

The Socialist Vision

BISIG (Bukluran sa Ikaunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa)

This document is a preliminary attempt to conceptualize the principles and guide-post of a Philippine socialism that is not a mere copy of foreign models but one that is based on a critique of existing socialist states and a creative application of the socialist ideology to Philippine reality. Our people's struggle to bring about a fundamental restructuring of our society must be fueled by a clear vision of the society we desire. The crystallization of this vision, however, must take place within the struggle itself in order that it can serve as a primary instrument for mobilizing people to participate in the process of transformation.

Today, there is growing interest in the search for a viable alternative both to the capitalist authoritarianism represented by Marcos and the capitalist democracy which preceded and gave rise to one-man-rule.

This document is a contribution to this search. It aims to catalyze thought and action, and put the socialist alternative on the agenda of political discourse in our country. While being the result of study and collective discussions, it does not pretend to be the final word on Philippine socialism. It is, as earlier said, a preliminary vision rather than a finished blueprint. It is intended to grow and develop in praxis, as the working people subject it to criticism and contribute new ideas drawn from their concrete experience in struggle. It constitutes but a beginning of a process whereby the future may be reached through collective and democratic struggle.

Why Socialism

For many Filipinos, socialism evokes terrifying images of shared misery, one-party rule, violence, confiscation of property, economic stagnation, foreign masters, party-controlled

trade unions and many more. These are not the goals of socialism. On the contrary, these are the very realities of capitalism our people face at present.

Shared poverty has been the lot of the vast majority of our people not only under the Marcos dictatorship but also under capitalist democracy. Despite token opposition in the Batasan, the KBL (Kilusang Bagong Lipunan or New Society Movement) practically exercised one party rule. Similarly, the two-party system before Martial Law did not offer genuine alternatives to the electorate since both the Nacionalista and Liberal parties represented factions of the same ruling class.

Violent dispersals of peaceful protest, illegal detention, torture and outright murder were the norm under the dictatorship. The property of the wealthy opposition, and worse, the land and meager belongings of the poor have been openly confiscated, often through force. The economy not only remained stagnant but in fact regressed. Imperialist control, especially by the United States of America, over our national life has prevailed even after the grant of formal independence.

In short, the fears usually evoked by discussions of a socialist future, are really capitalist scarecrows and realities we confront in our daily lives.

A return to pre-Martial rule days, a change in the people who run the government even through free and honest elections, will not erase the realities that are structurally generated by the system of capitalism. At best, these can only be minimized. The aspirations of the majority of our people can only be achieved through a socialist society, a Filipino socialism based upon our particular history.

Economic Underdevelopment

The present Philippine economy evolved, on the one hand, from the subsistence agriculture of the early Filipinos, and, on the other, from the rice haciendas and commercial crop plantations that flourished during the Spanish colonial rule. Throughout the American colonial period, the only industries developed were extractive in nature. This was in keeping with the colonial economy's assigned role as supplier of cheap raw materials and market for finished consumer products. Some import-substituting industries were later put up in the years that followed the grant of formal independence from the United States. But these did not progress because attention soon shifted to export-oriented industries. The industries built by a small and weak national bourgeoisie were nothing more than inefficient reprocessing plants designed to evade import duties. The masses were left to pay more for poor quality products. Today, the country remains heavily dependent on agriculture, although there is a significant manufacturing and service sector.

Capitalist Ownership. Ownership of the basic means of production in both agriculture and manufacturing remains in the hands of big landowners and capitalists. Though there are small owners of land and of capital (petty commodity producers), these sectors are still dominated by the big capitalists who hire workers principally on a wage basis. Therefore, the dominant and governing relations of exploitation in both agriculture and manufacturing are actually capitalist relations.

Low Level of Development. In both the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, technological levels have remained very low. Profits are secured by keeping the workers' wages depressed rather than by increasing productivity through the introduction of better technology. As in most Third World countries, capitalism in our country is unevenly developed. Alongside the dominant capitalist relations, significant areas of the economy remain at the pre-capitalist level.

Imperialist Domination. We live today in a world where monopoly capitalism effectively rules over the national economies of many so-called independent nations, such as the Philippines.

We do not control our economy. We have no power to use our productive capabilities to serve the needs of our own people. Our country is endowed with abundant natural resources which could be used to improve the lives of the Filipino masses. But these have been exploited mainly to enrich a few and to support the economies of other countries.

Foreign Control and Global Market Dependence. The control that foreign capital wields over our economy and the dependence in turn of our whole economy on the world capitalist system are two distinct but related features of the Philippine economy.

Direct foreign investments are found in the most vital sectors of the economy where they control decision-making.

At the same time, our economic activities revolve around an overwhelming dependence on international trade. This dependence is anchored on a number of factors, the most important of which is the type of products that our economy has virtually been programmed to produce. Thus, the simple elimination of foreign capital participation will not necessarily reduce the dependence of the economy on the world capitalist system.

IMF-WB Control. The Philippine economy is strictly supervised by the international creditor community led by the IMF-WB. This situation is a result of the failure of the Marcos regime to settle its loan obligations and to make good the guarantees it made on behalf of private capitalists who are unable to pay their accounts. Because of this debt bondage, foreign interests, such as those represented by the IMF-WB and the 483 creditor banks, have been able to impose harsh economic measures never before thought possible in this country.

Domestic Collaborators. Filipinos are an industrious and resourceful people. But we have been prevented from realizing our full potential because our economy has been kept at a very low level of development. Responsible for this are some of our own compatriots who, in collaboration with monopoly capital from the imperialist countries, have amassed their profits precisely by keeping the country underdeveloped.

These "domestic collaborators" are the wealthy and politically influential Filipinos who have grown fat from selling commodities produced by underpaid and super-exploited Filipino workers and peasants. By keeping the wages of the Filipino worker and the prices of the farm products of the Filipino peasant very low, they have succeeded in securing a role for Philippine economy as a supplier of cheap labor and cheap raw materials.

They are also the technocrats in government who have formulated an economic program based on foreign loans and aimed at providing the capital and infrastructure requirements of foreign and dependent Filipino capitalists.

They are the Filipino commercial groups who have made use of the limited resources of the country, both domestic and borrowed, to import luxury goods needed to sustain the lifestyle of the rich in this country.

They are the politicians who have bartered away Philippine sovereignty and genuine development for the narrow advantages accorded their class by US imperialism.

From Elite Democracy to Dictatorship

The 1946-1972 Philippine post-colonial State was patterned roughly after the North American political system in which three branches of government co-existed and checked one another. Elections for public office were held regularly. Though the candidates fielded by the two dominant political

parties belonged to the same ruling class, this nevertheless provided the voters the illusion of choice. Such a system reduced the role of the basic masses to that of passive voters in elections. It effectively excluded them from any meaningful participation in the running of government.

Despite its weaknesses, the pre-martial law government was a formal democratic system which enforced a certain degree of accountability among the wielders of political power. The existence of a relatively open and free press assured this, notwithstanding the fact that the press itself, like all other institutions of society, was safely in ruling class hands. The masses, however, remained basically depoliticized.

When Marcos declared martial law in 1972, he swiftly dismantled the basic structures of formal democracy by the inauguration of a government which ruled by decree. The following year, he engineered the replacement of the 1935 Constitution with a new constitution that was tailor-made to legitimize his continuing rule by decree.



Marcos expanded the military and staffed its leadership with officers personally loyal to him. He effectively stripped the judiciary of its independence and reduced it into a legitimating arm of his dictatorship. He managed the media and put it under his control. He also succeeded in neutralizing the opposition, especially the Left. For a large part of the period of martial rule, many retreated into opportunism, and a few continued the struggle.

The Marcos regime often resorted to populist and even nationalist rhetoric in an effort to camouflage its true nature. Behind the empty rhetoric, however, were the ugly realities of constitutional abuse, massive human rights violations, graft and corruption on an unprecedented scale, and centralized patronage that spawned a new oligarchy, the cronies.

An Impoverished, Oppressed and Powerless People

The working class and peasantry constitute the great majority of the Filipino population. But because a large

number of them are not organized, they are unable to wield political power. Throughout various periods in our history, they have been made to support the lifestyle of the domestic and foreign ruling classes. Today, even their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren must bear the costs of ruling class exploitation and profligacy.

Historically, unionism and political action represent two sides of the working class struggle. The Philippine labor movement emerged during, and developed with, the revolutionary ferment of the late 19th century. There was massive participation of urban workers in the revolutionary Katipunan that led the anti-colonial struggle for independence against Spain, and later the United States.

In the 1920s and the 1930s, agricultural and industrial workers engaged in militant political actions to break the economic backlash that threatened the jobs and lives of workers. This early militance was enhanced by the advocacy of nationalist and socialist thought by labor and peasant leaders who, by the 1930s, would provide leadership to the emerging socialist and communist parties.

The murder and imprisonment of the officers of the left-wing parties in the early 1950s declared political unionism into the safe path of reform. An American-oriented labor relations system committed to industrial peace and premised on collective bargaining was instituted.

With control and leadership of the movement in the hands of legal experts, the phenomenon of a lawyer-dominated labor movement emerged a scant decade later. Lacking a broader political vision to fire the imagination and forge class loyalties of workers, the labor movement became weak and fragmented. It was unable to overcome the structural constraints that plagued Third World unionizing. At best, it produced decent collective bargaining agreements (CBA) and honest officers and bureaucrats. At worst, it gave rise to a labor aristocracy which, more often than not, held leadership through a system of patronage, corruption and authoritarianism.

The shift from political to economic unionism has rendered the working class virtually powerless. Trade unionism is only beginning to take root in the labor movement. Still, only one out of every ten workers in the private sector today is organized. But majority of the organized belong to weak or company-dominated unions. A proliferation of unions and federations undermines whatever strength this minority of organized workers could have. Further exacerbating this weakness are the bans on unionizing among government employees and supervisory/confidential security employees laid down between 1950 and the mid-1970s.

On the whole, the vast majority of our people have remained unorganized. Ignorance, fatalism and dependence which stem from a paternalistic and feudal culture nourished in the womb of a very backward economy continue to pervade their lives.

The basic problems of our people are still poverty, class oppression and ignorance.

They are poor because the economy has been kept backward by monopoly capitalism and the hegemony of the domestic ruling class.

They are oppressed because all political power are in the hands of those who control the economy. And it has been easy for the ruling class to dominate them because of the ignorance of the majority.

They are ignorant because a feudal culture of subservience based on earlier forms of economic activity continue to govern their everyday lives. In addition, the cultural hegemony of a dependent ruling class has preyed upon the underdeveloped social awareness of the vast masses of our people.

The Socialist Alternative

Clearly, the Filipino working class and peasantry must seize political power in order to place the national economy on the path to development. The Filipino capitalist class has demonstrated its weakness and incapacity to challenge imperialist interests. It has failed to take the lead in developing the national economy, unlike the bourgeoisie during the early days of capitalism in Europe. Instead, it has subordinated itself to the encompassing logic of global monopoly capitalism which directs the accumulation of capital from the imperialist centers, and, to a limited extent, in a few peripheral countries like South Korea and Taiwan, while condemning the rest of the countries of the Third World to a fate of hunger, poverty and underdevelopment.

For the Filipino working class and peasantry to win political power, however, they must be organized. For them to be organized, they must overcome the culture of servility, ignorance and dependence which feeds the authoritarian tendencies of the Filipino elite. But this debilitating culture can only be overcome in the process of the struggle for socialism.

The struggle for socialism must be led by a core group of committed socialists whose principal task will be to capitalize on the self-organization of the toiling classes towards the realization of the power and intelligence that is truly theirs.

The genuine democratization and national liberation of Philippine society can only be attained through socialist transformation.

In an earlier epoch, the democratization of society was made possible through the spread of capitalism. Because capitalism wore a national face, it was not inconsistent with the aspiration for national independence.

In the present period, however, we confront a type of capitalism (monopoly capitalism or imperialism) that flourishes by cooperating with domestic tyrants and authoritarian

regimes in the Third World. Because of this, it shows great intolerance for the assertion of national sovereignty by Third World peoples.

This new type of capitalism works together with a variety of domestic classes, whether capitalist or pre-capitalist. Its operation exhibits no tendency to dismantle economic formations that are pre-capitalist in nature.

In the past, it was realistic to expect that under the banner of capitalist industrialization, capitalism would eventually spell the end of landlordism. Consequently, a democratic anti-feudal alliance between the capitalist and the working classes was politically conceivable. In like manner, when capitalism had a largely national character, an anti-imperialist alliance between the nationalist sector of the national bourgeoisie and the working classes was also possible. Since then, circumstances have radically changed.

Today, in many Third World societies, imperialism finds it more expedient to work with existing domestic classes instead of dismantling their pre-capitalist social organizations. Simultaneously, it has made possible the enrichment of the domestic capitalist class by integrating their operations within the larger capitalist framework of the entire global economy. As a result the national bourgeoisie has become the sentinel of a transnational economy rather than a source of nationalist initiatives. It has embraced imperial capital, viewing this as only the source of opportunity rather than of competition.

The centrality of transnational capital in Third World societies is precisely what has prevented the development of their economies. This is exactly the reverse of the popular perceptions of an earlier epoch that capitalism has no choice but to usher in economic development wherever it does.

This new type of capitalism inevitably alters the conduct of political struggles in the Third World. In the past, imperialism was contraposed only to national sovereignty. Today, imperialism is contraposed to democracy and genuine development. Significantly, it is no longer possible to speak meaningfully of the struggle against imperialism without, at the same time, bringing in the necessity for socialism.

A Vision of the Socialist Future

The socialist alternative is presupposed to undergird the programs of different ideological groups in the Philippines. But nowhere is the vision of a Filipino socialism fully articulated. Behind this reluctance to spell out the contours of a socialist ideology is the conviction commonly shared by many in the Left that socialism is not yet on the agenda of Philippine social change. Some claim that the persistence of a semi-feudal and semi-colonial economy makes it necessary to go through the national democratic stage of the struggle. They identify the principal targets as imperialism (which explains



the nationalist content of the struggle) and feudalism (which accounts for its democratic content).

The Philippine economy may well be characterized by the preponderance of feudal over capitalist relations. But to use this as a reason for shelving the socialist alternative is to fall into the mechanistic trap of assuming that capitalism will play the progressive role of dismantling the vestiges of feudalism and of advancing the productive forces. The truth of the matter, however, is that while feudal relations may exist in some parts of the country, they operate mostly under the logic of a dominant capitalist mode of production. This is why the Philippines is not semi-feudal but capitalist. Moreover, the social question is not merely the democratic anti-feudal question but the socialist anti-capitalist question itself.

Neither is it justified to conceal the socialist option in the hope of marshalling a broad anti-feudal and anti-imperialist coalition. Any coalition or united front must be built on a clear articulation of the immediate as well as long-range plans of each party. To deny or to conceal the socialist perspective of any group is to succumb to pragmatic opportunism and to undermine any real basis for unity. More importantly, the absence of any articulation on behalf of socialism makes it difficult for those advocating change to explain exactly the kind of society that they envision should replace the present.

Economic Progress

Capitalism thrives on exploitation. Its logic is that of profit. Its morality is that of self-interest. Socialism, on the other hand, stresses the cooperative rather than the selfish nature of human beings by eliminating the conditions that promote the self-centered thirst for property.

The primary contradiction of any capitalist order is between the social character of production and the private appropriation of surplus. Socialism resolves this contradiction through the socialization of the ownership of the means of production. Its thrust is the development of the productive

forces so as to accomplish the eradication of both poverty and inequality.

Public Ownership of the Means of Social Production. Since private ownership of property produces inequality and feeds on the exploitation of the majority, a socialist society must be based on social ownership of the means of social production. This refers to a type of productive property, the operation of which requires collective labor power. Hence, under the regime of private ownership, it serves as a means for exploiting others. This concept may also be extended to land and natural resources, the private appropriation of which deprives others of their means to life.

Social ownership of the means of social production does not mean absolutely no form of private property or having to borrow each other's toothbrush. Objects of consumption properly belong to the personal and private sphere. Also, tools of production such as fishing rods and carpentry tools which are not used to exploit or deprive others are retained as individual possessions. Personal property is respected, but not the ownership of property that is used to exploit others and to create wealth only for personal consumption. There will therefore be no confiscation of personal property in a Philippine socialist society.

In the process of building a socialist Philippines, a large amount of redistribution will have to be undertaken. This includes, for example, the redistribution of private property that has been used, not for personal enjoyment, but for the oppression and exploitation of the majority. The goal of socialism is to enable everyone to have access to more personal property such as food, housing, clothing, books, and leisure. But to accomplish this, the ownership and control by a few over the means of production must be eliminated.

Poverty has been the lot of the majority in the Philippines. They cannot be any poorer. The few who are wealthy will have to accept certain restraints on their accustomed lifestyles. Consumer goods that are import dependent, comforts that are provided through exploitation, luxuries that are



available to those who own property — these clearly have to be foregone.

Democratic Economic Planning. Philippine socialism means the creation of a society where the people, not a few property owners, own and manage the economic affairs of the country. In such a society, production would be basically oriented to need, not to market demand. This can only be accomplished through rational social planning.

A planned economy requires the identification of basic needs that must be met, and an efficient distribution system. These can only be achieved through the effective participation of people in the determination of national goals. It is crucial, therefore, that a planned economy be the result of decisions popularly participated in by all sectors of society. This is the only way through which real needs can be arrived at, people can be motivated to act collectively and sacrifices can be made based on rational choices. A planned economy must also ensure a wide and even dispersal of industries in the countryside in order to create work opportunities for a vast number of our people and avoid centralization of development only in selected areas.

Democratic social planning is thus in complete contrast to the anarchy of capitalism where surplus is expropriated from those who produce by the social classes that own the means of production.

Workers' Control. Economic planning, if it is not to degenerate into control by a bureaucracy, must be based on the direct producers' control over decision-making. Under capitalism, control is purely in the hands of the owners of the means of social production. Philippine socialism, on the other hand, must emphasize the need for producers to get the greatest share of the surplus. Thus, social profit must not be expropriated by the state.

While a percentage of the social profits must be contributed to the State in the form of taxes, the rest must be

placed at the disposal of the workers. These funds can then be used either to modernize the tools of production or as a social fund for collective services or individual bonuses. Workers must also have control over both the organization and technology of production to avoid becoming slaves to these.

Ownership, like control, does not automatically refer to State ownership. Emphasis is given to a variety of forms — cooperative, factory, municipal, or regional ownership — each with autonomous workers' councils which will make specific decisions but within the broad guidelines laid down by the regional or national bodies.

It is important to strike a viable balance between nationalization and private property especially during the stage of social reconstruction. All monopolies must be nationalized. However, in the case of individual enterprises, the informal business sector, and petty commodity producers, the State must encourage cooperatives rather than resort to the imposition of socialized systems. People should understand and accept the socialist system because it responds to their own aspirations and not because the State decrees it.

Philippine socialism also seeks to avoid the over-centralized systems of some present-day socialist states. Instead, it strives towards a system where the means of production and social services are owned and managed by communities of direct producers within the broad guidelines provided by the State. In addition, to ensure a vibrant, self-propelling economy, a market system may be retained for as long as no monopolies arise. In this regard, the economy should encourage healthy competition between production units and factories in order to improve the products, create new product lines and provide incentives to innovate.

Since the Philippines is basically an agricultural country, the same principle of workers' control should also govern the agricultural sector. Rather than a "land to the tiller" policy which contradicts the socialist principle of public ownership of the means of social production, land must be viewed as a common heritage of the Filipino people. Ultimate control over the wealth it produces should therefore rest in the hands of the actual cultivators. Thus, the thrust must be towards setting up appropriate forms of peasants' and rural workers' cooperatives based on the nature of the crop production. Autonomous rural organizations can contribute immensely towards this effort.

Development of the Domestic Economy. Under capitalism, especially when it is dependent, the economy always responds to the logic of the world capitalist market. Since Filipino capitalists do not have to rely on the local market, they are under no pressure to increase the buying capacity of workers. In fact, any attempt to control capital generally leads to its flight because capital recognizes no nationality.

In contrast, a socialist system, being under the control of the people, produces the strongest pressure to develop the

domestic economy because production would be sensitive to local needs rather than to global market demands. The very survival of the economy therefore heavily depends upon the improvement of the purchasing capacity of the local consumers which also necessarily entails the improvement of the standard of living of the masses.

Development of Science and Technology. Socialism is not luddism or the worship of the primitive. Considering the 19th century level of our productive forces which resulted from inefficient and dependent capitalism, Philippine socialism must put special emphasis on the development of science and technology. Economic progress and the improvement of the people's standard of living are largely dependent upon the capacity to produce our own means of production.

To develop our science and technology, however, it is not necessary to pass through the different stages of technological growth that other developed nations have taken. What is important is to identify needs that must be met and to develop the appropriate technologies to realize these. One possible strategy is to "leap-frog" over some stages (i.e., venture into the area of knowledge-intensive high technology in food production, energy, manufacturing and information, instead of going through the stage of capital-intensive industrial technologies now controlled by the advanced capitalist nations). A socialist state must also guard against the uncritical adoption of capitalist technology. While the instruments may be neutral, these are parts of a technological system designed for the exploitation and control of workers. Furthermore, technology that leads to the wanton destruction of natural resources must be avoided. A socialist science and technology must always be conscious of the need for technology that does not alienate, but rather enhances the humanity of the worker. Such a technology must therefore be in the control of the people.

Preservation of the Environment. Economic development in a socialist society can be sustained only through a stable and adequate resource base. Hence, the conservation of natural resources and the maintenance of ecological balance must be integral principles of a Philippine socialism.

Our natural resources, whether organic or inorganic, are not infinite. They will not last unless necessary policies and measures are undertaken to preserve them. This task is both immediate and long-range. It is urgent because of the current state of depletion and deterioration of our national biosphere which, in turn, is due to the intensive, wide-scale agro-industrial activities of foreign business firms in partnership with local capitalists. The result has been widespread poverty among the masses, especially in the countryside.

Among others, this task entails a transition process involving: the phasing out of unecological capitalist production technology i.e., pollutive, disruptive and inappropriate; the regeneration of ruined and weakened ecosystems, i.e., upland areas, inland and coastal waters, agricultural soil and

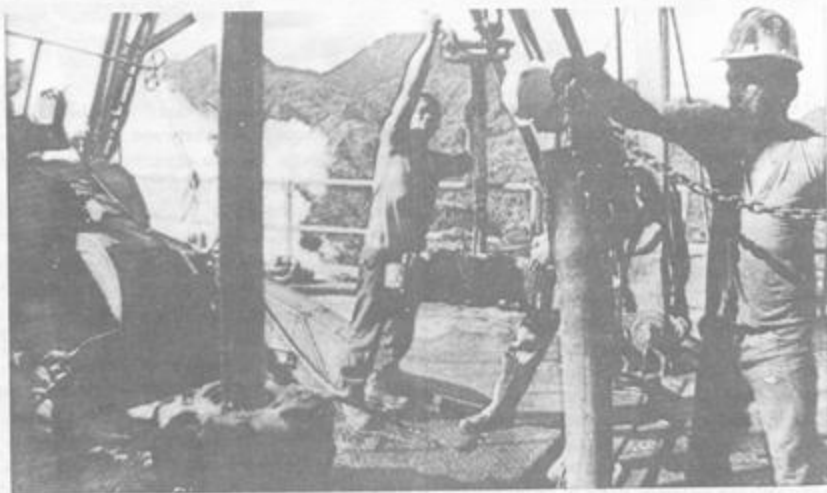
air towards a new balance; and the establishment of an optimum equilibrium between the human population and nature's limits, i.e., the capacity to provide space, food and other raw materials. The initial foundations of this transition process, in the form of preliminary solutions guided by scientific study, must be laid down as the masses are organized for political and economic empowerment.

People's Democracy

The illusion of democracy peddled by the exponents of the capitalist authoritarian order hinged on the existence of political pluralism which allowed the masses the right to choose their leaders. Socialism does not negate pluralism. But it goes farther by creating the conditions for people to indeed exercise their right to determine not only their leaders but the path towards the future. Under capitalism, politics is limited to the elite who have the resources to engage in politics. While elections allow the masses a token right to choose their leaders, the choice is actually only between members of the ruling class.

While recognizing the limitations of democracy in a capitalist order, we must also deplore the depoliticization that has taken place in many other socialist countries, where a small bureaucracy has effectively paralyzed the masses and simply rules in their name.





Popular Power. The propaganda against socialist states has always been that the party would dictate policy. Socialism in the Philippines will encourage the presence of multiple parties, each one with its own perspective on the correct path towards socialism. After all, an agreement on the basic goal does not automatically mean total agreement on the process of attaining such goals.

Unlike the much misunderstood and sometimes abused concept of the vanguard party, socialism in the Philippines will encourage the interplay of forces and perspectives on socialism, each aspiring for the vanguard role. The vanguard role, therefore, is not one that is bestowed on any party or political force. It is a role that is dependent upon the support of the majority for a party's policies and programs. With each of the parties vying and aspiring for vanguard role, it is then necessary to have regular elections to validate policies and programs and to feel the real pulse of the people. It must be made clear, however, that while no single party can automatically lay claim to possess the correct road to socialism, all parties and forces must agree on basic socialist goals.

The main task of competing socialist parties should then be to further politicize and organize the people in order to help the masses wield effective political power. The existence of competing socialist parties also guarantees that criticism can be aired in the open, rather than only internally, as is the case in a single-party system. However, while one of the competing socialist parties may even openly espouse some non-socialist perspectives, this will be allowed only for as long as there is neither foreign nor armed intervention. Finally, if, as in the case of some other socialist countries, only one party exists because of the fusion or the default of political forces, a system must be designed so that membership in the party is based on the recommendation of people in the sectors who will be armed with the right to recall. In this manner, the party ensures democracy and constant circulation and avoids dictatorship and bureaucratization.

Another source of fear with regard to the absence of democracy in socialist societies is the image of a police state. Under the Marcos regime, the Philippines was effectively one. We must learn from our experience in order to avoid the possibility of an overly powerful military that can spell the end of democracy. The power of the military is not a logical extension of socialism. But we must still guard against its possibility.

The only antidote to any form of dictation, whether by the military or by the bureaucracy, is a politicized, well-informed, organized and armed citizenry. Communities and sectors must be organized into popular and autonomous bodies, not into front organizations that are controlled by either a political party or the State. This will ensure that power resides in the hands of the majority. The experience in some countries has been the depoliticization of the masses after the attainment of socialist victory.

Philippine socialism must not only politicize and organize the people in the process of the struggle but must deepen and provide greater meaning to collective action after the socialist victory. Political organizing, even at present, must therefore emphasize the importance of the collective will in the struggle for and the building and sustaining of a socialist future. Every attempt must be made to encourage the formation of independent people's organizations. Every occasion must be used to demonstrate the viability and potency of organized collective action.

Equal Rights and Freedoms. In a capitalist order, the inequalities in the economic sphere spawn inequalities in the enjoyment of human rights and freedoms. The capitalist class that wields economic and political power, the professional sector and others who live in relative material comfort, comprise a small segment of the population which can enjoy the rights and freedoms of citizens under a capitalist democracy. But the exploited majority who are consigned to poverty know no freedom and suffer violation of their human rights.

In a socialist society, the absence of the force of private property which determines inequality is that which provides the basis for the equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms. Contrary to the usual attacks against it, socialism does not substitute material welfare for human rights. The socialist vision, in fact, is not meant to negate the rights enjoyed by only a few in a capitalist society, but to expand these rights and make them available to all.

Dissent. The experience of some socialist states has shown that a socialist system does not automatically result in greater respect for human rights. Philippine socialism must therefore ensure the full flowering of equal rights and freedoms. One of the basic requirements is the full guarantee of the right to dissent. The freedom to criticize must be guaranteed not only in the law but in fact. The right to free speech, to assembly, to demonstrate against the government, must be protected at all times. But the actual guarantee of these rights can only come from an organized and politicized people and from the existence of a multi-party system.

Media. Central to the right to dissent is equal access to information. The control of information is a tremendous source of power. Without this, the ability to analyze and criticize effectively is severely hampered. To guarantee equal access to information, state-owned media must not be government-controlled. In addition, access to the use of media must be democratized so as to prevent the degeneration of state-owned media into a propaganda arm of the existing government. This would mean, in practical terms, the apportionment of time and space to all political forces and groups. But ownership of media must not only be limited to the State. Political parties and forces, communities and sectors may run their own newspapers, radio and TV stations for as long as these are not owned by individuals or used as venues for foreign intervention.

The right to equal access to information, however, cannot be fully enjoyed if majority of the Filipinos are not literate. A massive nation-wide and community-based literacy campaign is therefore one of the urgent tasks a socialist society must undertake. Media (i.e. television, radio, print), must be extensively and effectively utilized for this purpose. As a powerful educational tool, it must also serve as a venue for non-formal education as well as a channel for the promotion of the cultural creations of the people.

Education. Like media, education must be supported but not controlled by the government. In the primary and secondary levels, emphasis must be given to the teaching of basic skills and knowledge, and in the inculcation of socialist values such as the collective good not selfishness, a sense of community not ruthless competition. Because of the continued dominance of colonial and imperialist culture in our educational system, a socialist education must immediately begin



the decolonization of minds even at the early levels. The curricula must therefore be reoriented to provide a basic knowledge and understanding of Philippine culture and history from a Filipino socialist perspective. In line with this, the medium of instruction can only be the national and Philippine languages.

Apart from guidelines that make for basic commonality across schools, the specific curriculum should be determined by educators in consultation with the communities that the school serves. The school must be intimately linked to the environment it operates in, thus making for differences between schools. In addition, while education must be subsidized by the State, the administration of schools need not be totally in the hands of the State.

A socialist society will lay the bases for the creation and maintenance of equal standards in all schools primarily because access to quality education will cease to be the exclusive right of those who can afford to pay for it. Free education in all levels will be a right guaranteed to all. Unlike the present system where primary and secondary schooling are mainly viewed as preparations for college, thus resulting in the relegation of much of tertiary education to skills training, a socialist education must provide for distinct levels, each one geared not only to the next level, but to larger national goals as well. While the primary grades should be devoted to the learning of skills, knowledge and socialist values, the secondary level must already prepare graduates for productive work so that those who wish to engage in the production process would already be equipped with the necessary skills. The tertiary level, on the other hand, should be geared to those who would wish to either devote themselves to the production of new ideas and knowledge or to train those who would handle more sophisticated technical jobs.

Perhaps one of the greatest tragedies in many socialist states at present is the decline of ideological debate, thus stifling the dynamism of the mind and theoretical growth. The school system must not be a conduit for State ideology, as it is under capitalism. Education must be bound by no dogma except by the vision of the socialist order. College education must be an occasion, not for imbibing information, but for the creation of new knowledge and ideas. The universities must be areas of freedom and debate. Ideological debate must not only be tolerated, it must be encouraged. The curriculum must be at the disposal of the faculty who then ensures that the proper venues are created for criticism and proposals from other sectors – students, academic and non-academic personnel, workers, etc. Teachers and other constituents must also organize in order to guarantee the dynamism of learning and the full exchange of contending ideas.

Religion. Earlier socialists denounced the institutionalized church as a bastion of reaction. The antagonism between the church and socialists derives from the role religion, especially



in the past, was made to play – that of the source of conservatism because people were taught to entrust their destinies to a supernatural being. But in recent years, a section of the Church has eloquently spoken of a slice of heaven that must be aspired for in the temporal world and must be actively sought in the here and now. Philippine socialism recognizes that religion can be a potent force for progress.

Being a predominantly Christian country, a growing minority in the church seeks to recover the gospel of liberation that was central to early Christianity. This essence was lost when Christianity came to terms with and provided legitimation for the existing order, starting with Constantine. This gave rise to triumphalism and later, a highly personalized salvation ethic. Christians in both institutional and para-church structures point to the social dimension of sin. They denounce the capitalist order as alienating, dehumanizing and, therefore, sinful at its core. Filipino socialists, while negating the alienated concept of a god who emphasizes powerlessness and justifies exploitation, recognize the efforts to free the gospel from its class fetters by Christians at the base who seek to link life and faith.

The freedom to worship as well as the freedom not to worship therefore must be upheld. To ensure this right, the struggle towards socialism should actively encourage church people to get involved not only because of the pivotal role they play in the lives of many Filipinos, but because the involvement of the religious in the socialist project is one way of tempering dogmatism and ensuring humanism.

Defense. The stereotyped image of the transition to socialism has been the unregulated use of violence, especially during that period between the death of the old order and the birth of the new one. While capitalist propaganda has indeed exaggerated certain events, it is nonetheless true that unless this transition is well-planned, abuse will occur – looting,

vengeance, spontaneous class reprisals — from either undisciplined cadres or the upsurge of mass anger. This can be minimized in a number of ways:

First, an organized people will effectively avoid the breakdown produced by the entry of a socialist order. Communities that actively participate in making socialism a reality will necessarily have structures that can keep order. Thus it is important to stress not only the necessity of organizing people for the seizure of power. Such organizations must provide the backbone for popular cooperation, especially at the start of a socialist order.

Second, an effective shadow government, at all levels of society, must already be in place before the socialist transition.

Third, a socialist judicial system must be prepared, even if in draft form, before victory is achieved. Since transformation is structural, the laws of a capitalist order which are based on property ownership will not apply. People must have a clear understanding of the laws under a socialist order so that the chaos that is usually associated with change is avoided.

Fourth, the fear of indiscriminate extermination of all those who do not belong to the working class, because of class anger, is a reality that must be faced instead of lightly dismissed. The open involvement of the non-capitalist professionals in the struggle towards socialism is one deterrent. Those of the middle class whose class position lies in contradictory position between the two main forces of society must be politicized and must take an active role in the socialist struggle. Their involvement allows the masses to distinguish between the stereotyped images of oppressors. With a deeper appreciation of the meaning of class, indiscriminate looting and physical harm can be avoided.

Finally, considering that not everyone in the capitalist and professional sectors will be convinced of the socialist alternative, the problem is how the people will deal with them. A strict division must be made between those who committed direct crimes against the people and those who, while working for capitalism, were only beneficiaries of the system. The former must be tried under socialist law. The latter, though unconvinced of the socialist alternative, must not be harmed.

They must not be forced to stay in the country. In fact, all those who choose not to support the revolution will be allowed to leave, should they so desire, but only with their personal belongings.

The capacity to create a relatively orderly transition from capitalism to socialism does not automatically result in democracy. In the experience of some socialist countries, the birth of socialism also brought with it the rule of the military and secret police. For Filipinos, the image of a garrison state, especially after our experience under the Marcos regime, is a future that must be shunned at all costs.

The military should be converted into a small but highly professional corps without an Infantry. Rather, people's

militias must be formed and must be large enough to deter the professional army. To do this, the State must democratize access to arms while socializing defense and security. An organized and armed people is the best deterrent to any local or foreign attempt to undermine socialism. Security, then, ceases to be a commodity accessible only to those who can pay for it because it is democratized for all. Finally, as part of the defense establishment, the socialist State needs an intelligence network. This network must be kept small and should have absolutely no police power or the right to arrest.

Human and Personal Development. Philippine socialism must be directed towards the ultimate fulfillment of the total potential of every Filipino. There must be a constant check to ensure that material welfare is not substituted for human development. The subordination of the individual to the State, the regimentation of life, the loss of sense of humor, the imposition of a puritanical lifestyle or a "proletarian" culture, the death of affection and romantic love, the break-up of the family, are *not* outcomes of socialism. And they ought not to be. In fact, socialism is aimed at the fullest development of each individual. In the final analysis, the process towards full socialism requires a parallel growth of human and economic development.

The Family. As the basic unit of society, the family plays a crucial role in the socialist order. Economic progress and political freedom under socialism will allow each family to develop mutually enriching relations unencumbered by the pressures of poverty and oppression. Special emphasis will be placed on maintaining and enhancing the strength of family ties since it is through the experience of the beauty of shared privileges and responsibilities that socialism can be born, nurtured and developed.

Women. While socialism as a politico-economic system does not directly confront the issue of gender oppression, a socialist structure is better able to handle this reality. The elimination of private ownership of the means of social production and democratic economic planning create the base for gender equality in both economic and political spheres. Socialists, however, must confront the private/public contradiction that relegates women to the domestic sphere, reduces their work to a biological and therefore insignificant category (as against the economic and significant category) and subordinates her being and her activity at work and in society at large.

The double burden of home and work lies at the core of female oppression. Unless socialists confront this issue, women's liberation will remain the partial vision and piecemeal reality that it has largely been in existing socialist societies. The logic of female degradation is manifested in sexual discrimination, prostitution and the exploitation of women.

Socialists must seek to end these forms of female oppression. As the feminist struggle conjoins with the socialist



struggle, women can move from a position of weakness to a position of equality and strength – not in theory but in the concrete – by acting and struggling. Socialists must support socialist feminists as they confront their class and gender oppression together and as they call for transformed structures at home and in the workplace for the full liberation of women.

Children. Socialism in the Philippines must train its sights to the welfare and total development of the next generation. This is not only because the children of today are the inheritors of tomorrow, but perhaps more importantly, because the future of socialism depends upon the seriousness with which it is developed. The present generation, those who struggle for a new order, has a stake in ensuring that socialism develops in accordance with our visions. But as in the case of some socialist states, the succeeding generations who inherit a system they had no hand in creating, may not exhibit the same zealotry with which their parents fought. Children must therefore clearly appreciate not only the sacrifices made to ensure their future, but the gains brought by socialism so that they have an equal stake in maintaining and developing a socialist Philippines. Finally, a child-oriented socialism also increases the motivation with which adults strive to develop the system since one of the greatest rewards of parents is the ability to offer the best opportunities to their children. Unlike in capitalism, to strive to better the society for one's child, in particular, redounds to benefits for children in general.

The Aged. Under capitalism, the aged are cruelly consigned to a fate of uselessness. After years of exploitation and decades of oppression, the old are unceremoniously shoved aside because they have outlived their usefulness. A socialist society must make sufficient provisions to ensure not only care for the aged but an opportunity to prolong the meaning of life so that retirement would be an occasion to look forward to rather than to be feared. Communities must take charge of this function and provide the opportunities for the old to pass on skills and cultural heritage. Regular venues for the old and the young to share and care for each other would make life more meaningful for the old and would allow the young to gain an early sense of responsibility.

Cultural Minorities. For centuries, Philippine cultural minorities have insisted upon retaining their own culture and traditions. They have confronted a variety of oppressors:

foreign, Filipino Christians, as well as their own indigenous elites. But they have struggled for the right to their ancestral lands and to determine their own future. Their quest for self-determination is an articulation of the aspiration to liberate themselves from their oppressors. A socialist society must therefore honor the right of ethnic communities to retain their cultural identity and to insist on self-determination. It must take the necessary steps to encourage the development of their cultures as legacies to the nation.

Artists. In the development of every individual, art – the symbolic expression of thoughts and emotions, works of creative imagination – is a basic necessity. Under capitalism, art is largely the preserve of the rich. The masses, on the other hand, are consigned to the role of consumers of commodified or commercialized art. Socialism must rescue art from the market and make it available to all as an important component in the development of the whole person.

To ensure that art becomes the property of the people, instead of the preserve of a few gifted people and those who can afford these creations, the emergence of popular and accessible forms of art must be encouraged. Cultural groups at the community level must also be organized so that art can be used for the people's own purposes (i.e., as a means of understanding and recording their own lives and as a way of expressing their own thoughts, feelings and aspirations). Furthermore, there should be no State censorship of art. Rather, artists as a community and people in communities must have full control over art. There must be no impositions as to the "correct aesthetic line" and no straight-jacketing of culture under the guise of proletarianization. Socialism must emphasize the creation of a truly Filipino popular culture that emerges from the marriage of indigenous and experimental forms.

National Sovereignty

While the Philippines under Marcos and under the previous neo-colonial governments posed as a sovereign actor in international affairs, Philippine foreign policy has never been truly independent. It promotes and defends the interests of US imperialism even at the expense of the Filipino people.

This is necessarily so because the foreign policy of a State reflects its social base. Under capitalism, political power effectively resides in the capitalist class. In a neo-colonial capitalist society, the ruling classes perceive their immediate interests as corresponding to the strategic interests of imperialism.

Insofar as it is based on the power of the working people rather than on the whims of the capitalist class or the caprices of a bureaucracy, socialism ordains a foreign policy that best serves the interests of the majority of our people. Philippine socialism will abrogate all unequal treaties with the United States and negotiate new treaties, not with the posture of a mendicant, but from the proud and principled standpoint of a people who have won their freedom.

While upholding our people's interests as the primordial basis of foreign policy, Philippine socialism also adheres to the principles of international working class solidarity. Just as capitalism has become a world system, the workers of the countries must join hands to destroy it. Isolated from the socialist community, the international working class, and the liberation movements in other oppressed countries, a triumphant socialism in the Philippines will be easy prey to an imperialist-sponsored counter-revolution. On our part, we recognize an obligation to support, morally and politically, all progressive trends throughout the world. This includes the world-wide movement to end the nuclear arms race, to destroy all nuclear weapons and to promote global peace based on justice.

Independent and Principled Foreign Policy. Socialist internationalism should never degenerate into flunkeyism, that is, the tendency to follow blindly the leadership of another socialist state. For we must recognize, no matter how disconcerting, the fact that the bureaucratic socialist states tend to pursue narrow and short-term State interests. To adopt a subservient attitude towards such states is, under certain

circumstances, a betrayal of our own people. We will support them only if and when our interests as a nation coincide with theirs. Finally, we must reserve our right to criticize their foreign and domestic policies from the standpoint of the international socialist movement as a whole.

Consistent with this, no foreign military bases must be allowed on Philippine territory. The US Bases Agreement must be unilaterally abrogated. If the United States government refuses to respect the wishes of the State, the United States must be declared as a belligerent whose continued occupation of our land is an act of transgression against our national sovereignty. Concrete steps must therefore be taken to isolate these bases by denying them services, access and even basic necessities. By doing so, we make it extremely expensive for the US to stay on and even more expensive to use the base facilities as a springboard for intervention.

Economic Relations Based on the National Interest. The tragedy of Third World nations under the grip of capitalism is that foreign aid, investment and loans are determined on the basis of the interests of the few who own the means of production. But the effects of and responsibility for these are passed on to the large majority of people who neither had a say in decision-making nor were beneficiaries of such arrangements. A socialist Philippines does not mean autarky or isolation from the world economy. Rather, it is participation on the basis of a conscious recognition of the national interest and not that of a specific class. The necessity for foreign investment and aid must therefore be assessed based on the minimum we cannot do without rather than the maximum we can get. Considering the staggering size of our foreign debt under the present system, no State can afford to overlook this problem.

A socialist Philippines must start out from the premise that the responsibility for Third World debts rests on both the creditors and the debtors. Thus, the resolution of the problem



of foreign debts must be a joint undertaking. Specifically, a socialist Philippines will honor foreign debts under the following conditions: first, in no way shall we make the masses pay for these debts through high taxes, depressed wages, the high price of the unabated extraction of our natural resources; second, the end users of these loans must be made to pay for these through the expropriation of their hidden ill-gotten wealth; third, creditor banks and agencies must help collect from the end users; and fourth, the terms of repayment must be renegotiated with the country paying a pre-arranged percentage of our export earnings rather than sacrificing the entire country just to meet our obligations. Lastly, a socialist Philippines will participate in any Third World collective effort to have these debts paid, partly by diverting the huge defense budgets of the big countries like the United States, to the servicing of these debts.

The Road Ahead

The collapse of the Marcos dictatorship restored the system of elitist competition which passed for democracy before Martial law. The future may likely usher in a new type of authoritarian rule. The culture of servility must first be broken. The hegemony of the people in the field of culture must likewise be established to ensure that the triumph of the anti-dictatorship and anti-imperialist movement will indeed be a step toward genuine democracy and socialism.

Socialism presupposes the possession and actual exercise of power by the working people, not the monopoly of power by a bureaucracy in the name of the working class. Helping to prepare the workers discharge their historic mission involves a long, arduous and extremely complex process. To contribute to this, our primary task is the propagation of socialist consciousness that will propel and give direction to the popular organizations.

We have to help dismantle the ideological framework that keeps the masses submissive and indifferent, or conversely, transform their spontaneous anger and activity into conscious and organized aspects of the social revolution. Such a task must be undertaken regardless of the political climate. In a relatively free and peaceful climate, we would feel much safer performing this task. Ironically, however, under a reformist-liberal government, political education and organization also tend to appear less urgent. What is clearly important is that we do not allow ourselves, even for a moment, to lose sight of the longer-range goal of transforming the political culture itself by instituting a Filipino social order that would put an end to the marginalization of the vast masses of our people.

Socialist education among unorganized individuals is a futile project unless combined with vigorous organizing work. Political ideas become a material force only if they capture the imagination of a significant number of people and

only if the latter act on their social milieu in an organized fashion. It is therefore the duty of socialists to propagate socialism in the organizations to which they belong and incessantly strive to raise their political militancy.

Where no organizations exist, our duty is to create them. But, given the premises laid down in the earlier sections of this document, BISIG does not aim to set up a network of manipulable groups that will sheepishly toe its line. Socialist organizations should embody our concept of the role of the masses in a socialist society, which is not that of a rubber stamp, but a source of popular initiative and a structure for self-activity from below. Socialist organizations must be autonomous in the sense of being able to run on their own dynamic.

We must develop proper relations with other popular organizations representing other ideological tendencies. This task entails clarifying and enlarging the area of consensus with the view to realizing our concept of a broad united front. This concept recognizes that in the Philippines today, there exist not only a single force but several forces which adhere to an anti-imperialist and democratic platform. To bring us together in one umbrella organization that will also serve as the nucleus for an alternative government, all forces should learn to respect each other and relate to one another as equals rather than try to subdue smaller ones by means of numerical superiority.

In dealing with prospective allies in this broad movement, *we must not conceal our socialist principles for the sake of unity.* Unity based on deception is artificial and fragile. The only form of unity that can withstand the twists and turns of this long and complex struggle is one based on mutual recognition of what we are and what we want to achieve. Then debate, rather than manipulation, becomes the way of resolving differences.

In the course of our struggle, we shall endeavor to clarify, concretize, refine and elaborate our vision of socialism. As stated at the outset, this document does not profess to be a finished blueprint but a catalyst for discussion and debate on the type of society we desire. Hence, at every stage in the struggle against imperialism and exploitation, we also spread and deepen socialist consciousness so that when capitalism ultimately faces its fate, bureaucratic and authoritarian tendencies will be averted. Only then will it be possible to visualize a system that is not only socialist but also genuinely democratic.

The struggle is long. Impatience is understandable. But impetuosity can be costly. We should not forget that our people have gone through four centuries of Spanish, American and Japanese colonization, twenty-six years of deception and thirteen years of outright dictatorship. Negating the ethos of servility which evolved from that experience and establishing popular working class consciousness is, of necessity, a protracted, difficult and complicated process. **K**