



## Orientation to Philippine Support Work in the Current Period

### Introduction

The period following the Aquino assassination has required significant changes in our policies and methods of work in the Philippine support arena. Our activists have had some difficulty implementing these policies and methods thoroughly, both because these are new and, we have not had the benefit of a systematic study. This Ang Aktibista is the basis for a mass study of our concrete assessment of the period and of our orientation, policies and methods. It presents the political and theoretical basis for the major refinements we have made especially in the area of forging the popular front of opposition to the Marcos dictatorship. At our summer theoretical school, we will study the universals of united front practice and their application to all our areas of work.

The level of abstraction of this Ang Aktibista is relatively high. We are assuming that comrades have followed in sufficient detail the political events in the Philippines through the A, T, and the materials and updates that the NDC has struggled hard to collect. (We will not attempt to reproduce those details here.) If not, comrades should rectify their practice immediately. We go to all lengths just to monitor the situation and scrounge up hard-to-get materials from the Philippine movement so that our activists can keep up with fast-changing political data. To neglect the responsibility of updating ourselves is to diminish our political and propaganda capacities.

Not only is the level of abstraction of this AA relatively high, it has not undergone a thorough enough editing due to the pressure to get it out. As a result, the sentence structures (especially of the first half) tend to be complex, dense, and even downright awkward. Leading comrades then, have the responsibility of preparing thoroughly for the main discussions to lead the membership in plowing through the material. Leading comrades already had a few hours of discussion here at the National when everyone gathered for the C-P conference. But if in the preparations those comrades encounter difficulty themselves, they should raise their questions to either Kas. or. Please do not fail to do this in the interest of a lively and elucidating study process. The next stage of our orientation will be the careful summation of our practice in the following years on the basis of the line presented here and the extraction of lessons that will improve our practice as well as deepen and refine the line itself.

### THE NEW POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

The existence of the Marcos fascist regime is itself a reflection of the global political crisis that has faced U.S. imperialism for the last two decades. Along with its attempt to reestablish nuclear blackmail over the Soviet Union and the socialist camp, it has stepped up counter-revolutionary activities against national liberation movements. This has included the imposition of dictatorial regimes in the neo-colonies and the reestablishment of its capacity

for open military intervention should these client regimes fail to stem the advance of the revolutionary movements.

As in other victimized countries, the imposition of fascist rule in the Philippines meant a qualitative change in the people's political existence. The destruction of nominal bourgeois democratic rights altered the terms of their political struggle. While the imposition of fascist rule marked a stage in the long-term deterioration of reactionary class rule in the Philippines, in the short-term, this vicious attack set back the people's movement and pushed it on the defensive all-sidedly. For reformists and national democratic revolutionaries alike, any avenues for peaceful and open political struggles were closed off.

The 10 years that followed was an ebb in the people's movement. Fascist terror spread a blanket of fear and intimidation nationwide. Disenfranchised bourgeois democrats, accustomed only to legal parliamentary struggle were paralyzed. National democrats went underground and took up the painstaking task of building up the people's army on a nationwide scale while preserving their forces from brutal fascist attacks. Although severely hunted down, the revolutionaries immediately undertook political agitation through illegal and semi-legal means. Only after two years or so were the bourgeois democrats able to regain their bearings and initiate legal forms of anti-fascist agitation.

Meanwhile, the objective conditions faced by the people continued to deteriorate, setting the basis for continued discontent. The regime's economic policy of heightened subservience to foreign finance capital wreaked havoc on the people's livelihood and living standard. By the end of the decade, the country was irretrievably trapped in a \$22 billion debt to foreign lending institutions. Benefitting most from this influx of borrowed capital were the Marcos cronies. On top of steady pauperization, the people also chafed at the severe restriction of their rights. Arbitrary one-man decrees, savage abuses and repression by the military and the paramilitary were accompanied by Marcos' KBL power monopoly. The country was kept in the dark by the controlled media which specialized in trumpeting the First Lady's ostentatious display of wealth and in feeding the President's vanity.

Throughout the last decade, the broad democratic resistance managed to establish a visible anti-fascist pole that fed the spontaneous discontent already arising from the oppressive economic and political conditions. The existence of this pole - from the revolutionary resistance to the bourgeois opposition - was an important factor in the quantitative weakening of the regime during the last 10 years. The activity of the subjective forces became part of the objective conditions that bit by bit, and year to year, eroded the regime's political strength. But during this ebb the political struggles tended to be more scattered and sporadic. The subjective forces, particularly the revolutionary left, had to exert great effort to draw out the connections between issues, and maximize the political and mobilizing impact of each particular struggle. Disheartened or intimidated, the masses were relatively difficult to mobilize.

Aquino's martyrdom, and the outrageous manner in which he was killed, set off a complex set of factors already building during the ebb (the combination of oppressive conditions and the efforts of the subjective forces) and let loose the current flow. With the Aquino assassination, the "connections" suddenly became "clear." The people's anger became concentrated. Overnight, the fear of fascist reprisal was set aside, and the mass response broke the back of fascist intimidation. From a period of relative calm, emerged a period of conspicuous change with the masses being drawn into struggle on a wide scale, in various levels, fronts and organizational forms. The obsolescence of fascist rule, previously exposed only in an uneven manner surfaced in an all-sided way. This has placed a tremendous strain on the regime and its institutions whose purpose had been to obscure the nature of Marcos' autocratic rule. The politicalization of the people is now growing by leaps and bounds,

the class struggle is intensifying day to day and the fascist institutions are experiencing a severe crisis.

No doubt the U.S.-Marcos regime still has the upperhand militarily. Despite its rapid expansion nationwide, the NPA is still not in a position to lock the AFP in a stalemate. Politically, however, Marcos has been placed on the defensive overnight. His popularity is at an all-time low. With his isolation from all sectors on a qualitative level, even the U.S. is in danger of being exposed ~~at~~ wide scale as the instigator behind the fascist imposition.

Literally, all sectors of Philippine society are represented in the open protest and defiance of the fascist regime. Workers, students, peasants, the religious and the urban poor - areas of traditional left influence - are being mobilized in almost daily demonstrations and marches. What is most significant however, is the spontaneous activation of the so-called "middle class" - sectors that had remained relatively passive and oblivious to anti-fascist and revolutionary agitation in the past, i.e., white collar workers, professionals, small businessmen, artists and liberal intellectuals. Among them, various democratic organizations have sprung up (ATOM, ROAR, etc.). In addition, opposition literature and newspapers have sprung up. To make matters worse for the regime, even its potential allies among the business elite have broken ranks. These are compradors who have been victimized by presidential favoritism or who fear that Marcos' mishandling of his power is making the country ripe for revolution. In other words, the regime no longer has any friends beyond its own narrow clique and its imperialist sponsors.

The broadness and militance of the spontaneous movement has shaken the regime and exacerbated the factional tensions within the ruling camp. Some of Marcos' KBL followers have begun to worry about their political futures and are looking for ways to position themselves safely should the need to jump ship arise. There have been minor defections to the opposition circles. Within the military, some disgruntled officers have begun feeding damaging information to the panel investigating the Aquino assassination, and to the legal opposition. This political crisis also comes at a time when the U.S.-Marcos regime has to resolve a delicate succession question. Ill and getting on in years, Marcos clearly cannot serve imperialism forever. Even though no single individual within his camp can replace his capacity to lord over the ruling machinery and to mediate factional disputes, imperialism already has to set in place a succession process that would not result in destabilizing factional struggles. The pressure of the protest movement is what imperialism needs the least at this point. Now, the need for a speedier transition is arising. At the same time, danger of internecine struggles within the ruling camps as factions jockey for positions increases in proportion to the strain imposed by the political unrest.

To make matters worse, Marcos' political crisis coincides with a severe turn in the economy towards a deeper crisis. Hard ~~on~~ *on* the heels of the assassination, which itself had a serious negative impact on tourism and the rate of investment, came a major devaluation of the peso - a measure dictated by the regime's international lenders. Thus, the people's economic conditions - including those of the middle classes - have become even more deplorable. This, while the regime's dependence on foreign capital, its corruption and the greed of its crony system are being exposed in a concentrated way by the protest movement. Definitely, the economic crisis will only serve to fuel the political conflagration.

U.S. imperialism, of course, is extremely worried about the deterioration of its ally's capacity to hold itself up politically. Its most immediate concern is how best to diffuse the political unrest that is destabilizing the regime. Because Marcos is already extremely on the defensive over the Aquino murder, open and violent repression is a politically unacceptable tactic in the immediate period. Imperialism has to devise a political maneuver - "democratization" - that can put the opposition off-balance, isolate the left and coopt its bourgeois wing. At the same time, such a

political maneuver can be used as a rationale to impose violent repression against those who "impede democratization" if the maneuver fails to neutralize the unrest.

This is also a moment when imperialism is forced to think and quickly decide on its long-term options, on the variants of forms for its class rule in the Philippines. The first assessment it has to make is whether, as in the words of former U.S. ambassador William Sullivan, "Marcos' days are numbered." It has to assess whether the current crisis is only a temporary setback for the regime or whether it is irreversible. Both sides of the bourgeoisie realize it is irreversible. And, even if the protest is diffused, Marcos' health problems and old age require the decisive settling of the succession question more sooner than later. Just this matter alone introduces strains between Marcos and the U.S. as the former tries to get the best out of the deal; for example, the Imelda-as-successor issue. The political unrest exacerbates matters and if sustained, will accelerate the ripening of the secondary master vs. puppet contradiction.

To sum up, imperialist class rule has entered a period of increased instability. The massive protest movement that emerged in response to the Aquino assassination together with a profound economic crisis, a ripening succession question, and the rise of conflicts within the U.S.-Marcos alliance make for a potentially devastating combination. How this period can be turned into a setback of historical proportions for the U.S.-Marcos regime depends on the astuteness and decisiveness of the revolutionary national democratic forces.

### The Challenge to Revolutionaries

#### A. The Character of the Movement

For the left, the new political situation presents a complex and exciting challenge. As the conscious element, the communists must establish a decisive orientation towards this phenomenon and determine how this spontaneous upsurge can be linked to the overall revolutionary agenda. How can this mass movement be sustained, and how can its political direction be established? First, we must assess as objectively as possible the character of the mass protest movement, its strengths and limitations.

The most impressive feature of the current protest is the number of people it has mobilized. The number of participants easily dwarfs any previous political mobilizations--including the 1970 First Quarter Storm. Another positive characteristic is the active participation of "middle class" sectors, such as white collar workers, entrepreneurs and professionals, who had not been "politically involved." These features show the extent of the dictatorship's isolation and the generalized anger at the present dispensation. Also, they reflect a spontaneous but objective coalescence of classes and political forces never before ranged against the reactionary ruling system.

However, it is largely a spontaneous movement with the unorganized easily outnumbering the organized and conscious forces of the various political trends--from bourgeois democrats, social democrats, to communists--interacting with it. Without the intervention of a politically conscious core, this spontaneous movement will peter out, despite favorable objective conditions for its sustenance.

In addition, the spontaneous movement is mainly anti-fascist and reformist in character. It is centered on the rejection of the Marcos regime and its peaceful replacement by a bourgeois democratic government. This is reflected in the popular demand for the resignation of Marcos and his minions and the varied calls for a caretaker government and genuinely democratic elections. This is understandable. Fascism may have placed itself in contradiction with the broadest number of people but it is still a form of indirect imperialist rule. Hence, while the fascist regime stands exposed, U.S. imperialism is not yet as exposed. Also, the majority of those who now actively oppose fascist rule gravitates towards reformist solutions. Peaceful reform is a more attractive direction, given that it requires less

sacrifice; and for as long as this alternative appears viable it will command a popular following--not only among the middle classes, but even among the basic masses not yet under the influence of the revolutionary forces.

The reformist, bourgeois-democratic impulse of the spontaneous movement is the basis for the reinvigoration and prominence of bourgeois reformist leaders and their organizations, even aside from the fact that these bourgeois forces can operate openly. The bourgeois reformists may have relatively small and loosely organized bases, but their influence is larger than their actual organized strength. Both the bourgeois reformist political leaders (and the middle classes that they have immediate influence on) play a significant role in the politics of the nation. Articulate, and heir to the retarded bourgeois democratic traditions of the nation, they still command respect even among the most oppressed classes and sectors of the masses, especially if they maintain a stance of opposition to fascist rule. (Aquino was an excellent example of this.) As such, they have an inordinate amount of influence on the political temper of the people.

The class character of the bourgeois reformist forces and their fear of a Communist-led revolution make them a potential reserve of imperialism. In fact, imperialism looks at them as horses-in-reserve, as a source of puppets should the present one prove no longer capable of serving imperialism's interests. However, we should note the gradations among the bourgeois reformists. This camp has three identifiable wings based on their outlook towards imperialism, the left, and revolution.

The right wing consists of the most-pro-imperialist and anti-Communist of these forces. They pose themselves to the imperialists as the viable alternative to both Marcos and the left, and actively campaign for imperialist sponsorship. This wing has absolutely no interest in seeing the people take the initiative in instituting social change, and would prefer to "critically collaborate" with the Marcos camp than ally with the revolutionary left.

The left wing is composed of bourgeois reformists who are more critical of imperialism's role and who lean towards political independence. They pursue a more consistent opposition to the regime and constitute the resistance pole, as opposed to the collaborationist or reconciliation pole, within the reformist camp. While they have a strategic fear of the left, they are open to cooperating with it and to armed revolution as a last resort.

This reformist camp has a large middle--political leaders, rank and file members, and lieutenants--who swing to whichever wing is strongest at a particular moment. It would be safe to say that the majority of the unorganized elements in the current protest movement also constitute this camp's middle. Prior to the Aquino assassination, the bourgeois reformists were in their darkest period. Marcos' ruthlessness and Ronald Reagan's rise to power had deprived them of whatever opening Carter provided. Collaboration was rising to dominance within their camp as the polarization between the regime and the left emerged more visibly. Very few struck to principled resistance and went into clandestine alliance with the left. The Aquino assassination however, produced a larger and more militant middle, politically and morally undercut the trend towards collaborationism and strengthened the hand of the left or resistance wing. With the regime on the defensive politically, more room has emerged for open, reformist political activity.

## B. Communist Intervention

For the Communists, who are also a force (in fact, the most organized force) within the new protest movement, the point of knowing the political character, impulses and forces within this movement is to answer the question: "How can this spontaneous anti-fascist and reformist movement be turned into a reserve of the revolution?"

From a distance, we observe that the left is actively grappling with this very question. The prevailing orientation of the CPP and the NDF at this time, takes note of the importance of interacting with the protest movement--including entering into alliances, utilizing electoral openings --within the framework of the strategy of people's war. However, according to "Plaridel Papers," a publication that reportedly involves some "in-

capacitated" Communists and NDF forces, "Within such a framework, the participation of the revolutionary forces in the current protest movement seems to be aimed only at intensifying the atmosphere of protest to heighten the political isolation of Marcos...The revolutionary forces, of course, are steadily 'harvesting' recruits from the spontaneous movement." (Underscoring ours.) *CPP Looking to another 10 years.*

Plaridel notes the "politically destabilizing combination" of the protest movement, the succession problem, the emergence of the master-puppet contradiction, and the economic crisis--and raises the question: "Should (revolutionaries) set more ambitious goals for the protest movement?" (Underscoring ours.) It went on to state: "If we consider the basic character of the actual movement rather than the explicit goals formulated by the legal organization, we can accept the view that the same protest movement that is now following a reformist line can develop into a conscious component of a revolutionary uprising. In the eyes of many observers, including Marcos, it is in fact, already contributing to the making of a revolutionary situation. (Underscoring ours.)"

This is an extremely significant assertion, a not-so-implicit criticism of the (as of this writing) prevailing approach of the NDF and the CPP to the current situation. Rather than simply look at the current situation as presenting improved new conditions for increased revolutionary propaganda work and organizational expansion, Plaridel calls for the conscious effort to transform it into a revolutionary situation. A revolutionary situation is an extremely crucial historical moment of the class struggle. It is a nationwide crisis affecting both the exploiters and the exploited, when the masses no longer want to live in the old way and the ruling class can no longer carry on in the old way. Meaning, when the majority of the basic masses (workers and peasants) "fully realizes that revolution is necessary and that they should be prepared to die for it" and when the ruling classes "are going through a governmental crisis, which draws even the most backward masses into politics (symptomatic of any genuine revolution is a rapid, tenfold and even a hundredfold increase in the size of the working and oppressed masses --hitherto apathetic--who are capable of waging political struggle), weakens the government and makes it possible for the revolutionaries to overthrow it." (Lenin, Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder, (Underscoring ours.) //

Indeed, if the protest movement can be sustained, expanded, and directed correctly, it can exacerbate the economic crisis, the succession problem and the secondary contradiction (master and puppet) and push the regime into a revolutionary crisis. At that point, the left's ability to seize power depends on the strength of its own base and the extent of its allies domestically and internationally. It is already admitted that the NDF's independent base, including its armed strength, is not yet sufficient for a direct seizure by the left. However, in our opinion, its entry into the corridors of state power, despite this limitation is not completely out of the question.

It is within the realm of possibility that in a revolutionary crisis, this particular regime can be overthrown and replaced by a government that includes the left, even if the latter's strength remains only at the current level. It becomes principally a question of allies. It depends on how the left, despite its insufficient base, can forge, prepare and motivate its allies. It depends on how its allies are prepared to move, and how far they are willing to go. It depends on how broad and vibrant such alliances are to the point that they can create splits within enemy institutions, even within the reactionary army. We may hasten to add that it also depends on the strength of an international front that can politically, diplomatically and materially flank the popular seizure, i.e. the left's links to the socialist camp and its ties with the progressive or independent governments, and peoples. (The impact of this external factor on the capacity of the internal forces to seize and consolidate historic gains should not be underestimated, given the strategic importance of the Philippines to the most powerful imperialist country in the world.)

It is within the realm of possibility that a coalition of anti-fascist forces can force the Marcos camp to step down; reconstitute the Philippine army by winning over its democratic elements, cutting off its ties with the U.S. and integrating into its command and ranks units of the people's army and other armed groups; and proceed to rees-

establish institutions of democratic rule. Even if the left is not the dominant force within such a coalition government, it can utilize its new position to widen and strengthen its revolutionary base and influence. And assuming a favorable international balance of forces--if imperialism is preoccupied by serious revolutionary challenges elsewhere--the left, through peaceful democratic contests, can even proceed to construct a more all-sided national democratic or transition regime that will lead towards socialism. Such a post-Marcos coalition stage, however, would be highly unstable and precarious, and the left must always be prepared for an orderly retreat in the event of an overwhelming imperialist counterattack.

It is more likely that such a coalition victory would be shortlived. But even the bourgeois democratic respite prior to a full imperialist counterattack would be of great advantage for the left politically and organizationally. Such a respite, if skillfully utilized, can enable the revolutionary forces to strike deep political roots nationally at a rapid pace, freely construct lasting international alliances, and even prepare to minimize the damage that the eventual counterattack will inflict. Even now, the partial relaxation of the fascist grip as a result of the pressure of the mass movement is already a relative boon for the left, giving its revolutionary efforts more room for maneuver.

It is most likely, however, that if a revolutionary situation matures, imperialism will clamp down before any of the left's and its allies' attempts can succeed. Even so, the left still stands to gain from the situation, assuming that it has prepared the popular forces for an orderly retreat. First of all, the political struggles leading to the crisis will be a source of tremendous lessons and valuable experience both in the "art of politics" and the "art of insurrection." Secondly, depending on the left's political skills, the masses in their millions can be trained in the political struggle and as a result of their experience, the anti-imperialist revolutionary alternative can gain hegemonic influence over all resistance efforts, greatly enhancing the people's war, and accelerating its pace. Thirdly, even if the imperialists clamp down, the revolutionary situation would deepen the crisis of imperialist rule. It would at least prove fatal to the Marcos regime. Imperialist rule would be so unstable because short of a direct occupation of the country, it would have to rely on a succession of unwieldy puppets to maintain order.

But a simplistic approach to the current situation will fail to bring out any of these above-mentioned possibilities. Simply intensifying the atmosphere of protest and recruiting new adherents to the revolutionary program will not lead to a qualitative maturation of the current protest movement or of the regime's political crisis. Bringing out the maximum historic potential of the present protest movement is a question of political line, of mapping out a complex set of political tactics capable of cohering the spontaneous movement and of setting its political direction. The implementation of these tactics will be more demanding and will require more of the cadre than any directive to mainly increase and intensify revolutionary propaganda and organizing. It will require of the Communist the mastery of the "art of politics." Lenin said this art "consists in correctly gauging the conditions and the moment when the vanguard of the proletariat can successfully assume power, when it is able--during and after the seizure of power--to win adequate support from sufficiently broad strata of the masses, and when it is able thereafter to maintain, consolidate, and extend its rule by educating, training and attracting ever broader masses of the working people."

### C. Zigzag and Compromise

The Communists would be the first to agree that presently the revolutionary forces are not in a position to assume power through a "direct path." Meaning, the basic worker-peasant alliance is not yet in a position to directly wrest political power from the enemy. The present political juncture (the regime's crisis) must therefore be considered a period that presents a detour or a zigzag, in the direct path to revolutionary power. But Communists must recognize it as such, otherwise the direct path could be fetishized, and the opportunity offered by the zigzag may be lost.

"As it happens, revolutionary periods are mainly periods in history when the clash of contending social forces, in a comparatively short space of time,

decides the question of the country's choice of a direct or a zigzag path of development for a comparatively very long period of time. The need for reckoning with the zigzag path does not in the least do away with the fact that Marxists should be able to explain to the masses during the decisive moments of their history that the direct path is preferable..." [(Lenin, "Against the Boycott"); ~~the direct path is preferable...~~]

In other words, the need to reckon with a zigzag path of history does not automatically negate the validity or the desirability of the direct path. In the same article, Lenin explained: "Marxism's attitude towards the zigzag path of history is essentially the same as its attitude towards compromise. Every zigzag turn in history is a compromise, a compromise between the old, which is no longer strong enough to negate the new, and the new, which is not yet strong enough to overthrow the old. Marxism does not altogether reject compromises. Marxism considers it necessary to make use of them, but that does not in the least prevent Marxism, as a living and operating historical force, from fighting energetically against compromises. Not to understand this seeming contradiction is not to know the rudiments of Marxism."

It is important to grasp this lesson in order to banish any fears that "setting more ambitious goals" for the present protest movement might deviate from the general line of the Philippine revolution. Relative to the socialist revolution, the two-stage strategy or the necessity for a national democratic stage is itself a recognition of a zigzag path of historical development. In the attainment of the first stage, the direct path is the seizure of power by the worker-peasant alliance through a protracted people's war. This strategy is the decisive factor that gives the communists the historic initiative and the leverage over other political forces and trends contending for power. Recognizing in the current crisis a zigzag course, and refocusing the communists' efforts towards seizing the political possibilities offered by this historical moment in no way requires the abandonment of the direct path. It would constitute a right error of grave proportions were the communists to abandon their strategic orientation and squander their leverage. But what is required is the integration of the essence of the direct path into new forms of struggle, forms that will, of necessity, be shaped by compromise. Zigzag in relation to direct path is tactic in relation to strategy. //

How then, must communists proceed to "seize the hour" in the present crisis? The experience of the world communist movement has yielded valuable lessons. Consider the following observation from Georgi Dimitrov (Report Before the 7th World Congress of the Communist International, Aug. 2, 1935; underscoring in the original):

"It is a common mistake of a 'leftist' character to imagine that as soon as a political (or revolutionary) crisis arises, it is enough for the communist leaders to put forth the slogan of revolutionary insurrection, and the broad masses will follow them. No, even in such a crisis the masses are by no means always ready to do so. We saw this in the case of Spain. To help the millions to master as rapidly as possible, through their own experience, what they have to do, where to find a radical solution, and what Party is worthy of their confidence--these among others are the purposes for which transitional slogans and special 'forms of transition or approach to the proletarian revolution are necessary. Otherwise, the great mass of the people, who are under the influence of petty bourgeois democratic illusions and traditions, may waver even when there is a revolutionary situation...may stray, without finding the road to revolution--and then come under the axe of the fascist executioners."

In the current crisis, it is not enough to raise the call for national democratic revolution, to raise the slogan "Dismantle the U.S.-Marcos Dictatorship," or to accelerate individual recruitment into the revolutionary ranks, or even to intensify calls to oppose the regime in general. These are not enough to do the most damage to the regime, or to deepen the crisis. These are not erroneous calls, but they are not enough to sustain the present protest movement, or to politically train the masses in their millions or to win them over to the necessity of revolutionary struggle. Even from the point of view of "rendering the bourgeois reformists incapacitated as a third force" as some CPP cadre put it, simply intensifying revolutionary propaganda and agitation will not effectively turn a significant portion of the bourgeois opposition into a reserve of the revolution (as opposed to



a reserve of imperialism).

The Communists need a transition approach. Dimitrov pointed out that Lenin attached exceptionally great importance to forms of transition "Because (Lenin) had in mind the fundamental law of all great revolutions, the law that for the masses, propaganda and agitation alone cannot take the place of their own political experience, when it is a question of attracting really broad masses of the working people to the side of the revolutionary vanguard." The left needs to popularize a tactical political program that can cohere the spontaneous movement, and unite the revolutionaries and the organized bourgeois reformists as this movements' core. This tactical (compromise) program should include among others, a commonly-agreed-upon alternative to the present regime, and the principal means of fighting for this alternative. The forces at this movement's core should necessarily organize a common center and formulate a general plan for the immediate political struggle.

From the communists' point of view, all of this is compromise--an exercise in flexibility. For in uniting the current protest movement, which is both spontaneous and reformist, this tactical program will have to be principally anti-fascist in character; a program for the restoration of democracy; for the setting up of a bourgeois democratic government which will not principally be under the worker-peasant class leadership (as we maximally want) but under the shared (equally weighted) leadership of the revolutionaries and the anti-fascist bourgeoisie. Given the reformist character of the movement--and the left's own assessment that an armed overthrow is not possible in the immediate period--the anti-fascist program will be pursued through peaceful but militant means. The only condition that must be placed on this broad anti-fascist unity is that all forces must direct their fire at the fascist regime and its supporters and not at one another; that all forces subordinate their strategic differences and be accountable to the established programmatic unity of the front. //

The left has to have a clear standpoint on this transition, on this compromise approach. This is not a communist trick "in lieu" of our inability to seize power by ourselves. Our interest in an anti-fascist compromise is not fake. It is precisely because we cannot yet take the direct responsibility for putting an end to the source of the people's oppression that for the communists, the bridling of the fascist beast and the strengthening of all democratic forces (even if these be principally bourgeois democratic forces) in order to preserve the people's democratic gains, is not a small matter.

It would be extremely irresponsible for any communist to ignore the danger faced by democratic forces, even by bourgeois democratic forces, or to fail to range before the fascist enemy all the possible forces that can oppose it just because such an effort will not yield an immediate and unqualified left victory. In addition, Lenin called upon revolutionaries to study all questions of all democratic struggles, "to expound and emphasize general democratic tasks before the whole people, without for a moment concealing our socialist convictions" (What is To Be Done?) This responsibility arises from the fact that "Only the proletariat can be a consistent fighter for democracy" while the bourgeoisie "will impart an inconsistent and self-seeking nature" to the democratic struggles ("Two Tactics").

The anti-fascist compromise will be positive for everyone, except the fascist regime and the imperialists. Even if it will objectively strengthen the hand of the reformists and the bourgeois democrats, it will not necessarily weaken the hand of the revolutionaries. Should the transition approach succeed, and a compromise democratic government replace the present regime, even for a brief period, it will not necessarily be a diversion from our revolutionary program--for as long as we do not for a moment conceal our revolutionary intentions. "Political changes of a truly democratic nature, and especially political revolutions, can under no circumstances whatsoever either obscure or weaken the slogan of a socialist revolution. On the contrary, they always bring it closer, extend its basis and draw new sections of the petty bourgeoisie and the semi-proletarian masses into the socialist struggle" (Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 21 p. 339). And should a democratic transition regime successfully assume power, it becomes a substage in the political struggle for a truly national democratic regime.

A clear orientation that the transition approach serves the interest

of the democratic whole and that it is neither a trick nor a sell-out on the communists' part, will enable the left to take the valid democratic interests of its allies seriously. With nothing to lose in this compromise, except if it surrenders its strategic outlook, the left can be broadminded, above-board and flexible. Such an orientation will establish the communists' political and moral superiority over other political forces whose anti-fascist stand may be flawed by their "self-seeking" strategic and class perspectives.

#### D. The Concrete Struggle

The call for a broad anti-fascist front and its program must be concrete and detailed. Various opposition forces in fact, have instinctively attempted to hammer out such a call, e.g. KOMPIL, COMPACT, JAJA, etc. However similar most of the calls and programs are, no unified front or an umbrella encompassing the majority of the opposition has gelled. The perhaps unspoken reason for this is that everyone wants to know what the CPP-NDF has to say. The left has become such a central force in Philippine politics that its policies and actions carry considerable, if not a decisive weight.

For its part, the left has apparently focused on the formation of the Nationalist Alliance for Justice, Freedom and Democracy. As an "anti-fascist, anti-imperialist" formation, the NAJFD has drawn the left-led groups and forces broadly sympathetic to the national democratic movement. As a legal expression of NDF politics, the NAJFD is an important formation. In the midst of a reformist movement, an open left pole makes up for the limitations that clandestinity imposes on the revolutionary forces. However, if the NAJFD, was meant to be the unifying formation that will cohere the spontaneous movement, it has serious limitations. Politically, it does not extend enough accommodations to forces who have not yet arrived at a relatively developed anti-imperialist critique. Part of its program of action are the repudiation of foreign loans that never benefitted the Filipino people; the nationalization of all basic industries; and the dismantling of the U.S. bases. While the spontaneous movement is prepared to oppose U.S. support for the Marcos regime, the imposition of more sophisticated anti-imperialist demands as a condition for broad unity will be counterproductive. The NAJFD program does not compromise enough.

"The term compromise in politics implies the surrender of certain demands, the renunciation of part of one's demands, by agreement with another party...The usual idea the man in the street has about Bolsheviks, an idea encouraged by the press, which slanders them, is that the Bolsheviks will never agree to a compromise with anybody...The idea is flattering to us...for it proves that even our enemies are compelled to admit our loyalty to the fundamental principles of socialism and revolution. Nevertheless, we must say that this idea is wrong..." (Lenin, On Compromises)

There is however, another motion from the left which bears watching. We have obtained a badly reproduced copy of an outline proposal for a Congress for the Restoration of Democracy (CORD) formulated by a certain "Bayani C. Aquino." We do not know CORD's relationship to the Plaridel Papers, but if they are from the same quarters, we would not be surprised. They have essentially similar political thrusts.

CORD calls for a united anti-fascist movement that would force the resignation of Marcos, his cabinet, all his appointees in all services of the Armed Forces "to give way to a democratic transition government headed by a committee of retired justices...and other outstanding individuals acceptable to all political parties and people's organizations. The transition government will nullify Marcos' constitution, restore democracy, release all political prisoners and declare general amnesty. It must call for general elections from the presidency down "either under the 1935 constitution or rules adopted by said transition government." To facilitate the resignation of Marcos and his top officials and the assumption of office by a transition government, a natural reconciliation council may be formed...etc.

A powerful, peaceful but militant mass movement led jointly by all organized opposition groups must utilize demonstrations, marches, general strikes and various forms of civil disobedience to press for the resig-

nations and to pave the way for the democratic transition government. Such powerful and militant mass actions must be sustained; all concessions offered by the U.S. or Marcos short of resignation and the assumption of a transition government must be rejected, boycotted, exposed and discredited. ??

The CORD proposal can be the left's approach to the "zigzag." Its points are broad and acceptable to all democratic forces. Given the existing capabilities of all opposition forces, its goals, the means it prescribes are practical. The call for a transition government can provide the present spontaneous movement a centerpiece, a unified vision of an alternative it can fight for, thereby providing it a direction and giving it sustenance. CORD also has the potential of cohering the organized left and bourgeois democratic forces as the core of the mass anti-fascist movement.

A sustained, politically focused protest movement can put tremendous pressures on the regime and its institutions. It can potentially cause regime officials to desert; it can create splits in the military; it can force imperialism to undertake risky political maneuvers thereby opening itself to exposure; it can exacerbate the master-puppet contradiction. This non-violent mass movement's call for a democratic transition government is so reasonable it places the people on clearly higher political ground vis-a-vis Marcos and imperialism. Their refusal to accede to this reasonable democratic alternative will heighten their exposure and isolation: they are the obstacles to democracy, peace and national reconciliation.

Should the movement succeed and consolidate its historic gain, it would be a tremendous setback for imperialism and a victory for the revolutionary forces. Should it succeed only briefly and is counterattacked by imperialism, the U.S. will stand exposed before all Filipinos and before all the world. Should the U.S. maneuver by ousting Marcos, and replace him with another puppet, it would only succeed in deepening the crisis of its rule. Should Marcos crack down it will be at a high political cost. His isolation will get even worse so that the U.S. might have to replace him anyway. In other words, the movement's reasonable demand for a democratic transition government can place the U.S.-Marcos regime in a no-win situation. It will be damned if it accedes, damned if it doesn't.

The CORD proposal has a secondary but important feature. It proposes a discussion among all opposition forces on the need to banish any illusions as to how the regime will respond. That while, the movement will pursue its goals through non-violence, it must also prepare for self defense and for the protection of its ranks and leaders. It calls on the movement to extend democratic influence into the ranks of the armed forces; to organize countersurveillance on military and police agents "so as to distinguish the diehard fascist elements from the good and honest elements" and so as to cause the arrest or disarming of bad elements; to secretly gather arms; etc. Presumably, the left will contribute much in setting up provisions for an orderly retreat, offering sanctuaries, routes to new posts in the countryside or abroad; or, as the front's unity matures, in setting up provisions for armed insurrection or an offensive. While the call for self defense is not the principal feature of the transition approach, it is an essential feature that checks any idealistic notions about the real dynamics of the struggle. It also mass lines the armed struggle to the reformist movement, not as a programmatic assertion by the left, but as a need to prepare for all eventualities.

A CORD-style approach to the present crisis facilitates a number of things for the communists. Firstly, a broad but detailed compromise program systematizes the work with allies. The program--its aims and methods - sets a clear standard of political accountability for the entire front. It makes easier the determination of who is and who is not in the front, or who has broken from it, or is about to break from it. This is how a carefully formulated program of reforms can be directed also against the opportunists. Secondly, the CORD approach rescues the movement from spontaneity and enables the communists to "train the masses in their millions in the political struggle" and through "their own political experience." The tit-for-tat with the enemy's maneuvers, the enemy's refusal to budge and its attempts to respond with violence can teach the

masses "in their millions" the obsolescence of reforms and the need for a revolutionary solution. Ironically, a carefully formulated reformist transition approach can in the end, prove to be a better recruiter of revolutionaries than the most tireless cadre who, without a transition program, tries to recruit people in their tens or hundreds. Finally, depending on the Communist's skill in leading the transition, the Communist Party can emerge as the most reliable, practical and trustworthy leader of the entire resistance. The dynamics of the transition approach facilitates the differentiation and radicalization not only of the masses but also of the bourgeois democratic forces. If the communists respect the compromise, defend the front's unity, work well with the other forces, and stand fast against the regime, a point will be reached in the front where, according to Dimitrov, considerable proportions of the non-communists - including bourgeois democrats - will "demand ruthless measures against the fascists and other reactionaries, fight together with the communists against fascism and openly oppose the reactionary section of their own party which is hostile to communism." In other words, a considerable proportion of the bourgeois reformists can become the reserve of the revolution, not the imperialists. Perhaps, an example that comes to mind is how significant Salvadoran bourgeois democratic forces (their version of the Tanadas, the Macapagals and the Dioknos) have become welded within the FDR component of the FMLN-FDR. //

### Struggle Within the Front/Independent Work

The left must, however, avoid any illusions about the smoothness of the transition approach. While the left "must fight most resolutely to overcome and exterminate the last remnants of self-satisfied sectarianism within its ranks," Dimitrov warns that the tactics of the united front "are not a reconciliation with Social Democratic (bourgeois reformist) ideology and practice."

Apart from the enemy's maneuvers, dangers lurk from within the front itself. The front represents the mediation of strategic class interests and is therefore inherently unstable. There will be a need to struggle against the vacillations, tendencies towards collaborationism and inconsistencies of the non-proletarian forces. The left has to be vigilant against divisive practices. It must also bear in mind that the danger of opportunism to the right will increase in proportion as the front broadens. There will be attempts to reduce the role of the Party and to sacrifice the interests of the left especially when instances of negotiations with the enemy arise. Communists must learn when the need for criticism and struggle arises; when to criticize with restraint and when to move for the expulsion of any force from the front.

The principle of independence also has to be established within the front. Left propaganda will be crucial in summing up for the millions of front adherents the key junctures, advances and setbacks of the common struggle against the fascist regime. In particular, the exposure of the role of imperialism falls on the shoulders of the CPP-NDF. As the anti-fascist struggle intensifies so must revolutionary education, agitation, and organization building. The left cannot allow the independent voice of any party to be muzzled, so long as independent actions do not contravene the unity of the front and are relatively subordinated to the demands of the common work and plans. Revolutionary propaganda carried out within the context of a broad and united popular movement packs a more effective wallop, as it is revolutionary propaganda rooted in the experience of millions in the political struggle. //

### Implications to Philippine Support Work in North America

#### A. The Broader Fronts

The current political crisis in the Philippine impacts mainly the Filipino Community, as opposed to the broader anti-intervention, anti-imperialist movements in the U.S. (and Canada). This is largely due to

## Implications to Philippine Support Work in North America

### A. The Broader Fronts

The current political crisis in the Philippine impacts mainly the Filipino Community, as opposed to the broader anti-intervention, anti-imperialist movements in the U.S. (and Canada). This is largely due to the fact that the Philippine conflict has not yet ripened to the level of a decisive confrontation between imperialism and the revolutionary forces. Objectively, there is no imminent necessity or possibility for a more direct and active U.S. military role that will polarize U.S. society (and the international scene) over the issue of imperialist intervention in the Philippines. (or of a military stalemate at least)

Understandably, the broader anti-intervention and the anti-imperialist movements are focused on the struggles in Central America, and there is no need on our part to insist that these movements bring the Philippine issue to the top of their agenda at this time. However, if the Philippine left takes the current tactical juncture by the horns, the political situation could change within a year or two requiring the broader movements to begin placing greater attention on the Philippine struggle. There is therefore a need to consistently update key sectors of the broader movements on the current political dynamics and where these could lead to. We need to give more attention to how "P-type" work gets conducted, for while it will not yet be the principal character of the support work our positioning in the broader fronts needs to be more consciously approached even now.

While, Marcos' governmental crisis, has not yet become the U.S. bourgeoisie's round-the-clock preoccupation, it has nevertheless intensified the debate over how best to preserve the U.S. position in the Philippines. Both sides of this debate recognize the need for a transition from an ally that has become a political liability to a more stable puppet regime. Both sides also agree that the transition should not be messy, to prevent the left from taking advantage of "contradictions within the enemy camp." The Reagan administration however, holds that while it is willing to give up Marcos, the new regime must retain the fascist core of the Marcos camp and include only the most pro-imperialist and anti-communist elements of the bourgeois opposition.

But the U.S. liberal bourgeoisie believes such a regime would not be able to appease the Filipino masses, would not have enough popular consensus to rule and therefore, would be inherently unstable. Their prescription is to "loosen up" by giving a more significant role to the bourgeois reformists in a regime that would be more bourgeois democratic than fascist and would definitely be pro-imperialist and anti-communist (Aquino's vision of a post-Marcos regime). The U.S. bourgeois liberals believe it is not yet "too late" for this type of transition. Meaning that unlike in El Salvador, the revolutionary left has not yet coopted or won over a considerable portion of the bourgeois democratic opposition into a solid resistance coalition. They believe the bourgeois reformists can still be split from the left and turned into a reserve of imperialism.

There are favorable opportunities for exacerbating this debate by bringing to Congress, the media, influential liberal circles, human rights and academic groups that have closely interacted with the Philippine issue, the exposure of the fake democratic maneuvers of Reagan and Marcos and the continuing abuses of the fascist regime. With a compromise program in the Philippines,--a "reasonable demand" for a democratic transition government on the part of the people -- the movement has a "realistic" alternative that U.S. liberals cannot outrightly reject. The conditions for extending the popular front more broadly and isolating the Reagan transition plan are favorable. However, while exploiting these responsibilities, we must check the anti-communism that can intensify if liberals both in the broader front and the Filipino opposition movement attempt to popularize the argument "democratize now or else the left will take over." } not yet there?  
// deepen

### B. The Opposition Front in the Filipino Community

The flow of opposition following the Aquino assassination has changed the political atmosphere and balance of forces within the Filipino community. The Philippine consulates and the reactionaries grouped around them are on the defensive. Except for the most unabashedly reactionary elements, there is a trend of "neutralism" within the organized sectors of the community as leaders and organizations keep a safe political distance from the regime's positions. Some have even gone beyond neutrality and have taken open anti-Marcos postures. In the community as a whole, there is an upsurge of democratic, anti-fascist sentiments and a flow of opposition activity. No doubt, the propaganda work

done by all the organized opposition forces over the years has facilitated the entry of hundreds of new forces into the active ranks of the movement.

The conditions for extending and broadening the anti-fascist popular front in the community are therefore, excellent. But in order to *gain from* ~~these~~ these favorable conditions, the left here must also have a clear and precise orientation towards the new protest movement among Filipinos.

First of all, let us not deceive ourselves as to the character of this movement. It is of course, not revolutionary. It is a reformist movement dominated by bourgeois democratic politics. In fact, the majority of those in the community who have stepped forward into political activity have gravitated to formations led by exiled bourgeois reformist leaders e.g., M., J., N. And due to the shortcomings and limitations of this bourgeois reformist leadership, the new movement remains largely spontaneous.

We can cite a number of factors that help strengthen the movement's political characteristics: the bourgeois reformist leaders are more "prestigious"; most Filipino immigrants are of petit-bourgeois origins; their different set of political and material conditions here tend to buffer their views from the real dynamics of the struggle in the Philippines; etc. But the main thing is, bourgeois democracy is not yet regarded as obsolete by most Filipinos, and their experience living in the most advanced bourgeois democratic society in the world certainly bolsters that outlook. Comrades should therefore not conclude that only the petit-bourgeois elements in the community gravitate to M. or N. Even among working class Filipinos, bourgeois democracy is not yet obsolete and we should not be surprised to discover that the majority of the people in the bourgeois reformists' base are your regular wage slaves.

No amount of anti-imperialist and revolutionary propaganda in the past several years could have basically altered the reformist impulses of this new movement. As in the Philippines, people can only be won over to revolution as a result of their own political experience, including, but not solely, their experience with revolutionary propaganda. But what ten years of anti-imperialist and revolutionary propaganda has achieved is no small matter. Within this new movement, anti-imperialist views and positions supportive of the national democratic revolution are not considered illegitimate. The C. and the K. are seen as legitimate political forces, even though many people maintain their differences with us. Even though many people, especially the newly activated elements have a lot of anti-communist fears and prejudices, their general tendency is to negotiate their apprehensions with us rather than to avoid us altogether. Only a handful of backward elements attempt to reduce the left into an outcast.

Maximally, our propaganda work has neutralized the more blatantly backward positions of the right. Ten years ago, for example, M. and the M. were only willing to "criticize" U.S. military aid to Marcos and not the economic aid. Now, they are even opposed to the U.S. bases. Ten years ago, any mention of the NPA in joint events tended to invite controversy. Although our propaganda work was not solely responsible for the changes in the rights positions, the A's, the T's, the C forums, leaflets, etc. have insured the amplification of a sophisticated political perspective that other forces could not ignore. These forms of propaganda improved the community's receptiveness to "radical" ideas and perspectives. Among key middle forces in the M. for example, the C. is now sought after for political updates and "framework sharing." As we had predicted our systematic propaganda work during the ebb has helped reduce the political primitiveness of the current flow, even though this flow remains principally reformist and non-revolutionary in character.

What should our attitude be towards this new movement and its limitations? How should we take the fact that it is reformist and that most people who join it gravitate to bourgeois reformist formations? If a new M. or N. chapter forms in our local areas, is that a bad thing or a good thing? It is no exaggeration to say that most of our activists had a hard time making up their minds. The initial impulse was to be critical of the underdevelopment of the political forces and the incompetence of the reformist groups and to feel threatened by their growth. Much of this reaction comes from a good place, from our grasp of our

revolutionary politics and intentions, and our concern that the community's political response to the Philippine situation not be influenced by backward perspectives. However, the purpose of analyzing this movement's character and the historical factors that shape it is to arrive at an objective appraisal that would enable us to gain our bearings. We must grasp that on the whole, the new movement--despite its spontaneous shortcomings and the self-seeking or incompetent behavior of quite a few of its bourgeois reformist leaders--is a positive thing. Even the growth in membership of the reformist groups is, on the whole, a good thing.

The new movement, despite its limitations, contributes profoundly to the popularization and strengthening of anti-fascist sentiments among Filipinos. And to the extent that reformist formations provide an organizational form for large numbers of people who are stepping forward into political activity for the first time, their growth should not be viewed by our activists with dismay. The flourishing of anti-fascist sentiments in the Filipino community keeps the pro-Marcos reactionaries on the defensive; extends the isolation of the Marcos regime; and contributes to the difficulties of U.S. imperialism in the Philippines. A broad democratic movement injects a valuable progressive current in community politics overall. And for the left's purposes, a broad and vibrant anti-fascist movement among Filipinos provides extremely fertile ground for anti-imperialist and national democratic propaganda.

It should be clear to us then that the left shares a common interest with other political forces in seeing to it that the anti-fascist sentiments in the Filipino community are strengthened and extended to new sectors. We therefore also share the common responsibilities of sustaining the new protest movement and setting its political direction. The left has to exercise leadership in struggling with all the organized forces to take up these responsibilities. In the context of performing the task and those that we share in common with all other forces, the left must extend and deepen the influence of the anti-imperialist national democratic line.

### C. Building the Popular Front

Reinforcing and expanding the climate of opposition requires sustained propaganda work on a community-wide scale against the Marcos regime, its representatives and its allies. Anti-fascist propaganda has to reach as many of the unorganized as possible and as consistently as possible. At the same time, recent experience has shown that the consulates' traditional hold on the organized sectors can be shaken depending on the strength of the anti-fascist climate. In the final analysis only a few diehard reactionaries are willing to stand up for the fascists when the going gets rough. These community organizations have to be targetted for propaganda. They can be encouraged to realign with the opposition or be "neutral". More realistically many of their individual members can be drawn into the organized networks of the opposition. The point is, anti-fascist propaganda has to permeate all sectors of the community--the organized and the unorganized. It is clearly a task that cannot be shouldered by the left alone. The requirements of community-wide propaganda work done at the pace of the flow should dissolve any remnant sectarian notions on our part that it is more desirable for us to "go it alone;" or that we have absolutely no use for the "incompetently led" reformist groups that have suddenly abounded.

Key to the maintenance of a sharp community-wide polarization over the issue of fascist rule, is how the left can get the other opposition groups to consciously share the responsibility of sustaining the new protest movement based on a commonly agreed upon direction. In other words, the key is the cohering of an organized common front, a popular front of opposition among the various political forces who otherwise cannot come together due to fundamental and strategic ideological and political differences. Right now, the movement's efforts are dispersed and the lack of a common direction weakens its consistency. In addition, such a state of spontaneity is advantageous to bourgeois opportunist leaders whose narrow agendas and self-promotion antics cannot be collectively checked.

The principal thrust of our work in the Filipino community therefore is the setting into operation of an actual, substantial and self-conscious popular front of opposition. Take note that we place a premium on the operative, working character of this front. It will therefore take a lot of complex struggles to build. But building the front is first of all, a political question. The pooling of efforts, the coordination of joint activities is best set in motion if all political forces can reach a set of political unities appropriate to the broadness of the movement and to the objective tasks before the entire opposition. As in the Philippines, the left here also has to be prepared to compromise and exercise flexibility. We will place no condition on the formation of this front other than the condition that all political forces train their guns at the common enemy and not at anyone within the front; that all forces subordinate their strategic differences in the interest of the common task. We will only object to any attacks against the left here and in the Philippines, or any attacks on anyone else, or any acts that violate or undermine the unity of the front. Other than this, we will remain extremely open to any proposal or initiative directed against the common enemy.

The most obvious concession we are willing to give is that we are not going to impose a revolutionary or a "national-democratic" unity on this broad front. Instead, all forces can realistically reach unity on an uncompromising opposition to the Marcos fascist regime (or to the "Marcos dictatorship" as some of the reformist forces prefer to call it). We are not going to demand a unity based on a thorough critique of U.S. imperialism. However, no one in this movement can conceivably be for the continuation of U.S. support to Marcos. Therefore, opposition to U.S. aid is not only a necessary but an acceptable point of unity.

In the past, joint efforts usually ran into the "problematic" question "what is your alternative." Usually any joint panel in a forum for example, would break down on this with forces having no choice but to go "to each its own." In other words, while forces from time to time could reach workable unity on what they were opposed to, the absence of a common alternative or of a positive elaboration of political unity served to undermine any unity effort. Here is where the development of a compromise opposition program in the Philippines would be of tremendous impact here. The opposition here would have the possibility of uniting not only in opposition to Marcos and U.S. aid but also in support of a popular demand for a democratic transition government, and in support of non-violent but militant mass efforts to institute that government. For the first time, the broad opposition would be able to place before the community a common solution (while still holding onto their strategic alternatives) thereby, giving the protest movement a common direction and a clearer vision. We will proceed with the assumption that the CORD proposal is the appropriate transition approach and we will actively struggle for that as the common alternative of the popular front.

slow down  
wait for  
development  
in RP!

What are the conditions like for struggling with the reformist wing of the opposition to cohere this front with the left?

The bourgeois-led opposition, or the reformists have undergone significant changes especially since the Aquino assassination. Prior to the assassination, the bourgeois oppositionists here reflected the despair felt by their counterparts in the the Philippines over their waning viability as a "Third Force." Organizational weaknesses and demoralization prevented them from pursuing any significant political activity. The Marcos state visit caught them unprepared and it became obvious that the C was better positioned to center the nationwide protests. After the assassination, however, new life was breathed into this wing with hundreds of new people joining the reformists ranks. Aside from the M, new groups were formed largely with overlapping memberships: N, J, etc. A new dynamic however, has emerged in the flow. A, leeching on to the Aquino family proceeded to turn N into a base of his own after drawing members from the M. This opportunism, A's sectarian practices have angered M and many leading figures in the M.

As things presently stand, A and N's top leadership which includes E now constitute the right wing of the reformist



camp. Their limelighting has attracted the most anti-communist and pro-imperialist elements in the camp. While A himself is not, out and out pro-imperialist, his personal opportunism encourages backward and sectarian behavior. Because of his opportunism, N., of all reformist forces, has taken a consistently vacillating position on the May 14 boycott movement. While M remains an anti-communist and pro-imperialist force, his contradictions with A has neutralized his most rigid postures towards the left. Meanwhile, a small but potentially influential left wing has become visible within this camp (left wing in relation to the right wing of the reformist camp, but center in relation to the overall reformist camp-left [C - K] polarity.) Individuals like G, B, and Br are social democratic types who are also the workhorses or the more serious forces within the M. They are non-collaborationists in relationship to the regime, more critical of the U.S. role, are outraged at A's opportunism, and are extremely open to working with the left. They exert a still underdeveloped influence among some of the rank-and-file that intersect M, N and I, rank-and-filers who are beginning to be critical of the incompetence and the egotism of some of their leaders.

Through the initiative of the national center, we have actually set in motion the forging of ties with center forces. A number of informal discussions have been conducted that resulted in low-key cooperative work. So far, the trends are positive. The serious and principled approach of the left has been tested a few times in the concrete, and is making itself felt. Already word about "the C - M unity front" is getting around the immediate circles of the leftwing reformists. To show comrades the extent to which we are willing to be flexible, we have been asked and have agreed to help the center forces (through advise and resources) in developing the M into a more competent organization. Relative to general task in the community and to the goal of checking the backward tendencies of the right, this is a positive concession.

Whatever steps we have taken are but the beginnings of a complex process of struggle. As Dimitrov repeatedly warned any "doctrinaire narrowness" or satisfaction with "simplified methods of solving the most complex problems...on the basis of stereotype schemes" will easily lead us to sectarianism. We cannot, therefore, look for a blueprint on how to deal with every dynamic that would confront us in building this front. Our day-to-day tactics of unity and struggle will have to be defined by the concretes of the situation; we have to train "on-the-job." However, we can map out a general approach. But first of all, activists have to grasp the interest of the whole, which is, the sustenance of an opposition movement based on resolute opposition to the fascist regime, opposition to U.S. support and on the struggle for a democratic transition government. This is the interest of the whole popular front and this is also our interest. This is not a "propaganda or public relations line" that hides a "real line" which calls for the deestabilization of everyone else but the left.

Assuming a correct stand, we will proceed with building the front from "above and below". There is no question as to which comes first; it has to be done simultaneously. The C has already designated campaigns that are specifically for joint work. We will initiate this joint work on a local level, working closely with the center forces. At the same time, we will formally propose to the national leadership of the various organizations these campaigns as national undertakings. We will be open to taking up other forms of joint work that may be initiated by the other forces. These campaigns are only building blocks to ensure that the front already becomes operative even on a limited scale. In the course of joint work, we must begin to popularize the concept of a common front that has a common direction. Without delay, we will initiate discussions on a national level on the need for the formalization of the front. The reasons for approaching front building from above and below are simple. Regardless of the backwardness of many of the reformists' leaders, they are still the only forces that have the mandate to formulate their groups' decisions and policies. While it may be "easier" for us to work with the rank-and-file, there is no avoiding the sometimes distasteful negotiations with higher officials. Otherwise, the front and its unities will never be formalized. Meanwhile, working from below is also crucial as the only possible way internal pressure can be applied on the official decision-makers. Working from below also assures us direct political contact with the rank-and-file.

While we place a premium on the actual operative life of the front, the formal aspects of it (actual organizational structure, points of unity or program, plan) cannot be disregarded. These are the aspects that spell out the rules of accountability, that make clear the political and organizational standards on which to base the struggle and criticisms within the front. Without these, it will be extremely difficult to check the more backward tendencies of the bourgeois forces or to determine who is within the front or who has already broken from it. In fact, this is the very reason why opportunists will tend to hesitate in officially constituting the front. A formally constituted front systematizes our alliance work. It would also constitute a mark of the movement's maturation. Thus, while we will not settle for just the formal trappings, neither will we settle for just an "objective" front.

#### D. Struggle Within the Front

Our readiness to work with opportunists and backward elements within the broad opposition movement does not mean we are willing to reconcile with opportunism and backwardness. The left must be vigilant and be ready to criticize and struggle against divisiveness, sectarianism, anti-communism, and vacillations and collaborationism in the face of the enemy's attacks or offers of seductive concessions. But criticisms must be concrete and based on the front's common standards and unities. We must also be willing to accept valid criticisms or to make self-criticisms.

We have to learn how to unfold struggles with precision, and how to bring them to a close; when to struggle with restraint and when to be relentless. Each instance of struggle will have its own concrete conditions, thus while we must be vigilant, we must avoid mechanical or knee-jerk responses. Spontaneity will not serve us any in these struggles. Furthermore, we are not struggling for joint and close-quarters work with other forces just so we can "expose and isolate the right" every chance we get and in every meeting we happen to be in.

Our approach to the exposure and isolation of the most backward forces must be a protracted one. This does not mean postponing struggles even when they are called for. We must always consider the center forces who will be able to see through the opportunists and the pretenders only through their own political experience. The center forces will have to be brought through these struggles each step of the way. We must consciously imbue them with a respect for the front's unities and with an appreciation for the front's valuable function. The center forces also have to be trained to be militant against the enemy's propaganda and political maneuvers and to accurately sum up the movement's collective experiences. Only through such conscious work can a considerable proportion of the center forces reach a point where, to paraphrase Dimitrov, they not only demand ruthless measures against the Marcos dictatorship, but they also "openly oppose the reactionary section of their own party which is hostile to communism." Needless to say, in the course of working in this popular front, our activists must do meticulous social investigation on the configuration of forces within the reformist groupings. We must especially identify center forces "above and below" (not all reformist leaders are opportunist and reactionary and not all rank-and-filers are necessarily honest and progressive) and seek ways to work closely with them.

Comrades should be sobered up by the evident complexity of building the popular front. This work is extremely challenging. The varying levels of detail and the endless possibilities of knotty political situations and dynamics are overwhelming. Furthermore, some of the opportunist elements are highly skilled and trained in bourgeois politics. Definitely, this work requires activists to function at a very high level of consciousness at all times. No wonder Dimitrov noted in his own time that "there are still quite a few...doctrinaire elements, who at all times and places sense nothing but danger in the policy of the united front...For such comrades, the whole united front is one unrelieved peril." There is simply no getting around the task of turning the spontaneous movement into an organized detachment of the broad anti-fascist front in the Philippines. There are no simplified methods of solving the most complex problems of the people's movement. The "self-satisfied" go-it-alone approach is too amateurish in light of the objective political demands, to be considered a serious alternative method of work.

Comrades will notice that the orientation laid out in this document departs from our previous attitude towards forces in the reformist camp. To be accurate, that attitude had been shaped a lot by objective conditions that dictated certain policies. At the same time, there were indeed weaknesses towards "leftism" in our united front practices.

Early in its history, K already broke from the gross infantilism of the U.S. Maoist trend. In Philippine support work, our initial impulse was in fact, correct: to build a broad anti-fascist front that includes reformists and bourgeois opportunists. (This was a far cry from the practice of U.S. Maoist groups who always imposed the highest level of unity on every front - including unity against "Soviet revisionism!") The vision of a broad anti-fascist front was the basis for the N.A.P. prior to K's formation and for the struggle to build the A.P. right after the K's founding. Mr. M. was the key right force that had to be dealt with. Initial discussions were taken up with him, in one of which, we even offered him the chairmanship of the front! After the A.P. founding, we pressed the M. to be part of a common front to no avail.

Despite our correct impulse, the conditions were unfavorable for such a front. To begin with, the movement as a whole was relatively narrow - it was us and the M. right circle. For the years following we tried looking for middle forces that had enough clout within the M. and we could not find anyone of significance. (Mr. A. even volunteered to be the "key middle force!") Still smarting from their loss of influence during the First Quarter Storm in the Philippines, M. et al. chose to stress their anti-communism, necessitating militant responses on our part. The right also downplayed the U.S. role - most especially during the Carter years when they wanted to keep their channels to the White House open - which led to frequent political clashes with us.

In general, our response to their backward tendencies was correct. In fact, our policy of struggling with the right even while seeking unity with them was a product of a line struggle within the K. An influential line of "all unity and no struggle," of "unite with the right to win over the middle" had been championed by R. R. and D. B. and tended to gag the left. A bitter struggle defeated that line and established the line "Unite the left, win over the middle, and isolate the right." This was an important demarcation. The victorious line was one of unity and struggle within the front and a line that allowed the independence of the left to propagate its strategic perspectives. It was also correct to educate our ranks on the bankruptcy of reformism and on the class character and strategic interests of the bourgeois opposition, as compared to the naivete, and political abdication promoted by the defeated line.

However, our distaste for the consistent opportunism and anti-communism of the right reinforced remnant leftism in our practice. Instead of the need to strengthen the movement through cooperation, the need to expose and isolate the right became the operating object of front building. This led to mechanical practices of "isolating the right" such as contending with them at every instance or drawing them to joint activities so we can discredit their reformist programs. We lost sight of the protracted character of the right's isolation because of our subjectivism. To be sure, M. et al. were no angels either and there was still the need to challenge their sectarian and anti-communist practices when these occasions arose. Finally, we gave up on forging a front with the right and kept our distance unless the need for joint work came up. This was our policy right up to the Marcos visit, and the Aquino assassination (whereupon, our orientation started to change). In hindsight, the years of "cooling off" was probably a good thing. However, in keeping our distance, a self-satisfied go-it-alone orientation also became operative in our ranks.

All in all, the damage done by incorrect "left" tendencies on our part is not qualitative. While we obviously need more time to bring out the fruits of our new orientation, the work of repairing our ties with center forces and even with right forces already look very promising. In consolidating our refined orientation, the summation of experiences and the extraction of lessons will be key. In consolida-

ting its theoretical underpinnings, we will rely mostly on the summation of the Bolshevik experience during the Russian revolution. The Leninist summation is by far the richest, the most complex yet precise body of work that deals with the political art of front building.

#### E. Independent Anti-Imperialist Work

Our approach to the popular front is extremely broadminded, yet by no means does it call for a reconciliation with the ideology of reformism. While compromise is one component of turning the spontaneous reformist movement into a reserve of the revolutionary movement, the independent political work of the left is the other component.

The popular front we are building is inherently unstable, given the coexistence of contending strategic class interests within it. It is completely necessary therefore, to extend to as many center forces - to those who are honestly concerned about the fate of the alliance - the anti-imperialist and revolutionary influence of the national democratic united front. This work done well, contributes to the immediate though temporary stability of the front. In the long run, this work done well will make sure that a considerable portion of the center forces will move with the national democratic forces once the popular front breaks apart for reasons historically valid.

It cannot be expected that reformist elements who are under the influence of bourgeois ideology, which had been instilled in them for decades, will break with reformism of their own accord. It is the business of the left to free them from the hold of reformist ideology. The work of explaining the principles of the national democratic revolution, the critique of imperialism as a system, and the flaws of reformism must be carried on in a patient and comradely fashion. The work must also be adapted to the level or degree of development of the center forces. For some leading and politically sophisticated center forces, it may be the principles of scientific socialism that need to be explained.

The "national democratic education" of the center forces has to be done creatively and not mechanically. Dimitrov said, "Our criticism of Social Democracy must become more concrete and systematic, and must be based on the experience of the Social Democratic masses themselves. It must be borne in mind that primarily by utilizing their experience in the joint struggle... will it be possible and necessary to facilitate and speed up the revolutionary development of the Social Democratic worker," (Concluding Speech Before 7th Congress, Comintern 1935). In other words, apart from direct propaganda on its strategic program, the left must lead in the careful summation of the front's experiences in the Philippines and here, be these about key political junctures or the political behavior of certain forces and tendencies within the front. A word of caution: the essence of winning over center forces is their realignment to the left's perspectives and lines, not their mechanical recruitment into the C.

The left must also stand for the principle of independence of all parties within the popular front. The best way for us to squander our leverage is to do everything through the popular front; to forget that the anti-imperialist united front is more strategic and to thereby abandon independent propaganda work and base-building.

C's perspectives, amplified through its propaganda work, exert a broad impact on the politics of the movement as a whole. It sets up a broad, unspoken standard which other political views have to reckon with. The consistent perspective of the T. s for example, objectively raises the standards for assessing the political trends in the Philippines. Other political forces also recognize the T. as the voice of the "left" in the opposition and take seriously its contents, regardless of their disagreements.

Instead of waning, C's anti-imperialist propaganda must intensify, and become even more conscious and timely as the popular front takes more recognizable shape. As the front systematizes the movement's work, and creates closer interaction among various groups and their bases,

the ground for expanding the political influence of the C. and for expanding the anti-imperialist united front, becomes even more favorable. And for the other political forces in the popular front, it is the consistency of the left's presence and base, along with the caliber of its activists, that serves as its clout. The C. has designated certain campaigns that are meant for its independent presence and base-building (NPA support work, etc.) These are to be implemented faithfully and are not to be needlessly sacrificed to popular front work.

#### F. Other Points of Attention for K's Work

The Building of the C. as an organization in its right is a key task which the K. must give particular attention to in this period. For some time now, we have noted the neglect in developing the necessary structures and institutions at the C. chapter level which are important for integrating and consolidating forces who subscribe to the politics of the united front organization. Developing these structures and institutions are also necessary in stabilizing the conduct of the campaigns, projects and other tasks of the C. -- especially in this period when the work entails forging the joint work with other parts of the opposition as well as building the independent base of supporters of the C.

The weaknesses in K's C.-building become stark when we examine the number of forces already in our periphery who are not yet fully integrated into a structure that can harness their contributions. For the last national conference of the C. we took a survey of how many forces we have available for this work and found that at the core level, including the K teams, we have at least 70 forces nationwide. We counted an additional 80 forces who should already be functioning at a second sphere level of the C. We therefore have at least 150 forces who are deployable for different levels of the work, but because of the weaknesses in the structure for integrating them their full potential are not tapped.

While the March national conference discussed how to develop the structures and institutions necessary for the C. organization, this will not be accomplished unless the K. plans this task out and guides its implementation thoroughly and consistently. Here, we will note the common problems in the conduct of the work by the K. both at the team and CEB levels.

The first problem is the K.'s practice of collapsing the team's and C.'s political and organizational life. Because of the immediacy of the tasks in Philippine work, the K. teams have found it more convenient to launch, plan and assign the work among themselves. The pressure of getting the work underway usually eliminates the process of uniting the core forces around the tasks and organizing them to implement it. Thus, a lot of the planning of front work happens only in the K. team, sapping the life of the front on one hand, and overburdening the team on the other. This incorrect practice also reinforces the tendency for the K. teams to function mainly at the political vantage point of the front and to sacrifice the need to take a higher K. perspective in this work. Most of the time, the CEB's do not find it necessary to discuss the Philippine work on a higher ground wherein its plans are factored into the overall K. strategy for the area. Discussions at the CEB level become mere reports or organizational decisions on when other activists attend forums, pickets, etc. A political fragmentation then easily takes place which also creates the conditions for other CEB's to lose the capacity to develop opinions and guide the Philippine work of the chapter. The guidance of the work is left at the team level and the NDC check-up.

The recent K. chapter retreats did an initial critique of the K.'s conduct of Philippine work noting these problems in the teams' and CEB's tasks. Initial steps are also underway for the rectification of this problem starting with breaking the fragmentation in the CEB's guidance of the Philippine work. We will focus here on distinguishing the life of the C. chapter from the K. team and on reviewing the structure for the front which was discussed at the March national conference.

The K. vantage point to the Philippine work must not be pragmatically sacrificed. The CEB must remain on top of this area of work. The chair must maintain a sub-collective with the CEB on top of the Philippine work. The K. team meetings and its life must not be collapsed with the C.'s. Front matters should be figured out in front meetings. Most of the details

of the work must not burden the K team meetings. Its agenda must be mainly assessments of how the Philippine work must be done in the city: figuring out the conditions, political trends, balance of forces, and their implications. The K team must also make assessments of how the forces in C / are doing in their work as well as who should be targetted for other types of political consolidation like the short course, etc. and even recruitment into the K.

Forces who have been "hanging around" the C / who take up tasks on projects and campaigns must be integrated into the core life immediately. The K teams must make sure that their political unity with the political program of the united front organization is clear. The requirement for C / membership is unity with the anti-imperialist analysis of the Philippine situation and support for the national democratic movement. This set of politics must be the entry level to the organization. Of course, the consolidation of their political understanding takes place inside the organization. The dg's are designed to provide a comprehensive sense of the political program. The conduct of campaigns and the studies that go with them as well as other tactical studies provide the basis for deepening the membership's grasp of these politics. Most K chapters already implement this work. The recent national conference also provided more material for the political consolidation of C / forces. The organizing of the C / for the all-sided implementation of its tasks is the area that needs special attention.

Although the objective focus of Philippine work at this time remains in the Filipino community, the systematic positioning of this work in the broader progressive movement must be organized now. To conduct the P side of the work, a sub-team or even just one KDP activist must be assigned to lead this area as a primary focus. Projects and campaigns must be assessed each time to determine if it has a corresponding P side. The consistency of keeping ties with the broader forces is organized by this team of activists. This entails developing the counterpart of the T for the broader audience. As previously discussed, the topic of this propaganda piece is not automatically identical to that of the T. The frequency of its production is less than that of the T, and can be determined by the C / chapter.

Projects such as the one on political prisoners become a standing area of work. A K sub-team, or again, even just one K activist must be assigned to lead this. Core and second sphere forces can then be integrated to the work. This team sets its own pace according to the local plan on the project.

Management of the literature and finances can be put together into one assignment in the C core. This must be separated from the K's finances. The production of the newsletter and the T including local leaflets, etc. should be assigned to a C team. This propaganda team is also in charge of the organizing and procurement of materials that will enable the C chapter to keep up with the developments on the Philippine issue (monitor work).

Second sphere forces must be encouraged to participate in projects so that their relationship with the work of the C / is sustained. However, participation in projects or other specific assignments does not negate the need to still conduct regular second sphere meetings which could be organized once every six weeks.

These meetings can have a "social" part to it such as merienda, pot luck dinners, etc. Specific issue studies, or current situation updates, explanation of a campaign or project and report of the chapter's work will be the range of topics for the regular second sphere meetings.

Aside from the standing work, the tasks also include campaigns which are specific in time duration. Tactical C teams should be formed whenever necessary to take charge of these campaigns. Again, it is possible that second sphere forces may participate in the campaign teams.

The task of relating to other parts of the opposition has emerged in the recent period as an area of work in itself especially in cities where alliances have emerged, like in San Francisco and New York. In Washington, D.C., this takes the form of some kind of coordination of the lobby work in

Congress. In Seattle this has taken the form of work with S. [redacted]. In Los Angeles, the situation is a bit different. The M. [redacted] and the [redacted] group are in a formal alliance with the [redacted] refusing the entry of C. [redacted]. In these cities, the need to assign one or two activists to conduct this relations or alliance work has arisen. It is important for the CEB in consultation with the NEB to figure out who (and how many) should do this work and not allow the assignment of this area to take place spontaneously. Otherwise, we run the risk of getting all our forces preoccupied in this work which is time-consuming and energy-draining -- therefore sacrificing the implementation of the independent base-building as well as other openings for popular front work.

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