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The New Khmer Rouge

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the issue of outside aid is more and more pressing. The guerrillas of the New People's Army are increasing rapidly in number. Moving in ever larger units, they have a soaring demand for arms, food, and equipment. The NPA also has enough potential recruits to double in size if it had the money to equip and support them as well. But the economic depression that helps produce so many potential recruits also makes NPA "tax collecting" increasingly less lucrative, no matter how much extortionate violence is applied.

If the future brings no substantial flow of money to the Communists from abroad, and if Marcos were to die or be toppled and succeeded by a competent, reformist government, it is quite conceivable that the current rapid growth of the Communists could stall. But if the money were to start flowing in substantial amounts and Marcos, who has lost the moral authority necessary to fight the Communists, were to hang onto power, then it is highly likely that Rodolfo Salas will be heading the People's Democratic Republic of the Philippines sometime in the 1990's and unveiling "a Pol Pot future."

But the most persuasive case that the Soviets have begun aiding the Philippine Communists was made by two Filipinos in separate interviews this summer in Manila. Both are very knowledgeable about what is going on inside the Communist party. One is hostile to the CPP; one is very sympathetic. Both said that Moscow is split over how to handle the CPP.

On one side, according to both these sources, is the International Department (of the Central Committee) of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). This organization usually takes the leading role in the USSR's relations with foreign Communist parties. But afflicted with bureaucratic inertia, the International Department today is run by conservatives who are comfortable with their decades-long ties to the old, pro-Moscow Communist party in the Philippines, the PKP (which since the expulsion of Sison and his supporters in 1967 has been declining in size and influence in comparison with the CPP and whose existence today largely depends on Moscow's recognition of it as a fraternal Communist party). According to this analysis, the International Department bureaucrats have resisted the CPP's repeated requests that they withdraw their recognition of the PKP and recognize the CPP instead.

Though a reading of CPP and PKP statements suggests that the International Department has been trying to convince the PKP to negotiate a modus vivendi with the CPP, hopes for any such agreement seem to have collapsed. By early this year, the CPP had escalated its attacks on the PKP's leaders, calling them "professional political swindlers [who] are trying to sneak into the ranks of the revolutionary Left." The CPSU's International Department responded in June by inviting the PKP's general secretary, Felicisimo Macapagal, to Moscow where the CPSU and the PKP, according to Tass, pledged their "fraternal solidarity."

But the more pragmatic and energetic KGB shares neither the old loyalties nor the new qualms of the International Department, according to my informants. Recently, they say, the KGB has developed close relations with the CPP. The two sides are in frequent contact with each other both in the Philippines and abroad, but precisely what kind of business they are transacting is unknown. Both sources assume that the KGB is assisting the CPP but they have no proof.

Clearly the CPP's new generation of coldly opportunistic leaders would no longer hesitate to accept substantial aid from the Soviets if it were offered. And just as clearly the CPP currently needs a generous foreign backer. For in the last year, the Communists' successes have brought them to a critical juncture where

I

April 13, 1974. Three U.S. Navy officers are riding in a jeep along a new road hugging the boundary of the Subic Bay naval base in the Philippines. All three are Seabees—Navy construction men—and their destination is a half-mile farther north where a Seabee battalion is continuing work on the road. Suddenly shots ring out. One officer is killed instantly. A moment later, the two others, badly wounded, are finished off with shots to the head fired at point-blank range. Later, Philippine intelligence informs U.S. authorities that the Navy men had been ambushed by members of the still fledgling Communist guerrilla group, the New People's Army (NPA). The guerrilla leader responsible for the attack, as he had been for previous attacks on U.S. military personnel stationed in the Philippines, is a twenty-six-year-old former engineering student who calls himself Commander Bilog. His real name is Rodolfo Salas.

Rodolfo Salas has long since graduated from being the leader of a five-man NPA hit squad. Now thirty-seven, he is the ruthless and brilliant leader of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), presiding over the fastest growing, most threatening, and arguably the most brutal Communist insurgency in the world today. U.S. analysts believe that if the corrupt and exhausted regime of President Ferdinand Marcos remains in power and the situation in the Philippines continues to deteriorate at its current pace, Rodolfo Salas could one day be leading the People's Democratic Republic of the Philippines, the name the Communists have already chosen for their new state.

Yet only a tiny minority of Filipinos has ever heard of Salas and only a handful of non-Communist politicians has met him during the eight years he has been chairman of the CPP. Most politically-minded Filipinos, if asked, will say that the leader of the Communists in the Philippines is Jose Maria Sison, who founded the CPP in 1968. But Sison, a poet, university teacher, and Maoist ideologue, has been languishing in jail since 1977, his influence largely eroded. It has been Salas the engineer who has turned Sison's vision of a nationwide Communist insurgency into a full-fledged reality. From a few thousand party members and guerrilla fighters who were at most a serious nuisance in Sison's day, Salas has been instrumental in building the Communist movement into a formidable force. Today, the CPP credibly boasts that it has "way over" 30,000 members, while the NPA has "way beyond" 20,000 guerrillas, now fighting in at least 59 of the nation's 73 provinces.

In news reports from the Philippines, nearly all the responsibility for the Communist upsurge is being given to Ferdinand Marcos. And indeed he has played an essential role. During his twenty years in power, the country has suffered from colossal mismanagement of its economy, corruption akin to looting, and the near destruction of the nation's basic political institutions. Without all this help from Marcos, it seems, the Communists would have remained about as inconsequential as they are today in, say, Indonesia or Thailand.

Yet by trashing the Marcos regime and blaming it alone for the Communist upsurge, we fail to give proper attention and credit to the Communists themselves. For it has been their fanaticism, bequeathed by Sison, combined with their increasing ruthlessness and opportunism since Salas became leader, that have also proved essential to their success.

While Salas shares Sison's original radical goal of transforming the Philippines into a Communist dictatorship, he seems to be far less concerned than the party's Maoist founder about what methods are used to achieve that goal. Under Salas, the Communist guerrillas are waging a largely unreported campaign of terror, assassination, and torture in the Philippine countryside. As a radical but independent leftist who knows both the CPP and the NPA well says: "I'm afraid we might be staring at a Pol Pot future." In the cities, the working style of the CPP is so paranoid, rigid, and totalitarian that even left-wing nationalists have quit anti-Marcos alliances controlled by the Communists. The most respected of these independent nationalists, former Senator Jose Diokno, states: "They [the Communists] feel they're so close to victory that they only need two or three of us." Abroad, the once Maoist CPP has dropped its pro-Chinese stance and, with Salas taking the lead, is avidly courting the Soviet Union for official recognition and for financial and military aid.

Most chilling of all is the rapidly mounting evidence of the NPA's reign of terror, rivaling the Khmer Rouge in savagery if not yet in scale. Most of the reports come from the countryside, where the more than 20,000 Communist guerrillas, with far less than one modern rifle per man, have a largely demoralized, corrupt, and ineffective Philippine military tied up in knots. From the foothills of the Cagayan Valley in northern Luzon to the city slums of southern Mindanao, the NPA continues to tighten its hold. That its primary means of accomplishing this is terror seems well known among leftists, civil-rights lawyers, rural parish priests, and

Church-related bodies in Europe to Communist-dominated organizations within the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines. At least some members of the European Church organizations know precisely what is happening to their money. *Ang Bayan* reported some time ago that "a number of foreign Church people ... have also visited the NPA guerrilla zones."

Another, increasingly important, source of funds are the so-called Philippine "solidarity groups" that Jalandoni has been instrumental in setting up in Europe. Such groups exist in Sweden, Norway, West Germany, Belgium, Holland, Ireland, and apparently several other countries. Some of these groups appear to be the offspring of small, radical splinter parties. Recently, several of them sent envoys to the Philippines to see first-hand how their donations are being spent by the NPA. A U.S. journalist who spent several days this summer at an NPA camp said a Norwegian woman was in the camp for discussions with the NPA guerrilla leader about giving financial help that would enable the NPA to obtain additional arms. Several German and Japanese radicals have also spent time with the NPA.

The financial help that the CPP is receiving from abroad does not seem to have increased to the point that it is making a huge difference. But it is already substantial, a fact that is almost universally ignored by the U.S. media. In August alone, the *Washington Post* reported that the NPA is receiving "negligible foreign support" while the *Washington Times* flatly stated that "there is no evidence of any material foreign support."

In fact, the CPP has been openly acknowledging since 1974 that it is actively seeking and often receiving material aid from abroad. As recently as this spring, Tony Zumel declared in an NDF news release that

we have made an appeal to all freedom-loving peoples around the world for political and material assistance and the response has been heartening. Such assistance comes from revolutionary, progressive, and democratic organizations, institutions and individuals who care deeply for our people's liberation struggles and welfare.

The question left hanging is whether the Soviets are involved in the flow of foreign assistance to the Philippine Communists. Since the 1981 arms shipment, which embarrassed both the Soviets and the CPP leadership when it became public, not a single well-documented case of Soviet aid has surfaced. Rumors abound that Vietnam is helping the NPA, but no hard evidence seems to exist. A strong circumstantial case is made by some that at least a few of the radical and Church organizations tunneling money from Europe to the Philippine Communists must be controlled or bankrolled by Soviet agents.

der Salas with increasing unhappiness since being captured in 1977, was enraged. In an exchange with me of questions and answers from prison in mid-1982, he contemptuously referred to the new NDF program as “this supposed draft.” He also suggested that anyone in the CPP or the NDF who had approached the Soviet Union for aid was a renegade: “I do not believe that the National Democratic Front as a whole has ever approached the Soviet Union for assistance. Nobody wants a bear hug. It can be fatal.” He added that “China’s diplomatic line is correct.”

During this period Sison several times signaled his opposition to the changes under way in the CPP. But it soon became obvious that the founding father was being ignored. By mid-1983, the CPP had turned the corner and was openly leaning toward the Soviets while almost completely ignoring the People’s Republic of China. *Ang Bayan* began praising developments in Cambodia, Vietnam, Mozambique, and Angola and dropped its earlier attacks on Soviet and Cuban aggression. Except for the occasional reference to “antagonistic contradictions” between Vietnam and Cambodia, the CPP’s statements on foreign affairs are completely consistent with Soviet policy. And this summer, in the exchange of questions and answers, Sison himself seemed to have accepted in principle the idea of the CPP’s receiving Soviet aid.

Meanwhile, using the National Democratic Front as its vehicle, the CPP is actively courting the Soviets in Europe. Luis Jalandoni, a Filipino and former priest who serves as the NDF’s international representative in Amsterdam, is successfully tying the NDF, and by implication the CPP, ever closer to the Soviet bloc. Jalandoni was a delegate to last year’s International Conference on Nicaragua and for Peace in Central America held in Lisbon. There he conferred with Vietnam’s education minister. Jalandoni also worked hard at identifying the NDF and its European supporters with the movement opposed to the deployment of U.S. missiles in Western Europe.

Jalandoni’s most important task has evidently been raising funds for the Communist movement back home in the Philippines. He seems to have been very successful. As far back as the summer of 1981, according to unchallenged affidavits, Jalandoni provided \$30,000 for travel and transportation to the CPP arms smugglers who passed through Europe on their way to South Yemen. Today, the amount of money flowing into the Philippines from Western Europe each year is estimated by Philippine and U.S. analysts to be at least in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. As already noted, the lion’s share of this money seems to be flowing from

others whose anti-Marcos credentials give them rare access to information about how the NPA really operates.

Typical is a leftist professor in Manila whose radical teachings have helped inspire many students to join Communist-front groups like the League of Filipino Students. Recently, several of his students won much-sought-after invitations to visit NPA strongholds in various parts of the countryside and view the revolution first-hand for a couple of weeks. But, recounts this professor, many returned sickened and appalled by what they had witnessed. They watched as Communist guerrillas killed “suspected informers” before an audience of villagers. “But it’s not just an execution. It’s cruel, slow, painful.” The professor demonstrates how the guerrillas stab the victim in the legs, buttocks, back, shoulders, and stomach before plunging a dagger into his heart. “Is this happening in a particular region of the country?” the professor is asked. “All over,” is his pained reply.

“Suspected informer” is a phrase heard again and again in accounts of how the NPA holds sway over thousands of villages. The NPA readily applies the condemnatory label to a villager who turns down the “invitation” of a newly arrived NPA squad to a lecture in a nearby hut on the evils of capitalism. Or to a minor local official who speaks out against the Communists. Or to a peasant who resists paying NPA “taxes.”

In a village in southern Luzon this spring, a Philippine journalist accompanying an NPA band witnessed a man being led away for execution, again on grounds that he was a suspected informer. The journalist, vaguely sympathetic to the NPA, pointed out to a guerrilla that the case against the man, a recent arrival in the village, was a circumstantial one, and flimsy at that. The guerrilla’s response was a dismissive shrug. The journalist accompanied the NPA to several villages in the area and discovered that in every one, no matter how small, the NPA had executed people.

Desperate for more funds to feed and arm their burgeoning ranks, NPA units are applying their terrorist methods to extorting money from rich and poor alike. No one seems exempt anymore. Early this year, for example, when Philippine Protestant missionaries in the province of Surigao del Norte resisted NPA demands for a hefty share of their Sunday collections, an NPA squad invaded their chapel during Sunday services where they shot and killed one pastor in front of his congregation, beat up a “deaconess” at another chapel, and, that night, tracked down and killed another pastor.

As law and order continue to deteriorate, NPA hit squads (the foreign media have adopted the NPA’s slightly heroic-sounding name, Armed City Partisans, for such groups) are operating with increasing ease in urban areas. Recent targets

have included unsympathetic Philippine journalists (whose deaths draw little attention compared with those of anti-Marcos journalists). In the city of Cebu, the NPA issued statements taking credit for shooting and killing two outspokenly anti-Communist radio commentators. The Communists are also turning their guns on the leaders of democratic trade unions. According to Ernesto Herrera, the courageous general secretary of the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP), the Communists began killing rival labor leaders last year. "We've lost nine [TUCP leaders killed by the Communists] in the last ten months," he reports.

There is also a steady stream of official accounts of NPA atrocities from the Philippine military that are carried mainly in pro-government newspapers. Such reports have little impact because the credibility of the military and the pro-Marcos media has long since been squandered. But independent sources say that the government accounts hardly do justice to the full horror of the violence perpetrated by the NPA in the countryside.

Here are a few of the more recent military accounts of NPA violence, confirmed by secondary sources:

- In trying to establish its control over a remote gold-rush site in the province of Davao del Norte, the NPA executed at least 45 people in a period of less than five months, ending this March. Most of the victims were retrieved from a body pit. Many showed signs of having been tortured; and indeed, eyewitnesses confirmed that the NPA had tortured many of the victims before killing them.
- On June 15 of this year three NPA guerrillas grabbed Corazon Pacana Coloso, a minor municipal official in northern Mindanao who had the misfortune of being the provincial governor's sister. The guerrillas told the hastily assembled townspeople that they were convening a "people's court." They accused her of corruption, pronounced her guilty, and then shot her in the head. She died instantly.
- The military's statistics show that the NPA killed 138 local Philippine officials in 1984. And the number of such killings this year is running ahead of last. No one appears to be challenging these numbers, even though a good case can be made that they understate the reality. Some of the local officials being executed are undoubtedly corrupt by Western standards. But because

of members of the Communist Party of the Philippines, it seems that only the estimated half-dozen members of the Politburo's executive committee share knowledge of the secret program.

IX

The party leadership's ultra-elitist style was evident as early as 1981 when Rodolfo Salas and a small group around him secretly decided to seek aid from the Soviet bloc. The decision was a momentous one. Since Sison had founded the CPP as a classic Maoist party, all the basic documents of the CPP and the NDF had denounced the foreign policy of the Soviet Union as social-imperialist. This was still the party's position when Salas approved a scheme to smuggle arms from Eastern Europe into the Philippines through South Yemen, which is firmly within the Soviet bloc and has Soviet and East German military personnel based on its soil.

For the record, the arms were donated to the Philippine Communists not by the Soviets but by a branch of the Palestine Liberation Organization. But this was a veneer that even Horacio Morales, a key figure in the smuggling operation, had difficulty in treating seriously. In a one-on-one courthouse interview after he had been arrested, I asked Morales why the CPP had decided to accept aid from the Soviets. "It's a few steps removed from the Soviets," he said with a nervous laugh, adding, "but it's still considered separate, no?"

Long after the arms (AK-47's and Makharov pistols) were aboard a freighter and on their way to the Philippines, the CPP leadership continued to suggest to rank-and-file members that there had been no change in the party's antagonism toward the Soviet Union. The August 1981 issue of *Ang Bayan*, for instance, denounced "Soviet social-imperialism." When the smuggling operation was later exposed and a few angry party members accused Salas and others of secretly acting contrary to party policy, the leadership lamely replied that the arms smuggling was the work of the CPP's National Democratic Front and not of the CPP itself. The fact that the NDF did not drop the anti-Soviet planks from its program until the year after the arms arrived was never explained. Nor was the fact that it was party leader Salas who gave final approval to the Soviet arms shipment.

The CPP leadership did not go public with its swing to a pro-Soviet position until January 1982, when it authorized the NDF to issue a new draft program that dropped all the Maoist jargon and the attacks on the Soviets. The party's Maoist founder, Jose Maria Sison, who had been watching developments in the CPP un-

With its promises of reeducation camps, sweeping nationalization of private business, and an anti-American stance in foreign policy, the NDF program by most yardsticks earns a Communist label. But the NDF's parent, the CPP, is telling its members that the NDF program represents only the beginning of the revolution in the Philippines. Says the CPP's *Ang Bayan*:

In essence, the [current] people's democratic revolution is a bourgeois democratic revolution and not a proletarian revolution... What will be the direction of the democratic coalition government, of the people's democracy that will be established? Depending on the class composition of the revolutionary coalition, it could lead toward socialism or toward capitalism.

In other words, when the NPA is marching down the streets of Manila, the real struggle has just begun: "The party of the revolutionary Filipino proletariat [i.e., we of the CPP] will bend every effort to advance Philippine society toward the correct path of socialism..." Said a member of the central committee in an interview this summer: "That [the NDF program] is the minimum program. The maximum program is Communism."

So what are the constituent parts of the CPP program? In informal conversations this past summer, CPP members talked loosely about a second, radical stage of the revolution that would push the Philippines to the far Left of the Communist world. Evoking memories of the Khmer Rouge's forced evacuation of Phnom Penh, one CPP member said that "most probably" the population of Manila would have to be significantly reduced. "We can't support Manila the way it is."

Another said that the NDF promise "to distribute land to the landless tillers" represents only a halfway house on the road to the total communization of agriculture. "There will be a transition period of land reform and cooperatives... We will invite them [the peasants] to join cooperatives and try to show them the benefits of collective labor. Collectivization will be implemented step by step." And how long will all this take? "A few years," said one. "Easily ten to twenty years," said another.

In truth, none of these relatively low-level party members really knows what the CPP program is. They were simply repeating the kind of talk they had been hearing inside party circles. Like the low-ranking Khmer Rouge soldiers who entered Phnom Penh not knowing that the next day they would be ordering the populace to evacuate, these good soldiers of the CPP are ready to carry out the second stage of the revolution when their leaders unveil the plan. Among the thousands

the aim of the killings is not to clean up corruption but to terrorize officials and villagers alike into knuckling under to the NPA, strong and popular local officials are being killed also. Says a U.S. official saddened by *déjà vu*: "It's just like Vietnam. The guerrillas are killing the worst and the best local officials. They don't worry about the mediocre ones; they know they'll go along."

- Inevitably, the increasingly violent NPA is turning on itself. Intelligence sources say the NPA recently executed several of its own members in southern Luzon in the belief that they were government agents. They discovered, too late, that they were mistaken. In the Davao area of Mindanao, Brigadier General Dionisio Tan-Gatue claims the NPA killed 28 or 29 of its own men who had been wounded in an encounter May 14 and were slowing down the escape of the other guerrillas.

Although the NPA's reign of terror is largely ignored by foreign correspondents and the anti-Marcos media, it is no secret among Communist-party members. On the final day of my most recent trip to the Philippines, I told a key member of the CPP that I had repeatedly heard horror stories about NPA terror and violence directed against civilians in almost every part of the Philippines. He offered not a word of argument, not even a suggestion that the stories might be overblown. "It is the biggest problem we have right now," he conceded. Yet evidently only a minority of his fellow members agree that it is a problem. The issue of NPA brutality toward civilians was raised at a clandestine meeting of national CPP and NPA cadres in late 1984. The outcome then was inconclusive. The belated response of Salas and the top CPP leadership came in the CPP's official, underground newspaper, *Ang Bayan* ("The Nation"), this spring. Charges of NPA abuses amount to "slander," *Ang Bayan* stated, because everyone knows that the NPA has "iron discipline."

Few but the most naive city-bound party members would believe such a claim. Instead, typical party members seem to have accepted the fact that they are players in an increasingly violent drama. These days, the phrase "blood debts will be paid in blood" rolls off the lips of party members as easily as it does off the pages of *Ang Bayan*. Such members have stopped making distinctions among the people who are murdered by the NPA. As three party members made clear in a discussion

with me, by definition anyone killed by the NPA must be a “*demonyo*”—a term that the NPA initially used to describe enemy spies but which has evolved into a label for anyone the NPA decides to execute. *A Guide to Establishing a Mass Base in the Rural Areas*, a manual prepared for the exclusive use of party cadres inside the NPA, makes it clear that the guerrillas have party approval to kill virtually anyone they want. Among the broadly defined categories of people who can be executed are “enemies of the people, spies, and unreformed elements who hinder the development of the revolutionary movement in the *barrio*.”

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) claims that the NPA is currently killing more than 130 civilians a month, not including local government officials. Most of the civilians are victims of so-called liquidations, meaning murders, assassinations, or executions. Although the Marcos regime’s statistics are often suspect, these numbers seem to be “clean.” For one thing, the same military reports that tally these civilian deaths contain other statistics on NPA gains that are remarkably consistent with claims that the NPA is making in its underground publication, *Pulang Bandila* (“Red Flag”). And dissidents in the armed forces who are otherwise critical of how the military conducts its business say the reporting of NPA killings is carefully corroborated by death certificates or eyewitness accounts.

But while these numbers are apparently “clean,” they fall far short of the truth. Without doubt, the actual number of civilian liquidations carried out by the NPA is much higher, quite possibly four or five times higher, than the military claims. The explanation is that NPA killings in remote *barrios* where its power is greatest are rarely reported, particularly not to the untrusted military. A peasant who journeys into town to tell officials of a Communist-ordered execution in his *barrio* is inviting, at best, a clumsy military raid on his village or, much worse, an NPA accusation that he is an informer.

If one ventures into areas in the Philippines where NPA guerrillas are active, the story is always the same. Where the NPA prevails, a code of fearful silence prevails: even if the NPA kills your brother or your best friend, you do not report it. When the NPA killed one of those Protestant missionaries in his home in Surigao del Norte, the guerrillas told his wife that she too would be killed if she reported the killing to the authorities. The civilian killings that do become widely known are usually those that the NPA wants widely known—where the guerrillas make an example of a victim by staging a pre-execution “trial” or by simply leaving his bullet-ridden body in the town square.

days when Salas was a hit-squad leader ambushing U.S. Navy personnel at Subic. Today the areas immediately adjacent to Clark and Subic are among the most peaceful in the Philippines. Instead of attacking U.S. military officers and heightening Washington’s alarm over the deteriorating situation in the Philippines, the NPA is quietly collecting “revolutionary taxes” from the businesses that prosper at the periphery of the bases.

VIII

The logical question to ask about the issue of U.S. military bases, or any other major issue, should be: what is the official position of the Communist Party of the Philippines? In fact, what is the official program of the Communist Party of the Philippines? Every Communist party on earth, after all, has an official program. But ask any rank-and-file member of the CPP what his party’s program is and watch the uncertainty flicker over his face. When he recovers, he always has an answer. The trouble is that every CPP member seems to have a different answer.

Answer One: “The CPP’s program is that of the founding document, *Programme for a People’s Democratic Revolution*, issued in 1968.” Obviously not, say other party members. And with good reason: the 1968 program, with its praise of Mao and Albania and its attacks on institutions that no longer exist, has long been out of date.

Answer Two: “*Our Urgent Tasks* [1976] was an update of the party program.” This answer was offered only by Jose Maria Sison, in a written response to questions I relayed to him this summer. The document he refers to was the last party document he wrote before being jailed.

Answer Three: “The party has no program.” This answer, volunteered by more than one party member, is not credible. It is true only in the very narrow, technical sense that the CPP has apparently not held a full-dress party congress, at which party programs and the like are formally ratified, since the founding meeting in 1968. But this does not prevent the top CPP leadership from having its own program that it keeps secret from party members.

Answer Four: “The CPP program is the same as the program of the National Democratic Front.” That sounds like a confession of what we know is true—that the Communists completely control the NDF. But the fact that the CPP controls the NDF does not mean that the public NDF program is the same as the secret CPP program.

freedom to be enjoyed by those who would seek the restoration of imperialist, landlord, comprador, and fascist rule? Democracy will be enjoyed by the majority composed of the nationalist and democratic classes, while their class adversaries shall be suppressed—that is, prevented from regaining power.

This sort of duplicity could not possibly be surprising to any student of Communist history, but there are few such people in the Philippines. There is a whole generation of young, vaguely leftish Filipinos who view the NDF program as a completely credible document deserving of serious discussion.

The Communists' intention of crushing a free press while their totally controlled front group, the NDF, promises otherwise is simple and straightforward duplicity. But the CPP's leadership is also quite adept at complex, multi-layered duplicity. Nowhere is this more evident than in how the party leaders are handling the emotional and controversial issue of the U.S. military bases on Philippine soil.

At first glance, the Communist position seems unambiguous. The NDF program declares that "the United States must leave its military bases in the Philippines..." In fact, says the NDF, "no foreign power shall be allowed to set up military bases on Philippine soil..." For years, the CPP has ridden this issue, using it to mobilize students and other nationalists to demonstrate in front of the U.S. embassy in Manila. Yet simultaneously, CPP leaders have been repeatedly signaling U.S. officials that they are willing to make a deal with the United States whereby the U.S. bases could continue operating after the Communists came to power.

The CPP began sending such a signal as early as 1981 when Horacio (Boy) Morales told a journalist that, despite the NDF's clear-cut pledge to remove the bases, all the NDF really wanted was to negotiate their future status. This year, people who have spoken with Salas and other figures in the Communist movement say that they also have expressed their readiness to junk the NDF program and make a deal on the bases.

But this is not necessarily the final word on where the Communists really stand on the issue. This is because Philippine nationalists who are strongly opposed to the bases say that Salas has been reassuring them this year that his offers to make a deal are a tactical ruse aimed at nothing more than lulling the United States.

This is consistent with the NPA's apparent decision a few years ago to avoid military action aimed at the bases or at U.S. military personnel. Long gone are the

But usually only the local villagers hear about the killing. In a small city in Bicol, the southern tail of Luzon, a young and well-informed lawyer who often defends dissidents says that an NPA unit was killing civilians in a village just a few miles from his home for more than three years before he or anyone else in the city heard about it. The villagers were simply too frightened, he says, to report the deaths.

In the province of Davao del Norte, where the NPA controls much of the population, I asked Father Eligio Bianchi why he and other churchmen in the area had not reported the many killings by the NPA as diligently as they had reported the relatively few killings by the military. Bianchi replied that, while he believed all killings were equally wrong, he rarely heard from frightened villagers about NPA killings. "Now and then you might hear someone whisper that somebody had been killed by the NPA, but that's all. They didn't want to talk about it."

This fearful silence prevailing in the countryside wherever the NPA is active is almost completely overlooked by middle-class Manilans and other Filipinos who still live far from the everyday insurgency. Filipinos, they themselves readily concede, are traditionally a garrulous lot, chronically unable to keep a secret, and they still take it as a given that they are the recipients of a free and plentiful flow of information. Manila's upper classes in particular pride themselves on knowing what is happening in their family's home province on the basis of an occasional visit from a retainer, relative, or friend. But the visitor probably lives in the provincial capital and knows less about what is going on in the surrounding countryside than the Bicol lawyer,

II

But the prevailing silence only partly explains why NPA brutality is largely ignored by the foreign-press contingent in Manila as well as by the independent or anti-Marcos newspapers that have been thriving in the Philippines during the past two years. Another important part of the explanation is that the media can learn nothing about NPA atrocities from Philippine organizations that claim to be committed to civil liberties and human rights.

By far the most prominent of these groups is Task Force Detainees (TFD). In an almost incredible feat of public relations, the openly pro-Communist TFD has become recognized as the leading defender of human rights in the Philippines. Its accounts and statistics regarding "political prisoners" and the frequent abuses committed by the Philippine military are cited by Amnesty International, the Lawyers'

Committee for International Rights, and even the U.S. State Department. And its claims and statistics find their way into innumerable articles by foreign correspondents reporting from the Philippines.

Despite its international standing, the TFD has consistently ignored NPA killings and other abuses of civilians. It resolutely refuses to investigate, report, or act on killings by the NPA. In my visits to the TFD offices in Manila over several years, officials have offered several explanations for their one-sided view of what constitutes a human-rights abuse. TFD spokesman Fidel Agcaoili made it clear in an interview this summer that the TFD is interested in exposing only those human-rights abuses that reflect badly on the military. “Definitely our main line of inquiry [is] human-rights abuses being committed by the government.” Agcaoili referred in a dismissive tone to “the alleged abuses being committed by the NPA,” then quickly caught himself and said, “No, I won’t say any more.” But as far as the TFD’s position on people who take up arms and join the NPA is concerned, Agcaoili readily volunteers that “we respect their right to do so.”

That Task Force Detainees has a benign view of the New People’s Army should surprise no one; the TFD has never made a secret of its politics. A visit to its offices in suburban Manila finds activists, widely reputed even by leftists to be Communists, wandering in and out and being treated by the TFD staff with everyday familiarity. Staff members talk about their plans to attend rallies organized by a Communist-front group. The head of the TFD, Sister Mariani Dimaranan, has remained on the executive board of BAYAN, one of the most tightly controlled of those fronts, even though virtually every independent leftist on the executive has quit in protest against the CPP’s heavy-handed domination. Gerardo Bulatao, for several years the key administrator of the TFD’s parent organization, the Association of Major Religious Superiors, was sentenced this year to twenty years in jail after the government made a strong case that he had played an important role in the Communist insurgency on the island of Samar. The TFD’s fortnightly publication, *Political Detainees Update*, usually devotes its front page to highly favorable reports of the activities of BAYAN and other Communist-party fronts, like KMU, the labor alliance. Headlines use CPP terminology—“U.S.-Marcos Dictatorship”—to describe the regime.

The TFD takes its heavy ideological baggage along in pursuing its main task, which is chronicling the human-rights abuses committed by the Marcos regime and the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The pursuit is relentlessly well-organized. The TFD currently has a staff of 280 and a large budget. Most of the money comes from foreign church-related organizations, but the TFD refused to answer

States.” Furthermore, “the United States must leave its military bases in the Philippines...” And “as a rule, direct investments and profit-making assets of the U.S. and other big foreign capitalists, especially those in the vital and strategic industries, shall be nationalized.”

In addition to Americans, a lot of Filipinos might feel unwelcome in the new People’s Democratic Republic of the Philippines:

Upon victory, a people’s tribunal shall be created. This tribunal will have jurisdiction to try and punish enemies of the revolution and their collaborators who have committed crimes against the people, and to escheat [*sic*] properties and ill-gotten wealth amassed by the ruling elite of the old order.

The program also promises “severe punishment of those with grave crimes (i.e., those who owe the people blood debts) and reeducation of those who deserve leniency...”

The NDF program repeatedly states that the PDRP will be run by a “democratic coalition” government. What is most unsettling about that statement is the NDF’s assurance that the coalition will be as pluralistic as the NDF is today. “As in the course of the people’s war, no political party, group, or individual shall be allowed to monopolize the decision-making processes and the execution of state affairs.” If there is any remaining doubt about the CPP’s concept of a coalition, it should have been dashed by NDF spokesman Tony Zumel who said earlier this year that the NDF rejected the suggestion that the Communists in the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam had overwhelmed the front’s non-Communist reformers.

While the “democratic-coalition” government the Communists are promising through the NDF cannot be described as a coalition, neither should it be described as democratic. The NDF program declares that “all the basic democratic rights shall be embodied in the constitution of the People’s Democratic Republic. These shall include the right ... to free speech and the free press...” But the CPP’s underground monthly, *Ang Bayan*, confided to party members this year that, contrary to what its front organization is promising, freedom of the press will be tightly restricted:

Under the People’s Democratic Republic, press freedom shall be enjoyed by the toiling classes and the strata of the bourgeoisie allied to them—in short by the overwhelming majority of the people who are at present exploited and oppressed. But should we allow the same

Aquino to left-wing nationalists like former Senator Jose Diokno—have quit BAYAN. After working on and off with the Communists for the two years since his brother was assassinated, Aquino concludes: “You can’t trust these guys.” But how could it be otherwise when the CPP’s explicit policy toward all front-group activity is one of deceit? This is how the basic party directive on front groups described the need for secret party control:

These concentric circles [anti-Marcos elements, NDF members, party members] are expressive of our efforts to have the party ... committee always at the center of anti-fascist and other legal activities, leading those activities without being clearly visible to the enemy.

To many it seems that those hurt most by the Communist machinations inside BAYAN were the Communists themselves. Today, BAYAN is known as just another CPP front. If the Communists had restrained themselves, they would today be a strong, perhaps decisive, influence within a popular, broadly based, anti-Marcos alliance. The explanations being advanced for this seemingly self-defeating behavior are all rather ominous. Aquino offers two reasons suggesting that we are merely witnessing a totalitarian party in action. The first is a paraphrase of the CPP directive: “their wanting to dominate completely any organization they join ...” The other, “their feeling that they’re the only ones who have the answers to everything.” Jose Diokno suspects the explanation lies in the Communists’ growing belief that they are so close to taking power that they no longer need to make significant compromises with the non-Communist opposition.

Certainly there were few real compromises evident in the new National Democratic Front program that was issued at the beginning of this year. Although Communists have repeatedly described the program as a moderate appeal to non-Communists, in reality it is overtly Marxist and covertly Leninist. The heart of the program is a call for the establishment of a People’s Democratic Republic of the Philippines (PDRP). The program is like that of most other nations with names that start out “People’s Democratic Republic of...” The United States is, of courses, the enemy. The program promises that the PDRP’s “revolutionary army as well as the people shall be constantly in a state of readiness to repel any act of intervention and aggression from foreign forces, including the United

both oral and written questions this summer about the origin and amount of the donations and the size of its total budget.

As countless news reports from the Philippines have made clear, the TFD has no shortage of raw material to work with in building its case against the Marcos regime. There are many documented instances of the Philippine military and other government security forces abducting, torturing, and killing Communist suspects. But even here, the TFD constantly plays with the facts. Victims of the military are regularly portrayed not as members of the NPA or the CPP who are trying to overthrow the government by force but merely as “farmers, ... fishermen, ... students” implicitly innocent of any wrongdoing. In many cases, the most cursory investigation would reveal that a victim of the military’s mistreatment was an NPA guerrilla or a key NPA informer. Crucial facts such as these could not possibly justify a killing by the military. But the TFD’s omission of such facts represents a conscious attempt to suppress an important part of the story for political reasons.

This was so when the TFD portrayed an ugly mass killing that occurred on the island of Negros in 1980 which, more than any other single incident, marked the Marcos regime internationally as brutal and murderous. In the spring of 1980, in the rural municipality of Kabankalan in the province of Negros Occidental, several peasants were killed by military units acting at the behest of a local political boss. In the protests and publicity emanating from the TFD and other human-rights organizations, two of the victims came to symbolize the injustice. Alex Garsales and Herman Moleta were portrayed as simple farmers who had been murdered because they were active members of the local branch of Basic Christian Communities, which in turn was portrayed as a Christian form of community organization for the poor. Yet a left-wing but non-Communist priest in Negros told me that it was well known in Kabankalan that the two men were key figures in the NPA organizational structure in their mountain village. Another leftist, with close ties to the CPP and firsthand knowledge of the situation in Negros, said it was taken for granted that the Basic Christian Communities of Negros formed “the basic infrastructure for the NPA.” (This is by no means true everywhere in the Philippines. For instance, Basic Christian Communities in Bukidnon province in Mindanao that were begun under the leadership of Bishop Francisco Claver are wary of both the regime and the NPA.) But there was never a hint of this either in TFD literature, or in a 1982 Amnesty International pamphlet that described the incident, or in a New York *Times* article (January 29, 1981) about the case.

In addition to suppressing crucial information, the TFD’s reports also artificially inflate the extent of political violence for which the authorities are responsible. The TFD does this by refusing to make clear distinctions between persons

killed by the military for political reasons and those killed by a variety of armed groups because they are involved in criminal activities, economic disputes, or even personal quarrels. Agcaoili conceded, for instance, that the TFD would define as political the killing of a peasant involved in a land dispute. After grouping together a wide variety of killings in a countryside beset for centuries with rampant violence, the TFD then suggests that all the violence is somehow connected to the regime's current counterinsurgency efforts.

What discredits the TFD's reports even more is that, even where there are virtually no facts available, it is ready to blame a murder on the authorities. This is particularly true in the TFD's tally of "salvagings," a uniquely Philippine term for an incident in which the military kills a civilian in cold blood because he is a suspected Communist.

Here, for instance, is the TFD's full account (in *Political Detainees Update*, May 15, 1985) of a recent case it classified as a salvaging:

Butuan City—An unidentified man was found dead along KM 8 of the National Highway in Ampayon at 5:30 A.M., March 17. The victim was approximately 30 years old, 5'4" and of fair complexion. He was wearing denim pants and a red T-shirt. The victim suffered stab wounds all over his body.

The TFD has less opportunity to manipulate the statistics concerning "political prisoners." Here, each prisoner is a confirmed resident of a prison detention center. The TFD's own statistics show that the number of political prisoners peaked in 1983 and has been declining ever since, from 851 on January 1 of this year to 695 on July 15. It is important to understand that many of these prisoners are picked up in raids on guerrilla strongholds and held for only a short period. The majority of the 695 prisoners have been in jail for less than one year, many for just a few days.

It is appropriate to call these people "prisoners of war" rather than political prisoners. There seems to be universal agreement in the Philippines that virtually all the long-term prisoners are NPA guerrillas or Communist-party members actively involved in trying to overthrow the regime. The TFD itself implicitly conceded this by distributing a statement this July saluting "the political prisoners who dare risk their freedom for the sake of our people's liberation." In other words, these are prisoners of war captured in the midst of a fierce, nationwide insurgency.

joining the party. The CPP administers the NDF through its National United Front Commission. The key roles in the NDF are filled by senior party members. Recently, the NDF's leading clandestine spokesman has been Tony Zumel, who not coincidentally is the CPP's propaganda chief.

A few years ago, the CPP faced the fact that the NDF had failed to develop into a classic Communist front, that is, a political umbrella organization with a program broad enough so that a respectable cross-section of non-Communist leftists and nationalists would be willing to endorse it. So recently the party set up a new generation of legal fronts—a good example being the Nationalist Alliance for Justice, Freedom, and Democracy—meant to draw in non-Communists. But the CPP's control of such organizations has been so obvious and heavy-handed that they have failed to develop broad bases. The Communists also infiltrated groups they had not started—like the August Twenty-One Movement, or ATOM, founded by Butz Aquino. But here again, any hope that the Communists might have had to influence a popular, grass-roots organization was destroyed by their seemingly compulsive need for total control. This summer ATOM split in half, with the Communists going one way and Aquino's people another.

For a while this spring, the Communists appeared to some anti-Marcos activists to be genuinely willing to participate in the creation of BAYAN, a broad opposition alliance in which they would not have automatic control. In the original Communist proposal, BAYAN would have three equal voting blocs: "national democrats," i.e., the pro-Communist group; social democrats; and "liberal democrats," i.e., moderates.

But once preliminary meetings got under way, recalls Butz Aquino, the Communists repeatedly and successfully demanded that the voting formula be changed in their favor. When the founding congress began on Saturday, May 5, it soon became obvious to Aquino that the Communists were determined to manipulate and control the entire event. The Communists orchestrated workshop discussions, broke standing agreements by slipping the names of trusted party members into the nomination lists for the executive, and referred every major decision to top Communists not even at the meeting. Recounts Butz Aquino:

The people outside the hall who we didn't even see were calling the shots... Party members were giving the orders. Whenever there was a crucial decision to be made, they'd ask for a recess. Then they'd come back with their hard position.

Angered by the CPP's manipulative approach, virtually every respected and independent political figure in the anti-Marcos opposition—from moderates like

barricades” on Davao’s main streets left no doubt that the strike organizers were calling for an urban insurrection:

The primary objective of the *Welgang Bayan* [national strike] is to paralyze the economic, political, and social machinery of the dictatorship... The *Welgang Bayan* will develop from partial to sustained strikes, from temporary to complete paralysis... This will result in the paralysis of the economy and political foundation of the U.S.-Marcos dictatorship and facilitate its downfall.

Shortly after the strike, the key publicly identifiable organizers were arrested. One of those was Davao lawyer Laurente Iligan. His incarceration has become a minor *cause célèbre* among human-rights activists. However, news reports, including one in the *New York Times*, have failed to indicate the declared goals of the strike.

The granddaddy of all the CPP fronts is the National Democratic Front (NDF). In the *Program of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines*, the NDF grandly describes itself as a broad coalition “made up of Filipino nationalists, democrats, progressive christians [the NDF uses the lower-case c] and church people, national minority autonomists, women’s emancipationists, socialists, communists, and other genuine patriots here and abroad, representing a wide variety of political and ideological trends.” And within this coalition, promises *Liberation*, the NDF’s own publication, “no single party ... will be allowed to dominate...”

This is all fiction. The NDF has been the total creature of the CPP since 1971 when a central-committee directive ordered its creation. It was formally founded on April 24, 1973, but only after CPP members had established the Christians for National Liberation and other front groups that, in turn, were designated as the founding members of the NDF “coalition.” Other founding groups in this ostensibly broad alliance were the NPA and the CPP itself, as well as CPP captive organizations like KM, the Communist youth group founded by Sison.

Not only is the NDF completely controlled by the Communists; so, apparently, are all its constituent organizations. Some, like the CNL, are effectively part of the CPP. There are other constituent organizations of students and workers—a good example being the KMU labor alliance—in which the majority of members are not Communists but the leaders are.

The NDF is organized into secret cells, similar to those of the Communist party. Apparently most of the NDF’s membership is composed of CPP candidate members and of CNL members who do not want to take that final step of formally

What the TFD’s tally really tells us is how pitifully ineffective the Armed Forces of the Philippines have become. After fighting Communist guerrillas for more than a decade, they have succeeded in capturing only some 200 CPP and NPA members important enough or threatening enough to keep in jail.

Nor, by the standards of rural insurgencies elsewhere in the world today, is the Philippine military particularly brutal. The language used in TFD reports (“state terrorism ... escalating military abuses ... alarmingly rampant salvaging ...”) and the tenor of some news reports suggest that the Philippines is akin to military-ruled Argentina or Guatemala. That is far from the truth. Even if the TFD’s inflated statistics are used, the rate of political killings and disappearances over the past decade is no more than one-fiftieth that of Guatemala.

In fact, the Philippine military is no longer marauding much around the countryside. Mostly the soldiers are huddling in their barracks, demoralized and on the defensive, while the NPA extends its reign of terror. Many so-called combat units no longer have the gasoline or even the boots to move around. One statistic sums up the portrait of an almost defeated military: a minuscule 2 percent of the clashes between the AFP and the NPA during the first half of this year were initiated by the military. Two-thirds of the clashes were initiated by the Communist guerrillas. The remaining incidents were classified as “encounters,” a catch-all term that includes incidents where the soldiers of the two sides stumble into each other.

Significantly, the Philippine military units most often on the offensive against the NPA are the very units most trusted and respected by the people in the countryside—the Marines and Scout Rangers. But these groups are a minority within the AFP; the majority of the armed forces is composed of passive, corrupt, and demoralized units. It is these units that are driving rural Filipinos into a sullen alienation that makes continuing Communist gains almost certain. They are led by officers who siphon off defense-ministry funds, sell their units’ services to provincial political bosses or land-grabbers, or use their power to muscle into local business. The enlisted men, understanding full well the connection between their officers’ wealth and their own lack of adequate food and clothing, run petty but vicious protection rackets in the towns, steal chickens in the villages, and, at checkpoints on the roads, demand payoffs from farmers bringing their produce to market. Shunned by civilians, the enlisted men express their frustration in drinking and fighting.

When a demand for action against the guerrillas comes down the command structure, a hapless lieutenant is dispatched to a village where he may grab the first two young men in sight and threaten to beat them unless they reveal the identity and whereabouts of the local NPA. Even villagers terrorized by the NPA and inclined

to give information to the military know that the lieutenant will not be there the next day to help protect them from an NPA death sentence for being an informer. In short, the people are learning every day that the military cannot be trusted or relied upon. An army like that cannot win a guerrilla war.

III

The roots of that guerrilla war can be traced to the mid-1960's when a group of young radicals began coalescing at the University of the Philippines. At their center was Jose Maria Sison, first a student and then a lecturer at the university, who had joined the old Moscow-line Communist party, then as now referred to as the PKP.

In late 1964, Sison founded *Kabataang Makabayan* (KM, or Nationalist Youth). Although KM was organized as the PKP's youth wing, it was first and foremost Sison's organization. The intense, brilliant, energetic, and disputatious Sison recruited and trained a phalanx of loyalists who formed the hard core of KM. Almost from the beginning, it seems, Sison chafed under PKP leaders he viewed as old failures. The heady politics of China's cultural revolution energized and legitimized his discontent and, by 1967, Sison had completed his first draft of a history of the PKP that incisively dissected and condemned the party's failure since 1942 under the leadership of the three Lava brothers. This draft, *Rectify Errors and Rebuild the Party*, became one of the founding documents of the originally Maoist CPP. Polemical and one-sided as it is, it remains the best available history of the PKP.

In April 1967, the Moscow-oriented PKP leadership expelled Sison and his supporters from the party. Almost immediately they formed their own provisional Politburo and issued a May Day statement hailing China's cultural revolution. But it was not until the day after Christmas 1968, when Sison and ten trusted comrades secretly gathered in Pangasinan province and opened what they called a "Congress of Reestablishment," that the new Communist Party of the Philippines was formally founded. The name given to the CPP's first meeting underlined Sison's contention that the old PKP was no longer a legitimate Communist party.

By now the CPP might have been a defunct and forgotten Maoist sect if Sison had not found Bernabe Buscayno. Commander Dante, as he is to this day better known, was the leader of a small group of guerrillas who were among the remnants of the 12,000 Huks who had challenged the Philippine government in the late 1940's and early 1950's. Dante had an apparently well-deserved reputation as a

carrying out operations, it has always acted like a classic Communist party in demanding total adherence of its members to the party hierarchy and to official party policy.

This insistence on unity and discipline helps explain the marathon meetings where top party leaders will often spend weeks thrashing out policy and personal differences before reaching an ironclad consensus which, from that point on, is considered unbreachable. It also explains why the CPP commits substantial resources to maintaining an extensive courier network so that party communications can flow quickly from one end of the archipelago to the other. In addition, the party leadership is constantly reassigning party cadres to various parts of the country to counter the regionalist tendencies that are historically so strong in the Philippines.

Because the CPP is secretive to the point of paranoia about its internal affairs, and because it almost never gives its leaders any public exposure, many otherwise well-informed Filipinos strongly doubt that a cohesive national Communist party even exists. This was the consensus, for instance, of a group of Philippine legislators, representing both the government and opposition parties, who recently visited Washington. Their collective view was that the NPA guerrillas in various parts of the country are effectively autonomous groups that have, at best, tenuous ties with each other.

Only a few Filipinos are better informed. Another recent visitor to Washington, Jaime Ongpin, the chief executive of the Philippines' leading mining company, Benguet, has no doubt about the centralized nature of the party. He said that guerrillas harassing his company's operations in Mindanao knew precisely how Benguet had handled similar harassment at another company operation in northern Luzon, several hundred miles away.

VII

The Philippine Communists are not waging revolution only through the outlawed New People's Army. They are also stepping up their efforts to topple the Marcos regime by using an ever-changing network of tightly controlled but legal front groups. And as Communist power grows both underground and aboveground in the Philippines, the front groups are making less and less of a secret of their Communist affiliation. This past spring, a coalition of CPP fronts called a general strike aimed at shutting down the Mindanao economy and creating political havoc. A pamphlet issued by the coalition calling for such actions as "the putting up of

Says a Davao City resident with leftist sympathies: “These people aren’t good Communists.” But the national Communist-party leadership no longer seems to care. Kintanar’s boys are doing their job: Davao continues to slip slowly out of the Marcos regime’s control and business is grinding to a halt.

All the available evidence suggests that Kintanar launched urban guerrilla warfare in Davao City despite the deep misgivings, if not the outright opposition, of the CPP’s national leadership. Underground party publications long ignored what was happening in the city. Then they began running the occasional article endorsing urban guerrilla warfare in principle but stressing that the time was not yet ripe.

Some Filipinos on the Left argue that Kintanar at that time was ignoring CPP directives and was on the verge of becoming an independent warlord or bandit leader. But recently the national party leadership seems to have decided that, thug or no thug, Kintanar is one of them. Kintanar has been promoted; he was recently named head of the NPA’s central military staff and of its national operational command. CPP publications are now endorsing urban guerrilla warfare in general terms and are reporting favorably on what they have dubbed the NPA’s Armed City Partisans (ACP’s). The ACP’s are essentially hit men and saboteurs. Previously, the euphemism used by the NPA for its assassins in both city and countryside was “sparrow units.” In the good old days, they were simply members of “liquidation squads.”

At the same time, party leaders may be trying to cut Kintanar off from his power base. While the new job titles sound impressive, it is uncertain how much real power they carry with them. The jobs could keep him in metropolitan Manila, or the provinces just north of the capital, where the underground headquarters of the CPP and the NPA are believed to be located. Either place is far from his base in southern Mindanao. The party also seems to be trying to reduce the independence of Kintanar and any other would-be guerrilla warlords by ordering that large Manila-based companies with logging, mining, or other business operations in the provinces pay their “revolutionary taxes” to representatives of the party in Manila and not to local NPA leaders.

These efforts by the national party leadership to maintain strong central control are consistent with the entire history of the CPP. Although the party encourages local CPP and NPA leaders to use their initiative in formulating tactics and

ruthless and well-practiced killer but, by all accounts, he wanted to devote his talents to revolution, not to serving the criminal syndicate into which the Huk hierarchy had degenerated. When the two would-be makers of revolution joined forces, Dante had his ideology and Sison had his army. The New People’s Army was founded on March 29, 1969, with 35 rifles and handguns, the discipline code of China’s Red Army, and Mao’s strategy of protracted people’s war.

There was a slavish quality in the Maoist cant (“punish the evil gentry . . . establish firmest relations with Albania”) that was woven into the CPP’s founding manifesto, *Programme for a People’s Democratic Revolution*. But the “central task” of the CPP then as now was straightforward: “Seizing political power through armed revolution.”

Amid the Maoist jargon and formulas in the CPP’s early documents there was only a hint of Sison’s analytical and visionary mind. That became more evident in 1970 in *Philippine Society and Revolution*, his comprehensive Marxist critique of what ailed the Philippines, which contained a hint of the Maoist prescription that he had in mind for its cure.

Sison’s most important contribution to the literature of the Philippine revolution was published in 1974. With *Specific Characteristics of Our People’s War*, Sison presented his fellow Philippine Communists with the strategic game plan they have been following ever since. At that time, Marcos was at the peak of his power and the CPP and the NPA together numbered no more than 3,000. But Sison saw victory ahead. He believed that the NPA could defeat the Philippine military slowly but surely by creating guerrilla strongholds in the mountains and hills of every major island. “In the long run,” he reassured his doubting comrades, “the fact that our country is archipelagic will turn out to be a great advantage for us and a great disadvantage for the enemy. The enemy shall be forced to divide his attention and forces not only to the countryside but also to so many islands.”

Sison believed that the Huks under PKP leadership had seriously blundered by effectively confining their guerrilla warfare to the island of Luzon. This allowed the Philippine military to concentrate its counterinsurgency forces there. It was Sison’s idea to establish guerrilla fronts in all the major islands of the Philippines, dispersing the armed forces throughout the archipelago and then gradually grinding them down.

Sison had a special role in mind for the largest island in the south. “The long-term task of our Mindanao forces is to draw enemy forces from Luzon and destroy

them.” The supremely confident Sison issued this master plan at a time when not a single NPA guerrilla band was active in Mindanao. With fanatic dedication, the Communists would try again and again and finally succeed in achieving Sison’s goal of turning Mindanao into the military meatgrinder it is today. In early 1971, the CPP dispatched a lone student radical, Benjamin de Vera, to the city of Davao in eastern Mindanao. By the end of that year, de Vera had sworn in three party members and they had recruited 30 candidate members. A few months after Marcos declared martial law on September 21, 1972, the CPP put together a small guerrilla unit to test the revolutionary waters in the countryside between Davao and the city of Cotabato. By the end of 1973, party documents reveal, this unit had been virtually wiped out.

But the CPP and the NPA persevered. More former student radicals were sent to Mindanao to “integrate with the masses” and to organize small villages. The NPA began over again, but painfully slowly. By July 1975, again according to party documents, the NPA in Mindanao consisted of only seven men with seven guns. It seemed that most of the young, educated Communists who came from the cities ended up dying. By mid-1976, 300 of the first 370 party members in Mindanao had died, dropped out, defected, or been detained. Elsewhere in the Philippines—in Isabela province and the Cagayan Valley in northern Luzon, and on the islands of Negros and Samar—the former student activists, along with the few members of the rural lumpenproletariat they could recruit, were doing only a little better. One pro-Communist account of the guerrilla fighting in northern Luzon reported that the life expectancy of an NPA member in those days was three years.

It was during this period—the early to mid-1970’s when the Philippine economy was booming and Marcos was at the height of his power—that the highly favorable image of the New People’s Army became fixed in the minds of the many middle-class Filipinos outside the guerrilla zones. The image was grounded partly in reality but to a substantial extent, even in those days, in myth. The fact that countless student radicals with comfortable backgrounds and promising futures were dying or going to prison for their cause made a deep impression on many middle- and upper-class Filipinos. Adrift in an increasingly cynical and materialistic society, privileged and educated Manilans often viewed the fanaticism of the Communists as an enviable virtue. To this day, an upper-class Manila dinner party seems incomplete until a guest, who invariably has no first-hand knowledge

Kintanar’s success did not immediately endear him to the national party leadership. He was repeatedly passed over for top party positions in Mindanao and was not even admitted to the central committee until 1979, when Salas was firmly in control. There is no mystery about why the old generation of party leaders in particular were not eager to embrace their military genius in the south. The most positive comment heard about Kintanar in leftist circles is that “he’s a first-rate military commander who doesn’t know anything about political ideology.” Others are not so charitable, describing him as “a warlord who’s operating a massive protection racket” and “a psychotic ... who loves to put a bandanna around his forehead and then go out and kill people.”

The number of would-be guerrillas needing to be equipped and fed has continued growing faster in Mindanao than in other parts of the Philippines. This created an economic crisis for the NPA because it was already coming close to exhausting its traditional “tax base.” For years, the NPA’s rural guerrillas had been demanding what amounted to protection money from the operators of mines, logging camps, plantations, and ranches. Those refusing to pay had either to hire their own private armies to keep the NPA at bay or to wait for the guerrillas’ tax-enforcement bureau to show up and drive ore-carrier trucks off cliffs, burn logging equipment, or rustle cattle.

Most businessmen paid, reluctantly but without any great sense of outrage. After all, in Mindanao, payoffs to political leaders, military officers, and sometimes criminal bosses had long been considered part of the cost of doing business. But as NPA “taxes” rose, some of the taxpayers said they were being driven out of business. A few of the more reasonable NPA leaders actually sent accountants who were CPP members to examine the books of some of the businessmen who were pleading poverty and waived taxes if it was shown they were losing money.

Kintanar’s solution was to start collecting taxes in Davao, the sprawling city of an estimated million people on Mindanao’s east coast. Businessmen who did not comply might be kidnapped; storeowners risked having their stores bombed or vandalized in the night. Kintanar dispatched NPA gunmen into Davao to enforce tax collection and to collect a commodity even more precious to the NPA than money—guns to arm the countless would-be guerrillas in the area. Over the past few years, dozens of policemen have been shot and killed in the streets of Davao by NPA hit men who grab their guns and race away.

To kill policemen and enforce his protection rackets, Kintanar has drawn around him a bunch of thugs who are a world apart from the campus Maoists who launched the revolution seventeen years ago. In their hideouts, the walls sport posters not of Mao but of Charles Bronson, for them a symbol of macho violence.

legislature had been abolished, the judiciary deeply compromised, the military politicized, the independent business sector cronyized.

With no jobs luring Filipinos from the countryside to the cities and newly unemployed Filipinos returning to the villages where there was a better chance of eating regularly, the agricultural labor force suddenly began to balloon. There was an increase of at least three million, or 34 percent, from 1979 to 1984, according to government statistics. Suddenly, the NPA was awash in potential recruits, but they were a new breed. For years, the core of the NPA had been young educated Communists from the cities who completely dominated the local recruits, best described as members of the rural lumpenproletariat. The newcomers flooding into the NPA were acting primarily out of economic necessity, not ideological commitment, but they were able to feel right at home. Under Salas the CPP and the NPA had been paying less attention to ideology, and more to achieving victory; to collecting more money and guns to make that victory possible; and to cutting down anyone who might stand in the way.

Inevitably, the new circumstances created a new kind of guerrilla leader. No one personifies this change better than Romulo (Roily) Kintanar, who today is the single most powerful guerrilla leader in the Philippines. The party dispatched Roily Kintanar to Mindanao in late 1974 or early 1975, about the time the NPA on the island had been reduced to a pitiful handful of seven men with seven guns. Kintanar was initially charged with giving military training to new and existing NPA guerrillas. But he quickly emerged as the key military tactician and commander in the NPA, building up NPA forces in Mindanao from a total of seven gun-carriers in 1975 to about 100 by the end of 1976.

It was Kintanar, according to some reports, who perfected the NPA's solution to its critical shortage of guns: he created and trained small hit squads, which assassinated policemen and military personnel, often on crowded streets, and stole their guns.

When the economic crisis hit the Philippines, it hit commodity-dependent Mindanao the hardest. And no guerrilla leader was more ready than Kintanar to exploit the new circumstances, and transform the insurrection from an ideological to an economic one. Today, Mindanao is home to several thousand NPA guerrillas and, thanks more to Kintanar than to anyone else, the island has become the nemesis of the Armed Forces of the Philippines just as Sison envisioned.

of how the guerrillas operate, begins speaking in admiring tones of the young Communists in the hills and prisons. The other guests nod knowingly and approvingly as dollar-a-day servants hover over them. Even politically moderate activists like Agapito (Butz) Aquino, brother of the assassinated political leader Benigno (Ninoy) Aquino, see something to admire in the fanatic dedication of the Communists. "I have always been impressed by the conviction of these guys... I envy these guys ... they're struggling for a philosophy they believe in..."

Many Filipinos came to think that if the Communists' fanaticism was selfless then it must also be benign. So they were instant believers in the myths surrounding how the NPA operated: guerrillas were idealistic students who won over the peasants by providing them with medical care (heavy on the acupuncture) and with political instruction that opened their eyes to their oppression. Now and then the guerrillas might shoot someone but the victims were all bad people—cattle rustlers, rapists, sadistic policemen—who should have been punished by the authorities. The peasants were so delighted that they referred to the NPA as the Nice People Around.

This myth may have overlapped with reality in some parts of the Philippines for a brief period in the 1970's. It is difficult to say because there are virtually no independent accounts available of how the NPA operated a decade or more ago. Certainly some radical leftists who are appalled by the NPA's actions today insist that there was a golden era. But even if that were true, the tarnish was already visible. As early as 1970, about one-third of the ranking NPA members belonged to liquidation squads. And the most upwardly mobile of all the NPA guerrillas during this supposed golden period was Rodolfo Salas, who was riding his reputation as a gunslinger to greater power and status inside the CPP.

IV

Contributing to the myth of a benign NPA was the growing awareness among educated Filipinos that many priests and nuns were becoming deeply involved with the Communists. Many Filipinos, who are more than 90-percent Roman Catholic, seem to believe that if nuns and priests support the Communists, then Communism must have many commendable qualities.

But very few Filipinos appreciate how deep the involvement of many members of the Catholic clergy has become. Nowhere else in the world, it seems, have so many priests and nuns been so committed to the Communist cause. As a Philippine leftist puts it: "Liberation theology has gone much farther in the Philippines than in

Latin America. In Latin America, it justifies collaboration with the Communists. Here it means joining the Communists.”

Although a great deal of publicity has been given to a handful of priests who have become gun-toting NPA guerrillas, these clerics turned killers form just a small and unrepresentative minority of the Communists inside the Church. In the Philippines, hundred of priests and nuns effectively become Communist-party members by joining a highly secretive, possibly unique, organization called Christians for National Liberation (CNL). The CNL’s members include some Catholic lay workers and some Protestants, but its core consists of an estimated 1,200 priests and nuns who form secret cells inside the Catholic Church and its many organizations. The CNL constitution mandates a secretive, highly disciplined structure “based on the principle of democratic centralism,” the organizational principle of Marxism-Leninism. The policies of the CNL are also explicitly Communist; its constitution requires members to pledge support for “protracted people’s war” and the “armed struggle and the underground movement.” The key task is “to overthrow the U.S.-Marcos dictatorship.”

The first program adopted by the CNL all but announced the Communists’ intention to establish Task Force Detainees under the control of the CNL. The wording left no doubt that the aim was not to protect human rights but to aid the NPA. The program declared that “the CNL must develop a massive, sustained, and militant protest movement against militarization. This seeks to block the full escalation of military activity against the guerrilla fronts... We denounce military atrocities.” In 1974, about a year after the CNL program was written, Task Force Detainees came into existence. To this day, all of TFD’s 13 regional and subregional directors are priests or nuns and most, if not all, are members of the CNL.

For priests and nuns, joining the CNL amounts to a secret rejection of the Roman Catholic Church. Their acceptance of the CNL’s unqualified call for revolutionary violence represents a philosophical break with the Church, but they also break with it in an organizational sense by endorsing a constitution that rejects the Church hierarchy from the local bishopric to the Vatican. Besides requiring members to fight for democratic decision-making in the Church, the CNL constitution says another aim of the organization is “to fight for truly self-reliant and self-determining Filipino churches against the interventions of foreign Church bodies and institutions.” Presumably that includes the Pope.

What is particularly insidious about the CNL’s presence within the Church is its secrecy. Bishop Francisco Claver, a left-wing critic of the Communists, has often said that he objects not so much to the presence of Communists inside the

Once he was chairman, Salas immediately began putting his stamp on the party. Sison, the poet, Maoist intellectual, and grand strategist, had placed great emphasis on ideological correctness and procedural purity. But Salas, the engineer and military tactician, though no less radical than Sison in his ultimate political goals, seems from the beginning to have been much more concerned with ends than with means. Whatever was required to win the struggle for power was justified. It was Salas, for instance, who wrote or at least authorized those party statements, issued since the late 1970’s, which establish and defend the party’s carte-blanche policy toward the killing of civilians in NPA guerrilla base areas.

The first whiff of the new opportunism came in 1978 when a CPP directive authorized local party leaders to jettison strict procedures set up during Sison’s leadership for the careful screening and training of prospective party members before they were admitted to the CPP. For the sake of party-building, the new directive stated, instant memberships could now be granted in areas where the party was just starting to organize.

In the late summer of 1980, members of the Communist party’s central committee gathered at a temporary hideout in the foothills near the Bicol town of Daet. It was a typical central-committee plenum, with intense discussion lasting for weeks. The meeting ended with agreement on a growth plan that reflected Salas’s ambition to speed up the revolution. Party membership, then totaling 8,000, was to be tripled and NPA strength, then just a few thousand, was to be doubled over the next three years. The party’s plans for Mindanao were particularly ambitious. The number of guerrilla fronts on the island was to be increased to 14 by 1984, even though there were only five in existence at the end of 1980.

For the party, the timing of the decision to launch a major expansion effort could not have been better. The Philippine economy had begun to unravel in 1979 due in part to the second oil crisis that hit Third World oil importers like the Philippines particularly hard. Unlike the aftermath of the 1973 crisis, the Philippines could not borrow or export its way out of its problem. There was no new flood of credits for economies as badly managed as the Philippines and there was no new surge in commodity prices. In fact, the prices of sugar and coconut oil, two key exports for the Philippines, were in the basement.

But the lion’s share of the credit for the economic collapse was due to the corrupt and wasteful economic policies of the Marcos regime that were finally coming home to roost. Businesses run by Marcos cronies and propped up by billions of dollars in government loans went bankrupt, some because of incompetence, others because the cronies had looted their own companies. Institutions that might have helped the Philippines weather the storm had been crippled by Marcos. The

KM generation of leaders began to be killed or captured. Names well known in Philippine radical circles—Ocampo, Corpuz, Jopson—fell one by one. And on November 10, 1977, the party chairman himself, Jose Maria Sison, was captured. Sison's comrade and top military man, Bernabe Buscayno, had been captured more than a year earlier.

During this period, a gloating President Marcos publicly declared that the elimination of the top party leaders had broken the Communist movement. Even today, Marcos is fond of rolling out statistics on how many CPP and NPA leaders have been killed or jailed. He apparently still does not understand that the ability of the CPP and the NPA to survive these repeated setbacks and then to continue growing under a new corps of leaders is compelling evidence of the Communists' strength, discipline, and resilience.

At a central committee meeting in January 1977, ten months before Sison was captured, Salas had reportedly already been designated as Sison's successor. In any event, he was quickly and formally elected party head in early 1978, capping a meteoric rise in the ranks of the CPP.

Born in the province of Pampanga on December 23, 1947, he went to high school in Angeles City, the prosperous next-door neighbor of Clark air-force base. He arrived on the campus of the University of the Philippines (UP) in 1965 where he studied mathematics and then chemical engineering. Soon caught up in radical student politics, Salas is said to have been recruited into the Communist orbit by Sison himself. Technically this made Salas a member of UP's KM generation of radicals. But Salas's contemporaries on the UP campus in the 1960's now say that he was an unassuming fellow who was never part of the inner circle of student leftists. By most accounts it was only after leaving the university and going underground that Salas became important in the party.

Even today, as the undisputed leader of the Communist insurgency, Salas does not leave a vivid impression with Filipinos outside the CPP who occasionally meet with him surreptitiously. They describe him as a man of ordinary appearance ("except for his ears, which stick out and make him look like Alfred E. Neuman," said one opposition politician). He speaks quietly and exudes self-confidence.

With no claims to being an intellectual like Sison, Salas developed a reputation as a good underground organizer and a daring military tactician. He was conducting military actions like the Subic Bay ambush at a time when the NPA nationwide had only a few modern guns. Although he was arrested in June 1973, he soon escaped. Salas was given the powerful post of party chairman for Central Luzon and was reportedly already in charge of party-building nationwide when he became the leader of the entire CPP.

Church as to their dishonesty and deceit. Priests will live in the same residence or work in the same Church organization as other priests for years without telling them they are CNL members. There is no open and honest debate because they never reveal to their fellow priests precisely what they stand for or where their ultimate loyalties lie.

Partly because virtually no Filipinos outside the CNL know anything of substance about the group, its constitution, or its program, it is still widely believed that the presence of priests and nuns inside the Communist movement is a force for moderation and mercy. Such comforting thoughts are promoted by people like the nun who told me that she knew guerrillas who, after being exposed to some of the Communists in the Church, began carrying Bibles in their packs. Yet the evidence suggests that the CNL members are more radical and rigid than other Communists. In statements commenting on the Aquino assassination that were issued within days of each other in the fall of 1983, the CPP endorsed all forms of protest, both violent and nonviolent, against the Marcos regime while the CNL called only for armed struggle.

It is not only the rhetoric of the CNL that is radical. Any curious visitor to provincial *conventos* where priests live and work will soon discover that many of them harbor clerics who are working virtually full time for the revolution. CNL members find shelter for wounded guerrillas, help party cadres move through their towns on the way to NPA base areas, and serve as message drops.

For a period in the middle to late 1970's, in some areas where the NPA's existence was still tenuous, the help of CNL priests and nuns was probably essential in permitting the NPA to hang on. In other areas, the CNL and its allies hastened the growth of the Communists. In Mindanao, for instance, the Communists took virtually complete control of the day-to-day running of the Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference, the organization that the bishops of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago had set up to administer social programs. The bishops eventually conceded that the only way they could regain control of their own organization was to abolish it. After much agony and delay, that is exactly what they did.

On the island of Negros, leftist sources confirm personal impressions that some priests were involved in organizing sugar workers for the Communists. Years before, the PKP, the old Communist party, had tried to organize these workers but had been quickly thrown off the isolated haciendas where the sugar workers lived. Said one participant in that old struggle: "We failed completely." But the

new CPP succeeded: "When priests come to organize the workers under the banner of religion, better yet when the priests are Australian or Irish, it's easy. The landlords will never think that this is a Communist organization. But that is what happened; the Basic Christian Communities [organized by the priests] in Negros became the infrastructure of the NPA."

One account of how the CPP has infiltrated and seized control of Church organizations in the Philippines is the testimony of the late Father Edgardo Kangleon. Father Kangleon was deeply involved in the Communist-party network operating inside the Roman Catholic Church on the island of Samar. After being arrested, he had a change of heart and consented to have a dialogue with Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile in front of three Catholic bishops.

Kangleon talked freely about how the Communists and a few trusted members of front groups had taken virtually complete control of the Church's social-action programs in Samar. Church programs ostensibly aimed at helping peasants, fishermen, and illiterates were in reality initiated and controlled by the Communist party, said Kangleon. "We geared these programs toward our own motives." Applications for financial help from Philippine and foreign agencies were passed through a regional organization, the Visayan Secretariat for Social Action, where other Communists forwarded them with a favorable recommendation to potential donor organizations.

The same thing is happening today to a greater or lesser extent in every region of the Philippines. It seems that no one in the Marcos regime or even in the CPP has a good estimate of the total amount. But no one doubts that hundreds of thousands, quite possibly millions, of dollars from abroad are flowing into Communist-controlled organizations and projects in the Philippines. One intelligence analyst estimates that Church-related organizations in Western Europe alone last year donated \$750,000 to Communist-controlled organizations under the umbrella of the Roman Catholic Church. But that is only a semi-educated guess.

Despite the great inroads that the Communists have made in the Catholic Church since Christians for National Liberation was formed in February 1972, the Church as a whole is still far from being pro-Communist. Less than 10 percent of the country's 14,000 priests and nuns belong to the CNL; most, if asked point blank, would say they are opposed to Communism. But this rank-and-file majority, now deeply disillusioned with the Marcos regime, has failed to come up with any coherent political stance that is both anti-Marcos and anti-Communist.

Thus the majority is easily cowed by the pro-Communist minority; even most conservative bishops now try to ignore pro-Communist activism among their priests, just as they themselves refrain from making anti-Communist statements.

was very close to, probably a member of, the Communist party. (An unqualified statement of CPP membership is hard to come by; membership status is so secret that fellow members are forbidden to acknowledge membership to one another unless they have been directed to work together.) But one advantage I did have was that many of the peasants I talked to addressed me as "father," believing I was a Catholic missionary in whom they could, presumably, confide. The peasants were not parroting anybody's line: they were obviously relieved that the guerrillas had fled, but they seemed wary of the military who were the new powers-that-be. All conversations were held well out of sight of military personnel.

Everywhere we went, the story was the same. The area was relatively well off; most farmers worked their own small landholdings. Until a few months before, there had been no significant military abuses; in fact, the area had generally been ignored by the authorities. There was no real government presence except in the *poblacion* (central town) of San Vicente. Roads were no better than dirt tracks, increasing the isolation of the area. The NPA had moved in just a few years before and had already killed scores of people. In the *sitio* of Linumbaan, a small village of 83 families, an NPA supporter and resident told us, the NPA had killed 20 people in the village and immediate surrounding area. The killings he described were aimed at demonstrating the NPA's power more than anything else. The NPA, he said, had killed people who had spoken out against the guerrillas. It had killed a woman, whom the villagers referred to simply as Tomboy, solely because she was a reputed lesbian. At another *sitio* that was home to 72 families, the NPA had killed two local people in the past two years. Villagers said the NPA had steadily raised "revolutionary taxes" that were paid in cash and food.

The NPA had set up forced-labor plots in some locations; local farmers had no choice but to work a three-day stint on them every few weeks. Nearly all the produce from the plots was appropriated by the guerrillas; a small amount was apparently put in collective storage for the entire village.

In three separate interviews, local farmers summed up the NPA's methods by slicing their hands across their throats, graphically conveying their firm belief that they would have been killed if they had not complied with the NPA's demands.

VI

While the NPA was resorting to increasingly brutal methods in the latter half of the 1970's, an almost complete turnover was not so coincidentally under way in the Communist-party leadership. Starting in the mid-1970's, members of the

In this period of reconsolidation, NPA guerrilla bands gravitated neither to the poorest areas in the Philippines nor to those areas where military abuses were necessarily the greatest. Instead, the NPA sunk new roots into remote and isolated areas where the government and the military had little if any effective presence and authority. The interior of the island of Samar was one of these vacuum areas; Davao del Norte, a province in eastern Mindanao, was another.

It was in Davao del Norte that I learned what the NPA had become. By the late 1970's, the NPA was well on its way to taking effective control of much of the province. The center of NPA strength was the municipality (equivalent in size to a large U.S. county) of San Vicente, still known to its inhabitants by its previous name, Laac. There, in late 1981, the Philippine military finally reacted to the NPA's gains by setting up variations of strategic hamlets. They forced farm families in small settlements to dismantle their houses and rebuild them in the municipality's larger towns where small military units were posted to stand guard. The military's aim was to isolate the NPA guerrillas from their support base. The move, which appeared to be a pilot project, alarmed the Communist party; clandestine CPP publications had long warned that hamletization represented a dire threat to the NPA.

So the Communists decided to launch a concerted propaganda campaign aimed at portraying the hamlets as a rank injustice foisted on an unwilling population. The first two journalists invited, indirectly by the Communists, to visit San Vicente, where they could be expected to write unfavorably on the hamlets, were a good-hearted missionary-journalist, who had great sympathy for the far Left, and myself.

By then I had reported several stories from the Philippines that reflected harshly on the Marcos regime, several of which had been attacked by the pro-Marcos press in Manila. The best-known article, provocatively headlined by *Time* "Pacific Powderkeg" (September 24, 1979), may have been the first comprehensive portrait in a major U.S. media outlet of the decay that was besetting the Marcos regime and the country at large. Reports of this kind had given me substantial access to Communists and their fellow-travelers. They seemed to think that I was their sort of reporter.

Not, as it turned out, in Davao del Norte. This was so despite reporting conditions heavily skewed in favor of the guerrillas. A pro-NPA group accompanied me virtually everywhere. The interpreter for all my interviews with local farmers

In fact, the Church majority has been bullied into such a flaccid neutrality regarding the Communists that it was an unusual, newsworthy event this summer when the Archbishop of Zamboanga, Francisco Cruces, pleaded that publicity given to NPA atrocities be as extensive as publicity given to military atrocities.

There is little immediate prospect that the Church will come to grips with the Communist challenge. Instead, the implicit policy of the Church hierarchy, from the Archbishop of Manila, Jaime Cardinal Sin, to the lowliest provincial bishop, is to maintain a state of ignorance about the CPP presence inside the Church. Cardinal Sin, in particular, is known to place the survival of a unified Catholic Church above almost everything else. If he were to launch a comprehensive examination of the CPP presence in the Church, he would, to borrow a Marxist term, be heightening the contradictions within the Church, and possibly precipitating a crisis.

V

Back in 1976, the Communists did not seem to pose much of a threat to the Church, or to any other institution in the Philippines. On June 25, 1976, after the CPP leadership had spent months analyzing the failure of the party and the NPA to make significant gains, the CPP issued a cautious new position paper. Although it has apparently been circulated only clandestinely and in mimeographed form, *Our Urgent Tasks* remains one of the key documents in the CPP's history. It would also prove to be the last important party paper written by Sison before his arrest.

Although *Tasks* brimmed with Sison's rhetorical optimism ("the soil for the revolutionary anti-feudal movement and armed struggle in the countryside is more fertile than ever before"), the overall message was glum. The Marcos regime was killing or arresting NPA guerrillas and CPP cadres at a rapid rate. There had been hardly any net growth in party membership since 1973. The party remained a small organization, perhaps 3,000 members, who were almost all one-time student radicals and other educated Filipinos from the middle and upper classes. In fact, most party members then seem to have been former members of KM, the radical youth organization, or had been recruited by KM members. The party of the masses it definitely was not. As *Tasks* almost plaintively stated: "We must increase the number of party members who are of worker and peasant status. In this regard, we must keep in mind that we do not wish to be an exclusively cadre party."

With false bravado, the *Tasks* paper declared that “in no year [since 1968] has the enemy struck down more than 5 percent of the party.” Even taken at face value, this was an admission that as many as two-fifths of the Filipinos who had joined the CPP since 1968 had been killed. But few of these deaths occurred among the large number of party members who had remained in the towns and cities. What Sison was really admitting was that the many party members fighting with the NPA were dying like flies.

One of the key problems then faced by the NPA was its lack of modern rifles. On that score, the party document was more hortatory than helpful: “We make sure that at the core of such weapons as bolos [a machete-like knife], spears, bows and arrows, and homemade explosives are good guns.” And if that is not possible, then “a full enemy squad ... caught by surprise ... can be easily overpowered by our militia with bolos or even with bare hands.”

The bottom-line advice *Our Urgent Tasks* had for the NPA was to avoid military action as much as possible and, instead, return to the task of consolidating control over rural base areas in remote parts of the country. Only after there is “painstaking work” and “solid organizational work,” said Sison, should the NPA attempt military action. Cautioned the CPP strategist: “We can advance only step by step.”

The NPA proceeded to build those secure base areas with a vengeance. “Solid organizational work” soon came to mean the total mobilization and control of the people in the base areas. This is how the Communist-party publication, *Ang Bayan*, described what was happening to civilians in NPA areas by the late 1970’s:

In the guerrilla fronts, the day-to-day work of the masses includes giving material support to the people’s army, keeping the enemy under surveillance, and helping to safeguard the security of the revolutionary forces. The people also participate in military operations carried out by the guerrilla units. They also play an important role in exposing and punishing enemy spies.

Many such “civilians” forced by the NPA into semi-combatant roles were among the first victims when the military came hunting the guerrillas. It was classic guerrilla-warfare strategy: coopt civilians and put them between you and the government’s armed forces. Their deaths have continued to provide grist for the mills of groups like Task Force Detainees.

But there was another reason why the NPA had concluded by the mid-1970’s that it had to be ruthless in asserting control over the guerrilla base areas. In *Mindanao Party Situation and Policies*, another CPP document issued about the same

time as *Our Urgent Tasks*, guerrilla leaders blamed their losses on their failure to kill “bad elements” and “local government informants.” What the NPA had to confront was the fact that, unlike virtually all Communist guerrilla movements that had ever achieved victory, it had no completely secure base area or sanctuary. There was no friendly foreign territory just across an international boundary where its guerrillas could flee when the fighting got particularly heavy. Nor did it have a remote base inside the country like Mao’s Yenan that government troops could not penetrate. Instead, to this day, there is no NPA base area anywhere in the Philippines that a large contingent of government troops could not penetrate and occupy if it wished to. Since the NPA cannot depend on territory, there is nowhere the enemy cannot come, the NPA has to make certain there is no one who might talk to the enemy when he arrives.

The literally terrifying solution that the party and the NPA came up with was to demonstrate their willingness to kill anyone who might possibly hinder the consolidation of their base areas. A defender of the NPA might say that, forced by military realities, the NPA terrorized the rural population. The NPA killed real, possible, and even, in its view, potential informers. It killed at the slightest pretext just to demonstrate its power and coldbloodedness. In Bukidnon province, for instance, we have first-hand accounts of the NPA killing a man solely because he once bragged that he had no fear of the NPA and, in another town, killing two men because, the guerrillas announced afterward, they had maintained mistresses. There are also countless second-hand accounts that make it clear that the NPA is less interested in whom it kills than in demonstrating to a cowed populace that it is ready to kill.

The NPA’s new ruthlessness was endorsed by the top CPP leadership. The party in effect told the NPA that it should feel free to kill anyone it felt it was necessary to kill. By including on the death list “unreformed bad elements who hinder the development of the revolutionary movement in the *barrio*,” the CPP was giving the NPA virtual carte blanche. If that was not subjective enough, *Ang Bayan* (December 31, 1980) seemed to suggest that any killing was permissible if a village mob approved:

What kind of criminals are meted out the death penalty by the revolutionary movement? The masses clearly express the answer to this by their feeling of relief every time a “*demonyo*” (enemy spy) or some other bad element is given capital punishment by the NPA... The crimes of these bad elements vary but these are all so grave as to warrant death as a just penalty.