

Political Strategy and the Political Negotiations

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"Where the objective conditions of a profound political crisis exist, the tiniest conflicts seemingly remote from the real breeding ground of revolution, can be of most serious importance as the reason, as the last straw. . ."

— Lenin
Collected Works
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While the fundamental problems of the Filipino people still remain, a drastic change in the political situation has taken place with the overthrow of the Marcos fascist regime. The peace negotiations between the liberal democratic Aquino government and the revolutionary movement come at this juncture and signify the attempt of classes, hitherto allied against fascism, to redefine their relationship. To Communists, the negotiations are of *strategic* significance, regardless and independent of their actual estimation of the talks' importance in the revolutionary struggle. Objectively concentrated in this one arena are crucial questions of strategy and tactics, or how the Communists will be able to define the terrain of the class struggle in the post-Marcos period to the strategic advantage of the revolutionary forces.

Necessarily, revolutionaries must comprehend how the sudden shift in the political situation affects the revolutionary process. Accordingly, they must be prepared to make bold refinements in revolutionary strategy and utilize new forms of struggle, even those not yet fully tested by this particular revolution. They must be fully aware that the sudden, ingenious and lively unfolding of history can easily turn yesterday's theory into a debilitating dogma. Only the bold application of Marxism-Leninism to the new, concrete conditions can

assure the revolutionary forces the moral and political superiority over all other class forces in this complex juncture of the revolutionary struggle.

Whether the revolutionary movement can utilize the current negotiations to move the alignment of class forces to its advantage depends on the vanguard's fearless application of Marxism-Leninism. Assuming such a stand, the Communists have before them an opportunity — in the form of the peace negotiations — to use *compromise* as a powerful revolutionary weapon.

The sudden replacement of fascist rule by a bourgeois democratic regime altered overnight the political condition that had served to fuel the revolutionary process in the last 14 years. That popular power installed a liberal democratic regime at the helm of the neo-colonial state assures the new government's immediate popularity. To defend themselves against any future attempts by their most reactionary and backward siblings in the ruling elite, the ruling liberal democrats have proceeded to institutionalize anti-authoritarian measures. In recognition of their partnership with "people's power," the Aquino liberals have given formal recognition to the masses' aspirations for basic reforms and social justice while remaining cautiously vague on such explosive questions as national sovereignty and property rights. As the cornerstone of its rule, the popular Aquino government has dusted off bourgeois democracy's best but unrealizable promise: that the democratic republic will represent the interests of *all* classes equally; that there will be free competition of ideologies and political programs; that naked force will not be the main instrument of political rule, and so on and so forth. Installed by popular power, the Aquino liberals have given bourgeois democracy a new lease on life and postponed its long overdue obsolescence in the minds of the Filipino masses.

To the defeated fascists whose tentacles still extend to local power bases and the military establishment, the liberal democratic program is a proven formula for social chaos — an invitation to the Communists to subvert the ruling system from within. Alarmed by their class brothers' flirtation with populism and incensed at their own loss of power, the fascist remnants have not ceased their often violent opposition to the new liberal regime. Since the new regime was installed with the aid of a military mutiny, ultra-reactionaries were initially able to retain a foothold in the ruling coalition through the ambitious Enrile neo-fascist/military clique. To counter the Enrile threat, the Aquino liberals immediately developed an alliance



Ceasefire negotiators at a hug after the signing of the truce agreement

with the Ramos camp — pro-imperialist, anti-communist officials weaned on American bourgeois-democratic military ideals in which “professionalism” includes deference to the supremacy of civilian authority.

U.S. imperialism managed to cut its losses as liberal democracy was in the process of supplanting fascist rule, by cautiously and even grudgingly shifting its support to the ascendant liberal opposition to Marcos. But it did lose some ground as a result of its sponsorship of fascism. U.S. support for Marcos embittered the liberal wing of the ruling elite. Consequently, turning this wing into a docile extension of U.S. policy is no longer such a simple project. The ruptured traditional ties between U.S. imperialism and Philippine liberals, combined with the growth of the revolutionary Left's political influence during the Marcos years, led to the more visible rise of a left wing in liberal democracy: left-leaning social democrats and Christian democrats who are, broadly speaking, ideologically represented in key government posts by radical petit-bourgeois reformers imbued with nationalism

and populism. In addition, the popular summation of the defeat of fascism cast the U.S. as an opportunistic fair weather friend of the democratic forces. The new liberal rulers are aware therefore that blatant pro-Americanism or out-and-out puppetry is no longer considered a virtue by the broad masses.

This loss of ideological ground for the U.S. means its area of political maneuver in the immediate post-Marcos period is somewhat restricted. Imperialism, therefore, is very cautiously working at turning the new liberal democratic regime into its reserve by minimizing irritants while bolstering its leverage through economic, military and other forms of blandishment. While the U.S. has no choice but to tolerate the mildly independent postures of the Aquino regime, and even the participation of radical petit-bourgeois reformers in the government, it has also made its bottom line clear: an alliance between the Aquino liberals and the revolutionary Left is totally unacceptable.

With the Enrile clique as their spearhead, the diehard local reactionaries kept up a steady assault on the Aquino liberals with the ultimate aim of seizing power through a *coup d'état*. As expected, the Laurels, representing the right wing of liberal democracy, vacillated and entertained a possible alliance with the Enrile clique. But the center, represented by Aquino, held despite the escalating attacks, especially against the radical reformers in her cabinet. Hemmed in by a draft constitution that would deny him an early shot at the presidency as well as by the threat of persecution for crimes he committed during the Marcos years, Enrile made a desperate bid for power.

But Enrile failed to get imperialism's backing and, consequently, Ramos' support as well for his putschist enterprise. For U.S. imperialism, which was still painfully recovering from its Marcos fiasco, supporting the return of fascist rule so early in the game (and at the height of Aquino's popularity) was politically untenable. Without U.S. support, an “Enrile dictatorship” would have been a *lone venture* that led directly into a political crisis. The prospect of such “chaos” and the absence of U.S. support for Enrile swung the Ramos faction to Aquino's side. Thus, the democratic space has been prolonged but with an Aquino grown more dependent on the conservative Ramos military leadership. Enrile's fall also impressed upon the liberals imperialism's awesome leverage. While centrist and left-wing liberal democrats still cling to a mildly independent posture, the U.S. drive to turn post-Marcos liberal democracy into imperialism's reserve is gathering steam.

Meanwhile, the Communist Party has yet to qualitatively rebound from the loss of political momentum it suffered as a result of the boycott blunder. The boycott was the culmination of a failure to build a popular anti-fascist front or a broad popular democratic front that included the participation of sections of the big bourgeoisie. Such a front became a strategic necessity when the imposition of fascist rule in 1972 altered the alignment of class forces and fostered a split within

the ruling elite. The boycott finally ruptured whatever objective front relations existed between the Left and the liberal democratic forces. It caused the leadership of the broad anti-fascist movement to pass to the exclusive hands of the liberal democrats in the struggle's final moments. It also deprived the revolutionary Left of its rightful share of power and the capacity to influence the course of events from a position of political strength. Thus, while the revolutionary Left has retained its impressive independent strength nationwide, the organizationally weaker liberal democratic forces are the ones who control the commanding heights of the political terrain.

Towards A Refined Political Strategy

To regain the initiative over all other class forces, the Party must first of all enrich its understanding of the specific characteristics of the Philippine revolutionary process. To begin with, the class struggle in the Philippines, an oppressed nation, must always be placed in the framework of the national struggle against imperialism. For the whole stage of the struggle for national democracy, the revolutionaries must aim their main blow at imperialism and its most reactionary class allies. Using the principle of "uniting all that can be united" in the national struggle, Communists must always aim at the narrowest target. To paraphrase Lenin, differentiations must be made even among the strategic enemies of the revolution, and the slightest vacillation or the smallest rift among them must not be ignored but utilized to the advantage of the revolutionary forces.

It is in this light that we must examine the anti-fascist struggle as a specific feature of the national liberation movement against imperialism. Some national liberation movements took the form of the struggle against colonialism. Our present-day liberation struggle bears the stamp of the struggle against fascism (authoritarianism, militarism, etc.) as a form of neo-colonial rule. This is determined not only by political impulses coming from the domestic ruling classes but also by the options available to imperialism as its strategic crisis as an international system deepens.

In struggling against imperialist tactics, Communists must be aware that the imperialist bourgeoisie itself is not of one mind on the matter of counter-revolutionary methods. There are two trends in imperialist policy today: the repressive and the reformist. These present serious dangers especially in light of the fact that the two methods for implementing such tactics have become more refined and flexible in the course of imperialism's efforts to push back the world revolutionary process.¹ The two wings are united and pursue a common strategic aim — the preservation of imperialist domination. But there are distinctive and often serious differences over the best tactic to pursue. These two trends in tactics reflect two main wings of the imperialist bourgeoisie.

The more moderate or liberal wing tends towards more cautious tactics and has displayed preparedness to compromise in foreign policy and to use flanking maneuvers vis-a-vis the progressive movements internationally. The extreme right wing of the imperialist bourgeoisie, however, is more predisposed to openly aggressive policies, Cold War tactics and the brutal suppression of revolutionary and democratic movements.² To the liberal wing, fascism as an extension of foreign policy only hastens social polarization and unnecessarily broadens the class antagonisms in the neo-colonies to the point of alienating potential class allies. But the ultra-reactionaries contend that liberal democracy is too vulnerable to revolutionary challenges that the material conditions in the neo-colonies continually spawn. This dilemma between two tactics is part of imperialism's historic crisis. The two options available to it are *both* incapable of permanently overcoming the crisis in the neo-colonies. This predicament is what gives the revolutionary forces strategic superiority.

But the point in knowing the main trends in imperialist policy is to grasp that the resort to fascism and its sponsorship in the neo-colonies like the Philippines is a standing option of imperialism especially as liberal democracy proves unable to sustain class and social peace in the face of intensifying class struggle. It would be a mistake, for example, to conclude that since the Enrile clique has been ousted from their position in the government, fascism has ceased to be a danger to the people's movement. It would be a bigger mistake to conclude that the movement must now direct its main blow at the ruling liberal democrats because the latter are now in charge of the reactionary ruling system, and regardless of the *historically concrete* development of their current political motion. While the liberal democrats may be at the helm of the state, they are



not necessarily the extreme reactionaries in the context of the struggle against imperialism and for the consolidation of the anti-fascist victory. To paraphrase Lenin and Dmitrov, it is not a matter of indifference to the working class which particular wing of the bourgeoisie is in a dominant position. The working class movement must always direct its main blow at the extreme reactionaries.

The revolutionary movement must make a definite choice between fascism and bourgeois democracy. The rise of fascism would mean a setback for the revolutionary movement as it deprives the latter of large political arenas of struggle where the working class can train itself to supersede the bourgeoisie in preparation for seizing power and instituting its own rule. Fascism is a violent response to the political superiority of the proletariat and invariably forces the latter to extend this strength to military superiority as well. Bourgeois democracy has a formidable capacity to foster reformist illusions among the masses and rightist deviations among revolutionaries. However, it is much more preferable to fascism which imposes severe hardships on the masses through naked coercion and the abolition of even nominal political liberties. For the revolution, the condition of bourgeois democracy affords better opportunities for the organization and orchestration of the revolutionary struggle and the political training of the working class. Furthermore, the proletariat's struggle for democratic reforms and the expansion of democracy can weaken bourgeois democracy itself. Reform is not the absolute opposite of revolution; the line between them "is not something dead, but active and changing, and one must be able to define it in each particular case"³. The thesis, "the worst, the better," belittles the suffering of the masses under fascism and promotes an infantile and mechanical view of the revolutionary process.

In the context of the Philippines as a neo-colony, the struggle to expand the recently won "democratic space"

bumps up against the harsh material conditions, and the ideals of a full blown liberal democracy comes in conflict with the limitations imposed on it by national oppression. In addition, liberal democracy is ultimately no match to the political superiority of the Communist-led revolutionary and democratic forces. Eventually, in the face of a strong revolutionary and democratic movement, fascism again becomes an option even for the more conservative sections of liberal democracy. But the more moderate and progressive section can be split away from fascism and turned into reserves of the proletariat under the premise that democracy, in its more popular form, is possible as a joint undertaking of democratic and patriotic forces. Thus, while the impulse towards fascism is ever present, its victory is not inevitable. By uniting all that can be united against the ultra-reactionaries, the proletariat can acquire the political superiority that can neutralize, render ineffective, or defeat the enemy's vastly superior capacity for ruling class violence. The ability to frustrate the rise of fascism and keep it from consolidating a base in the military, fundamentalist religious sectors and comprador and landlord elements would be to *deprive imperialism of its most dangerous option*, its ultimate fall-back position short of direct military occupation.

Popular Democracy as a Substage

The need for a popular anti-fascist front or a popular democratic front first became evident with the rise of Marcos militarism in the mid-60s and became absolutely necessary with the imposition of fascist rule in 1972. Imperialist-instigated fascism came in contradiction with the broadest number of people from the various classes, including sections of the oligarchy. The fascist imposition objectively called for a refinement of the political strategy for the national democratic revolution.

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Exultant NPA guerrillas display their weapons.



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Loyalist soldier flashes the "V" sign.

To align the most that could be aligned against the narrowest target, a broad anti-fascist front was necessary whose goal was the overthrow of fascism through *all possible means* and the establishment of a popular democratic government of broad popular participation. Pluralism was to be the essential political character of the new regime wherein all the anti-fascist class parties and their differing strategic programs could *peacefully* compete for state power or coalesce on the basis of common programs. Only those who refuse to abide by the people's mandate and try to subvert it by force would be excluded from the political process and suppressed *by force* by the popular democratic state using a standing army that has been reoriented, reorganized and to which the people's revolutionary army has been integrated. Compromise was the necessary glue for such a front, where the revolutionary forces could take the interest of the non-revolutionary class forces to heart without sacrificing strategic goals and only for the price of a necessary detour or zigzag in the revolutionary process. *History necessitated* that the struggle against fascism and for a popular democratic government be pursued as a *substage* in the national democratic struggle -- a *transition form* that gave the worker-peasant alliance the best opportunity to use the broadest reserves against fascism and imperialist intervention and the best condition to struggle -- through democratic and generally peaceful means -- for eventual political dominance which in turn is the basis to proceed step-by-step to socialist transformation.

But because the anti-fascist popular front included non-proletarian and bourgeois (even oligarchical) class forces, it would have been unstable and endangered by the vacillations of the non-revolutionary forces. Therefore, there was the necessity to simultaneously forge an anti-imperialist revolutionary front composed of Communists, revolutionary nationalists, anti-feudal forces, left-wing social democrats and similar trends. This united front was necessary to link, through independent initiative, the anti-fascist struggle to the anti-imper-

ialist and peasant struggles and to check the vacillations, duplicity, etc., of the non-revolutionary and conservative forces in the popular front. The revolutionary united front needed to struggle -- through meritorious practice -- for the leadership of the popular front. But ultimately, the stability of these overlapping but distinct fronts depended upon Communist leadership at the core. Thus, there was also a need to struggle for the political and ideological unity of all Communists, including Marxist formations outside the Party, with the goal of uniting Communists in the immediate task of leading both the popular and national democratic forces, independently winning adherents to socialism as a long-term program and forging a single, united leadership of the proletariat.

Obviously, these components of a political strategy can be discussed much easier in hindsight. The Party was not able to advance these as conscious policies that gave the revolutionary forces the power of orientation. But it is also true that the Party *operatively* adopted in varying degrees of stress some of these components. Thus, to the extent that the Party *operatively* placed emphasis on the anti-fascist struggle, the growth of its broad base of support was tremendous. In addition, armed resistance as the backbone of the opposition to fascism was indeed a form most appropriate to the condition of fascist rule. All these gains, however, only underscore the maximum power the Party could have potentially amassed had it consciously and boldly refined its strategy to conform to the new historical development which was the imposition of fascism.

This refined strategy, however, has not lost its significance simply because fascism has been overthrown and the bourgeois democratic opposition, instead of the popular democratic front, has taken power. The new government is not a popular democratic one. The ruling liberal democrats refuse to coalesce with the revolutionary forces and the *minimum* requirement, i.e., the integration of revolutionary forces in a pluralistic political process, has not come about. But the

struggle for a popular democratic government -- minimally for the integration of the revolutionary forces as legitimate political forces, in the post-fascist political process and maximally for a democratic sharing of power -- is still the best transition form that allows revolutionary forces to consolidate the victory against fascism, frustrate imperialism's attempts to transform non-revolutionary class forces into its reserve, take advantage of the losses it had incurred for having sponsored fascism, and step-by-step struggle for the dominance of the worker-peasant alliance. It is still the best method for directing the main blow against imperialism and its most reactionary class allies and for uniting the most that can be united against these targets. Essentially, this struggle demands the *continuity* of the popular front that operatively existed against fascism despite bourgeois democratic hesitations to pursue that front's essential logic: the formation of a popular democratic state. It is a demand that the most reactionary wing of imperialism and the most diehard local reactionaries will violently oppose.

In pursuing this strategy, however, the Communist Party must come to terms with its responsibility in the failure to forge the popular front and for abdicating the leadership of the broad anti-fascist movement in its final hours. Concretely, as a result of these errors, the revolutionary forces are now in a position of political weakness vis-a-vis the liberal democrats who can politically justify their refusal to share power. To be effective, a Party's tactics must be flexible and attuned to any change in conditions. The art of political leadership, according to Lenin, consists in being able to maneuver and make compromises and not only to advance but to retreat in complete order before superior adversaries when necessary. He systematically exposed those "revolutionaries" who refuse to understand that in certain conditions, a retreat may be necessary.⁴

Therefore, from a position of weakness, the revolutionary forces at this time must demand democratic reforms, particularly the institution of a democratic, pluralistic political system, the political integration of revolutionary forces and a *steadfast* policy *against* any force who would sabotage or destabilize efforts to that end. The revolutionary Left must await more favorable circumstances to press the issue of power sharing. On the basis of this minimum demand, the *Party can mobilize* the broadest popular democratic movement which will come in conflict with fascist destabilization, imperialist interference and liberal vacillations about giving "an opening to the Left". It is also *necessary* to win over democratic elements in the military establishment to this movement for peace, pluralism and democratic reforms. The possibility exists that the Aquino liberals, particularly the radical reformers and Aquino herself, would be agreeable to this "historic compromise". To refuse it could be to their political disadvantage.

Simultaneously, anti-imperialist and revolutionary forces must be united and mobilized to lead mass movements for social and economic reforms along the national democratic



perspective, support government policies that veer towards that direction but oppose and expose anti-national and anti-democratic policies or vacillations. At the very onset, therefore, the political superiority of the independent national democratic program can begin to be established. Necessarily, the Communist Party must struggle with other communist formations, no matter how small, for a unified proletarian leadership of these broad fronts and movements.

For an Abrupt Shift to Other Forms of Struggle

In order to implement this political strategy, however, the Party must determine the form of struggle most appropriate to the prevailing conditions. Lenin advised the international Communist movement "to master *all* forms of struggle or aspects of social activity without exception."⁵ If all methods of struggle are not mastered, certain changes in the situation which bring about the need for new forms of activity may lead to a major defeat. The Communist Parties, Lenin advised, must be prepared for the "*brusque* replacement of one form by another."⁶ In this regard, the abrupt change in the dominant classes' method of rule must be seriously taken into account. Abruptly, their method of rule has shifted to primarily ideological means — to the reinstatement of bourgeois democracy and reforms as a means of insuring social peace and economic development along a capitalist path. The task of Communists is to convince the masses through their *own direct political experience*, the obsolescence of bourgeois democracy, and its inability to achieve national and social liberation.

For the new political condition, i.e., rule by the dominant classes through primarily ideological means, the armed form of struggle is *not* the most appropriate form. The party must shift abruptly to the unarmed form of political struggle as the means to develop a popular democratic front and to independently promote the revolutionary national democratic alternative before the masses. Through the political struggle to extend and expand democracy, the masses must be taught through their own experience that, while the imperialists and the fascists are the main obstacles to democracy and independence, the anti-fascist liberal democrats *by themselves* are not capable of leading the nation to national and social emancipation. However, the shift to the unarmed form of struggle will not mean the lessening of the class struggle. On the contrary, *class struggle will intensify* as the ultra-reactionaries, both foreign and domestic, perceive the threat poised by the legitimation of the politically superior revolutionary forces. Hence, while shifting to the unarmed form, the revolutionary forces must maintain the capacity to quickly shift to the armed form of struggle.

Given the particular training of the Philippine Communist movement, its Maoist beginnings, and the real need to master armed struggle under fascism, it is important to clarify certain



misconceptions about forms of struggle and their relationship to the question of political power.

"In the first place," Lenin wrote, "Marxism differs from all primitive forms of socialism by not binding the movement to any one particular form of struggle. It recognizes the most varied forms . . . Marxism, therefore, positively does not reject any form of struggle . . . In the second place, Marxism demands an absolutely *historical* examination of the question of forms of struggle."⁷ In other words, there is no such thing as a generally superior or inferior form of struggle. A particular form is "superior" or more appropriate relative to certain existing conditions, which may also change. The founders of Marxism-Leninism also never dismissed the historical possibility of an unarmed taking of power, given certain developments in the world revolutionary process and nationally specific conditions. (Said Lenin: "The working class would, of course, prefer to take power peacefully."⁸) However, both Marx and Lenin, taking a historically concrete approach, believed that armed seizure of power is the most probable and possible for the working class.⁹ It does not follow, however, that the revolutionary movement must bind itself to principally the armed form. What it must grasp is that for the *forcible* seizure of power, all forms must be used, one form superseding the other according to changes in concrete conditions, and that the unarmed and armed forms are *not* absolute opposites, that they are interconnected, often replacing each other, or growing one into the other.¹⁰

While the CPP may shift to the unarmed form and hold the armed form in abeyance (in accordance with the sudden shift from fascism to a popularly installed liberal democratic regime), it must not forget that the Philippine revolution, due to the ruling classes' armed capacity and willingness to use class violence, will not be a peaceful one. Hence, the shift to the peaceful form is a means to educate the masses, through their own direct political experience, of the necessity to ultimately seize revolutionary power by force.

Political Negotiations

In the struggle for popular democracy as a substage in the national democratic struggle, the negotiation for ceasefire and political settlement is the *key* tactic. However, it is not the sole arena of struggle. In fact, care must be taken that this tactic be flanked by broad popular movements for democratic peace and democratic reforms and mass movements amplifying national democratic lines on burning political, economic, social and cultural questions facing the nation. It would be a mistake to collapse all propaganda in this one arena of political struggle. However, the negotiations are key as they are the *direct means* by which the revolutionary forces and the ruling liberal democrats will define their relationship as class forces. It is absolutely necessary that the struggle for popular democracy frame the Communists' and the revolutionary

forces' approach to the political negotiations and determine the content of the political settlement.

Below is a specific proposal on how to approach the political negotiations. This proposal incorporates and summarizes the strategy and tactics advanced by this paper.

An Alternative Approach to the Peace Negotiations

The Filipino masses want peace, and they also want social justice. According to the liberal democratic Aquino government, both can be achieved *if only it would be given a chance* to reconstruct a democratic republic which would represent the interests of all classes equally, and accommodate contending visions of social progress within the framework of national reconciliation and non-authoritarianism. Following this framework, its peace proposals boil down to this challenge to the revolutionary Left: "Now that the common enemy has been vanquished, lay down your arms and integrate into the pluralistic process wherein you can join freely in the peaceful competition for power — take this option or be known as the enemy of peace and democracy."

The Aquino government believes it has nothing to lose and everything to gain with this proposal. It can be granted that the pillars of liberal democracy sincerely believe in the superiority of bourgeois democracy as an ideology and political form that they do not fear the impact of the integration of a revolutionary challenge in their own processes. To be more cynical about it, this proposal is also meant as a counter-revolutionary method.

The diehard domestic reactionaries — fascists and neo-fascists alike — view the liberal democratic proposal with both contempt and horror. They are violently opposed to the "openings to the Left" that the proposal for pluralism offers, and have made this opposition the cornerstone of their campaign for destabilization. Even the presence of radical reformers (the left wing of liberal democracy) in the government is unacceptable to this recently deposed section of the ruling elite.

The most reactionary wing of the U.S. imperialist bourgeoisie also opposes the inclusion of the revolutionary Left in the political process and would like to see it decimated through principally military means. The liberal wing of the U.S. bourgeoisie, however, believes that the Aquino proposal is a more effective method of counter-insurgency.

To gain moral superiority and political initiative over all other class forces, the revolutionary movement must recognize that a sudden shift in the political situation has taken place with the replacement of the fascist regime with a popularly installed liberal democratic government. Accordingly, the revolutionary movement must shift abruptly to another form of struggle appropriate to the changed situation. It must shift to the unarmed form of political struggle without discarding

the capacity to shift to the armed form when dictated by dramatic changes in the political situation.

Specifically, the revolutionary movement must boldly take on the liberal democratic regime's challenge and accept its offer of integration in a pluralistic political process. *But it must not surrender its arms.* It should reach a compromise with the Aquino government on this basis, such compromise constituting the content of the political settlement.

With regards the capacity to shift to the armed form, the revolutionaries must give stress to the development of the insurrectionary aspects of the military strategy, and discreetly prepare the political and organizational grounds (e.g., mass movements, etc.) for the possibility of quick implementation. Ground must also be prepared for the flexible use of rural bases for insurrectionary advance or orderly retreat.

Politically, the NDF should adopt *essentially* the following position:

"A just and lasting peace is only possible with the resolution of the Filipino people's fundamental problems. We are confident that our (the NDF's) revolutionary program is the best answer to these problems. We are willing to cooperate with the Aquino government on any aspect of this program that it, too, believes is necessary for our people's welfare. However, we realize that the NDF must continue to fight for these radical solutions to our nation's problems. In the interest of bolstering our people's victory against fascism, and in the interest of peace and national reconciliation, the NDF is more than willing to pursue this struggle in a peaceful manner, within a pluralistic political arena where it can contend with other political parties in a peaceful competition for power.

"However, we must remind the Aquino government and our people that the revolutionary movement in the Philippines has always been suppressed by unjust and anti-democratic laws and through systematic and violent attacks by the government's institutions. The landlord and other propertied classes have always been given a free hand to commit violence against revolutionaries and the Armed Forces of the Philippines have always been armed with an orientation hostile to Communists and other revolutionaries. In other words, we have always been given no other choice but to pursue our goals through the only available means.

"Thus, while the NDF and its member organizations are willing to cease the practice of armed struggle, the Aquino government must give us concrete guarantees that all efforts of any government institution to harass, suppress and delegitimize our movement will be stopped; that we will be given equal protection under the law to propagate our views and our program; that we will not be denied our electoral victories and that no extralegal efforts will be used to prevent us from implementing our programs from legitimately acquired positions in the government.

"While the NDF is willing to cease the practice of armed struggle, the Aquino government must allow us to keep our arms which we will not use for political purposes but simply for self-defense. If it wants to resolve the 'issue of arms' the government must first show the political will to dismantle all private armies and the CHDF. It must concretely show its willingness to purge the military of bandit elements and reorient it away from virulent anti-communism and towards a constitutionalist and pluralistic outlook. Thus, the 'laying

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An NDF Conference: "nothing to lose . . . by taking on the liberal democratic challenge of peaceful competition."

down of arms' must be seen as part of the effort to rectify the state's aversion to pluralism, an effort that must include a guarantee of the aggrieved victim's physical survival."

Such an approach to the post-Marcos period and such a proposal for political settlement will provoke a visible alignment of class forces. The right wing of the U.S. imperialist bourgeoisie and the diehard domestic reactionaries, including those in the military, will stand opposed to pluralism and the legitimate integration of the revolutionary forces in the Republic's political process. Such a stand exposes them as anti-democratic and anti-peace. Meanwhile, the ruling liberal democrats will no longer have the monopoly of the high moral and political ground which it must now share with the other staunch advocate of peace and pluralism: the National Democratic Front.

If the NDF adopts such an approach to the political negotiations, it will exacerbate the divisions within the imperialist ruling circle or the clash between the right wing and the liberal wing over the best method of counterrevolution. It sets the ground for the exposure of imperialist intervention especially as the Reaganites move to strengthen the domestic fascists or directly attempt to sabotage the liberal democratic-NDF efforts for peace and pluralism. Such an approach will test the limits of the current military leaders' avowed commitment to professionalism and constitutionalism, and has the potential of encouraging the rise of democratic elements in the military and splitting them from the diehard reactionaries. It will force the liberal democratic Aquino government to stand by its promise of pluralism in the face of right wing threats and opposition, or be exposed as wavering and hypocritical. In other words, the NDF gains the political initiative over all other class forces, and in the eyes of the people it has the most reasonable and unassailable position which only those who are against peace and pluralism cannot accept.

Class struggle will intensify – not diminish – as the revolutionary forces attempt to shift to the peaceful form of political struggle. Should the Aquino government back out of its offer the NDF will have every reasonable ground, in the eyes of the public, to continue with the only means it is allowed to use – armed struggle. Should the government stand by its offer, the entire process can be characterized as a very prolonged and tense ceasefire, with the NDF on constant alert for a possible shift to the armed form. The process will be marked by polarizations. Most likely, threats of imperialist and right wing destabilization and *coups* will emerge on a number of instances: 1) as the Aquino government and the revolutionary forces come near or actually strike up a compromise; 2) as the revolutionary Left gains in the electoral process; or 3) when the Left actually gains control of the government and proceeds to implement its revolutionary program. At each instance, the people in their millions have the basis to learn through their direct experience that extraordinary measures must be taken against the violent threats and attacks on their

desire for peace, pluralism and social justice. Each instance presents the possibility of leading the people (including, at least, the left wing of liberal democracy) in insurrectionary activity in defense of the present liberal democratic government and towards a popular democratic state, or in defense of the gains of the revolutionary forces, depending on the circumstances.

By taking on the liberal democratic challenge of peaceful competition, the revolutionary forces will have nothing to lose (assuming a preserved ability to shift to a non-peaceful form of struggle). Regardless of whether the liberal democrats are sincere or not, the revolutionary Left can gain the political initiative. Even if the liberal democratic proposal is meant only as a counterrevolutionary measure, the Left's acceptance of the challenge can turn this weapon against its wielders. By accepting the challenge, the revolutionary Left can drive wedges between the U.S. imperialists and Filipino liberal democrats, and between fascists and liberal democrats – wedges that can constitute important reserves for the revolutionary forces. Should by some "miracle," the Philippine revolutionary process advance through a pluralistic and peaceful manner, well and good. But most likely, the most reactionary sections of the ruling elite, aided by imperialism will violently resist the possibility. Hence, the revolutionary forces' shift to the peaceful form, its acceptance of the liberal democratic proposal, is the best weapon for laying the unassailable moral and political basis for a non-peaceful seizure of political power.

This orientation to the post-Marcos period and to the peace negotiations constitutes an attempt to apply to concrete Philippine conditions two universal lessons of Marxism-Leninism: 1) when the political conditions change abruptly, the revolutionary forces must be prepared for a brusque shift to a new form of struggle, and 2) peaceful and non-peaceful forms of struggle are not absolute opposites – one form flows from the other in a dialectical fashion. (17 January 1987) **K**

NOTES

¹ V.V. Zagladin (editor), *The World Communist Movement: Outline of Strategy and Tactics* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), p. 49.

² *Ibid*, pp. 49-50.

³ V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works (CW)*, Vol. 17, p. 116.

⁴ Zagladin, p. 42.

⁵ Lenin, *CW*, Vol 9, p. 19.

⁶ Lenin, *CW*, Vol. 31, p. 96.

⁷ Lenin, *CW*, Vol. 27, p. 343.

⁸ Lenin, *CW*, Vol. 4, p. 276.

⁹ Zagladin, p. 142.

¹⁰ *Op. Cit.*, p. 65.