

## THE "LEGAL VS. ILLEGAL" PROBLEM IN CPP-ML STRATEGY AND TACTICS

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Recent Philippine government initiatives toward legalization of the Communist Party have been echoed by certain sectors of the moderate opposition.<sup>1</sup> Assuming good faith on the part of both the regime and opposition leaders, the move to legalize seems to be animated by the spirit of "national reconciliation and unity". Once legalized, the party may be accommodated in an eventual arrangement whereby its participation in political processes (including elections) is sanctioned but kept within manageable limits as a minority force, committed to non-violence and reconciled to an indefinite postponement of its presumed objective of seizing state power (on the assumption that if it had to rely on parliamentary means, the party could not count on more than a miniscule fraction of the population to vote for its programme, or that its tolerated existence as a pressure group would not suffice to sway the State into adopting "communist" policies).

But which of the two Philippine communist parties is being considered for the experiment in the first place? The more senior Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) claims to have been accorded *de facto* legal status in 1974.<sup>2</sup> But if this is the case, why does the government continue to press for legalization? In any event, the PKP chooses to interpret the *démarche* as "a clear sign of the growing political maturity of our people" and therefore openly presents itself

as a party that will be involved not only in electoral campaigns but more importantly in the propagation of Communist ideals of peace, freedom and democracy in all aspects of our social milieu.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, the PKP's analysis of the nature of the Marcos regime stresses the latter's "positive" features, which are invoked to justify in part

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<sup>1</sup> Statements of President Ferdinand Marcos, 5 March and 28 February 1982; of Justice Minister Ricardo Puno in response to Assemblyman Reuben Canoy's filing of a legalization bill at the Interim Batasang Pambansa, 26 February 1982; Teodoro Valencia, "Over a Cup of Coffee", *Daily Express*, 11 Aug. 1981.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Jose Lava, "Clandestine Struggle, Arrests, Battles", *World Marxist Review*, Dec. 1980, p. 126, and *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, p. 271.

<sup>3</sup> PKP central committee, "Open Letter to the Filipino People", 29 March 1982, 3 ll.

the party's long-standing decision to hew to legal or parliamentary struggle.<sup>4</sup>

It is clear, however, that the communist party which government and opposition leaders would like to preempt into the "system" is the Communist Party of the Philippines (Marxist-Leninist), or CPP-ML,<sup>5</sup> which organized the New People's Army a few months after its founding in late 1968, and which has yet to deviate from its original goal of seizing state power through armed revolution. This party and the army under its command are frequently cited by government officials as the biggest and most enduring threat to the regime. But judging by its manifest interest in legalization, the latter is not ruling out a "Western-style", nay "national bourgeois" à la Sukarno or Nehru approach, to defuse the threat. If this hypothesis is valid, legalization alone may at least achieve one tangible result: viz., a split within the CPP-ML between hardline partisans of revolutionary violence as the main form of struggle on the one hand, and more conciliatory elements willing to represent *their* legalized faction of the party in national politics, on the other.

But the question of legalization begs still another: will the CPP-ML indeed accept the offer of cooptation and, in the process, revise the Maoist tenets on armed struggle in an underdeveloped country upon which it built its revolutionary programme? In a recent interview, imprisoned party founder Jose Maria Sison indicates that under certain conditions it may be desirable to achieve some *modus vivendi* between the CPP-ML and the government — "not necessarily the Marcos government".<sup>6</sup> National Democratic Front (NDF) leader Horacio Morales Jr. states, as conditions for a serious reconciliation, the withdrawal of government troops from Mindanao, Samar, Bicol and the Cagayan Valley; the release of all political prisoners; and government opposition to World Bank-International Monetary Fund-U.S. imperialist pressures.<sup>7</sup> For his part, President Marcos has said that while the party is no longer outlawed, "it would probably take some time before it could develop into a political force", since under existing laws a political party would have to obtain at least 10% of the

<sup>4</sup> Felipe Malaya (identified as a central committee member), "For an Anti-Imperialist Front in the Philippines" in *Communists in the Struggle for Democratic Unity: International Symposium on the 40th Anniversary of the Comintern* (Prague, 1975), pp. 171-173. See also Lava, "The New in the Philippines Orientation", *World Marxist Review* (Dec. 1977), pp. 89-94.

<sup>5</sup> Art. 1, sec. 1 of the party's constitution states: "The name of this organization shall be the Communist Party of the Philippines. If ever the need arises, the Party shall further differentiate itself in name and substance from the Communist Party of the Philippines (Merger of Socialist and Communist Parties) by appending the phrase Marxist-Leninist or Mao Tse-tung's Thought in parentheses."

<sup>6</sup> *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 6 Nov. 1981, pp. 23-24.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 August 1981, pp. 20-21.

votes in a national election before being accredited by the Commission on Elections.<sup>8</sup>

The public version of the discussion seems to be confined to expediencies and *ad hoc* solutions. A review of the evolution of the CPP-ML's positions on the legal vs. illegal, the city vs. countryside debate may prove to be edifying. This study examines this evolution over the 12-year period 1968-1980, based on CPP-ML literature. The sources consulted are neither restricted nor classified: for example, *Ang Bayan* is sent to media offices here and abroad; *Rectify Errors and Rebuild the Party (RERP)* has been reprinted by the Department of National Defense as part of its propaganda series "So The People May Know"; and the *Program for a People's Democratic Revolution (PPDR)* figures as an appendix to Eduardo Lachica's *Huk: Philippine Agrarian Society in Revolt* (Manila, 1971).\*

At least in the earliest of these documents, there is evidence of a tendency to glorify the countryside-armed struggle ethic and to downgrade city-and worker-based legal struggle. But the CPP-ML never romanticizes about the peasantry in the manner of Frantz Fanon, for example, for whom it was the only revolutionary class,<sup>9</sup> or Jacinto Manahan and Juan Feleo, PKP leaders who in the early 1930s argued for the consideration of the poor peasantry as *the* proletariat.<sup>10</sup> The CPP-ML has always been categorical in its orthodoxy: the peasantry must be "guided" by the proletariat, i.e., the party.<sup>11</sup> However, the CPP-ML manifested an early disposition to be less rigid in practice about the "conscious shift" to the countryside than its theoretical stance might have led one to suppose. Within a year after its founding, the party's fundamental premises about city struggle and legal or parliamentary struggle began to take a less manichean aspect. By 1974 the Philippines' differences from the "Chinese model" were formally recognized; in 1976, dogmatic application of Mao Tse-tung Thought was the object of an implicit selfcriticism. But these accretive nuances had not, by 1980, displaced the basic primacy of armed struggle in the party's programme.

#### Anti-Urban Bias

Jose Maria Sison's earliest exhortations to the activist youth provide a foretaste of the CPP-ML's bias against the city-based strug-

<sup>8</sup> *Daily Express*, 6 March 1982, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Les Damnés de la Terre* (Paris, 1968), p. 75.

<sup>10</sup> Gregorio Santayana, *Milestones in the History of the Communist Party* (1950), p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> *Rectify Errors and Rebuild the Party* (henceforth referred to as RERP), 1968, p. 14; Jose Maria Sison, *Struggle for National Democracy* (Q.C., 1967), p. 115.

\* It is precisely the non-confidential nature of these documents which constrains the author to issue a caveat. Not having had access to more "reliable" sources than mass-circulation newspapers and other publications of the CPP-ML, this study does not lay claim to authoritativeness. All errors of interpretation and analysis are the author's.

gle that allegedly characterized previous Philippine liberation movements. In a 1966 speech, Sison depicted the ilustrado Propagandists as "exiles in a foreign city", divorced from actual conditions in their native land.<sup>12</sup> Rizal himself was naive, Sison contended, to have carried out an open and urban-based struggle.<sup>13</sup> One of Rizal's fictional characters did not fare any better:

Simoun is more of a putschist and is far from the Marxist-Leninist concept of a revolutionary; he thinks of the masses as a manipulator would, commanding them from the city.<sup>14</sup>

Contemporary counterparts of the Propagandists, charged Sison, existed in the sixties: "lazy 'leaders' fond of sitting out a revolution."<sup>15</sup> As subsequent polemics with the PKP would bear out (notably in *Omnibus Reply*, 1971), Sison was alluding in this passage to the leaders of the old party which, as early as 1957, and under conditions of illegality, had decided on the adoption of legal or parliamentary struggle as the main form of struggle for the nonce, and the relegation of armed struggle to a secondary position. Now, as the controversial May Day 1967 statement issued by Sison argued, it was precisely the outlawed situation of the party which "dictates that there is no path to national and social liberation except armed struggle."<sup>16</sup>

Not that Sison had always propounded armed revolution as the absolute answer to the problems of underdevelopment, injustice and oppression. In 1965, for example, he called for transformation, through the active use of civil liberties, of the government into a "genuine instrument of the people's welfare"<sup>17</sup> and in 1966 laid out as a task of the nationalist movement that of cooperating with government officials and extension workers "in their sincere work to effect land reform."<sup>18</sup> But between Sison the PKP cadre, subject to party discipline and the party line, and Sison the founder of the CPP-ML, there lay a wide chasm. As head of his own party, Sison was free to formulate a revolutionary project for Philippine society, devoid of the PKP's received knowledge — or rather, with the PKP's past and continuing record of failure as "negative example."<sup>19</sup> The founding congress of the CPP-ML articulated this frustration, even as it pointed the way out of the impasse:

<sup>12</sup> *Struggle*, p. 129.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>16</sup> *People's World*, 10 May 1967 (organ of the New Zealand Communist Party).

<sup>17</sup> *Struggle*, p. 48.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 89. Also, in a *Progressive Review* editorial, Sison could praise the Macapagal administration's land reform programme in glowing terms (January-February 1964), p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> *On Lavoite Propaganda for Revisionism and Fascism or Omnibus Reply* (henceforth referred to as *OR*), 1971, p. 19.

Our Party has existed for the last 38 years and yet has not won revolutionary power. The failures it has incurred should be clearly analyzed in accordance with Mao Tse-tung Thought so as to enable the proletarian revolutionaries of today to act correctly.<sup>20</sup>

### RERP, or the Countryside Reified

The choice of 26 December 1968, the 75th anniversary of Mao, for the "reestablishment" of the party was not fortuitous: the CPP-ML was intended to be a living affirmation of Mao Tse-tung Thought, "the highest development of Marxism-Leninism in the present world era". The party's basic document *Rectify Errors*... consecrates Maoism to an unusual degree. It cites "Mao Tse-tung Thought" either exclusively or in any case more frequently than "Marxism-Leninism" or the standard Chinese formula, "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought";<sup>21</sup> it faults the PKP leaders for their ignorance or non-application of Mao Tse-tung Thought which had allegedly "already reached the Philippines in the form of its military writings" during the second world war;<sup>22</sup> and it is as much a comprehensive critique of the "revisionist", i.e., pro-Soviet, PKP as it is an enunciation of the CPP-ML's theses for Philippine society and the Philippine revolution. But the quintessential Maoism of *RERP* lies in the invocation of the Chinese leader and strategist to sanction the CPP-ML's reorientation away from its urban base.

In line with Mao Tse-tung's Thought (sic), the [Party] must consciously shift its center of gravity to the countryside. All previous Party leaderships have suffered failures that were singularly characterized by political activity that had its center of gravity in the city of Manila.<sup>23</sup>

To be sure, Mao never posed the problematic "setting" of the revolution in as peremptory a manner (and much less was he thinking of the Philippine when he wrote about strategic problems in China<sup>24</sup>). However, the point is that *RERP* professed to see, in the breach left by the PKP's unsuccessful bid for power, an opportunity to apply the "surrounding the cities from the countryside" strategy

<sup>20</sup> *RERP*, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> The 1977 English version of *RERP* retains the "Mao Tse-tung Thought" formula whereas the Pilipino version, also dated 1977, utilizes "Marxismo-Leninismo-Kaisipang Mao Tse-tung."

<sup>22</sup> *RERP*, pp. 4, 7, 14 (deleted in 1977 version).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>24</sup> China, when Mao wrote "Problems of War and Strategy" in 1938, had no parliament in which to conduct parliamentary struggle; Chinese workers had no right to strike. "Basically, the task of the Communist Party here is not to go through a long period of legal struggle before launching insurrection and war, and not to seize the big cities first and then occupy the countryside, but the reverse" (*Selected Military Writings*, 1967 ed., p. 270). But Mao admitted the validity of legal/parliamentary struggle in developed countries (*ibid.*, p. 269), a view reiterated by *Red Flag* (Nos. 20-21, 1960), in G. F. Hudson et al., *The Sino-Soviet Dispute* (London, 1961), pp. 162-167.

then associated with Mao and Lin Piao (the document precisely refers, time and again, to the Red Army marshal's 1965 thesis).

*RERP's* and other CPP-ML documents' review of the PKP's errors in the ideological, political, military and organizational domains from 1930 through 1964 seeks to establish that from Crisanto Evangelista's leadership onwards, the old party forfeited its opportunity to win power by neglecting the potential of the peasantry and the countryside.

1. *1930-1938*: Thus, according to *RERP*, the PKP committed the mistake of being publicly launched, and based, in Manila, without taking into account the "coercive class character of the American imperialist regime and the domestic ruling classes".<sup>25</sup> "Closed-doorism" mark party work, concentrated among the workers and the trade-union movement.<sup>26</sup> The merger of the PKP and the peasant Socialist Party in 1938 did not change the city-oriented character of the organization, even as it inflated the size of its membership. The peasantry's politicalization was given secondary importance.<sup>27</sup> The empiricist policy of this period gave rise to a loss of revolutionary initiative.<sup>28</sup> The party chose to stress "secondary" legal and urban work under the aegis of the Popular Front, instead of what should have been its principal task of arousing and mobilizing the peasant masses.<sup>29</sup>

2. *World War II*: With the outbreak of the war, the Manila-based party was easy prey for the Japanese invaders. It was not ready for a protracted resistance, not having made adequate preparations either for the establishment of rural bases or for a programme for agrarian revolution.<sup>30</sup> Those "second-line" leaders — including Vicente Lava, adjudged responsible for the disastrous retreat-for-defense policy, spontaneously fled to the province in a hasty and uncoordinated fashion.<sup>31</sup>

Only in September 1944 was retreat-for-defense repudiated. With the implementation of a policy of active resistance, "the strength of the people's forces increased by leaps and bounds". The people's war proved the correctness of Mao's teaching that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun".<sup>32</sup> Still, tardy rectification of the Party's military policy caused serious losses: the Hukbalahap failed to expand as fast as it could have beyond Central Luzon. In general, the party leadership failed to use agrarian revolution as the basis for its strength in those Central Luzon areas held by the Red Army.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *RERP*, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24; also *The New People's Army* (1969), p. 9.

3. *Postwar*: The party leadership now swung to the "right opportunist" mistake of shifting its headquarters and center of political activities (including its propaganda organs) to Manila.<sup>34</sup> The Congress of Labor Organizations and the Democratic Alliance were set up for legal and parliamentary struggle; but within the DA, "the Party itself was supposed to be merely one of the organizations subordinate to the bourgeois personalities leading the alliance".<sup>35</sup> In any event, DA representatives in Congress were ousted, "thus exposing the bankruptcy of the policy relying mainly on bourgeois parliamentarianism".<sup>36</sup> Concurrently, the party disarmed and disbanded Huk armed units. The one-sided repression that ensued "proved the bankruptcy of abandoning the armed struggle".<sup>37</sup> In 1948, heightened repression gave the party no other alternative but to take up arms again.<sup>38</sup> But even the resumption of armed struggle was handicapped by two false premises: the policy was decided upon on the basis of *immediate and external circumstances* (e.g., a supposedly impending split in the local ruling classes, the clear victory of the Chinese Red Army, etc.); and worse, the PKP failed to recognize that armed struggle under prevailing conditions in the archipelago would have to be *protracted*.<sup>39</sup>

4. *1950-1964*: Instead, the Politburo decided on quick military victory within two years. The so-called Politburo-In and the secretariat remained in Manila, from where the central leadership issued orders to the field. The so-called Politburo-Out was similarly isolated in the Sierra Madre end of Laguna province, far away from the Huk forces in the Central Luzon plains.<sup>40</sup>

Severely disrupted and demoralized by the series of military defeats that followed the mass arrest of Politburo officers and the surrender of Huk *supremo* Luis Taruc, the party swung back to "Right opportunism and flightism". Parliamentary struggle once again became an attractive option, in 1956: the advent of "revisionism" in the Soviet Union at about this time encouraged the PKP leadership to give up armed struggle.<sup>41</sup> By implementing the unusual "single-file" policy, the clandestine city-based leadership only accelerated the process of the party's disintegration. The *coup de grace* came with Jesus Lava's arrest in May 1964, "in the urban mouth of the reactionary whale".<sup>42</sup>

Rectification of the party's errors, *RRP* declared, assumed special urgency at a time when the "local revisionist renegades" were allegedly intensifying efforts to develop a "city-based and city-oriented

<sup>34</sup> *RRP*, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7; *OR*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>39</sup> *RRP*, p. 7. Note that the PKP admits the first error but not the second.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10; *The NPA*, p. 11; *OR*, p. 60.

<sup>42</sup> *RRP*, p. 11.

party that is afraid of armed struggle".<sup>43</sup> The influence of contemporary events like the Cultural Revolution, the Vietnam war, and student-worker mass actions in Western countries, on the CPP-ML and the movement it spearheaded, cannot be discounted. Filtered through the Maoist optic, the prevailing national and international mood projected clearly in favor of revolutionary armed struggle. Beyond the armed-struggle mystique lay an implicit acceptance of Mao's thesis that

in the revolution in semi-colonial China, the peasant struggle must always fail if it does not have the leadership of the workers. But the revolution is never harmed if the peasant struggle outstrips the forces of the workers.<sup>44</sup>

### CPP-ML's Theses for Armed Struggle: a Schema

The objective condition of the Philippines' *underdevelopment* is at the core of the CPP-ML's argument for rural-based armed struggle as the main or primary form of struggle. The fruit of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism,<sup>45</sup> underdevelopment translates into a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society in stagnation. American imperialism maintains and relies on feudalism as its "social base"; the landlord class has persisted as "the most important ally of U.S. imperialism and the comprador bourgeoisie in the perpetration of feudal and semi-feudal relations in the vast countryside".<sup>46</sup> The Philippines, Sison wrote in 1971, "is still semi-colonial and semi-feudal and will remain so until the triumph of the new democratic revolution".<sup>47</sup> Taking place in this setting, the Philippine revolution must necessarily be an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal (national democratic) revolution. The primacy of the anti-imperialist struggle does not detract from the main content of the revolution which is the land problem, affecting as it does the overwhelming majority of the population.

Now, Philippine society's underdeveloped, semi-colonial and semi-feudal condition, precisely, rules out the luxury of parliamentary struggle as the primary form of struggle. Whereas the PKP not only

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28. William Pomeroy cites, in *An American-Made Tragedy* (New York, 1974), p. 89, plans, in the months preceding the imposition of martial law in Sept. 1972, for the creation of a "socialist or labor party outside of the ruling parties that could function legally".

<sup>44</sup> "A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire" (1929) in *Selected Military Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>45</sup> As of the party's founding, bureaucrat-capitalism was not yet part of the "basic problems of the Filipino people". The three-part formula (more in conformity with the Chinese model) appears to have been adopted only in 1971, with *Philippine Society and Revolution*.

<sup>46</sup> *Programme for a People's Democratic Revolution (PPDR)*, 1968, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> *Laban sa Maling Haka-Haka* (1971), p. 4.

seriously envisaged legal or parliamentary struggle as early as 1956, and even held in 1964 that neither the Nacionalista nor the Liberal parties were any longer “docile instruments of American policy”,<sup>48</sup> the CPP-ML refused the “illusion of democratic choice” between “Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola” parties and the “false drama of neo-colonial politics”.<sup>49</sup> *Omnibus Reply* belittles the PKP’s “reformism” as an essentially misplaced tactic:

Today, in a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country like the Philippines, the Lava revisionist renegades imagine themselves to be in an imperialist country like tsarist Russia and think of “revolutionary situation” in terms of being able to launch a strategic offensive on the cities and seizing political power within a short period of time after a protracted period of parliamentary struggle.<sup>50</sup>

Putting the stress of party mass work in the cities would lead to either one of two errors: the “left” opportunist one of “seizing power mainly on the basis of the mass strength of the proletariat in cities without adequate support from the peasantry”<sup>51</sup>—and in any case, the country’s semi-colonial and semi-feudal state, again, has resulted in a small proletariat<sup>52</sup>—or the right opportunist one of “relying indefinitely on parliamentary struggle and compromises with the imperialists and the ruling classes”.<sup>53</sup>

Parliamentary struggle—rather tendentiously portrayed by the CPP-ML as exclusively reducible to participation in elections and termed as “reformism”—is secondary, and in its “reformist” aspect is *contradictory* to revolution.<sup>54</sup> In any event, “as a proletarian revolutionary party, the [CPP-ML] should not be tied down by legalist and parliamentary struggle”.<sup>55</sup>

Armed struggle is the main form of struggle for the Philippines, and “this will not change until the total destruction of the political power of the class enemies”.<sup>56</sup> As a matter of fact, the downfall of the so-called “ruling classes” will be precipitated by armed struggle.

In the Philippines today, the ruling classes are in serious difficulties in ruling the old way. They cannot prolong the present balance of forces indefinitely... armed opposition now will aggravate their dif-

<sup>48</sup> William Pomeroy, “Sur la Montee des Forces Nationales aux Philippines”, *Democratie Nouvelle* (Paris), Nov. 1964, p. 31.

<sup>49</sup> *Struggle*, pp. 12, 48-55; *Philippine Society and Revolution* or *PSR* (Manila, 1971), p. 206.

<sup>50</sup> *OR*, p. 107.

<sup>51</sup> *PSR*, p. 281.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 257, 279; *RERP*, p. 29.

<sup>53</sup> *PSR*, p. 281.

<sup>54</sup> *OR*, pp. 85-86. The polemical intent of *Omnibus Reply* surely accounts for its extremist positions.

<sup>55</sup> *PPDR*, p. 4.

<sup>56</sup> E. Tagumpay, “Review of the History of the NPA”, *Ang Bayan*, 30 March 1971, p. 9.

facilities and hasten the maturing of what is now discernible as a revolutionary mood among the people.<sup>57</sup>

This struggle is necessarily protracted. Two factors dictate, rather than merely render possible, recourse to protracted war. The first is, once again, the Philippines' being a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country: "Because of the uneven development of politics and economy in the era of imperialism, the weak link of bourgeois state power is to be found in the countryside".<sup>58</sup> Also, the dispersion effect works both ways: "because the main body of the party (its cadres and members) is in the countryside, we cannot be destroyed at one blow", claims the CPP-ML, even if a massive repression were to be launched in the urban areas.<sup>59</sup>

On the other hand, cities offer no strategic advantages. (1) The area for maneuver is extremely limited in these "bastions of bourgeois state power".<sup>60</sup> The party claimed in 1972, in fact, that U.S. counter-insurgency policy had resulted in the deforestation of Rizal, Quezon and Laguna provinces, in order to create an artificial "counterguerilla ring of safety" around the Manila-Rizal region.<sup>61</sup> (2) For reasons of static defense alone, the "enemy" will always be compelled to deploy large military contingents in cities, major camps and main lines of communication and transportation.<sup>62</sup> (3) Development of armed revolutionary power cannot be carried out in secret.<sup>63</sup>

The second factor is geography. "It would require a protracted period of time for the Party to convert into a revolutionary advantage the initial disadvantage of fighting. . . in an archipelago like the Philippines".<sup>64</sup> But the archipelagic nature of the country is offset by its mountainous terrain. Such terrain, especially if sufficiently populated along foothills, clearings, plateaux, riversides or creeksides and naturally endowed with thick rain forests, is ideal for guerilla warfare. This environment makes it possible to "lure the enemy in deep" and likewise to make use of even primitive weapons like bolos, spears, crossbows, traps, as well as grenades, land mines, shotguns and homemade explosives.<sup>65</sup> In the Philippines mountains form natural boundaries (thus making it possible for the NPA to economize

<sup>57</sup> "Main Tasks of the Party", appendix in Lachica, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

<sup>58</sup> *RERP*, p. 31.

<sup>59</sup> *OR* p. 111; *PSP* p. 256.

<sup>60</sup> *RERP*, p. 31.

<sup>61</sup> *Ang Bayan* statement on the Central Luzon floods, 4 Aug. 1972, p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> *PSR*, p. 282.

<sup>63</sup> *RERP*, p. 31. This observation is deleted in the 1977 version. Note moreover that Sison debunks Carlos Marighela, urban warfare strategist, as a "minor current" together with Regis Debray and Che Guevara, *OR*, p. 169.

<sup>64</sup> *RERP*, p. 17. The archipelagic theme was another bone of contention between Sison and the PKP before 1974: *RERP*, pp. 20, 31; *OR*, p. 113; *Laban sa Maling*. . . pp. 27, 55.

<sup>65</sup> *Ang Bayan*, 6 Oct. 1972, p. 22.

on manpower): the Sierra Madre links nine provinces; the Cordillera and Ilocos mountains, as many as eleven, the Tarlac-Zambales chain, five, etc. Mindanao has even more mountains and forests than Luzon.<sup>66</sup>

### Peasantry: Fighting Force In Situ

Thus schematized, Philippine socio-economic-political variables and the geographic constant all converge to objectively favor a certain social class, the peasantry; and to bestow on this class its strategic (ultimate?) value: its role as "main force" of the revolution, i.e. in practical terms its function as principal source of fighters *in situ* for the NPA.<sup>67</sup> The majority of the country's population belongs to the peasantry, or in any case "is in the countryside". Now, the majority of the peasantry are landless poor peasants and farm workers.<sup>68</sup>

This differentiation is not alien to the over-riding concern of the party for the promotion of armed struggle: these classes' deprivation of their essential means of production presupposes their receptivity to radical change. Lower middle peasants, poor peasants and farm workers are the social base of the revolution and will continue to be so regarded during the "dictatorship of the proletariat" stage.<sup>69</sup> In contrast, the rest of the middle peasants are merely "won over"; rich peasants are "neutralized". Revolutionary agrarian reform is thus a potent motivational factor where the rural poor are concerned (hence, in part, the CPP-ML's insistence on the "absurdity" of the idea that U.S. imperialism will consciously liquidate feudalism).<sup>70</sup>

Significantly, fishermen along maritime coasts are considered as "mainly peasants" and characterized as victims of, *inter alia*, landlords who fence them off fishing grounds. Poor and middle fishermen, especially, are important for strategic purposes in the archipelago: they can be entrusted with communications between future guerilla bases and zones along sea coasts; develop sea warfare and warfare in rivers, lakes and estuaries; and provide food.<sup>71</sup>

Poor settlers and ethnic minorities represent another "special group" to which attention must be paid. Victims of land grabbers,

<sup>66</sup> *Specific Characteristics of Our People's War* (henceforth referred to as *SCPW*), 1974, pp. 15-16.

<sup>67</sup> This point is explicit in *RERP*, pp. 28, 29; *Maikling Kurso* (1980), p. 86.

<sup>68</sup> There is a certain confusion in the figures advanced by *PSR* and *SCPW*: the former pegs the peasantry at "75% of the Philippine population", with 75 to 80% being poor peasants and farm workers, p. 249, 254; the latter states that 85% of the national population "is in the countryside", with poor peasants and farm workers comprising about 75% of the rural population (p. 5). Another issue is the addition of "lower middle peasants" to the category of rural poor, an addition dating back probably to 1972. See *Ang Bayan*, 1 Nov. 1972, p. 2.

<sup>69</sup> *RERP*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>70</sup> *Laban sa Maling...*, pp. 2-17.

<sup>71</sup> *PSR* pp. 270-271; *SCPW* pp. 6, 18.

“they are very receptive to revolutionary propaganda”;<sup>72</sup> living in neglected hinterlands, hilly areas and forested mountain regions, they occupy a choice position in the terrain most propitious to the kind of warfare favored by the people’s army.<sup>73</sup>

#### The 1970 “Storm”: City Serves the Countryside

The strategic importance of the countryside did not obscure the tactical importance of the cities. There occurred a historical event in early 1970, the CPP-ML’s policy towards which indicated a capacity to maximize the advantages gratuitously offered by urban struggle, if not postpone the “conscious shift” decided upon in 1968. This event was the so-called First Quarter Storm, that series of urban uprisings *par excellence* which shook the Greater Manila region in January-March 1970 and whose after-effects could still be felt up to the eve of the declaration of martial law in September 1972.<sup>74</sup>

While its occurrence was not entirely unpredictable, given the numerous demonstrations, rallies and other forms of militant mass actions that had begun in 1961 (the CAFA investigation and rally to protest the threat to academic freedom) through 1966 (the Manila “summit” conference) till 29 December 1969 (the demonstration against U.S. Vice-President Spiro Agnew), the First Quarter Storm seems to have been spontaneously generated, i.e. unplanned by the CPP-ML or its youth organizations. Indeed, the incident that detonated the outburst was from all accounts imputable to the moderate “social democrat” demonstrators who were determined, even then, not to make militant action the exclusive province of the Kabataang Makabayan, the Samahan ng mga Demokratikong Kabataan, etc. But once the escalation of incidents dating from 26 January 1970 had developed enough momentum to merit the posthumous name of “storm”, the party lost no time in issuing a series of statements for “inspiration and guidance”<sup>75</sup> which sought to link the youth and students to the peasants and workers, Manila to the provinces, street fighting to guerrilla warfare. The 26 January demonstration was thus deemed by *Ang Bayan* to be the “inauguration of a nationwide campaign to make the students aware of the real state of the nation and the despicableness of fascism and to enmass them into the fold of the national revolu-

<sup>72</sup> *SCPW* p. 16.

<sup>73</sup> *PSR* pp. 272-275.

<sup>74</sup> Among other things, the First Quarter Storm hastened the reconciliation of the Kabataang Makabayan and the Samahang Demokratiko ng mga Kabataan; the isolation of PKP organizations from the Movement for a Democratic Philippines, and the alienation of a dissident group from the PKP; the radicalization of a significant sector of Catholic moderates, etc., developments which are beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>75</sup> *OR*, p. 143.

tion". While the CPP-ML organ called for bigger mass actions of nationwide proportions, it also urged students to go to the countryside and link up with the peasants, as "quite a number" had already done.<sup>76</sup>

*Ang Bayan* took a bolder step in its next issue, which took note of the higher level of struggle during the 30-31 January and succeeding demonstrations. These were hailed as a "rich source" of prospective party members and NPA recruits<sup>77</sup> to whom would be distributed the *Guide for Cadres and Members of the CPP*, Mao's *Selected Works, Quotations*, etc.<sup>78</sup> The call for students to "go to the countryside and promote revolution" was backed up by a similar appeal to "go to the workers"<sup>79</sup> *Ang Bayan* optimistically summed up the First Quarter Storm atmosphere: "The revolutionary situation has never been so excellent."<sup>80</sup>

But what was the revolution doing in an urban setting, in apparent contradiction with the "conscious shift"? The answer may very well be found in Jose Maria Sison's admission, in 1971, that the "cultural revolution" being carried out by the Movement for a Democratic Philippines in Manila could "not avoid starting in the national center of politics and communications".<sup>81</sup> Also, as specular as the First Quarter Storm may have appeared, it was not yet *the* revolution. The mass media's extensive, and in many cases live, on-the-spot coverage of the escalating violence may have unwittingly created a popular impression that Manila had come that close to the verge of an insurrection. Yet Sison declared that this was just the forerunner of "greater storms to come"<sup>82</sup>, while reasserting the superiority of armed struggle in the countryside where post-Quarter Storm recruits had "better chances of fighting back with revolutionary violence".<sup>83</sup> Even after youth activists had stormed the grounds of the presidential palace on 30 January, the party reiterated its condemnation of putschism and reaffirmed its commitment to protracted war in the countryside. The rural-urban dialectic had to be placed in the proper perspective. As the party stated the following year:

While so far the urban legal mass organizations have aroused and mobilized the masses in several tens of thousands for each public meeting at Plaza Miranda and have made recruitment of members from them *only in part*, the Party and the New People's Army have brought under local organs of political power and barrio mass organizations at least 300,000 people in Northern Luzon and Central

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<sup>76</sup> Undated *Ang Bayan* statement reprinted in *First Quarter Storm of 1970* (Manila, 1970), pp. 34-35.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 65.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>81</sup> *Struggle* . . . 1971 ed., p. 41.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

Luzon. This figure does not yet include those in the guerilla bases and guerilla zones in other regions.<sup>84</sup>

The capital would not fall that easily; the armed struggle was just beginning in a number of Luzon provinces. But the urban-rural frontier proved to be a porous one, as the so-called Diliman Commune of 1971 proved (taking into consideration the vulnerability of the suburban campus to armed invasion).

Armed city partisans constituted the NPA's urban presence, with the special task of "disrupting the enemy and punishing traitors in cities".<sup>85</sup> But the ACP's potential for action was extremely limited in the pre- and especially post-martial law period, and the CPP-ML made it a point to draw minimum attention to their existence. (This is the impression one gathers from reading the party's news and propaganda organs of that period.) For the time being, in the post-Quarter Storm, pre-martial law interim of repression in the cities, the party evolved a policy of encouraging the prudent and defensive building of a clandestine network, or the formation of party organizations in every district of the Manila-Rizal region within all possible mass organizations, places of work or neighborhoods. *Ang Bayan* made it clear however that the underground urban network must coordinate with the NPA in the countryside.<sup>86</sup>

Finally, the CPP-ML's ability to obtain maximum tactical gains from unpromising situations is illustrated by its response to martial law. In 1971, the party had predicted that a hypothetical coup or martial law would enable the armed struggle in the countryside to advance even more rapidly.<sup>87</sup> When the state of emergency was indeed imposed — in part, according to the official version, to quell the "Maoist rebellion" — the party leadership was not only ready, but even found in the new and difficult conditions a means to disseminate CPP-ML influence nationwide. The central committee noted in October 1972 that mass activists and even those with marginal links with the movement had gone into hiding as a result of indiscriminate repression. This, pursued the party, was "an opportunity to recruit and develop more cadres, and deploy them to hitherto unorganized areas of the country".<sup>88</sup> While it is impossible to determine the exact number of activists or "fellow travellers" who took to the Philippine maquis after 21 September 1972 (or, for that matter, those who came back), it is an undeniable fact that the party and NPA's implanation throughout the archipelago registered a tremendous increase during

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<sup>84</sup> *OR*, p. 118.

<sup>85</sup> *The NPA*, p. 2.

<sup>86</sup> *Ang Bayan*, 3 May 1971, p. 2.

<sup>87</sup> *OR*, p. 155.

<sup>88</sup> *Ang Bayan*, 12 Oct. 1975, in *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Sept. 1973, pp. 41-44.

the years 1973-1980. In 1972, on the third anniversary of the NPA, areas of activity were limited, outside of Manila-Rizal, to 800 barrio organizing committees or barrio revolutionary committees in North-east Luzon, Central Luzon, Southern Luzon and the Western Visayas.<sup>89</sup> By the end of 1980, the party could justly boast of 27 guerilla fronts covering more than 400 municipalities in 43 provinces.<sup>90</sup>

### Demaoization, or "Specificity"?

Yet this success had not been achieved without a price. The party's experiment with a "Yenan" in Isabela province had resulted in the quasidecimation of the NPA concentrated there. The years 1972 through 1976 were, all in all, a dark period for the armed struggle.

Up to the middle of the last decade, the people's army experienced a lot of difficulties and sustained heavy casualties due to the fierce onslaughts of the dictatorship and to our own serious limitations in terms of experience, skills, organizations, equipment and mass support. The enemy repeatedly assaulted our initial guerilla fronts with the result that almost all of these were reduced in size, and there were even a few we had to complete leave temporarily.<sup>91</sup>

From these bitter experiences sprang the realization that the Maoist model for protracted war based on the absolute necessity for a liberated area would have to be adapted to local conditions. In this regard, *Specific Characteristics of Our People's War* (1974) is more than a simple manual: it is also an attempt to recast revolutionary strategy and tactics in a Philippine mode, and in so doing subject Mao Tse-tung's teachings to fine tuning. This pamphlet thus enumerates seven conditions particular to the Philippines that influence the conduct of revolutionary struggle in this country, of which three depart somewhat from the Maoist formula: (1) "we are fighting in a mountainous archipelago"; (2) "a fascist dictatorship has arisen amidst a political and economic crisis of the ruling system"; and (3) the country being dominated by one ruling imperialist power (the U.S.), there is a unified armed reaction, except in Southwest Mindanao. (The other four characteristics, at least in their formulation, bear the Maoist stamp, viz. "U.S. imperialism is on the decline in Asia and throughout the world and world revolution is advancing amidst general crisis of the world capitalist system"; "our people's war is in line with the national democratic revolution of a new type"; "we need to wage a protracted war in the countryside"; and "the enemy is big and strong while we are still small and weak".)

<sup>89</sup> *Ang Bayan*, 29 March 1972, p. 2.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 Dec. 1980, p. 3.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, also 15 Sept. 1978, p. 5.

But did the insistence on specificity necessarily signify a wholesale abandonment of the Chinese model and/or Mao Tse-tung Thought? It is obvious that on the whole, *Specific Characteristics* does not radically depart from the Chinese theses. Since 1974, the party has been very circumspect in its "demaiozation." (The central committee's message of condolence on Mao's death studiously avoided any mention of the Gang of Four or Teng Hsiao-ping, as if to avoid foreclosing its options in the post-Mao era.) Shortly after Mao's demise and on the eighth anniversary of the CPP-ML, a more substantial clue came in the form of a self-criticism: "We realize that there are no ready-made, complete solutions to our specific problems from books or from abroad."<sup>92</sup>

#### Dogma vs. "Politics of the Possible"

Critics of the CPP-ML and the movement it led were quick to point out and denigrate its "cowboy ideology", its leadership's petty bourgeois origins, its appeal to petty bourgeois students itching for revolution, etc. These charges were to a large extent true, and magnified by the party's own tendency to regard criticism from the enemy as a "good thing", as proof *per se* of the correctness of the party's line. However, the left adventurist rhetoric diverted attention from the party's knack for a "politics of the possible". Where its theoretical stance was intransigent, its practice was often flexible and non-dogmatic. The CPP-ML's handling of the First Quarter Storm, we have seen, illustrates this flexibility. Insofar as it pitted unarmed youths and students against the sophisticated weaponry and material of the urban anti-riot squads, insofar as it took place at all in the so-called bastion of reactionary bourgeois power, insofar as it did not spread to the countryside or even the factories, the First Quarter Storm could have been, by the party's own theoretical and practical standards, written off, if not condemned, as so much exercises in steamletting disguised as "urban guerilla warfare". As it turned out, the central committee's response to the spontaneous urban outburst manifested a shrewd capacity to accommodate and even promote city-based uprisings, *provided it enhanced the armed struggle* in the countryside.

Another area where the party has belied its reputation for dogmatism is that of legal struggle. For example, the message of imprisoned leaders to Kabataang Makabayan activists in late 1970 took pains to point out the tactical gains that could be had from workers' strikes and mass work within "reactionary organizations".<sup>93</sup> In late

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 Dec. 1976, in appendix to *RERP* 1977 version (London), pp. 48-49.

<sup>93</sup> Nilo Tayag and Leoncio Co message to 3rd KM National Congress, 10 Dec. 1970.

1971, after the Supreme Court endorsed the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, the party issued a statement justifying armed struggle, while urging peaceful protest campaigns "to test the limits of reactionary laws".<sup>94</sup> In its 1975 Labor Day issue, *Ang Bayan* referred to the usefulness of existing labor laws, while warning against reformism and economism.<sup>95</sup> By 1980, the call was for the promotion of both strikes *and* economic struggles, but with the long-range objective of raising economic struggles to the level of political ones.<sup>96</sup>

The party's stand on electoral struggle has also undergone some evolution. In the early 1970s, particularly after the First Quarter Storm, the "parliament of the streets" was the party's privileged form of agitation (and significantly, martial law had yet to be declared). The Constitutional Convention was therefore denounced as a farce, a formalist exercise that did not even hold the promise of reformist tactical gains. But the imposition of martial law in 1972, and the hardships it entailed, constrained the party to reassess its basis for rejection of parliamentary struggle. It is clear that the new, softer line which emerged in early 1978 did not imply any fundamental revision of the CPP-ML's disdain for parliamentary or legal struggle as the main form. What was new, and understandably so, given the restrictions of martial law, was the refusal to reject elections outright. Political detainees thus announced their intention in 1978 to "probe the government's sincerity" by taking up the latter's offer for them to run for seats in the Interim Batasang Pambansa. But their acceptance to run was placed under certain conditions, foremost of which was their immediate release from detention. Whether they would indeed gain satisfaction or not on this point (they did not), it is significant to note the detainees' reasoning: "We have to take seriously any initiative that would lead to the release of as many political detainees as possible".<sup>97</sup> Elections, they said, could be used to advance the struggle for true freedom and democracy — but the struggle would not end with the polls. The CPP-ML praised the opposition party LABAN for its courage, but commented that it could play the opposition role for only a time.<sup>98</sup>

With the impending lifting of martial law, the CPP-ML proclaimed its readiness to "take advantage of any relaxation of restrictions, not to tie its own hands". At the same time, it took note of

<sup>94</sup> *Ang Bayan*, 15 Dec. 1971, p. 1.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 May 1975, pp. 6, 7.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 Dec. 1980, p. 10.

<sup>97</sup> Typewritten "press statement of political detainees on the National Security Council's decision denying release of detainees intending to run for the IBP", c. Feb. 1978.

<sup>98</sup> *Ang Bayan*, 15 March 1978, pp. 2, 3.

the appeal which electoral processes still exerted on the population, especially its "backward sections".

The dictatorship has tight control over modern instruments of communication that it can use to overwhelm the people with its lies and promises. The bigger part of the population has not been effectively reached by the revolutionary movement; a consequence is that this part of the population might be taken in by the parliamentary illusions being spread by the dictatorship.<sup>99</sup>

### Legal Struggle for White Areas

The restrictions of martial law were strong enough to inhibit the kind of mass actions that characterized the years 1970-1972 (in spite of the party's prediction of more First Quarter Storms to come). But in 1976, protest actions on a relatively large scale began to resurface; three such rallies took place in Manila in the month of October alone. At year's end, the party called for "open mass struggles" in the cities.<sup>100</sup> If any doubt persisted as to what this meant, the central committee spelled it out in May 1977: "In contrast to our guerilla zones in the countryside, the main form of struggle in Manila-Rizal as well as other white areas is clearly non-armed and legal. We must make use of every possible legal means to arouse, organize and mobilize the masses".<sup>101</sup>

"Masses" referred primarily to the workers, whose percentage in total party membership, it was claimed, was unprecedented. Moreover, "in due time, the overwhelming majority of party members in the [Manila-Rizal] region should be workers".<sup>102</sup> The contrast is striking between the May Day 1977 directive and the *RERP* of 1968, which faulted Crisanto Evangelista's and succeeding PKP leaderships' policy of carrying out work in the city-based proletarian milieu. A plausible reason for this volteface was the growing confidence of the party: it could now "afford" to pay more than lip service to city work, having insured that armed struggle had become an irreversible trend elsewhere. Indeed, even as the party called for recruitment of more city workers, it also specified that they should be asked to join the NPA.<sup>103</sup>

### Feudalism and the Countryside Revisited

*Specific Characteristics*. . . already hinted at a reappraisal of the Philippine countryside's potential for the realization of a liberated area, even in the vast mountainous terrain of Northeastern Luzon. Fighting in a countryside shredded into so many populated islands,

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 Dec. 1980, p. 8.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 Dec. 1976, in appendix to *RERP* 1977 version (London), p.

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<sup>101</sup> "Two Major Responsibilities", *Ang Bayan*, 1 May 1977, p. 2.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 Sept. 1978, p. 1.

with the two biggest being separated by the "clutter" of the Visayas, and with the additional consideration that the archipelago has no contiguous frontiers with other countries, obliged the CPP-ML to implement a policy of *centralized leadership and decentralized operations*. It would be foolhardy, said *Specific Characteristics*, for the party's central leadership to concentrate all party personnel and efforts in one limited area in Luzon, and consequently invite concentration of enemy forces there.<sup>104</sup>

The party likewise anticipated, by 1974, that for the U.S., "the stakes are bigger in the Philippines" than in Vietnam, or elsewhere in Asia, because of American investments, military bases and personnel in the islands.<sup>105</sup> The struggle would therefore be even more protracted than if it had taken place in the China of the 1930s and 1940s. In this regard, it is useful to recall that before the voluntarist rhetoric of *RERP* and other CPP-ML literature had set into the party's style, Jose Maria Sison had taken a more realistic measure of American capacity to withstand attempts to dislodge the U.S. bases from Philippine territory.<sup>106</sup> Especially in the late 1970s, with the reinforcement of the bases' perimeters, and the heightened presence of government military/superstructural installations were such as to make **any point in Central Luzon accessible by a variety of means of transportation within ten minutes**, realistic nuances of this kind regained their pertinence.

In a parallel evolution, the party's policy toward the landlord class has undergone a number of what may tentatively be termed as tactical changes. The preservation of feudalism was previously considered to be "a matter of prime necessity" for U.S. imperialism, to an extent that *Philippine Society and Revolution* could theorize that "if landlord power were to be overthrown in the countryside, U.S. imperialism would have nothing to stand on and it would have to face a colossal force that can drive it out of the country."<sup>107</sup> The 1977 ten-point programs of the National Democratic Front reversed the causality of the problem in this wise:

The land problem, especially the problem of ownership, can be finally settled throughout the country upon the complete overthrow of U.S. imperialist and comprador-landlord rule. Then the conditions shall have been laid for unhindered industrial expansion and balanced economic development.<sup>108</sup>

The 1980 primer (*Maikling Kurso*) for the study of *Philippine Society* . . . conspicuously refrains from restating the "social base" theory.

<sup>104</sup> *SCPW*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>106</sup> *Struggle* . . . p. 23, deleted in 1971 version.

<sup>107</sup> *PSR*, p. 202.

<sup>108</sup> *Ten-point programme*, 1977, p. 15.

The effects of land reform, both of the NPA and of the government, may have something to do with this modification, which presumably also took into account the diminishing linkage between the objective needs of U.S. imperialism and the capacity of the native landowning class, especially the middle and small categories, to cater to these needs. If the 1968 party programme's provision for confiscation of land from the landlords implied the monolithic nature of this class, *PSR* and, later, *Specific Characteristics* carefully made a distinction between those who "have vast holdings, who have acquired these by sheer grabbing, who hold political power and who are despotic" on the one hand, and on the other, "enlightened gentry who endorse and follow our policies and who support our revolutionary war".<sup>109</sup> The latter category was promised "more fields for fruitful endeavor" after the victory of the revolution.<sup>110</sup>

The party's call, after the declaration of martial law, for a primarily anti-fascist united front (with the relegation of the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal fronts to secondary and tertiary importance, respectively) resulted in the *de facto* reclassification of landlords as a less important target for the moment. The party granted the landlords a concession in the form of a directive to its cadres to allow 20% rent of the current actual crop to small landlords, 15% to middle landlords, and 10% to big landlords.<sup>111</sup> This temporary measure had the anticipated advantages of broadening popular support for the anti-fascist struggle and making a "widely accepted beginning [for agrarian reform] even among the tenants".<sup>112</sup> For their part, landlords were "urged" by the NDF to a minimum programme of rent reduction and elimination of usury, as a number of them had allegedly already consented to do.<sup>113</sup>

This general policy aims at splitting the feudal class, isolating the most diehard landlords, while keeping violent struggle to a minimum (in the sense that the NPA will not resort to armed coercion unless the landlords in question put up a fight—hence implying a choice, which was not explicit in previous policy). The party claims that its new "mass line" is succeeding. *Ang Bayan* has noted that

More and more small and medium landlords are accepting that they cannot and should not resist the Party's minimum programme of land reform, especially in the guerilla zones. Those who follow the policies of the Party may be categorized as enlightened landlords. This is particularly true of small and medium landlords who have also become members of the national or upper petty bourgeoisie.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> *PSR* p. 237, *SCPW* p. 7.

<sup>110</sup> *Ten-point programme*, 1977, p. 15.

<sup>111</sup> *Ang Bayan*, 6 Oct. 1975, p. 22.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ten-point programme*, 1977, p. 14.

<sup>114</sup> *Ang Bayan*, 21 Sept. 1977, pp. 8-9.

This statement is less significant for its categorization of landlords than for its acceptance of the objective process of differentiation of the “class enemy” in the countryside. It is in this light that the CPP-ML central committee’s 1980 instruction, “give due attention to advancing the struggle of progressive sectors in the countryside, other than those of the peasant and farm worker masses”,<sup>115</sup> may be appreciated.

### Conclusion

As the CPP-ML advanced in age and experience to emerge, 12 years after its founding, with the reputation of being the leader of the only viable guerilla force in non-communist Southeast Asia, it inevitably had to revise a number of its original principles to conform with Philippine realities. Evidence at hand does not warrant the conclusion that these revisions had anything to do with the devaluation of Mao Tse-tung Thought in China or with the capture of the CPP-ML’s first-line leaders. The 1976 reference to “readymade solutions from books or abroad” significantly criticized Mao Tse-tung Thought’s wholesale application to the Philippines more than it does Mao Tse-tung Thought itself.

The party’s newspaper *Ang Bayan* continues to run in its mast-head the blurb: “guided by Mao Tse-tung Thought”. A certain historical-sentimental attachment to the late revolutionary leader seems to stand in the way of demaoization—a demaoization that may be more apparent than real, incidentally. The party’s successes so far outweigh its failures, and its record over the past decade would appear to validate its abiding trust in armed struggle. The latter is practically an article of faith which has withstood the relatively minor changes that the party has wrought in its revolutionary project. And while the CPP-ML’s 12th anniversary statement scrupulously avoids mentioning Mao either in praise or in blame, it cannot avoid sounding “Maoist” when it declares that “the gun has played a decisive role in the overall advance of the revolutionary struggle in the past several years. And the gun certainly will become even more important in the coming higher level of struggle. . . .”<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 Dec. 1980, p. 10.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.