**THE POLITICS OF COUNTERINSURGENCY
IN THE PHILIPPINES: MILITARY
AND POLITICAL OPTIONS**

**by
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FOREWORD

Dr. Gareth Porter is well known in academic circles for his high quality articles and books on the revolution in Vietnam and United States policies there since the 1960s. He is also a familiar analyst to many policy makers in Washington, D.C., where, besides doing research and teaching, he has served as an assistant to Senator John Kerry (D.-Mass.). Dr. Porter is currently a Professor in the School of International Service, American University.

In recent years, Dr. Porter has been drawn to the Philippines. The growing unrest, expanding revolutionary movement, heightening national political crisis, and multiplying dilemmas for U.S. policy must have seemed vaguely familiar to this Vietnam specialist. As an aide to Senator Kerry, he traveled and did research in the Philippines. He also wrote articles and was interviewed several times on national television and radio in January-February 1986 as the world watched in awe the fall of President Ferdinand Marcos and the rise of President Corazon Aquino.

We in the Center for Philippine Studies at Hawaii are pleased to publish Dr. Porter's first lengthy study on the Philippines. It is a fine analysis of the debate within both the Aquino government and the Communist Party and the role of the U.S. government in the process. We hope his interpretation of events in 1986 will be illuminating to participants and observers alike in the months to come. Whatever the future of the struggles in the Philippines, Dr. Porter's study will be a valuable reference for those wanting to understand why it unfolded as it did.

Ben Kerkvliet
Director
Center for Philippine Studies
February 1987

FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
APDR	Asia Pacific Daily Report
CHDF	Civilian Home Defense Forces
CPP	Communist Party of the Philippines
EC	Executive Committee (of the CPP)
FBIS	Foreign Broadcast Information Service
JPRS	Joint Publications Research Service
KMU	<u>Kilusang Mayo Uno</u> (May First Movement)
MND	Ministry of National Defense
NAFP	New Armed Forces of the Philippines (name sometimes used post-February 1986 for the Armed Forces of the Philippines)
NDF	National Democratic Front
NFSW	National Federation of Sugar Workers
NPA	New People's Army
PnB	<u>Partido ng Bayan</u> (People's Party)
RAM	Reform AFP Movement

Introduction

The ouster of President Ferdinand Marcos and his authoritarian regime and its replacement by the administration of President Corazon Aquino put the problem of dealing with the communist insurgency in an entirely new political context. Marcos had relied almost entirely on the use of military and paramilitary forces in an effort to suppress or control the activities of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its military arm, the New People's Army (NPA). But the new government was not only committed to the full restoration of democracy and human rights but opposed the military's methods for fighting the insurgents.

The transition from Marcos to Aquino was thus accompanied by a fundamental shift in policy toward the insurgency from one that was predominately military in character to one that was predominately non-military. President Aquino's effort to negotiate with the CPP is a significant experiment in dealing with an armed communist insurgency. It deserves careful study. It challenges the central assumption of conventional counterinsurgency strategy that the government must combine socio-economic and political measures with military operations against the insurgency. Instead, it suggests that a non-military approach may be more appropriate in the particular constellation of circumstances in the Philippines.

This study examines the issue of Aquino government policy toward the insurgency against the background of the NPA's strengths and weaknesses, the ideological and strategic debate within the communist movement, and the prospects for military counterinsurgency operations under the new leadership of the Philippine Armed Forces. It analyzes the conflict over counterinsurgency policy between the group of liberal-progressive civilians within the Aquino government and the military establishment. The study shows how the antagonism generated by divergent approaches to the problem has been both the cause and the result of a larger power struggle in the Philippines.

The Philippines presents a dramatic illustration of the generalization that communist insurgency is primarily a political problem rather than a military one. The insurgents cannot at present pose a direct military threat to the government; at the same time the NPA has attracted a mass base large enough to make it relatively immune to the tactics of counterinsurgency warfare. It is already too late to use military force successfully against the NPA. At the same time, the insurgency's ability to convince its followers that armed struggle is justified may be vulnerable if the government were to pursue a well-planned political approach against the insurgents. Hence, a policy of negotiating a ceasefire and political arrangements with the insurgent leadership could be the opening wedge for a successful political attempt to nullify the threat of armed struggle.

This case for a non-military approach is further strengthened by unexpected developments within the CPP. Whereas military victory was once a fixed ideological star for the party's leadership, many communist cadres at middle and higher levels are now seriously questioning it. The debate on the party's strategy may not be resolved soon, but the potential for change from within in response to external developments cannot be discounted.

The Aquino government has had to formulate policy in the context of heavy pressures from intragovernment critics. By dismissing Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile in November 1986, Aquino survived the initial test of strength with Enrile and his allies in the military. Aquino may now be in a better position to maneuver in the difficult period ahead. The struggle over policy toward counterinsurgency is far from over, however. In that struggle, the position of the U.S. may play a significant role. The final chapter of this study examines the evolution of U.S. policy toward the issue and suggests that it needs a thorough reassessment.

This monograph has benefitted from two visits to the Philippines, in January 1986 and August-September 1986, to do research on the insurgency and on government policies toward it. The author wishes to thank several church agencies which supported the earlier trip: the American Friends Service Committee; the Church of the Brethren Washington Office; the Mennonite Central Committee; the Women's Division; General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church; and the Washington Office of the Presbyterian Church. In addition a number of friends assisted my research in Manila in various ways: Heinz Kotte of the Asian Social Institute; Melinda Q. de Jesus, editor of Veritas; Marites Vitug of Business Day; Paulynn P. Sicam of The Manila Chronicle; P.N. Abinales and Alex Magno of the Third World Studies Center, University of the Philippines; Col. Ismael J. Villareal, Deputy J-3, GHQ, NAFF.

Ben Kerkvliet read the entire manuscript and made a number of helpful suggestions for revision as well as contributing his fine eye for editing.

CHAPTER 1

The Insurgency: Military and Political Capabilities

1. The NPA: Military Prospects and Problems

The New People's Army, led by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), has proven to be the notable exception to the generalization that communist insurgency is fading as a political factor in the ASEAN states. After years of patiently organizing the barrios of the countryside, the Philippine communist insurgency emerged in the early 1980s as a full-fledged popular movement, whose political-military activities had spread across most of the country's provinces and had won the support of a significant proportion of the population where it was actively organizing.

Over the 1975-1985 decade, the New People's Army developed from a small number that could be dismissed as a nuisance to a guerrilla army capable of taking the tactical offensive in some areas and straining to reach the stage of military equality with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). In March 1985, U.S. officials estimated that there were 10,000 to 12,000 armed guerrillas.¹ A year later, they doubled that estimate of NPA armed strength. In testimony before Congress in May 1986, the Defense Department offered an estimate of 22,500 armed NPA regulars and another 15,000 part-time guerrillas.²

Although the Philippine military increased its own estimate from 16,000 regulars in June to 23,000 in October, it continued to maintain that a large proportion of those guerrillas were not armed. It estimated that the armed NPA numbered only 11,200 in mid-1986, and increased the figure to 11,900 in October.³ The NPA itself suggests that it has 15,000 full-time guerrillas and 20,000 part-time.⁴ NPA guerrillas now operate in 59 of the country's 73 provinces.

This rapid military growth has been achieved, moreover, without any known military support from abroad.⁵ Both the Soviet Union and China cultivated good relations with the Marcos regime in the 1970s and 1980s, spurning the interests of the CPP and its armed struggle. The Philippine insurgency stands alone as a successful communist insurgency without any links to external allies. The absence of outside assistance has been both a strategic strength and a strategic weakness of the CPP/NPA insurgency.

An accurate assessment of the insurgency's present and future capabilities for threatening the Manila government must balance the movement's impressive achievements against its significant weaknesses and vulnerabilities. It must weigh both its military power and its political base, taking into account its dramatic

growth and the factors that tend to limit the pace of that growth. Finally, the whole question of the insurgency's capabilities must be considered in the context of the transition from the Marcos dictatorship to the popularly-elected, elite democratic regime of Corazon Aquino.

The NPA was launched in 1969 with only 60 guerrillas and 35 antiquated guns. Initially it tried to follow the Maoist pattern of establishing "stable base areas" in Northern Luzon. This strategy was abandoned, however, after a heavy concentration of AFP troops nearly destroyed the fledgling NPA.⁶ From then on, the NPA pursued a strategy of dispersion, organizing in as many widely separated provinces as possible. By 1973, it was already organizing in Mindanao and the Visayas.⁷

While the AFP was busy fighting the Moro National Liberation Front in Mindanao during the mid and late 1970s, the CPP/NPA cadres were quietly establishing political bases in the non-Muslim areas of Mindanao and on the islands of Panay, Samar, and Negros in the Visayas. For several years they avoided military operations altogether, giving the impression to the Marcos regime that the revolutionary organization was dormant.⁸ The primary objective during the late 1970s was to expand the number and size of "guerrilla fronts"--areas stretching across a number of municipalities and including CPP, NPA, and mass organizations. From 1976 to 1980, the number of fronts increased from 135 to 376, according to CPP figures.⁹

During the same period, the NPA was said to have increased its high-powered weapons by four-fold, leading party leaders to judge that the NPA had entered the "advance substage of the strategic defensive," meaning that it was capable of carrying out limited coordinated tactical offensives.¹⁰

At that point the NPA began a new phase of building up its forces. The CPP set a three-year goal of transforming the NPA from a network of small armed propaganda units into regular guerrilla units whose primary tasks were military rather than political. Most of the political organizing work was turned over to mass organizations, while the NPA turned its attention to planning and executing military operations. When the three year expansion program was finished, most of the armed units were regular guerrilla units.¹¹

With the completion of this phase of the military build-up CPP leaders began looking beyond the initial "defensive" stage of the struggle, laying plans to speed the beginning of the "strategic stalemate" stage of the conflict, in which the insurgents would have essential military parity with the AFP. In late 1984, an NPA commander revealed that the target for achieving the "strategic stalemate" was 1987.¹²

A key to reaching the stalemate phase of the war was the creation of company-sized guerrilla units out of platoons and squads. Mindanao took the lead from 1982 on in building "main regional guerrilla units" (MRGU) and "secondary regional guerrilla units" (SRGU). The new guerrilla formations usually had 60 to 100 fighters, and could be used to attack some fixed targets. More operations against AFP installations would be a consequence of the new formations. On the fifteenth anniversary of the NPA on March 29, 1984, the CPP monthly organ, Ang Bayan, indicated that setting up guerrilla companies was to be the main thrust of building the NPA.¹³

By 1984, several new developments were converging to enhance dramatically the military potential of the NPA: with its new guerrilla companies, the NPA could launch more attacks and capture much larger numbers of high-powered rifles; numerous well-trained military commanders and cadres were emerging from the ranks; and the infrastructure of the NPA was taking shape, with the addition of combat support units specializing in logistics, intelligence, communications, and medical work.¹⁴

In the "advanced substage" of the defensive stage, the AFP is incapable of destroying the NPA militarily, or even inflicting serious damage on it nationally. And AFP Chief of Staff General Fidel Ramos has admitted that, in some areas, the NPA has already achieved a "strategic stalemate."¹⁵ Tactically, the NPA has taken the initiative in most of its contacts with the AFP since 1983. The Philippine Ministry of Defense's own estimates, according to one press report, concede that the NPA initiated 63 percent of the contacts in the first five months of 1984, and 62 percent of those during the same period of 1985.¹⁶

The AFP, with 146,000 regulars, a 42,000-man paramilitary Philippine Constabulary (PC), and a local militia numbering from 56,000 to 70,000, appears on paper to have an overwhelming advantage in troop strength. As of early 1986, the Marcos regime was still referring to its 10 to 1 numerical superiority in regular troops. But the actual balance of combat forces is far less advantageous to the AFP. According to a Defense Ministry official, the AFP has between 40,000 and 50,000 troops in actual combat with the NPA at one time or another, thus giving it a superiority of 2 or 3 to 1, depending on which figure for NPA full-time guerrillas is used.¹⁷ That superiority is clearly inadequate even to "control" the insurgency, let alone eliminate it.

On the other hand, the NPA cannot threaten the government militarily, nor will it have the potential to do so any time in the foreseeable future. The insurgents can ambush AFP units, assassinate individual officials, and enter towns, usually to seize arms. During the first half of 1985, the NPA raided a total of 26 town halls for that purpose, using an average of 200 guerrillas in

each such attack.¹⁸ But it cannot hold a town or any other military objective for more than a few hours.

Although it can mobilize up to 500 men for an attack on a specific target, the NPA must immediately break up into small units as soon as the operation is over. It cannot maintain even combat companies, let alone battalions, permanently, because it cannot supply them and because they would be vulnerable to government attack.¹⁹ For the next year or two, at least, the leadership of the NPA must be concerned with trying to build up its own forces rather than trying to weaken those of the AFP.

The military growth of the NPA is constrained, moreover, by the difficulty of obtaining arms. A CPP publication has suggested that 25,000 automatic rifles would be sufficient to move the NPA into the "early substage" of the strategic stalemate stage.²⁰ Without any apparent source of external support, however, the NPA must rely essentially on capturing weapons and ammunition from the AFP or Civilian Home Defense Forces (CHDF) units, or purchasing them from individual soldiers or criminal syndicates.²¹ As of early 1984, a CPP/NPA publication admitted that the insurgents had only about 10,000 rifles for 20,000 guerrillas to share in rotation.²² The AFP's estimate for the number of firearms held by the NPA in 1984 was 8,380.²³ The NPA claimed that it captured 2,200 weapons between April 1984 and May 1985, for a total of about 12,000 at mid-year.²⁴ It would appear, however, that the NPA entered the Aquino era at best only half way to their goal of 25,000 arms.

Even if the NPA does eventually capture or purchase enough weapons to arm a 25,000-man guerrilla army, it would still have a serious ammunition problem. It is easier to capture a rifle than to get enough ammunition to use it. As a cadre of the CPP/NPA's National Democratic Front admitted in an interview, the NPA must conserve its ammunition carefully and tries to plan as many of its operations as possible so that not a single shot is fired.²⁵

Furthermore 25,000 armed guerrillas would still lack the firepower necessary to have military parity with the AFP. The leadership of the insurgency understands that, in order to achieve a military stalemate with the AFP, it would have to have the capability to carry out larger operations and also defend larger troop concentrations against an AFP offensive.²⁶ To do so, both AFP and communist sources agree, would require heavier and more improved weapons than what the NPA now has. An AFP analyst says the NPA needs recoilless rifles, anti-tank weapons, explosives, and mortars in order to achieve military parity with the AFP.²⁷

The relatively rapid acquisition of such heavy weapons could only take place with the help of an outside power, but the CPP/NPA know that they are unlikely to get it. The Soviet Union was eager to court Marcos and has remained indifferent or even hostile to the

NPA. Antonio Zumel, a CPP official who doubles as spokesman for the CPP/NPA political front organization, the National Democratic Front, noted that "there has been no offer of help from the Soviet Union." He added, "I think they are even helping the dictatorship, politically and economically."²⁸ The NPA has been lecturing mass base followers that the Soviet Union is "reactionary and imperialist"--hardly a political line based on the expectation of future Soviet assistance.²⁹

The NDF cadre insisted that the insurgents are "not pinning our hopes on outside help." He freely acknowledged, moreover, "We are effectively blockaded, and we don't have the capability to undertake large-scale operations to bring heavy war material into the country."³⁰ The insurgents vow to capture such weapons if necessary, but to do so would represent a far more formidable military problem and would present greater risks than the operations they have carried out to seize small arms.

Despite the rapid advances of the New Peoples Army in building guerrilla units and its high hopes for its continued buildup, therefore, the leadership of the Party publicly conceded at the end of the Marcos regime that the AFP still held a "big edge in the balance of forces militarily." That assessment took into account the relative number of men, quantity and quality of arms, and quality of communications and organization on both sides.³¹

2. Political Strength: the NPA's "Mass Base"

The NPA's military capabilities are not necessarily the best measure of its threat to the government. Its political organization and the popular support it can generate constitutes the insurgency's primary challenge to the existing political structure. Acting Chief of Staff Ramos admitted in 1985 that "six-sevenths of the iceberg [lies] beneath the surface. That's what sinks ships."³²

Some officials of the AFP and the Ministry of Defense believe military planners have in the past made the mistake of overemphasizing the importance of the NPA's armed strength and underestimating the importance of its rapidly expanding "mass base" and the political arm of the insurgency, the National Democratic Front.³³ With sufficient political support from its mass base, combined with widespread indifference on the part of the rest of the population, the insurgents could seize power through a combination of political and military actions, despite the fact that the AFP is militarily stronger.

The size of the NPA's mass base is a politically sensitive and controversial question. There has been an understandable tendency by AFP officials to downplay its numerical strength. Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Armitage suggested in November 1985

that as many as five million people "might be controlled by the CPP and as many as five million more would be influenced by the CPP."³⁴ Later he said a figure of five million would be a good "ballpark figure" for the NPA's "mass base."³⁵

Based on available evidence, the five million figure appears to be a realistic estimate. In mid-1986, the AFP was reporting to its own officials that 18 percent, or 7,631 of the nation's 41,615 rural barrios (also called the barangays) were either "influenced" or "infiltrated."³⁶ "Influenced" is the term used when fifty percent of the population are sympathetic to the NPA; "infiltrated" indicates that from thirty to fifty percent of the population are sympathetic.³⁷ Given the observable trends, moreover, the AFP estimated that the number of "influenced" or "infiltrated" barrios would increase to 22 percent by the end of 1986.³⁸

Given the desire of most AFP commanders to portray the situation in their sectors as under control, however, even this estimate is almost certainly too low.³⁹ In late 1983 Ramos was quoted as saying that a total of 20 percent of the barangays were either "controlled or infiltrated" by the NPA, which would appear to indicate a higher figure for "influenced" and "infiltrated" barangays than the official estimate of nearly three years later.⁴⁰ But there is a general consensus that CPP/NPA organization in the barangays has grown significantly both in geographical scope and in political appeal during the 1983-1986 period.

This growth in the NPA influence and control is the result of a politicization of a large proportion of the population of the barangay. Before a party organization is set up in a particular barangay, the CPP/NPA organizers go through a carefully planned process of several phases. First, a small team, usually made up of activists from an adjoining barrio, undertake an investigation to identify the key issues as well as those individuals who would make effective, credible activists to carry on the next phase. Then the informal group of activists establishes an "organizing committee" (OC) of ten to fifteen people representing all sectors of the barrio, or in some areas committees for each sector, such as women, youth, and fishermen.

Only after this organizing committee has called mass meetings to discuss the main problems in the community and what can be done about them does it start organizations for each sectoral grouping—farmers, women and youth. At the same time, a Communist Party branch is also organized in the barrio, and the OC becomes a Barrio Revolutionary Committee and takes on government functions, with subcommittees for such problems as health and production.⁴¹ By this time, there is already a strong mass base in the barangay. CPP/NPA itself claims that it has de facto governments in some 10,000 barangays, or approximately 25 percent of the total.⁴²

If the figure of 25 percent of the the barangays either "influenced" or "infiltrated" is accepted, we can make some conservative calculations about the size of the NPA's mass base. It can be assumed that in "influenced" barangays the CPP/NPA, which by definition have the support of more than half of the population, on the average about 60 percent of the population support the NPA.⁴³ It can also be assumed that in "infiltrated" barangays (30 to 50 percent mass base by definition), the average level of support is 40 percent. Assuming also that there are half as many "influenced" barangays as there are "infiltrated" ones and that those barangays are typical of all rural barangays in the country in population, the "mass base" of the NPA in there two categories of rural barangays alone would be about 4.1 million people.⁴⁴

This estimate of 4.1 million would also have to be increased, however, to take into account both the "targeted" barangays (those in which ten percent of the population supports the insurgents) and the urban supporters of the NPA and its political arm the National Democratic Front. There are no published estimates for the "targeted" barangays, but even if only ten percent of the rural barangays are in this category, it would add another 500,000 to 600,000 to the total.

The insurgents' urban mass base is more difficult to measure. The CPP is known to have significant influence in recent years in some urban squatter districts, in some labor unions, and among some students. The population of the largely squatter district of Agdao in Davao City, Mindanao, is known to be very well-organized by the CPP, and approximately 70 percent of the residents are believed to be active supporters of the CPP/NPA.⁴⁵ In 1984, the NDF claimed predominant influence in 350 factories and 300 schools.⁴⁶

As early as 1981, the communist-controlled NDF was claiming that its urban mass base was four million people.⁴⁷ That estimate certainly greatly exaggerated the number of people who have been immediately involved in CPP/NDF-directed activities. The events of February 1986 demonstrated clearly that the vast majority of the urban population who are prepared to go to the streets to protest are not necessarily supporting armed insurgency. A few hundred thousand at most might be added to the "mass base" from urban areas. Nevertheless, the supporters in "targeted" barrios and in urban areas probably brings the total to over 5 million people.

The NPA mass base is a reflection of the overall political and socio-economic environment of the insurgency. It cannot help but be influenced by major political changes like the replacement of the Marcos regime by the popular elected government of Corazon Aquino. Just how much impact the Aquino government has had on the mass base, however, is unclear. A Defense Ministry official asserted in an August 1986 interview that the NPA mass base had diminished after the ouster of Marcos, but the only evidence he could offer was that there were "more reports from civilians of citings of NPA" and more

resistance to NPA taxation.⁴⁸ These indicators apparently did not cause the AFP to revise its estimate of CPP/NPA influence in the barangays. What seems more likely is that many people who were sympathetic to the insurgents adopted a wait and see attitude toward the government, hoping that it would bring about real changes.

The success of the CPP/NPA organization in building a mass base of at least five million people has far-reaching implications for the problem of counterinsurgency. The AFP claimed that it killed 2,071 NPA guerrillas in 1985.⁴⁹ (Some U.S. intelligence analysts suggest that the actual total was probably much lower.) Even if the AFP could double or triple the number of NPA killed per year, however, it is doubtful that it would have any appreciable impact on the insurgency. The pool of men between 15 and 34 years old that the NPA has available through its mass base to replace casualties is now estimated by military intelligence at nearly 2 million. The same intelligence report suggests that, "for every man killed in a barangay, there is a large extended family which would be angered."⁵⁰ Since the disparity in numbers between the size of the insurgent army and its popular base is so enormous, the NPA cannot be controlled, much less eliminated, by military force.

The extent of the NPA mass base also imposes practical dilemmas on the AFP. Counterinsurgency operations normally assume that people under insurgent political control cooperate because of coercion, intimidation, or simply superior political organization on the part of the insurgents. But if the "mass base" is participating in the insurgency because of conscious political choice, efforts to separate these people from the political organization through the usual counterinsurgency methods are likely to spur more hostility and greater support for the insurgents. It is important, therefore, to inquire into the reasons for the growth of NPA military strength as well as their mass base in different parts of the country.

Notes for Chapter 1

1. Larry Niksch, Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the Philippines, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, July 1, 1985, p. 36.
2. Statements of John C. Monjo, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and Richard L. Armitage, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, before the Subcommittee on East Asia and Pacific Affairs, Committee of Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, May 15, 1986.
3. Manila Bulletin, June 3, 1986; AFP dispatch, October 31, 1986, FBIS, October 31, 1986, p. P4.
4. Liberation, April-May, 1986, quoted in Philippine Daily Inquirer, June 1, 1986. Liberation is a publication of the National Democratic Front, underground political arm of the CPP.
5. What few arms shipments from abroad have been intercepted by the Philippine armed forces in recent years have been "generally insignificant" and "appeared to have been direct purchases from international gunrunners rather than outright grants from any foreign source." Republic of the Philippines, The Communist Insurgency in the Philippines, (Manila, 1985), p. 11. The Armed Forces of the Philippines charged in 1985 that the NDF had collected funds from "international agencies" in Western Europe for ostensible "social welfare projects" which had been used to purchase weapons. See Times Journal, August 26, 1985. U.S. officials have said that the "bulk of foreign funding" for the insurgent movement comes from church groups, labor unions, and other non-communist organizations in Western Europe. The Washington Post, October 18, 1986.
6. Francisco Nemenzo, "Rectification Process in the Philippine Communist Movement," in Lim Joo Jock and S. Vani, eds., Armed Communist Movements in Southeast Asia (Hampshire, England: Gower, 1984), p. 90; Joel Rocamora, "The Rural Resistance," Southeast Asia Chronicle, no. 62, June-July 1978, p.14.
7. Rocamora, loc. cit.
8. Nemenzo, "Rectification Process," p. 92.
9. Ang Bayan, December 1983, p. 2.
10. Ibid.

11. "Armed Struggle Scales Up," Liberation, March 1984, pp. 5,8.
12. Statement by an NPA commander in Western Samar, quoted in Christian Science Monitor, January 2, 1985.
13. "Armed Struggle Scales Up," p. 8.
14. Ibid.
15. The Manila Evening Post, May 3, 1986.
16. These statistics were said to be from a Ministry of National Defense briefing paper. See Business Day, July 16, 1985. In a meeting with Senator John Kerry in Manila of April 10, 1985, Minister of Defense Enrile said the NPA had taken the initiative in 70 percent of the contacts with the AFP in 1984 but claimed that the AFP had initiated 60 percent of the contacts in 1985.
17. Interview with Ministry of Defense official, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, August 21, 1986.
18. Ministry of National Defense briefing paper, cited in Business Day, July 16, 1985.
19. Niksch, Insurgency and Counterinsurgency, p. 38.
20. Ibid.
21. There are no estimates available on the number of arms the NPA has acquired through purchase from individuals or criminal syndicates nationwide. However, Col. Isagani de los Santos, Commander of the Task Force Sugarland in Negros Occidental, told me that he estimates that 10 to 15 percent of the NPA's weapons in Negros are acquired from criminal organizations. He also conceded that soldiers under his command "seldom" turn in captured arms, preferring to keep them for sale. Interview, Bacolod, Negros Occidental, January 23, 1986.
22. Liberation, February, 1984, p. 19.
23. "The National Security Situation," AFP briefing paper for Philippine government officials, July 2, 1986.
24. Pulang Bandila (Red Flag), no. 1, 1985, cited in Hong Kong AFP dispatch, July 15, 1985. Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Asia Pacific Daily Report, (FBIS) July 16, 1985, p. 5. Pulang Bandila is the bimonthly organ of the NPA.

25. Interview with a cadre of the Central Secretariat of the National Democratic Front, Manila, January 24, 1986. In a typical operation in which arms were seized from security personnel without a shot being fired, 60 armed NPA, most of them in fatigue uniforms, took six carbines and several rounds of ammunition from a CHDF unit in a town in Bataan Province, seized three hostages to cover their escape, then released the hostages unharmed. See Ang Pahayagang Malaya, January 17, 1986.
26. Interview with a cadre of the Central Secretariat of the National Democratic Front, Manila, January 24, 1986.
27. Interview with a Defense Ministry Official, January 12, 1986.
28. Interview in Business Day, November 20, 1985.
29. A lecture notebook used by the NPA in Davao City used this language, apparently as recently as 1986. Christian Science Monitor, July 28, 1986.
30. Interview with NDF cadre.
31. Zumel interview, Business Day, November 20, 1985.
32. Newsweek, April 22, 1985, p.38.
33. See the comments of Deputy Minister of Defense Jose M. Crisol, quoted in Business Day, December 17, 1985.
34. Recent Events in the Philippines, Fall 1985, Hearings and Markup before the Committee on Foreign Affairs and its Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, House of Representatives, 99th Congress, First Session, November 12 and 13, 1985, p.76. Armitage did not explain how he distinguished between "controlled" and "influenced," but indicated that the figures were not based on "just geography."
35. Testimony before the House Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, May 15, 1986.
36. "The National Security Situation." AFP Chief of Staff Ramos had already made this estimate public, saying that the NPA exercised "varying degrees of influence" in about 18 percent of the nation's barangays. (PNA, June 20, 1986, FBIS, APDR, June 20, 1986, p. P6.
37. Niksch, Insurgency and Counterinsurgency, fn. 24, p. 27. Col. Bumanglag, Intelligence officer at the Regional Unified Command headquarters of Region 11 provided a similar classification. Interview, Davao City, January 17, 1986.

38. "The National Security Situation."
39. In Negros Occidental province, where support for the NPA has been growing with astonishing rapidity and much of the province is considered sympathetic to the insurgents, the commander of the AFP's "Task Force Sugarland" claimed that only 1 percent of the barangays were actually "Communist-influenced" and another 3 percent "infiltrated." Interview with Col. Isagani de los Santos, Bacolod, January 23, 1986.
40. The Age (Melbourne), September 26, 1983.
41. Interview with NDF secretariat cadre. For similar accounts of the organizing process see The Communist Insurgency in the Philippines, pp. 19-21; Niksch, Insurgency and Counterinsurgency, pp. 30-31.
42. We Forum (Quezon City), December 31-January 6, 1986, quoting Liberation, March-April 1985 issue.
43. One government official in Mindanao reported in 1985 that the "typical" barangay in his province has a mass base consisting of 60 percent of the population, of which half are "active participants" in military units or mass organizations. Niksch, Insurgency and Counterinsurgency, p. 35.
44. These figures are based on a population of 55 million people, of which 63 percent is rural. See IBON Facts & Figures (Manila), no. 139, May 31, 1984, p.8.
45. Interview with a well-informed source in Davao City, January 17, 1986. A journalist in Davao told the author that the NPA claimed 70 percent of the Agdao population as its "mass base" and agreed that it was a credible estimate.
46. Ang Bayan, December, 1984, cited in We Forum, December 31, 1985-January 6, 1986.
47. Joel Rocamora, "Turning Point: The NDF Takes the Lead," Southeast Asia Chronicle, no. 83, April 1982, p. 3.
48. Interview, Camp Aguinaldo, August 21, 1986.46.
49. Business Day, December 24, 1985.
50. The Washington Times, November 28, 1986.

CHAPTER 2

Local Grievances and the Rise of the NPA

Poverty, unemployment, and inadequate health and other public services are all part of the socio-economic setting in which the New People's Army has flourished during the past decade. Such overall conditions, and the failure of the Marcos government to do anything about them, have undoubtedly contributed to the credibility of the communist analysis of Philippine society. But they do not necessarily prompt the rural poor to join the armed struggle or to become active supporters of the NPA.

What usually moves the rural poor to make a political choice in favor of the NPA, it appears, is the personal experience of an injustice at the hands of the economic elite, the government, or the military, which farmers and agricultural workers find cannot be redressed through government channels. The regional Commander of the Philippine Constabulary in Region 11 under Marcos, Brig. General Dionisio Tan Gatue, underlined the importance of landgrabbing and military abuses as the twin causes of NPA growth. "I often question captured NPA guerrillas and ask them why they joined," he said in 1984. "They tell me that either the army killed their brothers or sisters or the government took their land."¹

There is evidence linking landgrabbing and the rise of the NPA in widely separated areas. Negros Occidental, Northeast Mindanao, and Northern Luzon have all experienced significant landgrabbing either by national or local elites or by multinational corporations. Attempts by the victims to protest by legitimate means, moreover, have brought government repression.

1. Landgrabbing and the NPA

The primary NPA mass base in Negros Occidental has long been in the southern part of the province called the CHICKS region (so-called because of the first letters of the names of the six municipalities that it covers). The population of the area consisted primarily of pioneer farmers who had settled on previously uncultivated land in its hills and plains. According to a longtime observer, these settlers found in the late 1960s and early 1970s that the land they had been farming for years was being claimed by wealthy people with connections in the government Bureau of Lands.² Although the settlers themselves had usually filed claims, Bureau officials had ignored them and were now helping the wealthy obtain "pasture leases" and even grabbing the land for themselves.

By the early 1970s instances of landgrabbing were so numerous that the Diocese of Bacolod set up a legal assistance project to

help the settlers trying to hold on to their land. Those who tried to protect their legal right to the land by refusing orders to vacate were often jailed on trumped-up charges. While the victim was in jail, unable to post bond, the usurper was able to gain physical control of the land.

By 1976 some of the settlers in the area began to join the NPA. But the communists did not yet have a solid organization in the area. The Catholic Church was also organizing Basic Christian Communities (BCCs), aimed in part at encouraging the farmers to assert their political and economic rights. As a result of the effective organization of the barrios by the BCCs, barrio captains and mayors felt politically threatened, especially when the BCCs protested against their abuses.

The response of the municipal mayor of Kabankalan, a wealthy sugar plantation owner and a client of Marcos's crony Roberto Benedicto, was to strike back at those whom he considered to be subversives. By 1977 local military forces began arresting not only suspected NPA agents but also organizers of the BCC movement. In 1980 the Constabulary's Long Range Patrol troops, who had been hardened by years of fighting Muslim insurgents in Mindanao, tortured to death seven peasants belonging to the Christian Community at the mayor's hacienda. A week later they abducted and murdered one of the most popular local leaders of the BCC movement, who had already been arrested three times by local officials for opposing landgrabbing by the elite.³

After that people in the BCCs in Kabankalan municipality organized a secret security system in which every house in the barrio had a bamboo gong to warn of the approach of any military or police personnel. Two years later, the mayor, indicted for the murder of the seven peasants but avoiding trial by legal maneuvers and free on bail, was assassinated by the NPA.⁴ The Christian Communities began to see the NPA as an effective ally against the military and oppressive barrio officials. Since then, barrio captains who were notorious with the population have either pulled out of the barrio completely or have changed their allegiance. The BCCs continued to function in the area, but coexisted with the NPA. People who have decided to join the NPA in the armed struggle are respected by BCC members, even if they do not make the same choice. By the mid-1980s the CHICKS area was regarded by the military as a virtual NPA "liberated zone"—a place that the AFP could not enter without risking high casualties.⁵

Mindanao is the second largest island in the Philippines, with a total land area of 10.2 million hectares, or one third of the country's total land area and nearly one-fourth of its population. It was also the main focus of the Marcos regime's policy of shifting the country's agricultural base from food crops to cash crops for export. That strategy led to the expansion of agribusiness firms,

usually foreign-controlled, into land previously farmed by smallholders. Such corporations as Dole, Del Monte, and Guthrie acquired tracts of land much larger than what would have been allowed by the Philippine Constitution. They did this in partnership with the government's National Development Corporation. Transnational corporations now control an estimated 60 percent of Mindanao land that can be bought or sold.⁶

Much of that land was acquired from farmers by promises of more income that frequently were not kept. But there have also been many cases of using influence over the government bureaucracy to obtain property already cultivated by settler farmers. And there has been widespread use of coercion against those who resist the efforts of agribusiness or government to acquire their land. Communist officials themselves regard grievances over land as the main reason for their success in Mindanao. "Wholesale landgrabbing has politicized Mindanao by leaps and bounds, way ahead of Luzon," one NPA official observed in 1985.⁷

In Bukidnon province in Mindanao, Philippine Packing Company (PPC), Del Monte's local affiliate, began to expand its landholdings into areas of Sumilao municipality where farmers had been cultivating for years. Most farmers did not yet have land titles, despite repeated applications to the Bureau of Lands. Instead, land speculators got titles from the Bureau and sold them to PPC. PPC then began planting pineapples, despite the farmers' protests and legal complaints.

In cases where the titles were already clear but owners refused to lease, PPC pressured them. For example, the company allowed cattle to wreck these farmers' crops. Those with titles who agreed to lease the land to PPC were pressured into signing complicated agreements under which they unwittingly gave the company complete control of the land.⁸ A survey of Sumilao municipality in 1984 showed that most of those who had leased to the company felt that they had been treated unfairly and that the company's entrance had resulted in a deterioration in their livelihood.⁹

The landgrabbing issue has been important to the NPA's recruitment and mass base organizing, even in areas where it has not yet taken place, because of popular knowledge of landgrabbing in nearby municipalities or adjacent provinces and of the NPA's reputation for defending farmers' interests against expropriation.¹⁰ A good example is the municipality of Laac in Davao del Norte. By 1981 the NPA had established a strong organization in more than half the barangays in the municipality, as indicated by the fact that in those barangays not a single person participated in that year's presidential elections.¹¹ A major reason for supporting the insurgents in Laac was that most people lacked clear title to their land and feared that landgrabbing which had occurred in nearby municipalities would be repeated there.¹²

Land issues also continued to strengthen the CPP/NPA mass base in Laac. After the government had forcibly relocated the villagers, farmers were told by officials of the Bureau of Forest Development that their land had been classified as "forest," even though no trees were growing there, and that therefore they could not secure ownership titles to their land. Most of the municipality, they were told, was to become part of a new program under which the land would be planted with tree species such as ipil-ipil and rubber. They could choose to plant the designated tree crops under a 25-year "Stewardship Certificate" and receive a government loan or abandon the land. Many residents were skeptical about promises of favorable prices for wood and rubber that they would produce and feared that they would not be able to produce food for their families. While the tree-planting program had not been implemented when the Marcos regime fell, the government had not withdrawn it.¹³

Landgrabbing has also been the major grievance impelling ethnic minorities in the Philippines to support the NPA. One group victimized was the Ata-Manobo tribe in the area where North Cotabato, Bukidnon, Davao Del Norte and Davao City meet. Marcos's associate Antonio Floirendo wanted some of the tribe's land to expand his banana plantation in 1979. When many of the tribespeople refused to sell, Floirendo's private security forces along with personnel of the government's paramilitary organization for conflicts involving tribal peoples, PANAMIN, began to kill resisters, thus creating a virtual "no man's land" in the area.¹⁴

Before Floirendo's landgrabbing took place, the Ata-Manobo regarded all lowlanders as the enemy and had killed the first NPA soldiers who came through their community because they were strangers. When the NPA returned in 1979-80, the guerrillas had learned to ask to meet the tribal chief first. This time they discussed the landgrabbing issue with the chief and promised to help the tribesmen prevent or repel attacks by the forces of Floirendo and PANAMIN. Soon the Ata-Manobo chief was calling the NPA "soldiers of the people" and allowing the NPA to speak with tribal members. Some of the young people have joined the NPA guerrilla forces.

The seizure of private property by the government for infrastructure projects has contributed to the growth of the NPA among lowland Filipinos as well. In Leyte, for example, the government expropriated land for a geothermal plant, a building, and other projects. Officials promised the victims both just compensation and resettlement to a well-developed site. But the compensation was slow in coming and far less than market value, and the resettlement sites lacked bare essentials. When farmers protested the injustice, the government accused them of being communist sympathizers. Some victims joined the NPA in the early 1980s and later became province leaders in the organization.¹⁵

In the case of the tribal minorities of the Cordillera region of Northern Luzon, cooperation with the NPA was prompted by the Marcos regime's decision after declaring Martial Law to exploit land and resources of the region in order to obtain timber, minerals, and hydro-electric power. Eighty percent of the approximately one million residents of the Cordillera region are ethnic minorities, whose interests were ignored by the government and its allies in the private sector.

In 1974 Marcos approved the construction of the Chico River Basin Hydro-Electric Project, which would require the relocation of up to 100,000 people and the flooding of more than 6,000 acres of rice land, burial grounds and villages of the Bontoc and Kalinga peoples. The Kalingas and Bontocs resisted the dams, at first by non-violent means. The NPA offered military assistance against the government troops guarding the dam project and suppressing tribal resistance, but were turned down. As the government's military presence grew, however, the NPA was gradually accepted as allies by more Kalingas. What cemented the alliance was the killing by the AFP of a senior Bontoc leader of the movement against the dam.¹⁶ By 1985, according to a leading independent Bontoc, some 80 to 95 percent of the NPA guerrillas in the Cordilleras were natives of the region.¹⁷

2. Tenancy and Labor Inequalities

The NPA has also taken advantage of inequities in the land tenure system. The Marcos government promised land reform that would make tenant farmers owners over time through an amortization plan. But it excluded sugar and coconut lands and limited its application on corn and rice land to holdings of 7 hectares or more, thus excluding fifty to sixty percent of the tenants.¹⁸ High prices for land, high amortization rates, and the high cost of agriculture inputs made it impossible for most of the potential owners to pay the land rent.¹⁹ Moreover, landlords can still coerce tenants not to file for land reform because the owners control water, credit markets, and supplies of inputs.²⁰ As a result only 2,352 tenants had received ownership certificates for land by 1982.²¹

A recent study shows that the percentage of farm area that is owner-operated actually declined between 1971 and 1980, while the percentage under either leasehold or share tenancy increased. Moreover for coconut land, which is about thirty percent of the crop area, the percentage of owner-operated farms declined from 81.1 percent to 73.8 percent, while those under share and leasehold tenancy increased from 14.8 percent to 24.9 percent.²² Share tenants on rice land normally pay 45 to 50 percent of the crop to the landlord, while leaseholders pay about half that much.²³ On coconut land, the landlords' share of the crop ranges from one third to more than one half.²⁴

The inequitable land tenure system is often cited by guerrillas as a major reason for joining the NPA. The CPP/NPA has responded by carrying out land reform, both in the form of land redistribution and rent reduction. According to a member of the Executive Committee of the Regional Party Committee for Samar, some land was confiscated and parcelled out in five acre lots to farmers. In addition to rent reduction, the insurgents have also enforced a change in the practice of sharing the costs of agricultural inputs between landlord and tenant. Whereas before they shared the burden of the inputs equally, the share of the tenant was reduced to 25 percent under the CPP/NPA land reform.²⁵

In Albay province of the Bicol region, where coconuts are the predominant crop, the NPA has won adherents from 1982 on by carrying out its own land rent reductions. It forced landlords to reduce their share of the coconut production to one-third, and thus increased the tenants' share by 33 percent. The significant increase in income to the tenant family typically means that it can move from a dirt floor thatch hut to a larger concrete house with a cement floor.²⁶

Farmers in Central Luzon have similarly won reductions in rent from the landlord with the help of the NPA. A supporter of the NPA explained the process as follows: "In the old days the landlord used to walk through the barrio to collect rents--[well] over 50 percent of our crop. As the struggle heated up, he only came with a [Constabulary] patrol. Then the NPA ambushed the [Constabulary] and killed eight of their men. At that point he decided to lower the land rent. He won't come into the barrio at all."²⁷ The intelligence officer for Region 11 in Mindanao reports that the NPA helped tenants increase their share of the production, while asking for a contribution in return.²⁸

In Negros Occidental, the main sugar-growing region in the Philippines, most popular support for the NPA has been the result of years of denial of sugar workers' rights by the plantation owners, massive unemployment in the industry, and the collapse of social services for workers. During the 1960s and 1970s labor union organizations tried to mitigate the exploitation and oppression of sugar workers by establishing independent unions, but they were systematically frustrated by the hacienda owners. In one case, the son of a hacienda owner forced at gunpoint members of the newly formed National Federation of Sugar Workers to sign a document retracting their union membership.²⁹

When Martial Law was declared, the Constabulary was given arbitrary authority to resolve union disputes. They used it to raid the Catholic Social Action Office in Bacolod, which had supported unionizing efforts, with the intention of arresting its director, Fr. Luis Jalondoni. Jalondoni went underground, linked up with NPA organizers, and eventually fled to Holland to become the communist movement's leading spokesman abroad.³⁰

For years workers were deliberately paid less than the minimum wage and threatened with dismissal if they complained.³¹ The Catholic Church and the NFSW were powerless to compel the owners to obey the law. Only 80,000 out of a total of some 450,000 sugar workers were ever organized in independent unions. In the final years of the Marcos regime, repression of union organizers became even heavier. In 1984 and 1985 nine organizers of the NFSW were murdered or disappeared.³²

In the early 1980s hacienda owners began to mechanize their plantations, eliminating the jobs of a large percentage of the sugar workers, especially casual workers. Since most of the casual work was done by the wives and children of full-time sugar workers, it reduced the families' meager income by nearly fifty percent. It was the beginning of a social and economic crisis, which was accompanied by more serious malnutrition. But the Marcos regime was unwilling to take action because the hacienda owners, including cronies of the President, were denying that there was a crisis.³³

Finally, in 1984-1985, the world sugar market collapsed and unemployment rose to about 300,000 of the 450,000 sugar workers. Demands by NFSW for a program of turning over idle land to sugar workers to be farmed collectively for cash or subsistence crops has been spurned by the hacienda owners.³⁴ Hunger worsened; some public school teachers reported in early 1985 that 100 percent of their students were malnourished.³⁵

In this atmosphere of increasing desperation and radicalization, the NPA has attracted a very large following among sugar workers. CPP cadres conducted teach-ins at the haciendas, and the NFSW views the NPA as supporting their struggle.³⁶ One organization of planters has acknowledged that the idea of revolution "is already firmly implanted in the minds of the helpless majority."³⁷ Bishop Antonio Fortich of the Diocese of Bacolod estimates that the NPA has as many as 300,000 supporters in Negros alone.³⁸

Significantly, the insurgency has had relatively less success in Central Luzon where private landgrabbing and the intrusion of foreign agribusiness, logging, and mining enterprises were not socio-economic factors in the 1970s, and where the tenancy reforms of the Marcos regime at least gave tenants more security. CPP/NPA members reported in 1979 that efforts to gain support in Central Luzon had failed in large part because of the absence of serious complaints about the land tenure system.³⁹

3. Military Abuses and NPA Violence

While injustices related to land and labor have been the single most important source of initial support for the NPA in the rural barangays, military abuses committed by AFP personnel and their

proxies against civilians have increased the size of mass base and brought support from many who would not otherwise identify themselves with armed struggle. The response of the AFP to the rapid growth of the NPA political base and military activities in the late 1970s and early 1980s was the militarization of large areas of Mindanao, the Visayas, and Northern Luzon. The military tended in most cases to treat anyone who was believed to have contact with the NPA as part of the CPP/NPA organization, which meant that a very large number of people were subject to harrassment, threats, arrest, torture, and "salvaging" (arbitrary killing).

Suspected NPA or supporters have frequently been abducted by military units, then tortured and murdered, and their mutilated bodies later dumped along a road. Some 1,900 such "salvagings" were documented by human rights activists between 1977 and 1984, but it is believed that many cases were never reported because of fear of AFP reprisals or lack of contact with human rights organizations.⁴⁰ In addition to salvagings and torture by the regular army, the PC, and CHDF units, terror has been spread throughout Mindanao by paramilitary units formed by the AFP from fanatical religious sects.⁴¹ These religious sects are known and feared not only for their murder of those who oppose the military but in many cases for ritual mutilation and cannibalism.⁴²

Militarization and counterinsurgency operations have also spawned a host of petty abuses and corruptions: the stealing of chickens and pigs by patrolling troops, violence and criminality by drunken CHDF personnel, extortion of businessmen and ordinary citizens by soldiers, and corrupt links between local commanders and criminal syndicates, powerful businessmen, or political figures. In Negros and parts of Mindanao, CHDF units have often been closely identified with big landowners and businessmen.⁴³

Guerrillas and observers who do not support the NPA agree that militarization and human rights abuses have become the main cause of recruitment and mass base support for the insurgents. Guerrillas in Samar told a Philippine journalist that military abuses were the primary reason they joined the NPA.⁴⁴ The second-ranking NPA officer in Negros Occidental actually joined the NPA as a university student in 1972, according to his brother, because he was beaten by soldiers for no reason.⁴⁵

Francisco Claver, who was Bishop of Malaybalay in Mindanao from 1969 to 1984, recalls that militarization and military abuses were the primary issue exploited by the NPA in his diocese.⁴⁶ Foreign priests interviewed in Region 11 say that military abuses are now the main source of anti-government, pro-NPA sentiment in the Davao area.⁴⁷ Bishop Fortich of Negros maintains that most of the NPA recruits in Negros "are there not because of ideology but because they have grievances against the military."⁴⁸

While in the late 1970s and early 1980s barangays under the NPA influence tended to be more remote from government military presence, a priest working in Mizamis Oriental notes that the NPA is now growing fastest in areas where there is the greatest AFP presence. He observes that the NPA has gained control over barrios right along main roads, where it had only limited influence before, because of militarization and its attendant abuses.⁴⁹

The classic case of how wanton killings and mistreatment of civilians pushes an entire barangay—or even a much larger area—toward commitment to the NPA cause is the killing in 1984 of seven youths by a company of the AFP's 4th Infantry Division near Tungao, Butuan City, Mindanao.⁵⁰ The youths were taken into custody on their way to a dance, taken away for interrogation, and never heard from again. Their bodies were later found near the detachment's headquarters. Those supporting the NPA suddenly went from a minority to decisive majority of the village.

Finally, the NPA has gained from the Philippine government's ineptitude in protecting citizens from common criminals and thugs and from its own ability to respond quickly and decisively to such crime. A former public schoolteacher recalls how cattle rustlers dominated the barrio where she taught in Bataan until the NPA arrived; after two warnings, they ambushed the gang and forced it to break up. In another barrio in Pampanga where she taught, two bank robbers and extortionists who had terrorized the population were captured and executed by the NPA after the people asked that they be punished.⁵¹ In Albay, coconut farmers were constantly raided by robbers yet could never get help from the police. The NPA earned their respect—and presumably their support—by putting a stop to the raids.⁵²

The murder of government officials or agents by "sparrow" units has been an important element in NPA political-military strategy. According to Philippine government figures, the NPA assassinated 439 local government officials from 1981 through July 1985. Fifty-nine percent of those killed were barangay captains, while 24 percent were barangay councilmen. The rest were municipal mayors, vice-mayors, and councilmen.⁵³ The selective assassination of particularly unpopular mayors, barangay captains, police officials and other government figures is sometimes aimed at winning the support of the barangay residents, as was the case in the killing of the Mayor of Kabankalan, Negros Occidental. Typically, however, such killings take place after the NPA has built its mass base already on the basis of local socio-economic issues and military abuses.

Most victims of the NPA killings appear to be agents that the military planted to identify NPA guerrillas and cadres.⁵⁴ Independent observers in Davao agree that there is usually a

thorough investigation of an individual suspected of acting as a government informer before any accusation is made. One priest with long experience in Davao City noted that he has known three people who were investigated by the CPP/NPA organization; two were cleared; the third was definitely identified as an informer.⁵⁵ According to a Davao journalist, even after a person has been identified as an informer, he or she is not automatically executed. Instead, the NPA "negotiate" with the person on what he must do to reform. "The neighborhood will be able to tell whether he's reforming or not," says the journalist. "The people will tell who are the bad elements."⁵⁶

In an increasing number of cases, however, the system of control over the use of violence against individuals has not worked. Because the growth of the NPA as well as mass organizations in 1980-1981 and again between 1983-1985 was so rapid and indiscriminate, the quality of NPA personnel has sharply declined and ideological training was neglected.⁵⁷ In the Butuan City area of Northeastern Mindanao, there have been a number of executions without the three prior warnings, and NPA cadres have sometimes pressured barrio residents to cooperate.⁵⁸

In Davao City, according to independent sources, there was popular criticism of the NPA in 1984 when some people were wrongly accused of being informers and killed.⁵⁹ People who were sympathetic to the NPA but not solidly committed also complained that there were too many killings, and at community meetings people discussed the issue. But while they were angry at those responsible and critical of the NPA, they did not change their fundamental view of the conflict. People who were sympathetic to the NPA noted that the military's killings were on a wider scale and more indiscriminate. Moreover, most people blamed the government for planting so many informers. In the CPP/NPA stronghold of Agdao, people were publicly requesting that the AFP withdraw its informers from the district so that there would be no more killing.⁶⁰

A more serious source of popular alienation from the CPP/NPA, has been the AFP's program of infiltrating the insurgent organization with agents whose mission is not only gathering intelligence on its operations but discrediting the revolutionaries.⁶¹ Over the years, the government has apparently placed thousands of "deep penetration agents" (DPAs) into the ranks of the CPP and the NPA with orders to earn the trust of their superiors and then carry out actions such as encouraging gambling, prostitution, stealing, destroying property, or even killing innocent civilians. Some of the DPAs, whom the CPP/NPA soon labeled "zombies," managed to work their way into the higher echelons of party and military organs.

One of the tactics used by the "zombies" was the killing of

policemen or informers without going through normal procedures. Repeated indiscriminate killings, along with other actions violating NPA discipline, caused many former or potential mass base people to condemn the NPA as "no different from the AFP." The AFP sometimes took advantage of this alienation by sending troops to protect the population from the ostensible NPA abuses.

The program began to unravel in 1985. The confession of a well-placed "zombie" in the Mindanao party organization led to the discovery of hundreds of others. After an intensive, nationwide investigation of the entire CPP/NPA structure, there was a major purge in the party. Those "zombies" who had been guilty of indiscriminate murder were usually executed.⁶² In at least one case, an NPA commander who ordered that known or suspected DPAs be tortured or killed was in turn arrested and put on trial.⁶³

The difficulties the CPP/NPA organization has had with its own discipline and the deliberate abuses committed by government agents underlines an essential point. The NPA has not accumulated a mass base of several million people by terror; its success has been based on disaffection from the government arising from a number of sources: the inequalities of the existing landowning system, the process of landgrabbing by wealthy and politically influential figures, the insensitivity of the Marcos regime to the interests of poor farmers, the arbitrary and repressive local political and administrative structure, and the abuses of its military.

Notes for Chapter 2

1. Chicago Tribune, November 20, 1983, cited in Niksch, Insurgency and Counterinsurgency, p. 20.
2. This account is based on perusal of the records of the Diocese of Bacolod's project on legal aid for the poor and on an interview with a foreign priest with long experience in southern Negros, Bacolod, January 21, 1986.
3. For more details, see Alfred W. McCoy, Priests on Trial (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), pp. 185-187; Naill O'Brien, Seeds of Injustice (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1985), p. 36. The assertion by journalist Ross H. Munro ("The New Khmer Rouge," Commentary, December 1985, p. 23) that it was "well known in Kabankalan" that the BOC leader, Alex Garsales, and his companion were "key figures in the NPA organizational structure in their mountain village," no doubt accurately reflects the views of the Kabankalan elite who supported the mayor in using any means necessary to suppress those in the Christian Community who were challenging their social and political power.
4. The NPA took credit for the assassination and described it in detail in its local underground publication. But powerful figures in the society, chief among them Roberto S. Benedicto, attempted to frame the two Columban priests, Fr. Brian Gore and Fr. Niall O'Brien, who had inspired the organization of Basic Christian Communities in Kabankalan. The two were arrested and tried on charges of having carried out the murder. The celebrated case ultimately proved a political embarrassment to Marcos. The case is detailed in McCoy, Priests on Trial, pp. 192-250, and O'Brien, Seeds of Injustice.
5. Business Day, June 17, 1985.
6. This figure is based on still unpublished research by the Alternate Resource Center in Davao City. Interview with economist Astrid Bana, Davao City, January 14, 1986.
7. Gilda Cordero-Fernando, "Reds-2," Veritas, July 21, 1985.
8. A dramatic first-person account of the landgrabbing by PPC in Bukidnon is told in Robin Broad, "'Our Children Are Being Kidnapped!'" Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars, Vol. 12, no. 3, 1980, pp. 2-9.
9. Astrid Jose A. Bana, "PPC's Expansion Program: Benefit or Burden", Mindanao Focus (Davao City), Vol. 2, no. 5, October 1984, pp. 4-17.

10. An analyst in the Ministry of National Defense noted that the NPA "can recruit people on the landgrabbing issue even when it's not an issue locally." Interview, January 9, 1986.
11. Poole and Vanzi, Revolution in the Philippines, p. 232.
12. Some of the residents had already been displaced from their land by large banana plantations near Tagum. Earl Martin, "In the Name of Security: A Philippine Strategic Hamlet," Southeast Asia Chronicle, no. 83, April 1982, p. 17. For an interpretation that assumes the NPA gained influence in Laac primarily through terror and intimidation, see Munro, "The New Khmer Rouge," pp. 29-30.
13. This account is based on Paul Freese and Thomas J. O'Brien, A Preliminary Report on the Impact of Industrial Tree Plantations and Tree-Farming Projects on Small Filipino Farmers (Davao City: Alternate Resource Center, 1983), pp. 74-77; Martin, "In the name of Security," pp. 16-18; and an interview with a priest who is familiar with developments in the municipality, Davao City, January 19, 1986.
14. This account is based primarily on an interview with Ms. Jet Birondo, who worked with the Manobo as part of a church Justice and Peace program from 1977 to 1981, Davao City, January 20, 1986.
15. See the two articles by Leticia M. Locsin on meetings with an NPA leader in Eastern Leyte and the history of the NPA in Leyte. Business Day, April 7 and 8, 1986.
16. See The Philippines: Authoritarian Government, Multinationals and Ancestral Lands, Anti-Slavery Society, Indigenous Peoples and Development Series, Report No. 1, 1983, pp. 90-112; Martha Winnacker, "The Battle to Stop the Chico Dams," Southeast Asia Chronicle, no. 67, October 1979, pp. 11-21. These sources were supplemented by an interview with Bishop Francisco Claver, Quezon City, January 7, 1986. A Bontoc who has condemned the violence of both the military and the NPA, Bishop Claver was actively involved in opposing plans for the Chico dam, although he was then Bishop in Malaybalay, Mindanao.
17. Interview with William Claver, named officer in charge of Kalinga-Apayao province by President Aquino, Philippine Daily Inquirer, May 2, 1986.
18. Private communication from Benedict J. Kerkvliet, October 13, 1986.

19. Gerald C. Hickey and John L. Wilkenson, "Agrarian Reform in the Philippines" (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, The Rand Paper Series, 1978), pp. 11-12.
20. R. Sobhan, Rural Poverty and Agrarian Reform in the Philippines (Rome: Food and Agricultural Organization, 1983), p. 55.
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35. Veritas, January 27, 1985.
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42. On the savagery and ritual cannibalism of the "Ilaga" cultists who killed the Italian priest Tullio Favali in April 1985, see "The Bloody Saga of Commander Bucay and His Gang of Fanatics," Katarungan, Vol. 1, no. 2, August 1985, pp. 10-12.
43. One Defense Ministry official declared to the author in January 1986 that the CHDF in Negros had been turned into "private armies for a select few." Interview, Manila, January 9, 1986.
44. "Samar's Guerrilla Sanctuary", We Forum, June 10-16, 1986.
45. Cameron Forbes, "Hunger under the Volcano," The Age (Melbourne), January 31, 1986.

46. Interview, Quezon City, January 7, 1986.
47. Interview with two foreign priests who asked not to be identified, Davao City, January 20, 1986.
48. Veritas, January 27, 1985.
49. Interview, Manila, January 5, 1986. The priest, like most other sources, asked not to be identified.
50. The case is documented on the basis of personal investigation in The Situation in the Philippines, Staff Report, U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, October 1984.
51. Ang Pahayagang Malaya, January 15, 1986, p. 5. The ex-schoolteacher who recounted these experiences in a letter asked that her name be withheld.
52. New York Times, August 11, 1985. By way of contrast the military appears to have been effective in halting cattle rustling and private armies in other parts of Central Luzon where the NPA gained few supporters. See Kerkvliet, "Patterns of Philippine Resistance," pp. 40-41.
53. Recent events in the Philippines, Hearings and Markup before the Committee on Foreign Affairs and its Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, House of Representatives, 99th Congress, 1st Session, November 1985, p. 74.
54. In the NDF-controlled district of Agdao in Davao City, where by far the single largest number of murders took place, most victims were military informers, according to an observer who kept careful records of the killings there. Interview with a source who insists on anonymity, Davao City, January 19, 1986.
55. Interview with the Catholic priest cited above. A schoolteacher who had contacts with the NPA in Central Luzon reported that every decision on executions must be referred to "higher NPA command for close study." "Ex-teacher has a good word for NPA," Ang Pahayagang Malaya, January 15, 1986.
56. Interview, Davao City, January 19, 1986.
57. Interview with a member of the NPA North Central Mindanao Regional Operational Command, We Forum, May 27-June 2, 1986, p. 15.
58. Interview with Don Goertzen, Mennonite Central Committee representative in Butuan City, Washington, D.C., September 19, 1986.

59. Interviews with an independent, anti-Marcos, pro-Aquino activist, Davao City, January 18, 1986, and with a Catholic priest sympathetic to but independent of the left, Davao City, January 17, 1986.
60. Interview with a Davao City activist.
61. For the most thorough background on DPA's see Veritas, April 3, 1986, pp. 10-12, and We Forum, May 27-June 2, 1986, pp. 10-15.
62. We Forum, May 27-June 2, 1986, p. 15.
63. PNA dispatch, May 13, 1986, FBIS, May 13, 1986, p. P116; Washington Post, June 2, 1986, p. A7; interview with Don Goertzen. Goertzen reports that the trial of the NPA commander, who was portrayed as being "mentally unstable," went on for several weeks in the mountains and was covered by a local Butuan City newspaper, Mindanao Spectrum.

CHAPTER 3

Communist Strategy in Transition

The nonviolent ouster of President Ferdinand Marcos and his replacement by the enormously popular Corazon Aquino posed an unprecedented challenge to the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). This "new situation" would have forced the CPP to make significant adjustments in its political and military policies regardless of the past performance of the Party leadership. But the circumstances in which the Aquino government came to power--isolation of the party from progressive forces because of the policy of boycotting the February election--touched off demands within the party for action to insure that similar blunders would not occur again. And while the discussions on how to readjust the party's political-military posture and how to rectify the boycott error were going on, critics of the Maoist-inspired strategy of protracted people's war argued that the boycott policy was the inevitable result of an erroneous strategic line.

Three distinct processes have thus been at work within the party since the ouster of Marcos: the adjustment of strategy to the "new situation," the response to the blunder committed by the top leadership group in regard to the boycott decision, and an intense debate on the wisdom of the existing strategic line. Opponents of the past strategy have not won over enough CPP leaders to force an acknowledgement of the need for change. The debate on the party's fundamental strategic line, however, is by no means over.

1. "People's War" and the Boycott Policy

At the center of the strategic debate is the relative importance of armed struggle and of political struggle. While no one in the party has denied the importance of a strong NPA, critics of the existing line have argued that an overemphasis on protracted armed struggle has obscured the possibilities for much earlier victory through political struggle, both legal and illegal, in urban areas, particularly Metro-Manila. The "tactical" readjustments in CPP strategy since February--entering in peace negotiations with the Aquino government, placing limitations on military operations and raising the relative importance of political struggle--have implications for this broader strategic debate. One logical implication is that the armed struggle must be downgraded relative to the political struggle, at least for the time being. But the CPP leadership appears to have been at pains to deny any such implication.

The present strategic debate within the party represents the

first serious challenge to the primacy of armed struggle in revolutionary strategy since the CPP was organized in 1968.¹ The party's founding Chairman, Jose Maria Sison, had attacked the leadership of the old Communist Party of the Philippines for having oscillated from the "Right opportunist" mistake of viewing parliamentary struggle as the main form of struggle immediately after World War II to the "Left opportunist" mistake of waging armed struggle without building rural political bases. He set out a new strategic line of waging people's war in the countryside, with three closely-related components: agrarian revolution, rural bases, and armed struggle.² In his major theoretical work Philippine Society and Revolution, Sison urged that Mao's principle of "encircling cities from the countryside" be "assiduously implemented," with "principle stress" on the peasantry and the rural areas and only "secondary stress" on the cities.³

One of the central tenets of the new CPP was that there was no possibility of political change until the CPP's military strength was at least equal to that of the Marcos regime. Mass movements in the cities were viewed as a means of supporting the armed struggle in the countryside, not as a potential vehicle for overthrowing the dictatorship.⁴ The vision of final victory projected by the party in the mid-1970s was one in which NPA troops from the north and south would converge on the capital area in a general offensive.⁵

At a time when the CPP/NPA were the only real opposition to the Marcos regime, there was no interest in forming a united front with political elements who did not support the general line of the "people's democratic revolution." Sison had thrown cold water on legal united fronts, insisting that "the real united front for the people's democratic revolution is one for waging armed struggle."⁶

When Marcos held the first national election under Martial Law for an interim National Assembly in 1978, the CPP ruled out any participation in it as a means of building a united front with other opposition forces, such as Senator Benigno Aquino's Laban party.⁷ By the early 1980s, however, urban discontent and elite opposition to the Marcos dictatorship had grown so rapidly that the CPP began for the first time to enter into coalitions with other anti-Marcos forces on specific issues. After the assassination of Senator Aquino in August 1983 and the emergence of a large, militant urban middle class opposition movement, CPP policy toward urban struggle shifted from tactical, episodic alliances to the formation of broader coalitions aimed at bringing down the dictatorship.⁸

But while CPP leaders attributed an important role to the urban movement and united front work, armed struggle remained the primary and "most decisive" form of struggle. "Open mass struggles" in Manila and other cities were seen as helping to isolate and weaken the Marcos regime, but in the context of the people's war strategy, this was only to "prepare the ground for further advances by the people's armed forces."⁹

Even as it stepped up its efforts to build a broader legal united front, the primary concern of the CPP leadership was moving to the strategic stalemate stage of the armed struggle. In late 1983 and early 1984 the Executive Committee concentrated on the task of rapidly increasing the number of company-sized guerrilla units (60 to 100 men) in order to be able to strike at larger military targets.¹⁰ Its timetable was dominated by military plans.

Conceiving the urban political struggle as assisting in the building of the NPA, rather than as a part of a separate process that could result in political change, the CPP failed to consolidate a broad united front with other anti-Marcos forces. It defined the "anti-dictatorship front" in such a way as to exclude those who were considered "bourgeois reformists," including both Corazon Aquino and Salvador Laurel. When such opposition figures raised the demand that Marcos resign in 1983-84, it caught fire. But the party leadership viewed that demand as "reformist," meaning that it was not aimed at revolutionary change in society. It insisted that the main slogan should be "Oust the U.S. sponsored dictatorship." The result was a debate between the left and the rest of the anti-dictatorship movement, which caused a decline in the intensity and scope of the urban protest movement.¹¹

In 1985, the CPP had another opportunity to forge a broad legal political organization of all left-of-center forces. The idea behind the formation of Bayan was to unite the "national democrats" who supported the program of the National Democratic Front, the "liberal democrats," who embraced capitalism but also supported such elements of the NDF program as the elimination of military bases, and the "social democrats," who were both nationalist and socialist but non-communist or even anti-communist. A number of liberal democrats participated in the founding Congress on the understanding that Bayan would be organized on the basis of equality between these three ideological tendencies, with each to be allocated the same number of seats on the national committee. Without such a guarantee, they feared being swallowed up by the better organized national democrat bloc in the organization.¹²

The CPP leadership conceived of Bayan, however, as being formed with a centralized command: if there was conflict between Bayan and another organization affiliated with it, the other organization would have to submit to Bayan's policies. That meant that the party wanted national democrats to have numerical superiority in the national council to insure that Bayan would follow its direction.¹³ When the CPP's representatives refused the demand for strict equality, most liberal democrats and social democrats walked out of Congress and Bayan emerged as a CPP-directed front, rather than as a real united front of different ideological tendencies.

The CPP leadership did not automatically rule out participation in elections within the Marcos dictatorship's political system,

since "under certain conditions," it could "achieve certain democratic gains for the people and contribute to the advance of people's war."¹⁴ Even if Marcos and his ruling party, the KBL, were expected to use fraud and intimidation, the elections could provide opportunities to broaden political education and prepare the ground for mass political struggles.

But national elections also raised the "danger of reformism"—the idea that elections by themselves could solve the political problem of overthrowing Marcos and restructuring the society. The legal opposition, in its view, was prone to the naive assumption that Marcos or his successor as head of the KBL would allow the opposition candidate to win a Presidential election. Moreover, the electoral process was seen as a political arena in which the "bourgeois reformists," many of whom were regarded as having close links with the U.S., were likely to emerge in dominant positions in the opposition. The U.S. could therefore use elections—and particularly Presidential elections—to attempt to stabilize the political situation, whether by giving Marcos more legitimacy or by arranging a transfer of power to bourgeois politicians of the traditional political parties.¹⁵

While opposition figures were maneuvering over the issue of unifying behind a single candidate in a possible "snap" election in 1985, the communist high command was preoccupied with such military problems as the regularization of NPA forces, moving toward military campaigns and countercampaigns, and the development of guerrilla bases.¹⁶ In September 1985, the CPP Executive Committee (EC), increasingly optimistic about the prospects for armed struggle, adopted a three-year plan for advancing to the "strategic counteroffensive" period of the defensive phase.¹⁷

When the legal opposition united behind Aquino and Laurel as Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates, the CPP regarded the opposition ticket as simply representing the ruling class. On December 23, 1985, the EC met to consider the party's attitude toward the snap election and voted 3 to 2 for a boycott.¹⁸ In a ten-page memorandum to party cadres the EC said a boycott was necessary, not only to expose the election itself as a sham, but also to "expose the conservative bourgeois opposition and bourgeois reform." The memorandum suggested that the U.S. hoped to use the election to "give the reactionary opposition the chance to share in the power and privilege...to broaden the political base of the puppet regime."¹⁹ It thus implied that Aquino and Laurel would lend themselves to American plans for the Philippine government. The CPP's monthly journal emphasized Aquino's "comprador-landlord class background" and said her closest advisors were "pro-imperialist big compradors" and "ultra-conservative and clerico-fascist" Catholic leaders.²⁰

CPP leaders believed that the opposition candidates had little

chance of winning in the face of the regime's political machinery and use of fraud. They were confident that boycott would be proven correct as popular protest over rigged elections and loss of faith in the electoral process would step up the polarization of the country. That in turn would shrink the "middle forces," pushing more of them to align firmly with the NDF. In the strategic stalemate phase of the war, the traditional parties would disappear, Marcos could be replaced by a military junta, and the NPA timetable could be shortened.²¹

The popular response to the boycott policy soon revealed its weaknesses, however. As the groundswell of popular support for Aquino's candidacy became evident throughout the country, a large proportion of rank and file Bayan members and leaders left the organization or simply broke with the boycott decision and participated in the campaign. Where Bayan implemented the boycott policy, its rallies were many times smaller than those of the Aquino campaign.²²

The CPP underground publication conceded that "many anti-facists and progressives among the middle forces are worried that by boycotting they may be isolating themselves from the people."²³ The damage to the party's alliances with non-communist opposition groups was so serious that many party-led organizations acted on their own to participate in the election or at least avoid working against supporters of Aquino. In some cases the EC gave explicit approval to these "adjustments."²⁴ But the EC did not waver from the boycott decision. It had anticipated that there would be some negative consequences in terms of isolation from allies, but expected these to be temporary.²⁵

The leadership was still expressing confidence in its boycott policy, even after the election.²⁶ The ouster of Marcos by a combination of military revolt and massive popular non-violent resistance to Marcos troops was thus a stunning blow to the CPP leadership. The whole thrust of CPP strategy had been based on the impossibility of a liberal democratic seizure of power by an urban popular uprising, especially one that was non-violent and connected with the electoral process.

2. The "Rectificationist" Challenge

The setback for the CPP, which was obvious to everyone in the party, opened the floodgates of criticism of the Executive Committee. Many cadres and guerrillas complained that the revolutionary forces had missed an opportunity to be part of the movement that overthrew Marcos and was excluded from the new government. There was also bitter criticism from those cadres who had opposed a boycott but were ignored by the Executive Committee. They argued that there had been a lack of consultation with lower

levels of the party on an issue of strategic importance. Even the fifteen-member Political Bureau, which should have been called into session to discuss the issue, was never consulted.²⁷

Some critics of the Executive Committee pressed for a more fundamental reassessment of the party's strategic line of protracted people's war. These party cadres formed a loose intraparty movement which some refer to as "rectificationist," suggesting that the existing strategic line is so deficient that it should be repudiated in order for the party to be on sound ideological grounds. The best known critique by the rectificationists, circulated by a party cadre writing under the name Marty Villalobos, noted that the boycott error was being explained in terms of leadership's failure to anticipate a "sudden shift in the U.S. attitude toward Marcos." It argued that the difficulty was much more fundamental--that the CPP had been "so fixated on the 'protracted people's war' strategy" that it had failed to see the need to change its strategy "even when there were already clear signs of an insurrectionary situation developing."²⁸

Villalobos maintained that the February uprising was not an accident nor the result of a tactical shift in U.S. policy to oust Marcos, but the reflection of a "revolutionary situation in the process of ripening to breaking out." After the Aquino assassination, he wrote, the spontaneous struggle of the urban population had become a key factor in the political struggle against the Marcos dictatorship. That "spontaneous factor" had made it possible to carry out militant "people's strikes" in urban centers outside the Metro-Manila area, but such actions had been blocked in Metro-Manila by the CPP's own "serious tendency toward inflexibility and sectarianism" in dealing with other organizations.²⁹

The CPP, according to Villalobos, had been too influenced by the relatively hardline Chinese policy toward tactical alliances with the bourgeoisie and demanded that the latter agree with the party's position at every step. Instead, he suggested, the party should have followed the Nicaraguan model, which emphasized strategic alliances with "bourgeois reformists" as well as liberal democrats against the dictatorship.³⁰

A "flexible policy of alliances with opposition bourgeoisie," wrote Villalobos, was a key feature of an "insurrectional strategy," which he proposed in a second paper as an alternative to protracted people's war.³¹ Both strategies rely on armed struggle as well as political struggle. But in the insurrectional strategy, political struggle plays the decisive role while military forces play a supporting one. And unlike the protracted people's war strategy, which is centered on the countryside, an insurrectional one is more urban-centered.

In an insurrectional strategy, wrote Villalobos, the guerrilla

units of the NPA would be less concerned with moving to a higher stage of military development than with heightening the consciousness and morale of the masses for an insurrection. Again the author cited Nicaragua as a successful model in which military struggle did not have to advance from guerrilla warfare to regular mobile warfare. The events of February, Villalobos argued, showed that the Philippines was ripe for an insurrectional rather than protracted people's war strategy: the Marcos regime was not defeated by mobile warfare but by an urban uprising relying mainly on forces mobilized within Metro-Manila.

Villalobos' papers were widely reproduced, both in Manila and in other areas of the country, spurring wider discussions within the party.³² Meanwhile other cadres associated with the CPP's National Urban Commission, which directs party activities in Metro-Manila and also gives political guidance to other urban centers, criticized the boycott policy as ideologically faulty. In an editorial in a new theoretical journal, they said the boycott was "an ultra-left maneuver" based on "subjective intentions" of the U.S. and Marcos rather than on the "actual balance of forces, especially in the cities, between revolution and reaction."³³ They echoed the Villalobos conclusion that the boycott episode was only the most recent reflection of a "doctrinaire tendency" in the party that had given too little emphasis to the "anti-fascist movement" in the revolutionary strategy. Giving due weight to the anti-fascist objective would have required greater emphasis on broad legal alliances with liberal democrats and "bourgeois reformists" and giving up the party's insistence on domination by "national democrats" in such alliances.³⁴

This analysis, strongly implying that the boycott error was strategic in character and underlining the need for rethinking of the party's strategy, ended with a plea for an "effort at rectification"—a term that recalled the attack on the old Communist Party's ideological and strategic errors that had led to the formation of the new CPP in 1968.³⁵ In a companion piece the "National Youth and Student Department" of the National Urban Commission said the boycott policy revealed "deep-rooted problems concerning the anti-fascist struggle, the parliamentary struggle, the united front, the urban mass movements, and generally speaking, the whole strategy and tactics of the Philippine revolution."³⁶ These articles constituted an unambiguous call for revision of the fundamental strategy of the CPP.

The EC's parent body, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee, was not yet ready to say that the people's war strategy had been at fault in the boycott policy, but took a series of actions which reflected its concerns about how and why the error had been committed. It publicly admitted the seriousness of the boycott error, pledged to make the party leadership more responsive to lower level views, and even made high-level leadership changes.

The Political Bureau subjected the EC to unprecedented public criticism and demanded self-criticism from it for having committed the boycott error, while defining it as a "tactical" issue. On May 7, the Political Bureau agreed to a resolution concluding that the EC had committed a "major tactical blunder" in its "analysis and evaluation" of the situation and in its "understanding and application of the Party's tactics." It further criticized the EC for having failed to call a meeting of the Political Bureau to consider the issue, for disregarding the various opposition views and "alternative approaches to the policy," and for having shown "lack of respect" for some lower party units which disagreed with the policy. The EC was directed to "conduct self-criticism" to the entire party through a series of articles in the monthly Ang Bayan.³⁷

There was even a hint in the Politburo resolution that the boycott fiasco might have broader theoretical and strategic implications. "The political views and tactical concepts which guided the formulation of the erroneous boycott policy," it noted, "were affirmed by a plenum of the Central Committee not long before the snap election." This fact "indicated a need to relate the summing-up of the boycott campaign to a general summing-up of our experiences in the struggle against the US-Marcos dictatorship." This general language suggested that some members of the Political Bureau were not satisfied with the admission that the blunder was merely "tactical." The call for a "summing-up" may have been a compromise between those who defended the strategic line and those who demanded that it be reassessed.

The Politburo promised to create "forums and channels for the full expression within the Party of the various ideas and views on significant questions so as to arrive at a unified understanding and stand."³⁸ The first such forum for dissent to appear was the National Urban Commission's theoretical journal, Praktika, which announced that it would air "contradicting views" on current issues.

Finally, the Politburo also made the first major leadership change since the 1977 arrest of then CPP Chairman Sison and NPA Commander Bernabe Buscayno.³⁹ It dropped Rodolfo Salas as party Chairman and named Benito Tiamzon, formerly head of the Visayas Regional Party Commission, as the new acting Party Chairman, apparently to serve until a new Party Congress could be convened. Secretary General Rafael Baylosis was replaced temporarily by Ignacio Capegsan, formerly head of the Northwest Luzon Regional Party Commission.

The admission of serious error, steps toward greater democracy in the decision making process and reports of leadership changes were interpreted by some party members and outside observers as a sign that a "rectification process" was beginning. They believed that a group holding more flexible views on strategic and tactical issues had captured the initiative from defenders of the existing

party line. They hoped that the consequences would be greater emphasis on non-military methods of gaining power, particularly electoral struggle, greater openness to the views of nonparty allies, and a willingness to negotiate a ceasefire with the Aquino government—all views which were widely held by critics within the party.⁴⁰

As the party leadership grappled with the issue of how much to adjust its strategy and tactics in the new situation, however, the lines between the hardliners and the "reformists" or "rectificationists" began to blur. CPP leaders were in broad agreement that the CPP had to reposition itself politically to keep open the possibility of a tactical alliance with the progressive elements of the Aquino government, that the NPA should modify its military operations, that the party should enter into peace talks with the Aquino government, and that it should take advantage of new possibilities for waging legal struggle, including electoral struggle.

These tactical adjustments in CPP policy suggested that the party was moving away from the strategy of primary reliance on armed struggle rather than legal struggle. But the EC explained this combination of policies in the same framework that had guided the party for seventeen years. The CPP, therefore, seemed to be making only pragmatic adjustments while maintaining the people's war strategy.

Critics of the leadership's strategic thinking had hoped that the EC would move beyond the old framework. They were disappointed with the first EC resolution circulated to party units after a May meeting, which seemed to defend the past ideological and strategic principles.⁴¹ That document argued that the boycott policy had not affected the outcome of the events of February 1986, since that outcome was determined by the objective balance of forces between revolutionary movement and bourgeois political forces. It also asserted that the boycott error had been the result of a failure to analyze a particular situation objectively, not of an erroneous line.

This assessment of the reason for the error and the extent of the damage to the party's interests was aimed at clearing the way for reestablishment of the authority and credibility of past EC leadership. The document explicitly stated that past experience had "confirmed the correctness of the line and overall practice" of the CPP. The May resolution reaffirmed the centrality of armed struggle, stating that it would be the main method of gaining victory. It also restated the objective of advancing within three years to a "strategic counteroffensive," still defined only in military terms. The only concession to the "new situation" was that armed struggle must henceforth have "political impact."

The EC's May 1986 resolution gave greater prominence to

political struggle in the new formulation of strategy and to the importance of mass movements in the urban areas. It even called for preparation for urban "insurrection" in conjunction with "armed uprisings" as part of a plan for military victory.

Legal and parliamentary struggle received greater weight than before, but only to serve armed struggle, not as part of a predominantly political route to power. The EC resolution called for tactical alliances with the more progressive elements of the ruling class against the "reactionary" elements centered in the army; it explicitly approved political support for Aquino's progressive policies by legal organizations under CPP direction, even leaving the door open to cooperation in a "democratic coalition government." But alliances with pro-Aquino forces must be on the basis of the "national democratic" program and, based on past practice, under CPP leadership.

The amended people's war strategy, which the resolution outlined, was based on an analysis of the Aquino government's social and political character that was reminiscent of the boycott period. The government was identified as the representative of the "semi-feudal, semi-colonial ruling classes," and is therefore obliged to maintain those classes in power. Moreover, the EC emphasized the fact that Aquino had inherited a state apparatus which is unchanged in its repressive aspects from that of the Marcos regime and that the apparatus is controlled by the right, not by Aquino herself.

The resolution concludes that the Aquino government "lacks the will or the capacity to solve fundamental problems of the Philippines." Seeing neither positive policies from the Aquino government nor cooperation with the progressives against the conservatives, the CPP leadership seems to be positioning itself for a waiting game, expecting the Aquino government to sink into economic and political crisis and the right to consolidate its control. As Aquino falters and the Enrile-Ramos bloc's power becomes clearer, the party leadership expects that the urban mass movement will both grow and be radicalized as political support for the armed struggle increases. The NPA's plans for advancing to a new substage would again be the central dynamic in the overall struggle.

This analysis and prescription, far from resolving the debate on party strategy, has only generated more criticism and pressure from the "rectificationists" to reassess the CPP's fundamental premises. A number of the Central Committee members and some EC members are not satisfied with the new statement of the strategic line and believe that further discussion is necessary.⁴²

Satur Ocampo, who is a member of the NDF negotiating team in the peace talks, confirmed in an interview that, although "some sections of the movement have developed definite positions," there are

"continuing discussions" and "exchanges of opinions" on such issues.⁴³ These debates, which are "something new" in the party, are taking place, he explained, "because the situation is still in transition." Ocampo added, however, that "very soon, the CPP will take a definite view on exactly how political forces stand." The Party congress, which is expected to take place sometime in 1987, "may be an excellent occasion for unifying the perspective on the national situation, strategy, and tactics," he said.

3. The Strategic Debate and the Negotiations Issue

Four distinct, though interrelated, issues can be identified as central to the intraparty debate on strategy. These issues and the positions taken by the two sides may be summarized as follows:

1. The relative importance of armed struggle and unarmed struggle: The official party view is still that armed struggle is foremost, while political struggle is secondary. The rectificationists argue that the priority should be reversed. They cite the February uprising as proof that, in the Philippine political context, the unarmed masses can overthrow a government more quickly than armed forces in the countryside can fight their way into the cities. The concept of urban insurrection, which the orthodox position subordinates to military struggle, is in the dissident view properly part of a predominantly political strategy for winning power.

2. The role of the electoral struggle: The official party position is that electoral struggle serves the objectives of the armed struggle rather than those of political struggle. The primary reason for engaging in the electoral process, in the people's war perspective, is to win power in municipalities where the CPP/NPA organization is strong, so that the government cannot use municipal governments to carry out counterinsurgency campaigns and municipal resources can instead be used in support of guerrilla fronts. The rectificationists, on the other hand, see electoral struggle primarily as a means for positioning the party to have maximum influence in a political confrontation between different factions of the ruling class. They want to make sure that the party is part of a coalition with liberal and progressive forces backing Aquino—a coalition that could even lead to "power sharing."

3. The Aquino government: The official line is that the Aquino government aims to maintain the ruling classes in power and that the ruling classes remain united in their determination to destroy the armed revolutionary movement. Therefore, it concludes, no basic change has taken place. Moreover, since the Enrile-Ramos bloc controls the means of repression, Aquino cannot prevent eventual consolidation of power by the right. The rectificationists, however, hold that the government is objectively progressive in that

it overthrew a fascist dictatorship, thus weakening the ruling classes, and set up a liberal democratic regime. While acknowledging that the Aquino wing of the government has given up ground to the right, they argue that it can still take progressive initiatives.⁴⁴

4. The nature of the United Front: The official view is that the CPP is open to a tactical united front with Aquino and her supporters, including "bourgeois reformists," on specific issues, but that a "strategic" alliance must be on the basis of the national democratic line, including both anti-feudalist and anti-imperialist (i.e., anti-U.S.) elements, and under the leadership of the CPP itself. No such strategic alliance is contemplated, therefore, with the Aquino wing of the government. The rectificationists call for a broad strategic alliance with all "anti-fascist" forces, including "bourgeois reformists." They advocate watering down the "national democratic" line to accommodate those who are "anti-fascist" but cannot support the national democratic program.

In the context of this strategic debate, the party leadership has made a series of policy shifts that are "tactical" in character but which could lead to more important changes if the rectificationist views were to prevail. These shifts include orders to legal organizations to support the Aquino government's liberal democratic segment, the establishment of a legal political party to carry the national democratic line, greater selectivity in military operations, and entering into peace negotiations with the Aquino government.

One of the CPP's first major policy decisions in the wake of the February events was the authorization for legal organizations under party influence to align themselves with the progressive elements in the Aquino government on specific issues. Ang Bayan declared in its first issue since the inauguration of Aquino that the party would "support the initiatives of liberal and progressive forces inside and outside the government for democratic reforms, whether or not they are closely coordinated with our own organizations and activities."⁴⁵

A memorandum from the party's United Front Commission to its units on March 14 explained why it was in the interest of the revolutionary movement to "support and develop the liberal segment of the Aquino government in order to oppose its fascist and conservative aspects": it would help "safeguard and promote the democratic gains so far achieved by the people...exacerbate the contradictions among the contending factions in the government coalition and prevent consolidation by the conservative or fascist factions." Meanwhile, it would position the party to eventually "take command of the open mass movement and give the proper direction to 'people power.'"⁴⁶

The CPP leadership also quickly took advantage of the "democratic space" afforded by the Aquino government to authorize the formation of a new political party to carry the national democratic line—and therefore the CPP's strategic interests—into electoral politics. The new party, called Partido ng Bayan (PnB, People's Party), was organized by prominent former party leaders, including founding Chairman Sison and the first NPA Chief Bernabe Buscayno, both of whom had been detained for several years.

The ex-detainees held no position in the CPP and denied any connection between the Partido ng Bayan and the CPP, but they did not hide their identification with the revolution or with the CPP. Sison, presenting the "Political Report" to the founding convention of the Partido ng Bayan said that a "progressive legal party engaged in electoral struggle" might be able to "radically transform" Philippine society. He called its contribution to social revolution "secondary," implying that armed struggle would make the primary contribution.⁴⁷

Most of the membership of PnB came from mass organizations and individuals already affiliated with Bayan, the cross-sectoral organization established in May 1985 and controlled by the CPP. According to PnB convention delegates, most PnB members are workers and peasants and the two primary sources of membership are the May First Movement (Kilusang Mayo Uno, KMU) labor federation and the Peasants' Movement of the Philippines (Kilusang Magbubukid sa Pilipinas, KMP), the largest peasant organization in the country, both of which belong to Bayan.⁴⁸

While there are obviously close personal, ideological, and organizational links between the PnB and the CPP, a perfect correlation between the two party's positions on issues cannot be assumed. The PnB, as a legal party seeking electoral coalitions, is subject to a different set of political considerations. Moreover, its leaders, despite their former roles in the CPP, are not subject to CPP discipline and do not necessarily share the judgments of its top leadership. It is noteworthy, for example, that the Secretary General of the PnB is Romeo Candazo, who was once head of the Youth and Students Bureau of the CPP and a member of the Manila-Rizal Committee that defied the Central Committee and participated in the 1978 Batasan elections.⁴⁹

Party organizers said at an introductory press conference that PnB will participate in all electoral activities, but that they are thinking primarily in terms of local elections, in which they expect to win 15-20 percent of the offices. They also said they were interested in an electoral alliance with the PDP-Laban Party, one of the two parties that backed Cory Aquino for President. The condition for such electoral cooperation, according to a party official, would be agreement on the kind of issue-oriented campaign both would wage.⁵⁰

But readiness for an electoral alliance with PDP-Laban is tempered by an underlying pessimism about the Aquino government and the current political situation. Sison's political report described a government in which the "principle trend" was represented by "rabidly pro-imperialist and reactionary elements who hold key positions in the cabinet," while the "liberal democrats...who hold secondary positions in the same cabinet" are the "secondary trend." While preparing to conduct electoral and other legal forms of struggle, Sison warned, the party has to be prepared also for the possibility of "fascist restoration" and the possibility that Aquino "completely capitulates" to the forces of imperialism and reaction.⁵¹

This new situation required changes in the party's armed struggle policy as well. It was necessary to distinguish between armed struggle against the forces of reaction and armed struggle to destabilize or overthrow the Aquino government, which was riding a wave of immense popularity. The party's first assessment suggested that it would now be a "defensive armed struggle against fascism," and indicated that it would highlight targets that could be associated with the old regime and economic or political oppression, such as especially abusive military and paramilitary units, warlords and their private armies, and fanatical anti-communist cults. In light of the new political situation, and for the time being, it said, "we have to stop arms snatching with gunfire;...limit partisan attacks; avoid civilian targets; and cease the raiding of municipalities and capitals."⁵²

The new military line of the CPP was that the NPA should launch military operations only "with just basis, to the people's benefit, and with restraint."⁵³ This was understood as prohibiting attacks against AFP units unless those units went on the offensive by entering areas which were regarded as "guerrilla zones."⁵⁴ In Nueva Vizcaya and Ifugao provinces, the NPA command wrote to AFP commanding officers reminding them that no attacks had been made on AFP units which had not "engaged in anti-people and offensive military action."⁵⁵ In Central Luzon, where the AFP was relatively less active, there was little or no NPA military activity.⁵⁶

In areas where the AFP was carrying out its usual patrolling aimed at maintaining control, NPA tactical offensives continued at a lower than normal level. During the first weeks of the new regime, the NPA claimed that the rate of its tactical offensives had dropped to only two a week from an average of nine per week during 1985.⁵⁷ While this may have exaggerated the decrease, a high-ranking AFP officer said in mid-April that there had been a "marked reduction" in the initiation of contacts by the NPA.⁵⁸

By the end of May, the NPA was referring to an "active defense posture" and admitting to a step-up in tactical offensives as a result of increased counterinsurgency operations by the AFP.⁵⁹ NPA commanders were still claiming that the number of tactical

offensives had been reduced compared with 1985. The NPA command in Samar claimed that it had launched only 20 offensives in the first six months since the inauguration of the Aquino government, compared with 80 during all of 1985.⁶⁰ "They are more deliberate, more selective," said a U.S. Embassy official about the guerrillas in mid-August. "They may have run less tactical offensives, choosing operations that have propaganda value rather than losing popular support."⁶¹

The most sensitive issue facing the CPP policy in the "new situation" was how to respond to the Aquino government's offer to negotiate on a ceasefire and political issues. Contrary to the interpretation that the hardliners in the CPP leadership were forced by a more "moderate" faction to enter the peace negotiations, both the advocates of the "people's war" and its critics supported participation in the negotiations, according to a CPP source. But there was vigorous debate between the two tendencies over the significance and objectives of the negotiations.⁶²

Both sides agreed that the ceasefire issue was a central challenge to the revolutionary movement, primarily because of the danger of isolation if the party erred. In a joint memorandum in July 1986, the CPP's National Urban Commission and United Front Commission observed that the ceasefire issue had "strategic political effects on the development of the revolutionary forces." The "immediate danger," it said, was that "political isolation will greatly hinder our political advancements as well as our military work."⁶³

CPP leaders disagreed, however, over the implications of this challenge for party policy toward the Aquino government. In line with their broader analysis of the new government, the people's war advocates argued that the negotiations were part of a government effort to isolate and destroy the NPA. Their primary aims in entering the talks, therefore, were to avoid losing the initiative to Aquino and to legitimize the armed struggle. The "rectificationists," on the other hand, insisted that Aquino's motivation in offering to negotiate had to be distinguished from the Ramos-Enrile bloc. They viewed the talks as important to the consolidation of a united front with the progressive wing of the Aquino government.⁶⁴

When the EC issued a memorandum in July detailing for the first time the rationale for entering into peace talks, its tone and substance reflected the hardline assessment.⁶⁵ The document began by asserting, "The ruling class is united in suppressing and destroying the revolutionary armed movement," and that Aquino "understands that she has to suppress the armed revolutionary movement to win support from counterrevolutionary military and foreign and local reactionaries." It suggested that Aquino's ceasefire offer was forced on her by a set of debilitating

conditions: the demoralization and inefficiency of the army, the government's economic and financial crisis, and Aquino's need to consolidate her control over the military.

The memorandum said the negotiations would advance the revolution by showing that the party is a "national force to contend with" and that the party could "reach the masses on the necessity and correctness of the political goals of armed revolution in the current situation." These objectives suggested that the CPP leadership saw no need to negotiate a ceasefire.

Yet the same document also called for using the negotiations to "test how far the government will perform for the benefit of the people" and to "push" it toward a "more progressive direction" and to "open the door to the possibility of a tactical alliance against the extremist reactionaries." These objectives implied the need to test the sincerity of the government on a ceasefire in order to achieve other political goals.

The key party document on the ceasefire negotiations thus left the question of agreement to a ceasefire unresolved. Some NPA commanders, as well as some party leaders, were undoubtedly skeptical about what they thought would be a ceasefire trap, believing that the NPA would lose the momentum it has achieved in recent years. Other party leaders, however, argued that the primary short-term task was to promote the political stature of the NDF and the party had to avoid political isolation. Destabilizing the Aquino government by armed struggle, they believed was not the way to achieve that objective.

The politics and policies of the Aquino administration--as filtered through the Marxist-Leninist prism of the CPP leadership--will be a major influence on the intraparty debate on revolutionary strategy. Party leaders closely followed the political maneuvering and confrontation involving Aquino, Enrile, and Ramos. They watched for evidence of fundamental shifts in the power balance. In particular they were watching President Aquino to see if she would indeed bow to pressure from Enrile and the military establishment. Before Aquino dismissed Enrile, both the people's war advocates and the urban insurrection proponents agreed that the Aquino had been moving to the right in her economic policies, her Constitutional Commission nominations, and her failure to curb the military in the field.⁶⁶ Those pushing the orthodox people's war strategy, however, had expected Aquino's cooptation by the right to be a consistent, long term trend, while other party leaders maintained the possibility that Aquino could move against the right as well.

In late November 1986, Aquino fired Enrile. Then her government and the CPP agreed to a ceasefire. These changes will likely fuel a new round of debate within the party. If the CPP leadership interprets these events to mean that Aquino is not a captive of the

military and is free to negotiate, it will strengthen those pushing for a united front with progressives in the government, rather than those focused on armed struggle as the center of CPP strategy. If, on the other hand, party leaders conclude that the government's liberal democratic group has been eliminated or drastically weakened, and that the military has severely curtailed Aquino's latitude for negotiation, it will reinforce the defenders of the orthodox strategy.

A final policy issue confronting the CPP leadership by late 1986 was whether to oppose or support the Constitution drafted by Aquino's commission. The plebiscite will be in February 1987. The issue is reportedly being debated within both the CPP and the Partido ng Bayan. A main question is whether the party's position on the Constitution should reflect flexible tactics or a "principled stand."⁶⁷

Those who favored supporting the Constitution emphasized the importance of allying with the Aquino forces and prolonging the "democratic space" by helping to defeat efforts of the ultra-right to destabilize the government. Party leaders who advocated working against the proposed Constitution, on the other hand, emphasized that the document's basic provisions are "anti-people" and "anti-nationalist" and that the party would have to violate its own principles to support it. The position of principled opposition would be much easier to explain to rank and file supporters of the left. The Metro-Manila delegates to the Partido ng Bayan convention, for example, took it for granted that the left would oppose the Constitution unless its "anti-people" provisions were changed.⁶⁸

Advocates of the rejection posture also argued that the defeat of Aquino's Constitution would sharpen the conflict between liberal democratic and "fascist" segments of the ruling class, thus forcing the former to move left. Participants in the debate recognized, therefore, that the Constitutional plebiscite posed a choice between hastening the crisis of the Aquino regime or extending the period in which it will be possible to organize legally. As one PnB organizer and former CPP leader pointed out, "It is in the interest of the revolution to keep the ruling class divided, to drive a wedge between the opposing tendencies. It's also in our interest to prolong the democratic space." This key official of the PnB said it was difficult to judge which interest is more important, but believed, "on balance, it's more important for the revolution to use the democratic space to educate people, to consolidate."⁶⁹ The importance of democratic space to the PnB, and indirectly to the CPP, was dramatically underlined by the abduction and killing of the PnB chairman, Rolando Olalia, in mid-November 1986.

At the same time, the issue of the CPP's stand on the Constitution in some ways parallels the issue of participation or

boycott in the 1986 Presidential election. A decision to oppose, based on "principle" and the hope of polarization of the political system in favor of the left, would again pose the risk that the CPP could be isolated from the mainstream of urban political activists. Some high-level party officials feel strongly that the CPP cannot afford "another mistake" like the boycott policy.⁷⁰ The decision of the PnB shortly before the killing of its Chairman, Rolando Olalia, to support the Constitution indicates that the legal left felt that it could not afford to alienate the majority of Filipinos who want to support the Aquino government by coming out for defeat of the Constitution.⁷¹

The Constitutional plebiscite may typify the dilemma of the CPP during a period in which it has not abandoned armed struggle but must also reach out politically to the pro-Aquino population in both rural and urban areas. On one hand, it must try to maintain a highly cohesive revolutionary movement based on a common demand for radical structural changes and radical nationalism. On the other hand, it must avoid further alienating those who do not embrace revolutionary demands. The party leadership may deal with the Constitutional plebiscite by maintaining a "principled" opposition within the party, while refraining from active opposition and encouraging the PnB to support ratification.⁷²

Based on the evidence of the past year, the CPP's strategy appears to be in the early stages of a transition from protracted people's war to something more attuned to the importance of the urban population, of a broad united front with non-communist political groups, and of legal and even electoral politics. The debate will undoubtedly continue for years, and the character of the party's future strategy will depend to a great extent on the perceived opportunities and risks of urban-based and legal political struggle. As this process of strategic evolution continues, however, CPP leaders may increasingly face difficulties returning to their former overwhelming emphasis on the military route to power.

Notes for Chapter 3

1. For Reconstructions of the evolution of CPP strategy, see Armando Malay, Jr., "The 'Legal vs. Illegal' Problem in CPP-ML Strategy and Tactics," Asian Studies, XX, 1982, pp. 122-142; Francisco Nemenzo, "Rectification Process in the Philippine Communist Movement," in Lim Joo-Jock and S. Vani, eds., Armed Communist Movements in Southeast Asia (Hampshire, England: Gower, 1984), pp. 71-105.
2. See "Rectify Errors and Rebuild the Party," reprinted in Republic of Philippines, Department of National Defense, So the People May Know (Manila, n.d.), pp. 106, 124, 126.
3. Amado Guerrero [Jose Maria Sison], Philippine Society and Revolution (Manila: Pulang Tala Publications, 1971), pp. 281-282.
4. Ibid., p. 36
5. This expectation is explicitly stated in "Our Urgent Tasks," a key Central Committee document, June 25, 1976, p. 28. A mimeographed copy of the document was made available to me by the Civil Relations Office of the Joint Staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines.
6. Philippine Society and Revolution, p. 284.
7. According to a CPP source the Metro Manila branch of the party decided to participate in the election, despite the position of the national leadership opposing such participation. The Metro-Manila officials responsible for violating democratic centralism were removed from their positions. Interview with CPP cadre no. 1, August 19, 1986.
8. Ang Bayan, December 1983, p. 3
9. Program of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, p. 5.
10. "Armed Struggle Scales Up," Liberation, March 1984, p. 8.
11. Interview with CPP cadre no. 1, August 19, 1986.
12. Interviews with several of the noncommunists who were involved in early discussions of the concept and attended the Congress, Manila, January 1986.
13. Interview with CPP cadre no. 1, August 19, 1986.

14. Program of the National Democratic Front, p. 6.
15. This description is based on "Planning for a post-Marcos era," Liberation, January-February 1985.
16. "NPA Marks 17th Anniversary Amid Opportunities, Challenges," Ang Bayan, vol. 18, no. 1, March 1986, p. 8.
17. "Against the Snap Election Boycott," Praktika, vol. 1, no. 1, May 14, 1986, p. 35. Praktika is the theoretical journal of the National Urban Commission of the CPP.
18. Nick Quijano, Jr., "Will the Left Right Its Wrongs?," We Forum, May 27-June 2, 1986, p. 6; interview with CPP cadre No. 1, August 19, 1986. The Executive Committee is believed to have consisted of the following members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee: Rodolfo Salas (CPP Chairman), Rafael Baylosis (Secretary General), Juanita Rivera (Chairman, Military Commission), Benito Tiamzon (position unknown), and Antonio Zumel (Chairman, United Front Commission). "Ang Mga Komunista" [The Communists], A People's Variety Exclusive, vol. 2, no. 3, n.d. (circa summer 1986). "Ang Mga Komunista" includes biodata on the top thirteen leaders of the CPP, based on military intelligence files. The same list of thirteen top CPP leaders is provided in The News Herald, June 10, 1986.
19. Memorandum from the CPP Executive Committee to party cadres, December 23, 1985, quoted in "What CPP/NPA Say About Elections: 'Boycott and Launch Military Operation'," Mr. & Ms. (Special Edition), February 7-13, 1986, p. 9.
20. Ang Bayan, December 1985. Quoted in Ibid.
21. Roy S. de Guzman, "NPA Sets Attacks on Military," Philippine Daily Inquirer, January 7, 1986; interview with CPP Politburo member Antonio Zumel, Far Eastern Economic Review, February 27, 1986, p. 16; AFP dispatch by Teodoro Benigno, February 7, 1986, FBIS, APDR, February 12, 1986, p. P26.
22. P.N. Abinales, "Cory Aquino's Presidency and Bayan's Dilemma," Veritas, March 16, 1986, p. 14; Candy Quimpo, "Boycotters Not Vital to Final Count," Mr. & Ms., February 7-11, 1986, p. 9.
23. Ang Bayan, December 1985, quoted in "What CPP/NPA Say about Elections," Mr. & Mrs., (Special Edition) February 7-13, 1986.
24. Memorandum from the Political Bureau of the Central Committee to Members of the Central Committee, "Resolution on the Party's Tactics Regarding the Snap Election," May 7, 1986, photocopy of original document, p. 1.

25. Interview with CPP cadre no. 1, Manila, August 19, 1986.
26. Even one week after Aquino's apparent electoral victory, Politburo member Zumel argued that the failure of the U.S. to get Aquino to work with Marcos meant that polarization would continue and that the moderate opposition would "tend to contract as forces to one side or the other." Guy Sacerdoti, "The Left Sees Long-Term Gain," Far Eastern Economic Review, February 27, 1986, p. 16.
27. Interview with CPP cadre no. 1, August 19, 1986.
28. Marty Villalobos (pseud.), "Where the Party Faltered: An Analysis of the Snap Polls and the February Uprising," unpublished paper, p. 4.
29. Ibid., p. 6-8.
30. Ibid., pp. 13-20.
31. Marty Villalobos (pseud.), "On the Insurrectional Strategy," unpublished paper, March 30, 1986, p. 5.
32. Interview with cadre no. 2, Manila, September 2, 1986.
33. "When a Zigzag Turn is Shorter than a Straight Route," Praktika, Vol. 1, no. 1, May 14, 1986, p. 19.
34. Ibid., p. 20-22.
35. Ibid., p. 22.
36. "Against the Snap Election Boycott Tactic," in Ibid., p. 37.
37. "Resolution on the Party's Tactics Regarding the Snap Election." For a summary, see Ang Bayan, May 1986, reprinted in Ibid.
38. Ang Bayan, May 1986, reprinted as "Sum Up, Learn From Boycott Error," Ang Katipunan (San Francisco), July 1986, p. 7.
39. See Washington Post, September 15, 1986, p. A18; Ang Pahayagang Malaya, June 7, 1986; "Ang Mga Komunista."
40. See Philippine Daily Inquirer, June 7, 1986; Business Day, June 6, 1986; Ang Pahayagang Malaya, June 7, 1986; We Forum, May 27-June 2, 1986, p. 6.
41. This analysis of the May 1986, Executive Committee resolution is based on an interview with CPP cadre no. 1, Manila, August 24, 1986, and on an unpublished critique of the resolution by a party member that I was allowed to read but not to copy.

42. Interview with CPP cadre no. 2, Manila September 2, 1986.
43. Interview with Satur Ocampo, Manila, September 1, 1986.
44. In the first weeks of the Aquino Government, the general tone of the CPP's assessment was much more upbeat than either of these views. A document circulated by an unidentified unit of the party in mid-March viewed the progressive liberals in the government as having the initiative and Aquino as having a liberal stand on political and social issues. The assessment also saw a weakening of American "control over the local center force" and foresaw moves by Aquino to further weaken U.S. influence and open the way for further reforms. The seven page analysis is quoted extensively in Veritas, April 3, 1986.
45. "New Political Situation," Ang Bayan, March 1986, p. 4.
46. "The Current Situation and Our Immediate Tasks," Memorandum from CPP United Front Commission to all units, March 14, 1986, p. 9.
47. Political Report by Jose Maria Sison, August 30, 1986 (mimeographed), p.2.
48. Interview with Metro-Manila delegates, August 30, 1986; and discussion on the floor of the PnB convention regarding the party constitution, August 31, 1986.
49. The New Philippines Daily Express, September 30, 1986.
50. Remarks by Acting Secretary-General Alan Jasmynes and National Preparatory Committee member Joe Castro, press conference, August 19, 1986.
51. Sison, "Political Report," pp. 3-4.
52. Veritas, April 3, 1986.
53. Letter from the NPA Operational Command, Nueva Vizcaya-Ifugao Provinces to Commanders of AFP units in Nueva Vizcaya-Ifugao, July 12, 1986 (mimeographed).
54. CPP/NPA officials often articulated this policy in comments to journalists. See, for example, the statement by the NDF spokesman in Leyte, Business Day, May 19, 1986.
55. Letter from NPA Operational Command, Nueva Vizcaya-Ifugao.
56. The AFP Regional Commander in Central Luzon noted in late April that there had not been any major encounter with the

NPA there since the Aquino government had taken power, and speculated that the insurgents were "lying low." The News Herald, April 23, 1986.

57. Liberation, April-May, 1986, p. 4.
58. Brig. Gen. Edmundo Ermita, Deputy Chief of Staff, quoted in PNA, April 15, 1986, FBIS, AFDR, April 16, 1986, p. P9. In June AFP Chief of Staff Ramos said there had been a decline in the number of encounters during the previous two months and that insurgency-related casualties for the four previous months were forty percent less than they had been in the same period of 1985. Business Day, June 24, 1986.
59. Liberation, April-May, 1986.
60. Manila Bulletin, July 3, 1986.
61. Interview, U.S. Embassy, Manila, August 19, 1986. In late July a U.S. Defense Department official said that the "number of [NPA-initiated] contacts may have declined," while insisting that the "intensity of the fighting" had increased, because the objectives tended to be larger. Telephone interview, July 28, 1986.
62. This analysis is based on interview with CPP cadre no. 1, August 19, 1986.
63. Text of memorandum by the CPP's National Urban Commission and the United Front Commission, July 1986, in The New Philippines Daily Express, November 28, 1986.
64. This "rectificationist" view was reflected in an analysis published in Ang Bayan that described the liberals in the Aquino government as desiring peace "to enable the Aquino government to tackle the social roots of the people's struggle," in contrast to the reactionaries in the government who found them useful for "tricking and weakening the revolutionary movement, the easier to crush it." See the extensive quotations from this article in Ang Pahayagang Malaya, June 1, 1986.
65. Memorandum from the Executive Committee, Central Committee to Territorial Commissions and other party organs, "Negosasyon Tungkol sa Ceasefire" [Negotiations about a Ceasefire], July 1986 (photocopy of original).
66. Interview with cadre no. 2, Manila, September 2, 1986; interview with Satur Ocampo, Manila, September 1, 1986.
67. Philippine Daily Inquirer, October 27, 1986.

68. Interview with several members of the Metro-Manila delegation, August 31, 1986.
69. Interview with a member of the National Preparatory Committee, Partido Ng Bayan, Manila, August 19, 1986.
70. Philippine Daily Inquirer, October 27, 1986.
71. The Washington Post, November 12, 1986.
72. The CPP was reported in early November to have called for rejection of the draft Constitution, but the report was unclear as to what organ of the party issued the statement, or for what purpose. Nor did the article specifically quote the language urging rejection. See The New Philippine Daily Express, November 1, 1986. The CPP's underground publication in Negros was also reported in early December 1986 to have come out in opposition to the draft constitution, but it was unclear whether the party would take an active role in trying to defeat it.

CHAPTER 4

The Aquino Government and the Politics of Counterinsurgency Policy

The issue of how to deal with communist insurgency has bitterly divided the Aquino government from its first days in power. The conflicting policy positions of the liberal democrats and democratic socialists, on one hand, and Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and the military establishment, on the other, have reflected not only the different experiences of the parties involved during the Marcos years but ideological perspectives and personal and institutional interests. The issue of negotiating a ceasefire with the communist insurgents or taking the offensive against them militarily became an integral part of the maneuvering for power in a transitional phase of Philippine politics.

The stakes in this political controversy were far-reaching: were Aquino to succeed in negotiating even a temporary modus vivendi with the CPP, it would open up the possibility of a gradual reintegration of the armed left into the legitimate political process. It would also mean that the Aquino government had overcome a challenge from Enrile, the military, and the old Marcos political network, with its ability to set policy on a crucial issue. If, however, Aquino were forced to abandon the strategy of negotiations, either because of military pressures or because military officials preempted her strategy by their own initiatives, it could mark a transition to a military-dominated regime.

1. Origins of the Policy Conflict

The idea of trying to reach a negotiated political solution to the insurgency problem developed naturally out of the experience of people in the liberal-progressive wing of the Aquino government as activists in the democratic opposition to the Marcos dictatorship. That opposition role made Aquino and other civilian ministers both distrustful of the military and the Defense Ministry and profoundly skeptical of the value of military counterinsurgency operations. Despite ideological differences and power rivalry with the communists, most left-of-center oppositionists believed that there had to be some political understanding between the non-communists and communists in order to avoid a bloody war that would exhaust the country and obstruct social reform and economic development.

Aquino and other liberal democrats believed that the bulk of the insurgents had taken to the hills because of real injustices and abuses, not because they were Marxists. They thought that few NPA guerrillas were "hardcore communists."¹ The insurgents, Aquino said during her campaign, "are our brothers and sisters....They have

hearts fashioned by our common Almighty Father." Many of them had simply "given up on the capacity of the Marcos regime to give relief to their just grievances," she said.²

Out of this conviction developed one of the two strands of Aquino's policy for dealing with the insurgency: offering an amnesty to those insurgents who would lay down their arms, in the belief that they would regard her government as different from the Marcos regime. In a speech in late March, Aquino said she would soon call on the insurgents to "come out and rejoin your people in rebuilding the country." She also warned that those who did not would "face a reformed and reinvigorated fighting force..."³

In order to facilitate the return of NPA guerrillas to peaceful life, the Aquino government planned to offer them a general amnesty, resettlement on government land, and training in new skills. Thirty-three thousand hectares of military reservation land were available for distribution to the resettled NPA returnees. The World Bank agreed in principle to provide funding for the rehabilitation program for former insurgents.⁴

But a second strand in the government's strategy was to deal directly with the CPP leadership. Aquino had pledged during her Presidential campaign to declare a ceasefire with the NPA and undertake negotiations with the leadership of the insurgency "in order to afford the new administration the opportunity to immediately redress their legitimate grievances."⁵ In the first days of her presidency, she reaffirmed her intention to negotiate with the leaders of the insurgency and initiated talks with the CPP/NPA leadership through a secret intermediary, with the aim of agreement on a ceasefire to be followed by serious negotiations on ending the armed struggle.⁶ As a gesture of reconciliation, she also released political detainees, including the two top leaders of the CPP during the early and mid-1970s, founding chairman Jose Maria Sison and NPA commander Bernabe Buscayno.

The political calculations underlying the policy of negotiating with the CPP were varied and complex. Most liberals and progressives in the Aquino government distrusted the leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and doubted its commitment to democratic values.⁷ Aquino and her advisors were realistic enough to know that the CPP leaders would not agree to dissolve the NPA and accept legalization.⁸ They knew that the CPP's leadership had always condemned any notion of revolutionaries hoping to win power through electoral politics as "bourgeois reformism."

But they were also aware of differences within the party's leadership, partly as a result of the boycott policy, and partly because of more fundamental criticisms of the strategy of "protracted people's war." Some Aquino advisers were hoping for signs of a shift in CPP strategy that would reduce the importance of

armed struggle and put greater emphasis on political struggle, including electoral politics. In that event, the CPP might be interested in reaching an accord with the Aquino government that might include a ceasefire that could be extended indefinitely.⁹

A ceasefire agreement would have several advantages to the government in breaking the momentum of CPP/NPA development: it would help the government carry out economic and social development in the barrios; it would save money on military spending which is desperately needed for long-neglected social services; it would give the AFP time to carry out the reorganization and retraining needed to make it a more effective instrument of security. Finally, it would encourage those within the communist leadership who have doubts about the strategy of armed struggle to advance alternatives that depend on non-military struggle. Even if the negotiations failed to bring about a comprehensive political solution, they would nevertheless demonstrate to the rank and file of the NPA, as well as its mass base, that the government was sincere in addressing the grievances that caused them to join the insurgency.

Perhaps the most important consideration for Aquino and her advisers, however, was the strong belief that only political methods, not military force, could defeat the insurgency.¹⁰ Several key government officials had been human rights lawyers and were familiar with the military violations of human rights. They were certain that the military's attempt to suppress the insurgency by force had been a major contributing factor to the NPA's growth. Their conclusion was that restraining the military would eliminate one issue that had benefitted the CPP/NPA.

There was an implicit contradiction between the two strands of Aquino's policy. The amnesty track was based on the threat of strong military action against all those who refused to surrender, while the negotiations track opened up the possibility of temporary coexistence between the government and the insurgents. In pursuing amnesty the President would be working at cross-purposes with negotiations, while efforts to negotiate a ceasefire would conflict, at least in the short run, with a campaign to get NPA people to surrender.

One way of trying to reconcile the two was to suggest that the aim of negotiations would be to get the CPP to lay down its arms. On April 20, in a speech to graduates of the University of the Philippines, Aquino announced her intention to call for a ceasefire with a set and unextendable time period, during which the government would negotiate for the "reassimilation" of the insurgents into Philippine society.¹¹

During the ceasefire period, President Aquino said, the AFP would adopt a "defensive posture," while problems of peace and order in the barrios would be settled by the constabulary and police

forces. She acknowledged that such a defensive posture would allow the CPP to "consolidate its position" and recruit more followers. Despite that possibility, she said, she was "willing to take the gamble to avoid any further waste of lives."¹² But if the NPA rejected agreement and continued to fight, they would face "a new army and a new government."¹³

Trying to sell negotiations with the CPP in the guise of "reassimilation" did not convince the military, which recognized that it would inevitably involve some form of compromise. The Aquino negotiating initiative was in fundamental conflict with the professional concerns, world view, and institutional interests of the military establishment. Shortly after Aquino took office, General Ramos, supported by Defense Minister Enrile, began pushing Aquino to adopt an integrated counterinsurgency plan aimed at defeating the NPA through coordinated military and civilian programs. His plan ignored negotiations and assumed that the highest priority was to organize the government for an all-out political-military contest with the communists. By late spring, the U.S. was throwing its weight behind the Ramos plan publicly and urging Aquino to approve it.¹⁴

A key objective of the military in getting Aquino's approval of its plan was to obtain a greater share of the budget for counterinsurgency. A negotiated ceasefire would give the Aquino government an excuse to shift additional funds from the military to social services, something Aquino had said she wanted to do during her campaign.¹⁵ Although the defense budget had been increased from 8.85 billion pesos in 1985 to 10.6 billion pesos in 1986, the Aquino government had cut the original figure by nearly 14 percent.¹⁶

Another objective of the military's counterinsurgency plan was to assure that local officials nominated by the Aquino government to replace Marcos loyalists would cooperate with the military. Under the Marcos regime, relations between local officials and the military were governed by the loyalty of the civilian authorities to Marcos and of the military commanders to Chief of Staff General Fabian Ver. But the new governors and mayors, often critics of the military, were reluctant to be involved in counterinsurgency warfare.¹⁷ Ramos complained that the new local officials had done nothing to combat CPP/NPA subversion despite offers by the AFP and PC/INP to assist them.¹⁸

The military's plan called for a combined civilian-military structure at regional, provincial and municipal levels to fight the insurgents--an idea the AFP general staff admitted borrowing from the U.S. counterinsurgency program in Vietnam. Heading the combined structure would be the governors at the provincial level and by mayors at the local level.¹⁹ The plan called for more civilian government as well as private sector involvement in intelligence-gathering, propaganda, and paramilitary support for the NAFF.²⁰

Despite Ramos and Enrile's lobbying, backed by the U.S., Aquino refused to accept their proposal. As a Malacanang official later explained, Aquino and other cabinet officials did not want to prejudice the prospects for a peace agreement with the communists by approving a military plan for defeating the NPA. "It's not clear where we start out [regarding the insurgency]," explained one Malacanang official in August. "That's why there's no official counterinsurgency plan."²¹

Military officials were also pressing Aquino to consult more with the Ministry of Defense and the Chief of Staff on insurgency issues. They complained that Aquino was making decisions with minimal consultation with the Ministry of Defense and the AFP General Staff. One Defense Ministry official recalled that the first consultation regarding the negotiations--a request for a "sample format for a ceasefire"--came only after Aquino had announced that the communists had named Satur Ocampo as their chief negotiator.²² Moreover, Aquino decided in May that the military would be excluded from any direct involvement in the talks, at least until they reached detailed military problems. The military establishment viewed that decision as a concession to the CPP, which was insisting on the AFP's exclusion.²³

Ramos and Enrile proposed privately to Aquino that they revive the National Security Council, which had met only twice in the last years of the Marcos regime and had not been used by the new government.²⁴ That would not only force Aquino to consult fully with them regarding negotiations but further pressure her to create formal processes for coordinating the efforts of the various ministries in the overall counterinsurgency effort.²⁵

The conflict of interests and perspectives between the former opposition figures around Aquino and the military leadership was exacerbated by Defense Minister Enrile's role in post-Marcos politics. Enrile was at once a traditional elite politician, with roots and interests in the old system of parties and politics; a big businessman with considerable interest in land as well as other enterprises, and a close associate and ally of the military leadership as Marcos' Defense Minister. That combination of political roles made him the natural leader of the conservative, anti-communist opposition to Aquino's negotiation policy. It also positioned him to be the conservative opposition's candidate if and when he could force early elections.

Opposing any negotiations with the CPP was in keeping with his views on counterinsurgency. Under Marcos, Enrile prided himself on his sophisticated understanding of communist political-military strategy and was more likely to emphasize the political side of the party's operations than the purely military side of the problem. He viewed the CPP's effort to build a united front with non-communist oppositionists as their "most formidable source of political

legitimacy." Part of his task as Defense Minister had been to "neutralize" the united front efforts of the CPP.²⁶ This position had also dovetailed conveniently with his personal political interests in "neutralizing" the democratic opposition, one sector of which was willing to unite with individuals and groups identified with the NDF.²⁷

The Aquino government, in which Enrile retained his position as Defense Minister, also included several cabinet members who had, from Enrile's perspective, cooperated with CPP members and front organizations and thus helped to legitimize the communist armed struggle. Press spokesman Rene Saguisag, Executive Secretary Joker Arroyo, and Labor Minister Bobbit Sanchez, had all been human rights lawyers who had condemned torture and salvaging by the military and had defended accused CPP members, including Jose Maria Sison and Bernabe Buscayno.

Enrile recognized from the outset that he was politically vulnerable because of his role in the Marcos martial law regime. As the Minister of Defense from the beginning of martial law to the end of the Marcos government, he had been the jailer of Mrs. Aquino's husband and the defender of the military forces against charges of systematic human rights violations.

He had also amassed considerable wealth thanks to his key political role in the Marcos political apparatus. He had reportedly taken over vast tracts of land in Northern Luzon and made another fortune as owner of a law firm which handled the business deals of Marcos and his cronies, including the creation of the coconut monopoly. He had been made chairman of various business firms tied to Marcos, controlling at least nine large industrial and agribusiness firms and banks, in addition to his share of the coconut monopoly.²⁸ Enrile had good reason to fear that his opponents in the government would try to ease him from his cabinet position and strike at his properties and money through the newly-formed Presidential Commission on Good Government, which was investigating the "ill-gotten" wealth of Marcos regime officials and cronies.²⁹

At the same time, Enrile had both substantial political assets and political ambitions. He was the only KBL figure to survive the collapse of the Marcos regime with even greater prestige, thanks to his role in the "snap revolution" of February 1986. He stood to inherit the political loyalties of the nationwide network of former KBL mayors and governors replaced by Aquino. He also had an important base of support among those military officer activists who led the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) from March 1985 to the February 1986 "revolution." The RAM leadership quickly gravitated toward both Enrile and Ramos for protection against Ver and commanders supporting him. But distinct groups soon emerged within the RAM. One that included a number of staff officers

located in the Defense Ministry was closely identified with Enrile. These officers in turn formed a shadowy underground organization, called GUARDIAN, which recruited enlisted men, policemen, judges, and other officials as members, apparently devoted to a program of conservative, anti-communist political action.³⁰

2. Pressures on Aquino

Enrile did not wait for his foes within the Aquino government to move against him, but aggressively established his position as critic of Aquino's policy toward the communists and of the left-of-center officials who were most likely to be planning to force him out of the government. When Aquino announced her intention to seek negotiations with the CPP and released all political detainees as a first step toward reconciliation, Enrile saw an opportunity to position himself as the defender of the military against both the communists and the liberal left in the government.

Enrile publicly expressed reservations about the policy of negotiating with communists.³¹ Later, he complained about Aquino's "kid gloves" policy toward the NPA, including her "defensive posture," suggesting that it was causing the death of military and civilian personnel.³² In April he questioned whether there could be a ceasefire with regular NPA forces, and insisted that negotiations should be carried out only at the local or regional level. Negotiation with national level CPP leaders, he argued, would give the insurgents equal status with the government.³³ Enrile warned that communists would not agree to any reconciliation unless it was to their advantage.³⁴

Meanwhile the Defense Minister was building a political base from which he could challenge Aquino in the event that opposition forces could force her to call new elections. That base consisted of the former Marcos governors and mayors, as well as other former KBL politicians who were now without a champion. He courted the loyalists quietly through a former law partner who was enlisting their participation in a revived Nacionalista Party. Many KBL politicians were drawn to the new party in the belief that Enrile was behind its formation as a "fallback position" in case he was forced out of the government.³⁵ Enrile and the ex-KBL politicians courted each other. The Marcos loyalist movement publicly declared its support for Enrile in May.³⁶ In the Marcos heartland of Ilocos Norte, leading loyalist political figures pledged their allegiance to Enrile, who praised Marcos as "the only true hero of the North."³⁷

Aquino's original plan of keeping the AFP in a defensive posture while she pursued negotiations with the CPP was quickly abandoned when it became clear that the CPP would not accept an unconditional ceasefire and that the military would not tolerate such restrictions

on its operations. "We let them know we were not holding them back," explained a palace official later.³⁸ There never was a written order to the military about a "defensive posture."³⁹

Enrile and Ramos continued publicly to embrace the notion that the AFP was in a "defensive posture," but Enrile explained that it would be "without prejudice to any counteraction or initiation of efforts against...opportunity targets until and unless the ceasefire is in place."⁴⁰ Ramos also announced a policy of "protective security operations" which he described as "preemptive actions by means of vigorous patrols and redeployment of forces."⁴¹ In July the AFP began to call its posture "active defense."⁴²

Despite the military's aggressive patrolling and tactical offensives, the impression persisted abroad that the Aquino government was putting the AFP in the position of sitting ducks for NPA attacks. U.S. Defense Department officials contributed to that impression by their description of the AFP's posture in Congressional testimony.⁴³ According to a senior Defense Ministry official, however, the well-publicized ambushes of AFP units could not be blamed on any Aquino government policy. "Some people may be claiming the full [use] of their capabilities is hampered," said the official, "but we have not issued any such policy."⁴⁴

While she withdrew restrictions on AFP military operations, however, Aquino did not back away from her policy of negotiations with CPP/NPA national leadership. After its initial burst of enthusiasm, the government did not pursue the amnesty track aggressively, presumably because it recognized that it would make negotiations more difficult, and perhaps because the early weeks revealed no large numbers of guerrillas interested in giving themselves up.⁴⁵ There were no arrangements at local or regional levels to receive NPA guerrillas who wanted to surrender, and a plan to offer cash to guerrillas who turned in their guns was scrapped.⁴⁶

Enrile and the military shifted from opposition to negotiations per se to pressing Aquino to define the terms of any ceasefire. Enrile announced in May that the military wanted no ceasefire until the specific terms were settled. He demanded to know the government's position on where insurgents would have to stay and what the military would be allowed to do during a ceasefire.⁴⁷ By forcing the President to define her ceasefire terms, Enrile could put her in the position of either alienating the AFP further or signalling the CPP that there would be no compromise ceasefire.

Under pressure from Enrile and Ramos to specify what her terms for a ceasefire would be, Aquino declared in May that she would negotiate a "ceasefire in place" in which the AFP would be "positioned to ward off any threats to the security of the people during the period of negotiations." In a passage that a Malacanang official later said was aimed at mollifying hardliners in the

military, she added that there would be "no return of the troops to barracks that will leave the insurgents a free zone within which to operate with impunity."⁴⁸

Aquino's announcement in early June that negotiations for a ceasefire would soon begin with the CPP leadership triggered a political campaign by military officers aligned with Enrile directed against those in the Aquino government who were behind the reconciliation effort. The theme of the campaign was that Aquino's key civilian advisers were planning to forge an "alliance" with the communists by negotiating for a coalition government.

A Manila newspaper, without citing any sources, reported that "communist sympathizers and left-leaning members of the Aquino government" were assisting the CPP to take over the government through the negotiations.⁴⁹ In a second story, the newspaper alleged that "radical elements" close to Aquino had failed to gain the loyalty of ranking military officers and therefore wanted to "use the CPP-NPA as a...hedge against the armed forces."⁵⁰ These charges were paralleled in reports that certain AFP officers working with Enrile at the Defense Ministry circulated privately.⁵¹

By exploiting the opposition to Aquino and her policies with a group of AFP generals and colonels who were still loyal to Marcos, Enrile both strengthened his hand politically and increased the pressure against Aquino's negotiation policy. When Arturo Tolentino, Marcos' running mate in the February elections, tried to have himself "inaugurated" as acting President after occupying the Manila Hotel in early July, several loyalist officers joined the rebellion. It quickly dissolved when Enrile and Ramos failed to join it, but there was substantial evidence of prior contacts between the loyalists and the officers close to Enrile.

Some officers at the Defense Ministry admitted that they had known about the plan ahead of time but did nothing to stop it.⁵² A government committee headed by Health Minister Alfredo Bengzon investigated the incident and concluded that Enrile himself knew of the plan "several days in advance" and had "manipulated the event to extract...his own media mileage."⁵³ A senior military aide to Enrile was quoted as saying that Enrile had known of the plan and encouraged Colonel Rolando Abadilla to organize it, in order to show the government the extent of military dissatisfaction with its policies and its loyalty to Enrile.⁵⁴

The armed men who joined the Tolentino coup reportedly wore headbands and insignias of the GUARDIAN organization, which was linked with Enrile's chief of security, Colonel Greg Honasan.⁵⁵ In the aftermath of the Manila Hotel incident, military officers in the Defense Ministry and certain field commanders openly treated loyalist officers involved in the incident as allies. A staff officer at the Defense Ministry was quoted as saying that the

loyalists "were just expressing the disenchantment most of us feel." Brigadier General Jaime Echeverria, one of five loyalist generals present at the Manila Hotel, explained in defense of his participation in the rebellion that the Aquino government was "communist-leaning" and that its policies were exposing AFP troops to NPA attacks.⁵⁶ Enrile's security chief and hero of the February rebellion, Colonel Honasan, told a journalist, "They [the loyalists] are not our enemies....We did not want to attack because others would be happy to see us fight each other."⁵⁷

Enrile was the real winner in the affair, having demonstrated that the government's stability depended on his own support for Aquino. He flaunted his new power. After a tense confrontation in a cabinet meeting over Enrile's pardon for the loyalist military men, he warned Agriculture Minister Ramos Mitra, "We helped you in February, and we helped this week. I don't know what we'll do if there is a next time."⁵⁸

Aquino was reportedly shaken by the failure of General Ramos, on whom she had relied as a counterweight to Enrile in the military establishment, to warn her in advance of the loyalist plans.⁵⁹ The government committee that investigated the whole affair blamed the failure of military intelligence to give any warning and recommended the establishment of a new intelligence body that would be under the President's personal authority; only a few weeks later, Aquino ordered that the "Office of National Intelligence" be set up.⁶⁰

In response to Aquino's announcement that peace talks were about to begin, the AFP and Defense Ministry began to bring public pressure to bear on the issue. At an AFP-sponsored seminar, Deputy Chief of Staff Brigadier General Edmundo Ermita voiced the military's position that the surrender of arms by the NPA should be a "nonnegotiable" condition for a ceasefire.⁶¹ An even bolder move was the release of a paper by the Defense Ministry's Assistant Secretary for Plans and Programs that explicitly attacked Aquino's failure to implement a program for returnees and implicitly attacked its willingness to negotiate with the communists. The paper suggested that CPP/NPA strategy was to "titillate the national and local civil governments with hopes of peace and reconciliation" while they immobilize the AFP, and then try to win enough seats in a national election to form a coalition government which they would dominate by 1991. The paper also implied that Aquino and her civilian advisers were hopelessly naive about the communists and unwittingly cooperating in the CPP strategy to gain power.⁶²

Deputy Minister of Defense Rafael Ileta made it clear in an interview in August that the military did not believe a ceasefire would be in the government's interest. He conceded that both sides needed a "breather" for different reasons, but asserted that the insurgents have "time on their side," and therefore have an interest in a ceasefire. Ileta concluded, therefore, that the government's interests lay in sustained military pressure on the NPA.⁶³

Since Aquino persisted in seeking a negotiated ceasefire with the CPP and would not insist on the unrealistic condition of laying down arms, Enrile and the military exerted pressure primarily by specifying other conditions for a ceasefire that they hoped would scuttle an agreement. Claiming that he spoke on behalf of both the Defense Ministry and the armed forces, Enrile ruled out any negotiated agreement that would result in any one of three conditions:

1. The surrender of sovereignty by the government over any part of the national territory.
2. The recognition of any areas as being politically or militarily 'controlled' by the Communist Party of the Philippines, the New People's Army, or the National Democratic Front.
3. The acknowledgement that any area or community is 'defended' by any armed force other than the legitimate police and military forces of the government.⁶⁴

Points two and three were aimed at closing off all avenues of compromise that government negotiators might contemplate as a basis for a ceasefire. By denying that the NPA controls any barrios or territory and by asserting that forces under the AFP's control "defend" all territory and population, Enrile and Ramos were reserving for the AFP the right to move freely wherever it wished during a ceasefire. The purpose of point three was to ensure that the responsibility for maintaining peace in the barrios remained with the military rather than being transferred to municipal mayors.

The military's opposition to any agreement that would prevent AFP operations in NPA-controlled barrios blocked regional ceasefires in Mindanao. When the governor of Misamis Oriental, along with eleven mayors and several clergymen, met with members of the CPP's North central Mindanao regional party committee and the Mindanao Commission to negotiate a ceasefire, the Communist Party officials offered an indefinite truce in the entire region. But the military rejected it because the rebels had not agreed to lay down their arms.⁶⁵

In Davao del Norte, the governor, along with eleven mayors and local clergy, negotiated a province-wide ceasefire with CPP officials requiring an end to military movements outside the detachment perimeter and permitting police action only when requested by residents of a particular area.⁶⁶ Nine days later, the AFP, which had not been included in the negotiations, sent a new battalion into the province. On August 27, the NPA ambushed part of that battalion killing 30 men. The attack occurred in the ceasefire area after the soldiers had made what AFP officers described as a "barrio visitation" aimed at "securing the area."⁶⁷ After being

warned by the NPA that three ranger units were converging on them, the province governor had tried unsuccessfully to halt the operation.⁶⁸ Three senior Defense Ministry officials then denounced the agreement, complaining that the governor had "imposed" terms on the military that would have tied the military's hands and allowed the rebels to control a certain area.⁶⁹

The AFP's rejection of a ceasefire rested in part on the belief that it is militarily superior to the insurgents and need not concede any territory or population. "There is no part of the country that is under the control of the NPA," said one staff officer. "I can occupy any part of the country as long as I want."⁷⁰ Enrile encouraged this view by suggesting that the AFP could mount a massive offensive against the NPA, and that it would "finish" the insurgency in two or three years if only Aquino would give it a "free hand."⁷¹

Furthermore, the idea of negotiating peace with a movement bent on overthrowing the state by force contradicted every strategic principle the AFP officers had ever learned in military academy or their training in the U.S. AFP officers, priding themselves on their professional knowledge of communist strategy as well as counterinsurgency, could not concede that a group of civilians with no government experience could have a more valid approach to the problem than they did. They could not help regarding Aquino and her civilian advisers as being manipulated by the CPP.

Another factor motivating some AFP officers to oppose the President's policy of negotiating a ceasefire was the feeling that the military should have a greater share of political power. A number of officers in the RAM were political activists who scorned civilian politicians as having made a mess of the country.⁷² They had begun planning various military options for moving against the Marcos regime by October or November 1985.⁷³ They had experienced the heady feeling of power when they participated in the rebellion against Marcos in February and became national heroes. Within a matter of weeks after the Aquino government was formed, a new power clique emerged around Enrile which was referred to by others in RAM as the "MND [Ministry of National Defense] group." Some RAM members outside the group perceived it as still having a "hangover" from the "victory" of February.⁷⁴

The MND officers believed that the military was the hope for the country. Yet Aquino had not included military leadership in the key decisions regarding the insurgency. As time went by, the gap between these RAM officers' notion of the military's rightful political role and the reality of the military's subordinate status in the Aquino government grew ever wider.

The RAM ideology echoed Enrile's view of the AFP as the main stabilizing institution in Philippine society.⁷⁵ A leading RAM

figure, considered to be the "brains" in the MND group, described the military as "right in the center, balancing the right and the left" and likened the Philippine political system to a seesaw: "When the right is down, the left is up. If the left is up too far, the military has to come down on the left to maintain the balance." The Aquino government, he said, "had better be careful not to let the left get too strong."⁷⁶

Given the extreme politicization of these young officers, it was easy for them to view civilians in the Aquino government who advocated a different policy toward the insurgency as being motivated not by patriotism or idealism but by selfish and even traitorous objectives. The same RAM officer suggested in August that some Aquino advisers might have wanted to negotiate a coalition government agreement with the left in order to insure that they can stay in power beyond Aquino's current term. He complained that the same officials, including Executive Secretary Joker Arroyo, were publicly playing the role of "nationalists" in relation to the U.S., while privately running to the U.S. Embassy after a tense cabinet meeting with Enrile to demand that the Americans do something about Enrile's threat to take over the government.

3. Showdown with Enrile

During September, as Aquino traveled to the U.S. and the Constitutional Commission neared the completion of its draft charter, both Enrile's political attacks on Aquino's policies and pressures from Enrile and the military to adopt their counterinsurgency policy increased dramatically. While Aquino was reaffirming her policy to "exhaust all means to achieve peaceful and nonviolent solutions to the problems of communist insurgency,"⁷⁷ a day-long conference of AFP commanders agreed on a "statement of consensus" affirming the need for a "national plan" to defeat the insurgency, the assignment of missions and tasks to various agencies, and the allocation of necessary resources to accomplish them. It essentially restated the need for an integrated counterinsurgency plan, which the Defense Ministry and AFP had proposed early in Aquino's presidency.⁷⁸

While Aquino was abroad, Enrile, Ramos, and Vice-President Salvador Laurel all agreed to push for official acceptance of the military's integrated counterinsurgency program. One day before her return, the National Security Council held a "working meeting" without the President. Ramos presented the integrated counterinsurgency plan to the meeting, including plans for concentrating military forces in high priority areas to destroy the NPA. The meeting accepted the Ramos proposal "in principle"—a decision, however, that had no official standing in Aquino's absence.⁷⁹

At a cabinet meeting the same day, Ramos reportedly urged that the government redefine its policy toward the insurgency, and some cabinet members expressed support for a harder line.⁸⁰ Both Ramos and Enrile made their sharpest attacks on negotiations to coincide with the new push for acceptance of the military's plan. Ramos declared that the policy of reconciliation had put the military in a "disadvantageous" position, while Enrile said the delay in the peace talks gave the NPA "time to consolidate and strengthen its forces."⁸¹

On September 25, Aquino convened a meeting of the NSC and was presented with the new integrated counterinsurgency plan, but made no decision on it.⁸² Aquino did not want to prejudice the negotiations on a temporary ceasefire agreement, which appeared to be making substantial progress.⁸³ But the negotiations were suddenly set back when the military arrested Rodolfo Salas in Manila. The Defense Ministry identified him as the chairman of the military commission of the CPP.⁸⁴

At the same time, Enrile sharpened his attack on Aquino's policy of negotiations as well the legitimacy of her government. He and those RAM officers allied with him were not only interested in forcing Aquino to alter her policy on the insurgency; they were also determined to disrupt plans for the legitimization of the government. The timing of Enrile's new offensive was linked to the imminent completion of the draft Constitution, which would allow Aquino to remain in office until 1992, and which would be submitted to the electorate for approval in February 1987. The Enrile group apparently decided sometime in late September or early October to force a political crisis before the plebiscite for the proposed constitution. The group wanted to force Aquino to call early elections or to reorganize the government in order to give Enrile predominant power.

Enrile attacked the government's abolition of the 1973 constitution and the Batasang Pambansa (National Assembly) elected during the Marcos period. He suggested that those decisions were bound to result in "an unstable government." He claimed that Aquino was in power only because Enrile and the military had given it to her in February. "We had the power in our hands," he declared, "but gave it to them on the assumption they would use the mandate of the people...as the basis for their rule." Enrile went on to suggest that Aquino had betrayed the military's trust and was now ruling the country "by virtue of a revolution and not of an election."⁸⁵ He also expressed his impatience with Aquino's policy of "exhausting all peaceful means" and accused Aquino of trying to contain the insurgency by using only "one hand."⁸⁶

Aquino had no alternative but to try to placate the military and Enrile. She wanted to replace Enrile and military officers who were defying or undermining her policies and according to a Malacanang official, she was in the process of moving officers whom she could

trust into key military positions. But the process would take time.⁸⁷ Meanwhile, she depended on the support of Chief of Staff Ramos, who had already indicated his agreement with Enrile's criticism of her policy toward the insurgency.

Aquino's response to Enrile's escalating attack against her policy and her government, therefore, was to make several key concessions to the military establishment. Meeting on October 8, the cabinet unanimously approved several recommendations by Ramos, including an increase in budgetary support for the AFP, a more comprehensive plan for amnesty and rehabilitation, and the adoption of a "national strategy" to defeat the insurgency.⁸⁸

But Enrile's plan for destabilizing the Aquino government had already been set in motion. Members of the RAM faction close to Enrile began to talk openly about the necessity for some military action to change the government. In conversation with one U.S. official, a RAM officer said they had to "save the country" by eliminating the leftists from the cabinet. He said they wanted Enrile to be the main power in the government and to restore the old Batasan (Assembly). The officer's main justification for military action was the government's failure to adopt a strong policy against the insurgency. He complained that communists were given "too much leeway for political organizing" and even given "legitimacy" by the government's policy. He specifically mentioned the Partido ng Bayan, suggesting that Enrile's military allies wanted to prevent it from participating in the local and congressional elections scheduled for 1987.⁸⁹

The same military officers attached to the Defense Ministry also provided reporters with details of plans for a "surgical strike" on the palace and other key targets in Manila by the 1,000-man security force attached to the Defense Ministry.⁹⁰ The objective of the plan, code-named "God Save the Queen," was said to be the removal of key members of Aquino's cabinet and the establishment of a government structured like the former Marcos government, with Enrile as Prime Minister. Aquino would be allowed to remain as President but would clearly become a figurehead. The Defense Ministry's security force would patrol the streets with armored vehicles to prevent large concentrations of "people power" demonstrators.⁹¹

As rumors of an Enrile-led coup against Aquino began to multiply, Enrile visited several regional commanders in the Visayas and Mindanao in search of support. Upon his return, military sources claimed that he had "expressions of support" from military officers there.⁹² According to AFP sources, the Enrile-RAM group had actively courted the operations officers in key AFP commands and tried to isolate Ramos from the commanders.⁹³ Aquino was so alarmed that she sought a reconciliation meeting with Enrile and tried to placate him with hardline rhetoric about the insurgency. She declared "our patience has worn thin," and vowed to set a deadline

"soon" for ending the peace talks.⁹⁴ She was no longer fighting for a policy but for the survival of her government.

But Enrile defiantly rejected Aquino's authority, saying, "we serve no one but the people of this country. This was the mandate of the February revolution." He threatened to "consult the military organization" if Aquino fired him.⁹⁵ Before Aquino left for Japan on November 10, she referred to the rumors of a coup "or an emergency contrived to justify the called-for action" and warned that she would call her supporters to the streets again if necessary.⁹⁶ But she was hoping that Ramos would act to head off any coup attempt by the Enrile faction of the military.

Ramos, who had previously stood for civilian supremacy and a non-political AFP, seemed to throw his weight behind Aquino at the end of October, reiterating that the President was the Commander in Chief of the AFP and criticizing Enrile's public attacks on Aquino.⁹⁷ But the Chief of Staff's ability to turn back Enrile's challenge was uncertain at best. The Deputy Minister of Defense, retired General Rafael Iileto, who was considered an ally of Ramos, estimated that Ramos had the loyalty of 35 percent of the AFP, Enrile had 25 percent and that the remaining 40 percent were not committed or loyal to either.⁹⁸ Ramos acted, therefore, with utmost caution in moving against Enrile, attempting to maintain the maximum possible unity within the military.

Before Aquino left Manila for Tokyo, Ramos order AFP commanders to take action to "neutralize" any plot by "military adventurists" to overthrow the government, but AFP headquarters refused to say whether such a plot had been uncovered, saying it was a "sensitive issue."⁹⁹ Ramos held a series of meetings, first with Enrile and four service commanders, then with Enrile alone, and finally, on November 8, with some forty senior commanders. At the latter meeting, Ramos reportedly presented the demands of disaffected officers to the generals. These included the ouster of cabinet members suspected of "communist sympathies," establishment of a government body to try communist violations of human rights, a demonstration of AFP strength against the NPA, and rejection of the NDF ceasefire proposal. Ramos reportedly found that most of the military were sympathetic to these demands.¹⁰⁰

In the immediate aftermath of these meetings, Ramos seemed unable to act decisively against the dissident military officers. After Aquino's tough speech as she departed for Tokyo, one of the self-styled coup plotters mentioned to a journalist that Aquino should arrest the people she was criticizing. This was a taunt to Aquino and hinted that Ramos would not move against them.¹⁰¹ On November 11, Ramos publicly denied that there had been any military plot against the Aquino government, thus virtually exonerating the Enrile faction of responsibility.¹⁰² While AFP sources reported that the "God Save the Queen" plan had been postponed, a key member

of the MND group later vowed, "we will move before this year is up."¹⁰³

The threat of violence from some sectors of the military and their allies was demonstrated on November 14, the day Aquino returned from her visit to Japan. The mutilated body of Rolando Olalia, Chairman of both the leftist KMU labor alliance and the Partido ng Bayan, was found north of Manila. For several days before, unidentified men had been spying on him. Just three days earlier the PnB had announced its endorsement of the draft constitution, and the MND group had openly complained in October that Aquino was allowing communists to organize freely. Aquino said she interpreted the Olalia assassination, the kidnapping of a Japanese business executive, and a bomb set off in a Manila apartment store as aimed at "destabilizing or negating what I have done."¹⁰⁴

During the next several days, Ramos continued to meet with both the MND group and other top military leaders to arrive at a complex set of compromises. The results of these understandings emerged over a four day period from November 20 to 23. On November 20, Ramos presented a "suggestion" to Aquino on behalf of the military leadership, which included a series of military demands for the firing of "left-leaning" cabinet ministers (meaning Arroyo, Pimentel and Sanchez), a tougher posture toward the insurgency, and more direct consultations with the military on the ceasefire negotiations.¹⁰⁵ Ramos apparently got the MND group to agree to postpone any action until after Aquino had been presented with the military's demands. Meanwhile, however, he had gotten most senior AFP commanders to agree to support the ouster of Enrile as part of a broader reorganization of the government. Thus Ramos could offer Aquino a "package deal": fire cabinet ministers whom the military considered too left-wing and accede to other military requests while also firing Enrile.¹⁰⁶

Aquino seemed ready to agree. Officials close to Aquino indicated that she would "invite" some cabinet members to resign so that they could run for the Senate in 1987 and that she would bring in a new "chief of staff," thus diminishing Arroyo's power.¹⁰⁷ Then another unexpected development occurred which changed the context of Aquino-military bargaining. On November 22, Ramos reported to Aquino that the MND group was planning to collaborate with Marcos loyalists to seize the National Assembly building and convene a session of the old legislature.¹⁰⁸

The next day Aquino convened an all-day session of the cabinet at which she asked for the resignations of all ministers, fired Enrile, and replaced him with Deputy Minister Rafael Ileto. In a televised speech, she also threatened to "terminate all further negotiations" with the CPP unless its negotiators agreed to a ceasefire by the end of November.¹⁰⁹ It appeared as though Aquino

had indeed agreed to the "package deal" proposal by Ramos, but a Malacanang official familiar with Aquino's thinking denied that there was any such deal. "There could have been a package deal had Enrile's boys held their hands longer," said the official. "But since they were impatient, the deal, which was never formalized, was off."110

From the perspective of this Malacanang official, the ouster of Enrile and the elimination of the extremist officers in the MND and their security force eased the pressure on Aquino and strengthened her bargaining position with regard to the military leadership. While she was expected to replace ministers Pimentel and Sanchez, the decision, according to this official, the decision would be based on adverse "public opinion" rather than on the demands of the military.

While Aquino reasserted her authority by firing Enrile and finalizing the ceasefire agreement with the CPP, the power balance between Aquino and the military shifted strongly in favor of the military during November. Senior military officers reportedly believed that "the other half of the bargain" remained to be carried out, indicating that they still expected Aquino to act on their demands for a harder line against the insurgents and reorganization of her cabinet to exclude "leftists." They were concerned that the victory over Enrile might "tempt her advisers to drop plans for acting on these issues."111

The signing of a sixty-day ceasefire and the prospect that negotiations would turn to more substantive issues represented a move in the opposite direction demanded by these military officers. While officials in the President's office believed that the bulk of the military will accept the ceasefire, they also feared that some of the military men who agreed with Enrile on counterinsurgency policy "might attempt to actively sabotage it."112 It seemed likely that Aquino's effort to find a political alternative to military force in dealing with the insurgency would be the object of both overt and covert opposition from within the military.

The November crisis is probably not the last time Aquino will face efforts by the military to pressure her on policy toward the insurgency. Enrile's ability to threaten a coup was eliminated, but he still has the capability to mobilize opposition to Aquino's policy from various sectors of society. Moreover, as a palace official noted, when the negotiations turn to substantive socioeconomic issues such as land reform, the landowning class can also be expected to be more directly involved. Even if the ceasefire agreement survives the two-month period without a major breakdown, Malacanang officials expect another "flashpoint" around the time of the plebiscite on the constitution from foes of her counterinsurgency policy and her Presidency.

The unfolding confrontation with the military and Enrile suggested that in spite of Aquino's immediate victory over her Defense Minister, it would be impossible to implement a predominantly political approach to the insurgency problem as long as the subordinate status of the military to civilian leadership was in doubt. While Aquino was constantly on the defensive trying to accommodate both objections from her military, the AFP leadership, with U.S. backing, continued to maintain the initiative in moving government policy toward a conventional counterinsurgency strategy. Unless these political dynamics could be reversed, the prospects for either political stability or a successful pursuit of a non-military approach to the insurgency were bleak.

Notes for Chapter 4

1. In October 1986, Aquino said her intelligence chief had told her that "no more than 5 percent of the insurgent army were "diehard communists." Interview in Die Welt (Bonn), November 3, 1986, p. 7.
2. Text of Aquino's campaign speech in Davao City, January 17, 1986, Peryodiko Dabaw (Davao City), n.d.
3. South China Morning Post, March 23, 1986.
4. Times Journal, March 24, 1986.
5. Ibid.
6. Interviews with Aquino in La Republica, March 11, 1986, FBIS, APDR, March 13, 1986, p. P1; and The Daily Yomiuri, March 23, 1986, FBIS, APDR, March 26, 1986, p. P8. The contacts with the CPP/NPA leaders were so closely held that Presidential spokesman Rene Saguisag said he did not know the identity of the intermediary or the progress of the talks. AFP dispatch, April 13, 1986, JPRS-SEA-86-075, April 30, 1986, p. 48.
7. This distrust is best exemplified by the staunch nationalist and social democrat Sen. Jose Diokno, who was named by President Aquino to head both the Commission on Human Rights and the government panel of negotiators for the talks with the CPP. In an interview with an American free-lance journalist, Diokno said of the CPP leadership, "I would probably be behind bars if they took power." Notes of interview with Diokno by David Young, Manila, June 13, 1986.
8. Interview with Aquino, La Republica (Rome), March 11, 1986.
9. Interview with an official of the Office of the President, August 21, 1986.
10. In May 1986, Minister of Political Affairs Antonio Cuenco expressed the consensus among the former democratic oppositionists that "a fundamentally military solution cannot achieve victory." Ang Pahayagang Malaya, May 16, 1986.
11. Washington Post, April 21, 1986.
12. Business Day, April 21, 1986.
13. Ibid.
14. For a detailed account and documentation, see chapter VII.

15. Text of Aquino campaign speech in Davao City, January 17, 1986, Peryodiko Dabaw.
16. Statement by Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard L. Armitage to the House Subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific, May 15, 1986, p. 6. Interview with State Department official, June 16, 1986.
17. The military leadership clearly preferred the mayors elected under Marcos, who were more cooperative with the military. It reportedly argued that the incumbents had genuine popular support and understood the needs of the population better. Guy Sacerdoti, "Shadows of the Past," Far Eastern Economic Review, June 29, 1986, p. 42.
18. See Manila Far East Broadcasting Company, June 4, 1986, FBIS, APDR, June 5, 1985, p. P9.
19. Interview with an officer at AFP headquarters, Camp Aguinaldo, August 29, 1986.
20. Guy Sacerdoti, "March towards Reform," Far Eastern Economic Review, May 29, 1986, p. 42.
21. Interview with official in the Office of the President, August 19, 1986.
22. Interview with Ministry of Defense official, August 21, 1986.
23. Political affairs Minister Antonio Cuenco recommended the exclusion of the military from the negotiations, after receiving a report from his Deputy Minister on a dialogue with NPA commanders in Samar. (Ang Pahayagang Malaya, May 16, 1986.) This decision was attacked in a paper released to the press by a senior Defense Ministry official. Brig. Gen. Isidro B. Agunod (ret.), Assistant Secretary for Plans and Programs, Ministry of National Defense, "Post Revolution Communist Strategy in the RP, Indicators and Potentials," August 22, 1986.
24. Interview with a U.S. State Department official, June 16, 1986.
25. Aquino eventually agreed to reestablish the National Security Council, primarily as a vehicle for reconciliation with Enrile and the AFP leadership. Interview with an official in the Office of the President, August 19, 1986.
26. See remarks by Enrile to the forum "Dimensions of Insurgency," sponsored by the Harvard Business School Association of the Philippines, Manila, June 20, 1985.

27. See David Wurfel, "The Aquino Legacy and the Emerging Succession Struggle in the Philippines," 1984, Southeast Asian Affairs, 1985 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), p. 267.
28. Fred Poole and Max Vanzi, Revolution in the Philippines: The United States in a Hall of Cracked Mirrors (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984), pp. 120-121, 252, 253. After Marcos' ouster, a former business associate of Enrile's told a reporter that Enrile is one of the five richest men in the country, with extensive holdings in banking, logging, coconut products, and media operations. Philippine-American News, June 16-31, 1986. Enrile's only comment on his wealth was a denial that he received any "emolument" from United Coconut Oil Mill (Unicom), and that he owned only one percent of the stock of the United Coconut Planters Bank. Times Journal, March 12, 1986.
29. See the analysis in Manila Chronicle, June 22, 1986. It was later reported that Aquino had promised Enrile early in her Presidency that he would be exempted from investigations of Marcos regime officials' hidden wealth. POGG chairman Jovito Salonga seemed to change the scope of the Commission's investigation by suggesting that it was created only to recover the ill-gotten wealth of President Marcos himself. The Philippine Daily Inquirer, November 12, 1986.
30. See Luis R. Mauricio, "Fraternal Comrades in Arms," Ang Pahayagang Malaya, August 7, 1986.
31. Washington Post, March 4, 1986.
32. Ang Pahayagang Malaya, March 19, 1986.
33. Business Day, April 11, 1986; Manila Far East Broadcasting Company, March 25, 1986, FBIS, APDR, March 26, 1986, p. P14; For Aquino's position, see Kyodo dispatch, April 28, 1986, FBIS, APDR, April 29, 1986, pp. P1-2.
34. Manila Far East Broadcasting Company, April 28, 1986, FBIS, APDR, April 29, 1986, p. P1; an AFP official was quoted as arguing that the NPA would only agree to a ceasefire in order to build up their forces. See New Day, May 3-4, 1986.
35. Manila Bulletin, May 12, 1986.
36. Manila Bulletin, May 12, 1986
37. Manila Chronicle, June 20, 1986.

38. Interview with an official of the Office of the President, August 28, 1986.
39. Interview with Ministry of Defense official, August 21, 1986.
40. Business Day, April 29, 1986. Ramos later declared that until a ceasefire was negotiated, military operations would continue without letup. Far Eastern Broadcasting Company, May 20, 1986, FBIS, APDR, May 24, 1986, p. P7.
41. Business Day, April 23, 1986.
42. The Manila Evening Post, July 19, 1986.
43. See chapter 7, pp. 134-137 passim.
44. Interview with Ministry of Defense official, Camp Aguinaldo, August 26, 1986. An American Embassy official confirmed that AFP commanders were being ordered to carry out "aggressive patrolling," and that "if they see an NPA base camp, they will go after it." Interview, August 19, 1986.
45. Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard L. Armitage said in Congressional testimony on May 15, 1986, that "only about 100 insurgents have come down out of the hills in reply to Aquino's offer." Transcript of hearing before the House Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs.
46. The cash-for-guns plan was reported in Business Day, April 11, 1986. Aquino indicated in a speech on May 23, 1986 that it was no longer being considered. Ang Pahayagang Malaya, May 24, 1986.
47. PNA, May 21, 1986, FBIS, APDR, May 21, 1986, p. P7.
48. Text of speech by President Aquino, May 23, Manila Bulletin, May 29, 1986, p. P3; interview with official in the Office of the President, Manila, June 21, 1986.
49. Manila Evening Post, June 16, 1986.
50. Manila Evening Post, June 18, 1986.
51. Interview with a State Department official, June 30, 1986; Ang Pahayagang Malaya, June 30, 1986.
52. Business Day, July 10, 1986.
53. Manila Chronicle, August 16, 1986.
54. Ang Katipunan, July 1986, p. 5, quoting an article in the San Francisco Examiner.

55. Luis R. Mauricio, "Fraternal Comrades in Arms," Ang Pahayagang Malaya, August 7, 1986.
56. Manila Chronicle, July 9, 1986; Business Day, July 9, 1986.
57. Business Day, July 10, 1986. Not only were the loyalist officers allowed to return to their positions in the AFP without any punishment; a group of colonels, led by Col. Rolando Abadilla, the military coordinator of the Tolentino putsch, was permitted to organize a new Marcos "loyalist" group in the military. As one Defense Ministry official explained, "They have an itch, so they can scratch as long as they don't draw blood." Interview with Col. Rex Robles, August 18, 1986.
58. Time, July 21, 1986, p. 33.
59. A Defense Ministry official recalls, "Her adviser said she couldn't sleep, because either Ramos knew or didn't know. If he didn't know, what kind of Chief of Staff is he?" Interview, Camp Aguinaldo, August 21, 1986.
60. Manila Chronicle, August 16, 1986.
61. Manila Chronicle, July 4, 1986.
62. Agunod, "Post-Revolution Communist Strategy in the RP, Indicators and Potentials," pp. 1-2, 5-6.
63. Interview, Camp Aguinaldo, August 26, 1986.
64. Manila Bulletin, September 4, 1986.
65. On the Misamis Oriental negotiations and the military's position, see Philippine Daily Inquirer, August 14 and August 18, 1986; Mr. & Ms., August 29-September 4, 1986, p. 19; News Herald, August 28, 1986.
66. Carolyn O. Arguillas, "The Laac Ceasefire: An Experiment of Sorts in Mindanao," Veritas, August 21-27, 1986, p. 18; Francoise Joaquin, "Ceasefire in Davao: Peace at the 11th Hour," Mr. & Ms., August 29-September 4, 1986, p. 19.
67. Interview with a Scout Ranger officer, September 2, 1986.
68. Manila Chronicle, August 29 and 31, 1986.
69. Manila Chronicle, September 2, 1986.
70. Ibid.

71. Radyo Ng Bayan in Tagalog, July 26, 1986, FBIS, APDR, July 28, 1986, p. P8; New Day, August 4, 1986; Manila Far East Broadcasting Company, August 6, 1986, FBIS, APDR, August 7, 1986, p. P12; Kyodo dispatch, August 29, 1986, FBIS, APDR, September 2, 1986, p. P3.
72. See one of the early reports on the reform movement, an Agence France Presse dispatch, in Ang Pahayagang Malaya, May 16, 1985.
73. On the existence of the "secret" movement within RAM and its coup plans, see Business Day, April 8, 1986; Washington Post, March 1, 1986.
74. Business Day, April 8, 1986.
75. The AFP, Enrile said, is "the only institution supported by the people that can firmly stand in the way of a leftist or rightist adventure against the present government," and it must follow a "centrist course." The Manila Evening Post, September 20, 1986.
76. Interview with Defense Ministry official, Camp Aguinaldo, August 21, 1986.
77. The Washington Post, September 11, 1986.
78. Manila Bulletin, September 10, 1986; Business Day, September 29, 1986.
79. This paragraph is based on an interview with an AFP source, Washington, D.C., October 14, 1986.
80. AFP dispatch, September 23, 1986, FBIS, APDR, September 24, 1986, p. P1; Manila Times, September 24, 1986.
81. Far East Broadcasting Company, September 24, 1986, FBIS, APDR, September 25, 1986, p. P3; Far East Broadcasting Company, September 23, 1986, FBIS, APDR, September 24, 1986, p. P2.
82. Interview with an NAFF source, Washington, D.C., October 14, 1986.
83. AFP dispatch, September 29, 1986, FBIS, APDR, September 29, 1986, p. P2.
84. The Washington Post, October 1, 1986. The NDF retreated to an insistence on approval of its proposal for safety and immunity guarantees before any further negotiations on "substantive matters." Manila Chronicle, October 5, 1986; Business Day, October 6, 1986.

85. Kyodo dispatch, October 2, 1986, FBIS, APDR, October 3, 1986, p. 3. See also Philippine Daily Inquirer, October 8, 1986, for another Enrile speech along the same lines.
86. Business Day, October 7 and 8, 1986.
87. Interview with official in the Office of the President, August 28, 1986.
88. Business Day, October 9, 1986. Approved, however, was only a broad outline of a "national strategy." Shaping a comprehensive plan would require agreement among various ministries, including labor, education, local government, and justice—whose ministers were believed to be skeptical of the military's approach. Philippine Daily Inquirer, October 14, 1986.
89. Interview with a U.S. official, Washington, D.C., November 21, 1986.
90. The Defense Ministry had formed an elite force, ostensibly for the purpose of countering loyalist or communist terrorists based in Metro-Manila, under the command of Lt. Col. Red Kapunan. Manila Chronicle, November 9, 1986. According to AFP sources, it had accumulated an estimated 1,500 M-14s and 180 sophisticated automatic weapons in addition to older stocks of Uzis and armored tanks. See New Day, June 30, 1986, p. 15.
91. Business Day, November 7, 1986; The Washington Post, November 10, 1986.
92. Business Day, October 21, 1986.
93. Business Day, November 7, 1986.
94. AFP dispatch, October 20, 1986, FBIS, October 21, 1986, p. P1; The Washington Post, October 23, 1986.
95. Christian Science Monitor, November 3, 1986. Enrile claimed that the Aquino government was formed as a coalition with civilian and military components on an equal footing and repeated his argument that Aquino had lost the right to govern, because she had taken her oath under the 1973 Constitution and then scrapped it. See Business Day, October 31, 1986.
96. New York Times, November 10, 1986.
97. Armando Doronila, "A Strongman Emerges," Manila Chronicle, October 26, 1986; AFP dispatch, October 31, 1986, FBIS, October 31, 1986; Christian Science Monitor, November 3, 1986.

98. Quoted by journalist Seiichi Okawa in Tempo (Jakarta), November 8, 1986, p. 18.
99. Manila Chronicle, November 7, 1986.
100. Manila Chronicle, November 9, 1986; New York Times, November 9, 1986.
101. New York Times, November 10, 1986.
102. Ang Pahayagang Malaya, November 13, 1986; New York Times, November 9, 1986.
103. Ang Pahayagang Malaya, November 11, 1986; New York Times, November 17, 1986.
104. New York Times, November 20, 1986.
105. Business Day, November 21, 1986. According to a palace official, this news report was erroneous in suggesting that demands for early Presidential elections and convening the old National Assembly were included in Ramos' "suggestion." Telephone interview, November 27, 1986.
106. The Washington Post, November 25, 1986.
107. The Washington Post, November 21 and 22, 1986.
108. The Washington Post, November 24, 1986. Most observers expressed doubt, however, that such a plot was actually being put into operation. See Los Angeles Times, November 24, 1986.
109. The Washington Post, November 24, 1986.
110. Telephone interview with an official in the Office of the President, November 27, 1986.
111. The New York Times, November 25 and 26, 1986.
112. Telephone interview with an official in the Office of the President, November 27, 1986.

CHAPTER 5

The New AFP and Counterinsurgency

The decision to resort to military force as part of an integrated counterinsurgency plan would have to rest on the hope that the "new" AFP, with a professional military leadership and substantial reforms, can implement counterinsurgency operations more effectively than the old AFP under Marcos and Chief of Staff Fabian Ver. But how realistic is it to expect the NAFF to succeed in the future where it had so clearly failed in the past? What is AFP's counterinsurgency strategy and how would it be carried out? This chapter explores the question of continuity and change in the military's counterinsurgency operations.

1. The New AFP: Progress and Limits of Reform

With the ouster of Marcos, the NAFF, under Chief of Staff Ramos, acted quickly to eliminate the personal and institutional legacy of the Marcos era. Twenty-four of 36 "overstaying generals"—those who had been allowed to serve beyond mandatory retirement—were immediately retired; fourteen other generals who had held key posts under Marcos, including eleven of the twelve Regional Commanders, were replaced and demoted or reassigned to innocuous positions; the National Intelligence and Security Authority (NISA), which Ver had used to spy on political opponents and for other political purposes, was abolished and the Presidential Security Command, which had a strength of about 15,000 and had been used to protect Marcos from possible overthrow, was reduced to a single battalion.¹ Even lower-ranking loyalist officers had to undergo "reorientation" courses or even basic training.² Ramos began to change the entire command structure down to the battalion level, replacing commanders of brigades and battalions under Marcos with younger men.³

The Chief of Staff also had plans for increasing the efficiency of the NAFF's use of manpower and material. He sent ten or twelve battalions—6,000 to 7,000 men—which had been stationed in Manila to the field.⁴ He planned to dismantle the Regional Unified Command scheme, in the hope of using the military's limited manpower more effectively. Ramos also tried to get more weapons and equipment, including armored personnel tanks and howitzers, into areas of greatest insurgent activity.⁵

Perhaps even more important, the government began to dismantle the system of cronies and warlords that held such extraordinary political-military power under Marcos. So powerful were these cronies that local AFP commanders were forced to follow orders and were rewarded with a share of illicit business, corrupting the entire AFP command structure.⁶ Aquino's government forced such warlords as former Congressman Ramon Durano of Cebu, former Governor

Armando Gustilo of Negros del Norte, and former Governor Ali Dimaporo of Lanao del Sur to resign, although it has not yet eliminated private armies.⁷ Commanders of army and PC troops will now be under the authority of the Chief of Staff, not of private warlords.⁸ The NAFP has set up its own committee to investigate charges of corruption against officers, to be headed by former Chief of Staff and Secretary of Defense Jesus Vargas, who is said to be independent of the existing factional groupings within the military.⁹

The NAFP has achieved a more favorable image, at least among those not directly affected by military abuses in the past, because many units rallied to the rebellion against Marcos in February. Archbishop Sin's leading the cheers for both Ramos and Enrile at the huge rally in Manila on March 2, 1986, reflected the military's new status. U.S. officials have reported a new atmosphere of pride in NAFP ranks as a consequence of this enhanced image.¹⁰

These changes make the NAFP both more professional and more rational and efficient in the deployment of resources. They do not, however, necessarily make it more effective in combat. A senior Defense Ministry official observed in mid-1986 that the AFP was in such a state of deterioration when Marcos was forced out of power that it was "almost beyond salvage." It will take from one to three years, according to this official, to reorganize the army for counterinsurgency duties.¹¹

A major problem is the lack of basic essentials: combat boots, uniforms, backpacks, headgear, and rations. About sixty percent of NAFP troops are believed to lack a complete combat issue.¹² In addition, soldiers lacked medicines and medical care.¹³ The U.S. agreed to reorient its military assistance more toward basic needs.¹⁴ But the government, facing a budgetary crisis, could not devote the resources needed to solving the problem, so no improvement in the situation was forecast for 1986-87.

A second major problem for the NAFP is its inadequate system of transportation and logistics. Provincial commanders typically have no trucks at their disposal, while army battalion commanders had only one or two trucks, no armored personnel carriers, and no helicopters--only enough to move about five percent of its combat manpower to a battle area. Gasoline and spare parts shortages exacerbate the shortage of vehicles.¹⁵ The state of AFP transport and logistics is so bad that they are beyond the practical capabilities of the U.S. to solve. A U.S. Department of Defense conference on logistics in 1985 estimated that it would require \$1.5 billion in U.S. assistance to bring the AFP up to an adequate level of logistics and transportation to effectively combat the NPA.¹⁶

The most critical problem for the NAFP, however, remains that of retraining and reindoctrination. Part of this process involves improving the combat tactics, which have been criticized as

ineffective against the NPA. The other part, according to a Defense Ministry senior official, involves changing the attitudes of junior officers and troops who do not want to sacrifice comforts and take risks in combat. By the end of summer 1986, "not much" had been done to carry out this retraining and reindoctrination.¹⁷ Although Enrile promised to introduce retraining programs after February, he failed to do so, and some senior army officers criticized him for allowing the NAFP's performance to continue to deteriorate.¹⁸ Resource constraints have ruled out the establishment of a national network of training centers for individual and unit training.¹⁹

These weaknesses suggest that the NAFP cannot realistically be expected to produce dramatic results against NPA units over the next two to three years. As noted earlier, the mass base of the NPA is already so large that even a much more favorable "kill ratio" would probably not erode the size of the insurgent forces or even prevent it from growing. The real issue, therefore, is whether the NAFP is more capable than the old AFP of weakening the CPP/NPA mass base.

The NAFP's counterinsurgency strategists recognize the centrality of the political element in the struggle between the insurgents and the government. The Deputy Chief of Operations for the NAFP, Colonel Ismael Villareal, noted in a critique of past government counterinsurgency policy that it was very late in the insurgency before government officials became aware of the "progressive replacement of political units in the affected areas by CPP/NPA underground political infrastructures." The basic approach of the Marcos administration, the officer observed, had been one of "strengthening...the government's apparatus for ... suppression ... through physical, numerical, and restrictive measures." This was an "inappropriate military response which only enabled the CPP/NPA to further concentrate on the political effort."²⁰

The main thrust of the counterinsurgency plan adopted by the NAFP in 1986 is on "popular support," according to Col. Villareal. "You can kill a lot of commanders," he points out, "but others will replace them." In order to win the war, he asserts, "we have to apply the same strategy as the CPP in reverse order. The key to counterrevolution is countermobilization or counterorganization."²¹ That means "creating new social organizations..., strengthening or modifying existing organizations, and eliminating these organizations which are counterproductive...." In addition, writes Villareal, the government must have a popular program representing something "better than that which the local communists are offering." That program has to be developed through "close, personal contact with the people" and then communicated to the people through organizations and as well as mass media.²²

This overall strategic concept, which informs the NAFP's counterinsurgency plan for 1986, "Oplan Mamamayan",²³ reflects a highly sophisticated understanding of the CPP/NPA success in winning

popular support as well as how to combat it. It indicates that key military planners are under no illusion that a fundamentally "military solution" to the insurgency is possible. Indeed those officers who have been most immersed in the insurgency problem may be more aware of the need for the redistribution of power, status, and economic resources to combat the insurgency than most civilian officials.²⁴

The function of the AFP is not, however, to bring about social reforms, nor even to create social and political organizations; it is to use military force and to maintain physical security. The critical question about the NAFF's new counterinsurgency plan is how the NAFF proposes to fulfill those functions and whether it will be substantially different from what the AFP did under Marcos. If the military repeats the mistakes of the old AFP in counterinsurgency operations, it will certainly continue to push more of the rural population into the arms of the CPP/NPA organization.

2. NAFF Counterinsurgency Strategy and Tactics

The NAFF's counterinsurgency plan, code-named "Oplan Mamamayan," which emerged full-blown from the office of the Chief of Staff only a few weeks after the ouster of Marcos, owes nothing to the influence of the democratic regime of Corazon Aquino. In fact a top NAFF official observed that "Mamamayan" was originally drawn up in 1985 and was to have been implemented beginning in December 1985, but was delayed because of the election campaign.²⁵ According to a major participant in its drafting, moreover, the security portion of the plan is "basically the same" as the one in its predecessor, "Oplan Katatagan".²⁶

Since there is no essential difference between the two plans, a brief outline of "Oplan Katatagan" provides an overall understanding of the security portion of the new plan as well.²⁷ The military's involvement in the plan has three phases. In the "clearing" operations phase, the military would try to clear all NPA military forces from the targetted areas. The second phase would consist of "hold" operations, whose aim would be to "reassert government authority in the area and establish a firm security framework to protect the population from the CPP/NPA incursions." In practice the "clear" and "hold" stages have not been distinct and sequential but overlapping or even simultaneous. The third stage would be "consolidation" through the agencies of the government.

"Hold" operations involve "the eliminations [sic] of the CPP/NPA political cells in the barangays and the establishment of solid defensive system in the barangays with the ICHDF [Integrated Civilian Home Defense Forces] as nucleus supported by the PC/INP [Philippine Constabulary/Integrated National Police]."²⁸ Similarly, Villareal writes that the "first step in mobilizing the population

is to destroy or neutralize the CPP/NPA revolutionary infrastructure and its influence on the people."²⁹

Destroying the political organization of the CPP/NPA is a difficult task. As noted in an earlier chapter, CPP organizers do not set up a party organization in a barrio until after it has won the active support of a significant proportion of the population. By the time the AFP reacts to the existence of such an organization, most people are likely to be hostile to efforts to arrest cadres and activists. As a consequence, trying to get at the insurgent infrastructure will, as Villareal points out, "require extensive police and military actions...and, probably, some force and sanctions against the population to be carried out with compassion."³⁰

Such "force and sanctions" will likely be resented by the population, and that fact is explicitly acknowledged by NAFF staff planners. In a talk summarizing the NAFF's counterinsurgency strategy in July 1986, Villareal stated, "Although force and restrictions may alienate the people, they may be necessary to destroy or neutralize the local communist organization."³¹

A standard tactic in AFP counterinsurgency strategy has been "base denial" operations, in which the aim is to separate the guerrillas from their population base in order to deprive them of food, shelter and opportunities for political mobilization. Such operations also give the military the opportunity to flush out those in the barrio who are hardcore supporters of the NPA.

One version of base denial is forcible relocation of the population from an area of CPP/NPA influence to an area under firm government control. This practice, called "strategic hamletting" in South Vietnam, is referred to in the Philippine military establishment as "hamletting." It was introduced into the Philippine conflict in 1981, when virtually the entire population of Laac municipality of Davao del Norte, which was considered by the military to be an NPA "liberated area," was ordered to move to barrio centers.³²

After having to walk as far as 10 kilometers, people were concentrated in a place where there was no source of clean water, and food and shelter were inadequate. Because of disease and serious malnutrition, at least 145 people died between November 1981 and March 1982. People's movements were restricted to one kilometer from the barrio, and time spent in farm work had to end at 5:00 p.m.³³ Buying rice was limited to several kilos per family. Farms were left unattended, and crops were destroyed to deprive the NPA of their use.³⁴

The rationale for the hamletting, as explained by military officials at a later dialogue with church representatives, was to

make it easier for the government to protect the people, to provide them with services, and to get the people to "protect themselves" (i.e., to organize them into government-sponsored militia units). An AFP colonel explained to the people of one barangay that their village was like a "beautiful lake" which unfortunately sheltered "bad fish" and therefore had to be "drained."³⁵

The AFP command viewed the Iaac operation as a testing ground for the hamletting strategy, which would be implemented elsewhere in Mindanao if successful there.³⁶ In 1982 Minister Enrile publicly declared that forced relocation was forbidden, but the practice continued to spread throughout Mindanao; the only difference was that the relocation was accomplished by the threat of force rather than by government order. By mid-1982 an estimated 300,000 people had been herded to barrio centers in various parts of Mindanao.³⁷ In 1984-85, hamletting spread to the Visayas and Northern Luzon as well.

Hamletting begins typically with AFP officers calling villagers together and warning them that unless they move to the barrio center, they will be considered NPA supporters and might suffer strafing by the AFP.³⁸ After the relocation, the population is kept under tight military control and treated with suspicion; all movements out of the village require a pass, and carrying of food is strictly limited to enough for one person. In some cases, people are forbidden to visit their fields at all.³⁹ Crops are often so far away that people return to their original homes despite the threat of AFP attack on the barrio, because of their desperate economic situation.⁴⁰

In another variant of hamletting, a military unit goes into a barrio and establishes the same tight controls over the population without forcing them to relocate. As one AFP officer describes it:

I'll go to the barrio and make a census. I'll gather them all in the barrio social hall and tell them, tomorrow, nobody goes out without a pass. Anybody moving without torch, we will kill.... You have to go to your house at 6:00 p.m. You can't tend caribao.⁴¹

This type of operation is aimed both at denying local resources to the NPA guerrillas and also at beginning the process of identifying the political cadres of the insurgent political organization. The "census" is taken by ordering all barrio residents to gather in the center of the barrio, where their pictures are taken. The males are interrogated about local insurgent organizers and NPA camps; some are detained on charges of active involvement with the CPP/NPA. Such operations normally result in a number of barrio residents fleeing the barrio in fear of the military.⁴²

When the object of such an operation is no longer to deny the guerrillas access to the population but to find and destroy the political infrastructure of the insurgency, it is called "zoning." Then the military cordons off a populated area, concentrates the people in one place, and subjects them to interrogation about CPP/NPA cadres or sympathizers while conducting a house-to-house search.⁴³

The military frequently commits abuses of human rights during such operations. During a five-week zoning operation in early 1985, one woman was raped, several others were molested, and a number of men were mauled by AFP troops.⁴⁴ The abuses sometimes include extralegal killings as well. According to a Davao resident who has following killings by both sides, during zoning operations, there is always a military informer with the troops who points out those believed to be NPA. Those who are arrested during the operation are taken to PC headquarters and often tortured and killed.⁴⁵

In January 1986 the military conducted zoning operations in two barangays in Davao City after a grenade killed three Marines who were removing an NDF banner. During those operations, Marines and former Islamic Bangsa Moro Army members cooperating with the Marines picked up and killed several people. They tortured one resident until he admitted responsibility for planting the grenade. An organization of residents of the two barangays issued a manifesto denouncing the killings.⁴⁶

These abuses are particularly significant for two reasons: first, they took place in Davao City, which General Ramos had called a "laboratory" for both insurgent and counterinsurgent strategies.⁴⁷ Second, they were committed by the Marines, one group in the AFP which had previously been considered free from military abuses. The Marine commander in Davao City, Colonel Rodolfo Biazon, had deplored the use of force in populated areas and tried to change the popular attitude of resentment in Davao City toward the AFP by eschewing direct involvement in counterinsurgency operations that would create an antagonism toward the Marines. While the PC carried out house-to-house searches, arrests and killings, the Marines stayed in the background, providing the "cordon" that made it possible.⁴⁸ Until 1986, the Marines and Biazon were widely regarded as exemplary, because they didn't carry out zoning operations.⁴⁹ But their reputation was severely tarnished by the zoning operations of January 1986.⁵⁰

Zoning has been condemned by community and human rights organizations, and the military has been put on the defensive because of publicity against it. Defense Minister Enrile declared in 1986 that zoning "is not going to be practiced anymore." Ramos, however, said it would continue "in accordance with the due process."⁵¹ As Villareal's remarks in July 1986 indicate, the AFP believes that it cannot succeed in "mobilizing" the population

without operations such as zoning.

Hamletting and zoning, which involve enough force to take military control of a barrio for days or even weeks, mark the beginning of the military's efforts to destroy the CPP/NPA political infrastructure. But that process is likely to continue well beyond the ostensible reassertion of political-military control by the government. The military conducts surveillance of the activities of the residents through regular intelligence networks and through the local militia, the Civilian Home Defense Forces (CHDF) and then carries out raids to capture and detain those believed to be part of the insurgent political structure.

In this context the practice of "salvaging," or extrajudicial killing of suspected CPP/NPA officials, became a key element in counterinsurgency strategy during the Marcos era. These killings were not simply a matter of undisciplined individual soldiers nor of paramilitary forces out of control but of an organized program that military leaders in Manila publicly condemned but nevertheless tolerated and helped to hide.

Where AFP troops have been directly involved in salvaging, they have networks of informants in both urban and rural areas to pinpoint CPP/NPA cadres. According to a pro-Aquino activist in Davao City, the military's network of informers there grew rapidly in 1984-85, to the point where the population of the CPP-oriented Agdao publicly protested in front of City Hall and demanded that the informers be withdrawn from their neighborhoods.⁵² The informers, often posing as vendors of ice cream or fish, were paid about 200 pesos for each NPA identified. Those identified by an informer as NPA were often abducted by men without uniforms in unmarked cars and who later drop the bodies beside a road on the edge of the city. According to a politically neutral source with contacts in the military, the men were intelligence officers with the Region 11 PC headquarters.⁵³

According to this source, the PC abducted and killed anyone whom an informer identified as an NPA, because the military could not get evidence that would convict suspected subversives in court. This attitude toward the legal system as a major obstacle to the AFP's efforts to weaken the insurgent organization was expressed by the AFP intelligence chief for Region 11 headquarters in Davao City in early 1986. "We have the experience that it is difficult to convict a political prisoner," he said. "We have so many loopholes in our law, we find it very tedious and time consuming."⁵⁴ A staff officer at AFP headquarters confirmed that, "if [salvaging] was ever done," it was due to the fact that "some individuals may be frustrated with the situation" in which they have evidence against NPA suspects but cannot get convictions.⁵⁵

Suspected CPP/NPA cadres have been released by the AFP because

they could not convict them in court, only to be killed immediately, with the military blaming it on the NPA. The intelligence chief for region 11 claimed that two youths who had been arrested on the basis of the confession of a "hardcore" CPP member were released for lack of evidence, and then killed by the NPA as suspected informers.⁵⁶

Apart from the frustration that AFP officers apparently feel about the difficulty of proving participation in CPP/NPA activities in court, killing the suspect is the most convenient way to avoid the legal and political consequences of the torture of suspects. The victims of "salvaging" in Davao City reportedly always bore the marks of torture.⁵⁷

In those barrios where the military lacks an intelligence network, the burden of identifying and neutralizing the insurgent organization has fallen in the past to the CHDF, either alone or in concert with the military. The CHDF, numbering 70,000 nationwide,⁵⁸ have been particularly controversial because of the number of allegations of serious human rights abuses by members. More than half of all allegations of abuses brought to the attention of the Presidential Commission on Human Rights in 1986 involved the CHDF.⁵⁹

CHDF troops often have intimidated, beaten, tortured, and killed suspected insurgents and spread terror through the barrio. Lacking any training or political sophistication about the CPP/NPA organization, they have been given wide latitude to find the presumed subversives and eliminate them. Regular military officers have given little or no supervision to CHDF of operations, which usually include interrogations of suspects and searches of their homes. According to counterinsurgency specialists in Region 11 headquarters, the "control team" which is expected to accompany the CHDF on such operations consists of "one or two regular military or policemen," who may be only privates themselves.⁶⁰ In theory there is one such control team for the CHDF unit in each barangay. The NAFP Deputy Chief of Operations conceded, however, that, because of lack of manpower, there is only a control team of 15 people for every 500 CHDF personnel.⁶¹

What direction the AFP has given to the CHDF, moreover, has not been aimed at restraining their excesses. In the early 1980s the Ministry of Defense and the AFP General Staff branded as "subversives" the leaders of Basic Christian Communities, who challenged the abuses of local government and military units as well as the existing socio-economic structure.⁶² The military created an atmosphere in which the CHDF felt that priests and activists connected with the BCCs were fair targets. "If I were a CHDF [or] a commander in the field and not enlightened," said a senior AFP staff officer in early 1986, "I would think this organization is the enemy."⁶³

In North Cotabato the military command made no secret of its view that the BOCs were a vehicle for subversion and had conducted public anti-Catholic meetings. In this atmosphere, the local CHDF, who also happened to be part of a cult group, felt free to threaten church activists and priests and ultimately to murder missionary priest Fr. Tullio Favali in April 1985.⁶⁴ In Bayugan, Augusan del Sur, a man was murdered a few months after CHDF men warned him to stop performing his job as Catholic lay minister or they would blow his head off.⁶⁵ In Negros Occidental, a leader in the BOCs of Kabankalan parish and his four sons were abducted by CHDF and members of the army's 7th Infantry Battalion. They were later found murdered with marks of torture and repeated stabbings.⁶⁶

In many cases CHDF units have carried out torture and salvaging during operations with regular units of the AFP.⁶⁷ During a major operation in nine barangays of Claveria, Misamis Oriental, in June 1985, in which the Scout Rangers, CHDF, and paramilitary forces cooperated, the CHDF terrorized families on suspicion of being involved with the NPA, often using water torture to extract confessions. Nearly 1,000 residents staged a mass exodus, denouncing incidents of arson, looting, stealing of farm animals, arbitrary arrests and salvaging.⁶⁸ The abuses by CHDF and AFP troops continued in Claveria in 1986. Evacuees from Claveria told Minister Jose Concepcion that they wanted the CHDF relieved of their duties in seven barangays.⁶⁹

In the final years of Marcos and the first months of the Aquino government, there were increasing public pressures for the dismantling of the CHDF. President Aquino was urged to disband the CHDF by several sectoral organizations when she visited Davao City in May 1986. In June the League of Governors and Mayors, representing the officers in charge nominated by Aquino to replace the province and local officials of the Marcos regime, urged Aquino to disband the CHDF's and all paramilitary units as "an obstacle to reconciliation and peace within the community."⁷⁰ Local Government Minister Pimentel said he would press for the abolition of the CHDF after meeting with various sectoral groups in his hometown of Cagayan de Oro.⁷¹ Aquino herself, reflecting on the complaints of mayors as well as civic, religious, and sectoral leaders in Davao, said the military would have to "justify the existence" of the CHDF.⁷²

NAFP leadership, however, has insisted that it needs the CHDF as its "rear guard" in the barrios, so that its "mobile forces" can be used to "penetrate...guerrilla base areas."⁷³ The rationale, therefore, appears to be that the CHDF is better than nothing, regardless of how poor its overall performance has been. NAFP officers seem particularly concerned that their main source of intelligence on the CPP/NPA organization in many barrios would be lost.⁷⁴ Ramos proposed to "refine" the program by reducing the size

of the units by setting up a screening committee to examine the records of all CHDF personnel and evaluating their qualifications.⁷⁵ A few weeks later, he reported that 2,850 CHDF personnel (about 5 percent of the total) who had been the subject of complaints would be purged from the rolls.⁷⁶ Later Ramos proposed to reduce the number of full-time CHDF from 53,700 to 45,000.⁷⁷

This proposal, which implies that the military actually has complaints on file against 2,850 CHDF personnel, raises two important questions. First, those complaints clearly were not collected within a few weeks or months, but go back several years. If such complaints were already on file, why were the individuals never purged from the units nor prosecuted? Second, if documented complaints exist on five percent of the CHDF personnel, what percentage have committed abuses which were never officially recorded? It strains credibility that the military has records of a high proportion of the tortures, salvagings, and other abuses committed by paramilitary units over which it exercises only the loosest controls. And if the actual percentage of CHDF personnel involved in such abuses is significantly higher than five percent, is the entire program not politically counterproductive?

3. The NAFF and the Human Rights Investigation

Whether the NAFF will eliminate the past pattern of widespread torture, salvaging, and other human rights violations is one of the most important issues facing the Aquino government. Although retraining and reindoctrinating troops and officers is crucial to reforming the NAFF, it is not sufficient. The military leadership must also be willing to purge those officers who are guilty of previous human rights abuses.

During the first nine months of the Aquino government, Defense Minister Enrile and Chief of Staff Ramos expressed only equivocal support at best for an aggressive investigation of past military abuses. Sometimes the two men strongly opposed such a proposal; both Enrile and Ramos had been compromised by their failure to stop military torture and salvaging during the Marcos era.

During the twelve years that Ramos was chief of the Philippine Constabulary (PC), that branch of the military earned a reputation for systematic abuses of civilians. Documented complaints of PC torture, mistreatment of civilians and murder of suspected subversives continued from the mid-1970's until the end of his tenure in that position.⁷⁸ Ramos was responsible for regular PC units, several of which became notorious for consistently abusive conduct. He was also responsible for the Long Range Patrol Group (IRP), which carried out the murder of members of the Basic Christian Communities in Southern Negros in 1980.⁷⁹ Finally he had overall responsibility for supervising the CHDF. Whether or not

Ramos personally approved what those units did, he was unwilling or unable to do anything about it.

As a leading political lieutenant and adviser to President Marcos from 1972 to 1986, Enrile was instrumental in formulating counterinsurgency policy for the regime as well as in defending the government against charges of human rights abuses. While he made gestures to investigate and punish a few cases, he consistently denied that there was a fundamental problem of human rights violations and accused those who made such charges of playing into the hands of the communists.

In 1979 Enrile, pressured by the publicity given to certain killings in which eye witnesses blamed AFP personnel, created a special commission headed by the Deputy Defense Minister to investigate and make recommendations for action. Amnesty International found the same outcome in each of the two cases it was able to investigate: the military offered financial compensation to victims, temporarily detained the alleged offenders, then eventually restored them to active duty.⁸⁰

In a meeting with another human rights group in 1983, Enrile conceded that it was "possible" that military forces sometimes kill defenseless persons believed to be subversives, but dismissed most charges as communist propaganda, used to discredit the AFP. He claimed that his Ministry had investigated many alleged executions by the AFP and found that the victims had in fact been killed in combat.⁸¹ Two years later, Enrile took an even harder line in a meeting with Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), arguing that many "so-called atrocities" were in fact committed by NPA squads posing as PC troops.⁸²

One of President Aquino's first actions was to create a Presidential Commission on Human Rights (PCHR), led by former Senator Jose W. Diokno, to probe serious violations of human rights during the Marcos years. The PCHR was instructed to submit the results of its investigations to the judiciary for prosecution. Such an investigation would weed out proven offenders from the AFP, thus serving as a deterrent to future torture and salvaging.

In only three months of operation, the PCHR had received 1,157 cases of alleged serious abuses of human rights. The response from both Enrile and Ramos was to ward off such an investigation. Both argued that Aquino's pledge of amnesty for NPA guerrillas who turned themselves in ought to be extended as well to all in the AFP accused of human rights violations.⁸³ Such a blanket pardon would eliminate the rationale for the commission's investigation and perpetuate the feeling among military officers that they would not be punished for torture or salvaging.

Another argument put forward by Ramos in an August 1986 letter

to Aquino was that the PCHR was projecting the image of the NAFP as "sole violator of human rights," which was "demoralizing" to its troops. He demanded that an "independent fact-finding group" be formed to investigate human rights abuses by both the military and NPA.⁸⁴

The PCHR rejected this obvious bid to block its investigation. The acting Chairman, Jose B.L. Reyes, in a letter to Aquino, ignored the suggestion that some other panel should be formed and argued that the Commission could not investigate NPA violations, since it could not receive evidence from the other side as required by law. He also pointed out that government prosecutors were already authorized to inquire into alleged atrocities by NPA troops.⁸⁵ Then Deputy Minister of Defense retired General Rafael Ilete, who was untainted by involvement in the Marcos regime's counterinsurgency programs, also rejected the argument that a human rights probe had to apply equally to both sides. Because the NPA was an illegal organization, he reasoned, no special government investigating body was needed. Some reformist officers also welcomed the investigation of the AFP as a means of assuring the professionalization of the military.⁸⁶

The apprehensions of Ramos and Enrile about outsiders investigating or monitoring its behavior regarding human rights abuses surfaced again when an Amnesty International mission visited the Philippine in May 1986. In a meeting with the AI delegation, Enrile said he would allow no international meddling in the issue of human rights abuses.⁸⁷ He rejected the need for procedural safeguards on human rights, claiming that the NAFP was no longer arresting anyone.⁸⁸ Significantly, he suggested that, in a counterinsurgency war, NAFP troops could not avoid situations that would generate more complaints of human rights violations. "We are actually in a war situation," he said, "and to a soldier in such a combat situation, it's either you or I."⁸⁹

Within days of his meeting with AI, Enrile sought to turn the Diokno Commission's investigation into a political issue by contrasting his support for the NAFP with attacks by political figures against the military. On a trip to Mindanao, Enrile pledged that he would personally act as defense lawyer for anyone accused of human rights violations while on duty.⁹⁰

Enrile's hostility to an investigation into human rights abuses may stem in large part from the fear that it will touch officers who are politically aligned with him. His Special Assistant, Colonel Hernani Figueroa, who emerged in 1985 as a spokesman for the military reform movement, had earlier been identified by human rights lawyers as responsible for torture and salvaging in Samar when he was intelligence chief for the Eastern Visayas.⁹¹ Figueroa was named Province Commander in Isabela province after he accused former human rights lawyers Joker Arroyo and Rene Saguisag of being communists and threatened to "lynch" them.⁹²

Another figure associated with RAM and Enrile since February 1986 is Colonel Adolfo Aguinaldo, now Provincial Commander in Enrile's home province, Cagayan. Twenty prisoners detained during the time he was a major in the intelligence service have accused Aguinaldo of being their chief torturer.⁹³ Aguinaldo's violent antagonism toward the Human Rights Commission was demonstrated in July when a PCHR staff delegation visited his camp in Cagayan looking for two church workers they believed were detained there. Aguinaldo immediately accused the staff of being NPA, and threatened to take their pictures and show them to one of his "DPAs" (Deep Penetration Agents) to identify "which one of you is a red fighter."⁹⁴

A third ally of Enrile, Colonel Rolando Abadilla, who headed the Military Intelligence Service Group (MISG) under Marcos, is also accused by the twenty victims of having participated in torture sessions.⁹⁵ Abadilla helped to organize military support for the attempted Tolentino coup of July 1986. Afterward the Defense Ministry allowed him to resume his job and even to organize a Marcos loyalist group.⁹⁶

The ouster of Enrile as Defense Minister and his replacement by Deputy Minister Ileteo in November 1986 will help advance the objective of a purge of the NAFP. Ileteo is known to be sympathetic to the Human Rights Commission's investigation and has openly disagreed with Ramos and Enrile on the issue. Whether he can reverse the military establishment's posture toward the issue, however, remains to be seen.

Most Defense Ministry officials and NAFP officers appear to have closed ranks behind the position that the PCHR's investigation seriously harms the ability of the NAFP to carry out its counterinsurgency program. The Assistant Secretary for Plans and Programs, retired General Isidro B. Agunod, argued in an interview that the investigation was demoralizing NAFP personnel because the Commission submits its evidence to ordinary courts whenever it finds prima facie evidence. "Since the case is thoroughly documented," he said, "the court process will be swift, whereas NPA cases are likely to have very little evidence, so the court case takes a very long time." He went on to suggest that "the more effective way" to treat such cases would be to handle them in military courts.⁹⁷

Some officers have implied that the NAFP cannot make headway against the CPP/NPA infrastructure without resorting to the extralegal measures the Commission is investigating. One officer was quoted anonymously in the press as saying that, during operations in NPA areas "death and injury to NPA elements and sympathizers cannot be avoided...." (emphasis added).⁹⁸ Military sources suggested that the PCHR's threatened investigation had "stalled the military's efforts to penetrate deeply into NPA territory," implying that military officers were waiting to see whether those responsible for torture would really be punished.⁹⁹

Behind such complaints there is an undercurrent of cynicism among veterans of counterinsurgency war about the whole subject of human rights. These officers reject as naive the idea that the military should refrain from torturing, killing, and using other traditional means to suppress rebellion. A colonel who occupies a senior staff position in the NAFF declared, "Human rights is bullshit. You can afford it in the U.S., but not in a Third World country. In your country, life is precious, but here it means nothing."¹⁰⁰

Whether the PCHR can investigate and whether the worst violators of human rights can be convicted remains unclear. A senior Defense Ministry official suggested that the commission was "not so active" and that the military's demand that the PCHR investigate NPA human rights violations might have "stopped them."¹⁰¹ Not only does the commission need to overcome lack of cooperation by certain "exceptional individuals" in the NAFF,¹⁰² It also needs President Aquino to invalidate an earlier Marcos directive that all military violators be turned over to military courts. Only then can cases on which it has sufficient documentation be given to civilian courts. The commission had formally requested the repeal of the order, but as of early September, Aquino had made no decision.¹⁰³ Apparently Aquino is hesitating because of the fear of military reaction in an already tense political situation.

The PCHR investigation has undoubtedly made a difference in the behavior of the NAFF regarding treatment of suspected CPP/NPA cadres. "It has already helped as a threat," commented a senior Defense Ministry official who is sympathetic to the effort. "We've held back in the sense of avoiding human rights violations; we've avoided zoning operations."¹⁰⁴ These restraints are tenuous, however; they are part of the predominantly political approach to the insurgency that Aquino has tried to impose on the military. That policy depends, in turn, on a political balance that is in danger of shifting. A return to the military's preferred strategy for dealing with the NPA would almost certainly bring a new flood of human rights violations and the attendant cost in further political alienation.

Beyond the issues raised by the use of hamletting, zoning, torture, and salvaging as counterinsurgency tactics, AFP troops sent on counter-insurgency operations into populated areas invariably abuse civilians by stealing, molesting women, beating, killing, arson or other destructive actions. Soldiers with families to support and with inadequate salaries are likely to seize opportunities to loot homes and take farm animals, especially if they feel that the population has been supporting the enemy.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, troops are prone to vent their frustrations with NPA ambushes and mines, lack of information, and indications of sympathy for insurgents on the civilian population.

According to one influential AFP intelligence specialist, incidents of petty abuses against civilians are a "natural consequence of anti-insurgency operations." In his opinion, the number may be reduced through better discipline, but "there will always be incidents that a clever organizer could exploit, and the more troops you pour in, the more opportunities."¹⁰⁶ This officer conceded that the alienation of the civilian population because of military abuses became so great that it is "theoretically possible" that there would have been fewer NPA in Mindanao in 1986 had the AFP decided not to send larger numbers of troops to the island in 1983.

The new AFP may try harder to limit abuses of this kind than the old AFP, but stronger discipline can only go so far. Abuses are so prevalent that imprisonment or corporal punishment for all offenders is out of the question. The policy of transferring offenders out of insurgency zones to rear areas has not succeeded, since some soldiers commit military abuses in the hope that they might be transferred away from combat zones.¹⁰⁷ Increased pay and benefits would presumably help to limit the abuses somewhat, but the extreme paucity of financial resources facing the Aquino government means that the dramatic increases in military budget necessary to do that will not be possible in the foreseeable future.¹⁰⁸

If military forces enter into populated areas during counterinsurgency operations are bound to antagonize and to create more supporters for the insurgency, why send them? The AFP intelligence specialist offered no positive argument. He only said, "We would rather be accused of militarization than be blamed for doing nothing."

As this comment by a senior officer suggests, the military's counterinsurgency has long since taken a life of its own that has little or nothing to do with objective measures of reducing insurgency. The generals and colonels who plan and implement counterinsurgency fall back on programs and operations not so much because they have been successful in the past, but because they are familiar and because the officers know no alternative except inaction.

This analysis of the NAFP's counterinsurgency strategy and the attitudes of its top echelons leads to the conclusion that the ouster of Marcos and change of military leadership from Ver to Ramos will not by themselves prevent the NAFP from repeating previous counterproductive operations. The NAFP cannot use the traditional counterinsurgency methods without creating new enemies or strengthening the existing hostility of people toward the military--and, by extension, the government.

The most thoughtful military officers involved in counterinsurgency have recognized that force does not contribute to the solution of an insurgency that is essentially political in character. One reformist officer, who had participated in a Defense

Ministry study of the counterinsurgency program, observed in January 1986, "When the military comes in, it's almost always too late."¹⁰⁹ Colonel Rodolfo Biazon, the former Marine Commander in Davao City and one of the few popularly-respected AFP officers, remarked in 1985, "If we put in more force, things will only worsen. When...you have to apply more force, you don't hurt the enemies alone but also the innocent. The process becomes costly and unending."¹¹⁰

Notes for Chapter 5

1. Larry A. Niksch, "The Philippines: Uncertainties after the Aquino Assassination," Pacific Defence Reporter, February 1984; Col. William Wise, "The Philippines Military after Marcos," paper presented to a conference on "The Philippines and U.S. Policy," Washington Institute for Values in Public Policy, Washington, D.C., April 30, 1986, p. 8.
2. Wicks Geaga, "Cory Moves to De-Fang the Military," Ang Katipunan, April 1986, p. 7; Washington Post, April 22, 1986, p. A22; statement by Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard L. Armitage to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, June 3, 1986, pp. 2-3.
3. Guy Sacerdoti, "March Towards Reform," Far Eastern Economic Review, May 29, 1986, p. 42.
4. Interview with Defense Ministry official, Camp Aguinaldo, August 21, 1986.
5. Ibid., p. 42.
6. Interview with an official of the Ministry of Defense, Manila, January 12, 1986.
7. As of May 1, 1986, according to government figures, less than fifty percent of the arms in the hands of the warlords and private armies had been collected. An estimated 8,700 weapons remained in the hands of such armed forces. Philippine Daily Express, May 1, 1986.
8. The one exception to this generalization may be in parts of Northern Luzon where Minister of Defense Enrile's influence remained unchallenged. The governors of Cagayan and Ifugao and the provincial commanders of Cagayan, Isabela and Nueva Vizcaya were all considered loyal to Enrile. See Filipino Times, August 15-21, 1986.
9. Sacerdoti, "March toward Reform," pp. 42-43.
10. Statement of Armitage to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, June 3, 1986, p. 4.
11. Interview with senior Defense Ministry official, Camp Aguinaldo, August 26, 1986.
12. Interview with Defense Ministry official, Camp Aguinaldo, August 21, 1986.

13. Wise, "The Philippines Military After Marcos," p. 4.
14. Interview with a Defense Ministry senior official, August 26, 1986.
15. Niksch, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," pp. 70-71.
16. Interview with U.S. Department of Defense official, July 18, 1985.
17. Interview, Camp Aguinaldo, August 26, 1986.
18. The Australian, August 23-24, 1986.
19. Wise, "The Philippines Military After Marcos," p. 15.
20. Col. Ismael Z. Villareal, "Defeating the National Democratic Revolution of the Communist Party of the Philippines," unpublished paper, ca. 1985, pp. 4, 7.
21. Interview with Col. Ismael Z. Villareal, Deputy J-3, General Headquarters, NAFF, Camp Aguinaldo, August 29, 1986
22. Villareal, "Defeating the National Democratic Revolution...", pp. 8-9.
23. Villareal is one of the principal authors of the new plan, as he was of the old AFP counterinsurgency plan "Oplan Katatagan," which was adopted in 1981. Interview with Villareal.
24. Villareal's analysis includes the following statement: "It should be noted that strategy weighted on the mobilization of the people is dependent...on one important variable: the extent to which the government will allow the existing distributive arrangements of political, economic, and social values in our society to be altered" (emphasis in original). Ibid, p. 8.
25. Conversation with Philippine journalist Malou Mangahas of the Manila Chronicle, who learned about the background of "Oplan Mamamayan" from Deputy Chief of Staff Brig. Gen. Ermita. Washington, D.C., July 23, 1986.
26. The key difference between the two is that "Mamamayan" calls for greater emphasis on the "assimilation" of constabulary and police forces into the rural population by joining various local organizations, thus forming "social bonds" with the people. Interview with Villareal.

27. This description is based on Ministry of National Defense, "Oplan Katatagan" [excerpt], n.d. I am indebted to Heinz Kotte, Asian Social Institute, Manila, for showing me a copy of this four-page summary of Oplan Katagatan.
28. Ibid.
29. Interview, August 29, 1986.
30. Villareal, "Defeating the National Democratic Revolution...", p. 8.
31. Text of remarks by Villareal at the National Seminar-Workshop on Peace and Order, July 2-3, 1986.
32. Mindanao Documentation Committee for Refugees, The Strategic Hamlets of Mindanao (n.p., n.d.), pp. 3-15; Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, World Council of Churches, Philippines Testimonies on Human Rights Violations (Geneva, 1986), pp. 162-163.
33. Philippines Testimonies..., p. 163; Veritas, August 21-27, 1986.
34. The Strategic Hamlets of Mindanao; Veritas, August 21-27, 1986.
35. The Strategic Hamlets, pp. 8, 13-14.
36. Ibid., p. 13.
37. Mindanao Documentation Committee for Refugees, The Expanding Strategic Hamlets of Mindanao (n.p., n.d.) p. 4. By 1983 some sources estimated that half a million people had been hamletted by the AFP. See The Philippines: A Country in Crisis, pp. 72-85.
38. The case of Barangay Monterico, Baybay Municipality, Leyte Province, is documented in Human Rights Investigation Commission, Leyte: Fear and Pain, Fact-Finding Mission Report, November 13-16, 1985, p. 8.
39. See the account of the hamletting of a barrio in Ilocos Norte, Veritas, December 2, 1984.
40. Leyte: Fear and Pain, p. 8.
41. Interview with a Scout Ranger officer, Manila, September 2, 1986.

42. For cases of such operations in Leyte and Cagayan, see Philippines Testimonies..., pp. 143-144, 150-152. See also Ang Pahayagang Malaya, October 13, 1985.
43. Veritas, February 10, 1985.
44. The Philippines: A Country in Crisis, pp. 86-87.
45. Interview with a resident of Davao City who has made a careful study of unsolved murders in the city, January 19, 1986. The individual, who was not a political activist, insisted on anonymity, fearing that his life would be in danger if his identity were revealed.
46. San Pedro Express (Davao City), January 16, 1986; Ang Pahayagang Malaya, January 21, 1986. The killings and torture were confirmed by two Catholic priests working in the barangays in an interview in Davao City, January 19, 1986.
47. Mr. & Ms., May 24-30, 1985.
48. As then commander of the Regional Unified Command 11, Brig. Gen. Jaime Echeverria, observed, "Biazon is not exposed to the dirty work." Ian Buruma, "'Salvaging,' Liquidating Winning Hearts and Minds," Far Eastern Economic Review, November 21, 1985, p. 60.
49. Niksch, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," p. 65.
50. San Pedro Express, January 16, 1986.
51. Lucy Komisar, "Reform in the Philippine Army," Newsday, April 24, 1986.
52. Interview, Davao City, January 18, 1986.
53. Interview with source cited in note 44.
54. Interview with Col. Bumanglag, RUC 11 headquarters, Davao City, January 17, 1986.
55. Interview with Villareal.
56. Ibid. A similar story was put forward by the AFP to explain how several prisoners allegedly being transferred to province capital in Lanao del Norte were shot in the head in an NPA "ambush." The military claimed that the prisoners were killed to make sure they couldn't provide any information to the military. The official explanation failed, however, to account for the fact that all of the AFP troops went unscathed in the alleged ambush. Interview with a priest working in Lanao del Norte, Manila, January 16, 1986.

57. Interview with the source cited in note 45.
58. Business Day, July 29, 1986. Of this number, 54,200 were full-time and "duly appointed." The rest were part-time and reserves.
59. Manila Chronicle, August 23, 1986.
60. Interview with Bumanlag and with Col. Douglas Rosette, Chief of Civilian Relations Service, Region 11 headquarters, Davao City, January 17, 1986.
61. Interview with Villareal.
62. Col. Galileo Kintanar, a top intelligence officer in the AFP and a key advisor to Enrile, wrote in 1979 that the "most dangerous form of threat from the religious radicals is their creation of Basic Christian Communities (BCC) in both rural and urban areas. They are practically building an infrastructure of political power in the entire country." "Contemporary Religious Radicalism in the Philippines," Quarterly National Security Review, June 1979.
63. Interview, Camp Aguinaldo, January 6, 1986. This senior intelligence officer admitted that, in the past, "People in the military mistook the BCCs for NPA organizations," but maintained that those BCCs who used "liberation theology" and mix religion and politics will "probably cause them to fall into the hands of subversives."
64. Patricia Startup and Eileen Laird, eds., Truth Uncovered: Fact-Finding Mission Report, Cotabato-Zamboanga del Sur (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1985, pp. 19-25, 48-50.
65. Philippines Testimonies..., pp. 110-111.
66. The Age (Melbourne), July 25, 1985.
67. This fact becomes clear from a perusal of any of the several collections of reports of military abuses. See, for example, "Tabulation of Cases Interviewed, Leyte, November 1985, Leyte: Fear and Pain.
68. We Forum, January 21-27, 1986; Veritas, March 30, 1986; The News Herald, May 26, 1986.
69. Remarks by Concepcion at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C., June 20, 1986; see also Manila Chronicle, July 8, 1986.

70. Manila Chronicle, June 30, 1986.
71. Manila Times, July 9, 1986.
72. Philippine Daily Inquirer, May 26, 1986.
73. Ibid.
74. The unofficial newspaper of the AFP called the CHDF "a rich source of information." "CHDF: An Asset to the Community," The People's Sentinel, November 29-December 14, 1985, p. 2.
75. Times Journal, March 29, 1986; Philippine Daily Inquirer, April 12, 1986.
76. Philippine Daily Inquirer, June 6, 1986.
77. Business Day, July 29, 1986.
78. See Report of an Amnesty International Mission to the Republic of the Philippines, 22 November-5 December 1975, Second Edition (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1976), pp. 23-24, 33, 85-86; Report of an Amnesty International Mission to the Republic of the Philippines, 11-28 November 1981, (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1982), pp. 24-27; The Philippines: A Country in Crisis (New York: Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights, 1983), pp. 22-23, 26-27, 42-43.
79. Report of an Amnesty International Mission...1981, pp. 24-25.
80. Ibid., pp. 90-92.
81. The Philippines: Country in Crisis, pp. 39-40.
82. Notes of a meeting among Kerry, Enrile, and Ramos, Manila, April 10, 1985. The author attended the meeting as an aide to Sen. Kerry.
83. AFP dispatch, April 14, 1986, FBIS, APDR, April 15, 1986, p. P7; PNA April 16, 1986, FBIS, APDR, April 16, 1986, p. P9; New Day, April 19-20, 1986.
84. Ang Pahayagang Malaya, August 17, 1986.
85. Manila Chronicle, August 29, 1986.
86. New Day, April 19-20, 1986.
87. Philippine Daily Inquirer, May 14, 1986.

88. Phone Interview with an Amnesty International source, May 22, 1986.
89. PNA, May 13, 1986, FBIS, APDR, May 13, 1986, p. P2-3.
90. Sacerdoti, "March Toward Reform," p. 43.
91. See Mr. & Ms., May 31-June 6, 1985, p. 7; Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace, "Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Samar Re: Circumstances in the Slaying of Dr. Remberto de la Paz, May 20-23, 1982"; The Philippines: A Country in Crisis, pp. 37-38; testimony of Fr. Pedrito Lucero in Philippines Testimonies on Human Rights Violations, pp. 51-53.
92. Ang Pahayagang Malaya, April 8, 1986 and August 27, 1986.
93. Barry Lowe, "Torture under the Marcos Regime," The Age, (Saturday Extra supplement) January 11, 1986, p. 5.
94. Manila Chronicle, July 12, 1986.
95. Ibid.
96. Conversation with a Defense Ministry official, Manila, August 18, 1986.
97. Interview, Camp Aguinaldo, August 28, 1986.
98. The Manila Evening Post, April 19, 1986.
99. The Manila Evening Post, April 22, 1986.
100. Interview, September 2, 1986.
101. Interview, Camp Aguinaldo, August 26, 1986.
102. Commission Vice-Chairman Jose B. L. Reyes refused to name the individuals who were refusing to cooperate. Ang Pahayagang Malaya, July 17, 1986.
103. Telephone interview with PCHR Vice-Chairman Jose B.L. Reyes, September 2, 1986.
104. Interview, Camp Aguinaldo, August 26, 1986.
105. On the linkage between low pay and military misconduct, see Niksch, Insurgency and Counterinsurgency, pp. 90-91.
106. Interview, Camp Aguinaldo, January 6, 1986.
107. Bulletin Today, December 24, 1984.

108. The financial crisis helps to explain why some Aquino government officials have suggested that the AFP will have to be reduced in size by as much as fifty percent. Only in this way could salaries and benefits be increased sufficiently to have an impact on the problem of petty abuses. See the speech of Deputy Executive Secretary Fulgencio Factoran, reported in Manila Times, October 3, 1986.
109. Interview with a RAM member, Manila, January 12, 1986.
110. Quoted in Fe B. Zamora, "Vignettes from Davao: Of Body Counts, Ghost Towns and the Living Dead," Mr. & Ms., May 24-30, 1985.

CHAPTER 6

A Political Approach to the Insurgency

The Aquino government's policy of attempting to negotiate peace with the insurgents was primarily in response to the Marcos administration's failure with military counterinsurgency. But it was also based on the assumption that President Aquino would derive distinct political advantages from negotiating an agreement with the CPP. Both the intraparty discussions and debates in the CPP, analyzed in chapter three, and the the history of the negotiations that led to the December 1986 ceasefire agreement suggest that the assumption was correct. This chapter analyzes those negotiations and the possibility of using the "substantive negotiations," which are to take place during the ceasefire, as a broader political strategy for dealing with the insurgency.

1. Negotiating Aims and Strategies

Negotiations between the Aquino government and the National Democratic Front, formally representing the CPP and NPA, began in August 1986 under circumstances that made it difficult to predict their outcome. Each side was initially ambiguous about how to negotiate because concessions were dependent on how each side perceived the other's behavior. This interdependence of negotiating postures made for a good deal of mutual sparring as each tested the seriousness of the other side's intentions. It also meant that there was plenty of room for diplomatic maneuvering on both sides and a potential for mutual accommodation.

The negotiating position of the Aquino government was marked by an indecisiveness concerning objectives and means. Aquino was unable or unwilling to articulate a clear concept of how she wanted the negotiations to unfold or what sort of agreement she sought. In part, this lack of decisiveness was related to her desire to avoid an open rift with Enrile and the military; it also reflected uncertainty on the part of Aquino and top officials in her government about the intentions of the CPP leadership. An official in the President's office explained in August that cabinet level officials were convinced that the CPP leaders did not view the Aquino administration all that differently from the Marcos administration and therefore were prepared only to make "tactical moves" rather than "strategic shifts" toward peace.¹ Hence, government officials had a wait and see attitude toward the peace talks.

Depending on the perceived seriousness of the CPP leadership in negotiating, Aquino was prepared either to demand the immediate surrender of the insurgents under an amnesty or to postpone that decision until a later stage. At one point in late May, Aquino was upset by the CPP leadership's failure to contact the government. She publicly suggested that the government might contact local insurgents in Eastern Mindanao to negotiate a "longer truce during which greater trust might develop between insurgent leadership and ranks and the government."² While this proposal was aimed specifically at regional CPP leaders, its logic would have applied equally to the national level as well.

Officials were reluctant to commit the government to any negotiating initiative that would incur even greater political difficulties than it already had with the military and Enrile, until they saw evidence that the CPP was really ready to negotiate. The government's approach to the talks was almost "ad hoc," according to the Malacanang official, who described it as "get ready for the first round of talks, then respond in terms of how the other side reacts."³ When the two negotiating panels met in early August to discuss how to proceed, the government representatives admitted that they possessed no guidelines, and readily agreed that the NDF should take the initiative in submitting a proposal for security guarantees and other technical aspects of the talks.⁴

By the time of the first substantive meeting, however, Aquino and her advisers had made one key policy decision that shaped the negotiations from then on: any substantive negotiations on political issues could only take place once a ceasefire was in place.⁵ Beyond this guideline, the evidence suggests that the government had not made any decisions. What, if anything, they would be willing to agree to in substantive negotiations could be addressed if and when the CPP agreed to a ceasefire.

For the CPP, in contrast, a ceasefire was not the objective. Rather, the peace talks were a means to other ends. Negotiating with the Aquino government was necessary for the CPP to avoid being isolated from the uncommitted forces and losing the political initiative to the government. The boycott policy fiasco and the popularity of the Aquino government worried the party leadership, particularly in light of what it considered to be the "natural advantages of the ruling state in the propaganda battle." For them the "important function" of the peace talks was "gaining proper political leadership of the broad masses" and "clarifying the correct direction of advance of the revolutionary movement...."⁶

The party leadership was particularly concerned about combatting "reformist illusions on the part of the people, especially in the urban areas" and "parliamentarist beliefs that had always been widespread among the urban petit-bourgeoisie." In the face of these dangers, the CPP intended to use the talks to "make it clear to the

people that true peace and comprehensive political settlement cannot be achieved without hard struggle and without sufficient revolutionary strength."⁷

In a memorandum to its national and territorial units, the CPP's Executive Committee referred to the negotiations as a "formal recognition of the national stature and role of the party in the revolutionary movement," which would also bring "formal rights that can be used by the revolution and for its own defense and that of the people."⁸ This interest was behind the CPP's complex proposal on August 18 for "security guarantees."⁹ The proposal included provisions for an office with its own staff and security personnel, as well as access to technical services and the media for the duration of the talks.¹⁰ Those provisions would give representatives of the illegal underground organization greater respectability and more visibility, especially in the capital. CPP leaders hoped that its new status would "give greater weight and effectiveness to propaganda, diplomatic and support work abroad," thus helping to "more effectively combat the U.S. imperialist-led campaign to smear and isolate the Philippine revolution...."¹¹

Another possible objective, which CPP leaders viewed as less likely to be achieved, was to arrange a "tactical alliance" with the liberal civilian side of the Aquino government against the "diehard reactionaries." Such an alliance would be possible only if the Aquino government were willing to implement democratic reforms and follow progressive policies, and if it were "in danger because of the armed threats" of those reactionaries.¹²

The maximum aim of the CPP in the talks, of course, would be shared power through representation in the central government. But the leadership knew that this had no chance of being realized. The aim of a "democratic coalition government" had been discussed in the past only in the context of a more advanced stage of people's war, in which the NPA was on the verge of military victory against the Marcos regime.¹³ The offer to "cooperate with the Aquino government, and with other concerned sectors and forces of the nation, within the framework of a transitional democratic coalition government," contained in a NDF negotiating proposal draft, was almost certainly formulated with propaganda objectives in mind.¹⁴ Members of the NDF negotiating team raised the possibility of NDF representation in the Aquino government as a possible way out of the "impasse" even before any concrete proposals had been exchanged on agenda and security arrangements for the talks.¹⁵ But the NDF panel soon dropped the idea, perhaps because it gave the NDF position an unreasonable appearance.¹⁶

The negotiating strategy of the CPP was to insist that the discussion of a ceasefire had to be placed in a "framework of political settlement." Such a political settlement, according to the CPP leadership, could be based either on an agreement on the

"alteration of the basic structure of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society and the resolution of economic, political and military problems that are the root of the civil war" or on "tactical cooperation and alliance" between the negotiating parties and the "diehard local and foreign reactionaries."¹⁷

Since the CPP leadership had already discounted the Aquino government's ability to bring about fundamental change, the chances for a political settlement rested on the possibility of tactical cooperation. While they viewed this possibility as "remote," they directed leading cadres to "think about situations that may emerge, new revolutionary tasks and tactics, and the opportunities and problems, in case a ceasefire is reached."¹⁸

When negotiations began, the NDF panel took the position that a ceasefire could only be "effective and meaningful if it is situated [within] the comprehensive political settlement of the fundamental causes of the revolutionary armed struggle."¹⁹ At the first meeting between the NDF panel and Minister Mitra in early August, Ocampo proposed that the discussions be called "peace talks" rather than "ceasefire negotiations" to indicate that agreement on substantive political issues was the main objective. He indicated that a ceasefire could come only after agreement on certain "basic principles."²⁰

While insisting on linkage between a ceasefire and a political settlement, however, the NDF negotiators were flexible about timing. They distinguished between the ultimate ceasefire, which would be part of a broader settlement, and a temporary or partial ceasefire aimed at creating conditions for more substantive negotiations. The draft of a proposal circulated in the June-July period suggested two-phase negotiations. In the first, the two sides would implement a "standstill" in which neither side would attack the other without provocation during negotiations for an official ceasefire agreement, which would involve a number of substantive political issues. In the second phase, they would resolve more fundamental issues.²¹ Antonio Zumel repeated this two-phase formula in mid-August, suggesting that the first phase would deal with "cessation of hostilities even temporarily," while the second would be aimed at "solving essential questions."²² Another panel member, Satur Ocampo, said the NDF was "open to a possible agreement on ceasefire if only to provide the atmosphere for substantive negotiation."²³

Because they wanted to use the government's desire for a ceasefire as a bargaining chip in extracting the maximum political benefits from the negotiations, the CPP leadership adamantly opposed any regional ceasefire negotiations. They also feared government efforts to take advantage of the decentralized nature of the CPP/NPA political-military organization, splitting off certain local and regional organs through offers of locally negotiated truces. An NDF

statement issued in May said peace negotiations "must be held on the national level if a mutually satisfactory agreement is to be reached. Any attempt to work out a regional ceasefire, as the warmongers have been suggesting to President Aquino, will be useless and counterproductive."²⁴ A member of the NPA General Staff said regional ceasefires were "neither acceptable, helpful, nor called for at the moment," pointing out that it would simply allow the government to shift deployment of its forces to other regions without a ceasefire.²⁵

But regional party and military organs were accustomed to operating with wide autonomy in pursuing a broad strategy, and a number of them decided that ceasefire negotiations were in their interests. By late summer, ceasefire negotiations had already reached agreement in Misamis Oriental and Davao del Norte, and others were in prospect in several places, including Cebu, Bicol, and Legaspi City.²⁶ In Davao del Norte, where the civilian leadership of the government included members of cause-oriented groups at both the provincial and municipal levels, the CPP national leadership made an exception and gave approval for its regional party committee to negotiate a ceasefire.²⁷

But the CPP leadership opposed ceasefire talks elsewhere. It worried that multiple ceasefires would undermine the party's national level negotiators. Ocampo explained that the CPP had "adopted a policy of not allowing or discouraging regional initiatives, believing that there can't be concurring initiatives of different levels." Since the negotiations in Misamis Oriental and Davao del Norte had began "way ahead of the national initiative," it was agreed that the agreements would be submitted to the national level for approval." The CPP leadership tolerated regional units' discussions with the government, he said, as long as they focused on political or socio-economic questions, "but we say they have to be careful about entering into ceasefire agreements. It's very touchy. We haven't evolved national guidelines for a ceasefire."²⁸

Displaying an ability to defy Executive Committee policy, some regional leaders persistently pursued ceasefire negotiations. NPA commands in Negros, Samar, Bulacan, Bohol, and Quezon reportedly contacted government authorities about such talks.²⁹ The NDF, speaking through its Cebu branch, declared in early October that its "national committee" had "transmitted to all its regional and provincial committees a policy decision to conduct talks for ceasefire only at the highest level."³⁰ But the refusal of some regional CPP/NPA leaders to forgo their local negotiations again forced the party's Executive Committee to back down. In late October, a legal counsel to the NDF delegation said such regional ceasefire talks could take place, depending on the "rapport" between the insurgents and local government or church leaders.³¹ The strong interest of some regional organizations in reaching a ceasefire was evidently a significant source of pressure on national level party leaders.

In summary, the CPP leadership viewed the negotiations primarily as a means of enhancing the status of the revolutionary movement and dramatizing the refusal of the Aquino government to bring about fundamental changes. The ultimate rationale for the talks, therefore, was that they would contribute to stronger popular support for armed struggle. The CPP planned to seek points in common with the Aquino government while emphasizing differences on key issues. At the same time, the CPP leaders were apparently willing to agree to at least a temporary ceasefire as the price of admission to the substantive "dialogue" with the government.

2. Negotiating the Ceasefire

The first phase of the negotiations centered on problems with the mechanics of the talks, including the privileges and immunities to be accorded the NDF panel. The first draft of a "Memorandum of Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees and Physical Centers and Facilities" was submitted by the NDF panel for an August 5 meeting with acting chief government representative Agriculture Minister Ramon Mitra.³² It addressed the question of a definite site and physical facilities for the negotiations themselves. But a second draft proposal from the NDF, submitted August 19, covered the privileges and immunities of the NDF negotiations, including free movement for panel members, an office with its own staff and security, and access to the media.³³

This proposal touched off a political flap within the Aquino government, as Enrile publicly denounced the NDF proposal as an effort to secure "belligerent status" for the insurgency.³⁴ That was the beginning of greatly increased political sensitivity on the part of Aquino and her advisers regarding the public relations aspect of the negotiations. Instead of responding to the NDF proposal on "safety and immunity guarantees," Mitra and Audit Commission Chairman Teofisto Guingona began to press for agreement on a ceasefire. Mitra publicly proposed an unconditional 30-day ceasefire to begin in early November, explaining that conditions for the ceasefire could be "settled later on."³⁵

The NDF panel, which charged that the government's proposal might turn out to be a "mere scrap of paper because it lacked any definition of "mechanics and safeguards," submitted its own proposal for a conditional ceasefire before Mitra left for the U.S. in mid-September. The NDF draft included demands for troops to remain in their barracks in town centers, the disbandment of private armies and paramilitary troops, and the return of control over police to mayors.³⁶

With two proposals on the table, the two negotiating panels proceeded in September to complete the details of a draft agreement on physical facilities and safety and immunities. But the

government panel attached a 30-day unconditional ceasefire to its version of the text.³⁷ Before proceeding, NDF negotiators wanted the government's approval in writing of their safety and immunity guarantees.³⁸

At this point, with the talks seemingly stalemated over the sequence of agreement on preliminaries and a ceasefire, the military arrested Executive Committee member Rudolfo Salas in Manila and charged him with rebellion.³⁹ At first lawyers for the NDF panel claimed that Salas, his wife, and bodyguard, were all members of the NDF negotiating panel, but they quickly backed away from that claim and argued only that the bodyguard had been part of the NDF negotiating panel covered by immunity guarantees.⁴⁰ The NDF did not make his release a condition for resumption of peace talks. Salas remained in jail (although his wife and bodyguard were released), and the NDF negotiators remained in Manila.⁴¹

Three weeks later, the NDF panel was again meeting with the government delegation to discuss both security guarantees and a ceasefire.⁴² Apparently, the NDF side agreed that they would negotiate a ceasefire agreement before agreeing on immunity guarantees. It was the beginning of substantive bargaining on a ceasefire, but the negotiators had a long way to go to bridge the gap between their conflicting conceptions of how a ceasefire would work. While the government wanted to deny that any area would be off-limits to its troops, the insurgents insisted that the military stay out of areas under their control.

The AFP insisted that its right to maintain security in the barrios could not be limited by any ceasefire agreement, since to do so would mean limiting the government's sovereignty. Aquino's civilian advisers similarly argued that there could be no limitations on the government's authority over the barrios. In mid-September, Mitra asserted that the Davao del Norte ceasefire agreement was unacceptable to the government "because it recognized an NPA zone."⁴³ Mitra insisted that the military would have the right to go wherever it wanted, while the NPA would be forbidden to carry arms. "If [the NPA] go any place with firearms, they are looking for trouble," he said. On the other hand, Mitra suggested that the NPA would not be subject to arrest merely because of membership in the insurgent army.⁴⁴

The insurgents, however, demanded that the government acknowledge, at least tacitly, an NPA zone of control as part of a ceasefire agreement. The initial draft negotiating proposal by the NDF, later retracted, demanded that the government "withdraw and remove all its detachments and checkpoints from the barrios and interior town centers, and their advance command/tactical staging posts in other town centers within and near the areas of control of the New People's Army." The NPA would, in return, "confine its regular and guerrilla forces in the barrios and interior town centers within its areas of control."⁴⁵

Zumel called for the "withdrawal of military encampments and outposts from our territories back to the military barracks." He indicated that a delineation of boundaries of control was preferable, but that the NDF would accept a "standstill ceasefire," which would mean, "so long as their soldiers don't enter barrios, neither will we go to the towns looking for trouble.... We don't raid municipal halls and military camps."⁴⁶ This definition of a standstill ceasefire would have required that the AFP concede, in effect, all barrios outside the municipal centers, to the NPA, while prohibiting the NPA only from moving into these municipal centers.

The two sides were thus far apart in their definition of a standstill ceasefire at the outset of the substantive negotiations. In a series of negotiating sessions in late October and November the two panels sought to reconcile their differences. The draft agreement that emerged from this process distinguished between "hostile acts and armed operations," which were prohibited by the draft agreement, and government "peace-keeping" operations, which were permitted.

The draft also provided for a "National Ceasefire Committee," consisting of government and NDF members as well as others to be mutually agreed upon, to monitor and supervise the agreement's enforcement. The committee would compose implementing guidelines for local and/or regional ceasefire committees, investigate complaints or violations, and adjudicate on approval of the two negotiating panels.⁴⁷

On November 1, the NDF panel made public its own proposal for a 100-day ceasefire, which dropped its demand that the government withdraw from barrios it claimed to control.⁴⁸ Ocampo explained that the NDF side still believed that military withdrawal from certain areas was necessary for a workable ceasefire, but that it was not a precondition for the ceasefire. Ocampo also reported that the NDF panel had softened its earlier demand that the CHDF be dismantled completely, and agreed that the "abusive" members and units of the CHDF could be arrested and prosecuted along with regular AFP forces.

Ocampo indicated that the NDF would propose that regional and local ceasefire committees decide which military and paramilitary units were "notorious" and should be disbanded.⁴⁹ The NDF would continue to press demands for the withdrawal of government forces from NPA guerrilla zones; the disarming of CHDF units, private armies, and fanatical anti-communist sects; and having police control under local authority. These remained as "talking points" regarding the implementation of the agreement.

A few days later, at a meeting of the National Security Council, Enrile, supported by Ramos, outlined the reservations of the armed forces with the ceasefire.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Ramos and Enrile went

along with a government counterdraft which again limited the ceasefire to 30 days--an apparent concession to the view of military leadership that the NPA would use a longer ceasefire to "regroup."⁵¹

On November 10, the two negotiating panels met to settle differences on the key issue of what would constitute a "hostile act" in violation of the ceasefire. They agreed to include among the prohibited actions "search," "surveillance" and "arrest and apprehension," which made it clear that the government could not go after insurgents who were not involved in violating the agreement itself.⁵² However, they failed to resolve their differences on two key questions: the insurgents' "taxation" and "disarming" operations, both of which the government insisted should be included among the forbidden actions.⁵³

The CPP leadership was holding out on these two issues, at least in part, because of feeling that the political balance in Manila was shifting toward Enrile and Ramos. Ocampo had suggested in early September that the CPP was reluctant to proceed to the substantive negotiations unless and until Aquino had shown that she had control over her own military.⁵⁴ For weeks, NDF negotiators had been calling on Aquino to "assert her political authority" over the military, indicating their doubts that she could make the military abide by any agreement reached in the talks.⁵⁵ They complained that the Aquino government "cannot negotiate on its own terms" because of "grave pressure on the civilian government by the military."⁵⁶

The murder of labor leader Rolando Olalia, a key figure in the legal left and Chairman of the Partido ng Bayan (PnB), prompted the NDF panel to break off the talks indefinitely, on the grounds that their own safety was endangered. But after Aquino fired Enrile and issued a one-week deadline for a ceasefire agreement, the CPP leadership responded with alacrity. Only two days after Aquino's moves, the two panels spent eight hours clearing away the final hurdles to an agreement. A member of the NDF panel, Carolina Malay-Ocampo, said that Aquino's sacking of Enrile had removed a major obstacle and "improved the atmosphere" for an agreement.⁵⁷

The resolution of remaining issues again involved a willingness by both sides to make accommodations. The two sides agreed to split their differences on the duration of the ceasefire to arrive at a 60-day ceasefire. On issues involving "hostile acts," the NDF made one concession, and there was one artful compromise. The NDF agreed to include "disarming" as one of the prohibited actions, conceding a point it may otherwise have withheld and used later as a bargaining chip.

The government panel, on the other hand, agreed to the term "armed extortion," rather than "illegal taxation," appearing in the list of prohibited acts. This permitted the CPP to argue that its

collection of regular taxes was not extortion. The NDF panel agreed, however, to an additional statement that the ceasefire would not "prevent government from exercising its lawful power to stop any form of taxation or illegal exaction of the procurement of firearms and explosives."⁵⁸ Thus the government could claim that its prerogatives had been protected, but the agreement would not collapse on the issue of CPP/NPA taxation.

In the final agreement, "peace-keeping" was defined as "government police and security patrol, investigation, arrest, search, and seizure against criminality...and other violations of the penal statutes, excluding political crimes, for the purposes of protecting the civilian population and property."⁵⁹ By excluding any "political crime" from the purview of such operations, this language appeared to limit armed operations by government security forces to ordinary criminal cases. By including in the list of "hostile acts" those actions normally undertaken by government forces when searching for CPP cadres or NPA troops, the agreement further restricted government operations.

One potential source of conflicting interpretations remained. The phrase "and other violations of penal statutes" could be the legal basis for the AFP going after any armed NPA on the grounds that guerrillas are carrying guns without permits. One AFP official immediately suggested that the army would interpret it in that way.⁶⁰ To go after any NPA units not in populated areas, however, would appear to violate the "hostile acts" provisions and therefore defeat the central purpose of the agreement.

Finally, the agreement included two other points that satisfied initial NDF conditions for a ceasefire. It obligated the government to "arrest, disarm and prosecute armed groups which include private armies, armed goons, armed fanatical sects, groups such as the 'lost commands' and death squads." It also obligated the AFP to "disarm and punish abusive members and units in the field, including abusive CHDF." (The NPA was obligated to do the same with its own abusive personnel, as it had offered to do before the negotiations began.)⁶¹ But the NDF panel's proposal to have the regional or local ceasefire committees play a role in determining which units or individuals should be punished was rejected.

The agreement on "Safety and Immunity Guarantees and Physical Centers and Facilities" provided for the office, staff and security that the NDF negotiators had requested in their initial draft. It stated that both parties would be allowed to obtain "at their expense, offices and residences as they may deem appropriate...", and that their staff, consultants and security men would be issued safe conduct passes and would be granted "absolute, binding, permanent, and irrevocable immunity from search, arrest, and prosecution...."⁶²

In a passage that was clearly intended to satisfy military and civilian figures who had earlier charged that the NDF proposal would give the NDF the "status of belligerency" as defined by the Geneva Conventions, the agreement explicitly stated that neither that agreement nor any other reached between the two parties would "invest the NDF with the status of belligerency under the laws of war."⁶³ NDF negotiators had denied that the NDF proposal contained any such provision, although party cadres had discussed that status as one of the objectives of negotiations.⁶⁴

3. Beyond the Preliminary Truce

The preliminary truce is at best only an opening for the possibility of a more durable ceasefire. The "substantive negotiations" which are to follow pose a fundamental choice for the Aquino government: whether to advance a coordinated political strategy aimed at reconciliation and a durable truce, or to fall back on a counterinsurgency warfare strategy. One of the issues which remains unresolved is whether a long-term ceasefire is really in the government's best interests.

Although the military has argued that a long ceasefire would be advantageous to the NPA, the logic of that position is difficult to understand. Without being able to carry out disarming operations that have been the primary means of expanding the armed struggle, the NPA could lose momentum. "A minimization or cessation of military activities may have a weakening effect on the development of the army," said a memorandum from two key CPP commissions in July 1986, "because the launching of tactical offensive plays a major role in its strengthening."⁶⁵ The party and NPA command must weigh that factor in formulating their negotiating posture in the next phase of the talks. From a strictly military standpoint then, a ceasefire agreement that would continue to prohibit all military operations would be the Aquino government's most effective tool for controlling the insurgency.

As noted earlier, the CPP expects to be able to use the next phase of the negotiations to justify armed struggle by demonstrating that the Aquino government is unwilling to make any basic changes in the socio-economic and political system. The party leadership expects to be able to return to armed struggle after having persuaded the population that the Aquino government is not basically different from what came before it.

The challenge to the Aquino government in the next phase of the negotiations, therefore, is to frustrate the CPP strategy by making it as difficult as possible for the CPP to justify a return to armed struggle. It can do so by demonstrating that it is committed

to changes in economic and political structures, and that it is ready to open the political process at both local and national levels to those committed to radical change--provided that it will lead ultimately to ending violence.

A strategy for outmaneuvering the leadership of the insurgency regarding the armed struggle might be called "incorporation." It would center on a process of bringing the CPP and its supporters into the mainstream of the political system before getting a commitment to a surrender of arms. It would be based on the principle that an illegal armed movement cannot avoid being changed once given a role in the system.

The first element of an incorporation strategy would be to propose a program of peaceful cooperation between the government and the insurgents that includes some of the CPP's major demands. The key would be a proposal for land reform, both because land tenure issues have been a major source of support for the CPP, and because the CPP strategy assumes that the Aquino government is unable or unwilling to sponsor a credible agrarian reform.

Land Reform Minister Heherson Alvarez has already prepared a comprehensive proposal for the government. It would reform rice, corn, coconut, and sugar lands, as well as fishponds, and essentially liquidate landlordism. The program calls for the government to purchase all tenanted rice and corn lands at below-market prices and then redistribute these lands within two or three years. One million tenants would benefit. Other croplands would be subject to the same purchase and redistribution. Estimates of the total number of beneficiaries vary from two to four million tenants.⁶⁶

Opposition to such an ambitious plan comes from within the government itself.⁶⁷ Even Aquino has not publicly acknowledged the need for it.⁶⁸ But land distribution has been publicly advocated by the chief economist at the conservative Center for Research and Communication, which has influenced Aquino's thinking on economic planning.⁶⁹ If her government were able to embrace such a program, Aquino could use the negotiations as the occasion to call on the NDF to help insure that the national assembly approves it by helping to elect representatives who will support it and by helping to insure that it is fairly implemented.

The proposal for land reform can thus be linked with a proposal for encouraging the participation of the insurgents in national elections and in the legislative and executive institutions of the government. The government could pledge to remove any legal or political obstacles to that participation. For this aspect of the government's strategy to be effective, it would not be necessary for the CPP to accept a legal status. The PnB is already a legal stand-in for the CPP, even though there may be differences between their tactical positions on the issues.

While the government could not formally offer an alliance with the PnB, it could discuss privately with NDF the possibility of cooperation against right-wing opposition parties. Possible coalitions among traditional elite political parties associated with Vice-President Laurel and former Defense Minister Enrile have already pushed PDP-Laban--the party most closely associated with Aquino during the Presidential election--to offer an alliance with PnB, along with other leftist groups.⁷⁰

The new Constitution, which will be submitted for a plebiscite on February 2, 1987, contains provisions that encourage a multiparty system and the representation of such parties in cabinets. Some government officials believe that the PnB could win enough seats in the legislature to earn a couple of cabinet ministries in the government. Leaders of the PnB have said they expect to be the third strongest party in the national and local elections and have expressed interest in electoral alliances with other parties.⁷¹

Barring a military takeover or some other extraconstitutional interference, PnB participation in assembly elections will probably take place regardless of the government's negotiating stance. The only choice for the Aquino government is whether or not to position itself more advantageously in the negotiations by being more open to the PnB.

As noted earlier, the CPP leadership has remained extremely uneasy about the idea of direct electoral participation, even while quietly giving its support to the formation of the PnB. The CPP fears that winning some seats in parliament and ministries in the government could give rise to the belief in the party and among mass base people that elections can be more effective than armed struggle. Having representatives of the PnB in the government would certainly add fuel to the argument that more emphasis should be placed on the former than on the latter. That is why one palace official suggested that power-sharing achieved through electoral means would be in the government's long-term interest.⁷²

Other forms of cooperation between government and insurgents could also be proposed. The ceasefire agreement provides for the disarming of private armies, fanatical Christian sects, and other paramilitary organizations.⁷³ Aquino could invite CPP/NPA representatives to help the government locate, capture, and disarm these armed groups. Cooperation could take the form of exchanging information and perhaps even authorizing selected NAFP and NPA units to carry out joint operations against these forces.

Another potential form of cooperation concerns abusive CHDF members. Although Aquino has expressed her desire to eliminate the CHDF altogether, she has thus far gone along with the military's desire to maintain the program while weeding out individual CHDF

members who have been accused of abuses. The preliminary ceasefire agreement calls for the government to arrest and punish those CHDF members and units that have been guilty of abuses. The NDF panel meanwhile, has declared its determination to see the entire system eliminated. Aquino could propose an investigating team in each province, including one representative designated by the NDF, to collect data about which individuals or units need to be disarmed and which could serve as local militia.

Confronted with the invitation to join in a program of economic and military reform and to enter into the mainstream of the country's political life, the party leadership could turn to other demands that it knows would be difficult or impossible for the government to meet. It could demand, for example, rejecting the IMF conditionality or ousting the U.S. from military bases in the Philippines. These issues, however, are not the main sources of mass base support for the insurgency. Its strongest appeal is to those nationalists who are not necessarily prepared to engage in armed struggle in support of such demands. Moreover, NDF negotiators have indicated that they can live with Aquino's pledge to honor the existing bases agreement with the U.S. until 1991.⁷⁴

The Aquino government has another instrument for advancing an incorporation strategy: the local elections scheduled for August 1987. Through these elections, the government could accomplish several objectives at once. First, it could directly involve the insurgents in governing the municipalities. Second, it could "legalize" the armed forces now under the NPA command as local militia forces. Third, it could reintroduce a civilian government presence into communist-dominated barrios and institutionalize socio-economic cooperation between CPP influenced local governments and the central government's ministries. Fourth, it could reinforce the central government's authority and undermine any claim the insurgents might have as a "second government." The overall impact, therefore, would be to increase the incentives for the insurgent movement to shift toward peaceful methods of seeking power and to reduce the incentives for using armed struggle.

It is likely that the PnB will win fifteen to twenty percent of the mayoral positions in the local elections.⁷⁵ Once mayors acceptable to the CPP are elected in these municipalities, the government would have means of incorporating the insurgent movement into the national fabric. It could place the control of both the CHDF and the police temporarily in the hands of the mayors, rather than of the military.

The municipalities would have the legal right to recruit their own CHDF units and police, which could come from the ranks of the NPA. Carrying arms would thus be legalized because the power of the NPA had been confirmed through the local electoral process. At the

same time, the NPA-dominated municipalities would be required to allow civilian officials of various government ministries to function freely in order to assist in economic and social development. By this means, the government's presence in NPA-dominated areas, which has been largely absent for several years, could be resumed.

Allowing the CPP/NPA to have unfettered responsibility in those municipalities where they already have shadow governments and have prevented government ministries and local organs from functioning effectively would have an obvious impact on the whole structure of the revolutionary movement. Turning the party's energies to the tasks of governing would lead them away from the armed struggle. As local officials, party leaders would acquire an interest in cooperation with the central government officials who could provide resources to help solve local problems. Acceptance of resources from the national government for health, education, and agriculture, for example, would underline the insurgents' acceptance of the Aquino government's authority.

Such arrangements would roughly parallel the "territorial accommodation" or "confederal" peace plan considered by the Nixon administration and by former Johnson administration officials for South Vietnam during the early phase of the Paris peace talks (1969-1970).⁷⁶ Under that plan, the South Vietnamese government would have "confirmed" local revolutionary government in areas under National Liberation Front control and accepted revolutionary military units in those areas as the local self-defense forces. In return, the NLF would accept the sovereignty of the Saigon government and guarantee the free movement of certain civilian officials in its zones.

That kind of compromise was unacceptable to the insurgents in South Vietnam because they rejected the legitimacy of the Saigon government and because they were politically and militarily stronger than that government in the absence of U.S. military intervention in South Vietnam. The communist movement's control was limited to a minority of hamlets only because of the weight of U.S. military power. The territorial accommodation plan was aimed at freezing that control artificially and denying the movement a share of national power.⁷⁷

The armed conflict in the Philippines presents an entirely different set of circumstances, both because the insurgency is at a much earlier stage of political-military development and because the Aquino government has both uncontested legal status and widespread popularity. The revolutionaries themselves do not claim the support of an absolute majority of even the rural population. Nor does the communist leadership view the Aquino government itself as the enemy.

Hence a variant of the territorial accommodation plan might be

acceptable to the CPP leadership if it is presented in the proper context. NDF negotiator Ocampo confirmed that the CPP leadership was open to the idea of guerrilla units of the NPA becoming local militia units under the authority of the mayors in those areas, thus making them formally the local arm of the central government.⁷⁸ The juridical implication of such a policy would be to accept the authority of civilian government officials involved in socio-economic development programs.

The Aquino government has already considered putting local governments in charge of the police.⁷⁹ But the Defense Ministry and the military have resisted such proposals. For instance, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Plans and Programs, retired Brigadier General Isidro B. Agunod, declared in August 1986 that the Ministry would oppose giving power over the police to mayors who had been elected with CPP/NPA support.⁸⁰ The military would also object to NPA forces becoming part of the CHDF and to barrio governments being controlled by the CPP. Such developments would suggest that there is no hope for reasserting direct government control.

Realistically, however, there is no prospect in the foreseeable future for the recovery of those barrios by armed force. The question that must be asked, therefore, is not whether the strategy of incorporation will end the insurgent movement during the next few years, but whether it will bring the country closer to peace than will conventional counterinsurgency strategy, which relies heavily on military force.

In short, the government's best negotiating strategy would be to build a cooperative relationship with the movement. The objective of this strategy would be two fold: first, to make it more difficult for the CPP to justify a return to armed struggle, and second, to give the CPP leaders a stake in terms of status and influence that can only be maintained by continued peaceful cooperation with the government. A strategy of inclusion and collaboration, building on the Aquino government's advantages and the CPP's vulnerabilities, would halt the military growth of the NPA; put the CPP in the position of acknowledging the government's authority; remove the atmosphere of tension, resentment, and fear that have fed the growth of the insurgency in the past; make it difficult for the CPP to depict the government as reactionary and thus to justify a return to armed struggle; stimulate fundamental changes in the revolutionary movement by engaging it in peaceful pursuits; and encourage demands within the movement for greater emphasis on electoral struggle and opposition to the armed struggle.

Notes for Chapter 6

1. Interview, Manila, August 21, 1986.
2. Text of speech by President Aquino before leaders of Davao City and Eastern Mindanao, May 23, 1986. Manila Bulletin, May 29, 1986. On Aquino's remark that she was making the proposal because the top leadership of the CPP had not responded to her earlier proposal, see Ang Pahayagang Malaya, May 24, 1986.
3. Ibid.
4. Interview with NDF negotiator Saturnino Ocampo, Manila, September 1, 1986; comments by lawyers for the NDF panel, Business Day, September 3, 1986.
5. Comment by acting chief of the government panel, Agriculture Minister Ramon Mitra, quoted in Manila Bulletin, August 6, 1986.
6. Memorandum from the Executive Committee, "Negotiations about a Ceasefire," July 1986.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Philippines Daily Inquirer, September 4, 1986.
10. Interview with NDF negotiator Satur Ocampo, Manila, September 1, 1986. Enrile's claim that the NDF proposal demanded that the NDF flag be displayed alongside that of the Republic of the Philippines, however, was apparently false. Excerpts of a letter from Antonio Zumel, in column by Jesus Bigornia, Manila Bulletin, September 9, 1986; Ocampo interview.
11. Executive Committee Memorandum on Ceasefire Negotiations, July 1986.
12. Ibid.
13. See Drafting Committee, Secretariat, National Democratic Front of the Philippines, Program of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, revised draft, January 1, 1985, p. 7.
14. "Proposal for National Dialogue and Negotiations to Achieve the Cessation of Armed Hostilities and Political Settlement for Peace, Democracy and Independence," Second Draft, marked "restricted, not for reproduction." This draft, apparently written in the June-July period, was circulated widely in Manila and was in the hands of government officials by mid-August.

15. Business Day, June 30, 1986.
16. Business Day, June 24, 1986. In an interview in early September, NDF negotiator Saturnino Ocampo played down the earlier suggestion of a coalition government, explaining that the draft proposal containing that idea had been written "by a group within the NDF" and was only one proposal that had been considered by the panel. Interview, Manila, September 1, 1986.
17. Interview with Ocampo, September 1, 1986.
18. Ibid.
19. Joint Press Conference statement by NDF panel members Antonio Zumel and Satur Ocampo, Business Day, September 9, 1986.
20. Manila Bulletin, August 6, 1986.
21. "Proposal for National Dialogue and Negotiations," p. 5.
22. Yomiur Shimbun, interview with Zumel, August 18, 1986.
23. Interview, Manila, September 1, 1986.
24. AFP dispatch, May 29, 1986, FBIS, AFDR, May 30, 1986. p.12.
25. Liberation, June 1986, p. 12.
26. Interview with Ocampo, Manila, September 1, 1986.
27. Manila Chronicle, August 22, 1986.
28. Ibid.
29. Manila Chronicle, October 23, 1986; Far Eastern Broadcasting Company, October 5, 1986, FBIS, APDR, October 6, 1986, p. P2.
30. AFP dispatch, October 4, 1986, FBIS, APDR, October 6, 1986, p. P2.
31. Manila Chronicle, October 23, 1986.
32. Business Day, September 3, 1986.
33. Interview with Ocampo, September 1, 1986; Manila Bulletin, August 31, 1986.
34. Business Day, September 2, 1986. Among other assertions about the proposal, Enrile said the NDF wanted to display the "communist flag" next to the Philippine national flag. NDF panel members and lawyers all firmly denied any such demand. Interview with Ocampo, September 1, 1986; Business Day, September 3, 1986.

35. Business Day, September 9 and 12, 1986.
36. Kyodo dispatch, September 27, 1986, FBIS, September 29, 1986, p. P1; Philippines Daily Inquirer, September 20, 1986.
37. Ocampo interview in Business Day, October 6, 1986.
38. Ibid.; Zumel interview in Manila Chronicle, October 5, 1986.
39. The Washington Post, October 1, 1986.
40. Ang Pahayagang Malaya, October 3, 1986.
41. Manila Chronicle, October 5, 1986.
42. Manila Chronicle, October 20, 1986.
43. Interview with Ramon Mitra, Arlington, Virigina, September 16, 1986. In fact, the Davao del Norte ceasefire agreement did not establish a formal NPA "zone of control." It established a "ceasefire zone" in which no movements by the military would be permitted beyond the detachment perimeter. "Ceasefire in Davao: Peace at the 11th Hour," Mr. & Ms., August 29-September 4, 1986, p. 18.
44. Interview with Mitra, September 16, 1986.
45. "Proposal for National Dialogue and Negotiations," p. 6.
46. Interview with Zumel by Ninotchka Rosca, Philippine Daily Inquirer, June 18-19, 1986.
47. "Memorandum of Agreement on a Preliminary Ceasefire," p. 3; The Washington Post, November 2, 1986; Manila Chronicle, November 5, 1986.
48. The NDF panel proposal came ten days after Aquino, under mounting pressure from Enrile and Ramos for a stronger military response to the insurgency, threatened to announce a "deadline" for completion of peace negotiations "soon." Zumel insisted, however, that the proposal had been prepared in September, well before the Aquino announcement. Manila Chronicle, November 2, 1986.
49. The Washington Post, November 2, 1986.
50. The Washington Post, November 6, 1986.
51. AFP dispatch, November 5, 1986, FBIS, November 5, 1986, p. P1; The Washington Post, November 2, 1986; Kyodo dispatch, November 6, 1986, FBIS, November 6, 1986, p. P1.

52. "Memorandum of Agreement on a Preliminary Ceasefire," p. 1.
53. The Washington Post, November 12, 1986.
54. Interview with Ocampo, Manila, September 1, 1986.
55. Interview with Satur Ocampo, Kyodo dispatch, September 4, 1986, FPRS-SEA-86-175, September 27, 1986, p. 36.
56. Manila Chronicle, November 13, 1986.
57. The Washington Post, November 26, 1986.
58. "Memorandum of Agreement on a Preliminary Ceasefire," pp. 1-2.
59. "Memorandum of Agreement on a Preliminary Ceasefire." Unclassified telegram from American Embassy Manila to Department of State, November 28, 1986, pp. 1-2. The text is also published, without title and introduction, in Radyo Ng Bayan, November 27, 1986, FBIS, November 28, 1986, pp. P5-11.
60. A top military officer was quoted immediately after the signing as saying, "If someone carries a gun without a permit, we will accost him. If he resists, we will shoot him as a common criminal." Time, December 8, 1986, p. 47.
61. See the interview with Zumel, Ocampo, and Carolina Malay Ocampo, "Long and Lasting Peace," Veritas, August 21-27, 1986.
62. "Memorandum of Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees and Physical Centers and Facilities," in Department of State telegram, and FBIS, November 28, 1986, p. P8-11.
63. Ibid.
64. Interview with Ocampo; interview with CPP cadre no. 1, August 19, 1986.
65. Text of a memorandum by the National Urban Commission and United Front Commission of the CPP in July 1986, The New Philippines Daily Express, November 28, 1986.
66. See interviews with Alvarez in New Day, July 21, 1986, p. 4, and Veritas, August 14-20, 1986, p. 8.
67. The Minister of Agriculture, Ramon Mitra, was reported to have disagreed with plans to include sugar and coconut lands in the scope of future land redistribution. The Manila Evening Post, May 14, 1986.

68. As a candidate, Aquino carefully refrained from committing herself to any land distribution going beyond what Marcos had already decreed, promising only to devise ways to ensure "greater productivity and equitable sharing of the benefits and ownership of land." Speech in Davao City, January 17, 1986, Peryodiko Dabaw (Davao City), special issue, n.d. (January 1986).
69. South China Morning Post, June 4, 1986.
70. Manila Chronicle, August 20, 1986.
71. Manila Chronicle, August 20, 1986; Press Conference remarks by Joe Castro, National Preparatory Committee, Partido ng Bayan, Manila, August 19, 1986. The only condition mentioned for such cooperation was that the potential ally be "issue-oriented."
72. Interview, August 28, 1986.
73. At the beginning of May government figures showed that there were still 131 private armies around the country, with an estimated 8,700 weapons--nearly as many as officially attributed to the NPA. Philippine Daily Express, May 1, 1986.
74. Washington Times, December 3, 1986. CPP founding Chairman Sison noted that the party was ready to be flexible on the issue of the bases, recognizing that ending the U.S. military presence would require a much stronger popular movement than now exists. Interview in L'humanite, June 6, 1986.
75. Satur Ocampo alluded to this reliance on CPP-dominated barrios, when he said, "We have confidence that we can win in areas under our influence." Interview, Manila, September 1, 1986.
76. Variations of this proposal were detailed in Samuel P. Huntington, "Getting Ready for Political Competition in South Vietnam," Southeast Asia Development Advisory Group, The Asia Society, SEADAG Discussion Paper, revised draft, February 8, 1969, and "The Vance Plan for a Vietnam Cease-Fire," The New York Times Magazine, September 21, 1969, pp. 30-31, 93-99.
77. For an analysis, see Gareth Porter, A Peace Denied: The United States, Vietnam and the Paris Agreement (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1975), pp. 88-91.
78. Interview, September 1, 1986.
79. Ang Pahayagang Malaya, June 27, 1986 and August 20, 1986. One financial argument in its favor is it would save the national government two billion pesos each year.
80. Interview, Camp Aguinaldo, August 28, 1986.

CHAPTER 7

U.S. Policy and Counterinsurgency

For more than two years, the U.S. government has been actively involved in the issue of how to deal with the communist insurgency in the Philippines. The U.S. military facilities at Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Airbase, long regarded as vitally important to the U.S. political-military posture in East Asia, have made the preservation of a government friendly to U.S. interests a major concern of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia.

This chapter examines the Reagan administration's policy toward the insurgency in the Philippines which emerged in 1984 as the primary problem facing U.S. policymakers. It focuses on U.S. support for a conventional counterinsurgency strategy and for those civilian and military figures whose views seemed aligned with those of the U.S. government. The chapter argues that the Reagan administration, while reiterating its support for Aquino, has also expressed both public and private skepticism about her political approach to the negotiations. By pushing her toward a more conventional counterinsurgency strategy, the U.S. has made it more difficult for her to pursue a negotiated agreement with the insurgents and thus increased the likelihood that the Aquino government will find itself in an all-out war with the NPA. There are costs and risks in this U.S. policy which deserve far closer analysis than they have received thus far.

1. The U.S. and the Marcos Regime

The Reagan administration came to power committed to preserving the government of President Ferdinand Marcos, whom it regarded as a reliable ally. But after American officials became fully aware of the dimensions of the threat from the NPA in spring 1984, the U.S. became actively involved in trying to bring about changes in both personnel and policies in the Marcos regime in order to effectively counter the insurgency.

As administration officials publicly acknowledged, the U.S. was in a strong position to influence developments in the Philippines.¹ The economy was in critical condition, and the government was very dependent on large-scale loans from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as well as assistance from the industrialized countries. The Philippine military was linked to the U.S. by training, doctrine, organization, lines of supply, and personal associations. Other key elements of Philippine society, especially its business community, looked to the U.S. because of shared ideology and other interests.

Because its potential for political influence in the Philippines was so strong, the Reagan administration understood that it had to "respect national sensitivities and respect constraints," in the words of one official spokesman.² Thus, public U.S. policy was based on the principle that "it is up to the Filipinos themselves to choose their government, and only they can make the basic decisions that will determine their success."³ As a key policymaker observed, the administration believed that it would be most effective in advancing its interests in the Philippine context "when a debate has already formed in the Philippines, and when there are voices, and frequently voices within the government as well as the opposition, pushing for certain things."⁴ By throwing its weight behind the side in the debate which was in line with U.S. thinking, the U.S. could thus increase its leverage on the policies of the Marcos regime.

The administration's approach to dealing with the insurgency in the final year of the Marcos regime was shaped by the perception that the Philippine political system was in a transitional period, which began with the 1984 parliamentary election and would culminate in the 1987 Presidential election. In order to contain the growth of the communist insurgency, it believed that there would have to be substantial changes in organization, personnel, and policies within political, economic, and military spheres.⁵

But during most of 1985, the administration's highest priority was on bringing about changes in the Philippine military. Perceiving the military's "structural weakness; poor, uninspired leadership; corruption [and] mismanagement of resources," the administration's goal was the "restoration of professional apolitical leadership in the Armed Forces in order to deal with the NPA threat."⁶ In spring 1986, the "Reform AFP Movement" (RAM) appeared among AFP officers, some of whom worked in the Defense Ministry, and articulated the objectives sought by the U.S.⁷ After that, the Reagan administration publicly supported "important elements of the AFP leadership" who had embraced the aims of "rebuilding the professionalism of the armed forces."⁸ It argued that continued U.S. assistance—aimed at increasing troop welfare, communications, training, and mobility—would help to reform the Philippine military.⁹ When communicating with top Marcos regime officials, however, the administration linked continued military assistance to the dismissal of Marcos' Chief of Staff General Fabian Ver. American officials saw Ver as the main obstacle in military reform.¹⁰

The Reagan administration's view of an effective counterinsurgency program was by no means exclusively military. Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard L. Armitage noted in Congressional testimony that "there can be no simple military victory alone. Counterinsurgency strategy must involve the entire Philippine government in a coordinated program of political, social,

and economic measures."¹¹ Policymakers recognized that free elections were necessary for any Philippine government to have legitimacy, that a stagnant or shrinking economy would increase support for the insurgents, and that "officially condoned" harassment and murder by the military and paramilitary groups had to be stopped.¹²

But despite its reiteration of the importance of non-military programs and the curbing of illegal violence, the administration's image of counterinsurgency remained predominantly military. Policymakers viewed the AFP's anti-Huk campaign of the early to mid-1950s as the model for a successful counterinsurgency strategy against the NPA. Assistant Secretary of State Paul D. Wolfowitz said the AFP "wrote the book on how to fight an insurgency successfully" in the campaign against the Huks, and had used the same techniques against the Moros. He said the plans in both cases were "as much political and economic as...military."¹³

In fact, the counterinsurgency campaign that defeated the Huks was fundamentally military in character, with social and political elements playing only secondary roles. In 1950, the AFP, under Defense Secretary Ramon Magsaysay's leadership, actually added economic and political "annexes" to what was essentially a military plan.¹⁴ The economic and social programs carried out under Magsaysay's tenure as Defense Secretary actually followed rather than preceded the collapse of the Huk insurgency, and were regarded by the government and military as "psychological warfare" rather than real socio-economic reform.¹⁵

The swift collapse of the Huk movement between 1950 and 1953, far from reflecting a strategy of political and social reforms, was primarily due to the communist leadership's foolish gamble in 1950 on winning a military victory within a short time by mobilizing large combat units for positional warfare.¹⁶ The collapse of the Huk movement followed the capture of the entire urban-based Politburo of the Communist Party, which was about to depart for the field, and a devastatingly effective AFP counterattack against the large Huk troop concentrations in 1951, in which 2,000 insurgents were killed and another 2,000 captured.¹⁷ The communist-led Huk movement, with relatively weak political organization and political education, could not withstand a serious military setback.¹⁸ It became so demoralized that over 4,000 weapons were captured or turned in during the first three months of 1952.¹⁹ By the end of 1953, only about 2,400 armed Huks were left of the 15,000 at the peak of their strength.²⁰

Reagan administration policymakers certainly understood the differences between the Huk movement, which was limited almost entirely to Central Luzon, and the CPP/NPA challenge, which is countrywide and has carefully avoided large units that could be vulnerable to government attack. Nevertheless, the invocation of

the AFP anti-Huk campaign as a model for dealing with the current insurgency suggested that policymakers were hoping that military force could play a key role in turning back the CPP/NPA challenge. While they rejected the necessity for programs of political and social reform, the administration still held the image of the AFP "defeating" the insurgents.²¹

2. Responding to Aquino's Initiative

The fall of the Marcos regime was greeted with enthusiasm by key policymakers in the U.S. State Department, Defense Department, and National Security Council. President Aquino was recognized as having enormous popularity, being committed to democratic institutions, and appreciating the need for economic liberalization. At the same time, U.S. policymakers viewed continuity in the military establishment, represented by Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and Chief of Staff General Fidel Ramos, as critical to the success of the counterinsurgency effort.

The ideologically disparate elements of the Aquino government presented a potential source of difficulties for U.S. officials. The civilian components of the government included a market-oriented economic team, traditional political leaders, and a group of human rights activists and liberal democratic oppositionists. Enrile and Ramos, who had opposed Ver at the crucial moment, were clearly aligned with U.S. views on how best to fight the insurgents, as well as on the all-important issue of U.S. bases in the Philippines.²² The major question mark was the orientation of the liberal democrats, whose backgrounds tended to make them suspicious of the military and inclined them to believe in the virtues of a peaceful dialogue with the insurgents.

Aquino's announced plans to negotiate with the CPP leadership and her initial plan to rein in the AFP prompted a negative reaction in the Reagan administration. Officials in the U.S. Embassy and in Washington were unsure whether Aquino intended merely to try to separate the nonideological element in the NPA from the "hardcore" through an amnesty program, or whether she would try to conduct serious negotiations with the revolution's leadership. While the former was acceptable as a preliminary to conventional counterinsurgency strategy, the idea of conducting serious negotiations with the CPP contradicted the administration's strategic principles.

From April to June 1986, U.S. Embassy officials openly expressed their concern about the lack of clarity in Aquino's policy vis a vis the insurgency, according to a well-informed Malacanang source. Deputy Chief of Mission Philip Kaplan was "very vocal," according to an Aquino government official, in raising doubts about negotiations and the absence of a military strategy for defeating the insurgents. His message to Malacanang, as recalled by this

official, was in substance: "The problem is we don't know what you are doing on the insurgency. You should be doing more to fight them."²³

U.S. policymakers' main concern, however, was the absence of any comprehensive counterinsurgency program. The Marcos regime had such a program, although it had not implemented it. The U.S. government was determined that Aquino should also adopt both the integrated counterinsurgency program and the joint civilian-military decisionmaking body which Enrile and Ramos had proposed. Aquino's initial failure to act on these proposals drew a strong reaction from the U.S. officials.

In early April, Assistant Secretary of State Gaston Sigur made it clear that the Reagan administration supported Enrile and Ramos's proposal for the revival of the National Security Council. "A close, coordinated relationship between civilian and military authorities in an anti-insurgency strategy," he said, "will be required--the type of plan that Defense Minister Enrile and General Ramos are now proposing to the civilian leadership."²⁴ In a later statement Sigur added that the "comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy" should be under "civilian-military leadership."²⁵

Assistant Secretary of Defense Armitage used even more peremptory language. The Aquino government he said, "must recognize the vital necessity of integrating economic, military and social programs into a comprehensive framework which will defeat the NPA/ CPP."²⁶ The U.S. Embassy was making the same point in its conversations with military and civilian officials. A ranking U.S. diplomat later explained, "We are a treaty ally. The insurgency is a threat to our national interest. It would be bizarre if two treaty allies didn't discuss it. Do we have influence on them? I would hope so."²⁷

The bluntest criticism of the Aquino government's policy for its emphasis on reconciliation and its failure to adopt a plan to defeat the insurgents came from Armitage in a Congressional appearance:

I do not believe that there has been sufficient thought in the government given to the integrated counterinsurgency strategy. Whereas in the previous Administration...the attempt to solve the problem appeared to be totally military...this government seems to spend the majority of time talking about political reconciliation, but in truth it's the economic, social, political and military aspects which will in the end bring victory to the Filipino people.²⁸

As Armitage's remarks made clear, the Reagan administration understood that the solution to the insurgency problem had to be multifaceted, involving military and other aspects. In other

testimony, Sigur emphasized the necessity to address the "root causes of insurgency: poverty, ineffective and unresponsive local government, and military abuses."²⁹ But administration policymakers could not accept the notion that negotiations could be a substitute for the military component, even under the special circumstances existing in the Philippines.

Reagan administration statements suggested that the U.S. would support ceasefire negotiations only for the purpose of giving individual insurgents a chance to give themselves up under an amnesty. Armitage stressed that such negotiations would have to be followed by military force: "Should there be a ceasefire followed by a reasonable amnesty program, non-ideological NPA members will probably surrender...[but] the hardcore elements will fight on."³⁰

The idea of negotiations as the dominant feature of counterinsurgency was beyond the scope of administration doctrine. Armitage told the subcommittee that the Reagan administration was "not opposed to her efforts to try to negotiate," but clearly indicated that it was discouraging her from expecting the communists to negotiate in good faith. "We would...take every opportunity to make her extraordinarily aware that we don't believe that they're going to do anything but try to further their ends through that negotiation," said Armitage.³¹ The implication of this remark was that no proposal which the CPP endorsed could be in the government's interest.

There appeared to be less concern within the State Department than in the Defense Department about Aquino's proposed negotiations.³² The State Department assumed, at least publicly, that Aquino's policy of negotiations was aimed at nothing more than eliciting individual surrenders by non-ideological members of the NPA. In his first speech on U.S. policy toward the post-Marcos Philippines, Secretary of State George Shultz characterized Aquino's policy as one of offering a ceasefire and amnesty for a limited period of time before resuming the offensive against those who failed to give themselves up.³³ Assistant Secretary of State Sigur, testifying before Congress in early June, said the government was "considering a ceasefire and amnesty program in response to the insurgency." He made it clear that the U.S. expected such a program to end with the military pursuit of those who refused to lay down their arms. "The hardcore element will fight on," he said. "To believe otherwise is to underestimate the discipline and indoctrination of the communists."³⁴

In support of the State Department's view that Aquino understood that she would have to use force against the "hardcore" of the NPA, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State John Monjo recounted a meeting at which Aquino spoke of attracting those who are not ideologically committed rather than those who were. "And then she turned, and Enrile was there, but she said, of course, he will have to go with the hardcore."³⁵

Aquino's announcement in early June that negotiations would soon begin, and her failure to consult Ramos and Enrile in the formulation of negotiating policy, apparently caused renewed anxiety among U.S. policymakers. When Secretary of State Shultz traveled to Manila on June 25, he sought assurances that there would be no substantive negotiations with the communist leaders.

After Shultz had met with Aquino, Enrile, and Ramos, a "senior U.S. official," speaking on background, attributed to all three the view that there was no "real basis for substantive negotiation with the insurgency, because the demands of the insurgency are such as to be basically nonnegotiable."³⁶ This statement, suggesting that there was no possibility of a ceasefire agreement, conveyed the impression that there were no real differences between Aquino and the two figures representing the views of the military establishment.

Shultz pointedly stated that any talks should be "not about power sharing" but about "the return of people" from the NPA to the government side.³⁷ There were, of course, a wide range of objectives between those two polar alternatives that negotiations might pursue, including a ceasefire and a limited political accord. The Shultz formulation suggested that the U.S. wanted the negotiations to go no further than surrender and amnesty.

The combination of private and public signals by U.S. officials to the Ramos-Enrile proposals and negotiations left no doubt in the minds of civilian officials close to Aquino that the U.S. was putting strong pressure on her to adopt a harder line toward the insurgency and not to attempt to negotiate any real ceasefire agreement with CPP/NDF leadership. Although after Shultz's trip, the U.S. no longer questioned the negotiating initiative when contacting Malacanang officials, these officials assumed that pressure from Enrile and Ramos to forego negotiating a ceasefire agreement reflected U.S. policy. "The U.S. is no longer pressuring us directly on negotiations," said one Malacanang informant in August. "They only do it through Ramos and Enrile."³⁸

Immediately after the failed loyalist coup in July 1986, Armitage gave an interview to Associated Press in which he again expressed impatience with Aquino's political approach to the insurgency. He noted that the Aquino reconciliation policy had "not given any indication of winning over the insurgents thus far" and said that the insurgents had "stepped up their attacks" since Aquino's "order to the military not to initiate attacks while negotiations are pursued." The NAFP, Armitage said, "doesn't enjoy taking casualties at the hands of the NPA," and added, "I'm sure Mrs. Aquino is going to have to let her forces take the proper action against the insurgents."³⁹

Could Armitage's statement of support for the complaints by Enrile and some sectors of the military about Aquino's policy have

represented a personal view that departed from Reagan's administration policy? Circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that his views were both authorized and carefully expressed. Policy coordination among executive agencies, according to one State Department official, was rigorous during that period. "There were a series of meetings all through the summer consisting of key players, including Armitage, [Assistant Secretary of State] Sigur, and [NSC staff member Jim] Kelly," explained the official. "When Armitage makes a statement, it's not on his own."⁴⁰

The series of signals of displeasure with Aquino's policy from administration officials, culminating in the Armitage interview in July, brought a public response for the first time from Malacanang Palace. Executive Secretary Joker Arroyo, one of those associated with the policy of negotiations, complained in an interview with the Washington Post that the U.S. was trying to push the government into a full-scale counterinsurgency war. "We can't have another Vietnam, blindly following Washington's advice," he said.⁴¹

The Armitage and Arroyo interviews underlined the reality that the U.S. was supporting one side in a struggle over the direction of counterinsurgency policy within the Philippine government. While the Reagan administration could cite public statements approving Aquino's policy of negotiations, it had also managed to convey its desire to see Aquino move more quickly toward a tougher military posture against the insurgents.

One U.S. official described the situation in the Philippine government in late July as one in which cabinet members advocating primary emphasis on negotiations were losing ground to more pragmatic officials, who were calling for a tougher line toward the insurgents:

My guess is that some people in the [Aquino] government are beginning to see the [insurgency] problem much as we did....There are people in the cabinet who've seen the nonresponsiveness of the NPA and see it's not happening. So as you get those inputs, you get more pragmatic....As that takes place as a natural evolution, Joker [Arroyo] thinks its us.⁴²

While the official denied that the administration was "sitting around saying how do we bring pressure on Aquino," he conceded that there was "general agreement...that you can't take the pressure off and expect amnesty to work." Even more important, however, was the government's failure to adopt a counterinsurgency plan. He portrayed Aquino as "going back and forth" on the plan: "She says 'Eddie [Ramos] and the boys ought to be able to take care of it, while I take care of the political integration.'"⁴³

As for Enrile, U.S. officials were again at odds with the

liberal democrats and human rights activists within the administration. While Aquino's liberal cabinet members were accusing Enrile of working against the President behind her back, officials in the State Department and NSC saw it differently. They believed Enrile acted in the best interests of the government in treating loyalists involved in the Tolentino affairs with kid gloves. "Enrile was trying to prevent a bigger rupture than what happened," said an official. "If you have a purge of the army instead of letting it evolve you are going to split the damn military."⁴⁴ A State Department official suggested that Enrile's way of handling the loyalists was "a Filipino way."⁴⁵

Enrile's problem was not with Aquino herself, according to the official, but with certain members of the cabinet who continued to have "anti-military feelings." Aquino had to have the support of both Enrile and Ramos to survive, he argued, since a substantial part of the military was loyal to them.⁴⁶ A State Department official later recalled the feeling within the Reagan administration after the coup attempt was that "if she could keep him [Enrile] in the cabinet, it would be better than letting him outside....[If] they could just talk it out it would be good."⁴⁷

Administration officials were concerned that the human rights activists' anti-military bias might interfere with the process of rebuilding the AFP or it might otherwise weaken the government's ability to deal with the insurgency. The administration viewed the positions of Ramos and Enrile, both experienced professionals in counterinsurgency, as important in countering such tendencies. Undersecretary of State Michael H. Armacost had referred obliquely to this concern in late April when he emphasized the importance of Defense Minister Enrile and Chief of Staff Ramos "as a bridge between the old regime and the new to help contain excessive zeal in dealing with the past."⁴⁸

The problem of "excessive zeal" was raised specifically by the Presidential Human Rights Commission's announced intention to investigate human rights abuses by the AFP under the Marcos regime. Ramos and Enrile considered it a threat to the morale of the officer corps of the NAFP; the Reagan administration sympathized with the Enrile-Ramos view and was against the liberal democrats and human rights activists in the cabinet, including Aquino herself.

Armitage criticized the Aquino government's investigation into human rights abuses by the military in his Congressional testimony during May 1986. He suggested that there was a "basic inequity" in the government's policy of offering amnesty to the NPA, while NAFP personnel who had committed abuses would be prosecuted for them.⁴⁹ In the aftermath of the Tolentino affair, an administration official expressed sympathy with the Enrile-Ramos argument that a human rights investigation should be aimed equally at NPA and AFP violations. "It's dangerous if pursued in a onesided way, ignoring

human rights abuses on the left and pursuing these [AFP abuses] in the past with a vengeance," said the official. He explained that Ramos and Enrile wanted to "look forward not backwards," in order to maintain "the national fabric of unity."⁵⁰

The broad consensus among State, Defense, and NSC officials in support of Ramos and Enrile's views on counterinsurgency reinforced the inclination of close advisers of President Reagan to oppose Aquino's pursuit of negotiations. Senator Paul Laxalt, a close friend of Reagan and intermediary in dealing with President Marcos in late 1985 and early 1986, wrote an article during the summer criticizing Aquino for having made a "serious strategic mistake" in releasing the communist leaders from prison and for wanting "to negotiate with the communists."⁵¹

At the end of August, an unidentified "ranking Administration official" with the President in Santa Barbara told a reporter that there were "real concerns in certain quarters" about Aquino's ineffectiveness in dealing with the insurgency. "She had to make this effort," the official said, referring to her pledge to seek a ceasefire and negotiations, "and she has made it and now it's time to move to the next step." The official reiterated the Reagan administration's view that "military force is the only way" to combat the "hardcore" of the NPA.⁵²

The Aquino government interpreted this comment by a high Reagan administration official as yet another signal of U.S. unhappiness with her approach to the insurgency, and aimed at putting her on the defensive just before her visit to the U.S. in mid-September.⁵³ The U.S. Embassy was authorized by the State Department to deny that the report represented the administration's policy, according to a ranking U.S. diplomat in Manila.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the substance of the remark was not much different from views that were being expressed within the U.S. national security bureaucracy.

An Embassy official, interviewed two days after the comment was published, said, "We think Ramos and the people around him know what they are doing and we're supportive of them." As for Enrile, the diplomat commented, "We esteem the role he plays. He makes a real contribution to the cabinet." The official added, "His political tactics are his business,"⁵⁵ indicating that Enrile's increasing criticism of Aquino's policies was not of serious concern to the Embassy.

The Embassy official made it clear that the U.S. thought the negotiations had run their course. He said, "As far as I know, [the] central negotiations have gone nowhere." He charged that the CPP was "conducting a stalling operation" and that the talks were a "tactical instrument for overthrowing the government." While the official did not say directly that Aquino should stop the talks, he

belittled negotiations as a policy for dealing with the insurgency. "To say that you can handle [the insurgency] the military way or by the peace talks is silly," he said.

The course of action preferred by the Reagan administration was suggested by the official's speculation about what Aquino might do in the future: "At some point Aquino might get so upset she will say, 'Let's go get them in Region X.' Then a lot will depend on how the AFP will produce." As for the capability of the AFP to implement a military offensive against the insurgents, the official would only say, "You should do what you can do."

3. The U.S. and Aquino's Political Crisis

Aquino thus traveled to the U.S. under what she perceived as intense pressure from both Enrile and the military at home and from the Reagan administration to adopt a more aggressive stance. In Washington, Aquino strongly defended her negotiating strategy. In a meeting with President Reagan, she insisted that she had to exhaust all peaceful options before returning to military force. She argued that the military was in no position to take on the task of counterinsurgency warfare. "She doesn't feel they're ready," explained one administration official.⁵⁶

Aquino needed Reagan's imprimatur on her attempt to negotiate a ceasefire with the CPP and pushed hard for it when the sides discussed the statements both would make on her departure.⁵⁷ Reagan's statement reflecting those negotiations, was strikingly different from the previous private and public statements of administration officials. "Her efforts to reconcile all elements of her society and bring them into the democratic process are applauded here," said Reagan. "I might add that her personal bravery in this heroic endeavor to diffuse conflict has won the hearts and imagination of people everywhere."⁵⁸

Reagan referred to Aquino's strategy for meeting the insurgency as having two parts: "attacking the root political, economic and social problems that feed insurgencies" and "building the Philippine military into a professional, properly armed and trained force that is capable of dealing with any threat." Significantly, the statement focused on reforming the NAFP rather than on throwing it into a counterinsurgency campaign in the short run.

It was a victory for Aquino in her struggle to keep the political option alive. But it was at best a conditional endorsement. "The President was saying we understand the approach she's taking and support it as part of the process," said an NSC official later. "We'd applaud [the negotiations policy] if it worked." But the same official observed that the U.S. Embassy in

Manila and other administration officials were asking "How long can you continue [to negotiate] before you lose your barnacles?"⁵⁹

When Aquino returned from the U.S. she found Ramos, Enrile, and Laurel had prepared the groundwork for a showdown within the cabinet on the issue of the integrated counterinsurgency plan and increased spending on the military. According to an AFP source, the three were responding to a "clamor" from the Reagan administration for action on the plan.⁶⁰ "There is no question we've been pressing [the Philippine government] to get an integrated counterinsurgency plan," said a State Department official in mid-October. "Manila should be pressing on both the negotiating end and the military end."⁶¹

When the MND group threatened its "surgical strike" against the Aquino government and Enrile sought support for military commanders in late October and early November, the U.S. strongly opposed the extraconstitutional action as a threat to Philippine political stability. The U.S. "repeatedly and pointedly made it clear to all the players in the political spectrum that we think Aquino represents the best option for political stability in the Philippines," said a State Department official later.⁶² The administration was especially concerned that the Enrile-MND group's plotting was damaging business confidence in the Philippines. "We've got no problem saying to him you've undone much of the progress of the past months in the past three weeks, especially in banking circles," another State Department official said in early November.⁶³ There were several conversations with the Defense Minister, both before and after Aquino's trip to Japan warning him of the consequences of any extraconstitutional move against Aquino, including its impact on U.S. assistance to the Philippines.⁶⁴

At the same time, U.S. officials viewed Aquino's policies and key cabinet members as a major cause of the political crisis. In an interview with an American journalist in early November, Ambassador Stephen Bosworth expressed strong opposition to the methods of the MND group allied with Enrile but did not disagree with their objective of encouraging the Aquino government to move faster to implement a counterinsurgency plan.⁶⁵ One U.S. official later explained that by failing to impose a deadline for a ceasefire as Enrile and other military men were demanding and act decisively regarding programs necessary for a counterinsurgency program, Aquino contributed to the momentum of the MND group's campaign. Ramos found it difficult to defend Aquino, according to this view, without looking like a "wimp."⁶⁶

The U.S. responded to Enrile's ouster by reaffirming its "strong and unequivocal support" for Aquino. But it was also delighted at Aquino's decision to set a final deadline for a ceasefire agreement. U.S. officials maintained that this would lead to a stronger military posture against the insurgents. A "senior administration

official" commented that he hoped her "forceful actions," not only in firing Enrile but in putting a seven-day deadline on peace negotiations with the CPP, would end the "seeming drift in her policies."⁶⁷ One administration official explained why they hoped the negotiations would be terminated: "It's pretty clear [the CPP] wanted to use a ceasefire as a tool to buy time...."⁶⁸

When the negotiations instead concluded in a 60-day ceasefire agreement, the U.S. response betrayed a distinct lack of enthusiasm. There was no repetition of the Reagan statement praising Aquino's policy of reconciliation, no message of congratulations to Aquino. The State Department prepared a statement for press guidance, which said, "We are awaiting the full text of the agreement and will be analyzing its provisions. We welcome any constructive accord that will help reduce violence and promote stability in the Philippines."⁶⁹ The implication was that the State Department would have to analyze the text to determine whether the ceasefire would "promote stability."

In summation, the signals sent by the Reagan administration through public statements and private communications to civilians and military officers in the Philippines have in effect discouraged Aquino from pursuing her approach of trying to negotiate with the CPP; instead, they have pushed her toward a more conventional mixture of military force and non-military programs. It should be noted that most U.S. officials insist that the administration has consistently supported Aquino's policy toward the insurgency. They point out that the U.S. has never objected to negotiations and has never suggested that the problem is subject to a military solution.

The real issue, however, is whether the U.S. acknowledges that negotiating an agreement with the CPP—not just negotiating for propaganda effect on an amnesty for surrenderees—can be a legitimate approach to dealing with the insurgency. The public and private remarks of U.S. officials have been based on the assumption that negotiations with the insurgents cannot result in any constructive agreement, because the two sides have no substantive interests in common. So the Reagan administration has gone along with the talks only on the assumption that Aquino would return within a reasonable period of time to put more emphasis on a combined counterinsurgency strategy in which the AFP would be allowed free rein to fight.

It is difficult to gauge accurately the impact that U.S. policy has had on Philippine domestic politics. But Reagan administration officials themselves have acknowledged that given the Philippine government's need for close ties with the U.S., "a timely and discreet hint of what Washington thinks" can have a decisive influence in a political issue there.⁷⁰ The well-known U.S. skepticism about Aquino's political approach to the insurgency clearly influenced the expectations of key actors in Philippine politics.

Enrile, Ramos, and the MND group of military activists were all aware that they were advancing positions supported by the U.S. in criticizing Aquino's policies on the insurgency and on the issue of human rights investigations of the military. Enrile and his allies were probably bolder than they would have been if they had not been aware of this U.S. preference. Aquino, meanwhile, was rendered more cautious, and perhaps even more secretive, about her policy by the knowledge that the U.S. did not support any substantive negotiations with the CPP.

Whether or not U.S. policy was an important factor in undermining Aquino's political authority, it does have costs and risks which have not yet been carefully analyzed or understood. The NAFP is a long way from being prepared to wage counterinsurgency warfare. Any attempt by the military to take the military offensive against the CPP/NPA is likely to repeat the mistakes of the past, playing into the hands of the insurgents by multiplying military abuses.

Unfortunately, American diplomatic experience does not include any effort to use negotiations as a means of assuring stability and security, except as an adjunct to military power. But the Philippines presents a situation in which military force is not necessarily the key to success in an internal conflict. As noted earlier, neither side will have the capability to "win" militarily in the foreseeable future. As the outcome of the February 1986 elections and "snap revolution" demonstrated, the decisive factor in whether the insurgency continues to gain momentum or loses it has more to do with how each side positions itself with regard to rural and urban populations.

Conventional counterinsurgency strategy attempts to weaken the insurgents through a combination of military and non-military means, in order to defeat them. In the Philippine situation, however, such a strategy is not likely to result in a dramatic weakening of the CPP/NPA armed strength or political organization over the next few years. A more subtle political strategy is called for, in which success is achieved not by crushing the communist movement by force but by maneuvering it step-by-step into a position in which it finds acceptance of struggle through legal, nonviolent means more attractive than continued armed struggle.

Aquino will continue to have difficulties with NAFP officers who oppose her political approach. In order to have a reasonable chance of success, Aquino will need firm and unequivocal U.S. support for her policy. The kind of grudging and skeptical tolerance which the U.S. has conveyed in the past will not be adequate. It would undoubtedly be interpreted by opponents of Aquino's policy as condoning those who aim to force Aquino to return to clear-cut counterinsurgency war.

Support for a non-military approach contradicts current U.S. doctrines of counterinsurgency conceived as "low-intensity" warfare. Nevertheless, it would offer far better prospects for success than a conventional approach drawn from general principles rather than concrete realities. The Philippines thus represent a test of the U.S. ability to formulate policy that is sensitive to local political conditions, rather than falling back on what is familiar.

Notes for Chapter 7

1. Prepared statement of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, John C. Monjo, The Situation and Outlook in the Philippines, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 98th Congress, 2nd Session, 1984, p. 149.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Testimony of Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Paul D. Wolfowitz, Situation in the Philippines and Implications for U.S. Policy, Hearing before the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, 89th Congress, 2nd Session, September 18, 1984, p. 42.
5. "NSSD: U.S. Policy towards the Philippines. Executive Summary." This document is an undated text of a draft Reagan administration interagency policy document, released by the Philippine Support Committee, Washington, D.C., March 12, 1985. State Department officials confirmed the authenticity of this document, while pointing out that it does not necessarily represent the final draft.
6. Ibid., p. 5.
7. On the early development of the RAM, see Gemma Nemenzo Almendral, "The Curtain Rises on the AFP Reform Movement," Malaya Sunday Magazine, June 30, 1985; and Mr. & Ms., May 31-June 5, 1985, pp. 5-9.
8. Prepared Statement of Wolfowitz, Recent Events in the Philippines, Fall 1985, Hearings and markup, Committee on Foreign Affairs and its Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, House of Representatives, 98th Congress, 1st Session, November 1985, p. 32.
9. Statement of Wolfowitz, Recent Events in the Philippines, p. 42.
10. Interview, State Department Official, Washington, D.C., May 7, 1985. The linkage was not formal; the Reagan administration never threatened to cut or suspend military assistance if Ver was not replaced. It turned on the argument that unless Ver was replaced, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to get Congress to appropriate the level of assistance promised to the Philippines in connection with the 1983 military bases

- agreement. Interview, National Security Council official, May 9, 1986.
11. Statement by Armitage to the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, March 12, 1985, p. 2.
 12. Wolfowitz statement, Recent Events in the Philippines, pp. 10, 23.
 13. Statement by Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, Paul D. Wolfowitz, to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, October 30, 1985, p. 13.
 14. See Lt. Col. Tomas C. Tirona, "The Philippine Anti-Communist Campaign," Air University Quarterly Review, Vol. VII, no.2 (Summer 1954), p. 46.
 15. See Benedict J. Kerkvliet, The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 238-239. The same point was made forcefully by a senior Defense Ministry official who was active in the anti-Huk campaign. Interview, Camp Aguinaldo, August 28, 1986.
 16. Eduardo Lachica, Huk: Philippine Agrarian Society in Revolt (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1971), pp. 123-132.
 17. Lachica, Huk, pp. 130-131; Francisco Nemenzo, "Rectification Process in the Philippine Communist Movement," in Lim Joo-Jock and S. Vani, eds., Armed Communist Movements in Southeast Asia (Hampshire, England: Gower, 1984), p. 73.
 18. Nemenzo, "Rectification Process...", loc. cit.
 19. Robert R. Smith, "The Hukbalahap Insurgency: Economic, Political and Military Factors," (Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1963), p. 142. This declassified study is on file in the Modern Military Headquarters Branch, Military Archives Division, National Archives.
 20. Tirona, "The Philippines Anti-Communist Campaign," p. 47; JUSMAG, Monthly Summary of Activities for November, 1953, December 9, 1953, declassified document on file in Modern Military Headquarters Branch, Military Archives Division, National Archives.
 21. Armitage warned a Congressional committee that, "Without substantial military assistance, the AFP may become incapable of defeating the Communists." Statement to the House

Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, p. 9. For an earlier statement along the same lines, see Armitage's testimony in The Situation and Outlook in the Philippines, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 98th Congress, 2nd Session (1984), p. 142.

22. Within a few weeks of the new government's establishment, Enrile expressed his personal support for a U.S. military presence in the country beyond 1991 in a meeting with Japanese Democratic Socialist Party delegation. Kyodo dispatch, March 31, 1986, FBIS, March 31, 1986, p. P9.
23. Interview with an official in the Office of the President, August 21, 1986.
24. Statement by Gaston J. Sigur, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, to the Subcommittees on Sea Power and Force Projection and Military Construction, Armed Services Committee, U.S. Senate, April 10, 1986, p. 7.
25. Statement by Gaston Sigur to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, June 3, 1986, p. 12.
26. Statement by Armitage to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, June 3, 1986, p. 8.
27. Interview with U.S. Embassy official, Manila, September 3, 1986.
28. Transcript of hearing before the Subcommittee on East Asia and Pacific Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, May 1, 1986.
29. Sigur statement to Senate Foreign Relations Committee, June 3, 1986.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Such a divergence between State and Defense over the issue of Aquino's intentions was reported in Nayan Chanda, "Some Hope, Some Fear," Far Eastern Economic Review, June 12, 1986, p. 46.
33. "Reform in the Philippines and American Interests: The U.S. Role in Consolidating Democracy," Address by Secretary Shultz before the Foreign Policy Association, New York City, June 4, 1986, Department of State, Current Policy No. 842, p. 3.

34. Sigur statement to Senate Foreign Relations Committee, June 3, 1986, pp. 11-12.
35. Transcript of hearing before the Subcommittee on East Asia and Pacific Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, May 1, 1986.
36. The Washington Post, June 26, 1986.
37. The Washington Post, June 26, 1986.
38. Interview, Office of the President, August 21, 1986.
39. Manila Chronicle, July 12, 1986. An inquiry to the Department of Defense press office July 15 elicited a confirmation from Armitage's office that the quotes in the published interview "generally reflect his views," though that office added "sooner or later" to the "proper action against the insurgents" quote.
40. Interview with State Department official, November 17, 1986.
41. The Washington Post, July 15, 1986.
42. Interview with an Reagan administration official, July 31, 1986.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Interview with State Department official, August 14, 1986.
46. Interview, July 31, 1986.
47. Interview with State Department official, November 3, 1986.
48. Notes taken by Walden Bello of remarks by Armacost at a conference at the Foreign Service Institute, Roslyn, Virginia, April 23, 1986.
49. Transcript of hearing before the House Subcommittee on East Asia and Pacific, May 15, 1986.
50. Interview, July 31, 1986.
51. Sen. Paul Laxalt, "My Conversations with Ferdinand Marcos: A Lesson in Personal Diplomacy," Policy Review, Summer 1986, p. 5.
52. The New York Times, September 1, 1986.

53. The New York Times, September 2, 1986.
54. Interview, U.S. Embassy, September 3, 1986.
55. Ibid.
56. Interview, October 8, 1986. Aquino's emphasis on the inability of the NAFF to handle the insurgency was also reported by a State Department official. Interview, October 15, 1986.
57. A draft of President Reagan's statement was shared with the Aquino staff several days before her departure and discussed extensively before the final draft was approved. Interview with State Department official, November 17, 1986.
58. Office White House press release, remarks of President Reagan and President Corazon Aquino of the Philippines at Departure Ceremony, September 17, 1986.
59. Interview with an administration official, October 8, 1986.
60. Interview with Col. Ismael Z. Villareal, Washington, D.C., October 14, 1986.
61. Interview, October 15, 1986.
62. Interview, November 24, 1986.
63. Interview, November 3, 1986.
64. Interview with State Department Official, November 24, 1986.
65. Personal communication from an American journalist, November 1986.
66. Interview, November 24, 1986.
67. The New York Times, November 25, 1986.
68. Interview, November 24, 1986.
69. Text read to me by the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State, by telephone, November 28, 1986. I have been unable to find any press coverage of the statement.
70. The Washington Post, November 25, 1986.

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