

Gringo's Deadly Adventure

BISIG (Union for the Development of Socialist Theory and Practice) Statement on the August 28 Coup Attempt

As a socialist organization committed to democratic processes, BISIG condemns the coup attempt by the ultra-Rightist gang of Mr. Gregorio Honasan (alias "Gringo"). Despite the current civilian leadership's conservatism and indecisiveness in instituting basic changes, BISIG maintains that a bourgeois democratic regime is a hundred times preferable to a military dictatorship. BISIG therefore expresses support for the civilian administration of President Corazon Aquino in this crisis and declares its readiness to unite with other democratic forces in a demonstration of people's power.

The military uprising on 28 August 1987 confirms BISIG's analysis that the ultra-Right is the main and immediate threat to democracy in our country today. The ultra-Right, backed by U.S. imperialism, can never be comfortable in a situation where it must compete with the Left in the free market of ideas.

What is most alarming in the 28 August attempted coup is the extent to which Gringo's evil influence has evidently penetrated the AFP, apparently without the foreknowledge of civilian authorities. The full extent of that evil influence is not yet known, but the number of participants in the attempted coup is enough to put the entire AFP under the cloud of doubt. How many more conspirators were just waiting for Gringo's orders? Only in the next phase of his diabolical scheme will they be asked to disclose their true loyalty.

In a coup d'etat, a striking force smaller than what Gringo deployed is enough to seize political power, provided the rest of the armed forces stay neutral. How many stayed neutral last Friday? The number must have been considerable, which is why Gen. Ramos could not begin the siege of Camp Aguinaldo until 3 p.m. Why did it take hours to reinforce the beleaguered Malacañang guards? Or to beef up the desperate security contingent at Channel 4? What happened to the vaunted quick reaction teams of the Army and PC? With so many troops in Metro Manila and surrounding provinces, why was it necessary to import troops from far-away Zamboanga? why make do with vintage aircraft and Huey choppers? where were the Sikorsky helicopter gunships that played a heroic role in February 1986? and the fighter planes Marcos used to display in the Independence Day parades?

Neutrality is just a step to defection. Gringo was clearly

hoping for more defections in Metro Manila and reinforcements from the field. It appears that democracy was saved because the fence-sitters did not defect in time, and communication problems prevented the arrival of reinforcements during the few hours his men controlled the Villamor Air Base and the airport.

Gringo executed a tactical retreat. So did hundreds of hardcore mutineers. But their threat prevails. They have the capability to strike again or shift to guerrilla warfare. Either way, the civilian government remains vulnerable. It is therefore irresponsible to promote complacency by deluding people that "everything is completely under control."

We call on President Aquino to dismiss her economic advisers who suggested the oil price hike. This unpopular decision nearly led the nation to disaster as it provided the precise opening Gringo must have awaited all these months. She should also dismiss her political advisers who told people to stay at home and leave the defense of democracy to the armed forces. The same advisers instructed Jingo Alcuaz to keep the people in the dark by closing down the broadcast media, including DZRH. These gentlemen lack faith in *people's power - the force that installed her in office and the only reliable force for democracy in the Philippines today.*

We urge President Aquino to call for another massive display of people's power in order to show the wavering troops (those who stayed neutral at the critical moment) as well as Gringo's reserves that if they persist in their foolishness, they may steal the symbols of authority but they will not be able to govern. Let us remind these rascals of the lesson of February: *When besieged by an enraged but disciplined multitude, their soldiers will not obey orders to open fire.*

We urge our brother soldiers to use their brains, to think for themselves. Disobedience of illegitimate authority is heroic. Officers who follow a scalawag like Gringo Honasan forfeit their right to lead.

We urge other cause-oriented organizations in the broad democratic movement to unite behind the civilian government. We are outraged by its recent policies or lack of policies. Nonetheless we must come to its defense against the fascist menace. Should the Aquino administration fall at this particular historical juncture, the alternative can only be a military dictatorship.