should be attended to. We must help them remove any ideological and psychological baggage weighting them down in their work.

We must ensure that the standards of recruitment into the TLGs and SLTs are strictly followed. In the past, a few unreliable elements were able to get in because of mistakes in recruitment.

The countryside can be divided into two: the mountainous areas and the plains. Each has its specific characteristics which define the correct methods of work and size of formations of the people's army according to the level of struggle.

Attending well to our work in the mountainous and forested areas assures us of a firm foothold in the countryside because these are places that are not easily penetrated by the enemy and thus provide us wide room for maneuver. Here, because enemy control is weak, it is easier to develop guerilla bases and to increase and strengthen our forces.

Mountainous areas provide the most favorable terrain for guerillas. Here is where we launch big and extended activities of the revolutionary movement. Here we can outlast the fiercest enemy campaign.

Of late, however, we have been confronted with the problem of a shrinking population in the mountainous areas because of the extreme hardships of life and enemy operations there. To overcome this problem, we must raise the consciousness of the masses, teach them effective ways of fighting the enemy, and help them meet their needs with regard to livelihood and family.

On the other hand, we ought not to neglect work in the plains and in the areas beside the highways and municipal centers. These are where the broad masses live and where evacuees take shelter. If our work here advances, we will have a rich wellspring of mass support, a source of cadres and activists, and even greater room for maneuver.

In the plains, consolidated areas can also be established. So long as we develop effective methods of work and hit the right combination of legal, semilegal and illegal forms of action, we can maintain organized masses. Of course, compared to the mountainous areas, developing bases in the plains definitely takes a much longer time because the enemy can easily maneuver here and has superiority in armed forces and modern weapons.

In the plains, too, large formations of the people's army cannot operate on a permanent basis. As of now, small units are more suitable for these areas because they are able to move around more flexibly and swiftly. At certain times, large formations can operate and launch military operations in the plains, especially where these are adjacent to mountainous areas. But it would be extremely difficult to maintain them here.

We must achieve a correct balance in our work in these two types of areas. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages.

9. Lands of the national minorities

In consolidation work in the mountainous and forested areas, an important element is developing those areas where the national minorities live. The national minorities can be seen in every part of the Mindanao countryside, and most of them are in strategic places.

Owing to their particularities, we should give them special attention. In areas where our work among them made progress, we were able to set up natural guerilla bases, such as those in Fronts 1 and 4. In those areas where such work was neglected, such as in Paquibato, Front 15 and some parts of Front 3, our forces encountered huge problems.

The national minorities can be divided into two categories: those with a datu system and those without. The customs and ways of living of each are similar, though with some differences. The work of arousing, organizing and mobilizing them is based on their distinct characteristics.

In working among them, we are guided by the following principles: **1)** recognition and realization of their right to self-determination, which includes the right to secede and establish a separate state; **2)** establishment of good relations among the nationalities; **3)** unhampered development of their culture; and **4)** elimination of all forms of privilege based on nationality and religion and rejection of chauvinism and sectarianism.

We also recognize and respect their particular characteristics and

traditions. Especially in dispensing justice in areas within their domain, it is essential to consult with them and inform them. In the past, we made enemies of an entire tribe because we failed to inform them of the punishment meted out to some of their tribe members who had committed crimes against the movement.

In places where the datu system prevails, we must first talk with the datu to make it easier for us to win over and mobilize the people. There were times when we went directly to the masses and sidestepped the datu. But reports of our meetings with his tribe or group would invariably reach the datu and, knowing we had ignored him before, he would then block our efforts to organize the people under him. When we explained things to the datu first, we found no difficulty in mobilizing the whole tribe.

Among the national minorities, we do not form organizing groups or committees because we approach them as a whole community. We transform their traditional organizations into revolutionary ones. The leader can be the datu himself or anyone they choose as leader based on his political and military skills. The council of elders can be maintained or transformed into a council of leaders who are advanced in politico-military work. With their consent, they can take part in the formulation of laws and making of decisions.

It is very important to develop cadres from among the national minorities themselves. This ensures that within their ranks, there are forces capable of leading them in the process of self-rule, apart from guaranteeing our close links with them. The formation of the SYP-Minorya (armed propaganda unit of the minorities) or *Pulang Bagani* (Red warriors) contributed a lot to consolidating their ranks.

In their areas, mass campaigns related to production, literacy, health and defense are easy to promote and sorely needed. Production campaigns aim to improve their often backward methods of agriculture. Literary and health campaigns seek to provide them with the basic services long neglected by the reactionary government and to uplift their social conditions. Defense campaigns teach them to defend themselves and their territory.

The forces working among them must be given special studies and training based on the principles we have enunciated.

With regard to the tribes actively opposing the revolutionary movement, we use the politico-method to neutralize whatever damage they cause. We punish those who commit serious crimes against the movement and the people. We mobilize members of the tribe themselves to persuade those with lighter crimes to mend their ways.

Letter

On the Results of the Nicaraguan Elections

I would like to comment on the February 25 national elections in Nicaragua. In the elections, Daniel Ortega, the Sandinista presidential candidate, failed in his bid to win a second term as president of Nicaragua. He was defeated by Violeta Chamorro of the United National Opposition -- the coalition composed of conservative and reactionary elements in Nicaragua. From the total 1.7 million qualified voters, Chamorro got 55 percent of the vote while Ortega got 41 percent.

Supporters of the Sandinistas in and out of the country were shocked by the election results. They did not expect the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas who spearheaded the struggle against US imperialism and the brutal dictatorship of the Somoza family for many years. Since the overthrow of the US-Somoza dictatorship in July 1979, the Sandinista government has been responsible for great advances in the fields of agrarian reform, education and health (read *AB July 1989 issue*). Based on surveys and the number of people who attended the rallies of the two candidates, Ortega was given the edge in the electoral fight. Many, including some journalists from the Western media, predicted the reelection of Ortega.

Chamorro's electoral victory brought jubilation to the big landlords and capitalists in Nicaragua and US imperialism. They triumphantly proclaimed it as the victory of "democracy," a rejection of socialism just like what happened in Eastern Europe. They asserted that the election results reflect the failure of the system instituted by the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. The United States proudly proclaimed that the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas was a triumph of US foreign policy under the administration of George Bush, which was highlighted by the invasion of Panama by US troops last December to install their puppet Endara

into the presidency.

On the part of Ortega, after conceding defeat, he declared that the elections proved that there is democracy in Nicaragua. They have shown to the whole world that a "democratic electoral process" can be conducted in Nicaragua.

While it is true that the recent election was free and clean, it cannot be said, in my view, that it was a fair electoral fight. The opposition was openly supported by a foreign power -- US imperialism. The party of the opposition received the amount of some \$3 million for its campaign fund from CIA fronts like the US Aid for International Development (USAID) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

Moreover, the election was held in a situation very favorable to the opposition. First, Nicaragua is currently undergoing severe economic crisis as a result of several years of war against the counterrevolutionary Contra forces which were organized by US imperialists in 1981 and continue to be funded until today. Attacks and sabotage operations by Contra forces have caused a heavy toll on the economy. More than 30,000 people have been killed and some \$12 billion worth of losses were inflicted by the Contra attacks. In addition to this, the United States has imposed an economic embargo on Nicaragua since 1985 which brought further hardships on the economy. The economic crisis was also worsened by the general economic crisis that hit the whole region of Latin America in the late eighties.

Second, in a bid to fight hyperinflation, the government of Ortega was forced to adopt austerity measures which greatly affected the workers and peasants. The cut in government expenditures resulted in the loss of jobs of thousands of government employees. Subsidies in food were almost wiped out. Free hospital services and distribution of medicine were stopped.

And third, the long years of war against the Contras may have caused "war-weariness" among the people. The people desperately want peace. And the military draft or forced military service has become unpopular among the people.

The opposition has exploited this unfavorable situation to ensure their electoral triumph. In their campaign sorties, they promised to abolish the military draft and to restore peace throughout the country. They blamed the severe economic crisis on the Sandinista government. The opposition succeeded in deceiving the unorganized and those with low political consciousness from the ranks of the voters. Many voters may have chosen the opposition, hoping that the US will stop making life difficult for Nicaragua and that life will be better under a new government supported by the United States.

The electoral defeat of Ortega is a big setback for anti-imperialist and progressive forces in Nicaragua. The political power which they have successfully seized in Nicaragua in 1979 is once again in the hands of pro-US and reactionary forces. Another great effort by the Sandinistas is again needed to regain political power.

With the electoral defeat, the United States and the local reactionaries have been given a big opportunity to restore the old system of exploitation in Nicaragua. The United States can use the victory of Chamorro to position US troops inside Nicaragua, just like what happened in Panama last December. During the invasion of Panama, the United States used as an alibi the help requested by the puppet Endara, who they claimed was the real victor in the elections in Panama.

However, the Sandinistas and the people of Nicaragua should not lose hope. The electoral defeat of Ortega did not mean the end of the Nicaraguan revolution. As Ortega put it, "A change in government does not mean the end of the revolution." They should continue with the revolution they have started.

The electoral defeat can be viewed as just one of those setbacks experienced by revolutionaries in the process of instituting revolutionary changes. What is important is that revolutionaries everywhere study and sum up the experiences of the Sandinistas since 1979 and learn from their positive and negative experiences in connection with the correct handling of political power, the correct policies and programs in implementing revolutionary changes, and the effective way of advancing and defending the revolution in the face of determined efforts by US imperialism and local reactionaries to frustrate the revolution and to restore the neocolonial system.

I would just like to pose a few questions in relation to what happened in Nicaragua since 1979. First, how effectively did the Sandinistas wield political power in order to weaken or crush the power of the remnants of the reactionary and pro-US big capitalists and landlords since 1979? Second, how correct and deep-going were changes like agrarian reform instituted to meet the interests of

the majority of the population -- workers and peasants -- and other progressive sectors of the country? Third, how did they view the continuing aggression and intervention of the United States in Nicaragua in their decision to give concessions to the pro-US elements inside Nicaragua and in their decision to continue with the elections?

In my view, the new situation is a big challenge to the Sandinistas. They should strive to defend the gains they have achieved and the changes they have instituted since 1979. They should be vigilant against the maneuvers of the United States and its local henchmen to crush the Sandinista forces and to restore the neocolonial system. Above all, they should have faith in the power of the workers and peasants and other progressive sectors to continue with the Nicaraguan revolution. They should strive to unite and consolidate the popular sectors in society in order to defend and further advance the Nicaraguan revolution.

With the new situation today in Nicaragua, anti-imperialist and democratic forces everywhere should now more than ever extend all-round support to the Sandinistas and the people of Nicaragua as they enter a new and difficult stage in the history of the Nicaraguan revolution.

Long live the Nicaraguan Revolution!

An Observer