

# Oppose the US-Aquino Scheme to Stabilize the Reactionary Ruling Order!

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Come February 2nd, the constitution drafted by the Aquino-appointed commission will be ratified. By then, the incumbent government shall have proclaimed to all that "the Filipino people have spoken," and together with US officialdom, shall have claimed another "triumph of democracy" in the Philippines. Another step shall have been taken, and the ground rules for the continuing big landlord-big comprador-big bureaucrat-capitalist power game shall have been set. The political and moral bases for wielding the sword of war against all those perceived by government to have shunned the parliamentary process shall have been laid, and the option for fundamental and revolutionary change shall--the government hope--have been rendered moot.

US imperialism and the Aquino regime are hell-bent on having the constitution ratified, what with the machineries of local government, the mass media, the military establishment--all the essential components of the state apparatus--in their hands.

Since the last quarter of 1986, their campaign has been full-swing--a campaign that smacks of nothing less than the reactionary elite politics of old, if not of the Marcos fascist clique's political gimmickry. The regime's pointmen have doctored the statistics of voter's registration which, some quarters in government admit, did not even go any higher than 60 to 65 percent of the entire voting population. More recently, they have resorted to doling out to, if not bribing, local leaders and prospective supporters. Making use of whatever remaining popularity the government has, they equate a vote for the constitution to a vote for Corazon Aquino and the stability of her government.

It is an imperative for the US-supported Aquino regime to get the vote of the people for the charter. The charter will, once and for all, legitimize and regularize the Aquino govern-

ment, especially in the eyes of the ruling classes. The reactionaries, more than simply being disturbed by its provisional charter, cannot swallow the fact--bitter as it is for them--that the present government was catapulted to power by a people's uprising. Wary of the real power of the people, they now seek to reduce this to electoral votes. Without actually giving the people any real choice, the Aquino regime is asking them to vote "Yes" or "No" for a reactionary charter. They want to use the people's vote to approve a constitution that goes against the people's basic aspirations, ensures the preservation of imperialist, landlord and comprador interests and further entrenches the semicolonial and semifeudal ruling systems. And with all the resources at their disposal, they have the capacity to sway the backward elements among the masses.

With this charter in place, the parameters of reactionary governance shall have been defined anew, and the various factions of the ruling classes kept within bounds. Thus, the rationale for the use of force against all opposition--principally the revolutionary opposition - outside of these.

Still smarting from their defeat in the attempt at immediate takeover, Enrile and his cohorts in the Nacionalista Party, together with the Marcos hold-outs, are now feverishly campaigning against the proposed charter. Calling for early presidential elections and a return to the 1973 fascist constitution, their main argument focuses on the legitimacy of the Aquino government. Behind this, however, is their obsession and greed for power, worried as they are over the marginalization of their economic and political assets that now fall prey to the dominant faction of the reactionaries under Aquino's leadership. Nonetheless, Enrile and his ilk are basically united with the Aquino faction in their desire to stem the tide of revolutionary change and prolong the moribund ruling system. Thus, there are also those among them who reserve the option to

take the "yes" vote should the revolutionary forces "gain an upper hand."

The revolutionary forces, recognizing that no genuine social change has occurred even after the assumption to power of the Aquino government, reject the entire reactionary ruling system. For them, the proposed charter is merely a product and reflection of this system. They realize the necessity of, and persevere in, the continuing task of arousing, mobilizing and organizing the people to struggle for their national democratic aspirations, and building their own independent strength.

The open national democratic mass organizations of the workers, peasants and urban poor call for a rejection of the new constitution. They argue that they were never adequately and substantially represented in the framing of the charter. The constitutional commission was packed by representatives of big business and the landowning class, as well as by local hirelings of US imperialism. The resultant document therefore weighs heavily against the people's fundamental interests, serves those of foreign monopoly-capital and its local partners, and reflects as whole the prevailing social order. More importantly, it is in the context of rejecting this very ruling order, which the charter further seeks to legitimize, that the toiling masses have opted for its non-ratification.

There are those progressive organizations and individuals among the middle forces who, on the other hand, advocate ratification of the constitution without illusion or "critical ratification." Such a position is premised on the view that even as the charter contains reactionary provisions and fall short of addressing the basic problems of the Filipino people, whatever positive features it has--especially those in the field of democratic rights--can serve to extend the so-called democratic space. This, they sincerely believe, can help preserve the people's democratic gains against the ousted dictatorship as well as against continuing threats from the militarists and other forces of the ultra-Right in and out of government. Furthermore, they see this as starting point from which to assert the more basic changes.

But what democratic space and what democratic rights are there to really speak of? Sincere elements from among the middle forces appear to have been so mesmerized by the initial spate of democratic reforms that ensued upon the Aquino government's assumption to power. Now they fail to recognize the fact that economic and political power remains firmly in the hands of the people's oppressors and exploiters, and Philippine society continues to be dominated by US imperialism. The Aquino regime and its imperialist backers, meanwhile, harp so much on the restoration of formal democratic rights and processes after the downfall of a regime of tyranny and open terror, even as they steer clear of the more fundamental questions. Worse, such formal democratic rights and processes can easily be dispensed with to legitimize state repression in the interest of "national security, economic recovery and political stability."

Workers' rights continue to be violated in the interest of "industrial peace" and a "favorable climate for foreign investment." Urban poor, settlers' and national minorities' sights

continue to be trampled on in the name of "development." Peasants continue to be deprived of their lands, and together with those resolutely asserting their legitimate demands, continue to suffer from illegal arrest and detention, torture and salvaging, bombing and strafing, forced evacuation and hamletting. All these in the name of peace and national security. Genuine democracy for the vast majority remains far within reach.

The Aquino government, in its frantic effort to stabilize the existing set-up, is rapidly consolidating itself into a regime that is rabidly pro-imperialist and reactionary, even as it puts up a centrist or reformist image. Its current economic and fiscal policies, its counterinsurgency program and the ongoing government revamp attest to this. The paid hacks of US imperialism and local reaction are now firmly in place in the cabinet and in the armed forces. The regime calls for "peace and reconciliation" with the revolutionary opposition only to narrow such to the confines of the reactionary charter, within the same reactionary framework. The constitution, therefore, is but one more cog in the wheel that the US-Aquino clique needs to be able to push forward its integrated political and military approach to the "insurgency." Why argue then for the stabilization of such a regime?

Under the present class and political dispensation, a truly nationalist and democratic constitution is indeed a mere pipe-dream. It can only become reality upon the decisive victory of the people's democratic struggle and establishment of revolutionary political power nationwide.

The task of all revolutionaries is to expose the vicious scheme behind the US-Aquino regime's all-out drive to get this constitution ratified--the scheme to prolong imperialist domination, landlord-comprador rule and thus, the people's misery and oppression. They must do so not only through vigorous education and propaganda on the root evils plaguing Philippine society and on the national-democratic alternative; more so, they must unite with the people and lead them in their struggles for their basic demands. In doing so, the distinction between mere bourgeois reforms within the same ruling system and fundamental revolutionary change is brought into sharper focus.

The legal national-democratic forces, in taking the "No" position, must underscore the real nature and intent of the proposed constitution. They must take the lead in heightening the political consciousness of the people and show them the path to the attainment of genuine national freedom and democracy.

The broad masses must remain ever vigilant of the regime's schemes, firmly rely on their own strength and persist in asserting just national democratic aspirations in both armed and unarmed spheres. Those progressive and democratic forces who sincerely take the stand of critical ratification must never for a moment abandon their responsibility to the people. They must clearly point out the defects of the draft charter. And when the masses intensify their struggles, these progressive organizations and individuals must unite with them, translate into action their critical position and fight the ruling system well.