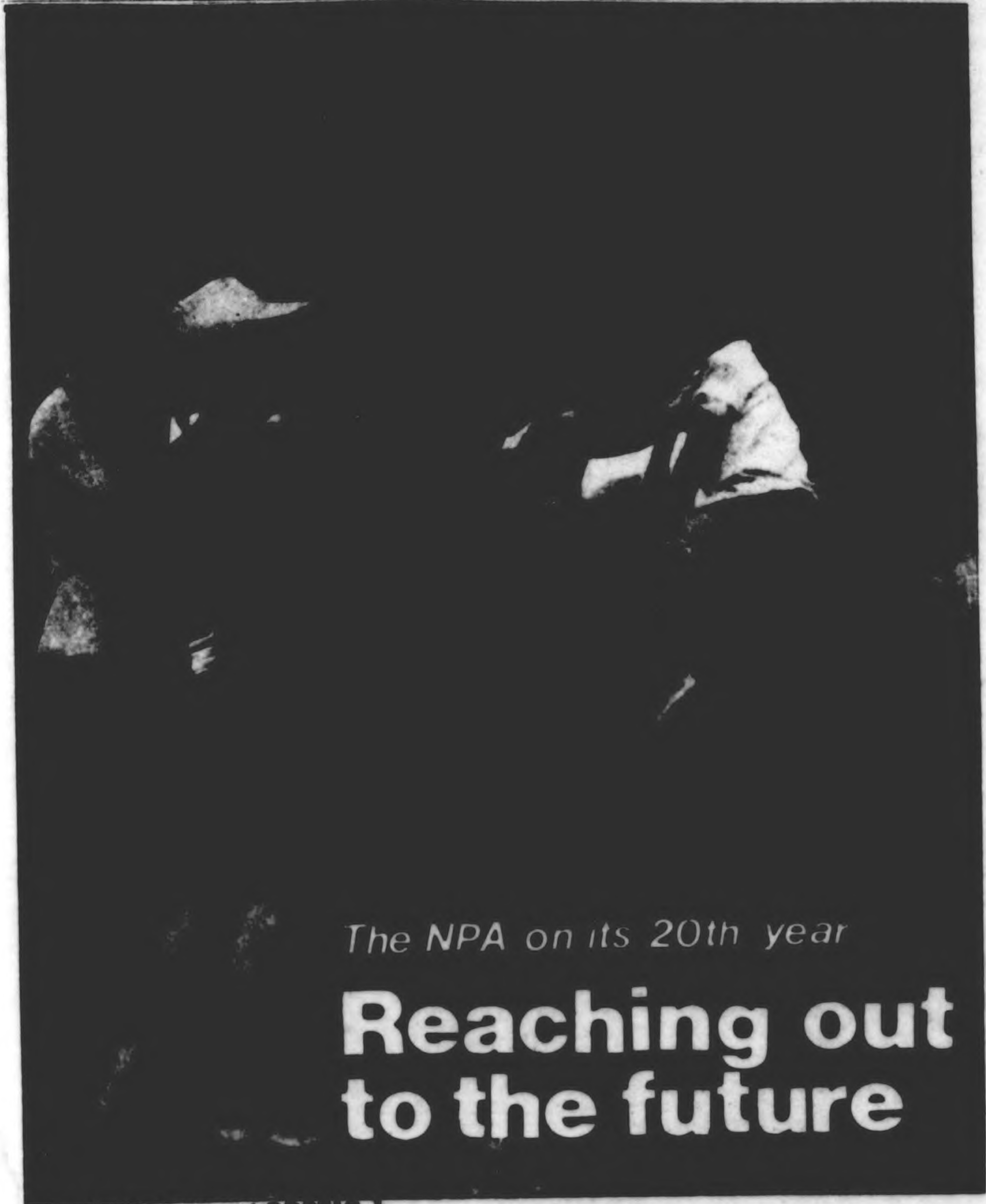


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LIBERATION

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The NPA on its 20th year

Reaching out to the future

DANTE L. AMBROSIO
KOLENSYON

The NDF marches on!

On the occasion of its 15th anniversary, the National Democratic Front salutes the people of the Philippines who are persevering in the struggle for national freedom, democracy and peace. The NDF likewise greets all peoples engaged in similar struggles abroad and expresses its firm solidarity with them.

The NDF wishes to thank all our friends and supporters all over the world for their abiding faith in us and their support for our fight against imperialism, feudalism, fascism and all forms of reaction in the Philippines and everywhere else.

The past 15 years, since the NDF came forward with its 12-point general program for the national democratic revolution, have been a period of relentless life-or-death struggle. On the whole, they have been very fruitful years, despite the great sacrifices that they have entailed.

We pay solemn tribute to the thousands of martyrs who have laid down their lives selflessly upon the altar of national and social emancipation. Their heroism shall forever be etched in the Filipino national consciousness — today in the continuously advancing struggle, and tomorrow in glorious victory.

We also proudly pay tribute to our tens of thousands of revolutionary cadres and fighters who are advancing the frontiers of freedom, to the millions of the toiling masses untiringly aiding and embracing them, and to the thousands of other countrymen, in both the cities and countryside, who support the NDF in countless ways.

The oppressive socio-economic and political conditions in the country provide continuing impetus to the people's revolutionary struggle. The changeover from the US-Marcos dictatorship to the US-Aquino regime has not basically altered these conditions, in cruel repudiation of popular expectations. In the past two years, the US-Aquino regime has shamelessly pursued a pro-imperialist economic program that stifles meaningful development, along with a "total war" policy against the people's revolutionary movement. The promises of change evoked by the February 1986 events are largely unfulfilled; with the reemergence of elite politics the fulfillment of these promises has become more and more remote.

In increasing numbers the Filipino people turn to the NDF and its revolutionary program, which provides the only viable alternative to the abominable ruling system.

Behind the NDF banner, the Filipino people are now assiduously and spiritedly building the structures of their new life. They build upon the gains of almost two decades of revolutionary work. Organs of democratic political power, the solid foundations of the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG), are now being established on the municipal, district and provincial levels in various parts of the Philippines. For a long time, these organs of democratic political power functioned on the basic or barrio level, providing the

strong support base that built up the fighting forces of the NDF.

Today these organs of political power are systematically being upgraded and consolidated. The large pool of local cadres developed during the many years of struggle are now being assigned to administer local governmental affairs in our base areas. We are actively soliciting the assistance of various organizations, groups and individuals in various aspects of governance and socio-economic programs to uplift the people's livelihood.

The twin tasks of the NDF today are to build the PRG on a nationwide scale while sustaining the advance of the revolutionary struggle on all fronts. We urge one and all to put their shoulders to these tasks.

Since last year, the NDF has also paid close attention to familiarizing our political and military cadres, and all the revolutionary armed fighters, with the fundamentals of the international laws of war and the salient provisions of the Geneva Conventions, specifically Protocol II of Common Article III of these international covenants. Protocol II deals with guarantees for the protection of civilians and non-combatants in a war of non-international character such as we have in the Philippines.

By doing its best to insure that the revolutionary fighting forces abide by the provisions of the Protocol, the NDF aims to humanize the conduct of the national liberation war. In the first place, the NDF undertakes this war to bring about justice and its concomitant social peace. The US-Aquino regime, on the other hand, carries out a war to suppress the people's legitimate struggle for national and social emancipation. Thus, it has consistently violated the provisions of the very same Protocol which it signed on December 10, 1986.

Yes, we have come this far in 15 years. And we are determined, more than ever, to forge ahead to victory and to build the structures of the new life that our forebears dreamed about, that our children anticipate with confidence and hope.

We call on the entire Filipino people to oppose and reject the continued rule of US imperialism, feudalism and fascism now represented by the US-Aquino regime. Cast away the illusion that genuine social change could be obtained by merely switching personalities among the elite holding state power. Trust your own power embodied in the revolutionary forces, both armed and unarmed, to decide our national destiny. March onward with the NDF!

We ask our friends and supporters in all countries to keep faith with us in this noble but gigantic struggle to eradicate imperialist-directed national oppression and exploitation. Let this faith bind us ever strongly. Let it be manifested in our united endeavors to defeat the common enemy.

IN THIS ISSUE

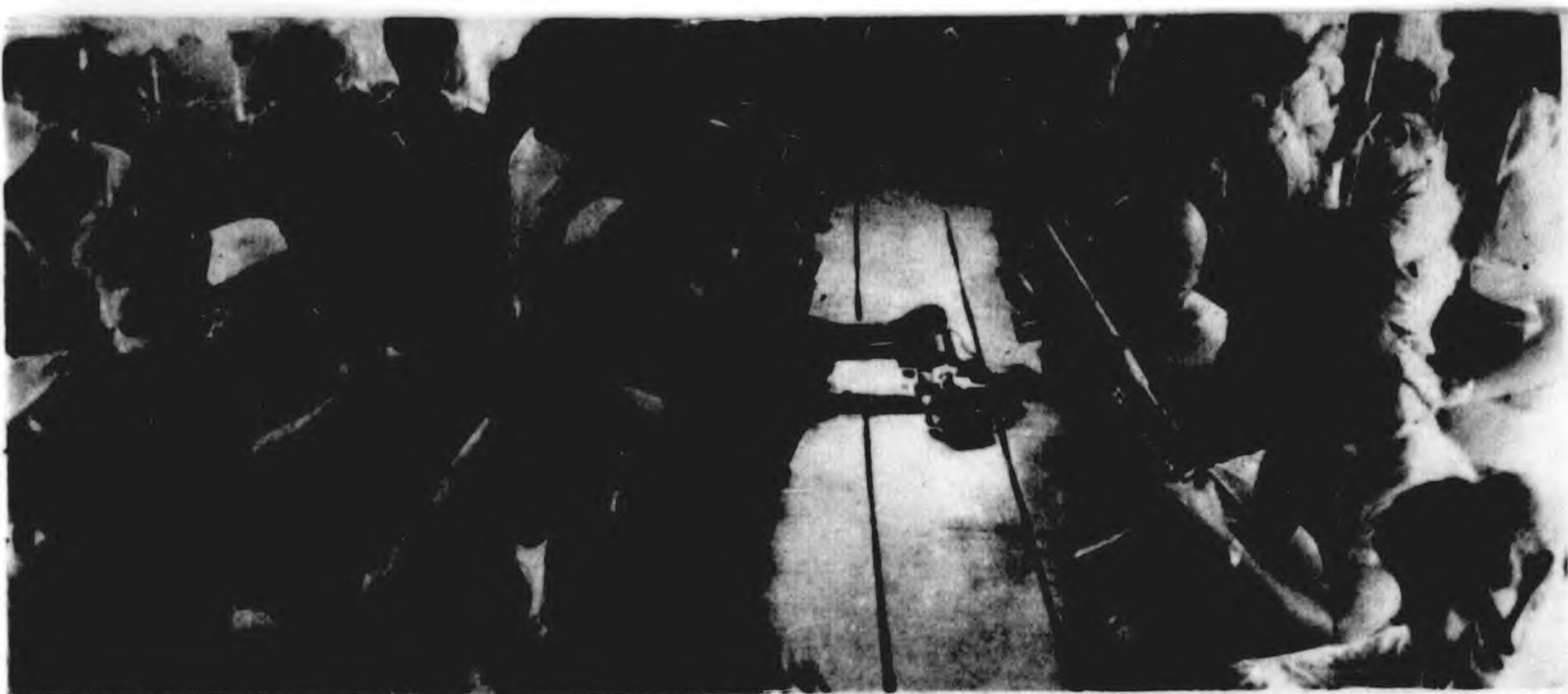
Cover: Red fighter and child in Samar

Cover stories: The NPA enters its 20th year of service to the people proud of its many achievements but mindful of the challenges it faces. In this issue, *LIB* cites the NPA's gains in the past year and its thrusts in the years ahead. Also featured are profiles of Red fighters from various regions.

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The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDF) serves as the organizational framework and channel for the unity, cooperation and coordination of all anti-imperialist and democratic forces in the Philippines and for progressive fighters and solidarity groups abroad. It traces its beginnings to the establishment of the temporary committee for the National Democratic Front on April 30, 1973. **LIBERATION** is the official publication of the NDF.



NPA company in tactical briefing: Ready and willing to face new challenges

LIBPHOTOS/Poi

COVER STORIES

On today's significant issues and events

Ushering in a new era of struggle

NPA sums up gains in 1987, prepares ground for regular mobile warfare

His smile is humble, yet he speaks with the thunder of a thousand battles. He is Ka Noel, a member of the NPA General Staff. Nineteen years of having been moulded and steered in the NPA have imbued Ka Noel with a certain quality that reveals a sense of fulfillment combined with a look of quiet expectation.

Today, as the NPA enters its 20th year of waging revolutionary armed struggle, it stands as Ka Noel does: proudly, with a string of achievements born of years of struggle; but humbly determined to confront the challenges that lie in wait.

String of achievements

The NPA has after all, come a long way from being a 30-man band in 1969 to the 12,500-strong regular guerrilla army that is now.

"Around 1983, our protracted people's war entered the advanced sub-stage of the strategic defensive (ASSD). *Sa puntong iyon talaga dumami, tumindi at lumago ang mga pormasyong kompanya at mga taktikal na opensibang inilunsad nito.* Guerrilla warfare was being intensified on a nationwide scale. Five years later today, our fighting units continue to achieve victories never before attained in the history of the people's army," said Ka Noel.

The year 1987 was a time of unprecedented intensification and maximization of guerrilla warfare throughout the archipelago. Said Ka Noel: "Intensification means increasing the frequency of our tactical offensives,

while maximization requires the staging of more wide-ranging and sustained guerrilla operations. This is done by utilizing varying combinations of company and platoon formations, partisan units and people's militias. Maximization and intensification will lead to the annihilation of bigger enemy formations while at the same time progressively weakening the enemy politically, militarily and economically."

As of mid-1987, consolidated reports from NPA commands all over the country showed an average of 10 NPA tactical offensives launched per day. In the Negros front alone, the NPA launched 65 tactical offensives in 45 days from the last week of July to the first week of September 1987.

Bigger NPA formations have also been established. According to an assessment paper by the NPA General Command, the growth of regular company formations almost doubled resulting in a more balanced distribution of companies in major areas of operation. Battalions were also established in two advanced areas.

An NPA company usually consists of three to four platoons with three to four squads of nine to thirteen combatants each. One battalion is composed of three to four companies. For every decentralized military operation conducted, the chain of command starts with the battalion commander to the company commander down to the platoon and squad leaders.

To facilitate command communication in quick decision battles, regular

forces use hand-held IC-2N or the more advanced digital O2N radio-transceivers. The transceivers, which are bought from or donated by local or foreign supporters or confiscated from the enemy, have vastly improved radio communication among various units. Radio communication is now continually being developed with the use of more sophisticated sets with wider range of frequency and reach.

The manufacture and utilization of grenades, landmines and other homemade blasting devices have also become widespread since last year. These were used against enemy armor like trucks, armored personnel carriers (APCs), tanks and entrenched enemy positions. The "vicious blasts" (as described by Melinda Liu of *Newsweek*) produced by explosives, serve to rapidly demoralize remaining enemy troops into giving up the fight, thereby gaining a quick tactical victory for the NPA.

Bigger formations employing guerrilla tactics but with the added advantages of high mobility, low visibility and more advanced communications and anti-armor ammunition have been proven effective in completely wiping out enemy platoons and decisively defeating or forcing the retreat of company-sized enemy operations. Dramatizing this increased military capability were successful ambushes in Bicol and Quezon and the raid on the Acoje Mines in Central Luzon in 1987.

In the Bicol ambush last March, a "six-by-six" cargo truck bearing AFP

troops was smashed to pieces by a landmine planted by an NPA explosives unit. The landmine instantly annihilated a squad of Scout Rangers led by 1Lt. Felix Brawner III. An APC was likewise completely destroyed when it hit another landmine in Gen. Luna, Quezon last March 1987. An accompanying truckload of soldiers was thereby effectively neutralized in that NPA company-sized ambush. At the Acoje Mines in Sta. Cruz, Zambales, an NPA company swept through the Australian-owned mining firm with tactical precision and occupied the premises for almost a day. In this first company-size operation launched by the NPA in Central Luzon, the Red fighters confiscated firearms and office equipment and gave the workers their overdue salaries.

Coordinated campaigns

Bigger formations require better military administration from the national, territorial, down to the regional and front levels. To do this, the NPA General Command has given special attention to the regularization of the people's army. Thus, administrative bodies have been formed on these levels along with the necessary support services for intelligence and medical work, finance and logistics. The political section has also been established with other staff support systems, assuring command and combat supervision in the field and the continuous strengthening of the political and military discipline of the NPA. The same period has also seen a significant strengthening and development of officers' and combat training to further hone the NPA guerrillas' fighting skills. The systematization of large-scale recruitment for the NPA has also begun. In Far North Luzon, recruitment posters and ads have appeared urging able-bodied youth 18 years and older, with no harmful vices and no crimes against the people, to enlist in the NPA. The ads read: "If you are willing to serve the people, ask for a recommendation from the NPA unit in your area."

As the NPA reaps gains along these areas, it is on its way to becoming a regular army. And as a direct result of these and other related developments, the NPA's overall capability to launch coordinated military campaigns at different levels has been enhanced.

One such campaign centralized at the national level was the anti-LIC (Low Intensity Conflict) campaign. Aside from the gains in terms of arms and war materiel confiscations, the intensification of tactical offensives nationwide aggravated demoralization in the AFP and starkly exposed the bankruptcy of the "total war" flaunted by the Aquino regime. In an assessment, the NPA General Staff said that the

anti-LIC campaign further fanned the flames of violent factional strife among opposing reactionary camps at the national and local levels. On the other hand, outstanding successes in the campaign raised morale among the masses and middle forces and brought to the fore the significance of armed

struggle and the revolutionary alternative in an intense situation. Foreign and local big capitalists, the Aquino regime's most prized beneficiaries, have also become doubting Thomases as to this regime's capability against the revolution.

Among the most dramatic series of



NPA company: vastly improved fighting capability

"Heed new cries for battle"

For the 19th occasion, the New People's Army, the Communist Party of the Philippines and the revolutionary masses commemorated the establishment of a genuine people's army on March 29.

The much-ballyhooed "neutralization" of ranking CPP and NPA members on this day bandied about by the US-Aquino regime as proof of the much-improved effectivity of its counter-insurgency program, must not in any way dampen our celebratory mood. While the recent arrests may have resulted in certain dislocations, they do not in any way diminish the significance of the many breakthroughs and successes achieved by the people's army during the past year.

Indeed, there is good reason for the entire revolutionary movement and the masses to celebrate. As the New People's Army enters its second decade of persevering in people's war, it has achieved unprecedented victories which heretofore have never been attained in the entire history of the people's army. Our fighting units now exhibit a high level of preparedness and willingness to face new tasks and challenges in advancing the national democratic revolution.

During the past year, our people's army launched more widespread and intense guerrilla warfare in almost all the major islands of the country. More important, the initial stages that signal the growth of regular mobile warfare in selected regions have become more pronounced. This significant development is a very clear indication that we are now at the threshold of a new stage in our revolutionary people's war.

The people's army has again demonstrated its high level of unity and strong internal discipline in the face of vicious attacks and sugar-coated blandishments of the reactionary regime. The steadfastness and exemplary performance of its officers and fighters in the midst of tremendous difficulties and sacrifices have further tempered the unity between the people's army and the masses.

More and bigger troop formations have been set up in almost all regions. The total number of company formations has practically doubled, bringing about a more even distribution of NPA companies in the major fighting front. Battalion integrity formations have also been attained in two areas. In addition, operational commands complete with necessary combat and service support networks have been established and strengthened at the national, area, regional, front and provincial levels.

On the whole, the advances made in terms of organizational level, technique and fighting capability have been demonstrated by the vastly improved capability of our fighting units to directly annihilate or effectively cripple bigger enemy troop formations. The main forces of the people's army can now totally crush enemy platoons and decisively defeat company size formations. In addition, our local guerrillas and people's militias have repeatedly demonstrated their capa-

offensives launched under the aegis of the anti-LIC campaign were those that took place in Negros in mid-1987. Targeting notorious military units and big businessmen-planters who were financing the formation of vigilante groups, the offensives yielded several firearms and at least P2 million worth of foodstuff and vehicle spare parts as well as equipment for the NPA ordnance units.

On a regional level, the NPA was able to frustrate two of the regime's most ambitious counter-insurgency schemes — Oplan Red Buster II and III. For most of 1987, battalion- and division-size troops of the AFP battered Cagayan Valley in an effort to crush the Red fighters and decimate their mass support network in the barrios. In Paco Valley alone, 2,000 AFP troopers entered 14 interior barrios in the summer of 1987, massacring 30 civilians, razing to the ground 50 houses and destroying some 250 hectares of cropland belonging to Isneg and Ilo-



More weapons: NPA guerrilla with confiscated machine gun

cano settlers. For months, killings, arson and bombings took their daily toll all over Cagayan Valley.

All in all, the US-Aquino regime spent P60 million on Red Buster III alone, which ran for four months last year. But the Red fighters and the or-

ganized masses fought back. In a series of daring ambushes and sabotage operations, the NPA killed over 125 enemy troopers and seized over 200 rifles. At least P523 million worth of property belonging to big logging companies were destroyed in NPA sabotage operations. The logging companies had been funding the formation of vigilante groups in the area.

The NPA was able to defeat Operation Red Buster II and III through the effective and creative utilization of weapons which were of lower caliber compared to the enemy's rifles. The NPA also made full use of their knowledge of the terrain and the principles of guerrilla warfare in dealing crippling blows on the AFP. Above all, they were helped by timely intelligence information and other forms of support from the organized masses, who play an integral role in the defense of their communities.

On the threshold

In intensifying and maximizing guerrilla warfare, the NPA has been able to seize more weapons and create more and bigger combat units. At the same time, in its step-by-step development of command structures, logistical requirements, training and fighting techniques, the NPA is preparing the ground for launching regular mobile warfare.

"Regular mobile warfare waged by company- and battalion-size NPA units is a distinct feature of the next stage of our people's war, the strategic counter-offensive," said Ka Noel. "After five years of maximizing guerrilla warfare, developing company-level formations nationwide and regularizing the people's army, we are now in transition to the next higher substage of the strategic counter-offensive. *Itong substage na ito ang magtutulak (sa atin) nang todo tungo sa strategic stalemate.*" Ka Noel's optimism can only derive from the determination of the people's army he has been with for nearly two decades, to carry on the struggle to victory. **Tara Go Mi-os**

and victory"

bility to repel and harass enemy forces attempting to enter or launch operations in our guerrilla fronts.

It is on this level of warfare that we now face the challenges of the immediate future.

At present, the central task of the people's army is the full maximization of guerrilla warfare along with the simultaneous and step-by-step development of the components and requisites of regular mobile warfare. This will mean establishing more companies and other bigger formations like battalions; fulfilling logistical requirements and upgrading military hardware; streamlining and strengthening command structures; systematizing large-scale recruitment and training; improving fighting techniques and tactics; improving the capacity to launch coordinated campaigns and counter-campaigns; and continuously strengthening the political and military discipline of the New People's Army. Through sustained guerrilla warfare, we must be able to deal crippling blows against the reactionary government to weaken it politically, economically and militarily and effectively impair its capacity to prevent the advance of the revolution.

The new situation which calls for the advancement of the revolutionary struggle to a new and higher stage will require tremendous effort, sacrifice and perseverance. Every officer and fighter of the people's army will give his best to prove equal to the bigger tasks and challenges that lie ahead.

For the past 19 years, the NPA has repeatedly demonstrated its capability to preserve itself, recover, grow and expand in the face of the most vicious attacks and setbacks dealt by the forces of reaction. The recent arrest of some of our comrades shall not diminish the morale, fighting spirit and courage of our commanders and Red fighters. We are certain that final victory will be ours because we are fighting for a just cause, we have the national and democratic interests of the Filipino people at heart, and we enjoy the warm and active support of an ever-growing number of Filipinos who recognize and cherish the New People's Army as the genuine army of the people.

We draw courage and inspiration from the counsel of a great Latin American revolutionary who said: "whatever setbacks may befall us, they shall be welcome, because we know that our battlecry has reached other receptive ears, that other arms will be extended to take up our weapons, and other comrades will come forward to answer our call with the staccato of gunfire and new cries for battle and victory."

Long live the New People's Army!
Victory to the Filipino revolution!

General Command
New People's Army

April 7, 1988

"Mass support shall be decisive"

An interview with the General Staff of the New People's Army

The AFP has lately been stepping up its propaganda war against the revolutionary forces by boasting that "the CPP-NPA will be practically decimated in the next few years." The military has also been drumming up claims of "splits" and "internal struggles" among the ranks of revolutionaries, which have allegedly resulted in the erosion of ideological, political and organizational unity. LIB sought to clarify these issues, among others, in an interview with Ka Noel, a member of the NPA General Staff. Excerpts:

Q: How would you assess the capabilities of the New People's Army in the current period? Have there been any significant changes in its capabilities since Aquino took over?

A: In terms of number of troops, high-powered firearms, logistics, aid and even training, the NPA is still smaller and weaker vis a vis the AFP. On the other hand, in terms of mass support, morale and troop discipline, the NPA is in a far better position. That is where our strength lies.

The NPA has gone through a long process of development since its founding in 1969. From 1969 up to the declaration of martial law in 1972, *mabilis ang paglaganap nito*. From Cagayan Valley, the NPA was able to establish its presence in other areas like Southern Tagalog and Bicol.

From 1972 to around 1975, the NPA experienced great hardships, especially in Isabela. On the other hand, advances were made in Bicol, the Visayas and Mindanao. But by 1976-77, most guerrilla fronts were able to transcend their difficulties, and there was a steady advance, especially from 1983 to 1984. We kept this up, until about 1986, when we had to make adjustments because of the new situation and the ceasefire that took place. *Halos walang napasok na armas mula February 1986 hanggang February 1987. Pero pagkatapos nito, ang bilis ng buwelo, lalo na nitong 1987-88.* In terms of arms seizures, and frequency of tactical offensives, we have now more than made up for whatever opportunities we missed in 1986.

At no time in its history has the NPA suffered a grave setback. Not during the early years of martial law, not during the erroneous boycott of the 1986 presidential election, not after the EDSA uprising.

Q: Has there been a shift from the strategy of protracted people's war, encircling the cities from the countryside to urban insurrectionary strategies? AFP propagandists suggest that disagreements regarding which strategy to follow is one cause of the so-called rift within the CPP-NPA.

A: As Amado Guerrero has pointed out in "Specific Characteristics of our People's War," our people's army should develop from being small and weak to being big and strong. We do this by capitalizing on our strengths and taking advantage of the enemy's weaknesses. The enemy is weaker in the coun-

tryside, so that is where we started, and where we developed our strength. Now that our people's war has made tremendous advances, the role of political and military struggles in towns and cities has also grown. But this does not mean that we have abandoned the countryside and are now concentrating our efforts in the urban areas.

On the contrary, we are at present creating bigger NPA formations and launching bigger military offensives in the countryside. This we will continue alongside the stepped-up development of our mass bases and political struggles in the countryside and cities. The development of urban partisan operations, insurrectionary forms of struggle and the like do not indicate a change in strategy, but merely indicate the advances in and growing sophistication of our comprehensive strategy of people's war.

Q: What can you say about the military's claims that the NPA will be crushed by the time Mrs. Aquino ends her term in 1992?

A: That's just military propaganda. As I've said, if we review history, we will see that when we were still very weak, they were not able to defeat us. When we started, we operated in only a handful of barrios, with only a few thousand mass supporters. *Iilang daan pa lang ang Hukbo noon.* The enemy had superiority in terms of weapons and numbers. They were even more united then. *Pero kahit noon, hindi nila tayo kaya.* In the two decades that we have been waging our guerrilla war, we grew stronger. We accumulated more firearms. Our troops began to receive better training. Our militia forces also grew in number. As far as the enemy was concerned, *hindi sila lumakas. Dumami pa*

ang mga problema nila. They were demoralized and factional struggles intensified. Meanwhile, the NPA gained in terms of mass support and troop morale. *Lalong hindi tayo makakaya ng kaaway sa ganyang antas. Hindi nila tayo kaya noon. Lalo na ngayon, mas mahihirapan sila.*

Q: Some military analysts say that the AFP has been able to consolidate its ranks somewhat, with Ramos' faction now in effective control. The effect, they say, is better morale.

A: Well, the AFP has been trying to solve its problems. Their troops have been granted salary increases. They have retired some of their overstaying generals, in deference to the demands of officers in the middle echelon. Foreign military aid, particularly from the US, continues to pour in. They have also been retraining their troops, and they call this "reeducation." Recently, they abolished the Regional Unified Commands (RUCs) because officers in the field have been complaining that the RUC setup was too bureaucratic. Now this gives officers in the field greater flexibility and initiative, *dahil nasa kanila na ang pagdedesisyon tungkol sa command, logistics at disposisyon ng pwersa nila. Dati kasi, yung supplies*



Mountain sport: Red fighters playing ball



High morale and discipline: NPA company officers lead mass oath-taking ceremony

nila, kinakarne sa RUC office at hindi na nakakarating sa field. This is supposed to streamline their operations and improve the morale of their troops in the field.

But the AFP as a whole still has very serious problems which it will never be able to solve. Its very orientation leaves it no mass support and its activities are counter-revolutionary. Its activities will always go against the interests of the masses.

The AFP's problem is how to arrest the military's decline, how to deal with its weakening position. On the other hand, the NPA has problems too, but these are what you would call "problems of growth." *Papalubog sila habang papalakas tayo.*

Q: Wouldn't massive doses of US military and economic aid cause a turn-around in the AFP?

A: Massive doses of US aid will mean more guns, more tanks, more helicopters for the AFP. But all this will not necessarily improve the military's fighting ability. Morale remains low among AFP ranks. Besides, the ability of both the US and the Aquino regime to provide for the AFP's needs is greatly hampered by the economic crisis.

In the long run, it is not logistics and armaments but mass support that shall spell the big difference. As the enemy's logistics improve, so will military atrocities against the revolutionary masses intensify. And so will mass support for the NPA grow. As the enemy's weapons capability improves, so will that of the NPA.

Q: More and more cases of bombings and other enemy attacks against the NPA's base areas are being reported. This is a practical problem that cannot be resolved merely by counting on the organized masses' high level of politicization. How does the NPA plan to deal with this?

A: On several occasions, the enemy has bombed our base areas and ground troops have tried to penetrate them. The military even utilizes division- and brigade-size operations to do this. Their goal is to destroy our mass base, our political infrastructure. They also want to deprive us of economic support, so they demolish the masses' houses and burn their crops.

When this happens, the organized masses and militia usually build traps to slow down enemy movement. The NPA's regular forces advance to engage the enemy outside the base perimeter. If the enemy succeeds in penetrating the interior, the militia units undertake harassment operations against them. *Kaya yung kaaway, pagpasok pa lang nila, dumudugo na. Paglabas nila, binibira uli sila ng regular nating pwersa.*

In terms of damage, several barriofolk are usually killed in

the AFP's rampage and crops are destroyed. But the enemy invariably fails in its goal of destroying the NPA's mass base. It is the masses themselves who take the initiative to defend their areas. And when the enemy leaves, the masses again set up their organizations, develop their defense capability and see to their crops. *Samantalang yung kaaway, malaki ang pinsala nila dahil namamatayan sila, at bumabagsak ang kanilang morale. Yung Hukbo, wala masyadong pinsala dahil na rin sa inisyatiba at suporta ng mga lokal na pwersa.*

But we do realize that as mass participation in the revolutionary struggle increases and as our own fighting capability improves, we will need more and better weapons. In the past, some of our NPA companies have faced problems in attacking enemy camps, for instance, because many AFP camps now have better fortification. It has become more difficult to take such camps or to penetrate their defenses with the use of ordinary rifles. For that, we need heavier weapons. There have been other occasions when our troops were able to achieve their objective of taking over the camp, but at great cost.

This means that we have to improve our logistics and ordnance capabilities. We are now studying ways to improve our manufacture of land mines, grenades, bullets. *Sinisikap nating sa iba't ibang paraan ay makakuha tayo ng mga armas na mas malalakas pa kaysa sa karaniwan nating armas ngayon.*

Q: What sources do you plan to tap?

A: In the main, we plan to obtain better weapons through arms confiscations during NPA tactical offensives. At the same time, we are open to receiving aid from allies, parties, governments or national liberation movements in other countries that recognize the justness of our struggle, provided that there are no strings attached.

Q: Sources say there are parties overseas that have been giving us "friendly advice" on how to wage our war.

A: We are open to receiving advice, suggestions and constructive criticisms, especially if such given in the spirit of revolutionary internationalism and mutual support. In fact, some parties have expressed concern about some of our shortcomings and published this in the form of an open letter to the CPP. What we will not allow, however, is interference in our internal affairs.

Now, should a party, movement or group overseas offer aid at may kasabay na pagdidikta, hindi naman natin tatanggapin iyon. ■

People's warriors

A collection of six portraits of NPA guerrillas



JIL, former CHDF member

Jil, an NPA guerrilla in Cagayan, is a man with a past. He had been a member of the much-hated Civilian Home Defense Forces for four years.

Jil, however, did not exactly volunteer to join the CHDF. The barangay captain sent him to Ilocos in 1974. "He gave my name to the enemy, then forced me to go to Ilocos. It was only then that I realized I had been recruited into the CHDF.

He was afraid and didn't know what to do. Besides, he began to receive a P100 allowance which meant so much to a poor peasant with a family of seven children to feed. It was simply irresistible for the confused, terrified farmer. As a CHDF, Jil said he committed no grave crime against the people. "All I did was to get drunk, go to dances, all the bad habits," he says with a smile now.

But as Jil found out easily, the enemy was capable of committing injustice even among its men. "We (CHDFs) were treated very badly by the members of the 115th PC Company." In 1978, he had been falsely accused of killing a civilian informer in his barrio. He was thrown into jail without trial, and was constantly maltreated by the police.

At dawn of April 8, 1984, Jil saw his chance to escape. He bolted out of prison and immediately sent a word to the NPA that he wished to join it. By then, the NPA didn't have to explain to Jil what it was fighting for and why the armed struggle was just. "I told the NPA that I wanted to reform, to give what I can to the people.

The revolutionary forces saw the sincerity in the man, and quickly admitted him. With Jil's full-time work as a guerrilla, his family's economic well-being remains a problem. So whenever he can, he goes home to a very small hut in one of the interior

barrios of Cagayan and helps farm a small plot of parched land. Recently, one of his sons also joined the NPA.

But Jil doesn't regret having joined the guerrillas and losing his P100 allowance. "*Hindi bale, nakakatulong naman ako sa mamamayan at sa Hukbo,*" he said.



ANA, a student from Negros

Ana, 22, is pert and pretty. She is also the political instructor of a platoon of NPA fighters in the south western guerrilla front in Negros. As such, she is in charge of administrative work, political instruction, recruitment of guerrillas into the Communist Party, and joins in drafting the ideological, political, organizational and military plans for the platoon.

She started her political involvement as a student activist in a rural high school. Though she comes from a rich peasant family and never directly experienced repression, she quickly accepted the cause of the poor masses as her own. Two years later, while a third year high-school student, she decided to go to the nearby countryside and work full-time for the revolution. She joined the instructors' staff under the district committee in the southwestern guerrilla front and also took part in peasant organizing. In 1983, after three years as a peasant organizer and education officer, she was recruited into the NPA, thereby becoming one of 10 women Red fighters in the southwestern front.

At first, she was apprehensive about becoming an NPA, but she was assured that her discipline, physical fitness and exemplary record as an activist, peasant organizer and instructor qualified her for the hard life of a guerrilla. Soon after, she took part in the one-month basic military training course required of Red fighters.

At 19, she participated in her first tactical offensive - the raid on a PC-

INP Field Force detachment in Barrio Bactolon, Sipalay. Ana started as an ordinary Red fighter, but later trained to be a medic. She quickly rose from being squad medic to platoon medic. She later became the platoon's finance officer before being assigned as the political guide of a squad. In a few months, she was promoted to the position of platoon political instructor.

Ana is newly married to a fellow Red fighter, who happens to be an assistant squad leader within her platoon. When asked whether the difference in rank (she is one of the highest-ranking NPA women officers in Negros) bothers them, she said, "*Walang problema. Pantay-pantay kaming lahat dito.*"



JIMMY, tailor, electrician, labman

Jimmy was born into a middle-class family in Bacolod City. The family's fortunes declined soon after Jimmy graduated from high school, so he was forced to drop out of college after two years to find work. He could not find a suitable job in Bacolod, so he sold some of his personal belongings to raise transport fare to go to Manila.

In the big city, Jimmy worked in the daytime as a tailor in a friend's shop and studied electronics at night. Upon graduation, he returned to Bacolod and found work repairing appliances. But later, the small store where he was working closed shop. He then became an assistant laboratory man in a photographer's shop. Jimmy jokingly said of his dwindling economic status: "*Bumaba nang bumaba ang class origin ko, mula petiburges patungong semi-proletariat.*"

By that time, however, Jimmy began to be initiated into the revolutionary movement through a friend, who often asked his help in developing photos of the NPA. In 1979, he resigned and became a peasant organizer in central Negros. His exposure to the peasants' plight convinced him all the more of the need for armed struggle. After two years, he became a Red fighter.

Jimmy proved not only to be a good guerrilla. He also had a quick grasp of military tactics. Today, he leads an NPA company in one of the

guerrilla fronts in Negros. Among the most successful operations he led was the simultaneous raid on the police station and the Scout Ranger headquarters in Isabela town in May 1985. The AFP in Western Visayas then considered it its biggest military setback.

Jimmy, by the way, has movie star looks and has other skills and talents besides tailoring, electronics, photography and military tactics. He also composes songs, the latest of which he dedicated to his fiancée, a peasant organizer. He is probably the Negros NPA's closest answer to the "Renaissance man."



ALLAN, a rich peasant

Allan, 37, was among those recruited by the famous Red Coy (RD 5), the NPA company which went on a long march in 1974 from Isabela to Central Luzon to flee pursuing battalions of government troops. That year, he volunteered to be an NPA courier and also helped in organizing farmers in their barrio. His wife Emma, who didn't know this, became suspicious of his activities and thought that he was having an affair with another woman, as he often came home late.

In 1977, Allan decided to work full-time as an NPA guerrilla. By then, he had already told his wife of his involvement but she insisted that the family should come first. Thus, every time he visited her, Emma pleaded, caajoled and threatened him to leave the revolutionary movement.

Those were not easy times for Allan because their two sons were already born by that time. But he held on to his convictions. After much persistence and patience in explaining the goals of the revolution to his wife, Emma was finally won over and even agreed to serve as a courier. At present, she works as a full-time organizer.

Allan cites several changes in their marriage after both of them joined the underground. "*Hindi naman basta maalis talaga ang tempuhan sa mga mag-asawa pero nabawasan nang husto ngayon dahil nag-uusap na kami kaagad pag may problema. Mas naging mature kami noong sumapi kami sa kilusan.*" Allan said. Whenever serious marital and financial problems arise in their fa-

mily, he said that their respective units are always there to help them.

Their first-born is now 17 years old and a high school graduate. Only recently, he asked his parents' permission to join his father in the hills.



GERSON, a Jesuit priest

Gerson is an NPA guerrilla in Samar. He is also a priest, having been ordained into the Society of Jesus in the early '80s.

It was while working in the slum areas of Metro Manila as a student theologian that Gerson realized that the problems of the poor cannot be resolved without basic changes being made in Philippine society. Later, he pursued his Christian mission in Samar. Exposed anew to rural poverty, he persevered to act against conditions that deprive the peasant masses of their rights. But he soon became disillusioned with the government and the Catholic Church which failed to respond decisively to the long history of suffering by the people in Samar. Meanwhile, actual immersion in political analyses brought Gerson to the conclusion that the liberation of the masses and the formation of a new society required the force of arms.

His militant commitment sharpened as he joined the Christians for National Liberation, the national democratic underground organization for church and lay people. A few years later, he was arrested for his religious activities. Upon his release, Gerson immediately resumed his political work, this time by becoming active in the movement to free detainees. Meanwhile, the military threatened that he would be salvaged if he continued his work. This drove him deeper into the underground movement. He said, "There was nowhere else to go but to be among the people. I joined the *Hukbo*."

Gerson finds a strong commonality between Christianity and Marxism. Both have total concern for human dignity, justice and freedom, he said. Both revolutionized human societies and in pursuit of basic changes, people have responded to the call of arms. Gerson said, "Faith is being one with the people." ■

MAINSTREAM

Developments in the people's movements

Good news of people's liberation

Christians for National Liberation plays active role in PRG building

In a clandestine press conference held during Lent, the Christians for National Liberation (CNL) presented its new spokesperson, Fr. Brendon Cruz. He doesn't practice the ministry anymore, Fr. Brendon said, as he introduced himself. That makes him a former priest, although the Vatican has not yet accepted his resignation.

Joining the revolutionary movement in 1972, Fr. Brendon has taken up a new vocation. "I didn't want to live the liturgical year while history was bypassing me in a different time-frame," he said then.

He started out as an organizer for the pre-martial law Kilusang Kritiko ng Kabataang Pilipino (KKKP), a driving force in the eventual formation of the CNL.

The year 1969, Fr. Brendon recalled, was a turning point for the disillusioned clergy. As a response to the nationalist fervor at that time, combined with the understanding of the church's imperative to do justice, a progressive sector of the religious summed up its experiences and redirected its orientation towards involving the church on the side of the people's struggle.

The CNL was founded on February 17, 1972 in a Gomburza seminar attended by 72 church people. It has since grown into a 4,000-strong organization for the clergy and laity, carrying and forwarding the national democratic line and program.

"I cherish it most especially for the type of Christian witness it gives in the context of the secular movement for social change. The movement, precisely because it is secular and non-sectarian, takes in the godless and the god-full and all in between." Besides, Fr. Brendon went on to explain how the revolutionary movement does not and must not impose premises based on faith and grace on the participants. "Even so, the CNL makes a distinctive Christian contribution for believers and non-believers alike."

The church offers its vast community-building expertise as a special contribution to the people's struggle for liberation. The people's war takes the

choice made by the people facing a situation of systemic violence and continuing suffering. The CNL has opted to stand by the people in their choice.

"Direct service to the armed struggle is the most salutary experience, to say the least," Fr. Brendon declared. He served in the New People's Army (NPA) for two years to get a comprehensive view of the revolutionary struggle. Leading cadres of the CNL are assigned to the guerrilla zones for at least six months service. Thus, many leaders of the CNL are former NPA guerrillas.

"I don't carry a gun anymore. I am basically a teacher. I go around explaining the revolutionary line and program as a valid Christian imperative to whoever is willing to listen," the former priest said. "Lately, I've been spreading around particularly good news, namely the emergence of Provisional Revolutionary Governments."

At present, CNL cadres like Fr. Brendon go around announcing the latest good news according to the gospel of people's liberation. The seeds of the new alternative society are emerging, as the revolutionary movement enters the threshold of the strategic stalemate.

The requisites have been laid: land reduction and control of usury; NPA formations are at company level nationwide; the mass organizations are in place and slowly acquiring national character; regional NDF units are being consolidated; and soon, the NDF national congress will be called.

Community-building

Fr. Brendon cites one barrio where he was recently invited to bless the inauguration of a village council. The village folk formed several task forces

for community-building. Thus, there is a committee each on administration, on socio-economic ventures, on education and culture, and even on family life.

Developments in some areas are relatively slow largely because of intensified militarization. But the people are most militant because they are actually defending concrete revolutionary gains — the future — which has begun in liberated areas. In these cases, new methods of organizing are devised. For white area work, for example, the so-called "Delta Force" (an NDF team composed of a CNL cadre as well as one from the *Kabataang Makabayan* and one from the *Katipunan ng mga Gurong Makabayan*) is escorted for security by an NPA partisan as the team goes about organizing the masses.

The former priest hopes for greater church participation in community work and the war effort. As a special contribution, the CNL offers its expertise in community-building.

"We have gone beyond the stage of building people's organizations. The task now is to engage in community-building for the war effort," the spokesperson stressed. "We must wield the people's organizations to advance the people's war."

Involving church leaders

The church and its denominations should take these developments seriously, said Fr. Brendon. To be convinced of this, however, one must see for himself what is happening in the countryside.

The CNL has sent personalized letters of invitations to various church leaders to visit the NDF areas. The

church people are enjoined to interview the citizenry and the cadres, check the black propaganda allegations against the revolutionary movement, see for themselves the concrete gains of the struggle as well as the new direction the CNL is taking in the light of these revolutionary achievements.

"The liberated areas offer untold possibilities for church efforts," he says. "There are no landlord-big comprador interests to frustrate the good works of the progressive church sectors." This time, the CNL is more aggressive in approaching bishops and church superiors in areas where the revolutionary movement is strongest.

The responses of the church leaders he has approached are varied but encouraging, Fr. Brendon notes. While a few were stunned to realize just how real and far-reaching the gains of the people's organizations are, some have expressed readiness to cooperate. Those interested are particularly concerned about the areas of economic development and the system of justice.

"They asked if they could possibly sit in the NDF jury proceedings, especially in cases where capital punishment is involved," he cited. "That's most welcome."

The rest take a wait-and-see stance, Fr. Brendon further reports. As for a few others, they have no choice. Cooperation after all, is on different levels. The minimum goal is for the church superior to be neutralized and take an apolitical civilian status, or the humanitarian "Red Cross-type" of involvement. The maximum objective is to elicit their active participation in the people's struggle.

"What will you do, for instance, if your bishop is in advanced NDF-organized areas such as in most of Northern Luzon, some parts of Bicol and the Visayas?" the CNL spokesperson points out. "Will your pastoral programs succeed without your coming to terms with the national democratic movement?"

As it is, the CNL allays the fears of the church that it will be divested of its wealth, as the national democratic society evolves. The CNL, Fr. Brendon stresses, is not anti-capitalist but anti-monopoly capitalist. In the same vein, he ventures to ask: Can there be now a new church for a new people?

For so long, many CNL members and allies considered themselves merely as Christians in the struggle. It has virtually conceded the image of the church to the reactionaries, the former priest points out, as he ends with this note: "It is time we reappropriated our society as church, and assert that we are different because we reflect and support the alternative society of the people." ■



Revolutionary faith: CNL cadre with barrio folk

COUNTERCURRENTS

The Philippine government and the US

A parody of "people power"

US-Aquino regime activates scheme for increased civilian role in counter-insurgency

It came after the much-ballyhooed local elections. Rafael Ileto, founder of the elite Scout Rangers and veteran of the anti-Huk campaign, unexpectedly resigned, expressing disappointment over having been left out in the US-Aquino regime's counter-insurgency planning. Immediately after, Corazon Aquino passed on Ileto's hat to her "friend and partner" Fidel Ramos and made a top-level revamp of the military establishment.

Superficially, these series of moves would have appeared as a strictly military affair. But actually, all of them form part of an ambitious package to systematize the integration of the civilian branch of government, as well as civilians, in erstwhile purely military affairs — a program Ramos has been consistently pushing for. The moves, which also indicate the employment of increasingly repressive measures to stem civilian support for the revolutionary forces, signalled Ramos' ascendancy over Ileto in defining the directions of the government's counter-insurgency efforts.

Civilian-military coordination

The establishment of a "command authority" over all government agencies involved in counter-insurgency has long been an ideal for the US-Aquino regime, an ideal which cannot accommodate the conservative and Scout Rangers-type of operations being propounded by Rafael Ileto. There has to be a "unity of effort" of all reactionary elements to prop any counter-insurgency program and this is the main idea represented by Ramos and his disciples in the Aquino government.

In a study prepared by Col. Ismael Villareal, chief of the AFP Joint Operations Center, he said that there has to be a fusion of military, police and civil functions to fight conflicts which "have primarily political objectives."

The need for a more streamlined government machinery to carry forward the US-Aquino regime's counter-revolutionary objectives has been occasioned by the perception that while there are agencies to coordinate the government counter-insurgency activities — such as the Peace and Order Councils, Development Councils and the newly reorganized National Reconciliation and Development Councils — the efforts of such bodies are geared towards negotiation and agreement

without authority to compel other government officers to join counter-insurgency efforts. Villareal added that the agencies involved "continue to operate freely or as they please without effective control from the coordinating bodies." He claimed that some civilian and military officials consider the required "unity of effort" to be anathema to the separation of powers and the system of checks and balances.



Ileto: Put down, phased out

In his paper, Villareal stressed the need for a unified management system to oversee the counter-insurgency program in all its aspects — reforms, security, information and economic development — from the national level down to the town or city level. This unified management system must be an executive arm of the Cabinet, equipped with decision-making powers to a certain level of responsibility, and tasked with the formulation of a national plan covering all political, social, economic, administrative, military, police and other measures which bear on the "communist insurgency," he said.

On the regional level, Villareal suggested the use of Peace and Order Councils (POCs) composed of regional military and police officers, provincial governors, members of the clergy and civic leaders, as well as ranking government officials, as the control and coordinating bodies for counter-insurgency operations. "All plans and programs carried out at the regional, provincial, city or town levels should be coordinated into the area plans of the Peace and Order Councils," said Villareal. "No plan or program should be carried

out independently. Security planning should be the responsibility of the Peace and Order Council as body, not of the police or military. The conduct of security operations must always conform to area plans."

Grassroots consolidation

The recent local elections which preceded the resignation of Ileto confirmed the US-Aquino regime's plan to select its functionaries in its counter-insurgency campaign. Malacanang took a direct hand in the selection of the chosen who would sit as local government officials, with Aquino urging the people to vote for her candidates, lest those chosen not be in accord with the regime's counter-insurgency program. "Baka hindi vibes," she cautioned.

The newly elected officials would assume the positions erstwhile held by the officers-in-charge. This gives a little more stability in the US-Aquino government's grassroots apparatus in its all-out war against not only the revolutionary forces but against the progressives of the broad Left.

In the local government level is also reposed the unpopular and expensive task of sustaining the traditional private armies and vigilante units that mushroomed after Aquino was catapulted into power. Not only are local government officials expected to become the effective administrators and benefactors of a costly vigilante machinery, Davao City-style, they are also expected to deflect the heat from the President who remorselessly called for their creation.

It is also significant to note that while the Aquino government has not yet acted on the proposal to return the police force to the full control of the local governments, such dilly-dallying in the past could now be resolved. It is reported that the majority of the regime's candidates, as well as some military coup plotters, won in the election. In relation to this, the Aquino government can now act on the proposal presented by both Ileto and Ramos to combine the functions of the PC-INP (which acts as the military administrator of the local police and national constabulary forces) and the projected Departments of Internal Security, Home Affairs and whatever may be conjured up by the US Pentagon, State and Defense Departments, in partnership with local military officials.

Institutionalizing vigilantism

The concept of employing the services of civilians for any military or police action is ages old, honed to its most practicable in the United States. A vigilante in the United States is a member of a "vigilance committee" or a "self-appointed group of persons (that) maintains order in a community where organization is imperfect or broken down" and cannot anymore protect life and property. Vigilantes in the US came into existence in the 1800s when there were few peace officers to uphold the law in the new settlements.

In the Philippine context, vigilantism was introduced by US military advisers in the 1950s when civilian organizations were transformed into paramilitary units for "intelligence gathering and to guide troops penetrating unfamiliar terrain." Marcos transformed these civilian units into the Barrio Self-Defense Units during the 1960s, and later into the Civilian Home Defense Forces upon the declaration of martial law.

Upon the ascension of Aquino, she immediately approved Oplan Maramayan, a rehash of Marcos' Oplan Katatagan, which calls for "mobilizing the citizenry and effecting their active involvement in the total effort to counter insurgent encroachment in their communities."

As in the past, vigilante groups are going to be under military supervision, but with a twist. The April 1, 1987 memorandum of Ramos entitled "Guidelines for Civilian Volunteer Self-Defense Organizations" stipulated that there will be joint supervision by local government authorities as well as the military and police, "in order to ensure that their continued assistance in operations are in accord with the government's security/peace and order, reconciliation and development program."

Another set of guidelines was prepared in May 1987 by an inter-departmental committee composed of representatives of the AFP, the Departments of Local Government and National Defense and the Commission on Human Rights. These were formally adopted on October 30, 1987. In addition to the points included in Ramos' April memorandum, the October guidelines call for the provincial commander to submit a monthly report to

the AFP chief of staff on the location, leaders, strength and members of each civilian volunteer self-defense organization, stating which members are authorized to carry firearms.

But even military officials cannot deny that while membership in these "self-defense organizations" is supposedly voluntary, recruitment has been coercive. Brig. Gen. Dionisio Tangatue once told the representatives of Amnesty International in July 1987



Youth activist survives vigilante rub-out try

that the military has to "convince" people to join the vigilante groups and that it has had to resort to these tactics as it is competing with the NPA for the same population.

Tangatue actually downplayed the military's role in the formation of vigilante groups. However, it is widely known that it is military men like Col. Franco Calida, Davao City Metropolitan District commander, who have fa-

thered the Alsa Masa and Nakasaka. Davao del Sur PC Provincial Commander Jesus Magno, together with then OIC Douglas Cagas, initiated the formation of Nakasaka in their province. Other top-ranking officers who have organized vigilantes are Brig. Gen. Alfredo Lim of the Western Police District, Gen. Cesar Tapia of the Southern Command, the late Brig. Gen. Eugenio Ocampo in Central Luzon and Col. Lorenzo Mateo, head of Recom 8 (Samar-Leyte).

By February 1988, reports gathered from various sources indicated that there are now 224 armed vigilante groups. Of this number, 146 are considered of the right-wing type, 63 are active religious fanatic groups and 15 are bandit groups. Of the 146 major vigilante formations, 53 are found in Mindanao, 41 in the Visayas and 42 in Luzon. There are at least 10 groups in Metro Manila, with Manila Mayor Mel Lopez and Quezon City Mayor Brigido Simon organizing their respective cities' *barangay tanod* into vigilante groups. The vigilantes in the city have revived the night-time "ronda" or neighborhood patrols to support the tighter security measures and counter-insurgency plans of their respective areas.

But despite the guidelines issued, vigilantes have killed at least 100 unarmed civilians, including church people, from February 1986 to December 1987 alone. Over the same period, they were involved in five incidents of frustrated salvaging, seven massacre incidents and seven incidents of "frustrated massacres." In the first semester of 1987 alone, right-wing vigilante groups illegally arrested at least 130 persons, caused the evacuation of at least 2,291 families (13,746 persons)



Raid: Vigilante team swoops down on urban poor community



Trigger-happy: "Self-defense organization" shows off

The POCs have been in de facto operation even before March 4, and have been actively recruiting for the vigilante groups in their respective areas, organizing "pulong-pulong" or dialogs in which those who attend are made to sign up as "volunteers" of vigilante groups.

Internal security act

Dovetailing moves to involve civilians in counter-insurgency efforts is the adoption of measures that would severely penalize civilian support for the revolutionary movement.

Immediately after his assumption into office as Defense Secretary, Ramos called for a package of legal weapons which include among other things, the restoration of the death penalty for rebellion and other "heinous crimes" and a national identification card system. AFP Deputy Chief of Staff for Civil-Military Relations Brig. Gen. Honesto Isleta, pleaded before Congress for an outright declaration of a state of emergency which "would allow the military to arrest suspected rebels even without court warrants and detain them indefinitely without formal charges." The state of national emergency can take the form of a sus-

in 24 major harassment operations conducted against communities suspected of supporting the revolutionary forces. At least 31 cases of physical assault, three cases of destruction of property and 17 cases of divestment of property were committed by these people well-tutored by the military in the observance of "human rights."

"Peace and Order Councils"

Civilian integration in the counter-insurgency program of the US-Aquino regime has already been set into motion, not only in the formation of the vigilante groups, but in the activation of Peace and Order Councils starting March 4, 1988. The POCs' creation is governed by Executive Order (EO) 309.

Already, some liberal solons have expressed concern over their activation. In a letter to Aquino, Sen. Wigberto Tanada, along with other members of Congress, said that the use of the Peace and Order Councils as instruments of counter-insurgency might not prove beneficial to the people as "it appears that civilians could be directly employed in the conduct of military affairs." Tanada added that "there is also the strong apprehension that the Peace and Order Councils may be wittingly or unwittingly used to legitimize armed vigilantes and other paramilitary groups in the country, in violation of the Constitution." Ending his letter, Tanada requested that "the employment of civilians in the conduct of military affairs not be allowed and that a thorough review of EO 309 be made."

Aquino, however, would not budge from her endorsement of the POCs. While assuaging Tanada's apprehensions, she obliquely confirmed them

by saying in her return letter that "the thrust of (EO 309) is to reorganize the Councils in order to provide fuller coordination of the efforts of the government and citizens to secure and maintain peace and order."

Mock encounters, staged surrenders

Where have all the butchers of Lupao gone? Barriofolk of Muelang in Mangataram, Pangasinan know the answer only too well. Advance forces of the dreaded 60th IB, the unit responsible for the massacre of 17 peasants in Lupao, Nueva Ecija in February 1986, have stationed themselves in their barrio.

At first conducting some civic action and lamely explaining to the people that what took place in Lupao was an "accident," the 60th IB troopers soon exposed their true colors. A number of residents later complained that their jewelry was stolen as the troopers swept through Muelang. "May mga tindahan ding nawalan ng mga paninda," said a peasant woman. "Besides," she said, "we know they didn't come here just to do civic action. They deploy their advance forces and set up detachments to familiarize themselves with the terrain and prepare for strike operations."

Sure enough, the troopers struck. On February 17, some 500 ground troopers backed up by three heligunships attacked an outlying sitio of Muelang inhabited by charcoal makers. The soldiers arrested six peasants and later made it appear that the men were Red fighters and sympathizers caught in an NPA training camp at the foot of the Mangataram mountains.

Col. Romeo Odi, the PC provincial commander in Pangasinan, has been frenziedly leading this campaign of terror and deception. Recently named "Officer of the Year," Odi earned this dubious distinction by reporting the biggest number of "NPA casualties and surrenderees." According to AFP press releases, Odi is responsible for the death of many Red fighters, and the surrender of thousands of NPA sympathizers as well as 229 NPA regulars from March 1987 to March 1988. Odi's "accomplishments," however, have no basis in fact.

"About the only thing Odi has succeeded in doing is harassing peasants and damaging and stealing their property," said Mel, a representative of the NPA Provincial Operational Command in Pangasinan. In an interview with *LIB*, the 29-year-old NPA officer said, "Not a single Red fighter in Pangasinan was killed in 1987 even as the NPA launched an average of one tactical offensive per month." She added, "We have had only one casualty this year, and only about four or five guerrillas have been dropped from our ranks for various reasons since 1987."

Meanwhile, the AFP in Pangasinan continues to mount without letup its campaign to terrorize and deceive the people. "Since Pangasinan is the home province of Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos, it has been chosen as a pilot area in

pension of the writ of habeas corpus or martial law, with the justification provided by a law "similar to the Internal Security Act of Malaysia or Singapore."

Coupled with EO 272 and 276 issued by Aquino, the proposed National Security Act forebodes stricter political measures. Human rights advocates who made a comparison between the Internal Security Acts of Malaysia and Singapore note that they are no different from the repressive decrees of the Marcos martial law regime, with the provisions almost identical to those of PD Nos. 1737 (Public Order Act) and 1498 (the undisclosed National Security Code) and a host of other repressive decrees, which provided for curfew, preventive detention, searches without warrant, checkpoints, the banning of publications and exhibitions, among others, aside from "creating offenses" like illegal possession of subversive materials, rumor mongering, illegal possession of firearms, ammunition and explosives and others. The only difference is that while Marcos' decrees were supposedly effective only under a period of national emergency, the ISA of Malaysia and Singapore are permanent



Ramos: New fair-haired boy

fixtures of the laws of these two countries — a condition Ramos pines for in the Philippines.

Military impunity

The proposed National Security Code will also integrate additional

Central Luzon of the regime's low intensity conflict strategy," said Mel. Thus, the military in the province keeps on conducting "mass surrenderee induction programs" and disseminating leaflets and handbooks on the alleged "evils of communism." The AFP in Pangasinan also continues publicizing reports of "NPA surrenderees" and military victories during "encounters" with the Red fighters.

In March 16, for instance, soldiers of the 151st PC Company attacked Sitio San Macario in Natividad, Mangatarem, branding the settlement as a "training camp" and rounding up 36 civilians whom they tagged as NPA guerrillas and sympathizers. Last March 24, troopers backed up by 14 heligunships, a jet-fighter and two Tora-Tora attack planes swooped down on Barrio Tibey, Infanta, where they bombed a cluster of huts in a ricefield and seized 50 cavans of rice belonging to rattan gatherers. The military later claimed that the huts formed part of an NPA "field hospital." Residents had left the area hours before, after being warned by the NPA of impending military attacks.

The so-called surrender of thousands of NPA mass supporters is nothing but a public relations gimmick of the AFP, said Mel. "One time, a barangay captain in Mangatarem invited barrio residents to attend a meeting in the provincial capital in Lingayen, 'to discuss livelihood projects.' When they reached Lingayen, *bigla na lang pina-oath of allegiance yung mga 1,200 na magsasaka,*" said Mel. Present during the fake oath-taking was Ramos himself and government "peace czar" Alran Bengzon. The same story has been repeated in the towns of Villadolid, Aguilar and Dasol. Since last year, some 3,500 people in Pangasinan have found themselves being declared as "NPA surrenderees" or "NPA sympathizers who have returned to the fold of the law."

Aside from "psychological warfare," the AFP in Pangasinan has also initiated the formation of vigilante groups and is recruiting "civilian volunteers" to join the CHDF. Already, these groups have been responsible for the salvaging of several leaders of legal mass organizations. To supervise its military operations in the area, the AFP has set up a Tri-Boundary Command based in the Pangasinan-Zambales-Tarlac border. The command is composed mainly of troopers from the notorious 60th IB.

Dovetailing the AFP's conduct of "psy-war" and military operations is the implementation by the local government of a socio-economic program known as "New Pangasinan," which calls for the active involvement of local officials in counter-insurgency.

But the organized masses in Pangasinan know better than to be fooled by such ploys. In mass meetings conducted by the NDF, they expressed the need for vigilance. "*Kailangang armas na ang mamamayan para labanan ang terorismo at panlilinlang ng gubyrerno,*" they said. ■

bans on involvement with the revolutionary movement. Following the collapse of the NDF and GRP peace talks early last year, Aquino issued EO 167 on May 5 reviving RA 1700 which makes criminal a person's membership in the Communist Party of the Philippines. In another "midnight decree" signed a few hours before Congress convened last year, Aquino also raised the penalties for association with the NPA from a maximum of 12 years to life imprisonment.

The US-Aquino regime's proposed code will also ensure guarantees military and police forces for an unhampered implementation of the regime's counter-insurgency program, impinging on due process and constitutionalism. Sources have it that Marcos' decrees which have not been repealed by the Aquino government will remain operational and are, in fact, integrated into the proposed Code. One of them is PD 1850 which stipulates that military and police personnel who have been charged in court are triable by courts martial, regardless of the offense of which they are accused. Unless this Marcos decree is repealed, there are only three ways by which members of the armed forces or policemen can be brought before a civilian court: if they had been dismissed from service; if the President issues a waiver of jurisdiction of the case, transferring its adjudication to a civil court; and if the aggrieved party brings suit for civil damages instead of a criminal case.

Not content with the legal weapons that his men are already equipped with, Ramos also sought the passage of an "Official Secrecy Act" punishing media practitioners for "untimely exposes" that could "interfere" or "jeopardize" current efforts by the regime against the revolutionaries. It also bans publication of planned counter-insurgency operations before they are carried out by government troopers. The NSC can also be invoked by interested elements to effectively prohibit the investigation and disclosure of violations of law and human rights committed by military, paramilitary and police elements in their counter-insurgency operations. There are also contentions that military men virtually enjoy immunity from suit on account of such prohibitions.

All these developments indicate the festering crisis of the US-Aquino regime. In the face of growing civilian support for the revolutionary forces, the Aquino government is desperately trying to win the people's allegiance by unifying its counter-insurgency efforts. But in the end, it can only revert to the method it employs expertly — force. **Alexandra Kitanglad**

PATAK-PITIK

Cal Y. Juete

"Ideological:" a dirty word?

Once in a while, after a few rounds of exhausting "kulitan" — which slogan is correct? street action or symposium? — our friends are wont to mutter under their breaths, "Masyado namang ideological kasi, e"

So-called centrists in fact never pass up the chance to indulge in a bit of ND-bashing by citing "the ideological intransigence of the Left" to "balance" their admission of the Cory government's failures.

They seem to believe that ideology is something attributable only to the Left, that ideological reasons are behind disagreements in analysis and the corresponding line of action, and that therefore we ought to just steer clear of this ideology business because it only confuses everyone.

Some of us don't quite know what to say when confronted by assertions like these. We want to avoid being accused of having ideological inclinations ourselves, but somehow it doesn't seem right.

First of all, it's not true that only leftists are ideological.

Every politically active person behaves more or less consciously in accordance with a set of interrelated principles that make up his philosophy of life and action. That means you willfully base your positions on previously defined and acknowledged convictions.

The more sharply defined your convictions are, the more ideologically coherent you become. In politics, you're going to be known either as a rightist or a leftist — which you're going to welcome by this time anyway since it has become clear to you that what you're doing is a matter of principle.

Obviously both ends of the political spectrum are where

the ideologically conscious congregate. On the Right are people like Enrile, Max Soliven, Aguinaldo and, yes, Cory Aquino sharply defining her convictions now and consistently acting to defend and preserve the status quo. On the Left are a whole lot of *masa* who've been fighting anonymously all these years to change the system so oppressive to them, plus people like you and me, not so oppressed but who want to change that system and create a new one more satisfying to our patriotic and humanistic cravings.

Now of course that leaves huge numbers of people in between who haven't made up their minds yet whether they want to keep the system or not. The ideological leaders of the Right (including the Church, big business, the tycoons of mass media) would have them believe that tinkering around with the system is going to do the trick. We, on the other hand, have got to convince those in the middle that only thoroughgoing radical change, a complete overhaul, will ensure a better future for the country and our children.

At the rate rightist-fostered illusions are cracking up, and given our determination to get the national democratic message across, the radicalization process will proceed apace for the great majority of the ideological in-betweens: faster in the case of the masses, with the middle classes hopefully not far behind.

So we can see that the political-military struggle in which the national democratic forces are engaged does actually have ideological underpinnings. This is manifested in our refusal to be dazzled by promises of reform, in our bullheadedness in sticking to our commitment to revolutionary change. ■

CULTURAL PAGE

Art and literature in the movement

GOLD

I thought there wasn't any gold;
and I was depressed and anxious,
and even afraid as I was told only a handful
of gold was left.
But for 18 days now of fanning,
of immersing with the faceless many,
of simply listening to the sounds of Babylon,
of just observing the rhythm of their pains and
sweats,
there, gold — though yet to be mined —
was unearthed.

Gold there is indeed
among these humble sons and daughters of the earth,
among these mountains sheltering the warriors,
among the wretched wanting land,
wanting a piece of dignity and voice,
wanting a ray of justice under the sun.
Yes, gold there is.

Miguel del Onor*

*Miguel del Onor is the pseudonym of a guerrilla-poet from Northern Luzon who likes to mix metaphors for relaxation.