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After an ambush

Warm welcome
from the masses

"AFP needs wars to justify itself"



In the 17-year insurgency war in the Philippines, one lesson stands out which the men in Camp Aguinaldo have not learned.

This is the lesson that a successful guerrilla war cannot be conducted without the support of the people. It is precisely because of the deep wellspring of support the revolutionary forces gathered from the people that they were able to outfight and outlast an enemy far superior in arms and number.

Why a military force which prides itself in its intelligence capability cannot grasp this obvious lesson is a cause for wonder. Perhaps, as one wit says, this is because the military lacks that essential element of real intelligence: thinking.

Seriously though, this inability of the military mind to grasp the nature and impact of a liberation movement is a recurring feature of history. Nowhere is this truer today than on the issue of ceasefire.

The military would like to convince the public that the ceasefire issue is a military issue, and therefore reduce its solution to a military one. The AFP-MND leadership has thus escalated their counter-insurgency operations nationwide against the NPA and revolutionary forces. But for all the violence it has inflicted for several months now, the military has yet to show results that its strategy is successful.

What the military fails to see — as they have failed to see in times past — is the fact that the full cessa-

tion of armed hostilities can only occur if the economic and social roots of insurgency are eliminated. Even President Corazon Aquino herself has recognized this fact.

The ceasefire issue is a political issue which requires not a military solution, but a comprehensive political settlement. The revolutionary armed struggle is founded on a just cause springing from the most basic aspirations of the impoverished majority of our people — for land, for freedom, for a decent human life.

These basic aspirations provide the political basis of the guerrilla war. Only if these aspirations are met can peace become a reality in our time. Genuine peace is absolutely inseparable from meeting the demands for democratic change and national freedom and independence.

This is the fundamental issue underlying the peace negotiations. It is the issue which the military now chooses to ignore as the NDF and the Aquino government gear for the forthcoming talks. Is it because the military needs wars to justify its existence? Is it because the military establishment is a system which nourishes itself by means of war?

After over 20 years of serving as Marcos' fascist soldiers, the military has become deadened by the sound of gunfire and the sight of corpses. Genuine peace has become a reality too terrible to grasp by military minds trained only to kill and destroy.

IN THIS ISSUE

Cover: Samar peasants welcome Red fighters after an ambush

Cover stories: While AFP and Defense Ministry officials vow to support ongoing peace talks between the NDF and the government, the AFP continues with massive counter-insurgency campaigns and appears to be gearing for an all-out war. In this issue, LIB delves into the extent of these campaigns and their effects on the people.

EDITORIAL	2
COVER STORIES	
Obstacles to peace	3
"Thirteen days' war"	5
A painstaking journey	6
Women for peace	7
A just solution to a just struggle	8
MAINSTREAM	
A government for the people	8

SPARKS	12
LETTER	12
COUNTERCURRENTS	
Dangerous defenseman	13
VIEWPOINT	
"Make full use of the mass media"	14
INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY	
Salute to Le Duan	15
POINTBLANK	16

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 Filipinos and solidarity groups abroad. It traces its beginnings to the establishment of the Preparatory Commission for the National Democratic Front on April 24, 1971. LIBERATION is the official publication of the NDF.

COVER STORIES

On today's significant issues and events

Obstacles to peace

AFP's offensive posture provoke NPA operations

"*Mga kasama, tagumpay tayo!*" cheered the masses from the windows of their huts as they waved happily to the advancing NPA formation. One man brought along his child to the trail to vigorously shake hands with each of the guerrillas.

That day, June 30, the NPAs had ambushed soldiers of the notorious 31st Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army who have a long record of abuse in Quezon province. After the fighting, the guerrillas placed the bodies of the slain soldiers on the wayside to prevent them from being run over on the national highway. They also pulled out the bodies from the jeeps before they burned the vehicles so as to reduce the enemy's mobility in the area. Unfortunately, the gas tank of one of the jeeps leaked into a culvert where one of the bodies lay and the corpse was scorched up to its knees.

The people greeted the news of the ambush at Villa Prinsipe, Gumaca with relief and jubilation. That day, they had not expected the NPA to stage an ambush. Instead, they had expected military troops accompanied by a tank or armored personnel carriers. Since March this year, in fact, there has been no let-up in the AFP's armed assaults in Quezon, to the anger of peasant folk. Last May 27, troopers from the 49th and 42nd IB penetrated the interior barrios of the towns of Gen. Luna and Lopez, terrorizing farmers in their wake. The soldiers announced their presence by peppering Mt. Baliswang with gunfire.

Last May too, the 49th and 22nd IB troopers launched search-and-destroy missions in the towns of Gumaca, Lopez and Pitogo. Another unit of the Philippine Army, accompanied by the CHDF, rampaged through Buenavista and Guinayangan. Members of a fact-finding mission in Guinayangan, sent to probe military human rights violations, were threatened by soldiers.

In deference to the moves of the Aquino government and the NDF for peace negotiations, the NPA in Southern Tagalog had refrained from launching tactical offensives. But because of the continuing depredations of the AFP in the area, the NPA was persuaded by the people to hit back, if only to frustrate military operations against the masses.

As expected, the defense and military establishment used the June 30 Gumaca

ambush to malign the NPA. RUC 4 Commander Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla claimed that the ambush zone was a proposed "ceasefire area" and deplored the NPA attack. He even claimed that the guerrillas burned the bodies of the dead soldiers. AFP Chief Gen. Fidel Ramos was even more strident. He proclaimed the Gumaca incident as a "mass slaughter stage-managed to allow the CPP enough propaganda mileage to suit their purpose."

Unfortunately, the media itself hyped up the incident and gave prominence to the military's reports. The NPA Southern Command's statement clarifying the incident was not given as much coverage; in the *Bulletin*, it was buried in the inside pages. No mention was made of the fact that the soldiers carried several assault rifles and a grenade launcher — telling proofs that they were on the offensive and not, as claimed by the AFP, on the way to "ceasefire negotiations."

AFP troop redeployment

Evidently, all this is part of the military's efforts to justify escalated and large-scale counter-insurgency operations in the countryside. In fact, since end-February, AFP troops have been redeployed in offensive positions in so-called "critical areas," thus belying military

claims that its troops have been taking a defensive position (*see table*).

From 1984 to late 1985, the military had 56 combat battalions deployed in NPA and MNLF areas all over the country, according to the NPA General Staff. Other combat troops were then deployed in Manila to guard the dictator Marcos. Ironically, under the liberal administration of President Aquino, a total of 70 combat battalions are now fielded against the NPA and MNLF, marking an increase of 11 to 13 combat battalions.

These combat battalions are clustered and concentrated in particular regions or provinces where the revolutionary forces are strong. In Quezon province alone, in areas where the RUC IV commander has supposedly designated "ceasefire zones," there are four enemy battalions. In sparsely populated Zamboanga del Norte and Zamboanga del Sur, there are four and five combat battalions respectively, including the 2nd MP and 5th Marine Battalions. This means that each of these provinces has thousands of troops concentrated in specific areas to fight a few hundred NPA and MNLF guerrillas.

The table on troop deployment shows the AFP's move to achieve "unit integrity" for brigade level operations. This means that several battalions are now being combined in a province or region to



Mass support: Peasant woman and child greet NPA fighters



Militarization: AFP troop deployment nationwide

cover the entire area and limit the movement and initiative of the guerrillas operating there. This includes the move to reorient and reorganize the Philippine Constabulary (PC) and army for counter-insurgency objectives.

In the early years of the Marcos era, the PC was used for internal rebellion while the army was tasked with external defense. As Marcos' reign hardened into open fascist rule, the PC, whose regular company-size formations could no longer do the job, were augmented or replaced by battalion-size formations. Today, as the revolutionary forces continue to grow and their base of civilian support widens to millions of people, the AFP and defense establishment are using even bigger formations to contain the revolutionary movement.

Thus, a deeper look into the deployment and reorganization of military troops will fully expose the AFP's "active defense" policy for what it is — a massive and all-out drive to crush the revolutionary forces and their mass base — in complete opposition to President Aquino's call for a halt to the fighting. In fact, the magnitude of present AFP operations has become even greater than those launched during the Marcos dictatorship.

AFP: Warlord-coddler

Interestingly too, in its all-out drive against the revolutionary forces, the mi-

litary has chosen to ignore the real and prime forces of instability in the country. Lanao del Sur is a case in point.

This Mindanao province has long been the bailiwick of infamous Marcos-backed warlord Ali Dimaporo, who is widely believed to be behind the recent abduction of an American pastor and 10 Carmelite nuns. Yet the military has refused to go after him and his private army. According to Ramos, they will not confront Dimaporo's armed followers so as "to maintain the balance of power in the area."

In spite of its vaunted concern for "peace and order," the military even transferred out two battalions from Lanao del Sur (the 6th and 12th IB PA) to Negros and Panay for anti-NPA operations there. This reduces to seven the 10 combat battalions previously deployed in MNLF areas. Apparently, the military would rather coddle Dimaporo who shares their iron-fist policy on counter-insurgency. After all, the wily warlord could have been speaking their minds when he said: "Aquino will suffer a split from Enrile because she wants to work with communists... Talking with communists is another evidence that the Aquino government is trying to find a way to work with communists."

Concerned church people have expressed worry over the fact that the military and the civilian government seem to be pursuing different courses of action in relation to

the insurgency. According to Bishop Federico Escaler of Ipil, Zamboanga del Sur, "While Cory talks of a ceasefire, the military orders full-scale operations."

Stung by adverse reports from human rights groups about them, Ramos and the military recently instituted draconian measures to limit freedom of expression, which are reminiscent of the worst measures of the Marcos dictatorship. Last July 24, Ramos ordered that "All findings by cause-oriented groups regarding human rights abuses committed by soldiers must first be submitted to military authorities for comment before being released to the media."

The AFP's onslaught and its propaganda scheme notwithstanding, the revolutionary forces led by the NDF are determined to push through with the peace negotiations. As NDF chief negotiator Satur Ocampo has stated, "We agree with President Aquino that for lasting peace to come about, 'the roots of insurgency (which) are in the economic conditions of the people and the social structures that oppress them' must be addressed vigorously." Thus, President Aquino must see that in her moves for a just peace, the revolutionary and progressive forces are her allies. With them, she can have a counter-force against a thoroughly repressive AFP-MND leadership. ■

Thirteen days' war

Letter from Negros recounts AFP's indiscriminate shelling of barriosfolk

To any activist who has been to the guerrilla zones in the countryside, there is no forgetting the warm welcome and comradeship of the guerrillas and the masses. The escalation of military operations, however, is enough to make anyone worry over the safety of the many new friends one left behind there. Last July 20, we received a letter from Bacolod, telling us about the fate of the people in a guerrilla camp, whom two of our LIB staffers had met during their trip there last October. The camp, located in southern Negros, had been based in one of the most secure areas deep in the mountains. The letter was written by Orlan, the editor of Paghimakas, the revolutionary newspaper in Negros. We want to share his letter with our readers, so that they may know the true nature of AFP campaigns in the countryside and the NPA's active defense policy.

Dear Arlene and Caloy,

Mainit na pagbati at pangangamusta sa inyo!

Habang isinusulat ko ito, wala na kami roon sa lugar na pinuntahan ninyo, pati na rin ang ibang mga kasama at organo, dahil binira ng atake ng kaaway ang lugar. Kaya, pansamantala, vacated ang area. Ganito nga pala ang istorya ng buong pang-yayari:

Noong Mayo 1986, nang umorder si Gen. Ramos ng opensiba ng NAFF, bumira rin sila rito, kasabay sa Cagayan offensive. Noong May 4-10, buong battalion ng 7th IB ang nag-operasyon sa (Barrio) Bactolon area (Sipalay, Negros Occidental). Balak sana nilang pasukin ang lugar na pinuntahan ninyo. Pero na-frustrate nang banatan ng yunit gerilya ang isang kolum nila bilang dependibong aksyon ng NPA. Resulta noon, minoritar nila ang lugar — 38 mortar shells ang binira ng NAFF sa isang gabi lang; walong bahay ang sinunog at isang magmamka ang kanilang pinatay.

June 20: Our NPA units fought back. Tatlong battles ang inilunsad ng yunit gerilya sa Hinobaan, southern Negros:

5:45 a.m. Ni-reyd ng platoon ng yunit gerilya ang detachment ng B "Coy" patrol base sa Talacagay, Hinobaan. Nag-sitakbuhan ang AFP troopers at isa ang malabing sugatan sa detachment; sumurender siya. Nakumpiska ng yunit gerilya ang isang M16 at isang karbin. Sinunog ang detachment.

10 a.m. Inambus ng blocking force ang reinforcement team ng kaaway, mga half-kilometer from the town proper of Hinobaan. Napigilan ang reinforcement team. Maraming sugatan sa pasistang tropa (unaccounted).

2 p.m. Isa ring reinforcement team ang hinayang ng isang yunit ng NPA mu-

la sa northern part ng Hinobaan. Pina-sabog ang kanilang sasakyang pick-up ng land mine na ibinaon ng mga kasama sa kalsada. Sentrong tinamaan ang pick-up at pinalipad ng explosive, umangat sa lupa nang limang metro ang taas. Ang limang sundalong nakasakay ay hindi namatay; tatio ang sumurender. Limang high-powered rifles ang nakumpiska ng yunit gerilya. Ginamot ang sundalong sumurender na sugatan.

Talong-talo ang AFP sa naturang labanan. Pati sa propaganda, dahil nakunan namin nang live ang labanan at ipinalabas sa radio sa Bacolod. Sayang at hindi namin nakunan ng retrato dahil nasira ang dala naming camera sa impact ng putok ng explosive.

June 24: Nag-retaliate at muling nag-offensive ang NAFF, reaction sa tactical offensive ng hukbo. Papasok naman sana sa lugar doon na pinuntahan ninyo (doon sa basing area). Inisnaysy ng isang

kaaway, binaunan ng yunit gerilya ng explosives ang mga dadanaan. At isang platoon ng kaaway ang nakapasok sa land mine area — mga 30 troopers — ang tinamaan. Walo ang patay on the spot at 22 ang severely wounded nang sumabog ang land mine. Sabi nga ng mga kasamang mandirigma, "Parang palito ang mga sundalo; lumipad nang sumabog ang land mine."

Sa kabuuan, sa dependibong aksyon ng yunit gerilya — paglunsad ng area ambush, sniping at harassment, paglalagay ng land mine at explosives — 10 troopers ang confirmed killed while more than 40 were wounded. Isa ring Red fighter ang napatay.

Resulta rin nito: 52 houses ang sinunog ng pasistang tropa, isang magasaka ang pinatay nila; crops were severely damaged. More than 2,000 families were evacuated to the town proper of Sipalay and the Barrio Bactolon center.

Sa ngayon, patuloy pa rin ang offensive character ng NAFF. Sa Murcia, 14 km. from Bacolod City, nag-operation din ang kaaway. Hundreds of evacuees have trooped to the provincial capital in Bacolod City.



Faces of anguish: Sipalay women refugees

team ng yunit gerilya ang 80 tropa ng "C" Coy ng 7th IB. Dalawa ang patay at tatio ang sugatan. Umangat sila sa kapalit sa sityo at doon nag-start ang indiscriminate mortar shelling. Everyday, two hours ang kanilang shelling, at pagkatapos papasok ang kanilang ground troops. Pero binabantayan ng yunit gerilya na pagkatapos ng shelling, pumupusyon ito sa dadanaan ng ground troops at binabantayan. Atras ang ground troops ng kaaway. Ganito ang pattern ng away mula June 24-July 5 ("Thirteen Days' War") — shelling ng kaaway, ko-cover ang yunit gerilya, papasok ang ground troops ng NAFF, babanatan ng yunit gerilya.

First week ng July: Dalawang battalions na ng 7th IB at 6th IB ang mobilized ng kaaway pam pasukin ang lugar. At tinatanta ng hukbo na hindi kayang i-contain. Kaya binaysang pumasok ang

Siya nga pala, all our materials were left behind in the area, kaya sorry, at wala kaming mapapadala na mga statements na hinihingi ninyo. Pati nga iyong mga kagamitan namin, nandoon pa. Maski typewriter, wala pa kami. (Kaya nga handwritten lang itong sulat ko, e.)

Mayroon nga palang tatlong battalions na dagdag dito mula noong Mayo — 6th IB-PA, 7th Artillery Battalion, 57th IB-PA. Sa kabuuan, there are five PA battalions, three PC battalions plus INP and CHDFs.

Tungkol nga pala sa mga ibang dokumento, umabot na noon pa iyong para sa Negros. Pero nawala noong nag-withdraw kami sa area nang mag-bombing ang kaaway. Kung maari sana ay padalhan ninyo kami kung mayroon kayong extra copies.

Ka Orlan

A painstaking journey

NDF vows to pursue peace talks amid temporary difficulties

The peace negotiations between the National Democratic Front and the Aquino government may finally get off the ground in the coming weeks, if the two sides are able to reach an agreement on security, immunity and guarantees that will facilitate the smooth and continuous holding of talks. The mutual guarantees were proposed by the NDF.

As of press time, NDF negotiators Satur C. Ocampo and Antonio Zumel were awaiting the response of the Aquino government, through negotiator Ramon Mitra, to the NDF proposal. The two had rejected the guidelines issued earlier by AFP chief of staff Fidel Ramos, which severely limited the scope and effectivity of the safe conduct passes already held by Ocampo and Zumel.

Mitra has admitted that the government side still has to reconcile differing opinions on the matter.

The crux of the issue lies in the willingness of the Aquino government to recognize the NDF's sincerity in searching for peace, and its readiness to provide the proper atmosphere and conditions for fruitful discussions. The NDF negotiators have signified their intention to come out into the open, making themselves available anytime to the government side and their actions subject to public scrutiny. This would necessarily mean availing themselves of the assistance of lawyers, staff personnel and consultants, as well as suitable physical facilities in which to conduct their work in connection with the negotiations.

"If the Aquino government is serious about the negotiations, it should not treat our negotiators as if they were fugitives," NDF sources said. "They are taking grave personal risks in surfacing, and that is enough proof of the NDF's good intention."

The fact is that the government side enjoys an overwhelming advantage in putting forward its own position. It has enormous resources at its command, and its numerous spokesmen have unlimited access to public forums and mass media.

In contrast, the NDF negotiators would find it extremely difficult, and dangerous to be "commuting" between the open talks and the underground.

Initial talks

In late May, the NDF sent an emissary to the Aquino government to follow up its declaration of readiness to dialogue and negotiate in pursuit of peace. On June 26, the Aquino government named Jose W. Diokno (as chief negotiator) and Mitra to compose its own panel. The preliminary talks were being pursued with Diokno when the latter was taken ill and obliged to leave for medical treatment abroad.

A few hours before Diokno's departure on July 21, Ocampo visited him and expressed good wishes for his health. The two agreed that the initial talks could proceed with Mitra, but that discussion of the substantive questions would await Diokno's return.



Aquino: Not alone in the pursuit of peace

Ocampo and Zumel had an informal meeting with Mitra on August 5, during which they were informed of Teofisto Guingona's designation as temporary member of the government panel in the absence of Diokno. In the course of the conversation, Mitra touched on the question of ceasefire between the NPA and AFP, to which the NDF negotiators replied by observing that any such agreement "must be considered in the context of a comprehensive political settlement, inasmuch as the NDF seeks to resolve not only the fighting but the causes of the fighting."



NPA fighters: Object of AFP's vilification drive



NDF panelists Zumel and Ocampo

Preview

A rocky road lies ahead for the revolutionary forces as they pursue the effort to win lasting peace for the people through a negotiated political solution.

An ominous preview of the obstacles to peace is provided by recent incidents in Davao del Norte, where NPA forces had entered into an experimental agreement with local civilian officials. Brushing aside the commitments of the civilian government, the AFP commanders in the area continued to conduct counter-insurgency operations. Obviously, their aim was to undermine civilian authority while going all-out on search-and-destroy missions against NPA units during the so-called ceasefire. Elements of the First Scout Ranger Regiment were thus administered a sound drubbing on August 27 when they aggressively entered a supposed ceasefire area in violation of the terms of the local agreement, and despite clear warnings by the local NPA command.

The Davao del Norte experience is instructive in other aspects as well. Presidential adviser Jesus Ayala was quoted as saying, for example, that "government resources are too limited to make an impact" on nine towns all at once, so that finally the number of towns to be covered by a government commitment for certain limited measures was scaled down to only two. It may be noted that Ayala was merely talking of bulldozers (presumably to build a few kilometers of road with). Evidently, he had been hoping to give government credibility a boost, at the expense of the revolutionary movement in Mindanao. But even such a cheap image-building project is turning out to be a pitiable failure, both because of AFP intan-

sigence and the civilian government's inability to make good its promises of reform and a better deal for the people.

On the national level, daily attacks are being launched against the revolutionary forces through the mass media in a massive attempt to stir up unreasoning fear and hatred among the people. Intrigues and speculations are cooked up to portray disunity within the revolutionary ranks. All sorts of scenarios for a "communist takeover" are reported as facts. Progressive leaders and organizations are constantly slandered. Leading the vicious propaganda campaign has been Aquino's defense chief Juan Ponce Enrile, seconded and echoed by an assortment of ultra-conservatives (including the deposed dictator Marcos) within and outside the government.

The barrage of reactionary propaganda to sabotage the peace talks is intended to divert attention from the escalating repression against the organized peasant masses in the countryside, where NDF

areas are subjected to intensified bombings, arson, forcible evacuation and massacres by the fascist military and paramilitary units.

Prospects

The NDF, however, has resolved to face all these difficulties, taking heart from the warm support and encouragement of the Filipino people for the revolutionary cause.

"We believe that genuine and lasting peace will certainly come upon common recognition of our fundamental problems, agreement on how to solve them, and the establishment of mutual cooperation towards this end," Ocampo said recently.

He called upon all NDF member organizations, as well as political forces, organizations and groups interested in pursuing peace, to "unite against those who oppose this earnest effort, against those who are bent on sabotaging the peace talks in their vain attempt to crush the national democratic revolution through force and deceit." ■

Women for peace

MAKIBAKA urges Filipino women to fight against militarization



"A chance to talk for peace and in peace"

The Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan (MAKIBAKA), the national democratic underground mass organization for women, gave its full support to the NDF's move to enter into ceasefire talks with the Aquino government. In a statement signed by MAKIBAKA spokesperson Gregoria de Jesus II, the women's organization, which is an NDF member, said that "more than anyone else, it is the Filipino women who desire peace. For very often, it is they who are left to pick up the pieces of shattered lives whenever . . . their sons, husbands and fathers are killed or maimed in the name of counter-insurgency." Likewise, rape and other forms of sexual abuse frequently committed by soldiers during such operations are a con-

stant threat to women, said the MAKIBAKA.

The women's underground group also said that the NDF's response to the government's ceasefire offer shows the desire of revolutionaries for peace in pursuit of the people's just demands. "Whenever the opportunity arises, the NDF is ready to negotiate for the people's demands in peace."

The MAKIBAKA defended the right of the Filipino people to take up arms in order to defend and fight for their rights. It said that during the Marcos dictatorship, the government had "relied more and more on the language of the gun in meeting the people's demands and in labeling revolutionaries as criminals and terrorists." Thus, "objective conditions in the Philippines set the need for arms . . . Give the Filipino people bread and freedom, justice and democracy, and peace will surely reign in this land."

The women's organization, however, castigated Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and AFP chief Gen. Fidel Ramos for ignoring this fact and waging an ever-escalating war in the countryside. "Rather than welcome, ensure and prepare for peace talks now, they have set the stage instead for a full-scale counter-insurgency war that promises to surpass even the record of the Marcos regime."

The MAKIBAKA urged Filipino women to spearhead and rally around a movement for peace that "would call for a halt to military operations and atrocities, and would give the revolutionaries and the Aquino government a chance to talk for peace and in peace." ■

MAINSTREAM

Developments in the people's movements

A government for the people

LIBERATION staffer visits NDF barrio councils in Cagayan Valley

It was almost daybreak, the rains had not stopped, and I was still struggling to sleep. My socks were damp from the leaking roof. Just above the mat where I lay, rats feasted on sacks of palay.

For a week now, I had been hopping from one barrio of Cagayan to another, from one hut to another. I often dreamed of cool, clear water to drink and splash on my face. For even such a basic thing was not to be found in the homes of these endlessly generous but destitute peasants.

Ka Gina, the woman guerrilla who had been my buddy, snored beside me, her M16 rifle jutting above her shoulder. But Manang Minda, our host, a fortyish peasant woman, stirred and rose to ask how I was. I told her gently I was all right.

Then, she started to talk about her life. It was about 3:30 in the morning and to my sleepy ears she sounded as if she was reciting the litany to the saints. Her brother, she said, was "salvaged" by the enemy, that she couldn't go to town because the soldiers were looking for her, that a relative had just joined the NPA, and so forth and so on. Then, as the cock crowed, she said, "The soldiers in the town say all the people in the barrio are NPAs."

I caught that one loud and clear. Of course, I had heard it said many times by soldiers and their officers, no less. But as I heard it now, I knew and fully understood.

Like most of the other people in the barrios, Manang Minda had never carried a gun in her life. But when the guerrillas came, she cooked her prized chicken and laid out the best mats in the house. When the NPAs stay in the barrio, Manang Minda and the other barrio folk zealously guard them from the enemy. For why would Manang Minda give up her relative in the NPA to the enemy? Why would the masses give up their sons and daughters, or their fathers, brothers and sisters to the hands of the "kabuso" (enemy)?

Indeed, there is truth to the soldiers' statement that "all the people in the barrio are NPAs." The NPAs are the people themselves who took up arms to fight for their very right to live. The NPA has come to be loved by the poor peasants because they see it as their weapon against oppression. Manang Minda, for one, is sure that the people's army fights to defend her family and the people, and to give them a better life.

In the barrios that I visited, the revolutionary forces promised that — and delivered. Time was, when running after the cattle rustlers and punishing the abusive Civilian Home Defense Force (CHDF) were enough to endear the NPA to the masses.

Now, the people eagerly await the victory of the revolution as they see the Barrio Revolutionary Committees (BRC) take shape.

The BRCs or *Komiteng Rebolusyonaryo sa Baryo*, are in effect, the proto-governments in the barrio which function as the embryo of the people's governmental authority. Their formation was initiated by the NPA, but with the rapid expansion of the national democratic movement in the countryside, running the BRCs has been turned over to the National Democratic Front committees and mass organizations in the barrio. As in many other parts of the country, the BRCs in Cagayan Valley are meant to evolve into NDF councils in the barrios, and coalesce into municipal councils — the basic units of the democratic coalition government. The primary objective of the BRCs is to advance the welfare of the masses and strengthen their democratic political power, as they prepare and lay the ground for the DCG.

The BRCs assume the very basic functions of a local government: administration of day-to-day barrio life, legislation and enforcement of ordinances, convening the people's court to administer jus-



AFP tank harasses peasant marchers

A just solution to a just struggle

Central Luzon NPA command says roots of armed struggle lie in the basic problems of society

The NPA operational command in Central Luzon has expressed its wholehearted desire for peace based on social justice, as it welcomed the Aquino government's moves toward ceasefire negotiations.

"As much as possible, we do not want any violent confrontation," the regional command said in a statement published this May in *Himagsik*, the underground newsletter of revolutionary forces in Central Luzon. "We wish to consider President Corason Aquino's offer to use peaceful means in solving the fundamental problems of our society."

The Central Luzon NPAs said they are open to peace talks, recognizing the sincerity of the new president and the progressive members of her government.

However, they stressed that the issue does not entail laying down of their arms, which are necessary to protect their ranks

and the masses, and safeguard the gains they had garnered in the past 17 years of the revolutionary struggle.

"As developments on the ceasefire talks are optimistically awaited by the revolutionary forces and the people, these efforts are blocked by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the conservatives inside and outside of the Aquino government as well as the other reactionary forces," the regional command said.

Debunking the myth that the military is new and reformed, the statement noted that the "reactionary AFP continues to be pro-US and anti-people in orientation and deeds," as it goes on perpetrating massacres, salvagings, terrorism and various forms of human rights violations and reinforcing its troops in Central Luzon in the guise of counter-insurgency.

The NPA cited two incidents of massacres and several other military atrocities in the region. On April 25, Philippine Army troopers and CHDF men strafed three households in Baryung-Bayu, Camp O'Donnell in Capas, Tarlac. Nine persons were killed, including a pregnant woman and her four-year-old son. On April 21, four farmers were slain and one seriously injured when masked and fatigue-clad soldiers fired at them at around 8 p.m. in Pula, Talavera, Nueva Ecija.

Since March 1986, two persons have

tice, and seeing to the economic, health, educational, organizational needs and the defense of the people.

For most people in many remote and neglected barrios in the countryside, the BRC is the first real experience with government. Except for the notorious barangay leaders and the presence of the much-hated CHDFs and soldiers, or the occasional radio news from Tuguegarao or Manila, the local adjuncts of the Manila government no longer exist, or have ceased to function and serve the people. Until the revolutionary forces came to help build up the BRCs, the people had never really known the service of a government

or the benefits of public welfare programs.

The BRC in Barrio Sta. Fe

In Barrio Sta. Fe (not its real name), a typical farming barrio, the BRC is made up of 16 people elected in the area. All are either part- or full-time peasants. A youth sits in the BRC to represent his sector, and a teacher stands for the very few professionals in the barrio. If there were considerable workers and other sectors in the barrio, they will all be represented too, said Ka Nickson, the BRC's elected chairman. Aside from him, other officers are the president, the vice presi-

dent and the secretary.

The BRC is the implementing arm of the mass organizations at its base. Each of its 16 members sits in one of the standing committees on health, education, economy, organization and security. Each is also a member of the leading committee ("Komiteng Balangay") which supervises his respective sectoral mass organization. These are the NDF mass organizations for the peasants, women, youth and the middle forces. In Cagayan Valley, the main mass organization is the PKM, the Pambansang Kaisahan ng Magbubukid. In Sta. Fe, there are six PKM units, one from each sitio. All have a united front character in themselves as they embrace some middle to rich peasants (with properties of as much as seven to ten hectares of productive land, and able to employ farm workers) who are sympathetic to the revolution.

Other mass organizations are the Kabataang Makabayan, Kaisahan ng mga Makabayang Propesyunal, Katipunan ng mga Gurong Makabayan and the Village Council of Leaders (in tribal communities) which may not be all present in a barrio. In some towns of Cagayan, especially in the east, groups of BRCs called the Provisional Revolutionary Group already exist on the higher municipal level.

When the officers of the BRC in Sta. Fe talked about their projects and their plans, they got excited. Nita, who heads the Committee on Health, said her group had sponsored a benefit dance in May, to raise funds for a humble clinic in the barrio. And to man her barrio's "little hospital" are medics to be trained by a handful of "sympathetic" health workers in the town, or the NPA paramedics themselves who have a wealth of experience in both preventive and curative health care.

Nita, who perhaps would be the equivalent of a public health administrator, said the main thrust of her committee is to launch an intensive information campaign to educate the masses on how to prevent the most common ailments in the barrio: malaria, amoebiasis, tuberculosis and rheumatism. The health committee also plans to popularize herbal medicines, some of which can cure malaria (herbs locally known as "dangle" and "dalipawen").

Not to be outdone, Pancho, a young peasant who heads the Committee on Education, said the institutionalization of literacy classes, plus regular mass courses on the NDF program, US imperialism and other topics, is in the works. His committee is now in the process of forming an instructors' group and training them.

The busiest of the committee perhaps is the Komiteng Pang-Organisa. The organizing committee, in the first place, had been responsible for the formation of the mass organizations. Until these groups have become full-fledged "balangays,"



Welcome presence: NPA fighter exchanges pleasantries with barrio children

been salvaged, two others reported missing and presumed salvaged also, while four more persons were reportedly arrested and tortured by the military in Central Luzon. In Pampanga, the military has been escalating its repressive operations on towns suspected to be rebel lairs — Porac, Lubao, Mexico, Sta. Ana, Arayat, San Luis, Candaba, Guagua, Sta. Rita, and Floridablanca. "Parang panahon din ni Marcos," some townfolk said angrily.

"The AFP is mistaken if it thinks it can solve the 'insurgency problem' through militarization," the NPA regional command further said. "First and foremost, insurgency is not the problem but the means by which the people seek to solve the basic ills of society."

The statement traced the birth of the New People's Army on March 29, 1969 in Central Luzon, and how it has grown into the "armed forces of the Filipino people in the struggle to eradicate the roots of our societal problems and attain national democracy."

The NPA maintained, however, that the very foundation of the reactionary state is still far from dismantled. "The oppressed class still has no power nor voice," their statement read. "And lord-ing it over the power structure are the forces and personalities serving the interests of US imperialism and the rabid

oppressors among the landlord class and the comprador-bourgeoisie." These are the powerful blocs that hinder social change through peaceful means.

As part of the national campaign of the revolutionary movement to dismantle the repressive structures of the Marcos regime, the NPA in Central Luzon said it has been staging tactical operations to disarm the Civil Home Defense Force (CHDF). Last May 6, the guerillas seized an M16, two M2 rifles and one Garand in a raid in Carmencita, Floridablanca in Pampanga. On May 29, they raided the CHDF detachment in Lanang, Candaba, Pampanga and confiscated an M16, three M2 rifles and one Garand.

The Central Luzon NPAs explained that the Pampanga townfolk had long been pressing for the disbandment of the CHDF. "But not a single member of the CHDF has yet been dismissed by the AFP, thus the New People's Army carried out the task," they added.

As the NDF and the Aquino government seek out peaceful solutions to the fundamental problems of Philippine society, the NPA said it will pursue its task of being the "armed force of the Filipino people" against exploitation and oppression until a free, democratic and prosperous society is established. "Only then can there be lasting peace," they stressed. ■

the committee will have its hands full, I was told.

The committee on the economy, which Ka Nickson heads, is in charge of economic welfare projects. In the group's program are the establishment of a communal vegetable plantation for the residents and for the BRC; another communal farm to raise food and funds for the NPA; a cooperative to finance the individual peasants' production costs; and the institutionalization of simple exchange of labor or "amuyo."

The "amuyo" is the local version of the "bayanihan" where all members of the sitio-based peasant mass organizations help in the farming of individual family plots, to raise overall productivity. Of course, the committee's long-term objective is the eventual redistribution of land through the revolutionary land reform program.

Although most of the Sta. Fe BRC's program are still on paper, other BRCs, particularly those in the more consolidated sections of eastern Cagayan, can boast of concrete results. For example, as early as 1980, a total of 15,000 farmers benefited from the agrarian reform and welfare projects of the BRCs across Cagayan Valley.

These are the farmers who were given

For example, in 18 barrios of Kalinga-Apayso which depend on bananas for income, the organizations led a campaign to raise the farm produce price from P7 per 100 bananas to P14 in 1984. The NDF mass organizations in the barrio confronted the big buyers and militantly pushed their demands.

In big farms where workers are employed to till the fields, daily wages were raised from P8 to P25 in 1980. Then, in barrios where there are BRCs, majority of peasants benefited from the "amuyo."

Most of the 15,000 farmers, however, gained from the so-called "kampanyang one-fourth neto" in March 1980. Ka Mario, a cadre who had helped form BRCs in many Cagayan barrios, explained that the "one-fourth neto" refers to the peasants' share of produce, which increased from 2/3 or 1/2 to 3/4 with the campaign. It also means that costs of production are excluded prior to dividing the produce.

The campaign also abolished the "muerto," a system whereby the peasant has to pay the landlord's share no matter if the harvest has been bad due to calamities or crop infestation, which are both common in the Valley.

Defense and the Milisayang Bayan

The Committee on Defense is not

tions of the people's militia: to secure the barrio from the attacks of the enemy, to eliminate civilian informers, to confiscate arms from civilian home defense forces or private armies, to ambush enemy soldiers who enter the barrio, to enforce the ordinances of the BRC (police function) and to take note of the movements of suspicious outsiders.

The Milisayang Bayan in fact serves as the reserve and auxiliary force of the NPA. It supports the NPA in tactical offensives in the barrio when this is possible, providing 24-hour security while NPA units are in the barrio and gathering intelligence data. Sta. Fe's militia, Ruben said, has ample experience in intelligence work and in the elimination of civilian informers. While in the barrio, I witnessed a deliberation of militia members on whether to liquidate an informer.

"Kami na ang gumagawa ng desisyon. Kung may sukat na datos laban sa kanya, binibigyan ng kaukulang aksyon. Halimbawa ng ganitong datos ay kung maraming kasalanan siya sa 'umili' (mamamayan) o kaya'y nagpahamak at naging dahilan ng pagkamatay ng mga NPA o lider ng masa," Ruben explained.

In this particular case, the informer had been punished with barrio arrest for three months, which meant he could not leave the barrio within the period. A stern warning was also sent by the militia. "Kung mabibigat ang kaso, halimbawa'y kung may utang na dugo, ang mga mamamayan ang nagpapasye sa pamamagitan ng publikong paglilitis," Ruben continued.

However, if violation of the barrio's ordinances is the case, only a corresponding fine is imposed. Two examples of these barrio ordinances made by the BRC, are: for the barrio people to inform the owner of a pond whenever they want to catch catfish, and to pay damages if one's farm animals destroy another's crops. In Sta. Fe, a P20 fine is slapped against the owner of the animal (which adds up to the funds of the BRC), plus payment for the damaged crops or property.

Ruben said the local militia in Sta. Fe has actually limited experience in resisting the counter-insurgency campaigns of the AFP in the barrio. "Ang problema ay kulang kami sa armas at masyadong malalaki ang mga operasyon ng kasaway dito." The 25-member militia, Ruben noted, has only 28 pistols, two M16 rifles and a Browning automatic rifle in its arsenal.

In 1985, Sta. Fe's militia was nearly dissolved when five of the then seven members directly joined the NPA. With interest, Ruben noted that it had one woman member, who led the bandwagon transfer to the guerrilla army at that time.

Other welfare projects

Helping the masses, however, does not begin and end with the BRCs. In coordi-



Taking a breather: Members of the Milisayang Bayan rest during a lull in military training

land seized from their despotic landlords and lands abandoned by their owners. They also include peasants who were given carabao, or those who gained from the eradication or lowering of usurious rates, land rents and irrigation fees. These concessions were won by the PKM, along with the other mass organizations in the barrios, through collective petitions and in some cases, confrontation with landlords and usurers.

Countless other peasants benefited in campaigns led by the NDF organizations to raise the prices of their farm produce.

exactly the armed unit that secures the barrio from the counter-insurgency attacks of the AFP. More accurately, it supervises the people's militia which provides the civilian support for military work such as the systematic gathering of intelligence data in and out of the barrio, particularly on movements of the enemy. It is also involved in fund-raising for NPA logistics, such as ammunition.

Ruben, a young peasant who heads the Committee on Defense in Sta. Fe, also sits in the 25-member Milisayang Bayan in the barrio. Ruben rattles off the func-



Guerrilla-athletes at play

nation with the NDF-led "local government," the NPA conducts its own campaigns. For example, when the masses complained of the denudation of forested lands (which make up 2/3 of Cagayan province alone) by big logging companies, the NPA sabotaged logging trucks and raided some of the logging companies. Some P200 million worth of loggers' property were destroyed by the NPA in its "Operation Lapat" (an Isneg word meaning "to stop"). Affected were the Cellophil Resources Corp., Parvi Logging, Pasig-Rizal Lumber, Integrated Development Corp., Northern Luzon Mahogany, Taggat Logging, among others.

In a statement, the NPA said it acted on the people's demands, particularly of the Isnags, a tribal minority and on the fact that the logging companies were being used by the military in its counter-insurgency operations. It also noted that it was not the people, but only a handful of big loggers — particularly the "Enrile-Puzon-Lim clique" who benefit from the enterprise.

Indirectly, the revolutionary forces also help the masses to assert more forcefully their rights and interests. Through such concerted protest actions as rallies, demonstrations and petitions, the barrio people not only gain economic concessions, but push their political demands as well.

In February 1979, a massive demonstration called "Misang Bayan" successfully led to the relief of an unpopular mayor in a Cagayan town. The people's militancy reached high points such as when the 21st Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army was successfully ousted through persistent and militant mass actions in September 1979.

Counter-insurgency

The people's worry, however, are the intense counter-insurgency operations, which threaten to destroy the political,

economic and social gains of the BRCs and the revolutionary movement.

Cagayan Valley remains one of the most heavily militarized regions of the country, and Cagayanos have suffered the most ruthless operations of the AFP. In fact, the Valley sustained the highest incidence of salvaging and other cases of human rights violations in the entire country in 1985, according to human rights groups. More people were also forced to evacuate or were hamletted in Cagayan than anywhere else. Eight "encirclement and suppression campaigns" have been launched against the NPA and the Cagayan masses since 1972.

As a result, Cagayanos have been displaced from the towns of Baggao, Gattaran, Cabugao, Amulong, Flora, Allacapan, Ballesteros, Lallo, Lasam, Pudtol, Luna, Claveria, Aparri, Rizal, Sta. Marcela, Sto. Nino and many other towns in the Valley. Until now, many houses remain empty, and what evidently used to be communities have become ghost barrios.

Despite the February revolution which toppled the Marcos regime, these AFP operations are continuing and even intensifying. Last March, two more battalions of Philippine Army troopers beefed up the 3,000-strong army. Worse, an armored regiment, 12 helicopter gunships, 13 fighter bomber planes, an artillery unit and a brigade-sized private army of CHDFs and armed goons have been deployed against

Cagayanos to carry out the final phase of the newest counter-insurgency operation in Cagayan Valley — "Oplan Pegasus."

The last in Pegasus' four phases calls for a series of massive operations, employing battalion-sized forces backed by the bomber planes, heligunships, mortars, artillery and tanks. Once more, Pegasus' objective is to drive away the NPA from the guerrilla bases in the barrios to the harsh interiors of the Cordilleras, to starve them and wipe them out.

The campaign shall be followed by civil-military operations, population and resources-control operations, building up of a massive intelligence network, and psy-war operations to discourage the people from supporting the revolutionary forces.

The gains of the ongoing revolution, however, have all the more fired up the people's determination to support the NPA. Despite the intense AFP operations, the NPA in Cagayan Valley currently sustains one of the highest levels of recruitment. In one barrio alone in June, as many as eight people joined the Army in one day. And within one guerrilla front, as many as 15 have been joining the NPA in a single day.

In Cagayan Valley, the people have seen a glimmer of how a liberated future would look like. They have fought hard for it, made untold sacrifices, and they are not about to let it go. *Pen Guerrero*



Urgent plea: Cagayan peasants march against militarization

SPARKS

Newbriefs about people's struggles



NDF SALUTES TANADA

The National Democratic Front expressed its greetings to nationalist leader Lorenzo M. Tanada on his 88th birthday on Aug. 10, 1986. In a statement read during his birthday gathering at the St. Joseph's College, the NDF acknowledged Tanada's outstanding contributions to the struggle against foreign domination and to the movement to "assert and develop the power that resides in the masses of the Filipino people." "It has been a long, arduous struggle. But we are beginning to see its first fruits. For this, we must give rightful credit to the role that had been played by the courageous, wise and far-seeing Ka Tanny," said the NDF.

PRIESTS, NUNS ASSAIL U.S. INTERVENTION

Forty-nine American priests and nuns working in the Philippines decried last July US interventionist policies in the country. In an open letter signed mostly by members of the Maryknoll and Columban orders, the priests and religious said US intervention is a chief cause of poverty in the Philippines. They also said that the US response to events leading to and following the February ouster of Marcos showed "an intention to continue to intervene in Philippine affairs."

STRIKE VIOLENCE EXPOSED

The Commission on Trade Union and Human Rights, a church-based organization, exposed this July, the "alarming trend" of killings in the labor front. Commission chairman Bishop Antonino Nepomuceno said that 12 workers have been killed in violent incidents since the start of the year. In a recent report, the group said seven of the fatalities died between the months of March and June. Last year, the commission documented more than 100 cases of human rights violations against workers, including picket line killings, disappearances and salvaging.

"FIND" DEMANDS ACCESS TO MILITARY RECORDS

The Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearances or FIND pressed for access to military records on missing persons believed to have been abducted by military agents. FIND said at least 619 people have disappeared since 1970. In a report released last July, the human rights group also said that peasants topped the list of disappeared persons, with a total of 174 cases documented. Mindanao, on the other hand, ranked first in the number of disappearances, with a total of 329 cases. Fourteen cases so far have been filed with the Presidential Committee on Human Rights. FIND also said it has been receiving more reports of disappearances, particularly in the countryside.

NPA HITS MILITARY ON AMBUSH REPORT

The NPA Southern Tagalog command clarified the defensive nature of the ambush sprung on elements of the 31st IB in Villa Prinsipe, Gumaca, Quezon last June 30, where three officers and eight enlisted men were killed. In a statement released to the press on July 7, the NPA said that the ambush was "in retaliation for a series of armed assaults against the NPA and the people of Quezon." The guerrilla command issued the statement in reaction to a military-inspired report claiming that Villa Prinsipe was a "ceasefire area" and that the soldiers were on their way to a "peace dialogue." It said the NPA action was actually precipitated by the June 26 search-and-destroy missions of the military in the town of Lopez. Such operations have also been conducted without let-up since March in Gumaca, Pitogo, Buenavista and Guinayangan,

said the NPA. They said that these operations have resulted in the salvaging of a civilian, military harassment of barrio residents and intimidation of members of fact-finding missions. The statement added: "We reiterate our openness to peace negotiations, but we cannot allow the remnants of the fascist Marcos dictatorship to continue sowing terror among the people unopposed." The NPA also denied AFP allegations that they burned the bodies of military casualties.

NEPA RAPS IMPORT LIBERALIZATION SCHEME

The National Economic Protectionism Association (NEPA) expressed grave concern last July over the negative effects of the import liberalization program. In a statement addressed to President Aquino, NEPA said that the program, which is an IMF imposition, will have disastrous effects on the economy in general and on the manufacturing sector in particular. NEPA cited the lack of safeguards against the possible surge of imports. It also said that the program will: a) cause the shutdown of businesses unable to compete with the influx of cheaper foreign-made goods; b) deplete the dollar reserves as the economy will be open to larger volumes of imports; c) dislocate the agricultural workers whose produce cannot stand alongside US-made substitutes; and d) result in further devaluation of the peso as the country's perpetual balance of payments deficit worsens.

NEPA maintained that "the current backward state of our economy is not primarily due to internal inefficiencies but precisely to the overwhelming foreign domination of strategic sectors, which the import liberalization program will only reinforce."

LETTERS

Comments from readers

On human rights, etc.

Dear LIBERATION,

Here are some comments on your publication:

- 1) The layout is good and professional, as could be expected.
- 2) As for the content, well, it becomes a matter of opinion and taste. I feel the reports of killings ("victories") should be done apologetically, but of course, I understand there is hardly anything to apologize for, as far as you're concerned.
- 3) Military atrocities are a continuing old hat, they bore me.
- 4) I would like intelligent answers to why we are poor; why there is starvation in our richest islands (Negros, Mindanao); why the US bases should be out (try an economic answer, if you can).
- 5) I have long wanted to see tables, graphs, figures, i.e., an intelligent position paper, on how to solve the food and poverty problem.

Regarding Enrile and Ramos, I have always thought Ramos was strictly a professional. I don't know about Enrile.

You still have not given the full story on Balweg. Please do. Regarding the LIB stand against the US raid on Libya, this is not surprising; but it will be considered poor taste in this country (United States - *ed.*). See if you can get away from your "terrorist" image with the US and Western press and establish respectability and legitimacy.

Linda

We will do our best to write stories that will establish the NDF's respectability and legitimacy before, foremost of all, the Filipino people, who are our primary audience and top concern. We will also seek ways to make stories on military atrocities more interesting and relevant to people like you. To the peasants in the countryside, these atrocities are certainly not "old hat," no matter how often they recur year in and year out. Salvaging and hamletting can never be boring to the victims themselves. - Editor

Dangerous defenseman

Persistent suspicions rankle former No. 1 Marcos man, Juan Ponce Enrile



Riding on the Cory tide: Enrile with fellow coup leaders last February

To a largely Roman Catholic population, Juan Ponce Enrile ought to be an extremely dangerous man. Nearly 14 years ago, in September 1972, he was one of Ferdinand Marcos' "Twelve Disciples," a group of military officers and civilians consulted by Marcos in declaring martial law. There must be something ominous in 13 people binding together, for Marcos — religious and a serious student of history as he claimed to be — forgot how betrayals can arise and be fatal. Last Feb. 22 to 25, Enrile did a Judas on Marcos.

Enrile had for years been Marcos' chief martial law administrator. However, a well-timed military revolt and the decisive show of "people power" somehow exonerated the military rebels led by Enrile and another martial law enforcer, New Armed Forces Chief Gen. Fidel Ramos, before a forgiving people at the height of the euphoria over Marcos' departure.

Today, however, Enrile is once again showing his tendencies of disloyalty. He is increasingly becoming an anachronism in the Aquino government, getting at odds with human rights advocates in the Cabinet and unmanageably concealing his presidential ambitions. In one of his flirtations with the press, he said: "If I'm pushed or provoked, I'll put my bet on

the table and run for the Presidency." The morning-after papers didn't fail to banner his statement in the headlines — confirming such plans long publicly transparent. The following day, however, Enrile claimed that he was just joking, saying that "what I said was that if I am provoked to run, I would consider the provocation. But I did not say there are persons provoking me . . . because there is no reason to be provoked."

That, coming from a man who only four months ago initiated a military revolt is indeed alarming, if not outrightly foreboding; the coy qualification is in no way reassuring.

The February turnabout

When on the night of Feb. 22, Enrile and Ramos announced that they no longer recognized Marcos as president and commander-in-chief, Enrile said, "I cannot in all conscience support President Marcos who thwarted the people's will in the last elections" — this news sent shock waves everywhere. What made the situation more tense was Marcos' ultimatum that the rebels surrender, or they would be pulverized by mortar fire. At about the same time, Enrile made his crucial message, saying "I believe with all my

heart that Cory Aquino is the duly elected president of the Filipino people."

That pivotal appeal, plus Cardinal Sin's invocation for people to protect "our (military) friends," saw droves of Filipinos quickly encircle Camps Aguinaldo and Crame in defense of the rebels. Though the military later termed it as a "people power revolution," it was more like a failed military coup d'etat which was salvaged by Enrile and company by riding on the Cory craze.

Enrile and his rebel-colleagues, heavily identified with human rights abuses under Marcos, somehow emerged from the incident with cleansed souls. They began relating how the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) battled to realize reforms within the military. They recounted how frustrating it was to ensure a clean, fair election. They recalled the frightful prospect of Marcos being proclaimed president again, with all the talk of the military reformists being arrested shortly after the snap election. Tales of military and Enrile's valor and heroism were in abundance.

However, for Enrile, the stigma of his close association with Marcos is hard to erase. To many people, his sudden change of loyalty is too good to be true, too sudden to be lasting — and too Enrile to be believable. As expected, his questionable past (which is not so long ago) soon clashed with the liberal current in government, especially with human rights lawyers who fought the dictatorship which Enrile dutifully served for years.

When Cory Aquino moved to fulfill her election campaign pledge of releasing all political prisoners, Enrile was the first to object. While mouthing a familiar line — that civilian rule should always be supreme over the military — he pointed out that the government was underestimating the "hardcore" Marxists: that they are sworn to revolutionary violence and will spare no one — not even Cory. After the government did let go the detainees, Enrile warned: "I won't be responsible for the consequences."

His rumblings over the creation of



AFP "reformist" soldier



Enrile and imperialist coddler

the Diokno Commission to investigate human rights violations by military men followed suit. As if ever protective of his flock — the military — Enrile retorted that abuses by the insurgents should likewise be probed. No sooner had Diokno rebuffed the proposal when the government expressed its wishes to hold ceasefire talks with the underground revolutionary movement. A dyed-in-the-wool anti-communist, Enrile asked for amnesty also for the military, and glumly predicted lean chances for the talks' success.

After the Presidential Commission on Good Government began sequestering Marcos cronies enterprises, Enrile's interests were unavoidably harmed. When the Philcomsat was sequestered, a company where he holds substantial interests, he blew his top and ordered that the PCGG order be lifted. However, he passively gave up his shares in San Miguel Corporation and the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. when news over the sequestration moves in these firms drew wide public attention. When it was the Cojuangco-controlled Coconut Planters Bank's turn to be sequestered, he dramatically resigned as chairman (a post he had held for 11 years) to manifest his disgust over the PCGG proceedings.

Mr. Controversial

By design or by accident, Enrile has been Mr. Controversial since the February affair. Aside from his accusations of communist infiltration of the government — a charge lustily echoed by his own RAM "boys" — Enrile has had arguments with about every civilian member of the Cabinet, opposed the declaration of a provision-

al revolutionary government, publicly favored the retention of the US bases, all enough for him to ask: "Why, oh why do people doubt my sincerity?"

The Tolentino coup at the Manila Hotel was the second time Enrile showed his considerable grip over the military. Offered by the aging loyalist the post of defense minister, the coup was as good as failed after Enrile said no to the ludicrous proposal. Although the main result of the Manila Hotel vandalism was Tolentino's erasure from serious politics, some say that it was Enrile who gained the most from the incident. He greatly boosted his stock with the military and some conservative sections of society, while showing up the glaring weaknesses of the civilian government of Aquino.

Moreover, the Manila Hotel incident showed that the military is a major political force in Aquino's fragile coalition government. However, it likewise made Enrile the man to watch. Today, everybody has all the more become suspicious of Enrile, who now has to live with that notorious failed coup. No matter how hard he strains, he cannot anymore deny his burning presidential ambition.

That ambition may easily be nurtured into reality by showing that the present government of Cory Aquino is incapable of keeping peace and order in the country. These insinuations, in fact, color Enrile's double-speak. It is not surprising that Enrile and the RAM have been accused of working for the ceasefire talks' failure.

This has likewise given rise to suspicions that the recent series of kidnappings in Mindanao have Enrile's secret nod. The picture of a disorderly, unsafe Philippines would give legitimacy to a stronger, more decisive leader; Enrile would want to believe he's the chosen one.

His statement, "One does not go to a revolution only to retire," betrays some hidden agenda in the Defense Ministry. Notwithstanding Enrile's "jokes," the basic seriousness of his utterances forebode surprises in the months ahead. In one instance late in 1985, he was queried on the possible surprise creation of a Ministry of Interior (reportedly to be headed by Gen. Fabian Ver) which would drastically diminish his powers as Defense Minister. Quipped Enrile: "I don't know whether there will be any surprise. The surprise could be either way, you see." The February event must have been part of that surprise, but no one knows if it is the end of it.

The surprise of Enrile's life, however, may come when he finally decides to stage his own coup, with the help of his band of loyalists within and outside the Defense Ministry-military establishment. He might just find the people who, correctly or wrongly, risked their lives to save him from Marcos' mortars, literally on the other side of the camp.

Karlos Magdiwang

VIEWPOINT

Contributions from readers

"Make full use of media"

Reader calls on national democrats to promote the revolutionary cause

The mass media are keenly interested in the revolutionary movement. Review the news yourselves. The focus of interest ranges from solicited views by adherents of armed struggle to revelations of NPA "atrocities."

Also take note of how the mass media are frequently attracted to the military aspects of the revolutionary struggle. This is understandable. In the past, the Marcos dictatorship promoted the view that the national democratic revolution is principally a military conflict. Today, this same line is still being echoed by the AFP and Defense Ministry and put into practice through counter-insurgency drives that stress military "solutions" to the conflict. This line is also being used to buttress the AFP's claim that the revolutionary forces are not genuinely interested in a ceasefire.

It is true that in the past, the revolutionary movement also had to emphasize the role and achievements of the New People's Army (NPA), to prove to most Filipinos that the repressive machinery of the dictatorship cannot be allowed to violate the rights of the people with impunity. It thus became valuable news, especially to the organized masses in the



Smiling NPA couple: Projecting the revolution's

barrios, when the NPA took action against the AFP's terrorism. However, continued media exposure of NPA offensives also led to the mistaken notion in some sectors of our society that the NPA is what the revolution is all about.

The real scope and depth, therefore, of the revolution are still nebulous to some quarters of mass media and to large segments of the people. Our work in the political and economic spheres, for one, has not been given enough projection. This is the field of work, I believe, where we have to make up in our media work. For instance, the national democratic movement has already undertaken agrarian reform in areas where it is strong. When we speak of defending revolutionary gains, we have to match such a pronouncement with explanations on the reduction of land rent, elimination of usury, or the socio-economic transformations being effected by the peasant organizations in the areas controlled by the NDF. We also have a revolutionary health program which can stagger the imagination of Western-oriented medical practitioners, given the scarce resources of the national democratic movement. This too, we must propagate.

The point is that we have to share these gains with mass media so that journalists can report and feature crucial aspects of the revolution. We can no longer afford to be misunderstood, especially during this phase of the struggle. Fascist and reactionary elements are intensifying their "black propaganda" and they have influence over and access to media. To counter this, we should take initiative in providing basic or comprehensive information on such important matters as revolutionary justice both as theory and practice. The latter is especially crucial considering that reports on NPA "killing fields" have gone on uncontested in the newspaper and broadcast media. We could also

share information on AFP deployment of combat forces or on AFP "berdugos" who have been reassigned to other areas. The mass media could then take the cue from here and conduct their own investigations to verify our claims on escalating military moves to sabotage the ceasefire talks and project the NPA as bloodthirsty killers.

We should also project the other revolutionary organizations within the NDF. How about giving more information on the Christians for National Liberation (CNL) to clarify burning issues about religion and politics? Or on the peasant mass organizations, to contribute insights on their revolutionary experiences in land reform? I'm sure the mass media would pick up this kind of news, which are social issues currently being deliberated or debated upon within the Aquino government, the Constitutional Commission and other political organizations.

Mass media audiences would also want to identify an organization with someone of flesh and blood, because a faceless re-

volutionary organization creates sinister mystery. Notice the positive reaction of newspapers and readers to the admission of Jose Ma. Sison of his leadership role in the revolutionary movement. Or take the public's sense of relief upon rediscovering the NDF in the persons of Satur Ocampo and Antonio Zumel. Perhaps one reason why the NPA is so popular is because many people can actually claim to know some of its leaders and members.

Mass media can serve as an important vehicle for presenting the truth about the national democratic revolution. If we are better understood by mass media audiences and consequently, by the Aquino government, perhaps the wisdom of creating a coalition government with the revolutionary forces would dawn to reality. This is not to say, however, that what we should merely launch is a public relations campaign. We are not, after all, in the business of marketing an "image." Revolutionary substance and form are a dialectical unity. **Julian Parades**

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY *Resistance and struggles abroad*

Salute to Le Duan

NDF pays tribute to a revolutionary fighter

Last July 10, Le Duan, Vietnamese leader and secretary-general of the Vietnamese Communist Party, passed away at the age of 79 after a long illness. He was a distinguished theoretician and fighter in the Vietnamese struggle for independence, first against the Japanese, then the French, and finally the Americans. The NDF conveyed the following message of sympathy to the government and people of Vietnam:

No death is more noble than the death of a revolutionary fighter.

For more than 60 years of his life, Le Duan dedicated his whole self to the service of the Vietnamese people. He persevered in three Vietnam wars in order to achieve a free and united country, where the Vietnamese people themselves would become the masters of their destiny. He was a brilliant strategist who resolutely and creatively developed the art of people's war to the highest degree so as to defeat the US imperialist aggressors and their war of destruction.

Le Duan was truly a comrade-in-arms of all the world's revolutionary people who have derived great inspiration from the victory of Vietnam's struggle for independence.

We, in the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, cannot but therefore salute his heroism and valor, even as we extend our deepest condolences to the Vietnamese people on the passing away of their leader. We cannot but grieve over the loss of a life so nobly and richly lived.

But though the Vietnamese nation today is bereft of their leader, we assure them that Le Duan and other Vietnamese heroes like him will never be forgotten because of a priceless legacy they have given to the oppressed peoples and countries of the world. This is the legacy of hope and struggle — that a small country, united and fighting for a just cause, can



Le Duan: Beloved leader of Vietnam

defeat a big power; that a people, with great militancy and determination, can make history.

This is the legacy of Le Duan. It is a legacy that we, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, vow to cherish and pursue in the Filipino people's continuing struggle for national liberation and freedom. — NDF



human side

Enrile's guackery

Johnny Enrile boasted early this August that "if only President Aquino would give the orders," he could wipe out the NPA in one month.

Now doesn't that give you a funny feeling of *deja vu*? Johnny's former boss, Ferdinand Marcos, also made the same claim during his heyday.

In another speech three days later, Johnny took his listeners back to the '50s by parroting the infamous line said by the Red-baiting Sen. Eugene McCarthy. He said, "If it walks like a duck, quacks like a duck and wiggles like a duck, then by God, it's a duck!"

Johnny, of course, was referring to so-called communists who have allegedly infiltrated the Aquino government. He declined to name names, but his subalterns in the MND leaked the names to the press anyway.

Now, look who quacked!

In an interesting turn of events, Marcos from hula-hula land also echoed Enrile's claim, citing that as much as 40% of key government posts were in the hands of the Reds.

What? Enrile, Marcos and McCarthy all in one class?

After the quackery come the fishy stories. Enrile bared in mid-August a so-called "NDF three-phase plot" to infiltrate the government alongside with another plot by Marcos loyalists to kidnap top government officials (with himself at the top of the list), storm Malacanang and vital military camps this September.

Tsk, tsk. Johnny should be more discreet. After all, people still remember that the last time he helped conjure up a story about an alleged attempt on his life, martial law was declared.

Besides, there's no telling what the people might do to him and his ilk if he tries something naughty. The Philippines, after all, is the land of *balut* and *fishballs*.

When the AFP says it is on the defensive, this is what it means in the Visayas: Fifty-three cases of salvaging from January to June 1986 compared to 46 in the same period last year; 161 political prisoners in jail compared to 144 during the first half of 1985; 56 persons jailed for various political offenses since January, more than half of whom are without charges of counsel; cases of sexual abuse, murder and cannibalism committed by soldiers against suspected NPAs in Samar; indiscriminate mortar attacks against mountainous barangays in Negros; as many as five army battalions and other combat units deployed from Mindanao to the Visayas since May.

Phew! Now, Visayans know what defensive - AFP-style means!

Last July, a group of Marcos loyalists bearing neatly made placards picketed the Channel 4 TV station to protest the airing of what they called "communist and NPA propaganda" such as interviews with Satur Ocampo and the Cordillera documentary "Ramut." It turned out, though, that none of the programs in question had ever been shown on Channel 4.

See, that's what happens when instructions are relayed all the way from Hawaii.

OPENS TOMORROW

SUPER ROADSHOW PRESENTATION

GOTESCO ● GALAXY ● NEW FRONTIER ● ALI MALL ● GOTESCO (CAL.)
 ● SM CINEMA ● ROBINSON ● HOLIDAY PLAZA ● QUAD ● GREENBELT
 ● PARAMOUNT ● VIRRA MALL ● REGAL

YOU CAN
 STOP A MAN
 WHO'S
 AFRAID
 TO DIE!

JUST
 BLOW
 HIM TO
 PIECES!

