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   PHILIPPINES

## E D I T O R I A L

### **AN OPEN LETTER TO THE YOUNG OFFICERS' UNION**

Our brother Filipinos,

We have been closely following your statements in the newspapers and on radio and television, studying each one with an open mind and heart. These have made us hopeful that there can be a genuine new beginning for our brother Filipinos in the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

We are glad to hear your declaration of a patriotic stand to free our country from the clutches of US imperialism and its local puppets. For you are not merely another voice in the powerful clamor of the Filipino people for national independence and sovereignty. You are a significant voice, because you come from an institution which is the main instrument of imperialist domination in the country -- the AFP.

The mere expression of such nationalist views within the AFP already exposes you to great risk. What more if you set up an organization which actively fights for the nationalist cause?

We hope that your efforts will pave the way for a broad nationalist awakening and a vigorous anti-imperialist movement among the officers and men of the AFP.

You are right in saying that no one has a monopoly on nationalism. It is a cause which the whole Filipino people must unite on and fight for, whatever their station in life, faith and ideology. In line with this spirit and principle, the Communist Party of the Philippines is ready to unite and cooperate with all forces that uphold the cause of anti-imperialism and genuine national independence. All that we ask is that they be true to their word and fight for this cause with all their heart.

We were surprised and saddened by your statement on the anniversary of the New People's Army last March 29, 1990. In that statement, you challenged the Communist Party and the revolutionary movement to unite with you in a national revolution, but on one condition -- that they first repudiate Marxism-Leninism.

In this we cannot find the spirit of genuine national unity and brotherhood of all Filipinos in the struggle against US imperialism.

It would be unfortunate if an organization that seemed to offer a fresh start, show boldness in approaching new and differing ideas, and be imbued with the forward-looking spirit of youth became hidebound by the narrow thinking, obsolete attitudes and aberrations so typical of McCarthyist hysteria and obscurantism.

In this new age of internationalism, progressive thinking and rising spirit of pluralism, why does the YOU cling to such regressive principles as national chauvinism, intolerance and bigotry?

Rejecting Marxism-Leninism in the anti-imperialist movement means rejecting its scientific critique of modern imperialism and its

theoretical contributions on how to defeat imperialism and how colonies and semicolonies can win national liberation. Lenin's works such as "Imperialism -- The Highest Stage of Capitalism" and "On the National Question" served as a powerful beacon light not only for Marxist-Leninist parties but for all liberation movements which struggled against and defeated imperialism. A broad array of progressives and scholars throughout the world recognize the valuable contribution of the Marxist critique of modern imperialism to an understanding of world developments and the actual progress of humanity for the past century.

We urge you to seriously study communist works such as "Philippine Society and Revolution," the writings of Jose Ma. Sison and other known Filipino Marxists, and the documents of the Communist Party of the Philippines, in order to better assess their correctness based on the realities in our country. Do not close your mind and condemn right at the start.

Repudiating Marxism-Leninism also means turning your back on the rich practice of Marxist parties and formations in fighting against imperialism. It ignores the blood, sweat, hardships and lives that communists have offered to free the world and our country from the plague of imperialism.

For more than six decades, the Communist Party of the Philippines and Filipino communists have been fighting not only for national independence but also for genuine democracy.

Within this decade, Marxism-Leninism served as a guide in discovering the close interconnection between imperialist domination and exploitation and the lack of social justice and democracy in our country. Marxism-Leninism led us to the truth that imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism lie at the root of the present national crisis. Marxism-Leninism is a beacon light in our search for the ways to fight these evils and to strengthen the liberation forces of the country in order to win complete victory.

If there were a single lesson of Marxism-Leninism of special relevance to our national experience, it would be that national liberation cannot be achieved without at the same time liberating the peasant masses from feudalism and realizing democracy for the whole people, and vice versa. The fundamental character of the Philippine revolution at the present stage of Philippine history is that it is not only a revolution to attain national liberation but also a revolution to attain democracy for the people.

You harp on the mistakes, failings and defeats of the communist movement in other countries and even here in the Philippines. It is Marxism-Leninism which teaches us to recognize our errors and setbacks, to dig into their root causes, and to be honest, assiduous and determined in correcting them and rising from defeats.

And it is also Marxism-Leninism which teaches us to be open to you and other patriotic forces, understand your situation, strength and limitations, and learn from one another and cooperate with each other in realizing our common aim and aspiration -- the true liberation of our nation.

## **BUILDING A REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT IN SAMAR**

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*With the emergence of relatively stable guerilla bases, conditions have become ripe for the establishment of organs of political power at the grassroots. In many parts of the country, these basic organs -- called barrio revolutionary councils or BRCs -- are sprouting vigorously. And as they multiply, the ground is laid for a revolutionary government at higher levels.*

*Recently, Ka Tony, a member of the NDF secretariat, visited Samar to study the building of a revolutionary government there. In his report, which has been adapted in the article that follows, he discussed the historical development of a guerilla base and the prerequisites, methods and problems in the formation of BRCs and a district-level revolutionary government in the area.*

*The efforts of the Communist Party, New People's Army and the revolutionary people of Samar in organizing a revolutionary government yield many interesting lessons. The report, however, clarified that these experiences are based on the particular conditions of the revolutionary movement in the island. -- Editor.*

Somewhere in the western part of Samar, a new revolutionary order is being born. There, in one of the most advanced and most solid bases of the revolutionary movement in the island, the Party, people's army and revolutionary mass organizations have joined hands in building a revolutionary government at the district level.

This emerging reality is the product of almost two decades of revolutionary struggle filled with hardships and sacrifices, utmost dedication to the people's interest, and boldness and determination to win of countless men and women revolutionaries. Not far off in the future, a full-blown revolutionary government will rise in this part of the island, and the people will have reason to hold their heads high and declare: Now we truly hold our own destiny in our hands.

Conditions have long been ripe to set up a revolutionary government in this area -- and even in other parts of Samar. After a long period of steady and brilliant advances in the people's war, the revolutionary struggle here has reached an advanced stage. Nearly all of the requisites to achieve the highest level of the people's political organization -- the formal exercise of political authority over a territory -- have been fulfilled.

### **Guerilla base: womb of the RG**

The womb of the revolutionary government (RG) is a guerilla base composed of a cluster of 40 consolidated barrios (which we shall call Sta. Fe). This is the core of a district-size area (which we shall name District One) made up of 252 barrios, of which 197 are covered by varying degrees of revolutionary influence. Sta. Fe lies in the upper portion of five out of eight towns within the responsibility of District One.

Sta. Fe covers 1,000 square kilometers and is located in the

hinterlands of District One. The "lowest" barrios are three to five kilometers from the coastal highway. Its population is roughly estimated at 10,000 people.

There is not a single road going to Sta. Fe that is passable by jeep. From this place, pumpboats have to navigate three big rivers and can only penetrate up to six to 15 kilometers upstream from the highway or town centers. But for most residents, the principal means of transporting their products to the commercial centers are on carabaos or through sheer manpower. From the highest point in Sta. Fe to the highway, the journey takes four to five hours.

Most of the barriofolk are peasants. They plant mostly rice and root crops like camote and cassava.

Although the monopoly of land has never been a serious problem and many forms of feudal and semifeudal exploitation have been practically eradicated, especially since the advent of the revolutionary movement, peasant incomes are meager because of very backward methods of farming. They produce only enough for their own needs; little is left to sell.

Most of the lands are still commonly owned, through inheritance by different generations. This system of ownership is called *kapuyongpuyongan*. Members in the *kapuyongpuyongan* have the right to open up farms free of charge on any vacant portion of such land.

Because of government neglect and the remoteness of Sta. Fe, a large percentage of the population are illiterate and have never gone to a doctor.

Before the revolutionary movement came to Sta. Fe, almost all of the barrios were lorded over by armed lumpen groups led by goons. They engaged in stealing, murder and rape. Because they carried arms, they exerted a strong influence on barrio politics. The policemen were afraid to run after such lawless elements.

The mountainous terrain, extreme poverty and gross government neglect provided the fertile soil on which the revolutionary movement in Sta. Fe took root and grew.

### **Sta. Fe: scene of revolutionary victories**

The story of Sta. Fe is an integral part of the history of revolutionary struggle in Samar. This was one of the first guerilla bases on the island where the Communist Party and New People's Army sunk deep roots. This was also the scene of great victories of the revolutionary movement in the region, especially in the early years.

Before martial law was declared in 1972, many activists were already working in adjacent areas, conducting surveys, propaganda and organizing work. In 1973, they reached Sta. Fe.

Staring them in the face were the immediate problems of the masses -- the lack of food, medicine, housing, literacy and justice. These were the problems on which the revolutionaries focused their attention at the outset. They linked these to the basic problems of Philippine society, the Marcos dictatorship, government neglect and the presence of bad elements.

The people of Sta. Fe were responsive to the revolutionary call. The revolutionary movement first earned its spurs when the New People's Army -- with the support of the masses -- succeeded in sanitizing the area from bad elements. The most notorious leaders and members of the armed criminal groups were sentenced to death; the rest fled to the town centers.

Hand in hand with the people of Sta. Fe, the revolutionary movement went on from these initial gains to more significant ones. From then on, Sta. Fe -- in fact, the whole of Samar -- has had a long unbroken revolutionary history, marked by breakthroughs in the revolutionary armed struggle and the peasant mass movement and contributing greatly to the overall advance of the people's democratic revolution throughout the country.

### **Outbreak of armed struggle**

In June 1973, the first armed unit of the New People's Army in the region was formally organized -- a seven-man squad armed with five rifles and two pistols. That same year, the guerillas ambushed four policemen in Sta. Fe, signalling the outbreak of armed resistance in the island.

With high morale and strong determination, the full-time organizers, with the full backing of the masses, expanded to the town centers to pursue the bad elements that had taken refuge there. The scourge of these lumpen groups was completely eliminated, and peace and tranquility returned to Sta. Fe and other areas where the revolutionary movement had taken root.

As a result of the victories in addressing the concrete needs of the masses, restoration of peace and order, launching of tactical offensives, daring expansion of the mass base, and maintenance of iron discipline and exemplary conduct by Party cadres and Red fighters, the revolutionary movement earned the high respect and firm support of the masses. Revolutionary power grew rapidly throughout the island.

All this incurred the ire of the reactionary state. From 1973 to 1975, the Marcos regime launched a big military offensive in Sta. Fe. The military burned down many houses and stole the carabaos, pigs, chickens, rice stocks and other properties of the masses. Many innocent civilians were killed and women raped.

The revolutionary movement called on the masses to evacuate to the forested mountains, open up new farms and set up defenses. Many of the barriofolk responded positively and settled in the forests, together with the NPA unit and organizers. In the meantime, other revolutionary cadres continued expansion work in areas not affected by the military operation.

But before they could harvest their first cropping, the resettlement area was subjected to heavy bombardment by the enemy. The comrades and the masses stood their ground, strengthened their defenses and surrounded their villages with native traps such as *balatik*, *suyak* and *gahong*.

Though still small and armed with low-caliber weapons, the lone NPA unit exerted its utmost effort to strike back at the enemy. In May 1974, the nine-man NPA squad, reinforced by 77 militia men armed with homemade guns and bolos, ambushed a patrol of PC soldiers. Nine enemy troopers

were killed and six Armalites, two carbines and two pistols were seized in the operation. With these captured weapons and others donated by the masses, the NPA was able to expand the squad into a platoon of 27 fighters.

In 1975, this NPA platoon, together with a bolo platoon of militia men, waylaid an army squad of seven men, killing five of them and confiscating three M16s and two carbines. The militia members were farmers who had evacuated to the forested mountains and served as the most reliable mass base of the NPA at that time.

After the ambush, one squad was detached from the platoon and sent to the eastern side of the province to reinforce the new guerilla unit there. The guerillas immediately launched a series of attacks which rattled the enemy.

### **Upsurge of armed and mass struggles**

From 1977-80, the NPA in Samar raided more than 30 town centers. This invited the biggest and fiercest military operation to date in the region, which lasted from 1978-82. The AFP deployed 11 regular army battalions, apart from air support and a few CHDF battalions. Suspected NPA areas were heavily bombed.

But the revolutionary forces foiled the enemy's all-out campaign to crush them by formulating the correct strategy and tactics to handle the situation. NPA raids on town centers and ambushes became more daring. Antifeudal struggles erupted over wide areas not affected by military operations. Expansion work was stepped up to offset losses in some heavily militarized areas. Open protests were launched to expose the brutality of the fascist regime's counter-insurgency campaign.

In 1982, there was also an upsurge of armed and mass struggles in many parts of the country. The reactionary government was forced to transfer several AFP battalions to other regions without having achieved strategic victory in Samar. As military operations shrunk and became sporadic, the revolutionary movement took advantage of the favorable conditions to intensify the antifeudal struggle and recover lost areas.

Mass struggles in the island reached their peak in the years 1982-85. Simultaneously, the NPA heightened their armed actions in the province. In Sta. Fe alone, the big guerilla unit, reinforced by the people's militias, undertook 13 major tactical offensives which added more than 50 high-caliber rifles to the NPA arsenal.

As they grew ever stronger, the revolutionary forces and people gained the capability to frustrate succeeding military operations of the fascist AFP, such as those in 1985 and 1986.

From 1986-87, when the Aquino regime came to power, there was a temporary lull in armed actions due to the ceasefire and the adjustments to a new political situation. But since 1988, the revolutionary armed struggle has once again been on the upswing.

Today, the initial seven-man guerilla squad in the region has grown into a battalion. The Regional and Front Mobile Forces provide an umbrella of protection to guerilla bases such as Sta. Fe. The adhoc RG itself has a full-time guerilla unit under its command which can easily

augment its forces by combining with the people's militias. All 40 barrios in Sta. Fe have their own militia units, which number a few hundreds when put together.

The regular NPA forces, local guerillas and fighting masses together ensure that the gains in the guerilla bases are effectively defended against enemy assaults.

### **Antifeudal struggle: key link in base-building**

Landlordism or feudal exploitation in Sta. Fe was not a severe problem. Land rent usually amounted to only one sack per hectare or approximately three percent of the normal harvest at that time.

However, in the plains of District One below Sta. Fe, feudal exploitation was highly developed. Landlords extracted half of the rice harvest as land rent or even as high as 80 percent as rentals for land, carabaos and farm implements.

In 1976, the revolutionary movement in Samar began to stress the antifeudal struggle of the poor peasants as the key link in mass work and base-building in the countryside. A Party conference drafted comprehensive guidelines for mass work. The guerilla zones here were to be vigorously expanded and strengthened in line with the new orientation.

The new concepts, guidelines and programs set down by the conference and the active participation of regional cadres in the actual work gave new life and inspiration to grassroots organizers. They organized and mobilized the peasant masses to fight for land rent reduction, higher farm wages, reduction of interest rates and other antifeudal issues. Thus, in District One, keeping pace with the surging armed struggle, revolutionary power expanded wave upon wave from one mountain to the other and down to the plains and highways, seashores and town centers.

The revolutionary activists organized the masses step by step. As they raised the level of organization of the masses, so did they raise the latter's political consciousness and forms of struggle. At first, when the peasant organizations were still small and newly formed (at the level of organizing groups or OGs), struggles were focused mainly on demanding increased wages for farm workers. OG members were first organized into a *tiklos* or mutual labor exchange system. As the OGs gained more recruits and became organized along class lines, they developed more bargaining power to demand better pay from the landlords.

These OGs later developed into organizing committees (OCs). At this stage, the peasants started to launch struggles to reduce land rent and usury rates. The former was mainly in the form of "operasyon tago" (secret confiscation of part of the harvest).

Mass organizations for youth and women were also set up after the peasant organizations. One of their tasks was to support the antifeudal struggle.

The best activists among the growing number of peasants, youths and women tempered in the mass struggles joined the Party. Branches of the CPP were formed and they coordinated the underground mass organizations (UGMOs) as well as performed some governmental functions at the barrio level.



### **More militant and daring mass struggles**

As the political and organizational capability of the masses advanced, antifeudal struggles gained more vigor and started to take higher forms such as direct confrontation with the landlords. These confrontational actions succeeded in areas where the armed struggle was strong.

In turn, the antifeudal struggles which were consistently waged by the peasant movement developed and tempered a great number of mass leaders and Party cadres and made the masses more politically mature. Such a development provided an even more favorable condition for raising the form of organization to a higher level.

From 1979-81, the peasant movement in District One, having chalked up successes in the antifeudal struggle and armed struggle, began to pay attention to organizing and mobilizing the masses for economic projects. Marketing and consumer cooperatives were set up. Production groups were also formed to speed up the opening of new areas for cultivation. By this time, even the remaining land rent of one sack of rice per hectare had been totally eliminated.

Despite the effects of prolonged and massive military operations, the revolutionary peasant movement did not lose its momentum. In 1982, the peasant organizing committees were transformed into full-fledged peasant associations (barrio-level). This spurred even more daring and militant peasant struggles.

In 1984, while the enemy was in panic due to the rising tide of the revolutionary movement in many regions of the country, the barrio-level peasant organizations were raised into municipal-wide peasant associations. This enabled better leadership and coordination over inter-barrio peasant mobilizations. In 1985, the peasant association in one municipality staged a successful rally and boycott to raise the price of corn. The barriofolk of Sta. Fe enthusiastically participated in this action. The municipal peasant organizations also supported many provincial and regional multisectoral and political mobilizations.

### **Ripening of conditions**

The big advances in the armed struggle, revolutionary peasant movement and other revolutionary efforts such as the united front and the expansion of revolutionary power down to the plains and town centers served as the firm basis for the assessment of the Regional Party Conference in 1989 that conditions were already ripe for building organs of the revolutionary government up to the district level in various guerilla bases throughout the island.

Both in the region and in Sta. Fe, all the requisites for setting up a district-level RG have been fulfilled.

First, the Party has the capability to guide the revolutionary government. This is the product of its long experience in revolutionary struggle and its deep roots among the masses.

Second, the masses have reached a certain level of political maturity. The underground mass organizations, tempered through years of antifeudal and antifascist struggles, cover entire municipalities. There

are substantial numbers of mass leaders. The local militia has enough experience in fighting the enemy and defending the guerilla base.

Third, the guerilla base of Sta. Fe spans a wide area and is surrounded by consolidated areas which act as shields or buffer zones.

Fourth, the NPA has reached a sufficient level of strength -- militarily, politically and organizationally -- to defend and ensure peace and order in Sta. Fe. This capability has been tested in practice.

Fifth, apart from Sta. Fe, other guerilla bases have emerged in Samar, stretching out and demoralizing the enemy forces.

Sixth, the revolutionary movement has extended its influence to the urban centers. Legal organizations, progressive groups and other middle class sectors are active in exposing and protesting militarization in the countryside.

Seventh, local conditions are favorable. The people's dissatisfaction with the local government grows ever deeper. Many local officials are also no longer active in the anti-insurgency campaign. In fact, the barrio councils are already being mobilized in various ways and at various levels for the revolution.

All of these, together with the overall advance of the revolutionary movement throughout the whole country, on the one hand, and the irreversible crisis of the ruling system, on the other hand, are the factors that militate for the building of a revolutionary government in Sta. Fe.

### **Setting up the revolutionary government**

To prepare the way for the setting up of a district-level revolutionary government in Sta. Fe and facilitate this process, the Regional Committee in Samar created a temporary or adhoc RG in 1989. This would function as a transitory government until the regular RG is formally established.

In Sta. Fe, all that is needed to push through with the formation of the district-level RG is to satisfy the minimum requirement of 40 relatively consolidated BRCs (barrio revolutionary councils). Almost all of the other requirements have been met.

The adhoc RG is composed of cadres at the provincial, district (or front) and company command levels. Under it are teams of organizing cadres and an oversize squad of the LGU (local guerilla unit). One team of cadres takes charge of building BRCs, while another links up with the middle forces and organizes national democratic cells among them.

The oversize squad may be concentrated or dispersed into two squads or several teams. It may also concentrate with militia units or with the big NPA units, as the situation and tasks require. Its general task is to establish a system of defense in Sta. Fe. Its particular tasks are to recruit, build and consolidate militia units and give them training and guidance.

The adhoc RG started its work by conducting training of its forces in the following: social investigation and class analysis (SI-CA); socio-

economic and cooperative movement; propaganda and education; solid organizing work; BRC-building; minimum and maximum program of land reform; and defense.

Then it set out to tackle its main job: organizing the BRCs. It assessed the existing KRBs and found out that most of them were no longer functioning. There were also no cadres specifically assigned to such work. The adhoc RG realized the need to revitalize the inactive BRCs, following the new process of BRC-building.

Before setting up the BRC, the adhoc RG ensures the following: (1) the mass organizations are functioning well; (2) SI-CA is undertaken in every barrio where the BRC is to be set up; (3) a propaganda and education campaign on the BRC, the revolutionary movement and the national democratic program is conducted among various groups of peasants, women, youth and defense; (4) a general meeting participated in by the Party branch, different mass organizations and people's defense unit is called to plan the setting up of the BRC.

The abovementioned process takes about two weeks. The BRC is formally established upon the calling of an assembly for the purpose. Elections are held to elect the officials of the BRC through secret balloting.

The newly-elected BRC members then meet and elect their chairman and vice-chairmen. Subcommittees are organized, such as those on education, finance, defense, health, land reform, socio-economic projects and organization.

The creation of the People's Court follows. The BRC recommends individuals to serve as judges in the court. An assembly is called to approve the recommendations and the drafted laws, policies, plans and programs of the BRC.

After four months of sustained activity, the adhoc RG was able to organize 14 KRBs. These councils coordinated and encouraged production projects, passed and implemented ordinances regarding public sanitation and housing, supervised the registration of firearms, and ensured the functioning of the People's Court.

#### **On the relations among different organizations**

In the course of its operations, the adhoc RG encountered many problems which inevitably accompany a new experience and a new advance. They constantly drew lessons from their practice in order to continue moving forward in their work.

One problem was the confusion in orientation. The Party branch, BRC and UGMOs had no unified common view of the distinction and harmony in their respective tasks and responsibilities. In many cases, the Party branch felt jobless after governmental functions were assumed by the BRC. Some were under the impression that the branch is under the BRC, while others thought otherwise.

The BRC and the Party branch also tended to monopolize decision-making or the solution to problems, making the lower organs dependent on them. Some UGMOs also seemed to be acting under the centralism of the BRC.

Related to the above problem were the different guidelines issued by the adhoc RG, on the one hand, and the Party district and section committees, on the other, regarding the setting up and operation of mass organizations in the barrios where BRCs are to be organized.

These problems pointed to the necessity for frequent consultations, close coordination and mutual assessments of the progress in their work between the Party committees and the adhoc RG, so that they can reach a common understanding of their tasks, their interrelations and their priorities.

The consolidation of the newly-formed BRCs posed another problem. Despite the fact that the guidelines on BRC-building were adequate and followed to the letter by the organizers, the cadres in the adhoc RG were still confused on how to consolidate the BRCs.

Mass activists complained that they were overtasked. Some of them held as many as three to four positions in the different organizations, such that their livelihood was affected by too many meetings and responsibilities. Many of the elected BRC members also did not know how to read and write.

Moreover, the organizers were not conscious of using SI-CA as the basis for making plans, programs and policies. These were formulated without a unified analysis of the barrio situation. As a result, the formation of subcommittees was mechanical and not based on actual capabilities and needs. Plans and programs were merely repetitions of the previous ones, and priorities were not clearly spelled out.

Apart from the BRC, the People's Court had its problems. There were no laws and guidelines available for use by the judges to handle cases efficiently and systematically. At present, the judges base their decisions on Party policies, though they feel that these are inadequate.

### **Relations between the Party and government**

All of the above problems in one way or another touch on the underlying issue of how Party leadership should be exercised in a situation where regular organs of the revolutionary government are emerging.

From their experiences, the adhoc RG and the Party section committee derived initial lessons bearing on this issue. During a consultation, they ironed out their differences in methods and concepts, particularly regarding the roles of the Party, UGMOs and BRCs and the interrelations of these different organs.

Regarding the role of the Party branch:

The Party branch upholds the democratic system of government; ensures the collective leadership, decision-making and implementation of major policies, decisions, plans and programs of the BRC; and strives to align all these with the national democratic program.

The Party, however, exercises its leadership, not through dictation or imposing its ideas on others. This is realized by being advanced and united in the study of local conditions and formulating the correct

political line to guide the people. The Party also encourages and leads the BRC and the mass organizations in summing up their experiences in mass struggles and other important areas of work. It supports the correct ideas of others while presenting its own ideas drawn from concrete analysis of objective conditions and mass sentiments.

During meetings, branch members persuade and educate the people not as Party members but as members of the BRC, MO, assembly or others. They respect public judgments and collective decisions that are arrived at after thorough and democratic discussion.

Regarding some characteristics of the BRC and UGMOs:

All the people in the barrio, including those who are class enemies and bad elements or do not recognize the BRC and support the revolution, are automatically under the jurisdiction of the BRC which is the government responsible for maintaining peace and order, the general welfare and security in the barrio.

On the other hand, UGMO membership is voluntary. Its responsibility does not include non-members.

UGMOs are the most reliable allies of the BRC and spearhead the implementation of its pro-people plans and policies. They strengthen the leadership of the BRC by helping it to make pro-people programs. They serve as channels for the people in influencing and expressing approval or rejection of BRC decisions, when the assembly does not meet. They can exert pressure to call an assembly to recall elected officials or even dismantle the BRC in very serious cases.

It is the duty of the BRC to extend the necessary support to the UGMOs in their sectoral struggles and demands.

### **Developing an alternative socio-economic system**

In Sta. Fe, the improvement of the people's livelihood has become a central issue in organizing and mobilizing them in a comprehensive way for the revolution.

Feudal exploitation in this guerilla base, such as land rent and usury, has been virtually eliminated. Farm wages have been raised to a point where, at the present level of production, the landlord no longer finds it profitable to hire farm workers.

The extreme poverty of the masses is now caused to a large extent by additional factors such as the backward state of agriculture and low productivity of their farms, the transportation problem and the lack of basic services which should be provided by the government.

Of course, the overall economic crisis cannot be resolved so long as the semifeudal and semicolonial system remains in force throughout the country. But a comprehensive socio-economic program undertaken by the revolutionary movement can contribute a lot to improving the lives and livelihood of the masses in the guerilla base.

The socio-economic projects launched by the BRC, Party branch and UGMOs in cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as the communal and demonstration farms, cooperative stores, mutual labor

exchange system and others, have not been sufficient in alleviating the economic hardships of the masses. This seems to be the weakest link of the revolutionary movement in the guerilla bases, not only in terms of economic support but more importantly, in terms of consolidating political power and military strength. What is needed is to build an alternative socio-economic structure in line with the national democratic program.

Giving stress to such work is the key link in solving the problem of consolidation. The period of preparation for the building of the revolutionary government must not only concentrate on the organizational aspects of building and consolidating BRCs but also give heavy emphasis to invigorating the mass struggles by confronting immediate and pressing local issues such as the fight against poverty and the improvement of basic social services.

To consolidate the BRCs, the adhoc RG has learned, they must be directly involved and take the leading role, in coordination with the mass organizations, in the struggle of the masses against extreme poverty and backwardness and for their social welfare. If the BRCs and the adhoc RG do not respond to these urgent needs, they will be out of the mainstream and consequently become stagnant.

In accordance with this principle, the new plans and programs drafted by the BRCs with the help of the adhoc RG give top priority to improving the economy of Sta. Fe while setting up an effective defense system for the area to ensure that such economic gains are maintained even within a war situation.

Among the details of the new program are the following:

1. a general call to the people to expand their farms, be open to new ideas and experiment on improved methods of farming, especially the application of appropriate technology;

2. giving stress to preserving and improving soil fertility and productivity by not burning organic matter, planting leguminous crops, diversification of farms, using adopted and high-yielding varieties, applying organic fertilizers, and rehabilitating the land through reforestation;

3. maximizing the use of carabaos in farming and collectively acquiring plows and other farm implements, in addition to encouraging individuals to buy their own;

4. utilizing communal farms for experimentation, demonstrations, training, education and seed banks of approved varieties of crops;

5. making full use of the resources of NGO programs such as appropriate technology, agricultural experts and materials.

### **Perspective**

The day is not far off when a regular revolutionary government will rise in Sta. Fe. The adhoc RG is determined to meet within one year its target of 40 consolidated BRCs to serve as the RG's solid foundation.

When the time is ripe, a conference to formally establish the

district RG will be called by the regional or front Party committee, upon the recommendation of the adhoc RG. The latter will cease to exist upon the election of members of the regular RG. In the future, the scope of this revolutionary government will be extended from Sta. Fe to the rest of District One's 252 barrios.

In this way, the Party guarantees that political power is wielded directly and firmly by the revolutionary people, from the grassroots to the higher levels until a national provisional revolutionary government is established. It ensures that people's democracy becomes a flourishing reality throughout the country.

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## **DAVAO: ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY**

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In 1986, a thin veil of deceptive calm descended upon Davao city, Mindanao's most advanced urban revolutionary base. The Regional Unified Command (RUC 11) in Southern Mindanao was setting the stage for the launching of OPLAN Eagle, a counter-insurgency program patterned after the US-designed LIC (low-intensity conflict).

It combined the essential LIC components -- psywar, covert action, humanitarian work, counter-insurgency training and use of local surrogate forces -- in a coordinated and comprehensive effort to crush the revolutionary movement. For a year, the eagle clawed its way around Davao and seemed on the verge of victory. On her first visit to "Alsa Masa country"\* in 1987, Aquino claimed the fascist AFP had decisively broken the backbone of the revolutionary movement.

But the series of militant and daring mass actions that started to erupt in the first half of 1988 are breaking the grip of the eagle. The revolutionary movement is undergoing a resurgence. Under the leadership of the Party, the revolutionary forces and people of Davao are meeting the challenge of the arduous task of recovery: recouping their losses from fascist attacks and raising the revolutionary struggle to a higher level on all fronts.

### **Revolutionary gains and advance**

The years 1982-85 in Davao city were major turning points for the people and the revolutionary movement. It was during this period that they reached the pinnacle of a massive anti-fascist and anti-imperialist upsurge.

Revolutionary mass organizations like the *Kabataang Makabayan* (KM) and the *Kalihokan sa Rebolusyonaryong Mamumuo* (KRM) mushroomed, and their membership expanded among the youth and the working class, respectively. The Christians for National Liberation (CNL), the underground national democratic organization among members of the church sector, began organizing sub-chapters in the city's strategic centers. Cells of the National Democratic Front sprouted among the middle forces in many business offices and firms.

In 1985, preparations were underway for the formation of BRCs or barrio revolutionary committees. In many factories and plantation sites

(workers and the semi-proletariat constituted a large majority of the city population), plans were afoot for the holding of a congress to establish a city-wide KRM.

Communist Party units and NDF underground cells safely held plenary meetings in well-guarded shacks and houses inside revolutionary bastions in Agdao and other marginalized communities. The admirable proletarian attitudes and practice of revolutionary activists endeared them to the masses everywhere they went. There was always a place to rest their tired bodies after a hard day's work.

Meanwhile, a militant propaganda movement launched in large part by the city's intellectuals -- enlightened sections of the church, student, civic and academic sectors -- proved to be a key strategy for expanding contact with the broader population.

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\*Alsa Masa (Masses Rise) is a rightist vigilante group first set up in Davao city as part of the AFP's counter-insurgency program.

A broad popular movement launched a successful one-day *Welgang Bayan* (people's strike) that totally paralyzed business operations in the city and nearby areas. The pulpits and the various business forums in 1984 helped tremendously in mobilizing thousands of Davaoenos from all walks of life for this. The middle forces also spearheaded other multisectoral mass actions to dramatize popular discontent over the economic crisis and resistance to fascism and dictatorship.

In Agdao, Matina, Buhangin and other urban poor communities, the masses stood up against brutal zoning operations. They staged militant anti-demolition strikes and put up barricades to denounce fascist repression and raise high the banner of the national democratic alternative to poverty and dictatorship. Theirs was a life-and-death struggle, as demolition of communities was being stepped up by the Regional City Development Planning (RCDP) to make way for an IMF-World Bank commercial and industrial project.

Partisan operations effectively combined with political mass struggles in the urban area. In two years, the NPA dealt revolutionary justice to many notorious fascist criminals and hooligans among the local police force, CHDF (Civilian Home Defense Forces), AFP and government officials. Among the bloodthirsty hounds punished were abusive soldiers from the PC Provincial Command under Col. Laudemer Kahulugan, who tortured and killed innocent peasants and workers on mere suspicion that they supported the revolution.

Needless to say, it was the revolutionary movement in Davao city that galvanized the open mass movement and synthesized dispersed acts of protest into earth-shaking blows against the pedestals of reactionary rule.

By 1986, the popular movement met with even more violent suppression. As in the rest of the country, repression here mounted along with the slide of the economy into deeper crisis.

### **Losses and setbacks**

With the rise of Aquino to power, the "new" AFP initiated and organized moves to reverse the revolutionary tide that had swept the



country. In Davao city, the fascist AFP launched OPLAN: Eagle.

The counter-insurgency plan consisted of the following components:

> **Detachment building.** Military checkpoints and detachments were set up in strategic points in all of Davao city's 72 communities. Of these, 13 were in urban poor areas like Agdao, Bajada, Buhangin, Boulevard, Sasa, Panacan, Ma-a, and Bangkerohan, where military posts were doubled. This infrastructure of repression was meant to drive away the revolutionary forces, control the flow of "legitimate residents" and goods, and assert the military's presence in the areas.

> **Armed civil-defense units.** With the expressed blessings of Aquino, right-wing vigilante groups were formed. The most notorious and easily the most widespread was the Alsa Masa, whose phenomenal growth was attributable in part to the grenade-brandishing anti-communist radio commentator named Jun Pala and the acknowledged "godfather" himself, Col. Franco Calida of the Metrodiscom.

The formation of the Alsa Masa in the communities was aimed at driving a wedge between the revolutionary forces and the civilians, denying the former local bases for support. These paramilitary forces engaged in spying, harassment, coercion and ideological propaganda. Their motto: Better dead than red! Kill for democracy!

In building Alsa Masa chapters in the communities, its military-trained organizers followed methods of organizing by the revolutionary underground: contact-building, core-group building, mass meetings, mobilizations and consolidation. The main differences were that in the Alsa Masa, membership and participation in mobilizations were forced and their core groups brought together the "advanced" class of lumpen like Rodolfo Cagay, a.k.a. Boy Ponsa, a notorious holdupper and drug-pusher from Agdao.

> **Psy-ops.** With the support and assistance of big business, the United States Information Service (USIS) and local government media resources, the local Metrodiscom systematized control of traditional information channels like the radio and community newspapers.

They incessantly trumpeted anti-communist slogans and scandalous lies, maligning the revolutionary movement and those who support it. They succeeded in creating such a paranoiac anti-communist hysteria that even priests and nuns were not spared from malicious attacks and veiled threats.

The fascist mind of the purveyors of LIC in this city was captured accurately by Col. Calida himself, who publicly admitted that Hitler and the latter's chief propaganda officer Goebbels were his role models. It was Goebbels who once said, "A lie when repeated frequently enough often becomes a truth," at the height of Nazi rule in Europe.

More sophisticated psy-ops techniques -- rumormongering and the "soft touch" -- were used on rank-and-file members of the revolutionary movement who had been rounded up and herded to the military camp. Expecting torture, the detainees were instead treated to sumptuous hot meals and comfortable amenities. Then they were fed juicy rumors and stories about comrades who had allegedly turned traitors to the cause.

Visual propaganda was exploited by the AFP to the hilt. At GOTAMCO in Agdao, where the first Alsa Masa chapter was organized, and at LADECO in Mandug, AFP soldiers who accompanied members of the Civilian Volunteers Action (CIVAC) and the Civilian Volunteers Organization (CVO) held mass meetings where they showed slick video tapes about alleged massacres and evil-doings perpetrated by the NPA. In March 1987, the fascist military paraded a hundred coffins down the streets of Davao city amidst wild claims that the dead were victims of NPA atrocities.

> **Civic and humanitarian assistance.** The most memorable case of American show of humanitarian concern was the visit of the US hospital ship USNS Mercy to Davao city. Free medical assistance was extended to Davao residents.

The Rebel Returnees Association (RRA) led by one Benjie Recto received special funds from government and US sources. There was also increased military participation in infrastructure-building in the city like school and road-building.

Such a display of benevolence was necessary to pacify, if not douse completely the growing anti-US sentiments among the people.

> **Political assassinations.** Counter-insurgency forces selected targets for assassinations. The avowed objective was to intimidate and cause demoralization among the revolutionary forces and what is called the Legal Left.

Among those liquidated in 1987 at the behest of the AFP-Alsa Masa conspiracy were Maria Luisen, an urban poor leader who was killed in front of her children by Alsa Masa members; Edwin Laguerder, a coordinator of a Davao-based non-governmental organization (NGO), who was murdered by military agents; and Peter Alderite, a labor organizer in the Lapanday Agricultural Development Corporation (LADECO) in Mandug, who was executed by head-chopping Tadtad fanatics.

In line with its LIC strategy, the US-Aquino regime was clearly pursuing deceptive conciliatory policies in order to conceal its essentially violent nature.

### **Tactical retreat**

In November 1988, the Regional White Area Committee summed up the two years since the Aquino regime escalated its "winning the hearts and minds" campaign in Davao City. In a summing-up document, Party cadres cited the AFP's LIC-inspired strategy as a major factor that forced the revolutionary forces to sidestep and make a tactical retreat to the countryside.

The other factors were: the popularity of the newly-installed president and regime that replaced the much-hated fascist dictatorship; military sabotage and clandestine maneuvers by the fascist AFP during the period of the ceasefire forged between the NDF and the Aquino government; internal organizational problems; and US intervention.

While the peace talks between the government and the NDF were in

progress, the local AFP command had given out instructions to Alsa Masa organizers to penetrate NPA positions in the areas. In the nearby countryside, breaches of the ceasefire agreement by AFP units threatened to undo the fragile pact halfway during the ceasefire period.

The build-up of the US role in Davao city became increasingly clear with the frequent visits to the local USIS station of many US embassy officials beginning 1987. Veteran CIA agent John Singlaub was then often seen hobnobbing with Calida, Pala and other local AFP officials. Expensive anti-communist propaganda materials were likewise traced to the shadowy presses of the USIS station.

Coupled with the ultra-terrorism of the enemy, internal organizational problems also sapped the energies and time of the Party leadership. Internal problems -- ideological debates on tactics under the "new" order and the handling of enemy infiltration in the movement -- created fissures, dislocation and, to a certain degree, demoralization in the ranks of the revolutionary forces.

Unable to cope with these pressures, the Party in the urban area retreated to the countryside. Only a skeletal force of cadres was left behind to administer remaining underground units and to monitor developments in the territory.

### Lessons and new tactics

In a May 1987 meeting, Party cadres in the white area committee and the regional party committee in Southern Mindanao reaffirmed the February resolution declaring recovery work as the central task in the revolutionary movement and an essential feature of consolidation in the particular conditions existing in Davao city and other areas in the island.

A Party committee called the Special White Area Team (SWAT) was formed to perform major tasks in what was called the "three machineries," namely: 1) partisan warfare; 2) revolutionary mass movement; and 3) party work.

**Partisan warfare.** To advance partisan warfare, Party cadres delineated two major tasks: **base-building and army-building**. Targets of recovery are 1) the revolutionary base area in the so-called southern and central plains, the central hill and the northern part of the rear areas; and 2) the revolutionary base in the city center.

The first targets for recovery are areas in the surrounding countryside (called by one cadre as "semi-CS"), which play a strategic role for the revolutionary forces by serving as rear and back-up areas for maneuver and other services for the armed struggle in the urban area.

The second target is composed of the main urban area with the big concentrations of population and business activity.

In **base-building**, the tactic of recovery is to deploy forces to rear back-up areas and the city center and synchronize activities in both. This is necessary to disperse enemy concentrations, scatter military actions over a wide area, and maximize every opportunity to get hold of accessible areas within the capacity of the forces.

In the early period of recovery, problems in sustaining and following up this type of operation emerged: lack of systematic planning in entering areas of recovery and a lack of understanding and unity on tasks and coordination among the forces involved in recovery work.

For example, some forces held open mass meetings without conducting sufficient investigation on the presence of enemy agents, informers or assets in the area. There was also a time when NPA units held the mistaken notion that launching TOs (tactical offensives) was a separate task from recovery work.

While the various kinds of legal machinery remained intact, they suffered from a lack of unified character and direction. There arose problems in orientation and methods of operations in relation to the over-all revolutionary work.

In **army-building**, problems involved recruitment, tactics, techniques in tactical offensives, and combat support services. However, there was one positive development among the Red fighters during the early phase of recovery work. Periods of relative concentration of NPA units proved helpful in their consolidation as it gave them the chance to be together in one group. It was also during these times that the people's army was able to launch more tactical offensives.

The main fighting forces operating in the areas are the partisan units and the regular NPA units. Beginning February 1987, their orientation has been to launch long-arms operations and to build bigger formations. Long-arms operations refer to partisan operations by a squad to a platoon-size unit using long-arms (like M-16 and M-14 armalites). Short-arms operations, on the other hand, are performed by one or a team of two partisans using lower caliber handguns. Tactical operations ranged from raids, ambushes, liquidations and acts of sabotage.

**Party work.** The SWAT serves as the center of Party leadership. It has an army committee that takes care of army work. The main military unit is called Django after a known NPA partisan named Edilberto "Django" Canoy who was killed in battle in 1985. Other Party organs take charge of mass campaigns and sectoral organizing.

By consolidating its ranks through more intensive ideological studies, the Party hopes to conduct its recovery work ever more effectively. Thus, the Party gives prime stress to ideological-building.

**Revolutionary mass movement.** In general, the focus of the mass movement in Davao city at this time is exposing to the broad masses of Davaoeos the evil scheme of neo-fascism, as exemplified by the Alsa Masa and other right-wing vigilante groups, while asserting and fighting for the basic demands of the people even in the face of the harshest repression.

The revolutionary movement exercise discretion and flexibility in dealing with the masses who were forced to join vigilante groups under threat of death. It was made clear that so long as they remain steadfast to the revolution and do not join anti-people operations, the revolutionary movement continues to place its trust in them.

Main military targets are the hardcore elements of the Alsa Masa

and other rightist vigilante groups, AFP and government officials with blood debts to the people and the revolutionary forces, and foreign nationals involved in counter-revolutionary activities and their installations.

### **Recovery breakthroughs**

In September 1988, NPA partisans attacked a military detachment in Lanang, just a few kilometers away from the city proper. The fascist AFP was shocked because it belied their claims about the "death" of the NPA in Davao.

A SWAT military report listed 16 TOs as early as 1987, another 20 TOs in 1988 and more than 15 other successful military operations in 1989. The targets -- though as varied as those whom they had victimized -- had one common crime: unmitigated assaults on defenseless people.

In early 1988, a nation-wide *Welgang Bayan* to protest the oil price hike drew massive response from Davao city. Many community chapters of the Alsa Masa joined up with militant workers' groups, other pro-people mass actions and sectoral organizations to bring transportation to a halt for one day. Alsa Masa members also launched protests in unity with militant organizations on such economic issues as demolition, humane housing for the urban poor, wage increases and land.

Workers' strikes erupted in 1988. Last October 1989, for the first time, 500 peasants marched down the streets and held an indoor rally demanding genuine land reform and denouncing militarization in the countryside.

On Davao Day in March 1989, mass activists released more than 50 balloons up in the clear blue skies at the start of a government-sponsored program. Streamers tied to the ends of the colorful balloons unfurled, showing the red-painted slogans: MABUHAY ANG NDF! (Long live the NDF!), MABUHAY ANG CPP-NDF! (Long live the CPP-NDF!).

Last January, 20 young men and women staged a lightning rally in the streets of Claveria (C. M. Recto), San Pedro and Bangkerohan, chanting anti-US bases slogans and waving flags. They belong to what the revolutionary youth sector (YS) calls QRT or quick reaction teams ("because they react quickly to enemy attacks"). They were also responsible for many of the hand-painted propaganda on the walls of schools and communities such as: *Mabuhay ang pagbabalik ng partisano!* (Long live the return of the partisans!) and WELCOME BACK NPA!

As if to emphasize their comeback, the NPA partisans struck twice at the USIS city station: in December 1989 and January this year.

### **Prospects**

As the revolutionary movement in Davao City steadily regains its strength, repression is likely to escalate and become more vicious in the years ahead. But external conditions are hastening the destruction of the ferocious AFP eagle, as the following developments show:

> The Alsa Masa is falling apart. Its lumpen and fascist ideology has caused contradictions (over money and power) to break out into open bloody gang wars among members. Notable examples are the Toril AM vs.

Agdao AM and Pala-Calida rivalries. Many AM members are also beginning to complain about being made into "cannon fodder" of the AFP during military operations against the NPA.

In 1989, many Alsa Masa members returned to the fold of the revolutionary movement, albeit secretly. The many others who remain under the wings of the vigilante group, however, are reportedly helping the revolutionary forces in a thousand and one tasks like gathering intelligence and conducting propaganda.

> The ever-worsening economic crisis is being felt in the city. In 1988, Southern Mindanao, of which Davao city is the main urban center, posted the highest inflation rate among the regions in Mindanao. It was 10.65 percent, far higher than Mindanao's 8.16 percent and even higher than in the other regions.

This year, the economic situation is growing more critical as price levels in the city keep on rising.

> The fascist infrastructure has not been dismantled. And repression is becoming worse, especially in the countryside.

> Since the Alsa Masa gained power in the communities, their notoriety has also risen. Anti-social activities like drugs, prostitution, gambling and robberies have become rampant in areas where these had been eradicated or reduced before by NPA campaigns.

Indeed, the next few years augur well for hastening recovery work in Davao city. On the basis of their rich revolutionary experiences in the past, the masses and the revolutionary movement steel their resolve to carry their struggle through to the end.

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#### **NPA OFFENSIVES RESOUND IN PANAY ISLAND**

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The New People's Army in Panay island showed its growing strength by launching a series of tactical offensives during the first half of 1990. The following are some of them, as reported in the March-April issue of *Daba-Daba*, revolutionary newspaper in Panay:

In Igbaras, Iloilo, an NPA unit waylaid a CAFGU patrol aboard a jeep in Bgy. Lab-on at 10:30 a.m. The jeep careened out of the firing area, but not before two CAFGU members were wounded.

The CAFGU immediately called for reinforcements from the 15th IB-PA and police forces at Igbaras. Afraid of being ambushed, the army soldiers pushed the policemen to respond.

A police patrol of nine men rushed to the scene. As soon as they entered the "killing zone," they saw the Red fighters ready to pounce on them. They tried to speed out of firing range, at the same time spraying the guerillas with gunfire.

But the NPA triggerman kept a steady hand all throughout. As the

police jeep passed through the concealed landmine on the road, he immediately detonated it. The vehicle was blown to pieces, killing all the men on board.

Among those slain were Sgt. Juanito Espina, Igbaras chief of police; Corp. Arnulfo Espinosa, his deputy; Rafael Estranghero, CO of the CAFGU in Mantangon, Tubungan; Sgt. Rogelio Panes of the 15th IB, former CO of the military detachment at Curucuan, Igbaras; and five policemen.

The guerillas confiscated four Armalites, one .45 caliber pistol, one super .38, two .38 caliber revolvers, and several magazines and rounds of ammunition.

In Culasi, Antique, the NPA launched a counter-offensive and staged an ambush on combined PC-CAFGU forces conducting operations in Bgy. Bitadnon last April. Two PC constables and two CAFGU members died in the encounter.

Earlier, the NPA attacked a 12-man CAFGU force at 7:30 a.m. in Sitio Calbayog, Bo. Valderama, Culasi. Nine fascists were killed and two were wounded. The Red fighters seized one Armalite, one Garand and a lot of ammunition.

In the town of Ibajay, Aklan, guerillas sniped at a tricycle full of constables. They were able to get one M-14.

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