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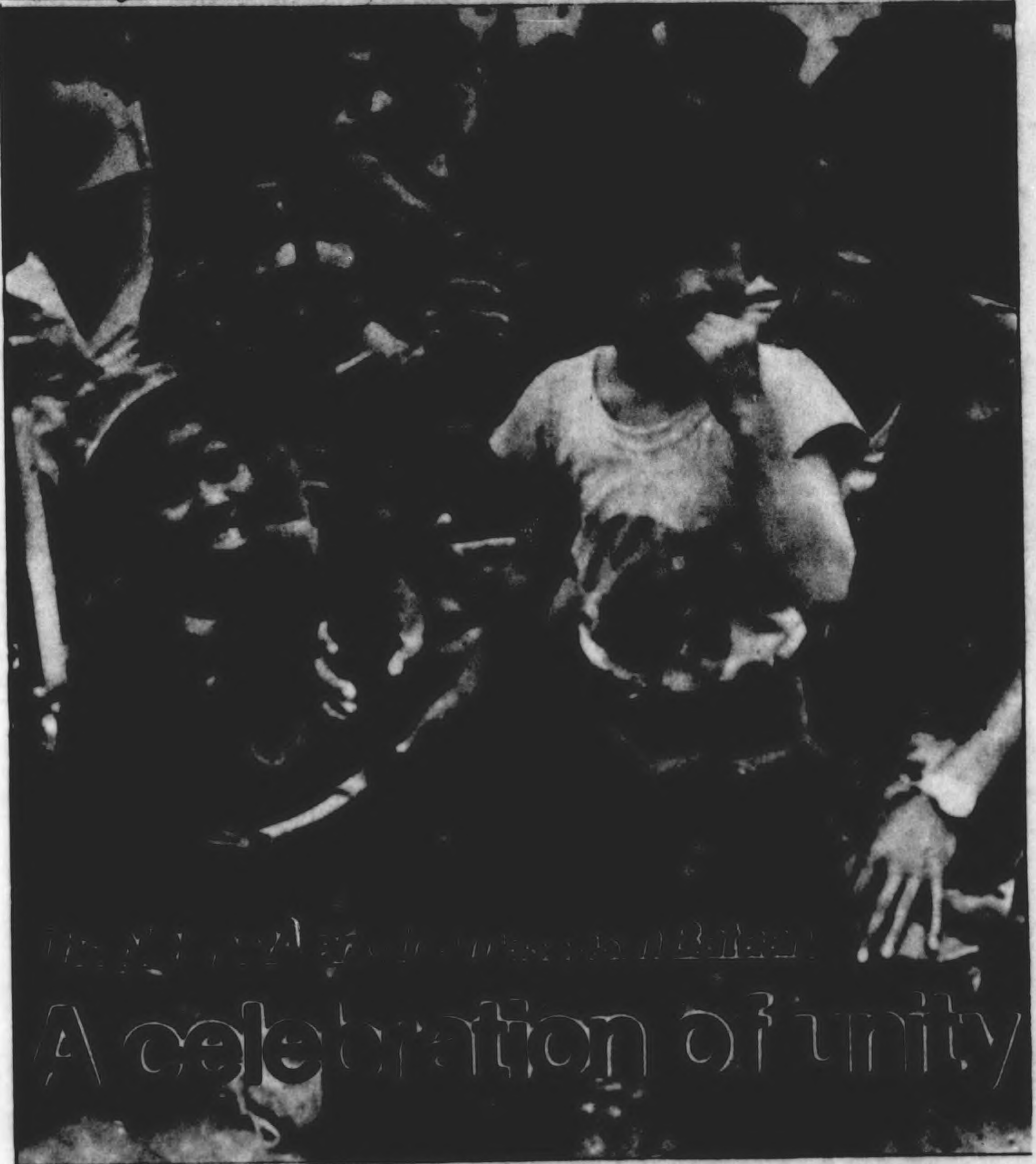
LIBERATION

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The XI, 1964 National Democratic Front in Batangas

A celebration of unity

Agenda for a just and lasting peace

This December 10, our nation took the first step towards peace. In step with the hopes of our nation, we, the undersigned, in behalf of the organizations affiliated with the National Democratic Front, declare our united stand in full support of the preliminary ceasefire and the efforts of the Aquino government, the National Democratic Front and the Filipino people to achieve a just and enduring peace.

As we publicly and jointly express our commitment to work for this objective, we firmly believe that such peace can be attained only through a just resolution of the fundamental socio-economic problems besetting our nation. As President Corazon Aquino herself has stated, these problems are "the roots of the insurgency" and they must be addressed "vigorously if we are to hope reasonably for a lasting peace."

In this connection, we believe that the framework of political settlement of the armed conflict should be based on the resolution of these basic social and national problems of our people. It must not be limited or tied down to any existing or proposed laws of the land that fail to fully respond to the long-standing demands of the people for fundamental change.

We in the National Democratic Front are therefore presenting today to the Filipino people, the Aquino government and the international community these key proposals which we hope will serve as the guideposts for a negotiated peaceful settlement of the present armed conflict. These proposals are derived from the NDF's own revolutionary program of government.

First, the complete dismantling of the remaining features of the fascist Marcos dictatorship and the full protection of the basic democratic and human rights of the people. This includes the eradication of all iniquitous and oppressive structures carried over from the Marcos regime; a stop to all military violations of human rights; indemnification and rehabilitation of all victims of militarization and repression; and the release of all political prisoners, including Rodolfo Selas whom the NDF has designated as one of its authorized representatives to the peace negotiations.

Second, the full promotion of the people's welfare and livelihood. This includes the thorough implementation of a genuine and comprehensive land reform program aimed at eradicating excessive monopoly of land ownership by a few and the fair redistribution of lands to peasants and farm workers; guarantee and support for the right to self-determination of national minorities; provisions for adequate housing, wages and sure employment for all; guarantees for free public education and expansion of social services.

Third, the assertion of national dignity and sovereignty. This includes the abrogation of all unequal military and economic treaties or arrangements with the US and other foreign entities, specifically the US-RP Military Bases Agreement; the placing of all strategic and key industries and businesses under Filipino ownership and control or in nationally favorable joint enterprise with foreign entities; and the adoption of a comprehensive and feasible program for nationalist industrialization.

Fourth, the adoption of concrete guarantees for durable peace. This includes the complete termination of hostilities between the New People's Army and the Armed Forces of the Philippines; the reformation and reorientation of the AFP to uphold the principles of civilian supremacy, patriotism and service to the people; and upholding the effective and maximum participation of all social sectors and patriotic forces in building a government that is nationalist and pro-people.

We know that it may take some time to tackle all these complex issues during the forthcoming substantive phase of the political negotiations. We therefore express our readiness to pursue the political negotiations and dialogue with the Aquino government even after the 60-day preliminary ceasefire period, in our earnest desire to find mutually acceptable solutions to the festering problems that stand in the way of peace.

In the meantime, we and our entire organizations and supporters in the national democratic movement shall exert every effort to ensure the effective implementation of the preliminary ceasefire agreement and to oppose any move and forces that seek to sabotage it. At the same time, we call on President Corazon Aquino to create better conditions favorable for a durable ceasefire and, as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, to exercise decisive control over the military and firmly resist pressures from both the AFP and US government.

In this decisive moment of history, the National Democratic Front joins hands with all our countrymen who desire to make a just peace a reality in our time, and for all time. With the start of the preliminary ceasefire in the International Year of Peace, we dare to hope, we dare to advance the first steps towards peace.

Signed, this Tenth Day of December 1986.

Andres Macias, Chairman
NATIONAL COUNCIL, NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT

Emmanuel Salvador, Chairman
KATIPUNAN NG MGA SAMAHANG MANGGAGAWA

Raul Mangaya, Chairman
PAMBANSANG KABAHAN NG MGA MAOBUBUKID

Juan Limson, Chairman
REBOLUSYONARYONG KONSEHO NG KILUSANG UNYON

Vidal Rubio, Chairman
KABATAANG MAKABAYAN

Ms. Teresa Valero, Chairperson
MAKABAYANG KILUSAN NG BAGONG KABABAIAN

Ruben F. Martires, Chairman
COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE PHILIPPINES

Eusebio Bautista, Chairman
CHRISTIANS FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION

William "Bill" Ellis, Chairman
CORDELLERA PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC FRONT

Lolay Abatard, Chairman
KATIPUNAN NG MGA GUSONG MAKABAYAN

Marvin Pas, Chairman
MAKABAYANG SAMAHANG PANGKALUSUGAN

Adel Macalena Sr., Chairman
ARTISTA AT MANUNULAT NG SAMBAYANAN

Fidel P. Alinas, Chief
GENERAL STAFF, NEW PEOPLE'S ARMY



Honored guests: NDF panelists Antonio Zumel, Satur Ocampo and "Bobbie" Malay-Ocampo with their staff in Samal

COVER STORIES

On today's significant issues and events

A step towards peace

Sixty-day preliminary ceasefire starts

It was as if a fiesta was being held to welcome a visiting superstar. But this time, the celebrities were not movie stars or politicians. They were NDF panelists Satur Ocampo, Antonio Zumel and Carolina Malay-Ocampo who had come to address a mass meeting in Barrio San Juan, Samal, Batasan, dubbed as the heart of the NDF's mass base in the province.

The festive atmosphere became evident as the convoy bearing the NDF panelists, their security staff and scores of media people entered Balanga, the provincial capital, some 30 minutes away from Samal. Residents came out of their houses to watch, as several other vehicles arrived to join the convoy. Some townsfolk decorated their homes with crepe paper ribbons and displayed posters saying "Mabuhay ang NDF!" At the head of the convoy flew a blue, red, white and gold flag of NDF-Balanga.

In Samal, cries of "Si Ka Satur!" emanated from the jubilant 2,000-strong crowd that lined the streets and marched toward the rally site. Lamp posts were decorated with red ribbons while children carried placards and streamers bearing welcome messages. Amid the festive landscape, about 80 members of the New People's Army in full battle regalia were starkly noticeable. They had come down from their mountain camps two days before.

Confetti rained, barriofolk broke into cheers and loud chanting, while the NPA changed their single-file formation and broke up into two columns. They lined both sides of the street as the NDF negotiators alighted from their vehicles and trooped toward the waiting crowd to take their place on a make-shift stage.

The stage itself was a sight to behold: made of bamboo, it was adorned with two huge NDF flags; big red, blue, and yellow balloons were strung at the front area of the stage; and an immense silver torch on which was written "Long live ceasefire" was conspicuous at the right side. There, the NDF panelists and other invited guests spoke before the crowd that erupted into cheers to acknowledge the speeches. Among the speakers were NPA leader Ricardo Silvestre and representatives from the Batasan provincial government and cause-oriented groups.

Both local and foreign photographers and television crews had a heyday recording on film and video the massive outpouring of joy and support by the Samal folk for the NDF negotiators and the NPA. Some even posed side by side with the NPAs for souvenir photos.

Watching the moving tableau of the NDF panelists surrounded by the marching crowd, and passing by the town hall where the NPA stood at attention, one could not help feel this was a scene that

would be repeated in many parts of the country that would be visited by the panelists. The start of the 60-day preliminary ceasefire was indeed a joyous occasion for many Filipinos. On Dec. 10, Human Rights Day, flags and huge streamers bearing the names of NDF member organizations festooned Plaza Roma in front of the Manila Cathedral. Here, some 500 rallyists gathered to fast for peace and to listen to the NDF negotiators proclaim the start of the ceasefire between the NPA and the AFP. During the rally, Ocampo also bared the new NDF 10-point program which it will present to the government panel once the two sides sit down for the substantive part of the peace talks later this month.

Elsewhere in the metropolis, drab concrete walls pulsed with life as activists painted slogans and plastered posters that enumerated the NDF's demands, such as "Lupa at Himpaluhay, Kalayaan at Kasarinlan Para sa Tunay na Kapayapaan!"

In Bacolod City, Negros Occidental, the start of the ceasefire was welcomed by an exuberant crowd of 20,000. The rallyists, hundreds of whom clapped their hands and danced in the streets, were joined by a platoon of unarmed Red fighters, who were welcomed by cries of "Mabuhay ang NPA!" Among the underground personalities who were present were Frs. Frank Fernandez and Vicente

Pelobello. Fr. Pelobello, together with Negros NPA leader Nemesio Dimafiles and two other Red fighters, talked to reporters a few hours before the ceasefire took effect. "We are giving peace a chance," said Fr. Pelobello. "We have extended our hand in the spirit of reconciliation and we expect the military to show the same sincerity and trust."

Disturbing trends

In other places, however, incidents of AFP-instigated violence brought ugly reminders of conditions that the people had hoped to seek respite from through the ceasefire. In Davao City, members of the anti-communist organization *Alsa-Masa*, accompanied by four jeepsloads of policemen, taunted, stoned and later shot at hundreds of marchers on their way to a rally in support of the ceasefire. Three rallyists were killed while scores were wounded in the assault, which occurred barely three hours after the ceasefire took effect.

In Barrio Cabalutan, Orani, Bataan, military troopers barged into homes and conducted searches on Dec. 10, despite provisions in the ceasefire agreement prohibiting such acts. In Manila, at least 55 activists were arrested and charged with vandalism and subversion for painting slogans and plastering NDF posters on walls.

But it was to the Bataan mass meeting that the military reacted with characteristic belligerence. Task Force Samat commander Col. Vicente Garcia branded the appearance of armed NPAs as "a clear violation" of the ceasefire agreement and threatened to file a complaint with the National Ceasefire Committee. Looking surly, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Fidel Ramos even claimed in a television interview that evening that "the rebels (in Samal) had frightened the local population."

That Ramos put forward a patently distorted view of what had transpired in Samal, Bataan is not so surprising. Even during the two-week hiatus before the actual start of the ceasefire, the military has been trying to force its own distorted interpretation of the agreement in an effort to counter the generally favorable exposure the NDF has been getting from the media.

On Dec. 3, AFP spokesman Col. Honesto Ileta emerged from a two-day high-level military conference to announce that "government troops will continue patrols, including areas where communist rebels claim control." Ileta moreover said that NPA guerrillas not covered by immunity guarantees would be disarmed, and insisted that NPAs secure licenses for their firearms. Gun permits, he said, are issued only by PC Chief Maj. Gen. Renato de Villa, and safe conduct passes are granted only by Ramos, the commanding general of the four major services, and

chiefs of the 12 regional unified commands.

The NDF panel strongly protested the military's statements which mangled the spirit and letter of the ceasefire agreement. In a press conference last Dec. 5, Ocampo rejected the military requirement to have (the NDF's) guns licensed by the PC. "(It is in the agreement that) only the government negotiating panel can issue firearms permits and safe conduct passes for the NDF," said Ocampo.

The NDF also wrote President Aquino urging her to revoke Ramos' policy statements ordering the disarming of NPA guerrillas. Said the NDF: "The guidelines laid down by the AFP Chief of Staff clearly violate the ceasefire agreement which explicitly prohibits, as hostile acts, arrests and disarming by one side of the other. Moreover, the Agreement provides that NDF members may not be arrested during the ceasefire period."

"NDF forces in the field," said Ocampo and Zumel, "have expressed grave concern that the AFP is out to break the Preliminary Ceasefire Agreement through provocations in the guise of untrammelled security patrols in NPA areas of operation."

The military's interpretations, which conflicted with those of the government and NDF panels, caused a lot of alarm among people who had been anticipating the start of the ceasefire at noon of Dec. 10. Tensions rose as Filipinos waited with bated breath for the result of last-minute talks held by the two panels to resolve the deadlock.

On Dec. 9, one day before the scheduled ceasefire, the government panel held three separate meetings — one with military officials in the morning, the second with President Aquino late in the afternoon, and the third with the NDF panel

that evening. Details of the government team's previous meetings were not disclosed. But by 9 p.m., the NDF and government panels emerged from their closed-door meeting to announce on television that both sides had agreed on the following compromises: that NPA armed units will leave behind their guns or keep them in appropriate places when entering population centers, and that as much as possible, peace-keeping patrols should be conducted only by the police against ordinary criminals. Military troops that go on patrols against criminal elements should first inform the ceasefire committee about their mission. The compromise agreement meant that the ceasefire would come to pass, after all, on Dec. 10.

Immediately, however, the military moved to define "population centers" to include all barrios, towns and urban centers, thereby limiting NPA mobility to their camps in the mountains. The NDF position was that "population centers" meant only urban areas, and that the NPA should be allowed to carry their guns in barrios and interior towns where the revolutionary movement has taken root. To prevent the outbreak of fighting when NPA and AFP units encounter each other in such places, the NDF suggested the use of counter-signs or identifying marks.

The military justified its stand by claiming that the presence of armed guerrillas intimidates community residents who fear NPA abuses. The NDF rejected the military claim by pointing out that the incidence of criminality is actually lower in areas influenced or controlled by the NPA, and that most NPA fighters are residents of the area where they operate. "You cannot keep the NPA (away) from here because the NPA are from here," said Ocampo before the rallyists in Samal



Opening salvo for peace: Zumel addresses Plaza Roma rally

town. "We will continue to talk about what is a population center where, if the NPA come in, they must not carry their arms. A place like Samal has so many people. But from the start, this has been a barrio of the NPA. (We are holding this rally) to prove a point in the dispute over what is a population center. Our definition must be based on realities," stressed Ocampo.

No unity in government position

The reality of the people's support for the NPA in vast areas of the countryside is something the military is ill-inclined to admit. For this reason, it has been introducing new elements that would tend to alter the original intent of the ceasefire agreement. "What they would now like to have is an agreement that would give the military undue advantage over the NPA," said Ocampo in an interview with *LIB*. "But what was originally agreed upon is a ceasefire in place. This means the maintenance of the status quo minus armed operations against each other and minus the commission of certain acts considered hostile."

With these developments as precedents, the NDF negotiators are gearing for tougher times ahead in the talks. "The conflicts that have arisen regarding the interpretation of the ceasefire agreement's provisions only point to the fact that up to now, there is no unified interpretation of the accord by the Aquino government," explained Ocampo. "The military is pushing its own independent interpretation, even if the two panels had already agreed on a common interpretation."

"This," said Ocampo, "shows that the military continues to overrule the authority of the government negotiating panel and impugn the integrity of the commitments made by it in the name of the Presidency and of the Republic of the Philippines."

In the same interview, Carolina "Bobbie" Malay-Ocampo also chided the government panel for not doing enough to assert the joint government-NDF interpretation of the agreement: "This is a question of human lives. (But) it seems the government panel is more concerned with avoiding the exacerbation of its own tensions with the military than with saving the ceasefire."

Meanwhile, the military is stepping up its "psy-war" campaigns, with Ramos harping on alleged NPA atrocities committed during the two-week lull before the ceasefire and on the supposed "provocation" resulting from the appearance of Red fighters in Samal town on Dec. 11. Ocampo expressed concern that the military is really out to sabotage the ceasefire by deliberately distorting the issues and conducting armed patrols to provoke the NPA. "Already there has been an alarming military build-up since Nov. 27 in Cagayan Valley and Central Luzon. Some 10



Red fighters with Samal townsfolk: Reality of support for the NPA

armed personnel carriers have been sighted in parts of Tarlac. There have also been reports of forced evacuations in Cagayan and zoning operations in Samal, Betan," said Ocampo.

Nonetheless, the NDF continues to hope and work for the ceasefire to succeed. On Dec. 13, it issued a joint declaration with the government panel stating that the "incidents of the last few days" have not in any way broken the substance of the 60-day preliminary ceasefire agreement. In this declaration is seen the NDF's willingness to forego minor irritants in order to uphold and protect the

ceasefire agreement. On the same day, representatives of eight national democratic underground mass organizations met the press to formally present the NDF's four-point agenda for a political settlement.

The negotiators have also called on the people to be vigilant in the face of the AFP's bellicose position and its underhanded moves. For without the people's vigilance, the joyful anticipation that greeted the ceasefire in many parts of the country may soon give way to the anguished cries of Filipinos once more bereaved and violated with the resurgence of armed conflict. ■

The voices of peace

The NDF underground mass organizations speak

Representatives of national democratic underground mass organizations met the press last Dec. 13 to express full support for the 60-day preliminary ceasefire agreement and to present the NDF's four-point proposal for a just and lasting peace. The NDF's political agenda will be brought up during the substantive phase of the peace talks.

During this first-ever NDF press conference of its kind, journalists met spokespersons Cris de la Cruz of the Christians for National Liberation; Gerry Lopez of the Kabataang Maka-

bayan; Rolando Bello of the Communist Party of the Philippines; Rona del Rosario of the Katipunan ng mga Gurong Makabayan; Jojo Sanvictores of the Makabayang Samahang Pangkalusugan; Sumkad of the Cordillera People's Democratic Front; Tito de la Paz of the New People's Army General Staff; and Salvador del Mundo of the Rebolusyonaryong Konseho ng mga Kilusang Unyon. Other member-organizations of the NDF also sent messages of support for the ceasefire.

Following are excerpts from statements issued by the revolutionary groups in support of the NDF peace endeavor.

GENERAL STAFF, NEW PEOPLE'S ARMY



We welcome the signing of the 60-day ceasefire agreement with as much enthusiasm as the National Democratic Front (NDF) and the Aquino government. Though the agreement is limited and temporary, we view it as an important step in the struggle for genuine peace.

As a member of the NDF, the New People's Army (NPA) will abide by the position of the NDF in the ceasefire agreement. We hereby order all Regional/Front/Provincial/District commands and all unit commands of the NPA to respect and protect the ceasefire agreement upon its effectivity.

In the meantime, our forces and the masses under our influence should prepare themselves to strictly implement the provisions of the ceasefire agreement. We also enjoin them to extend the necessary assistance to the national and local committees that will be constituted to oversee the ceasefire agreement.

We assure the Filipino people that the NPA will exert its utmost caution not to be provoked into committing acts which may constitute ceasefire violations. However, in line with its duty to protect the people's interests, the revolutionary army reaffirms its right to self-defense when subjected to unprovoked attacks by hostile forces out to sabotage the ceasefire.

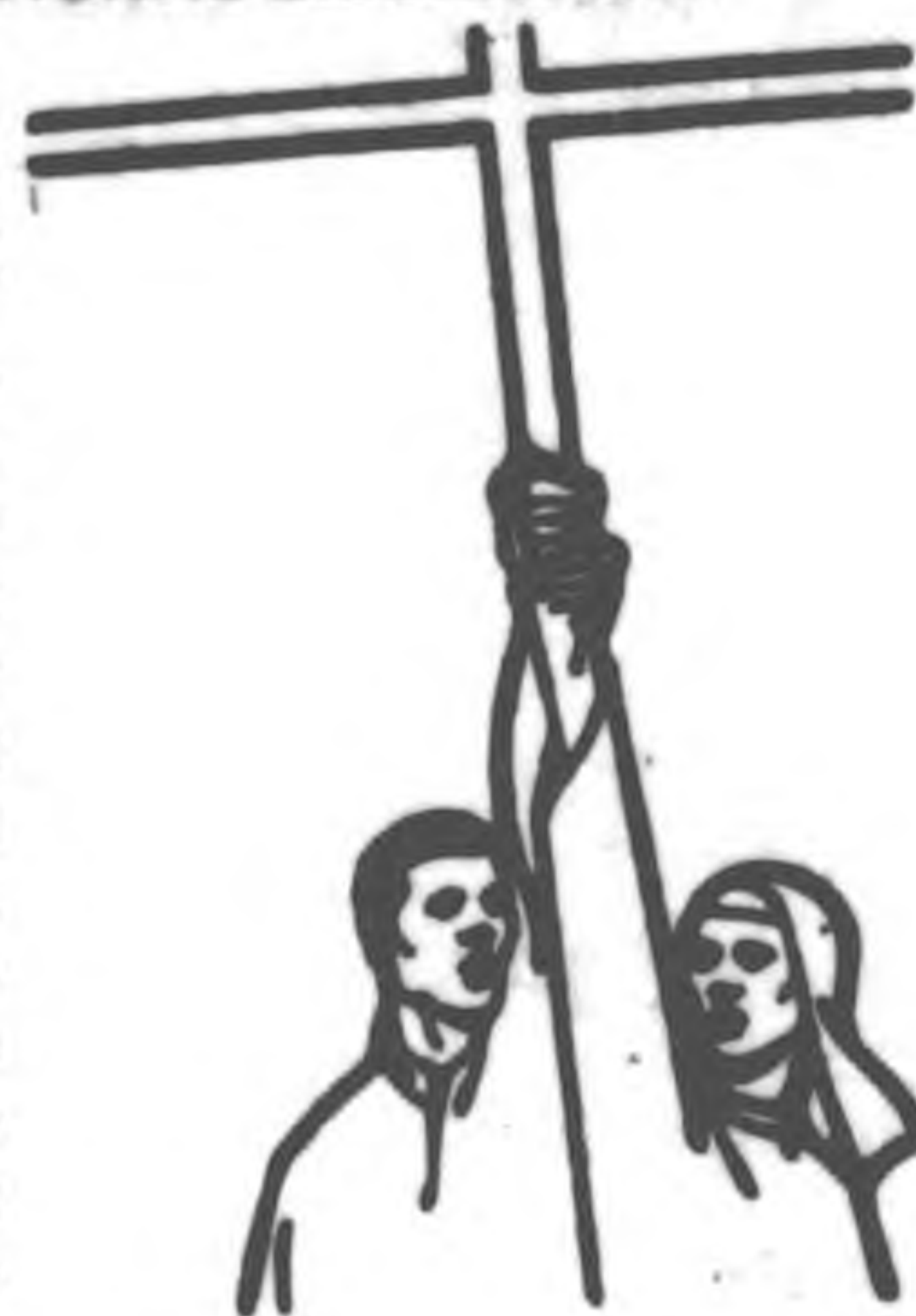
We call on all patriotic and peace-loving Filipinos to be constantly vigilant and be actively involved in closely monitoring the ceasefire. This is our best assurance, that these first steps we have taken will bring us closer to our goal of peace based on freedom, justice and democracy.

CHRISTIANS FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION

For too long, war has raged in our land. (Thus), when the peace negotiations produced an agreement to enter into a cessation of armed hostilities and stop further bloodshed, we rejoiced greatly and saw in the ceasefire agreement the dawning of that day of peace which all of our people seek and which we as Christians know is what God wills for all of his people.

The CNL supports the ceasefire agreement signed by the NDF with the Aquino government. It reaffirms its designation of the negotiating panel as its authorized representatives in the ceasefire talks. It is committed to implement any and all agreements that the NDF negotiating panel may enter into now and during the substantive phase of the ceasefire period.

CNL believes that the ways of peace are as significant as the ways of war in the struggle of the people for national liberation and total human development. Indeed, war must be waged because the requirements of peace demand it. As Christians and members of our Churches, we know this from the depths of our faith. Likewise, we believe that many in the Aquino government are Christians and aspire for that "peace which passeth all understanding". We know that they too would like to give peace a chance. They owe this to the Filipino people as they owe it to the God who is the Maker and Ruler of us all.



KABATAANG MAKABAYAN

Whereas, generations of youth, the best hope of the Filipino people were deprived of basic opportunities and conditions for a worthy role in society;

Whereas, since the colonial period and under successive regimes, education moulded a privileged minority and became a subtle inducement to submission for the vast majority.

Whereas, the US-backed Marcos regime, true to its subservient nature towards imperialism, bartered away the country's patrimony and resources - including the nation's best resources, the Filipino youth;

Whereas, protests, more heightened now in the countryside, are met with terror. Families and tender minds are brutal-



ized by the trauma of intensified militarization, hamletting and salvaging; in the cities, harassment and disappearances are still the ordeal of many community organizers and mass leaders;

Whereas, all these still continue against the promises of the present government, and must now come to a halt;

Whereas, at stake in the ceasefire and subsequent peace negotiation process is the future of the country and the youth;

Whereas, we, the Kabataang Makabayan, are determined to inherit a just, democratic and prosperous society and carry on to completion the struggle for genuine national freedom and democracy;

We hereby resolve and declare our formal support to the peace negotiation process, in solidarity with the broad masses of the Filipino people, as we share a sincere desire to give direction to the revolutionary process towards a more permanent solution to the fundamental problems of our society.

KATIPUNAN NG MGA GURONG MAKABAYAN



The Katipunan ng mga Gurong Makabayan (KGM) views the (ceasefire agreement) as a good start in the more protracted process of trying to work out a lasting solution to the basic ills of Philippine society. It is only through a sincere effort of striking at

these problems that a genuine and lasting peace can be attained.

As teachers, we are fully aware of the hardships entailed by Filipino teachers and students as well, in areas suspected of supporting the New People's Army. Schoolhouses close down for indefinite periods as entire barrios are subjected to strafings, bombings and hamletting. In such places, the regular school calendar is hardly followed as what lies foremost in the residents' minds is learning how to survive.

In this light, we strongly welcome a temporary ceasefire which could serve as a much-needed respite from the indescribable sufferings already inflicted on our people. We also welcome the ceasefire as an opportunity for us to further expand the reach of our literacy campaign and political education work among the people in the countryside, as well as in the cities.

Nevertheless, we must be vigilant against all forces who are working for the failure of the peace talks.

It is necessary, therefore, that all Filipinos concerned about the materialization of genuine peace organize themselves into "volunteers for peace" and initiate activities which could further deepen the people's understanding of these peace efforts.

In the ultimate analysis, the success of the peace efforts of the NDF and the Aquino government would strongly depend on the willingness of the larger Filipino populace to participate actively in ensuring it.

MAKABAYANG SAMAHANG PANGKALUSUGAN



The Makabayang Samahang Pangkalusugan (MSP) reiterates its full support for the ongoing peace talks. We pledge to abide by the provisions of the 60-day ceasefire agreement. Moreover, we will continue to mobilize our members, the health sector and the people to counter all moves by the enemies of peace to forestall, disrupt or abort the negotiations process.

As the underground national democratic organization of revolutionaries in the health sector, we take this opportunity to bare our basic demands consonant with the interests and welfare of the majority of Filipinos.

MSP demands that the people's right to health as a basic human right be upheld in unequivocal terms by the Aquino government. Inherent to this right is the protection and promotion of the people's livelihood, just compensation and humane working conditions for the working class, and genuine land reform for the peasantry. Only by fulfilling such material preconditions for optimal physical and mental well-being can we assure the people not only of relief but also freedom from illnesses.

The MSP calls for the nationalization of the health industry as a prerequisite to building a health care system free from foreign domination and genuinely responsive to the needs of the people.

We rejected the past dictatorship's bogus health programs geared to buttress and glorify itself and those used for counter-insurgency. We will continue to oppose anti-people and anti-nationalist policies and programs of the present government while we express readiness to cooperate on those which will benefit the people, immediately and in the long term.

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT- MINDANAO

The NDF-Mindanao joins the Filipino people and all other nationalists, democrats, liberals and patriots in the country in hailing this major political milestone in the common search for lasting solutions to the country's main problems. This is a veritable testimony to the incredibly hard and long struggle of the Filipino people for genuine freedom, justice and democracy. This is also a monumental tribute to a people determined to live and die for a prosperous and happy future.



Faithful adherence to the ceasefire agreement by both sides would help create a healthy atmosphere conducive to comprehensive and more substantive talks.

Experiences from the Laac, Davao del Norte and Misamis Oriental regional peace talks, however, have taught us bitter lessons. Just a few days after a truce was forged, fascist military troops on orders from Marcos hold-outs in the military, stormed the countryside and killed suspected Red fighters. We therefore remind the government that unjust and unwarranted provocations in the field have never come from our guerrilla fighters for they have always acted in self-defense as experiences in the past have shown.

Nevertheless, we reiterate our commitment to respect and uphold the ceasefire agreement signed on behalf of all revolutionary forces under the NDF by our representatives in the peace talks, Ka Satur, Ka Tony and Ka Bobbie.

We view with optimism the fact that the fundamental problems in Philippine society can now be dealt with seriously and more profoundly on the negotiating table and other democratic venues available under a liberal political atmosphere. But the revolutionary armed defense of the people must remain intact and preserved against renewing threats of fascism.

Fascist and oppressive apparatuses are still whole and intact. . . . In Mindanao, only foreign interests and a few landed families continue to benefit from the rich natural resources. The national minorities and the Bangsa Moro people wallow in backwardness and abject poverty while deprived of genuine autonomy to chart their own destiny.

The *lumads*, the Christians and the Moro people alike are daily threatened by fascist atavists in the form of pseudo-religious fanatic groups like the Tadtad and Bolo Battalion, abusive CHDF units, private armies of notorious warlords as Dimaporo and Paderanga, Lost Commands like Col. Lademora's and other dreaded paramilitary units and death squads.

Surely, with the ceasefire agreement, the battle for genuine liberation is only half-won and far from over. Almost two decades ago, we began the long trek along the tortuous road to national salvation. We dared to hope, to begin and to struggle. With the vast support of the majority of our people, we shall dare to win.



Comraderie: NPA guerrillas mingling with peasants

ARTISTA AT MANUNULAT NG SAMBAYANAN



As a member of the NDF, ARMAS shall work hand-in-hand with all national democrats, patriotic and peace-loving Filipinos to ensure that the ceasefire accord is fully implemented and all violations exposed and opposed.

Through art and literature, we shall utilize the period of peace to heighten our people's consciousness regarding the basic evils that have until this very day oppressed and exploited the vast majority of our workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie. During the harder but more substantive phase of the negotiations, the NDF can always count on ARMAS especially where the issue is people's art and literature for national freedom and democracy.

We harbor no illusions for an immediate political settlement of the age-old problems that have caused the impoverishment and dehumanization of our people. Still, the ceasefire agreement offers us a freer atmosphere under which to create and propagate a national democratic art and literature.

If, by whatever scheme US imperialism and its local lackeys succeed in sabotaging the peace talks, ARMAS will all the more be inspired to create art and literature for the people to persevere in the war to attain peace and prosperity. Revolutionary and progressive artists and writers have always persisted in their task no matter the environment. We have always created works of art even in the most adverse and repressive periods of the US-Marcos dictatorship because the people have always been our strength and inspiration.

ARMAS joins all NDF members in serving a warning to the ultra-rightists and all reactionaries in and out of the Aquino government: the Filipino people can never be cowed by plots to whip up anti-communist hysteria and thwart our efforts at achieving lasting peace and just solutions to the problems of US imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism.

As artists and writers, we have learned — and we are determined to learn some more — how to wield art and literature as weapons to defend our people and arm them for the final struggle to secure national freedom, democracy, lasting peace and prosperity.

MAKABAYANG KILUSAN NG BAGONG KABABAIHAN



The Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan (MAKIBAKA), along with the rest of the revolutionary organizations under the NDF, have waged a popular war for the past 16 years. So many MAKIBAKA members have laid down their lives in struggle. Among the first to fall was Ma. Lorena Barros, the MAKIBAKA's founding chairperson, who at the time of her death was the most wanted female guerrilla of the Marcos regime.

Many more have been brutalized — raped, tortured, abducted, detained, separated from husband and children, wounded and scarred in battle as well as from bombing, strafing and zoning operations conducted by military and paramilitary troopers against the people.

And yet at the first opportunity for peace that the Aquino government has offered, the MAKIBAKA has responded positively — but not without maintaining that the only peace acceptable to us is peace founded on justice.

MAKIBAKA sits at the negotiating table, duly represented by NDF negotiators, with the memory of the blood of our martyrs spilled for national democracy. It is this same thought that drives us even more to seek all possible avenues for the immediate resolution of the basic democratic and nationalist demands of our people through peace, if conditions allow it, or through war, if forced by circumstances beyond our control.

In this light, the MAKIBAKA will not take the attempts and provocations of reactionary forces to sabotage the ceasefire lightly. Neither will the MAKIBAKA allow itself and other revolutionary forces to be led like lambs to the slaughter in case the Aquino government, whether by design or by accident, unsheathes the sword of war. The MAKIBAKA serves notice that it seeks peace but will not retreat from war.

NDF-INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Mankind stands at a crucial crossroad of history, the road leading to annihilation or to global peace.

We have confidence that the deepest aspiration of mankind for a lasting peace is achievable. Through the years the forces for peace have grown and widened their influence.

However, the present world reality tells us that the factors which generate war still exist, foremost of which is the aggressive foreign policy of the Reagan administration. It is the Reagan administration which has put obstacles to the disarmament talks and has made the door to the arms race wide open. Embracing the doctrine of "Nuclear Superiority and First Strike Capability," Washington planners are mapping out a new arena of battle, the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) or Star Wars. It was the SDI issue which stood in the way of a fruitful talk in Iceland.

On the ground, they are sponsoring counter-revolutionaries and are beefing up the military machinery of local reactionaries in power. The US military build-up is undoubtedly aimed at global dominance.

The Filipino people and the NDF are paying close attention to the question of global peace, especially because of the presence of huge US military naval and air bases in the country. These bases have been the instrument of force in securing the dominant position of the US in the country as well as in the region. Moreover, they serve as an important component of the US global strategy.

Recently, the government and the NDF initiated a ceasefire and peace negotiations. The NDF has entered the peace process within the framework of the resolution of the basic problems of the people and advancing national independence and democracy. The quest for local peace and the struggle against US domination are concrete contributions of the Filipino people towards the advancement of international peace.



LIGA NG AGHAM PARA SA BAYAN



We in the Liga ng Agham Para sa Bayan (LAB) give our full support for the ceasefire and peace negotiations between the government and the NDF. We are also calling for a comprehensive solution not only to the political but also to the economic roots of the insurgency through a commitment of the

Philippine government to a program of nationalist industrialization and genuine agrarian reform.

National democrats in the science and technology sector are

most willing to lend their skills and expertise to the ongoing efforts at economic construction and other important national goals. Such efforts, we believe, must recognize that the basic ills of Philippine society are the biggest stumbling blocks to the Filipino people's political and economic emancipation. Imperialism and feudalism, in fact have only served to stagnate Philippine science and technology and to isolate it from meaningful use by the national economy and the broad masses.

Finally, we are calling on all Filipino scientists and technologists to contribute their share in the all-important endeavor to achieve lasting peace, democracy and independence for our nation and people.

MAINSTREAM

Developments in the people's movements

Sowing hope in San Fernan

How the PKM changed the lives of peasants in a Central Luzon barrio

Except for a narrow dirt road where tricycles now and then pass, the barrio of San Fernan (not its real name) consists only of two things: hectares and hectares of rice fields and a few clusters of fragile nipa huts.

In the early morning, just as the sun has risen, smoke would rise from the brown huts and the strong smell of kapeng barako would fill the air. The farmers in their long-sleeved polos, rolled-up pants and buri hats, would then walk to the fields to start the day's work. In the evening, just a few hours after the sun has set, the gasera in each hut would one by one be turned off, signaling the end of another day for the farmers of San Fernan.

On the surface, life in this remote barrio in Nueva Ecija looks as tranquil as a sleeping child. The farmers' life, it would seem, is as leisurely, peaceful and easy. But nothing could be farther from the truth.

A peasant's story

Mang Emil has lived all his life in San Fernan. When he was just as high as his father's waist, he was already helping to plow the land, apply pesticides and prepare and carry the sacks needed during harvest time. Mang Emil, only 45 years old but now toothless and his back bent from rheumatism, ticked off with his fingers the problems of small farmers like him:

"Sa amin, nagtatawag ang taniman sa utang at nagtatapos din sa utang. Utang ka ng pambili ng binhi ng itatanim. Utang ka ng pestisidyo. Utang ka ng kemikal. At habang naghihintay ka ng ani mo, utang ka ng kakainin ng pamilya. Mabuti kung maganda ang ani at nasa oras. Kung mahaba ang tag-araw, Setyembre na kami nakakapagtanim dahil walang parubig. Pag bumagyo naman, lubog ang pinakahihintay-hintay na tanim at lubog ka rin sa utang."



Peasants in the field: Caught in a cycle of poverty

Mang Emil has planted rice in the same three hectares of land since 1962. But up to now, he has remained a *hacoma*. He shoulders all expenses, from the seeds to the hand tractor, and pays the absentee landlord 35% of his harvest.

Like other farmers in San Fernan, Mang Emil's harvest is sold to the rich merchants who come to the barrio during harvest time. These are the same merchants who loan him the fertilizer, pesticides and other farm inputs. The merchants not only price them higher than in commercial stores but they also demand higher interest rates. In addition, they impose as a condition for lending that the harvest be sold to them. The merchants then buy the crops at prices lower than those declared by the Agriculture Ministry. This usurious system, known as *tan-pahan*, has been a common practice not just in San Fernan but in thousands of barrios in the Philippines and has been exploiting thousands of farmers every planting season.

Mang Emil compared his plight as a poor farmer with that of being trapped in quicksand. "Kailangang magtanim para kumain. At para magtanim, kailangang mangutang dahil wala lang kapital. Pag umani na, kulang pa para sa isang buwang pagkain, at di pa lahat ng utang ay nabayaran. Kaya magtanim ka uli, utang ka uli - mas maikli na ngayon, dagdag pa ang natirang utang. Kaya talagang para lang nasa kumunoy. Kahit anan ka pumalit, hindi ka makawala at palubog ka lang nang palubog sa utang."

But in addition to all these, Mang Emil and the other residents of San Fernan still have to endure the abuses of PC soldiers deployed in the area.

"Pumunta sila minan sa amin nang katanggap-tanggap, nagtatanong tung may NPA daw akong anak. Pagtatapos kinuha sila ang maliit na baboy na pinapaliti ho para sa hani ng anak kong baboy." Mang Emil narrated. A farmer's wife added, "A, sa amin, lagi silang pumapunta, sinasabing bertdey daw ni Mayor, ni Kapitan, o ni gawitong opiyal, at lung gusto raw naming iregalo ang manok namin. Wala ho namang magagawa dahil hawak na sila ang manok bago kumatak."

There are many other incidents in San Fernan that Mang Emil and other barrio-folk would find impossible to forget. In the year 1979, for example, an old man and a neighbor of Mang Emil refused to give his beloved dog to the soldiers who wanted it for pulutan. The following morning, the old man's body was found on the roadside, riddled with bullets.

Sowing revolutionary change

The seeds of the revolutionary movement were first planted in San Fernan in 1981. Intense military operations, however, kept them from growing fully. Mang Emil described the first time he saw NPA guerrillas: "Uma'y takot na takot kami dahil nakahahatohat naman talaga yung mga

baril. Ayaw sana naming patuluyin at nagdahilan na ako na wala kaming pangilew - ubos na tako ang posporo. Ang kaso, inabutan ako ng lighter sa bintana."

Grinning his toothless grin, he added, "Pero nang makilala namin sila, ang babata at kasing bait ni San Pedro."

The farmers soon learned that the first step to dismantling the system which has exploited them for so long was to get themselves organized. They realized that if they did not do something now, their children and their children's children will inherit the same hunger and oppression they have suffered all their lives.

"Ang kawayan," said Mang Emil, "ay mahina at yumuyuko pag nag-isa. Pero pag itinali nang same-sama ang marami, puwede pang gawing isang matibay na bahay."

It was from this realization of their collective strength that the farmers of San Fernan organized their barrio chapter of the Pambansang Kilusan ng Magbubukid. The PKM is a revolutionary underground mass organization of farmers and agricultural workers. An active member of the National Democratic Front, it recognizes the need for a national democratic revolution in order to uplift the oppressive condition of the peasant masses. Thus, it directly participates in and supports the underground movement and (is) in fact one of its major forces since the peasantry constitute 70% of the total population.

"Ang PKM ay naglalayong baguhin ang buhay ng mga magbubukid. Ito ay may pangunahing mithiin ng pagpapetupad ng tunay na reporma sa lupa, at siya ring numumuno sa pakikibaka ng mga magseesaka," explained Frank, the secretary of the local PKM chapter in San Fernan. As in other politically advanced barrios of the NDF, the PKM in San Fernan is led by the *komite sa balangay (KB)* which consists of the heads of each *grupo sa purok (GP)* or area committee. In turn, the GPs consist of the leaders of each *grupong mesa (GM)*, which usually has three to four members.

San Fernan residents, however, are still in the process of forming their Barrio Revolutionary Committee (BRC) which should serve as a proto-government in the barrio. The Chapter committee of the PKM is represented in the BRC, as well as the leading committees of other barrio organizations such as the local chapter of the Kabataang Makabayan and the Samahang Kababaihan. These two other organizations, however, still primarily aim to support the PKM and the peasant movement because they consist of peasant youth and peasant women.

Meanwhile, the barrio chapter of PKM is under the provincial committee of the revolutionary movement except in areas where municipal-level chapters of the organization have already been set up. In turn, the provincial committees are supervised by the regional committee.

A barrio chapter usually has a mini-



Truly the people's army: Red fighter helps in planting rice

mum of 15 members. The municipal chapter, on the other hand, must have at least five barrio chapters or 30% of the total number of barrios, depending on the condition in the area.

Ideally, PKM chapters should have *katulong na komite* (support committees) to systematically and more effectively work for its goals. These include the support committees on education, health, defense, production-economy and organizing. In San Fernan, the PKM is still relatively a baby compared to that of other barrios; only its committees on organizing and production-economy have been formally set up. Its other tasks such as implementing a health program are specially carried out by other members of committees. Defense work, which is usually performed by the *militiyang bayan* (people's militia) is being done in the meantime by the local NPA unit.

All the committees meet regularly, especially the *komite sa balangay*. The KB drafts a program of activities every two

months, while the lower committees draft more detailed two-week programs.

The problems tackled by the PKM range from simple domestic problems to low production, usury, stolen carabao and lack of water for irrigation. If the problems, however, become too grave and dangerous to be handled by the organization alone, the NPA steps in and helps. These problems include threats of violence from the landlord or the military and the punishment of bad elements in the barrio.

Backbone of the peasant movement

With the PKM as its backbone, mass struggles in San Fernan have intensified, to improve the economic, social and political condition of the farmers. These include campaigns for the reduction of land rent and the prices of farm inputs; increase in the price of paddy and in the wages of agricultural workers; reduction of interest rates; abolition of usury; and

the dismantling of a PC detachment in the area.

All these campaigns are part of the PKM's primary goal of implementing a revolutionary land reform program. An integral part of the national democratic revolution, agrarian revolution is the key to dismantling the feudal and semi-feudal exploitation of the Filipino peasants. It is the revolutionary lever needed to get Mang Emil and the other farmers out from the quicksand of oppression in which they are now trapped.

One of the projects being undertaken by the PKM chapter in San Ferman is the setting up of a cooperative. The groundwork for this started in July this year, and territorial cadres have noticed how mass meetings in the barrio inevitably become liveliest when the topic turns to the planned cooperative.

Eldy, 24, a leading cadre in the guerrilla front which encompasses San Ferman, said that although the farmers recognize how they are exploited by usurers, they still have no option but to continue to borrow money from them because there is no alternative source of capital. But with the establishment of a cooperative, the farmers are given a better alternative and higher hopes for bigger earnings. At the same time, the cooperative would put the usurers in the area out of a job.

Eldy explained that there are three types of cooperatives. First is the marketing cooperative which helps to raise the price of farmers' products. All the crops are bought by the cooperative at a price just high enough for the producers to gain profit. The cooperative, serving as a marketing agent, then deals with interested buyers and sets a uniform and competitive price for the crops. Forced to transact business through the cooperative, merchants would no longer be able to coerce the farmers into selling their products at exploitative rates.

"Ang isa pang tipo ay ang kooperatiba sa pinansya," Eldy stated. "Ito naman ay nagpapautang sa magsasaka ng pondo para sa petanin ngunit sa mababa at kailangan'y pinagkaisahang interes. Masariling pera ang pagpapahiram at masari ring mga pataba o gamot na mismo."

The third kind is the store-type cooperative which sells at lower prices farming materials and machinery. It should also cater to the basic needs of peasant families by selling fresh food or basic medicines. The store could also promote the products made in the area, such as hand-made baskets or hats.

With the cooperative providing for their needs at just prices, the farmers will not have to buy from the merchants who unscrupulously double, even triple, the prices. This is the type of cooperative that the San Ferman farmers have chosen to organize and which they later plan to

expand into a marketing cooperative.

Nimfa, 25, a student who became a peasant organizer, said the capital for the store will come from the farmers who have all agreed to give a small amount every harvest season. In addition, NPA guerrillas operating in the front were able to persuade last June 23 a big businessman who owns a milling factory, to contribute to the cooperative's fund. Nimfa also said that the NPA will give to the farmers the things they confiscated in operations against abusive landlords.

Meanwhile, in other barrios where cooperatives have been successfully set up, farmers' production has considerably increased. The cooperative even serves as an effective means of promoting cooperation and collectivism among the barrio people.

Furthermore, in other open legal struggles, the determination and unity that the underground movement has helped to weld among the peasant masses continue to guide them. Picket-delegations to local government offices demanding solution to the farmers' plight have been launched in San Ferman. Last Aug. 30, the farmers, together with those from neighboring barrios, marched to the municipal hall in protest. Although typhoon Miding at that time was also demonstrating its fury, it failed to deter the angry and hungry peasant men, women and children.

The peasant mass movement, moreover, does not stop at launching anti-feudal struggles. They were there, for example, in rallies in Angeles, Pampanga to protest the US military bases. They also marched untiringly from San Ferman to Manila in the now historic Lakad ng Bayan para sa Kalayaan in March 1984.

"Malaki ang natulong sa amin ng rebolusyonaryong kihusan dahil natuto kaming magkaisa at lumaban," said Elpie, a farmer-leader. The problems, however, of farmers in San Ferman and in other barrios in the country are too deeply rooted to be solved in a few years. But as Mang Emil himself said, "Ngayon may boxes na

ang mga maliliit na magsasaka. May pag-asa pa palang makaalis kami sa kumunoy - kundi man ako, ang apo ko man lang sana."

PKM and armed struggle

When Mang Emil was asked why armed struggle was necessary, he just stared and described the question as blind and stupid. He asked, "Pag sinuntok ka, di ba ulag ka? Lalo pa pag binarii ka!" Mang Emil knew that without the armed protection being provided by the NPA, many of the small farmers who are buried in debt would have long lost their land to the greedy usurers.

In fact, the NPA always supports the farmers during negotiations with despotic landlords so as to neutralize the private armies used to frighten the farmers into submitting to the landlord's wishes. The guerrillas warn abusive landlords and punish those who refuse to heed their warnings. Meanwhile, soldiers who keep extorting money or who steal the property of barriofolk also receive corresponding punishment.

Eldy, explaining the need to combine armed struggle with the open and underground peasant movement, said: "Ang rebolusyong agraryo ay naglalayong wasakin ang pampulitika at pang-ekonomiyang kapangyarihan ng mga naghaharing uri. Hindi natin makakaya ito nang pagrarali lamang o pagpepetisyon. Isang pitik lang sa armalayi ng militar, tumba na tayo. Ang kailangan ay isang armadong sandatahan na magtatanggol sa magsasaka upang maisulong ang rebolusyong agraryo." Eldy said it is thus important to firmly consolidate NDF areas to effectively implement the agrarian revolution and to defend whatever gains the movement has achieved.

But while the Red fighters protect them from the military, the private armies and criminal elements, the farmers too, in their own way, protect the guerrillas.



All in the family: Mother, son and daughter in the NPA

"Nagbibigay kami sa kanila ng intelligence reports. Pag may pumasok na PC sa isang baryo, madali naming ipinaabot ito sa mga kasama sa pamamagitan ng kuryer," Eldy explained. Thus, the NPA easily learns of the movements of enemy soldiers.

The peasantry also gives invaluable help to the armed struggle through the recruitment of Red fighters from its ranks. It is the PKM chapter committee that screens possible recruits and makes recommendations to the local NPA command. The masses further help in communications and propaganda work and provide the guerrillas shelter when they visit the barrio. "Pagkain at sigarilyo lang naman ang hinihingi nila, pero malaki ang proteksyon na ibinibigay nila," Mang Emil said.

Indeed, the NPA has been aptly named. It is the people's army because it grew from the people's support. On the other hand, it exists for the protection and advancement of the people's revolutionary movement.

Truly, the story of Mang Emil is the story of every poor farmer in the country. San Fernan — where the peasants' unity has become an effective weapon against exploitation — could be any place in the archipelago. Even these words could have been uttered by any of the long abused Filipino peasants:

"Ang magsasaka, higit sa lahat, ang nakakaalam na kung maganda ang binhing itinanim, maganda ang palay na aanihin. Hindi namin gusto ng gyera. Ang gusto lang namin ay sapat na ani kaya't kami'y nagsisikap na mapataas ang produksyon. Ngunit ayaw din naming makita na lang ang bangkay ng kapitbahay namin sa gilid ng kalsada. Kung hindi kami nagkakaisa, mananatili kaming gutom at nanginginig ang tuhod pag narinig ang tinig ng mga sundalo."

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In a narrow dirt road leading to the barrio of San Fernan, two things were discovered one morning: tracks made by army boots and the body of a dead farmer. Then, one evening, long after the farmers had gone back from the fields, AFP soldiers suddenly arrived and ordered all men to line up in the street and show their cedula. One or two farmers were shouted at, and one was even slapped for daring to look at the soldiers with angry eyes. Meanwhile, a farmer who took a long time to answer the soldiers' questions was brought to the detachment for interrogation. The farmers didn't know if they would see him alive again.

Mang Emil, who has lived all his life in San Fernan, was once asked why he keeps on farming despite the hardship and the abuses by landlords, usurers and PC soldiers. He replied: "Ipinanganak ako ng nanay ko sa bukid. Nabaluktot na ang katawan ko sa bukid—nalagas na nga rin ang ngipin ko rito. Pero walang sinuman ang maaring makapagpalis sa akin dito. Sa bukid ding ito ako mamamatay."

Liz Beltran

A harvest of goodwill

NDF-Northeast Mindanao Congress held



Dialogue with the people: NPA fighters thresh out problems with barriofolk

"The trust is back," whispered a teary-eyed cadre as she witnessed the opening of the NDF Congress in Northeast Mindanao (NDF-NEM). Emerging from a traumatic campaign to purge its ranks of massive infiltration by the enemy's deep penetration agents, NDF-NEM began to pick up the pieces in October.

For the first time in many months, congress delegates, mass activists, three platoons of the New People's Army (NPA), and scores of peasants and their children cheered, burst into lively songs and marched to celebrate "a fresh start."

The congress was not the first, but it certainly unleashed a newfound energy and enthusiasm to vigorously consolidate the NDF units from the barrios to the municipalities, and to carry out more aggressively the NDF program. Delegates and observers went home with the firm resolve to catch up with the remaining work: expansion of revolutionary land reform, launching mass campaigns for higher wages, raising of rural production and improvement of the overall living conditions of the masses.

This resolution was the gist of a one-year program hammered out in the congress. Organizationally, it is expected to harness the massive creativity and initiative of thousands of national democrat activists in the region.

Aside from the program, delegates conducted hair-splitting discussions on the orientation of the NDF, assessed the NDF's efforts in the past four years, and reviewed the present national and regional situations. A concrete product of the four-day discussions were step-by-step guidelines on how to build the Barrio Revolutionary Committees, the NDF's pro-governmental units in the barrios.

Twenty-two delegates, including four priests and two professionals attended the congress. Represented were the Pamban-

sang Katipunan ng mga Magsasaka, Kabataang Makabayan, Kilusang Rebolusyonaryo ng mga Manggagawa, Nasudnug Minorya, Samahan ng Kababaihang Makabayan, Christians for National Liberation, the NPA and the Communist Party of the Philippines.

The delegates also elected the members of the Executive Committee. Chosen chairman was Morris, the CPP representative. Also elected to the committee were Karyo, the CNL representative; Fr. Frank Navarro, who represented the NPA; and the two professionals.

The congress' lively mood was carried over to succeeding weeks, when the elected NDF officers held peace talks with local mayors, civic and church leaders. The first dialogue held Oct. 20 had eight municipal officers-in-charge, the representative of Surigao del Sur's governor and the NDF led by Fr. Frank Navarro agree to continue threshing out ways through which they could cooperate to solve the region's problems. Bishop Irineo Amantillo of Tandag town; as well as church, civic and government officials motored to the mountainous barrio of St. Christine in Liangga town, Surigao del Sur to witness the talks.

A few days later, the provincial government, led by Gov. Felicidad Pimentel, staged a demonstration with the NDF in Tandag, the capital town. During the rally, Fr. Frank Navarro addressed the crowd in a well-applauded 35-minute taped speech.

It was the well-known and well-loved guerrilla-priest who closed the four-day NDF congress earlier with a solemn celebration of the mass. NPA guerrillas, CPP cadres and NDF mass activists joined peasants and workers in the ceremonies held inside a modest, wooden chapel atop a hill, warmed with the newfound goodwill and the morning sunshine overwhelming the Diwata mountains. ■

Harnessing the people's support

NDF implements principle of just taxation

Bonnie, one of a handful of cadres who started organizing in Davao del Norte in the late '70s, recalls how revolutionary taxation began in a remote barangay of Monkayo. A landlord — a judge who had acquired lands through bribery — must have gotten tired of militant peasants who were agitating for a reduction of land rent. As Bonnie tells it, he suddenly abandoned his property — all 60 to 80 hectares of irrigated lands — in 1978, whereupon Bonnie and his comrades distributed the land to the peasants.

The gesture must have touched the peasants who volunteered to give 10% of their produce per harvest to the New People's Army. Today, the contribution has become a tradition. But instead of going to the NPA, the funds have been channelled back to the Barrio Revolutionary Committees (BRCs), which are the people's revolutionary governments in the barrios.

Revolutionary taxation must have begun differently in other NPA areas. But Bonnie suggests that, everywhere, it could have started as voluntary contributions to what was once a fledgling revolutionary movement. By the time the revolutionary movement had spread out to 60 provinces and won the support of millions, Bonnie adds that it had become necessary to collect taxes, if only to enable the National Democratic Front (NDF) to continue its work — that of advancing the democratic and nationalist interests of the people.

Bonnie himself could not recall when

the revolutionary leadership had started to regularize taxation. But as many cadres remember it, the first guidelines came out in the late '70s, in a document called the "Revolutionary Guide for Land Reform." The document laid out the rules by which revolutionary activists could collect taxes fairly and justly. But because of different conditions prevailing in various areas of NDF and NPA organizing work, the taxation guidelines had to be adjusted. According to Morris, chairman of the NDF provisional council in Northeast Mindanao, a person or an establishment in an NDF territory is taxed depending on economic capacity, importance and contributions to the community, attitude towards the revolution and the people, the overall prevailing economic situation, the demands of the people, the business' effects on the ecology and many more.

In practice, taxation varies even more — from person to person, from one company to another, from one barrio to another, and from one region or province to another. "Our primary concern is to be fair and just as possible, to be as flexible and considerate as possible," says Morris. "Perhaps, this is one reason why revolutionary taxation has never become uniform."

Agricultural tax

Generally, however, the broad guidelines set by the Revolutionary Guide for Land Reform (RGLR) continue to hold.

One example is the iron rule that revolutionary taxes must never be obtained with the use of force.

Broadly, there are two kinds of revolutionary tax: agricultural tax and the "tax on class enemies." The first is levied on peasants who have benefited from the NDF's programs on land reform. Thus, they are derived from the income obtained by the peasants as a result of concealment of part of the landlord's exorbitant share in the harvest, reduction or the total elimination of land rent, or the free distribution of land. Agricultural tax also covers the increase in income obtained by farmworkers from wage increases and net income earned by the people's cooperatives. The amount of tax is based on income earnings, so that poor peasants give less than the rich peasants.

The current agricultural tax policy set by the RGLR is as follows:

► When part of the harvest is concealed, the land rent which used to go to the landlord is divided into three. One part goes to the peasants, another to the NDF and NPA, and the remaining one-third is kept by the BRC or the local chapter of the Pambansang Kilusan ng Magbubukid (PKM), the peasant association;

► Poor peasants who benefit from reduction or non-payment of land rent give 2% of the net harvest while peasants of higher status give 5% of their net income;

► Farm workers who benefit from increases in wages give 5% to 10% of their wage increases;



Welcome greetings: NPA guerrillas and peasant women exchange warm greetings

a logging company in Agusan del Sur owned by Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. had tried to negotiate with the NPA. "*Gustong makipag-ayos. Magbibigay daw sila ng malaking tax. Pero grabe ang landgrabbing at terorismo ng mga security guards at militar sa masa.*" Therefore, he says, the NPA burned down the logging company's equipment, chain saws and vehicles.

In the Cagayan Valley, the NPA destroyed some P200 million worth of property of a score of big logging companies after Isneg minorities complained about damage to the environment. The same was done to the NDC-Guthrie Plantation, Inc. (NGPI) in Surigao del Sur. The NPA raided the camp in 1984, destroyed equipment and confiscated the arms of security guards. The people did their share by destroying NGPI's palm oil crops. Morris notes that the people and the revolutionary movement were angered when NGPI grabbed wide tracts of land of the peasantry using the notorious Lost Command, a fanatical group armed by the AFP. As a result, nine leaders of the workers' union at NGPI and countless other people were killed or harassed by the paramilitary group.

Eventually, the NPA agreed to let the company stay — not only because it was willing to give in to the NDF's taxation. "*Nakipag-usap sa amin ang may-ari pagkatapos ng raid. We agreed to let them operate as long as they do not expand anymore. Besides, destroying the whole enterprise would have destabilized the economy. It was too big,*" Morris says.

For the NGPI and other businesses allowed to continue operations, a 10% to 15% tax is imposed on the net income of the enterprise. Therefore, taxes are higher for enterprises which earn more. If data on net income is not available, the tax is

based on total sales, scale of production, number of head of cattle (in the case of ranches), number and unit price of the equipment being used, size of the payroll, size of the plantation and others.

Landlords, on the other hand, are taxed based on the amount of land rent they receive from the peasants. But taxation does not prevent the revolutionary movement from mobilizing the peasants to demand lower land rent, better prices for their produce and an end to usury.

As for the national bourgeoisie or small and medium-scale businessmen, the RGLR stipulates their exemption from taxation, although they are encouraged to make contributions based on their solidarity with the people's anti-imperialist struggle. Says Morris: "Generally, we are considerate with small companies. But those owned by compradors are taxed more strictly." "Class enemies" who are willing to help the revolution, he adds, are also accorded lenient treatment. "There are no hard and fast rules. Taxation depends on a number of things," Morris told *LIB*.

How the NDF implements taxation

Banial, as head of the BRC's Finance Committee in his barrio, collects the agricultural taxes. But this particular job, he says, is a piece of cake. "*Hindi na kailangan ang puwersahan dito. E, 'pag nagpatawag nga ng miting ang barangay council, kalahati lang ang pumupunta. Pero 'pag NDF (o BRC) ang nagpatawag, lahat pumupunta. Mas madali ang pangungulekta. Naiintindihan naman ng masa ito at nakikita nila kung para saan ang pera.*"

Contrary to popular belief, collection of "tax on class enemies" is not also hard, says Morris, who had served in the NPA and the Executive Committee of the CPP in the region before he became regional

NDF Chairman. "For example, when we opened up the guerrilla front around the Nasipit Lumber Company (in Butuan, Agusan del Norte) in 1979, we wrote the middle-level manager to demand P50,000 in taxes. We explained why, and told them: 'If you're concerned with your operations, talk to us because we are reasonable.' We wrote them three times before they finally answered. The managers consulted their superiors in Manila, and came back with the agreement."

Up to now, he says, the lumber company has never failed to pay its dues. Usually, it is collected in lump sum only once a year. Some companies, however, are allowed two installments, he says.

Morris points out that the irony with the Aquino government is that it refuses to recognize that the NDF fully controls certain territories, and yet it concedes that it is able to collect taxes. "Even (former Defense Minister Juan Ponce) Enrile's companies pay taxes to us. If he had wanted to show his military was in control, let them secure those companies," he says.

In the NDF barrios in the countryside, the question of where the collected taxes go is superfluous. Nevertheless, an NDF finance committee in Western Mindanao has published a 22-page pamphlet explaining taxation, and giving a detailed accounting of its expenses. The bulk of the expenses go to the military expenditures of the NPA such as purchase of arms and medical costs; production of mass newspapers and books; and food for the army and the cadres who work full-time for the revolution. Allowances for NPA guerrillas and full-time cadres come at the bottom of the list because each Red fighter or cadre is given only a P10 to P20 allowance per month.

Taxes collected from the NDF territories in the countryside are also used to sustain part of the revolutionary work in the cities. A big chunk of the budget goes to the production of educational and informational materials. A sizeable amount is also used to support full-time cadres and mass activists and their families.

Taxation, however, is not the only source of funds for the NDF. Each member of the revolutionary movement is charged with the responsibility of looking for other sources of finance. Thus, NDF units are encouraged to undertake finance projects. To boost the movement's coffers, each member is also asked to pay a minimum monthly membership due of P5. Besides, underground newspapers solicit subscriptions and like other units, receive voluntary support from many people.

Along with the principle of "self-reliance" and "simple living and hard struggle," the principle of just taxation is one that is carefully upheld and guaranteed by the revolutionary movement.

Pen Guerrero



The underground press: Funded by revolutionary taxes

