

Democracy and the Philippine Left

Olle Tornquist

"God, we missed out again!"¹

-- Fr. Edicio de la Torre, upon being released from prison, and disappointed over the non-participation of the national democrats in the events of February 1986.

For many decades one of the most important political theses in the Third World prescribed communist-guided political struggles in order to implement bourgeois revolutionary changes similar to the historical ones in Europe. Independent nation states should be created and foster agrarian reform as well as industrial development. However, at least from the mid-sixties and onwards, this thesis was losing ground in Asia. The Indonesian communists were massacred. The Vietnamese did win, but most of the other similar movements were forced to retreat. During the late seventies and early eighties, the Philippines was actually one of the few countries in Asia where the revolutionary Left still expanded.

The so-called "national democratic" movement ("democratic" in the sense of being anti-feudal) constituted the main force. It was led by a similarly labelled clandestine front, a new Maoist-oriented Communist Party, and its rural-based New People's Army. [2] The immediate target was the authoritarian and increasingly despotic regime of President Marcos whose base was identified as imperialism and semi-feudalism. In 1983, the economic and political crisis of Marcos's state-led development was accentuated with the assassination of the liberal ex-Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr., Marcos's chief political opponent among the "middle forces." Many analysts spoke of an emerging revolutionary situation.

Were these expanding "national democrats" about to show that the defeats of similar aspirations elsewhere in Asia were not caused by basic inadequacies of mainstream Marxism but were related to "revisionism" and clumsy implementation, since it seemed possible to solve the problems by learning instead from Mao and the insurrections in Latin America? Or was the Philippines an exception proving

the rule? Drawing on studies of the problems of the Left in Indonesia, and on initial comparisons with India, I was at this time personally inclined to think that the Philippines I was told about had only fallen behind -- and that the radical opposition was already about to miss the train by boycotting the 1984 elections which was then on its agenda. [3]

The train did not depart in 1984. Instead, a little more than one and a half year later, when President Marcos had to call for snap elections to ascertain his mandate, the strong and still expanding national democratic movement ran into a blind alley by calling for another boycott of what was bound to be another sham election, after which people were expected to realize that outright revolutionary struggle was the only real alternative. [4] Most people and cause-oriented groups instead rallied behind Mrs. Aquino in a massive attempt to win the elections. And when Marcos's manipulations and weakness became all too obvious in February 1986, the combined effect of vacillating US support for the regime, defections within the military leadership, interventions of Cardinal Sin to create a miracle, and huge popular manifestations made Manila, among other places, almost ungovernable. Marcos had to flee the country. While the national democratic movement seemed almost irrelevant, other sections of the radical Left were unable to step into his shoes of power.

A few months later even the national democratic hardliners had to admit that their boycott decision had been at least a "major tactical blunder," while many others within the radical Left claimed that it was only the tip of the iceberg which indicated more fundamental problems in the predominant communist interpretations of Marxism.

The Left taken by surprise

A full explanation of why the Left lost the initiative in 1986 is of course beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, what I might be able to contribute is a study -- based on my previous



Missing out: A solitary BAYAN banner flutters unnoticed near a lamppost amidst the throng of EDSA 1986

comparative studies of problems in applying Marxism in Indonesia and India, and talks with Filipino Marxists -- on why it was difficult to foresee with the use of radical Left analysis the rise of new essential contradictions, and to give priority to the issues related to political democracy which became so essential in early 1986. [6] The answer to this question may be self-evident for those who maintain that communists stand rooted to their analyses of socio-economic structures, programmatically neglect the issue of democracy, and cannot be expected to pay any interest in, or say anything enlightening about the state, government, and concrete politics. However, the Philippine national democrats did not abstain from political studies. They were often adept at concrete analyses of the political arena, tactics, manipulation, the possibilities of forming al-

liances, etc., and of adapting to the specificities of different localities.

The question may also seem unfair, since few if any of the well-known actors involved fared much better in terms of actually predicting the growing importance of the struggle for democracy in general and the "EDSA Revolution" in particular. But at the same time, one should not forget, for instance, that the decisive boycott decision in the CPP Executive Committee was passed by a margin of only one vote. [7] And there were rather influential sections within the radical Left, including among the national democrats, who for many years had produced alternative perspectives.

It should therefore be fruitful to explore why it was difficult for various sections of the radical Left, including those who were critical

of the boycott decision, to carry out materialist analyses towards a more fruitful and convincing understanding of political transformation in general and, in this case, of the growing importance of the struggle for political democracy, within the framework of their basic theses. It is of course also interesting to see if they have been able to do better since then.

Features of democracy

Optimum democracy may be conceptualized in terms of the actual capacity of the adult citizens to exercise in various forms equal and effective rule, over resources which they hold in common without undermining the absolutely necessary prerequisites for this rule.

First, the features which are specially important in a discussion about Communists and democracy in the Philippines include, what I mean by "the actual capacity" of the citizens, namely the absolutely necessary prerequisites for democratic rule. These include the usual basic rights to organize and express opinion, the existence of clean elections, etc. and also such a degree of autonomy that the citizens are genuinely capable of, for example, casting their vote in accordance with their opinion without having to adjust to the wishes of landlords, the armed forces, certain candidates with their totally dominant propaganda, or even an intervening foreign government.

Second, the notion of "citizen" indicate also that we address the governance of a country. We should also consider that the idea of a nation-state is definitely no problem for the radical Left. It is worthwhile to pay some interest to different views on the importance of government at various levels, including the very local tiers.

Third, the ways in which the radical Left approached questions related to the "exercise" of democratic rule "in various forms" should also be observed. How were, for instance, people's participation, including co-operative efforts, in addition to representation, and the electoral and party system perceived?

Fourth, "equal effective rule" naturally had to do with the principle of one man one vote, which as such does not seem to have been a problem for the radical Left. Various views on efficiency problems, the capacity to imple-

ment what is decided, may, however, be identified.

A fifth and most important aspect is to what extent the "resources which they (the citizens) hold in common" are addressed by the radical Left. This has to do with the extension of democracy. Radicals are usually eager to stress that under so-called bourgeois democracy many of the resources are excluded and governed by private owners, and that one can only, at best, talk about equal rule of some few political institutions with few resources at their command. Optimum democracy would rather imply that democratic rule is extended to the resources which are held in common within, for instance, trade and production. [8] But to what extent are many resources already formally publicly controlled and regulated? To what extent are they non-democratically governed, and what is the importance of various ways of monopolising them?

Sixth, radical Left views on what democracy is used for should also be considered. The phrase "without undermining the absolutely necessary prerequisites for this rule" indicates, for instance, that the contents of a decision to discriminate against certain citizens or limit the right to vote would be undemocratic, but not necessarily a decision to, for instance, hold down people's wages.

In addition to this, the more or less democratic character of various movements' policies must be examined. My basic materialist assumption is that the best way to demonstrate if, for instance, demands for certain democratic rights are genuine or "purely tactical," is to study if the movement finds it necessary to apply them in order to reach other basic aims such as, for instance, land to the tiller or better living conditions for the laborers. In other words, many actors may maintain that democracy is important as such, but their reliability may be doubted as long as it cannot be substantiated that basic democratic aims and means are instrumental for their long term goals.

How, then, were these six aspects of democracy approached within the important over-all analyses and strategies of the radical Left, and how credible were various claims to democratization?

The Mainstream "National Democrats"

Background and basic theses

Most of the movements in Asia with a "national democratic" orientation grew out of the anti-colonial struggle, as for instance in China, Vietnam and Indonesia. The movement in the Philippines, however, is mainly a product of student activists who turned against a "revisionist" old party during a period of revolutionary optimism in the late sixties and early seventies, and managed to include some remnants of the old peasant-based national liberation army. Thus, even though the third largest Communist Party in the world, the PKI in Indonesia, had just failed miserably and was almost eliminated, and the old Philippine Communist Party was on the retreat, students in Manila had instead become increasingly radical. It is illustrative that Jose Maria "Joma" Sison, one of the most important student leaders in the Philippines, was the one responsible for the contacts with Jakarta, communicating mainly with those who had tried to introduce Maoist ideas. [9]

Moreover, as the Vietnamese revolution advanced and the Great Chinese Cultural Revolution was at its peak, Sison did very much the same as Jusuf Adjitorop, a member of the former Indonesian politburo and later on head of a delegation to China. They both employed old radical Maoist writings as blueprints when interpreting the historical development of their countries, reviewing previous communist policies, and outlining new political strategies. [10]

From this point of view, the old PKP had betrayed the national and democratic revolution, especially through its downgrading of the struggle against so-called semi-feudalism in the rural areas. This had paved the way for compromises with the regime and attempts to grab power which were not based on the mobilization of the majority of the population, the peasants. [11]

While most Communists maintained that the Philippines was not yet fully independent and liberated from imperialism, a main difference was that Sison, et. al. were most eager to uphold the thesis that the power of the imperialists, the so-called compradors, and the bureaucrat-capitalist, rested with the landlords.

[12] Neither the so-called national bourgeois forces [13] nor the small working class was strong enough to confront these enemies. Any consistent attempt to promote real social change must instead be built on the contradiction between the landlords and the most numerous subordinated class in the country, the peasantry. Those with good reasons to oppose imperialism, semi-feudalism, etc., could and would then rally behind a broad national democratic front. They could stage almost all forms of struggle, be it legal or illegal -- as long as they served the interest of the national democratic cause. [14] But since a prerequisite for the most basic exploitation -- the semi-feudal relationship -- was private monopoly of land and the use of extra-economic force against poor peasants, the peasants had to resist this repression and enforce land reform through armed struggle. A properly led peasant-based guerilla movement would be able to initiate a prolonged people's war, liberate various areas, [15] and finally, encircle the comprador and bureaucrat-capitalist puppets in the cities. [16]

Moreover, those who rallied behind the broad front were assumed to be interested in anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism, but their positions, as well as that of the peasants', were often vulnerable, making them potentially sensitive to compromises. It was therefore necessary that the project as a whole be led by a party with a program that was based on the working class, since the working class interests could only be firmly approached after a consistent national democratic revolution. [17] Accordingly, Joma Sison and a handful of associates set out to found the new Communist Party of the Philippines in early 1969.

Thereafter, the young urban activists had to found or find a guerilla army to lead. They themselves were approached by an equally young commander with the name of Bernabe "Dante" Buscayno, an unusually well-educated son of a poor revolutionary tenant in Tarlac, Central Luzon. Dante was virtually born into the old Huk guerilla movement, which fought feudal oppressors, the Japanese occupying force, and US-created puppet governments. He had become commander, responsible for education, then finally broke away from the increasingly corrupt Huk leadership. Dante and his group were thus not only experienced armed peasants, but also politically conscious revolutionaries with firm roots in the struggle

for national liberation. They did not look for enlightened leaders but for alliances with workers, students and progressive liberals such as Benigno Aquino. [18]

Dante's group was transformed into the New People's Army in late March 1969. Dante also became a member of the highest organs of the new party. But during the following six year period he worked mainly in the mountain ranges, educating and organizing guerilla fronts all over the country -- while Joma Sison was charged with the central ideological leadership on the basis of the theses outlined above. In 1976 Dante was arrested, followed by Sison in 1977. But the movements that they had created were solid enough to not only survive, but also to expand swiftly during the increasingly despotic Marcos regime.

It is not difficult to understand that differences in the background, experiences, and perspectives of these two leaders created some personal and political friction. [19] The "intellectual leader" was in favor of a "limited boycott" in 1986 and still holds on to Mao's ideas of an anti-feudal peasant uprising [20], while the "armed peasant-leader" propagated "critical participation" and for sometime has made use of the new "democratic space" to organize peasants and a most successful cooperative against the onslaught of capitalism. [21]

Democracy of minor importance

I shall now argue that while this background and these basic theses, which were still being applied in the mid-eighties, did not prevent the national democrats from applauding the increasingly widespread opposition to Marcos, it was quite natural for them to reject this opposition's preoccupation with peaceful democratic means, and to instead suggest boycott. [22]

According to the national democratic theses, democratic methods of changing the society were untenable since not even the minimum prerequisites for a democratic process were present. Most basic rights to organize and express opinion were lacking. Elections were not clean and the propaganda resources were extremely unevenly distributed. Feudal remnants in particular prevented the majority of the citizens from casting their vote according to their real opinion. Washington

would never in any case accept that progressive forces made substantial gains in the Philippines. All these preconditions for democracy must be fought for by confronting the ruling classes -- before democratic means could be relied upon. There was thus even no need to talk about issues such as the overwhelming problems that any progressive government would have in implementing its policies.

In a way Sison has summarized all these by saying that "we could invite the others for elections in our liberated areas and then see who would win." [23] At the same time, however, he did of course open up to questions as to whether there would be minimum democratic prerequisites also for "the others" in these areas. And even if the national democrats were eager to demand, for instance, basic civil and political rights, and as such presumably appreciated them, the actual implementation of these rights in order to reach long term goals were, as we know, not instrumental within the framework of their strategy of armed struggle. Moreover, the explicit theses about the need for enlightened leadership based on the national democratic program implied that democratic rights and rule often did not make sense for the movement itself. The limits of internal democracy is a history in itself. There has not even been a second congress of the party. [24] But also most attempts at building various front organizations and coalitions have failed because it was basic for the national democrats to lead them. [25]

Finally, in addition to what we have already said about the national democrats being reluctant to employ democratic means against the Marcos regime, it also followed from their theses that it was either unfruitful or simply not especially important to emphasize struggle for democratic rule. There were two main reasons for this.

First, if one wants to get rid of an authoritarian regime, one must hit at its ultimate basis. The national democrats conceptualized the existence of, for instance, undemocratic control of extensive public resources and means to regulate the economy, in terms of "bureaucratic capitalists." However, these and many others within the organs of the state, did not, according to the national democrats, have a basis of their own which could be hit at by democratization. The bureaucrat-capitalists relied instead on the

more powerful imperialists, compradors, and landlords who controlled most of the resources in the society. And it was thus the latter's private control of resources and their backing in Washington which had to be hit at by means of anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism since they would not be especially threatened by political democracy. This argument was no exclusive property of the Philippine national democrats; it played a similarly decisive role within the Left in Indonesia and India.

Secondly, if one wants to introduce a democratic system which is not exclusively useful for the traditional elite, the basic preconditions -- which we have already discussed -- must exist from the beginning. According to the national democrats, most of the essential prerequisites cannot simply be proclaimed, and democratization of public regulation and resources would not help much since most of the resources of society are privately controlled. What is instead required is the uprooting of landlordism, etc. Otherwise, democracy would not mean much for the people.

What happened in early 1986 was thus almost impossible, according to the mainstream national democratic theses. Despite the lack of solid prerequisites for a democratic process, huge masses of people had been able to use and create some democratic rights and peaceful means which proved powerful. Demands for democratic control of public regulation and resources actually became the main issue which engaged huge masses of the people and undermined the regime. Large sections of the bourgeois force were obviously not so retarded by, or linked up with, imperialism and "semi-feudalism" that they could not actively contribute to democratic changes. Even Washington finally supported the changes.

Challenges

The national democratic theses were of course questioned from within the movement itself as well as by left dissidents, even if it was an uphill task politically to challenge perspectives which at least until early 1986 seemed to be quite rewarding. My argument is, however, that while many critics emphasized the lack of democracy within the national democratic movement, and while some of them suggested alternative tactics which would include, for instance, participation in elections, no primary, long term interest in the issues of democracy

followed from any of the contending approaches.

Radical nationalism

To begin with, many scholars and leaders related to the old Communist Party had critically examined previous negative attitudes towards participation in the electoral processes. Extensive rigging of elections during the forties and measures to prevent those radical leaders who were elected from taking their seats had contributed to a Communist boycott decision in the early fifties. The state of partial civil war at the time of the 1951 elections made it impossible for the party to participate openly. [26] But according to former general secretary Jesus Lava, it would have been possible to support the best of the other candidates. He also claims that it was wrong to assume that people were uninterested in elections only because they were against fraud. There were successful attempts, supported by Washington, to hold fair elections, but the radical Left distanced itself and lost out, almost like in 1984 and 1986. However, Lava concludes by asserting that one must be ready to boycott elections when people are prepared to take up revolutionary work. [27]

Further, as I have already indicated in the former section, it is also true that many scholars and leaders with some relation to the old party had long since questioned the national democratic thesis of "semi-feudal" oppression and exploitation as the main basis of imperialism in the Philippines. Had not the Americans been eager to introduce land reform? [28] On the one hand this implied that armed anti-feudal struggles against extra-economic oppression was not as primary and mandatory as the national democrats would have it. But on the other hand, the main enemy then was imperialism itself. The Philippines was simply not yet fully independent. Nothing serious took place in the country without the direct or indirect involvement of Washington, the Monetary Fund and so on. All patriots, democrats or not, must therefore fight against imperialism with all possible means. Struggle in democratic forms for democratic rights and rule would have to wait since one of the most basic preconditions -- true national independence -- has not yet been attained. [29]

The questioning of the national democratic thesis on the primary need to fight "semi-feudalism" continued during the late seventies and early eighties within the framework of a Philippine version of an international discourse on modes of production which was then in vogue. [30] While this was often most abstract and formalistic, the political implications were less convoluted.

•Democracy and the expansion of capitalism

Lava et. al. had arrived at a radical nationalist position. [31] Those inspired by the neo-Marxist Latin American and African dependency school emphasized later on the spread of an underdeveloping capitalism. The peasants were present, but share-cropping and similar forms of tenancy relations were on the retreat. Rural and urban labor as well as other subordinated groups became increasingly important. "Semi-feudalism" was no longer there. The bourgeois forces acted instead within the framework of "dependent capitalism." This called for broad popular struggles with socialist perspectives. The only alternative development path was authoritarian state-led economic growth. But Marcos was about to fail his attempt on the latter. [32]

Many of the scholars and activists attracted by these perspectives had hard personal experiences from authoritarian practices related to the old as well as new Communist Party. Other sympathizers had a background among social democratic and often Christian groups. It was thus natural to demand for democratic rights and rule within and among the radical movements themselves. Still others were engaged in voluntary action and development groups which they claimed were indispensable to a democratic system that was not only for the elite, and which should also include people's participation in addition to their representation. [33] Moreover, such groups would not be able to exist without rather extensive civil liberties. Given the background of many of those attracted by neo-Marxist perspectives and the special character of the cause-oriented groups it was finally natural to consider the possibilities of employing efficient non-violent forms of struggle. [34]

The neo-Marxists were initially preoccupied

with validating the thesis on the expansion of capitalism and underdevelopment. Much of the general democratic orientation and preferences among many neo-Marxists thus lacked a powerful theoretical and analytical foundation. Later on as the increasing importance of the state in third world development became more and more obvious, neo-Marxists in most countries tried to go beyond previous mechanical and economic perspectives. In Philippine seminar rooms scholars began to talk about "the relative autonomy of the state." [35] All political structures and transformations were not directly determined by the basic class forces. There was some room for political maneuvering without first having to take over state power.

To the extent that such insights had some political importance [37] they did, of course, allow for more careful analyses. But it is important to remember that the thesis about a special degree of "relative autonomy" in the third world was mainly substantiated by first, the common inability of any of the dominating classes to develop as the ruling force, and second, by extensive, formerly colonial, state institutions. [38] From this point of view it was the balance of class forces that was vital, rather than questions related to the monopolization of public regulation and resources. American colonial rule had moreover been quite different from, for instance, Dutch or British. Inherited state apparatuses were thus less important than in Indonesia or India. [39]

Issues related to demands for democratic rule of the state and its resources were therefore not on top of the agenda. This was instead dominated by discussions on how to supplement basic struggles against the dominating classes by also fighting for positions in the arena and within institutions that were "relatively autonomous." Decisions among the neo-Marxists to first boycott the elections in 1984 but then to go for critical participation in 1986 seem to have been based mainly on analyses of the political conjuncture, including the possibility of uniting as many people as possible against the regime -- in addition to studies of to what extent reasonable preconditions for a democratic process were available or at least could be fought for. Struggle with democratic means for democratic ends was not considered a reliable alternative. Military intervention was expected to be unavoidable. [40]

●Democracy and remnants of feudalism

Among the mainstream national democrats, the predominant reaction to the challenges may very well have been that the grassroots downgraded the importance of their over-all theses and adapted their concrete tactics to complicated and highly different contradictions in various regions and sectors. But in addition to this, some leading national democratic scholars took upon themselves to defend and further develop the old perspective in face of those rejecting the notion of semi-feudalism, etc. These national democratic scholars apply an extremely narrow definition of capitalism, and thereafter invite all the new transformations which, thus, are not pure capitalist, to take shelter under the old umbrella of "semi-feudalism," thereby helping to confirm the orthodoxy.

According to Ricardo Ferrer the essence of capitalism is that the "mechanism of reproducing property rights over means of production is the intervention at the level of economy via accumulation and/or innovation." [41] Markets are present in the Philippines, and so are generalized commodity production and capital-wage labor relations. But the capitalists are not productive. Moreover, a lot of extra-economic force is made use of, and various rents are extracted. Ferrer even maintains that feudal laws of motion are decisive within

the framework of western monopoly-capitalism. [42] The main political implication is that the basic thesis of the national democrats is still valid. But does not Ferrer's emphasis on extra-economic forces, monopolized control of regulation and essential conditions of production, the extraction of rents, etc., make struggle for political democracy especially important?

Basically his answer is negative. The main reason for these factors is the predominance of feudal laws of motion, which must still be fought against by the oppressed through broad alliances with so-called progressive capitalists and farmers (who are, unfortunately, difficult to separate from the bad guys). [43]

When challenged by my alternative conclusion that "feudal remnants" have proved decisive for the rapid expansion of capitalism in, for instance, Indonesia -- implying a strategy of anti-monopolism through democratization, rather than anti-feudalism in favor of capitalism [44] -- Ferrer doubts that it is capitalist laws of motion which are at work. He also adds that in any case those who monopolize public regulation and resources have no base of their own which can be fruitfully undermined by democratization. As usual, one must instead hit at their "real" foundation among the powerful landlords and private capitalists. [45]

Midweek



Imprisoned alleged leaders of the national democratic underground: (from left) Pascual, Rodolfo Salas, Benjamin de Vera, Romulo Kintanar, and Rafael Baylosis.

National democratic dissidents

Serious disagreements were also present within the mainstream national democratic movement. As the popular opposition against Marcos increased in the mid-seventies, many young and often intellectual leading members of the Manila-Rizal party committee suggested that they should not have to wait for the rural revolution to unfold before they themselves staged urban offensives. [46]

The extent to which this perspective was inspired by neo-Marxist arguments about capitalist expansion is an open question. The committee members were of course more eager to situate themselves within the framework of the mainstream movement even referring to recommendations from Sison for decentralized operations in accordance with the local situation. Viewed thus the best thing to do in the central urban area was to stimulate and influence the broad opposition movement against Marcos's dictatorship.

It was instead the way in which the Manila-Rizal cadres went about doing this that brought them into sharp conflicts with the highest party organs. The Manila-Rizal leaders gave priority to broad "anti-fascist" struggle for democratization against Marcos's dictatorship. They claimed that the democratic rights and means which were present or could be developed, including the electoral process, should be used as much as possible, despite the fact that many decisive preconditions for a democratic polity were lacking. As elections were due in 1978, the Manila-Rizal activists thus entered into agreements with other leftists and liberals (including the Aquinos), proposed critical participation in the electoral processes, and thereby even spoke about the possibility of getting rid of Marcos.

The orthodox central leaders, including Sison [47], maintained that the Manila-Rizal committee settled for "right opportunist" policies, helped legitimize Marcos's rule, and created illusions about how one could change society. The ascent on broad urban "anti-fascist" struggles departed from the necessary emphasis on rural-based armed struggles against feudalism and imperialism.

A last minute straight-forward order from the party leaders to instead boycott the elections was finally neglected by the Manila dissi-

dents. The extent to which this dispute contributed to the miserable results is impossible to say. The elections were in any case efficiently rigged. The progressive front did not make any gains. Some thousands of Manilans protested but no huge masses of angry people took to the streets in order to form their own parliaments, and mainstream national democrats who claimed that they had been vindicated set out to purge their opponents.

While it was thus obvious that struggle for democratization by peaceful and democratic means made sense for the Manila-Rizal leaders in a short-term perspective, these considerations were hardly based on alternative conceptualizations which make the issue of democracy instrumental to reaching long term aims. The Manila-Rizal committee emphasized "anti-fascism" but did not really negate the basic importance of struggle against "feudalism" and imperialism. Their argument was rather that the best way for the national democrats to reach out to wide sections of the population with such revolutionary propaganda was to participate in joint mass campaigns. As people gained their own bitter experiences they would be prepared to listen to the national democrats. There was also an opportunity to divide the ruling elite by keeping the channels open to those against Marcos. And it should be possible to mobilize moral and material support for the rural armed forces through contacts with dissatisfied administrators, politicians, and businessmen. In addition to this it is interesting to note that in an internal trial against the Manila-Rizal activists after 1978, the party-leadership employed the writings of Mao, while the dissidents made frequent use of what Lenin and Stalin had said about the need to apply efficient tactics and make use of all means in order to mobilize and organize people before the time was right for a revolution.

From discussions with scholars with good knowledge about these debates, as well as with Sison [48] my own conclusion is that much of the alliances and policies suggested by the Manila-Rizal committee would have been quite alright if "only" the party had been in a guiding position and the national democratic perspective had been imposed as a framework. In the face of the 1984 elections, the party leadership entered, for instance, into alliances with similarly moderate forces -- with conditions enabling national democratic cadres and

sympathizers to enforce a boycott decision. [49] And only when the leaders later on failed in doing the same within the framework of the previously managed coalition called *BAYAN* was it natural to take a principled stand in 1986.

The party leadership was able to limit the direct effect of the controversies in the late seventies to Greater Manila and was able to purge those directly involved. But the critical perspectives survived and developed into two directions: one emphasizing insurrectionist perspectives, another stressing so-called popular democracy.

•The "insurrectionists"

In the late seventies and early eighties the national democrats and their New People's Army expanded drastically in the south, in Mindanao. [50] Reckless penetration of capitalism within fishing, timber, shipping, and agri-business had generated drastic socio-economic changes. Many people in rural areas had been uprooted and spent parts of their lives as migrant laborers trying to find jobs in the urban areas. The guerilla units followed suit and their armed actions spread to the cities. Leaders of the National Democratic Front [51] were also able to stimulate and influence many of the various cause-oriented groups -- not least during the boycott of the 1981 elections -- in the rapidly growing city of Davao with its huge slum areas.

This movement gained further momentum by hanging on to the broad popular protests after the assassination of Ninoy Aquino in August 1983. The leaders saw a revolutionary situation emerging in which it should be possible to combine rural and urban struggles, given the eruption taking place in the cities. This ran counter to much of the orthodox national democratic theses inspired by Maoism. Some inspiration came instead from the successful Left in Nicaragua and the experiences in El Salvador. In late 1983 and early 1984 the Mindanao leaders suggested in vain that the national democratic movement as a whole should consider a fast track to power by applying an insurrectionist perspective. [52] In Mindanao, they were able to develop successful so-called people's strikes -- the *welgang bayan*.

The concept of "people's strike" was an attempt to go beyond the traditional workers'

strike with roots in industrialized societies. The many people in third world countries who work in administration and education and more or less "informal" sectors of transportation, service, trading etc. could add their form of work stoppages such as blocking roads and participating in demonstrations, rallies, etc. to paralyze the government.

To some extent, people's strikes were successfully adopted also by other party organizations in the country. The "insurrectionist" perspective had become one of the major opposition tendencies within the national democratic movement. However, in Mindanao in general and Davao in particular, the tense situation, specially in urban slum areas, eventually got out of hand as attempts to supplement the coordinated protests and work stoppages with armed actions developed into uncontrolled killings. This slowly came to an end in 1985 when a new and highly professional marine colonel [53] was able to stabilize the situation by mixing the selective enforcement of law and order with the addressing of certain problems that people had revolted against.

Meanwhile the national democrats had to concentrate on what was happening in Manila, including Marcos's snap elections. To what extent then did democracy make sense to the "insurrectionist" tendency?

Obviously the "insurrectionists" suggested "critical participation" in the elections. A precondition for the expansion of the revolutionary forces in Mindanao had been their ability to associate with the broad popular opposition against Marcos. But the main criterion in deciding what methods to use was clearly the extent to which they would contribute to a successful insurgency. This could generate a dual sharing of power between the moderate progressives and the revolutionary forces. The latter would finally win since they should be able to paralyze the ruling of the country, reminiscent of events in Russia. The struggle for democratic rights -- by making use of whatever freedoms that were already there or could be created -- did thus make sense in a short-term perspective in order to pave the way for more drastic methods to grab state power. From this insurrectional point of view, the central party leadership took its devastating boycott decision because its preoccupation with a Maoist protracted people's war prevented it from foreseeing the ripening of an

urban revolutionary situation. Accordingly, the EDSA "revolution" was a lost insurrectionist opportunity. [54]

However, one should also discuss the extent to which the concept of "people's strike" was based on ideas of local popular rule and cooperative efforts in, for instance, neighborhoods. Within the Latin American discourse about radical transformation, such efforts have at least gained some importance. [55] In the Philippines on the other hand, this was hardly touched upon by a leading ideologue like Vilalobos, despite frequent references to Latin American experiences. Neither does it seem to have been solidly practiced, for instance, in the Davao slum areas where the killings took serious proportions and people rapidly changed loyalties. The foremost national democratic stronghold of Agdao even became a hotbed of anti-communist vigilantes in 1986. [56] And the abortive attempts at introducing people's strikes in Manila by drawing on small groups of activists hardly indicate a special interest in introducing popular rule and cooperative efforts in various districts and sectors.

On the contrary, the "insurrectionists" simply developed the art of political maneuvering and the grabbing of state power in a given revolutionary situation, without relying too much on social theories and analyses of fundamental driving forces -- perspectives which in turn would have made it possible and relevant to discuss if aims like democratic rights and rule made sense, or at least consider when and how revolutionary situations could emerge (and disappear).

•The "popular democrats"

As I have already pointed out, the Maoist-inspired communist theses adopted in the Philippines prescribed an anti-imperialist, anti-feudal revolution which would be led by the Party based on common interests among the workers, peasants, and the so-called national, as well as petty-bourgeoisie. When the new Communist Party and the New People's Army had been consolidated in the mid-seventies, it was thus time to initiate a multi-class National Democratic Front (NDF) under communist hegemony. [56]

For obvious reasons these classes did not automatically appear, and the various organizations which more or less represented their

aspirations were not particularly eager to enrol themselves under communist rule, unless they are already domesticated or initiated by the communists.

In the late seventies the united front program was therefore more attractively designed. It was, for instance, stated that nationalistic private businessmen would have nothing to fear and that all patriots would be granted democratic rights under a national democratic coalition government. As we know, the dissident Manila-Rizal party committee even managed to initiate close cooperation with progressive "centrist" forces in the 1978 elections. But as we also know, this project was effectively blocked by the orthodox party leadership.

It was only in 1980 that a party-authorized dynamic attempt was made to develop efficient united front work. Its propelling force with excellent contacts was Horacio "Boy" Morales, a celebrated former executive secretary under Marcos and the head of his prestigious Development Academy who had defected when he was to be acclaimed as one of the "ten outstanding young men" in late 1977. Another, though in exile after five years of detention, was Father Ed de la Torre who was inspired by Latin American "liberation theology." He had initiated the militant Christians for National Liberation and had participated in the first attempts to build the NDF.

On the one hand, the NDF was solidly anchored by Morales, et. al. within the national democratic movement. Its key leaders were included in a coordinating committee. The New People's Army was relieved from much of its political work and the NDF took responsibility for local organization and action by synchronizing the activities of various so-called sectoral organizations of the workers, peasants, women, etc. Morales suggested moreover that the 1981 presidential elections should be boycotted. On the other hand the new NDF leadership also tried to open up the Front to others, despite the fact that party leaders still demanded that those joining must accept all the basic national democratic theses. This proved difficult and priority was given to extensive contacts and joint actions with independent organizations and most influential opponents of Marcos's authoritarian regime -- leftists as well as liberals and mere nationalists. This paved the way for broad political alian-

ces and successful campaigns influenced by the NDF against the Marcos regime and its attempts to gain some legitimacy.

But Morales was arrested in 1982 (as was de la Torre upon his return from exile) and the promising start slowly came to an end. The NDF was subordinated to orthodox party leaders. When huge masses of people staged frequent angry demonstrations and formed more and more opposition cause-oriented groups after the assassination of Ninoy Aquino, the national democrats definitely tried to hang along. Flexible writings came from the detained Sison. But generally speaking, the national democrats were once again eager to force their perspective upon others. Inside prison Morales and de la Torre were able to exchange views with certain other prominent radicals, including the dissident revolutionary Dr. Nemesio Prudente, and the leading socialist Marianito Canonigo. Morales's and Torre's previous attempts at trying to develop a framework for broad coalitions thus continued, while a new and extended perspective was labelled "popular democracy." Their prison study-circle produced a series of *Plaridel Papers* [57] and the ideas gained some influence among the various contending oppositional forces, including the Aquinos. [58]

An important first step was to set aside some of the differences between, for instance, armed national democrats, socialists, and liberals, which were simply imagined or only important in a long term strategical perspective -- and to identify instead what conflicts between the political groups prevented efficient united action, under the present concrete circumstances, against Marcos's authoritarian regime and for a trustworthy government. A major argument was that the basic actual conflict had to do with the sort of democracy that should replace the dictatorship. Restoration of the previous "elite democracy" with more or less "peaceful alternation of various factions of the elite in holding government power" stood against varying attempts to give people a real choice between many parties and projects, or "popular democracy." [59]

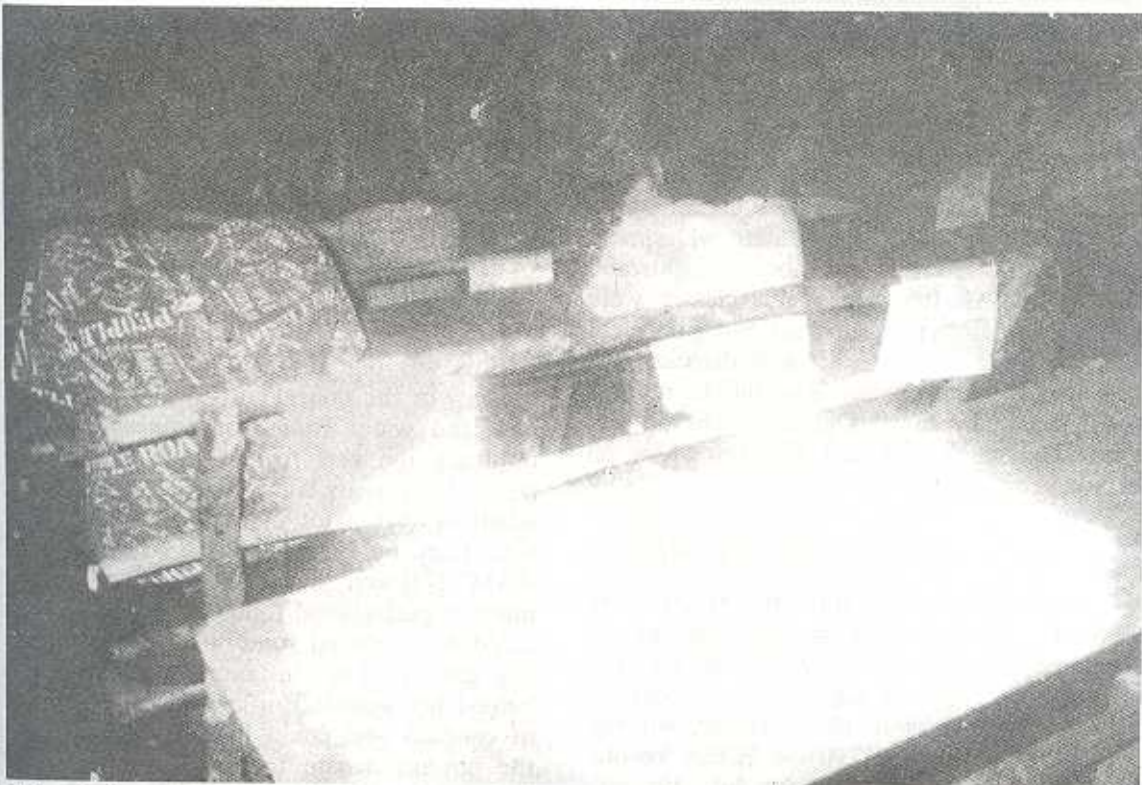
Despite the fact that the "popular democrats" emphasized "anti-fascism," their concept of "popular democracy" was intended to be different from the communist-led so-called popular fronts "from below" in Europe during the thirties and forties. [60] Nor was it

identical with the notion of "people's democracy," [61] which indicated the dominant rule of many classes (rather than, for instance, proletarian or bourgeois heremoney). [62] "Popular democracy" implied something more: the importance of autonomous organizations in addition to parties, state, and government, and participation in addition to representation, making pluralism essential. [63]

According to the popular democrats, three different political lines were contending for influence over the protest movement in the mid-eighties: those emphasizing pressure politics through enhanced protests; those suggesting that there was also a need for elections; and those saying that in addition to pressure politics and elections there was a decisive need for armed uprisings. The vital question was thus: how could these efforts converge and effectively get rid of Marcos's authoritarianism, while at the same time enhancing the attempts to build popular democracy? [64]

First, the united front work must be characterized by popular democratic principles. For instance, there should be parties and leaders representing different class-interests as well as groups or councils with people who participated in the transformation of society. These actors should be autonomous, treat each other with mutual respect, and gain influence according to the balance of forces both in terms of organizational capacity and in terms of being able to mobilize broad popular support. The attempt to form a broad coalition of centrist and Left-oriented forces against Marcos -- *BAYAN* -- was seen as a step in the right direction a month before the devastating formal founding congress of the said coalition. [65]

Second -- and this was stated in early 1985 -- elections must be turned into the "tactical focus." This was compatible with all the three political lines, with no one having to give in. For instance, those in favor of pressure politics could simply add elections, while the armed national democrats could, for a certain period of time, stress on one of the minor components of their comprehensive strategy, elections. [66] Moreover, those who wanted to go beyond the restoration of elite democracy could thereby (a) prevent attempts to isolate the radical Left (by first provoking a boycott decision and then invest in reasonably clean



Claims of democratic practice: NDF 1st national congress held last July 1990.

elections) [67] (b) strengthen the alliance between the "middle and the Left" (c) enhance the bargaining power of the radicals vis-a-vis the traditional elite, and (d) allow people themselves, including those who supported the traditional opposition, to learn from their own political experiences and later on favor more radical policies. [68]

It is thus obvious that many decisive features of democracy made sense for at least one national democratic tendency before "the EDSA" revolution. [69] Many minimum prerequisites for democracy did not exist and in some cases elections had to be boycotted; but there were also ample opportunities to use existing liberties to fight for more democratic rights.

Similar statements had been made by the 1978 Manila-Rizal dissidents. But the "popular democrats" had more to say in a slightly different political situation: autonomous organizations and people's participation in addition to representation were most important; there should be a multi-party system; and pluralism should characterize relations within the Left as well.

On the other hand, the "popular democrats" paid little interest to the potential importance of the struggle for democratizing control of public resources. This may be related to the lack of analyses of how resources in general were controlled. They had consciously abstained from tackling long term perspectives and basic analyses of driving social forces, since this might have blurred the more urgent "anti-fascist" unity. Moreover, various democratic rights and certain forms of rule were definitely instrumental in developing appropriate frameworks for popular coalitions, cooperation, participation, checks and balances, etc. But aside from identifying movements that might give tactical emphasis to elections, the popular democratic analyses were not comprehensive and deep enough to say much, if anything, about what social forces could be genuinely interested in enforcing the attractive democratic framework in a longer perspective.

Rethinking?

Then came the snap-elections and the EDSA "revolution." As we have said democratic means and demands had not been specially relevant within the radical Left.

Those who suggested at least alternative tactics were either imprisoned or severely weakened. The promising attempt to establish *BAYAN* as a broad coalition of popular opposition forces had failed. The radical Left could do little but watch how more or less bourgeois forces and even the Church (both of which in theory were bound to fail in any progressive undertaking), managed to guide and manipulate widespread and explosive interests in democratic rights and rule (which in Left theory no classes were primarily interested in anyway) and got rid of Marcos, using all means at their disposal (except armed struggle). But how did the radicals read what they saw? Did they develop previous analyses further and did their views on democracy change?

"Democratic space" or business as usual?

Previous dissidents within the radical Left, including the popular democrats and an alliance of socialists called *BISIG* [70], who had opposed the boycott and acted in favor of critical participation in the elections, felt vindicated. In their view [71], the EDSA "revolution" had overthrown much of Marcos's authoritarianism and created a "democratic space" which had to be defended and used as much as possible. Meanwhile the armed struggle should be terminated, while the capacity to rapidly resume it could be kept intact. The new government was lacking a clear-cut social basis. Many forces were now competing for best possible positions. The radical Left should offer critical support to progressive factions within, and aspects of the new administration, and try to make use of these. Conservative forces which had defected from the Marcos regime for opportunistic reasons had to be obstructed. Radical people should try to work within the administration and also approach progressive young officers. A lot of interest organizations among various sections of the population, cause-oriented groups, community organizations, etc., could now be even more active. There were, for instance, unilateral actions among peasants and tenants who, by themselves, tried to enforce agrarian reform. [72] The popular initiatives should not primarily be brought under the umbrella of, for instance, the national democrats, but instead be supported and radicalized. The "people power" which was expressed at EDSA could thereby be institutionalized and serve as

a firmer and more radical base for a more progressive coalition government.

These and similar arguments in favor of urgent democratic action to develop a basis for extended democratic rights and rule were confronted with suspicion by the leading mainstream national democrats. There was a general incapacity among them to take any firm decisions on these. A large scale debate on aims and means had emanated out of the devastating boycott decision. [73]

This was one of the reasons why the full capacity of the radical Left to make use of the new and wider room for maneuver and the influence the new regime could not be utilized. Four years later, Sison, among others, admitted that a lot of opportunities "to work with Cory but also with the lower levels of RAM" [74] were lost. "She still did not have much organizational following in 1986 and we could have offered some in exchange for certain gains.... For instance, we could have helped her against Enrile. Dante had the best of contacts and could have bridged me. But the boycott debate took so long [a] time... [75] Other reasons why the radical Left mainly remained a spectator even after EDSA were the very conclusions which the mainstream national democrats slowly arrived at. The general secretary Salas resigned and the boycott decision was, after some months, recognized as a "tactical blunder." But not even the two almost disobedient issues which could be published by *Praktika*, a theoretical journal of the National Urban Commission of the Communist Party, included anything more than extrapolations from previous arguments and debates. The "insurrectionists," as we know, claimed that the snap elections and EDSA had been lost opportunities. But since the revolutionary situation soon dwindled they had little to offer for the time being. And while certain arguments in other articles were rather close to those advanced by the "popular democrats," they were, as in 1978, mostly references to Lenin's Stalin's, and Dimitroff's more cautious theses about the need to use all possible means for tactical purposes, especially when no revolutionary situation exists. [76]

On the other hand, according to the orthodox national democrats, nothing serious could actually have happened in February 1986. The whole affair was simply a quarrel within the elite where some factions had be-

come fed up with Marcos's way of governing the country and the deep economic crisis, and had been wary of the possibility that the national democrats would take over. (Some of these orthodox national democrats even maintained that Washington had masterminded the whole affair. [77]) No basic socio-economic changes had taken place. The old ruling classes were still in place. The new government did not signal any qualitative change. [78]

However, many mainstream leaders kept a comparatively low profile and "gave Aquino a chance." For instance, negotiations between the National Democratic Front and the new government had started in August, and a ceasefire was agreed upon in November. Special difficulties arose with these negotiations. Those in actual command of the contending armed forces did not take part. Also, it was hard for the national democratic representatives to base themselves on a firm political line which was still under review. [79] But the main and general problem was rather that the new government never "got a chance." If the national democratic leaders believed in their own argument that no real changes had taken place in February 1986, the new government would not be able to change much if anything. So why then "give Aquino a chance" if she could not take it?

One answer could have been that the national democratic leaders were really serious both in giving Aquino and some of her associates "a chance" as individual leaders and in trusting the national democratic thesis that no real socio-economic changes had taken place. But this implied that there was a need to mobilize and trade alternative "critical" support for Aquino so that she would get a real option to challenge the dominating classes. Such support was not offered by the mainstream national democrats but only by much less powerful left dissidents.

A more plausible answer, therefore is that it was not Aquino who should get a chance but rather the vacillating national democratic sympathizers and many of Aquino's followers who must be able to discover that the new government could not change anything. This tactics were thus almost the same as those in late 1985, when the leaders who did not give chance to the struggle for fair elections but instead advocated boycott claimed that the masses would follow them as soon as they

realized that more radical methods were necessary.

Consequently, the progressive forces within Aquino's administration could not rely on alternative social forces in their attempts to countervail demands from the armed forces, landowners, national and international private business, and others. But despite the fact that the rightward drift of Aquino's administration was to a certain extent a self-fulfilling prophecy of the mainstream national democrats, they claimed to be vindicated and began to speak up with self-confidence again. Sison, for example, stated that "the replacement of Marcos by Mrs. Aquino has not rooted out the fundamental causes of fascist dictatorship, has not solved the deepgoing crisis of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal system and has kept the ground fertile for social unrest and armed revolution.... (The new government) represents the same class interests (as Marcos) -- those of the comprador big bourgeoisie and the landlord class...." [80] That this thesis was totally inconsistent with the accusations against the Aquino government for not doing anything progressive did not mean much.

The most brutal dispersal of a peasant rally in central Manila in the end of January 1987 [81], which left eighteen people killed, was followed by the suspension of the peace talks on the part of the national democrats after which the doors remained closed.

Another election debacle

However, voices of dissent continued to sound off among the national democrats. Just a few days before the Mendiola massacre and the breakdown of the negotiations, continued peace talks and broad unity against "fascism and imperialism" had been most forcefully advocated from within a national democratic framework. The Philippine concept of popular democracy could be legitimized as a "substage in the national democratic struggle" by recalling the European communist tradition of initiating Dimitrov's so-called "popular fronts" to defend "bourgeois democracy" against fascism before it was possible to go ahead with more advanced means and aims. [82]

Moreover, while the party organ *Ang Bayan* spoke vehemently about the senatorial and congressional elections scheduled for May

1987, and seemed to rule out any form of participation [83], the national democrats decided to participate indirectly through a new legal party initiated in 1986 by, among others, Sison, his wife, the *Partido ng Bayan* (PnB), the organization Volunteers for Popular Democracy (VPD), and certain groups within *BAYAN* -- they formed the Alliance for New Politics. [84]

For majority of the national democratic leaders *Partido ng Bayan* seemed to be a way of relieving the movement from paralyzing disputes on issues of democracy and participation in elections. Having established the party, most of the activists would instead be able to concentrate on actions among peasants and workers and other sections of the population as well as the armed struggle, while the dissidents would be left alone with at least a formal chance to prove their point. [85]

The results were extremely depressing. Hardly anyone was elected, not even to the Congress. The overall analysis of the election results reveal a drastic return to the pre-martial law period of "cacique democracy" (to use Ben Anderson's notion [86]). Most of those elected belong to prominent business cum political "families." The radical Left was in no way ready to replace this "elite democracy" with popular democracy. There was also some fraud, harassment (including the assassination of the chairman of the PnB), and army offensives against the clandestine organizations which enabled the military to control the voting in many radical strongholds. [87]

Despite this the Left should have been able to do better. [88] The national democratic movement as a whole may have been serious about using the elections for propaganda purposes. In the senatorial elections (where the nation as a whole serves as a constituency) this may not have been a matter of dispute. For instance, one of the dissidents who ran as a candidate for the senate, Bernabe "Dante" Buscayno, claims that he himself told people to listen but not necessarily vote for him. [89] However, he is far from alone in adding that several of the candidates for the Congress could have won if the full capacity of the national democratic movement had been mobilized in support of the candidates and democratic politics. [90]

To begin with, the forces of the Left were

inexperienced and used to boycotting elections. Not even all loyal followers cast their votes. But the real failure was on the "open market." The organization of the campaign was poor even in terms of supporting the candidates getting people to register, and organizing activists to protect and count the votes. And certain contending candidates were able to buy their way into sections of the national democratic movement which tried to mobilize resources for the *real* struggle.

Secondly, it was probably even more important that the "new politics" candidates could only be sure about trading progressive ideas -- not reliable promises on what to deliver and realistic chances to win. The price which a poor and fragile voter would have to pay in case his "radical" candidate did not win could be substantial. The national democrats who fought landowners in the fields or capitalists in the workplaces were more interested in, for instance, favorable relationships with the local police and some "private contributions" than in access to governmental and bureaucratic positions and democratic rule of public resources. The well established political machines and socio-economically deeply rooted patron-client relationships were thus given a free lease of life and won the day.

The outcome was a loss for the Left, but orthodox national democrats may have felt justified. They seemed victorious as the party leadership closed the internal debate in early August 1987. While the remaining dissidents in general and the popular democrats in particular were harshly criticized, certain concessions may have been made to those who had suggested urban insurrections. Rural as well as urban offensives which were initiated met little success but instead exposed many militant leaders as well as vulnerable followers to severe hardships, internal witchhunts for traitors, and outright state-sponsored terrorism by semi-private vigilante armies (especially during 1988). [91]

While the orthodox leaders resumed their predominance, the legendary founder of the New People's Army and one of the candidates for the senate, Commander Dante (who had long been most skeptical over the policies but had tried to work from within) came out openly with his critique. Among other things, he was against the emphasis on armed struggle advocated radical politics within the framework

of the "democratic space," suggested that the development of capitalism had created new important contradictions, and most of all, rejected all forms of dogmatism. [92]

It was not only national democratic hardliners who grabbed for their guns. At the end of August, the first really serious coup attempt against Aquino by anti-communist officers, who must have felt outmaneuvered by the politicians after the elections [93] forced the legal Left -- which had just tried to advance a popular transport strike against higher oil prices which had almost paralyzed Manila -- into defensive positions. Those who tried to use the "democratic space" to influence the regime were from then on incapable of doing much more than watch Aquino adjust her staff and policies to the right.

New stakes in democracy?

While staging new drastic offensives against the regime, the mainstream national democrats also engaged themselves in the nationwide provincial and local elections in early 1988. There were cases where local popular groups succeeded in boosting progressive candidates. But generally speaking the previous attempts to initiate "new politics" seem to have been replaced by widespread adaptation to what was so obvious in the May 1987 election -- a clear tendency toward the restoration of cacique democracy. The national democrats now played the game, and joint business and political families continued to score victories -- provided that they had come to some kind of agreement in terms of money, various supplies including weapons, etc. with more or less powerful and well-armed revolutionaries in their respective areas. [94]

When discussing how the national democrats might approach the coming elections in 1992, Sison as well as Luis Jalandoni of the NDF are eager to emphasize "the need to build regional and local alliances and do what is possible within the system, like in the local elections of 1987/88." [95]

• "Empowerment"

In the face of the electoral failures in 1987 and 1988, the restoration of cacique democracy, the revival of dogmatic national democrats, frequent coup attempts, and a weak government drifting rightwards, one of

the priorities of the popular democrats has been to help vulnerable people "empower" themselves through their own development initiatives, thereby becoming reasonably autonomous citizens -- a basic pre-condition for a more genuine democracy. [96]

This is thus a conscious attempt to combine development efforts and political struggle. Strikes, militant and sometimes armed struggles, pressure politics, etc., are fine. But the emphasis on such methods presuppose that one first must grab political power, then economic power, and finally use all these powers to make people fully capable of governing themselves and the country. If, on the other hand, serious efforts are made to help people do some labor for themselves (and not only for others) in terms of joint development efforts, they should already at present become able enough to participate as reasonably autonomous citizens who can stand up for themselves in a more democratic struggle for radical change of society. In other words, the international discourse on "civil society against the state," and the role of so-called non-government organizations in general and popular movements in particular (with or without "green" perspectives), has become increasingly important for the popular democrats -- as have the large sums of money available for such projects in the development-aid markets.

Much energy has for some time been spent on initiating and stimulating various development projects, including education and popular cooperation, among local cause-oriented groups and community organizations as well as within trade unions. The popular democrats cannot protect these activities or, for instance, get rid of a landlord by the use of arms. And their followers, who are usually from the middle class, may be less devoted than the guerilla soldiers. But the popular democrats can deliver certain goods -- at least partly through their access to development funds -- and they do address people's livelihood problems in concrete local settings. They can also, in the general debate, put forward grand visions about alternative development strategies.

The idea is of course that these projects and movements shall become self-sustained within a reasonable period of time and constitute the basis for local people's councils. This will then, among other things, undermine

a good deal of the basis for cacique democracy. People themselves will be able to form and govern parties rather than the other way around. And the same holds true for the organs of the state at various levels. Similar perspectives and practices have even deeper roots and quantitative importance among many socialist-oriented groups and community organizations. [97] While the popular democrats turn mainly to local activists affected by the national democratic perspective, socialists and social democrats reach out to those influenced by their concepts.

But one cannot stop here. In the Philippines as in India or Indonesia and elsewhere, almost every political force, including religious institutions and some business factions [98], have created their own environment of so-called NGOs. And every cluster has its international financiers and patrons of various kinds, with various special interests, such as the undermining of the state or other political forces. [99] Even President Aquino herself has recently made an attempt to bypass the senate, congress, and parts of the central administration, by turning directly to various local governors, mayor, old as well as new NGOs, thereby getting hold of the international development funds directed to the NGOs, drawing on some of their success stories, and reviving her populist "people-power" heritage in the 1992 elections. [100]

Finally, the whole process has created huge markets with good opportunities for not only "organic intellectuals" but also, and perhaps mainly, for more or less devoted, often missionary-minded, and entrepreneurial middle class development organizers with irrelevant experiences and insufficient education. [101]

This is not to say that the genuine efforts to develop foundations for popular democracy are hopelessly undermined from the very beginning. But there is definitely a need for closer studies of the decisive interests involved, both among those who try to "stimulate" and their "targets." The most serious problem is perhaps the fact that the theoretical and analytical framework adhered to by the radicals rarely generate such concern and studies.

For instance, the concept of "civil society against the state" does not help much when attempting to answer questions such as under what conditions different features of

democracy become instrumental for various groups and political forces. [102] This is crucial. Most of the actors may be interested in a "democratic space" wide enough to allow their "business" to continue without being repressed or regulated by an unfriendly state. But what about the democratization of existing public administration and resources? What about extending democratic rule to vital resources which are now privately controlled?

Moreover, if funds are available overseas it may be more important to go to a workshop in Amsterdam than to join those fighting political monopolization of credits in Manila or the provinces. And to what extent are people really "empowered" and the projects sustainable? Are those who are eager to sustain progressive development projects look for the best possible patron? What shall local activists do when they cannot even start a union or a cooperative because of threats or naked repression?

•A New Democratic People's Project from Tarlac?

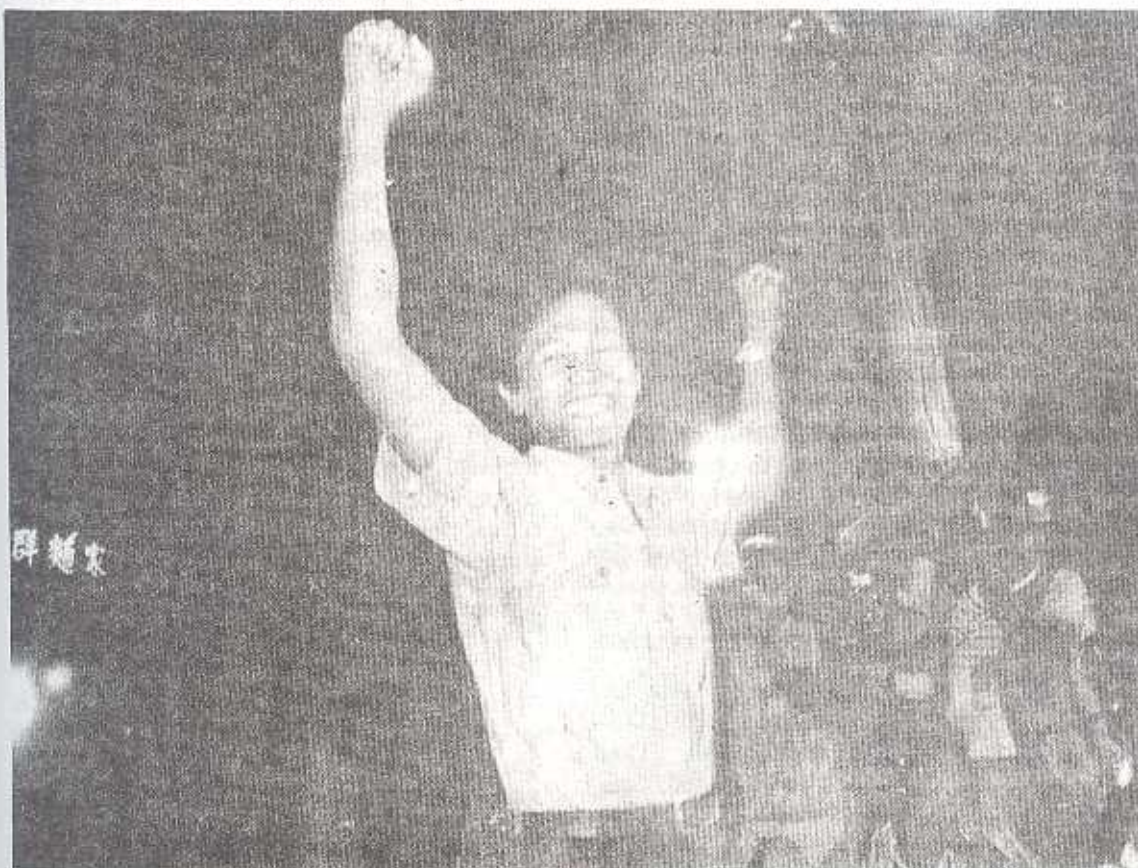
In a discussion about the problems of combining people's own development efforts with democratic political struggles, the largest popular cooperative effort in the country merits special attention.

Probably the most important base for the powerful national democratic movement grew out of the poor tenants with their leader, Commander Dante, and their struggles in Tarlac, Central Luzon, against Japanese imperialism, Philippine landlords and warlords, and post-colonial authoritarianism. In the early seventies they formed the New People's Army. At present, however, the same peasants and the same leader are instead busy laying the groundwork for what may perhaps become a New Democratic People's Project. [103] Dante still claims that oppression under feudal landlords and the Marcos regime was for many years so massive that people simply had to fight illegally, and defend themselves through armed resistance. But in the early eighties, and after the assassination of his friend Ninoy Aquino in 1983, the situation started to change. From his prison cell Dante argued in vain for, among other things, the participation of the communist-led movements in the snap elections.

After his release Dante returned as an ob-

server in the highest organs of the Communist Party. But when not only leftist dissidents in lower levels but also Dante himself claimed that the mistakes were fundamental, he again found himself part of a tiny minority, and came to realize that the movement as a whole was not seriously interested in the "new politics" that he and others fought for in the May 1987 elections. The election was no personal disaster for Dante, who received more votes than anybody else in the Left. But when

exposed to all the disadvantages of capitalism. Their plots were small, and they had no access to support from politicians and bureaucrats. The farmers were therefore not able to acquire the effective production inputs which businessmen sold or rented at good profit for the latter. After the harvest, mill owners and others charged exorbitantly. Middlemen bought cheaply and sold dearly. Most of the farmers were heavily indebted. The workers were given miserably low pay. And of course



Buscayno at PnB proclamation rally in 1987.

he was personally hit by the violence he sought to avoid, [104] and when the dogmatic leadership closed the internal national democratic debate, Dante spoke out openly [105] and felt that politically he had to start from scratch in Tarlac, where people would also protect him.

Decades of militant struggle against the feudal landlords in Tarlac had compelled Marcos to initiate a minor land reform in areas where maize and rice were grown. Many of the old sharecroppers were now independent small farmers. As far as they were concerned the anti-feudal struggle for land was over, for all practical purposes. Instead, they were now

there was also a scarcity of labor opportunities. Many had already lost their land. Concentration of land ownership, or at least "kulakization," i. e., the growth of a group of rich farmers with their own workers, seemed imminent.

Dante therefore suggested that the many small farmers should make use of the new room for maneuver under President Aquino, cooperate openly, and seek public credits. By acting in common they could provide more and cheaper input goods, and use them more effectively. Better preparation and irrigation of the fields could be organized collectively.

Everyone could harvest their own fields, but the harvest should then be stored collectively, and be sold only at the farmers' own terms, preferably with no middlemen involved. The cooperative could take care of as many bags as were needed to repay the loans, and then ask for new money. Later they could invest in their own mill and in other processing. This, in turn, would give the workers better wages and more jobs.

The peasants shook their heads in disbelief, thinking of all the unsuccessful cooperatives that smart businessmen and politicians had turned to their own profit. But Dante had been able to gain unquestioned confidence among perhaps 500 peasants since decades of dedicated work among them. If for nothing else, they joined out of loyalty, while the guerrillas in the nearby mountains left their former commander in peace. [106]

The next item on the agenda was now not merely to avoid being obstructed by the state, but to get access to sizeable credits. Like Ninoy Aquino, the present governor of the area chose a live-and-let-live relationship with Dante and his peasants. In the presidential palace Corazon Aquino probably neither dared nor wanted to move against a man who had been the friend and prisonmate of her assassinated husband during the 1970s.

Late in 1988 the project could be launched.

When I arrived in Tarlac about a year and a half later the 500 skeptical peasants had become more than 4000 enthusiasts. Their plots, which are still individually owned, comprise more than 8000 hectares. [107] The sugarcane-growing Hacienda Luisita [108] close by is 2000 hectares smaller, but is of course endowed with more capital. The cooperative is the largest in the country. Production has increased drastically. The rice, maize, and beans harvested are stored collectively until the purchasers offer acceptable prices. Even those harvest-time workers who are employed by the farmers themselves get better pay under the supervision of the cooperative. The farmers have been able to repay their previous loans and are no longer threatened by bankruptcy. The state credits to the cooperative have even been repaid ahead of schedule. As a result they have been able to get even larger loans from a government which lacks its own success stories and is doing its best to exploit

those of Dante. [109] Inside and outside the country even conservative columnists and business reporters write astonished and admiring articles about the cooperative.

There are of course also problems (such as how much of the net harvest should be invested or how much to pay those employed by the cooperative). But above all, the cooperative suffers from growth pains causing problems of organization and leadership among other things. More and more people want to join in. Schools need to be started as soon as possible. The drought is getting serious and there is fanatic digging for water which in the future may be pumped up by use of windmills rather than with expensive electricity or diesel. When I was there, top priority was given to the new rice mill, which was inaugurated later on in April.

More than seventy elected local leaders cooperate in some twenty groups with one cooperative coordinator and one technical adviser each, constituting the basis of the central leadership. Internal democracy is "developed according to the speed at which the peasants themselves recognize the advantages of cooperation." To prevent infiltration there is a requirement that those who have been employed by the cooperative must have a local base. Those who are to run the new rice mill will also own shares in it, thereby securing their own interest in its effectivity.

In the main office -- with a few long tables at one end of an otherwise empty factory hall which has been rented cheaply and is used mainly as a warehouse -- we discuss the background and development of the Left. Finally I ask Dante whether he has abandoned politics. Has he become merely a progressive money lender with good contacts or a managing director for a farmer's cooperative? Does he want to exploit the success story in Tarlac to run for mayor, governor or congressman in the elections in 1992? What about the self-reliance of the project. Can this project really stand as a model for other areas in the Philippines?

Dante is conscious of the fact that Tarlac is unique in some respects: the farmers own their land, he himself is a seasoned leader, they can now act quite openly, and they can get considerable credits (which the cooperative can repay immediately due to its productivity).

But on the other hand, the preconditions are not extraordinary. The land was not theirs from the start, but they forced the change. The leadership grew with the struggle. Nor is today's room for maneuver a gift from heaven, but a product of hard work. Tarlac is not the only place where this kind of thing can be done, Dante says. I am not so sure, mentioning as an example areas where poor peasants cannot organize cooperative or trade unions because of the landlords' private armies. Dante nods, and says that at least they can now form broad popular defense organizations. But then he adds that "on the other hand, the whole point is really that we might fail here in Tarlac." The argument is that the project cannot succeed within the parameters of the system. Peasants must have more power.

Dante's big idea is that people do not become revolutionaries in Tarlac or anywhere else just by receiving propaganda, but only through their own personal experiences. Now, when the room for maneuver is so much greater than under Marcos, one has to work hard and fast together with the peasants to achieve as much as possible "under existing relations of production." Only when the peasants are themselves confronted with the unavoidably hard opposition from powerful businessmen, politicians and bureaucrats will they be able to develop the common political struggle. "And only then can I decide how I should proceed myself. I am not even sure how far this process has advanced by the time the new elections are held."

How important is the struggle for democracy? Dante believes that most of the peasants are conscious of the fact that their freedom and possibilities to cooperate, as well as elected politicians and reasonably uncorrupt administrators who can fix loans on favorable terms, are indispensable if they are to continue. I would argue that this heavy dependence on -- and motive to fight for -- not only civil rights and freedoms, but also for political rights and a democratic state administration can partly be explained by one factor specific to Tarlac: in contrast to many other important development organizations and action groups in the Philippines, the cooperative in Tarlac does not primarily rely on international assistance. But the risk -- that Dante and all those involved will have to adjust to the best possible patrons in order to sustain the individual project -- is of course great. For how long and

to what extent democracy will make sense in Tarlac remains to be seen and analyzed.

●Coalition-building

Finally, in addition to the attempts by popular democrats and socialists to "empower" people as a means to developing better conditions for genuine democracy, the tradition from the *Plaridel Papers* to create a framework for coalitions between various groups within the radical Left has at present become increasingly important and gained some success.

The present difficult times for the Left may be right for limited cooperation. The mainstream national democrats have faced serious problems, including "efficient" hard repression, since they resumed the armed struggle in 1987. And while many committed activists who have fought oppression and exploitation for many years may become even more devoted, but also more isolated -- since they find few if any alternative avenues which do not imply that they almost have to start anew -- many of those who distance themselves from the mainstream movement do not turn to hard work in alternative projects. Some gains are reported from the labor front, but the student movement is on the retreat. The next military coup attempt may be successful. The recent developments in China and Eastern Europe have generated a lot of questions. And within the cladenstine movement there are even difficulties in carrying out simple discussions given the outright war declared by the state. Finally, new elections in 1992 must soon be tackled.

One aspect of the just mentioned coalition-building is that popular democrats and socialist-oriented intellectuals conduct and publish analyses which open up for discussions what conclusions the many factions could agree upon, rather than on areas of disagreement, while other questions remain to be solved or can be taken up later. This is also reflected in frequent "public forums" where concerned scholars, leaders, and activists with various ideas and experiences are able to meet and discuss. Lectures, statements and comments are often published.

These are not new phenomena, though they may have become more important. But another feature is: at least some leaders within a number of various groupings -- including national democrats, popular democrats, radical

socialists and nationalists, as well as followers of the old Communist Party -- have for some time been able to meet and, in an atmosphere of mutual respect, hold discussions around what concrete issues some or all of them should be able to cooperate on. [110]

All these have favored broader actions in questions such as the U. S. bases, the huge Philippine debt and its consequences for common people, human rights, and a genuine agrarian reform. One could also mention the successful attempts by popular democrats in the provinces to get a broad following and respect among the fighting parties for a concept of "peace-zones." [111] Finally, it is not impossible that some kind of agreement among the various progressive forces can be reached as they face the 1992 elections.

However, these tendencies should not be overestimated. There are not only problems of differing analyses, strategies, and tactics. Everyone concerned carries along assorted bad experiences amassed over the years. Moreover, it is important to remember that coalitions are built mainly on rather short-term questions, focusing on demands rather than alternatives, and relating to traditional pressure politics, primarily in the capital. Therefore, as the 1992 elections approach, one cannot be sure that the alliances are compatible with the efforts to "empower" people and develop bases for more genuine democracy. The coalitions may instead be adjusted to the ways of the 1988 local elections in which sections of the Left related to the best possible patrons within the existing framework of cacique democracy.

Conclusion

The experiences from communist-led political struggles in Indonesia and India indicate that various forms of appropriating surplus through the monopolization of mainly publicly, communally, and cooperatively managed conditions of production -- often in combination with privately owned resources -- which usually are external in relation to the units of production (for instance credits and irrigation) had been difficult to take into proper consideration with the use of predominant Marxist theories. These characteristics may be labelled political rent-capitalist. One can study them without abandoning Marxism, by extending the analyses of the means of

production to include also additional vital conditions of production. If these dynamics are vital, a lot of people should have a material interest in struggling for demonopolization -- though they may vacillate between democratization and privatization. [112]

Clearly, the Philippines is much different from both Indonesia and India. The role of the colonial and post-colonial state, to take one example, has been much less decisive in the Philippines, despite Marcos's attempts at state-led development, and his cronyism. In no way does my brief study of the Philippines allow for systematic comparisons with the above conclusions about neglected rent-capitalist features in India and Indonesia. However, it seems to me that the main reason why it was difficult for almost all sides of the radical Philippine Left to foresee the growing importance of the struggle for democracy was that their basic theoretical and analytical perspectives allowed for the identification of main sources of power only outside of the political sphere.

In the beginning of this article optimum democracy was defined as the actual capacity of the adult citizens to exercise in various forms equal effective rule over resources which they hold in common without undermining the minimum prerequisites for this rule.

Democracy was not vital according to most radical Philippine analysts and ideologues. The essential prerequisites for democracy -- or the "actual capacity... to exercise... equal effective rule" -- were lacking. They had to be fought for. However, this could rarely be done in legal, peaceful, and democratic ways because of the limited rights and liberties available. Furthermore, the essential resources in the society were not even formally public, but in private hands. Even if the organs of the state, and public resources, had been reasonably democratically governed, it would not necessarily have created significantly better preconditions for democracy. Nor would it have undermined the dominating classes. Imperialists, big capitalist compradors, landlords, and others who were in command of the real sources of power -- these instead have to be tackled head on.

This is not to say that all political analyses were equally square. But even most of the dissidents employed short-term tactical

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perspectives in support of the above-mentioned basic views when arguing in favor of, for instance, critical participation in an election. They wanted to start from the actual level of consciousness among the people and win them over step by step or they wanted to create a revolutionary situation; or they recommended struggle over the control of "relatively autonomous" institutions, and so on.

On the other hand, the more independent dissidents who gave priority also to the creation of autonomous organizations, popular participation in addition to representation, pluralism and coalition-building etc. -- and since recently have added the "empowering" of

people within movements and NGOs -- usually abstain from basic analyses of which controls of private and public resources should be tackled, because such considerations could undermine their attempts to build tactical coalitions. This makes it difficult for most of them to indicate which social forces might be interested in fighting for their democratic model in a longer-term perspective. Many different interests and actors are involved, including neo-liberals and new patrons. There is thus a need for closer studies of under what conditions, for how long, and to what extent popular movements may find it instrumental to give priority to the various features of democracy.

Notes

1. Quoted from Alex Magno 'CPP: Rethinking the Revolutionary Process,' in *Diliman Review*, Vol. 34, No. 4, p. 18.

2. The Communist Party of the Philippines, (CPP) was formed by members of the old Philippine Communist Party (PKP) -- which had compromised with Marcos -- and student activists, and was founded in early 1969 (officially, however, on Mao's birthday, December 28, 1968), as was the New People's Army (NPA) which initially was based on members of the Huk guerrilla movement who divorced from an increasingly corrupt commander. The National Democratic Front (NDF) was initiated in 1973 and formally established in 1980.

3. Having disputed this with the Nemenzos in Canberra late in the evening of May 1, 1984, they not only held on to their hospitality but also suggested that I should try to study the issue more carefully by including the Philippines in my comparative project. Therefore, whatever merits this essay might have initially rest with them -- as well as with all the others, both in and outside of the Philippines, who have been kind enough to share their analyses with me. Of course, I remain solely responsible for all the shortcomings. The research has been funded by Uppsala University, the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation, and the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

4. See the editorial statement of *Ang Bayan* (Official publication of the Communist Party of the Philippines) January 15, 1986, and *Liberation* (Published by the National Democratic Front) Vol. XIV, No. 1, 1986.

5. *Ang Bayan*, Vol. XVIII, No. 3, May 1986, pp. 1-3.

6. I am thus relying primarily on interviews with scholars in the field and some of the concerned analysts and ideologues who, from their respective points of view, have also been asked to suggest sources and literature on key issues, which I have then tried to supplement. Comparative points of departure are found in my *Dilemmas of Third World Communism: The Destruction of the PKI in Indonesia* (London: ZED Books, 1984), *What's Wrong With Marxism: On Capitalism and State in India and Indonesia* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications 1989)

What's Wrong with Marxism? Volume 2: On Peasants and Workers in India and Indonesia (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1990), and 'Communists and Democracy: Two Indian Cases and One Debate,' in *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* Vol. 23: 1, 1991 (forthcoming).

7. Alex Magno, "CPP: Rethinking..." pp. 1f. and Gregg R. Jones, *Red Revolution: Inside the Philippine Guerilla Movement* (Westview Press, 1989), p. 157.

8. Allow me to state, in order to avoid possible misunderstandings, that the fact that optimum democracy -- in the sense that it is extended to all resources which the citizens hold in common -- may be economically devastating is quite something else, democracy does not solve all problems.

9. Interviews with the former general secretary of the PKP, Jesus Lava, March 14, 1990, and with Joma Sison, May 5, 1990.

10. See for instance Amando Guerrero (Jose Maria Sison), *Philippine Society and Revolution* (Hongkong: Ta Kung Pao, 1971), and *Build the PKI Along the Marxist-Leninist Line to Lead the People's Democratic Revolution in Indonesia* (The Delegation of the CC PKI, 1971) (The Indonesian attempts in this direction ran aground in 1968). I am also thankful for discussions with, among others, delegation to China, March 16, 1990). When nothing else is stated below, I am drawing up on the *Philippine Society and Revolution*.

11. See for instance *Report to the Central Committee on Lavaite Propaganda for Revisionism and Fascism* (Pulang Tala, 1971). I am also drawing on Jesus Lava's own version, supplemented by that of the former PKP and Huk leader Casto Alejandrino; Interviews, January 19 and March 14, 1990.

12. I hesitate to refer the definitions, which, in any case, follow the Maoist formula. See especially Guerrero, *Philippine Society...* Allow me, however, to stress, as in my previously mentioned analysis of the problems in Indonesia and India, that the 'bureaucrat capitalists' were not assumed to constitute a class or even a faction with a basis of its own, but mainly indicate those capitalists or landlords -- but also

bureaucrats, officers, and politicians drawing on the class basis of, for instance, capitalists - who utilized the state in order to promote themselves as capitalists. I believe this was one of the major factors which paved the way for the lack of interest in democracy among the national democrats.

13. The Philippine analysts were no more successful in specifying this problematic concept than those within the Indonesian or Indian Left. Guerrero (Sison) made his best out of what Mao had stated: See Guerrero, *Philippine Society...* pp. 241 ff. As usual, the attempts of applying economic distinctions related to 'nationalist industrialization' or 'capitalist relations of production in the country' (p. 241) are insufficient and still lead - in the final analysis and when one presses political economist such as Ricardo "Dick" Ferrer, related to the national democrats -- to classifications based on various capitalists' views on the political lines of different organizations. Interview March 21, 1990.

14. The limits were, of course, difficult to identify. This opened up for skilled political maneuvering. Sison himself was (and is) dogmatic with regard to the basic theses but very open to most actions by different actors and movements as long as they do not challenge the leading role and ideology of the national democrats, and during the early and mid-eighties he criticized so-called sectarian positions among the national democrats. Discussions and interviews with Sison (February and October 1987 and May 1990) as well as with dissidents who opposed the boycott decision (May 1990); cf. also what Sison had to say as late as January 1986, *Midweek*, January 15-22, 1986.

15. These ideas of initiating a popular uprising presume that a lot of people would follow suit when the oppressive forces in a village or an area had been undermined or "eliminated." Interestingly enough however, the discussions about the possibilities of igniting the spark seems to have been rare and the existence of at least potential revolutionary situations taken almost for granted. One of the scholars in the field, Armando "Buddy" Malay, Jr. even suggests certain similarities with the Latin American 'foco-strategy' of generating mass support by armed actions. (Interview March 19, 1990). (Cf. also his 'Some Random Reflections on Marxism and Maoism in the Philippines,' in *Marxism in the Philippines, Marx Centennial Lectures* (Quezon City: Third World Studies Centre, University of the Philippines, 1984.) When pressed on this point ("How do you know that there is a revolutionary situation?") Sison could only offer rough indicators such as an inability of the government to rule the country, grave oppression of the people, etc. (Interview May 3, 1990). This reminds me very much of the problems experienced by the so-called Indian Naxalites; see the second volume of my *What's Wrong with Marxism?*, ch. 3 (At least at present, the guerilla leader Dante takes quite another stand to which I shall return below.)

16. When later on the liberation of Saigon took place, it seems to have been a good illustration of what the national democrats would like to think could happen also in the Philippines.

17. See e. g. Guerrero, *Philippine Society...* pp. 276-286.

18. I draw on William Chapman, *Inside the Philippine Revolution* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co., 1988) pp. 64-67 and 78 f., Jones, *Red Revolution...* p. 26ff., and Fran-

cisco Nemenzo, *An Irrepressible Revolution: The Decline and Resurgence of the Philippine Communist Movement* (Manuscript, n. d. - mid-eighties) pp. 54ff., as well as on interviews with Dante, January 1 and May 25-26, 1990. While Dante led impoverished peasants who, in protest against appalling conditions put fire to the adjacent sugarcane fields at the Hacienda Luisita, young lady Corazon grew up in the saloons of the mansion among landlords and businessmen including one who was to become a real favorite of Marcos. Cory married one from another hacienda in Concepcion, not far away. He was Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, who grew up to be a radical liberal politician who saw Marcos as the main enemy, and who developed close relations to popular leaders in Tarlac such as Dante.

19. Two illustrations only, to avoid further gossiping: "Dante is good at minor tactics, not strategical.": Interview May 5, 1990, and "Sison was a good interpreter and compiler of books from whom I never got anything practical, and was a bit of an adventurer.": Interview May 25-26, 1990.

20. Interviews May 5 and 6, 1990.

21. I shall return below to Dante's present project.

22. I am thankful for comments on preliminary version of the following interpretations from Armando "Buddy" Malay Jr., March 19, 1990 and Sison, May 5, 1990.

23. Interview with Sison, May 5, 1990.

24. When I think about the fact that the devastating boycott decision was not even taken by the politburo but in a 3-2 vote by the executive committee, or contemplate a plausible and serious decision in 1971 which may not have been taken by any organ at all, I cannot but remember the way in which some of the leading members of the PKI in Indonesia seems, in a similar fashion, to have handled the more or less provocative information that coup attempts were on their way in October 1965. See Olle Tornquist, *Dilemmas...* Ch. 18.

25. Cf. P. N. Abinales, 'The Left and Other Forces: The Nature and Dynamics of Pre-1986 Coalition Politics,' in *Marxism in the Philippines: Second Series* (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, University of the Philippines, 1988). This caused, for instance, the attempts in the early eighties by Horacio "Boy" Morales, et. al. to broaden the National Democratic Front to run aground and turned Bayan, a legal coalition of radical cause-oriented groups, into an almost exclusive 'naked' set-up even at its founding congress, not to talk about the state of affairs when the boycott decision had been enforced. (Interview with Karina Constantino-David of one of the groups who departed at the congress, March 28, 1990; Documents of the Second National Congress of the *Bagong Alyansang Makabayan* [BAYAN, 1986], and interview with Etta Rosales, leading member of BAYAN, March 23, 1990). And it was almost tragic-comical to hear in 1990 a leading member of this and similar organizations saying that contemporary attempts at more open attitudes had been approved 'from below,' which has nothing to do with the grassroots but with the underground top leaders. (Interview Quezon City March 1990).

26. Armed revolutionary forces had actually advanced to a then rugged and hilly area, which is now the

campus of the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City, Greater Manila.

27. Interviews January 19 and March 14, 1990. It is unfortunate – and interesting – that a recent critical assessment, with no PKP connections, of U.S. policies in these matters, which goes back to the forties, does not discuss similarities between the dilemmas of the Left in, on the one hand, the late forties and early fifties and, on the other hand, the mid-eighties. See Walden Bello, **U.S. Sponsored Low Intensity Conflict in the Philippines, Food First Development Report No. 2** (San Francisco: The Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1987).

28. For recent scholarly contributions, see for instance Rene E. Ofreneo, **Capitalism in Philippine Agriculture** (Quezon City: Foundation for National Studies, 1980) and by the same author **Deregulation and the Agrarian Crisis** (Quezon City: Institute of Industrial Relations, 1987).

29. Interview with Lava, March 14, 1990 Cf. also the extensive writings of Renato Constantino, though I am not aware of straight-forward political conclusions in them. For a brief interesting prediction with some relation to the issues of democracy, see his **The Philippines after Marcos** (Cebu: Tug-Ani Student Publication of UP College, 1985).

30. For a brief interesting review of the Philippine debate, see Virgilio Rojas, **The Mode of Production Controversy in the Philippines: Anatomy of a Linger- ing Theoretical Stalemate, a Comparative Analysis and Evaluation** (Stockholm University, Dept. of Economic History, 1989).

31. Related scholars and activists with a basis in the classical Marxist analysis of the international expansion of capitalism later on concentrated on validating the importance of a so-called new international division of labor. In addition to anti-imperialism, the direct political consequences which followed from analyses of industrialization were naturally related to the role of the working class, including its struggle for democratic rights, but rarely the issues of state, government and democracy. See for instance the writings of Rene Ofreneo, and of Peter Limqueco, Bruce McFarlane and Jan Odhnoff, **Labor and Industry in ASEAN** (Manila: *Journal of Contemporary Asia* Publishers, 1989).

32. For this and the following two paragraphs I am thankful for discussions with Prof. Randolph S. David, head of the Third World Studies Center, University of the Philippines (January 18 and March 20, 1990) who is associated with this tendency, and with Prof. Eduardo C. Tadem (especially March 12 and 14, 1990) and Prof. Francisco "Dodong" Nemenzo (March 23, 1990), though their political backgrounds are partly different. For relevant research related to the dependency perspective, see, for instance, **Political Economy of Philippine Commodities** (Quezon City: U.P. Third World Studies Center, 1983), most of the research and working papers published by the same Center, and its journal *Kasarinlan* which also include discussions on political implications.

33. See for instance Karina Constantino-David, **Community Organization and People's Participation**, paper for the Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, Uppsala, 1984, and by the same author, **The New Politics:**

Lessons from the Democratic Struggle in the Philippines (Quezon City: n. d. - 1985?).

34. Cf. Randolph David, **The Theory and Practice of Unarmed Popular Resistance**, paper to Seminar on People's Responses to Political and Economic Changes, October 12-16, 1984, Salam, Muntlari, Central Java, Indonesia.

35. For instance, Prof. Alex Magno wrote his M. A. thesis on **Relative Autonomy and the Philippine Authoritarian State** (University of the Philippines, Department of Political Science, 1982).

36. Alex Magno, with personal political experiences, has serious doubts about this himself. Interview March 12, 1990.

37. For a more elaborated discussion on this and other attempts to approach the state see the first volume of my **What's Wrong...** Ch. 5.

38. For interesting perspectives on this, see Ben Anderson's "Cacique Democracy in the Philippines: Origins and Dreams," in *New Left Review* No. 169, 1988, Esp. pp. 11 f.

39. Cf. Randolph David, **No Participation in Elections Under a Dictatorship**, speech delivered at the Kongreso ng Mamamayang Pilipino (KOMPIL) Congress, January 7, 1984 and Francisco Nemenzo, "The Left and the Traditional Opposition," in **The Philippines after Marcos**, ed. R. J. May and Francisco Nemenzo, (Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985). I am also thankful for interviews with Randy David (March 20, 1990) and Dodong Nemenzo (May 1, 1984).

40. Ricardo Ferrer, "When Capitalism is Not," in *Con- juncture*, Vol. 1, No. 11-12, December 1988. Cf. "Theoretic and Programmatic Framework for the Development of Underdeveloped Countries," in *New Progressive Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1987, and "The Political Economy of the Aquino Regime: From Liberalism to Bureaucratic Authoritarianism," in *Diliman Review*, Vol. 35, No. 5 and 6, 1987.

41. For Ferrer's earlier writings, see for instance his articles in *New Philippine Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, and Vol. 1, No. 2, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1984, and "On the Mode of Production in the Philippines, Some Old-fashioned Questions on Marxism," in **Marxism in the Philippines: Marx Centennial...**

42. Interview March 21, 1990.

43. See my **Dilemmas...** and the two volumes of **What's Wrong...**

44. *Ibid.*

45. When nothing else is stated I draw mainly on Armando Malay Jr., "The Dialectics of Kaluwagan: Echoes of a 1978 Debate," P. N. Abinales, "The Left and Other Forces: The Nature and Dynamics of Pre-1986 Coalition Politics," and Alex Magno "The Filipino Left at the Crossroads: Current Debates on Strategy and Revolution," in **Marxism in the Philippines: Second Series...** Gregg R. Jones, **Red Revolution...**, pp. 110 ff and Ch. 10, and interviews with Armando Malay (March 19, 1990), and Alex Magno (March 12, and 22, 1990).

46. Sison was captured in late 1977 but participated in the early debate, Cf. his statement in Jose Maria

Sison and Rainer Werning, *The Philippine Revolution: The Leaders' View* (New York: Crane Russak, 1989) pp. 103 f.

47. Interview May 3-4, 1990.

48. Gregg R. Jones, *Red Revolution...* pp. 148 f. (Cf. also *Liberation* Vol. XII, No. 1 and 2 1984, and the evaluations in Vol. XII, No. 4 and 5, 1984). It should also be noted that while the opposition against Marcos won almost nothing in terms of seats in 1978, the gains were substantial in 1984.

49. When nothing else is stated I draw mainly on Gregg R. Jones, *Red Revolution...* Ch. 12, William Chapman, *Inside the Philippine...* pp. 229-233, and the two duplicated discussions papers from 1986 by Marty Villalobos, *Where the Party Faltered and On the Insurrectional Strategy*, his 'Parallelisms: The Philippines Now and El Salvador in 1979-80,' in *Praktika* (A theoretical journal published by the CPP 'National Urban Commission' which appeared with two issues), Vol. 1, No. 2, 1986, and 'Counter-insurgency and the People's War in El Salvador,' in *Kasarinlan*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1987, supplemented by interviews with Alex Magno, March 12, 1990, (cf. also his 'The Filipino Left... pp. 83 ff.) and with Ed Tadem, March 12 and 14, 1990.

50. Including a young intellectual activist who was sent from Manila, later on became a major ideologue among the insurrectionists, and in some writings used the name Marty Villalobos.

51. Sison and Dante were detained but it is still interesting to note that both regarded the 'insurrectionist' line as 'adventurous' (Sison) and 'romantic' (Dante). Sison and Werning, *The Philippine Revolution...* pp. 129f, and interview with Dante, March 26, 1990.

52. With the name of Rodolfo Biazon.

53. See the mentioned discussion papers by Villalobos, especially *Where the Party...* pp. 7 and 10-13.

54. I am drawing on discussions with and the writings of Bosco Parras, see e. g. his 'Labor and Democracy in Chile,' in *Strategies and Practices: Workers in Third World Industrialization*, ed. Inga Brandell (Macmillan, forthcoming).

55. Cf. Gregg R. Jones, *Red Revolution...* pp. 268-275.

56. When nothing else is stated on the united front policy, see P. N. Abinales, 'The Left and Other Forces: The Nature and Dynamics of Pre-1986 Coalition Politics,' in *Marxism in the Philippines: Second Series...* William Chapman, *Inside the Philippine Revolution...* pp. 214-229, and Gregg R. Jones, *Red Revolution...* Ch. 13.

57. Named after a 19th century Filipino hero, Marcelo H. del Pilar, 'who struggled peacefully for reforms but remained open to the revolutionary option.' (Quoted from the cover of the second *Plaridel Paper*, see next footnote.)

58. For this and the following, I am mainly drawing on interviews with Horacio Morales, March 27, 1990 and Ed de la Torre, May 3, 1990 -- supplemented by interviews with Isagani R. Serrano, leading popular democrat, and Clark Soriano, director of the Institute for Popular Democracy, March 20, 1990 -- and the *Plaridel Papers* No. 2, August 1984, and No. 3, April 1985.

59. See especially *Plaridel Papers* No. 2; the quote is from p. 2.

60. I shall, however, return to how it was possible for national democrats to analyze the popular democrats in such terms.

61. Which was associated with the concept of 'native democracy.'

62. One of the ways in which Sison accommodates the popular democrats is, however, to say that they 'request a better form of bourgeois democracy,' and 'initially ours is bourgeois revolution.' Interview May 3, 1990.

63. Cf. also Ed de la Torre, *The Politics of Popular Democracy* (Institute for Popular Democracy: Quezon City, 1986).

64. See especially *Plaridel Papers* No. 3.

65. *Ibid.*, especially pp. 34 ff.

66. The popular democrats were of course right saying that the national democrats were not by definition against elections but simply claimed that we should only participate when, and in such a way that the strategic means and aims were not undermined, instead supported. Discussions about critical participation in elections scheduled for 1987 were actually un- way Cf. *Plaridel Papers*, No. 3., pp. 32 ff.

67. Interestingly enough, the popular democrats I previously recalled the ways in which Washington managed to outmaneuver the Left as far back as the early fifties, by employing similar tactics. See *Plaridel Papers* No. 2, pp. 6 ff.

68. See especially *Plaridel Papers* No. 3, pp. 30 ff.

69. It should also be mentioned that, Dante, among others, who was isolated in detention, tried to reach out with similar propositions.

70. *BISIG* was founded in May 1986 by radical socialists and Marxists with various backgrounds (including Christian social democracy, trade union work, community activism, concerned scholarship, the old as well as new Communist movement). For a review of socialist groups in the Philippines, see Paul Petitjean 'The Trajectory of the Left Forces That Supported Aquino's Campaign,' in *International Viewpoint*, 103, July 14, 1986; See also *BISIG*, 'The Social Vision,' in *Kasarinlan* Vol. 2 No. 3, 1987, and Franco Nemenzo 'Beyond February: The Tasks of Socialism' (paper presented at the *BISIG* founding congress 20 May, 1986) in *Kasarinlan*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1986.

71. I draw mainly on interviews with Randolph D. March 20, 1990; Horacio Morales March 27, 1990; Clark Soriano and Isagani Serrano, January 19 and March 1990; Ed Tadem, March 12 and 14, 1990; Franco Nemenzo, March 23, 1990; and Ed de la Torre, March 1990.

72. For these and similar actions see Felipe S. Rana Jr. et al. *Popular Grassroots Initiatives Toward Genuine Agrarian Reform: A Descriptive Report* (Quezon City: CPAR, 1989?)

73. See, for instance, the reviews by Alex Magno 'CPP: Rethinking...' and 'The Filipino Left at Crossroads...' and by Paul Petitjean 'After the Elec-

Reassessment in the Revolutionary Left," "Communist Party Makes a Self-criticism" and "A Year of Debate...," in *International Viewpoint*, June 2 and June 30, 1986, and June 29, 1987 respectively.

74. RAM, Reform the Armed Forces of the Philippines Movement, was important in the overthrow of Marcos.

75. Interview May 3-4, 1990.

76. See *Praktika*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (May) 1986 and No. 2 (August) 1986.

77. That the U.S. was deeply involved is quite something else. And one should not forget basic economic determinants, including the ways in which Marcos's attempts at state-led development were undermined by international creditors, including the IMF. According to Rene Ofreneo, concerned scholar and Dean of U. P. School of Labor and Industrial Relations, this may even have been the main cause for the downfall of Marcos. Interview March 26, 1990.

78. For a bold version, see Sol del Pilar, "When a Zigzag Turns a Longer Route," in *Praktika*, Vol. 1 No. 2, 1986.

79. See, for instance, "Ceasefire Forum" in *Diliman Review* Vol. 34, No. 4, Edilberto Zamora, "A Reply," in *Kasarinlan*, Vol. 3 No. 4, 1987, Pepe Manalo "Political Strategy and the Political Negotiations," and Gregg R. Jones *Red Revolution...* Ch. 15.

80. Written lecture by Sison dated January 26, 1987, Stockholm, pp. 4f.

81. For an interesting contemporary analysis, see Ed Tadem, "The Agrarian Question Confronts the Aquino Government," in *Kasarinlan*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 1987.

82. A clandestinely distributed discussion paper written under the pseudonym "Pepe Manalo" and later on published under the title "Political Strategy and the Political Negotiations..." It is interesting to note that this terminology was later on applied by the top-Communist leaders when the "Pop-dem question" was discussed as late as in early 1988; others maintained that it might not merely be a tactic but could even serve as an alternative programme. (CPP document captured by the authorities from the archives of Rafael Baylosis in early 1988.) At least as early as 1987 the organization Volunteers for Popular Democracy was included in the National Democratic Front, although identified as having a shallow role as a united front tactic. The argument that there was a need for a strategic conceptualization of the legal struggle was, however, regarded as problematic, and it was stated that the "popular democrats" had initiated cooperation with "non-national democratic progressive forces" without the approval of the party. (Captured minutes of the CPP CC Plenum, Jan. 6 - March 18, 1987).

83. "Bourgeois Elections and Parliament: Props for Counter-Revolution," *Ang Bayan*, March No. 4, March 1987.

84. For a report on the formation of *Partido ng Bayan*, see *Midweek*, Vol. 1, No. 36, October 1, 1986.

85. Indirectly confirmed by Sison and his wife in interview, May 3-4, 1990. Sison himself has written that the *Partido ng Bayan* could "relieve the legal mass organizations and alliances of the burden of having to

debate and divide over whether to participate or not in voting exercises." They could instead "concentrate on fundamental sectoral and multisectoral issues and simply decide and set forth the criteria for influencing the electoral progress." Sison and Werning, *The Philippine Revolution...* p. 169.

86. Ben Anderson, "Cacique Democracy..."

87. See *Condensed Report on the May Elections*, Institute for Popular Democracy (Quezon City, 1987) and summaries of a survey and analysis of political clans in the Philippines carried out by the same institute in *Conjuncture* (published by the Institute for Popular Democracy), Vol. 1, No. 2, and in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 14, 1989, which also included additional material. (Cf. also Ed de la Torre, "Structural Obstacles to Democratization in the Philippines II: Continuing of Political Clans," in *Conjuncture*, Vol. 1 No. 7, June 1988, and the report in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 21, 1987.) I draw also on interviews with the director of the institute, Clark Soriano, March 20, 1990, and would like to thank Ben Anderson for fruitful conversations on related issues; cf. his "Cacique Democracy..."

88. To get an idea of some expectations, see Ed de la Torre, "Electoral Etudes," in *Midweek*, Vol. 2, No. 23, May 13, 1987.

89. Interview March 26, 1990. The chairman of PnB claimed, however, that Dante was out for votes (*Midweek*, Vol. 2, No. 37, September 23, 1987). And many seemed to agree on the fact that the radical alliance should have abstained from the senatorial elections and concentrated on the Congress. See "Vanguard of the New Politics: The Magnificent 7," *Midweek*, Vol. 2, No. 19, April 1, 1987.

90. Here and below I draw especially on interviews with Dante, March 25 and 26, 1990; Joe Castro, previous leading member of PnB and one of its candidates for the Congress, March 25, 1990; Horacio Morales, candidate for the senate, March 27, 1990; Etta Rosales, leading member of Bayan and PnB, March 23, 1990; Ed de la Torre, leading member of VPD, May 3, 1990; Clark Soriano, director of the Institute for Popular Democracy and in charge with their studies of the elections; and on the interview with Fidel Agcaolli, chairman of PnB, in *Midweek*, Vol. 2, No. 37, September 23, 1987.

91. For one general review, see Gregg R. Jones, *Red Revolution...* pp. 162 f., and 239 ff. It might also be interesting to note that the chairman of the Manila-Rizal committee, Filemon Lagman, who in 1978 revolted against the party leadership by suggesting critical participation in the elections and thereafter was purged, has now resumed his position as he is reported to be in favor of armed urban actions and "insurrectionist" perspectives, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 23, 1990, pp. 18 ff.

92. See the interview with Dante (Panayam kay Dante Hinggil sa Estratehiya) in *Diliman Review*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 1987.

93. For interesting analyses, see *Kasarinlan* Vol. 3, No. 2, 1987 and Francisco Nemenzo, "A Season of Coups," in *Kasarinlan*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 1987.

94. I continue to draw mainly on many of the sources

mentioned in relation to the May 1987 elections. Cf. also Gregg R. Jones, *Red Revolution...* pp. 310 f.

95. Interview with Jalandoni May 3, and with Sison May 3-4, 1990.

96. I am mainly drawing from interviews with Isagani Serrano, Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement, January 19, March 20 and May 29, 1990, and Clark Soriano, Institute for Popular Democracy, January 19 and March 20, 1990, Horacio Morales, March 27, 1990, and Ed de la Torre, May 3, 1990, plus various issues of Rural Reconstruction Forum, and *Conjuncture*, and Ed de la Torre's *The Politics of Popular Democracy...*, Horacio Morales's *Political Economy of Popular Democracy* (Quezon City, Institute of Popular Democracy, 1986) Selected Speeches: Isagani Serrano (Quezon City: PRRM, 1990), and by the same author **Developing a Fourth Generation NGO Strategy**, paper to the 31st International Training, International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, October 11, 1989. See also Alex Magno, "Popular Democracy as a Political Form," in *Dilliman Review*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 1986.

97. I am particularly thankful for discussions with Karina Constantino-David, Professor of Community Development and formerly Mrs. Aquino's Deputy Secretary for Social Affairs and Development and herself an activist in the field, March 28, 1990. See also her **Community Organizations and People's Participation**, paper for a seminar with the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Uppsala, May 1984, and **The New Politics: Lessons from the Democratic Struggle in the Philippines** (manuscript 1985; available with the library of the U. P. Third World Studies Center).

98. The dogmatic national democrats are no exception. If for no other reason, they need their own NGOs to raise money. (Confirmed off record by leading members.)

99. I continue to draw on the interview just mentioned with Karina Constantino-David (Cf. also Karina Constantino-David, **The Limits and Possibilities of Philippine NGOs in Development**, paper for the University of the Philippines Round Table Discussions on Participation, March 9, 1990) and would also like to thank among others, Mario Bolasco, for sharing with me his analysis of the role of the church, Interview March 19, 1990.

100. Her movement is called *KABISIG* (linked arm in arm).

101. In relation to this and the two paragraphs above, I am especially thankful for a summary of recent findings from a mid-1990 review of some foreign aid

projects and several NGOs in the Philippines. Private communication dated July 26, 1990.

102. Cf. my "Communists and Democracy: The Indian Cases and One Debate."

103. For the following I am mainly relying on discussions and interviews with Dante Fatima-Penilla Buscayno, his companion in the project, Jan. 21 and March 24-26, 1990, their unpublished paper **Cooperatives: A Self-help Approach to Poverty Alleviation** (February, 1990) and news clippings.

104. Directly after a TV show where he had analyzed the election results, terrorists attacked his car with sub-machine guns, but were "only" able to murder two of his friends and seriously wound two others. See also Fatima Penilla Sibal's story in *Dilliman Review* Vol. 35, No. 3, 1987.

105. See the interview with Dante in *Dilliman Review*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 1987.

106. At present the mainstream national democrats are unhappy with Dante and his project (interview with the representative of NDF Luis Jalandoni, May 3, 1990, and with Sison, May 3-4, 1990), while dissidents are often favorable, though eager to stress certain special features in Tarlac.

107. According to written communication with Fatima Buscayno (August 12, 1990) the project has since then grown steadily and expanded into an additional district (no. 1) in Tarlac and the Pampanga and Nueva Ecija provinces.

108. Property of the Cojuangcos, including Mrs. Aquino.

109. Even then Agrarian Secretary Florencio Abad told me (March 20, 1990) that "Dante is, and I understand him, tired, of being used by everybody: by the government, by various groups, by everybody..."

110. I draw on interviews in March 1990 with people more or less directly involved. I am also told that a more open attitude has been authorized by the top national democratic leadership.

111. See e.g. Henry G. P. Ysaac, Jr. "The Nagapopdem Experience," in *Conjuncture* Vol. 3, No. 4, 1990.

112. For the general conclusion, see my "What's Wrong with Marxism...." Vol. 1 and 2. For a previous attempt to study when democracy made sense for Communism in West Bengal and Kerala, see my "Communists and Democracy...."