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The Ultra-Right: Common Enemy of Cory and Popular Groups

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There is enough basis to expect another Right-wing coup attempt within the next two weeks and that it will ride on, or coincide with, the massive unified labor strikes (*welgang bayan*) being planned beginning October 12.

Based on the pattern of previous Right-wing destabilization attempts, we can expect the attack to ride on an ongoing crisis. What we have here, in effect, is a large coup plot in search of an event.

The objective of this Right-wing coup will be, as before, to establish a more overtly and actively anti-communist and authoritarian transitional coalition government, aimed at consolidating the middle and Right-wing forces against the perceived communist threat, and most importantly at unifying the divided military. The perceived communist threat is about the only reason that could possibly unite the various factions within the military at this time.

A state of emergency aimed at riding out the present political and economic crisis could be announced, not by Mrs. Aquino or Gen. Ramos, but precisely by the renegade military forces and their civilian allies, in accordance with their constitutional duty "to protect the people (from the threat of communism).

The main objective of the Right-wing coup would be to broaden the pool of decision-makers at the executive level, by providing large spaces for the participation of Right-wing politicians and the military itself in determining the direction of our national life.

The resulting emergency government could take many forms. It could retain Cory as a figurehead. It could exclude Cory and take the form of a parallel provisional government. Or it could replace Cory and Gen. Ramos altogether.

It is not likely, given Cory's own simple concept of the presidency (i.e. I am either president or I am not), that she would allow herself to be a mere figurehead. She could there-

fore be assassinated or kidnapped, arrested or placed in preventive detention by the new government. The same could happen to Gen. Ramos.

All of the moves of the ultra-Right from now on will be meant to project the impression that:

1. The Communists must be stopped pre-emptively by the combined forces of the military and the renegades, before they (the communists) succeed in overthrowing the Aquino Government.

2. The Aquino Government, because it has alienated the military, can no longer effectively break the momentum of the perceived ongoing and intensifying communist offensive.

Only by the unilateral and unified action of all patriotic troops, both within and outside of the present chain of command, can the communist threat be effectively arrested.

In an effort to create a *de facto* state of emergency, the coup plotters could implement any or all of the following:

- a. Raids on suspected communist safehouses in and around Metro Manila (this was one of the key components of the aborted 'God Save The Queen' plan in November 1986);

- b. Arrest and/or kidnapping and assassination of leaders and personalities of the legal Left;

- c. Infiltration by Right-wing provocateurs of the ranks of labor, to create trouble that they will subsequently blame on the NPA. The renegades may even engage demonstrators in street battles, and allege that Metro Manila is being overrun by the communists. And if Cory does not declare martial law, they would issue a call to save the country from civil war through a timely seizure of power from an ineffective presidency.

- d. A state of panic could be created through disinformation and rumor-mongering leading to panic buying, massive bank withdrawals, and telephone rumors of armed men, etc. sighted in various neighborhoods.



What actions can popular organizations take given the circumstances? Here are possible modes of intervention.

1. Draw up contingency plans for mobilizing people's power in as short a time as possible.
2. Publicly expose the evolving plot of the Right to overthrow the duly-constituted government, thus denying them any claim to legitimacy.
3. Attempt to consolidate all open mass organizations in an effort to forestall the Right-wing coup. More frequent joint sharing sessions are indicated.
4. Adopt security precautions to secure all mass organizations, offices and leaders.
5. Draw organized labor to government's side. President Aquino and leaders of the business community should be persuaded to grant labor's valid demand for a P10 across-the-board wage increase.
6. Admonish labor organizations to inject a political dimension into their calls. Labor can for example, warn the Right against taking advantage of the situation to seize power for itself.

In the final analysis, the defense of the present constitutional order will depend on the amount of support that the organized civilian sectors are willing to provide. Church and business leaders who still believe in constitutional government must be heard now.

It is disturbing to realize that there has been no vigorous commitment on this issue. And it is appalling to hear otherwise progressive-minded people remark that they frankly don't care anymore if the Aquino Government collapses or survives.

We must bear in mind that whether we like it or not, the collapse of the Aquino Government would also mean the termination of the present political environment, which has, so far, given us "democratic space".

If it has been difficult for a number of progressive people to summon enough passion to defend this democratic space against the fascist assault, it is because its defense today

is so intimately intertwined with the survival of the Aquino Government. Many do not feel right about contributing to the survival of a government which, on many counts, has failed to address the interests of the vast masses of our people.

But should we also hold Cory responsible for defending the democratic space? The main threat to it does not come from her, but from the enemies of democracy both within and outside of the present State. We ask why Cory cannot stop them. The reason is that the consolidation of State power under Cory Aquino has never been really consummated.

Our interest is not so much the consolidation of Cory Aquino's hold on the State as the consolidation and expansion of democracy in our country. This is not an exclusive obligation of Cory Aquino. This is our collective responsibility and burden as a people. In a sense, this was the whole promise of the Edsa Revolution, i.e., of people directly taking political action to reform their society.

If Cory Aquino issues policies that are undemocratic, we should expose and criticize these. If she is not doing enough to promote democratization, we must pressure her and point out the areas in which we expect her to intervene. But when democracy itself is threatened, we should vigorously resist the threat, and not allow ourselves to be heckled into inaction by those who equate the defense of the democratic space with uncritical support for Cory Aquino.

It is a fact that, at this time, the popular organizations and Cory Aquino have the same enemy — the Ultra-Right. The awkwardness of the situation is understandable given the elitist record of the Aquino Government over the last 18 months. But why should we abandon democracy to the fascists just because we happen not to be pleased with Mrs. Aquino?

Our resistance to the fascist threat will not be resolute for as long as we have not fully understood what type of political environment we require in order to carry out the twin task of popular empowerment — politicization and organization. **K**