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The outcome of the latest coup attempt, apart from the defeat of the rebel forces, focuses on the role of US imperialism, which is the major obstacle in our struggle for national independence. The Aquino government is all the more exposed in its abject dependence on a foreign power for political survival. We can expect that this betrayal of national sovereignty will surely be paid for in the coming negotiation of the RP-US Military Bases Agreement. The Aquino administration can only resolve the US bases question in favor of its American rescuers, an eventuality which no less than US Vice-President Dan Quayle pointed out.

It is well-known that the military bases question, which remains the central interest of the US, has reached a critical point especially in the light of the Senate's position to block a new bases treaty. It is likely that imperialist machinations, including attempts at destabilization, are aimed at, among others, removing obstacles posed by the Senate to continued US presence.

It is well-known that the US wields significant influence on the military as a whole, irrespective of factional loyalties. In fact, it supported the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) in the US-backed military rebellion against the Marcos dictatorship in February 1986. There is evidence of US involvement on the side of the RAM in the August 1987 coup attempt, which succeeded in driving the Aquino government further to the right and to be even more beholden to the military.

Rising frustration against the Aquino regime -- its inefficiency, corruption, and incompetence in solving the country's most pressing problems -- has again appeared to have prompted disgruntled military elements to mount another bid for power. It is clear that the military has in itself become a political force, and that it is no longer the homogeneous pro-American entity that it was before. It cannot be denied anymore that there are genuinely patriotic and reformist elements among the military, especially among the younger officers and rank-and-file, who want changes for the better, who favor independent, efficient, and responsible government, and who feel revolted by the Aquino regime's shameless recourse to US assistance to save itself.

Real changes, however, cannot simply come out from the barrel of the gun. The only way to achieve reforms and redress grievances without reverting to abuse and anarchy is through the democratic participation of the people, and through the full use of their political rights as affirmed in the Constitution. Coups and other forms of political terrorism, whether from the right or the left, negate the essence of democracy and substitute the arbitrary rule or will of a few with another form of coercion and intimidation. Worse, even if they are unsuccessful, they are invariably used by imperialism to strengthen its hold by increasing the leverage of the Pentagon-influenced military as well as of right-wing pro-American government officials in swaying the direction of regime policies and actions even more in favor of US interventionists.

It is our view that the only way out of the present crises is the broadest expression of the democratic process and the mobilization of the people in defense of their fundamental right to govern themselves and build a new society on the basis of self-determination. This must accentuate the role of the trade union movement as well as the broad strata of the patriotic forces among the peasantry, women, and youth organizations, among the teachers and public sector employees, and among the entrepreneurs and the military. The root causes of our social crisis are too serious to be left to the government. These patriotic forces must take direct political action in dealing with massive corruption in public office, the plunder of the nation's resources, foreign debt, the domination over our policy-making processes by foreign interests, and US control of our security-military establishment. The solid unity of these forces must aim at electing a new government which can genuinely uphold our national independence and our dignity as a people. This can only be achieved without US military presence and with a Pentagon-free military dedicated to our independent interests.

The December coup has dramatized to the whole nation that even its most vital national interests are within the reach of imperialist manipulation. It has demonstrated that the issue of national independence is so intimately tied to the most urgent demands of national security.

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