

Party Conduct Assessment, Says Boycott Policy Was Wrong

For more than 17 to the 20 years that the Marcos fascist puppet regime was in power, the Communist Party of the Philippines (reestablished in December 1968) had played a leading role in our people's anti-fascist, anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggles.

In all those 17 years, the Party and the revolutionary forces that it leads have contributed tremendously to exposing, isolating and weakening the regime, leading to its eventual downfall.

Yet, where the people saw in the February 7 snap presidential election a chance to deliver a crippling blow on the Marcos regime, a memorandum by the Executive Committee of the Party Central Committee (EC-CC) saw it merely as "a noisy and empty political battle" among factions in the ruling classes.

And when the aroused and militant people moved spontaneously but resolutely to oust the hated regime last February 22-25, the Party and its forces were on the sidelines, unable to lead or influence the hundreds or thousands of people who moved with amazing speed and decisiveness to overthrow the regime.

This was because of the Party's official policy enunciated by the EC-CC to launch an active and vigorous boycott campaign vis-a-vis the election, a policy that was based — as the events showed — on the incorrect reading of the political situation.

A recent assessment conducted by the Political Bureau (Politburo) of the Central Committee characterized the boycott policy as a major political blunder.

Roots of the Error

As evaluated by the Politburo, the boycott policy erred in its overall assessment of the political situation at the time of the snap election in its understanding and application of the Party's tactics against the US-Marcos fascist dictatorship, and in its understanding and application of the Marxist-Leninist organizational principle of democratic centralism.

In the main, the political assessment on which the boycott policy was based mechanically analyzed the various political forces with regard to their basic class standpoint and subjective intentions. It paid little or no attention to the objective positioning of each of the political forces in motion and in interaction with the others.

Thus it failed to grasp the essence of the whole situation that was in flux at that time.

The assessment had earlier described this period as the setting for an important political battle with a tremendous impact on the people and on the major political forces. But when this came initially in the form of the snap election, the assessment underpinning the boycott policy belittled it as nothing but a noisy but meaningless interfactional contest among the ruling classes.

Specifically, the assessment:

1. Did not correctly understand the character and operation of US policy towards the Marcos regime. It overestimated US capacity to impose its subjective will on local politics and misread the US dilemma over the conflicting needs it had to simultaneously attend to. It failed to appreciate the possible effects on US policy of local developments over which the US did not have full control.
2. Underestimated the bourgeois reformists' capabilities and determination to engage the Marcos regime in a decisive contest for state power.
3. Ignored the fact that the Marcos clique had become extremely isolated and its capacity to rule was fast eroding. It failed to look more deeply into the contradictions developing within the Armed Forces of the Philippines.
4. Above all these, misread the people's deep anti-fascist sentiments and readiness to go beyond the confines of the electoral process in their determination to end the fascist dictatorship.

As practice subsequently showed, the snap election was not just "a noisy and empty political battle". The election and the major events it unleashed constituted the climax of the people's long-drawn struggle against the Marcos regime. During and after the snap election, the historically determined central political struggle was the showdown over the very

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existence and continuance of fascist rule. The snap election became the main channel of large-scale mobilization and deployment of the masses for the decisive battle to overthrow the dictatorship.

This being the case, it was tactically necessary for the revolutionary forces to participate critically in the snap election in order to effectively combine and make use of all forms of struggle, march at the head of the politically active masses, and maintain flexibility and an active position in the face of the fast-changing situation. Only by doing so could the revolutionary forces have maximized their political and military capability and reaped the optimum gains for the revolution under the prevailing circumstances.

The boycott policy forfeited all these.

As regards understanding and applying the Party's tactics against the US-Marcos dictatorship, the boycott policy failed to give commensurate political value to the anti-fascist struggle that assumed primacy during and after the election. The anti-fascist struggle united the various levels of revolutionary, democratic and anti-Marcos sentiments during and after the election, and created a mass force capable of toppling the regime.

The boycott policy not only failed to give enough value to the question of reaching and mobilizing the majority of the people. It directly and openly went against the desire of the broad masses to pursue the anti-fascist struggle by means of critically participating in the snap election.

More especially, the boycott policy concentrated in addressing and consolidating the advanced section of the people, or the revolutionary forces, at a time when the people were already gearing up for a decisive battle with the fascist regime.

This showed an insufficient understanding of the tasks of political leadership during such a time, as well as a lack of appreciation of the current level of mass participation in revolutionary struggles, and confusion regarding the actual needs of the revolutionary armed struggle.

The Party leadership is now encouraging leading Party organs which have not yet done so to sum up their experiences

regarding the boycott policy. The results of the different studies and summing-ups will be circulated within the Party, to develop a common understanding of the lessons from the boycott campaign.

Likewise, a general summing-up will be conducted of the Party's experiences in the struggle against the US-Marcos fascist dictatorship. At the same time, steps will be undertaken to strengthen the Party's ideological foundation and raise the theoretical knowledge of the entire Party.

Steps are being taken to encourage and develop the democratic spirit and the democratic way of doing things in the Party. To this end, forums and channels will be created 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.

The Future is Bright

While we missed out on important political as well as military opportunities and suffered other negative effects as a result of our erroneous boycott policy, the fact remains that the events of last February represented a great victory for our people and for their struggles towards genuine national freedom and democracy.

The Party and its forces are intact, and these are now in the process of strengthening their ranks for new tasks in the post-Marcos period which is highly conducive to the heightened and more extensive politicalization of our people.

While the Party perseveres in strengthening itself ideologically, politically, and organizationally, while it looks inward from time to time and learns both from its negative and positive experiences, it will continue reaping the people's wholehearted support.

The future is bright for the Party, for the entire national-democratic movement, for the revolution, and for the entire Filipino people.

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