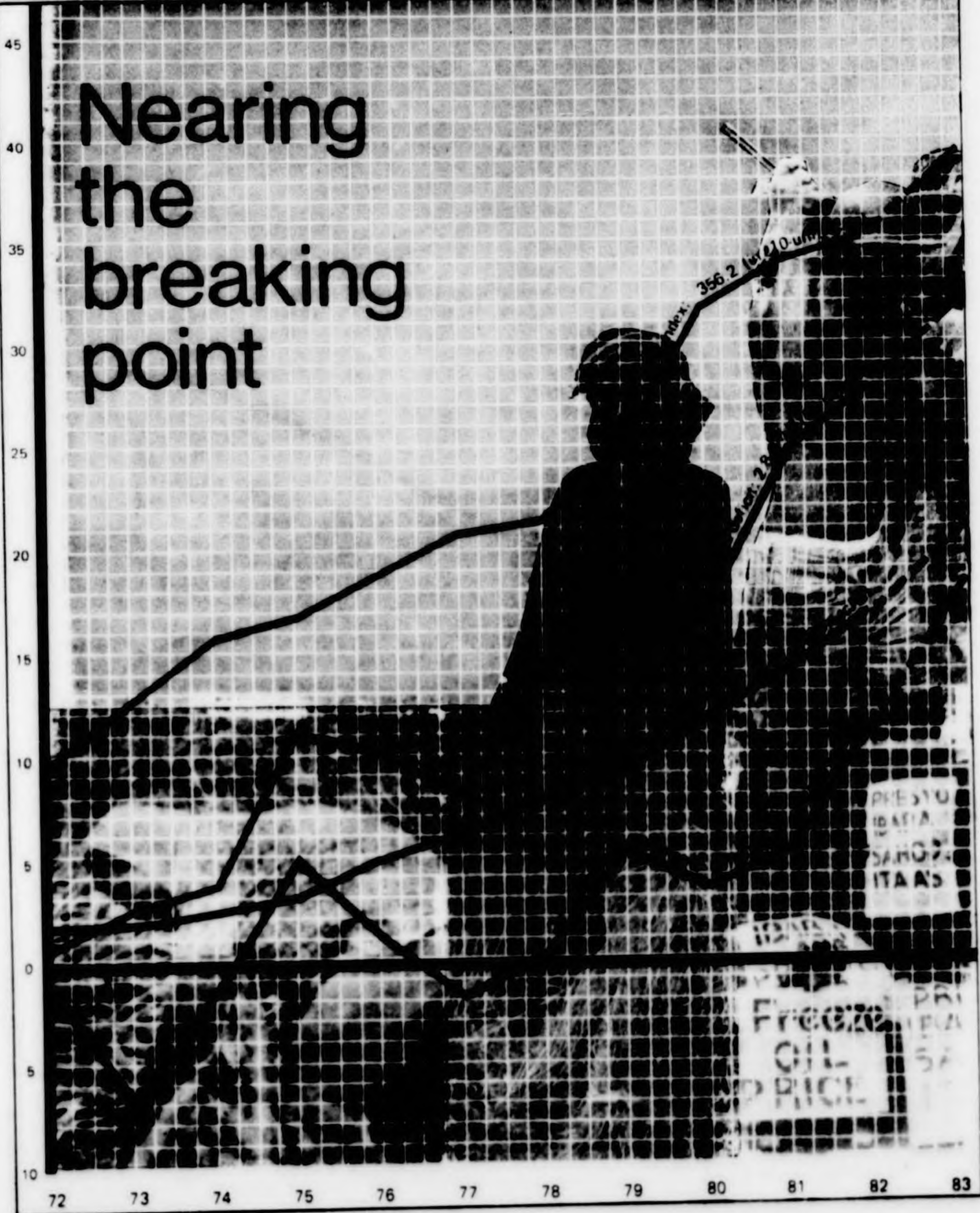


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LIBERATION

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Nearing the breaking point



Nearing
the
breaking
point



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LIBERATION warmly greets the Christians for National Liberation on its 11th anniversary. Established on Feb. 17, 1972, the CNL has since then contributed much to the revolutionary struggle, particularly to the NDF of which it is a founding member. **Mabuhat ang CNL!**

EDITORIAL

1983: Off to a bright start

The beginning of 1983 was like a New Year's resolution for the people. Their militant protest and undaunted will turned the fangs of repression on the fascist wolves themselves.

The church sector, media people and cinema artists resisted the regime's repressive measures in a bid to assert their democratic rights.

Public school teachers, jeepney drivers, urban poor, students and workers rose up to press their economic demands.

In the countryside, the New People's Army launched successive, medium-scale guerilla offensives that jarred many a general's battle plan.

While 1983 opens a year of protest and struggle, it also highlights a dramatic downturn in the economy. The peso is plunging deeper, unemployment is soaring, real income is shrinking further, all on an unprecedented scale since World War II.

All are reeling under the crisis except the foreign monopolists, the Marcos family and its ringleaders. No one believes that an end to this crisis is in sight except the World Bank technocrats.

In answer to the growing turmoil, the US-Marcos dictatorship wields a three-pronged demon's fork.

One is the fascist lunge trained at the open protest movement. The other is the public relations gimmick called Operation Katatagan, now enfeebled by its own relentless drive to harass, maim or kill the millions who support the NPA.

The third is the abracadabra of elections, a counter-offer aimed at traditional oppositionists who are increasingly taking up the people's demands. Elections is the regime's last futile attempt at breaking its isolation.

Notwithstanding this three-pronged strategy, 1983 promises a new and striking turn in the political isolation of the US-Marcos dictatorship and in the growth and unity of the forces fighting the regime.

To seize this excellent opportunity and push the present regime closer to the brink of political collapse is the task of all democratic forces.

In the wake of the economic crisis, the broad masses of the people should militantly assert their economic rights. None but the regime, through its subservience to US interests, its corruption and its mismanagement, has sunk the people into this economic morass; none but the regime should now be pressed to bail the people out immediately.

Struggles for economic rights must go beyond the issues of wages and immediate material benefits. They must target US imperialism as the root cause of the disaster, with the Marcos-technocrat clique as its willing executors. These struggles must be woven into a comprehensive anti-imperialist and anti-fascist movement asserting national sovereignty and democratic rights.

As rosy economic prognoses are belied by grim realities, as the economic crisis worsens and the people's protests mount, the regime is sure to go berserk and inflict punishing blows. To successfully thwart state attacks and advance their legitimate demands, various democratic sectors and forces should coalesce broadly and support each other's cause.

This early in the election gambit, the regime is already turning the screw on the traditional oppositionists. The latter have no other recourse but to continue firming up their links with the masses and participating actively in the democratic protest movement. At the same time, they must at every turn expose and oppose the regime's blatant maneuvers to stack the cards against them once again in the 1984 elections.

As the offensives of the NPA escalate in the coming months, the people's material and moral support becomes more important in further pushing forward the momentum of the armed struggle.

The bursts of people's protests and guerilla offensives that greeted 1983 are indeed a fitting opening salvo to a most fruitful year ahead for the people's democratic struggle.

CROSSCURRENTS

The economic slump

Regime's export-oriented strategy fuels worst crisis in postwar history

Rey Astorga, 34, is a reporter in a government news agency. His monthly pay of P1,300 is not enough for his family of 10 children, the eldest of whom is 15 years old and the youngest is 1. He is forced to moonlight in another newspaper and to ghostwrite for a columnist who does not know how to write.

Tony, 25, is a janitor in the maintenance section of a government ministry. His P600 monthly salary supports his parents and three younger brothers and sisters. They live in a squatter area in Makati. Recently, as part of the government's belt-tightening measures, the ministry slashed its budget by 18 percent. Many workers were laid off; Tony was among them.

Ernesto, 55, is a senior executive assistant in another ministry. He has been 20 years in his job and is two years short of retirement. He receives less than P2,000 a month. In June last year, he was laid off. He did not have enough "pull" to be reinstated. His eldest son has been forced to seek work in Saudi Arabia to help their family.

Garcia, 47, is the owner of a small shoe store in Rizal Ave., Sta. Cruz, Manila. Sales have been on the decline in his store for some years now. As a result, he has been forced to close shop. He is now trying to sell his bankrupt business.

Rosa, 40, is a head nurse in a government hospital in Cebu City for 19 years now. She is a widow with four children. Her fixed income of P900 a month cannot cope with the rapid rise in prices. She fears that she cannot send her children through college.

They are only some of the many Filipinos who are presently reeling under the impact of the worst economic crisis in postwar Philippine history. Even super-tycoons like Ayala Corp. head Enrique Zobel are complaining about the "worsening climate for business." Prospects of economic recovery are bleak and government officials are grimaced over the situation.

Marcos has called for more austerity and fiscal restraint so that "the nation can meet its goals during these times of unmiti-

gated adversity." He has lashed at his critics and cajoled them to "do away with (their) blinders on our perception of our economic life." Like his technocrat adviser and Prime Minister Cesar Virata, he attributed economic difficulties to the worldwide economic recession.

It is Marcos and his technocrats, however, who should remove their blinders — and the blindfold from the eyes of the public. Although the global recession has a bearing on the Philippine economic crisis, the primary cause of that crisis stems from the regime's own domestic policies. Principal of these is the strategy of export-oriented industrialization (EOI) which in the name of "national development" has distorted the economic structure, deepened US control and domination of the country and wrought increased poverty and hardship for the people.

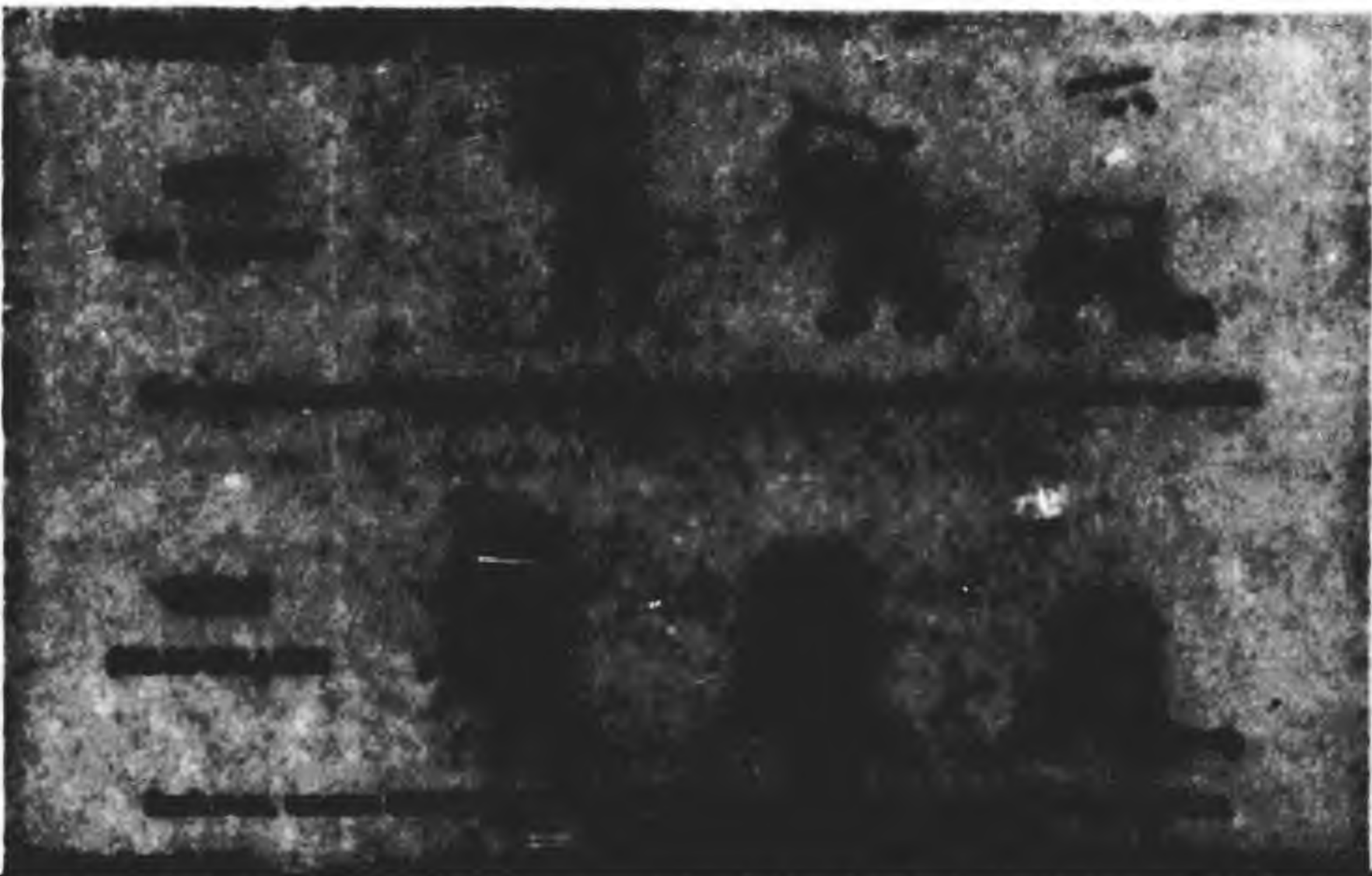
The EOI strategy

This strategy congealed in the 1960s under the sponsorship of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB). The latter are the key financial institutions founded and dominated by the US government to promote US strategic and corporate interests worldwide. A recently published book, *Development*

Debate: the World Bank in the Philippines, provides "straight-from-the-horse's mouth" evidence of the role of the IMF and World Bank as the major conduits of US imperialist policy. Authored by Walden Bello *et al.*, the book was based on over 6,000 pages of confidential World Bank and IMF documents.

The EOI strategy has two objectives: to open up the economy to the unrestricted flow of foreign capital and commodities, and to integrate the economy into the US-dominated international capitalist economic order. The imposition of martial law in September 1972 provided the political framework for the consolidation of the EOI strategy as the scenario for economic development.

The colonial thrust of EOI is manifested in the laws and policies enacted by the regime which liberalized or abolished import restrictions, lowered tariff levels, allowed unlimited repatriation of profits and earnings and established import and export incentives. A key incentive was the creation of a pool of cheap and repressed labor. A level of industrialization was allowed provided that this focused on the production of labor-intensive light manufactures (e.g. garments) with the participation of foreign capital.



In the first two years of martial law, the strategy yielded superficial successes. The gross national product (GNP) rose by 10 percent in 1973 while foreign investment reached \$55 million, a sum that equalled the net outflow of the previous three years. But in the next three years, 1974-77, the development offensive ground to a halt on almost all fronts. In the period 1977-81, the program headed for total collapse, dragging the economy in a fast downspin.

To ensure the smooth implementation of IMF-World Bank-directed policies, US-trained technocrats took commanding positions in the Marcos cabinet in July 1981. As expected, Virata and company's rise to power ushered in a bleaker picture for the Philippine economy: the balance of payments deficit soared, foreign debt and the government deficit ballooned, the peso's value plunged, inflation, unemployment and poverty levels jumped to unprecedented heights.

The soaring BOP deficit

In the late '70s, economic "stagflation" hit the advanced capitalist countries, prompting them to set up protectionist policies. In two years alone, 1978-80, the IMF identified at least 33 barriers erected by the US, Western Europe, Japan and other industrialized countries against Philippine exports, mainly textiles and garments.

Still, the World Bank prodded the Philippines to walk the tightrope of EOI without any safety net. The subservient Marcos regime took the suicidal course, making the country completely dependent on the world market and exposing the economy to the fluctuations of the latter. In 1982, the consequences of that

foolhardy policy became apparent. Prices of the country's major exports -- sugar, coconut and copper -- dropped sharply in the world market at 29.3 percent, 13 percent and 12.3 percent, respectively. Even the prices of non-traditional exports such as garments and electronic parts, which have grown by an average of 20 percent in the last 10 years, slumped by 6.4 percent.

The substantial fall of \$4.995 billion in export receipts resulted in last year's record \$1.135 billion balance of payments deficit and \$2.8 billion trade gap -- the biggest ever in the country's history.

On the other hand, while the value of exports plummeted, that of imports skyrocketed. This reflects the extent to which multinational giants controlling the production and marketing of imported products have distorted "free market" price mechanisms. It also reflects the inherent contradiction in the EOI strategy which is saddled with high import requirements.

In 1970, the Philippine import bill for raw materials and intermediate goods (excluding oil) was \$432.1 million. By 1979, this bill had ballooned to \$2.5 billion. In 1982, this further swelled to \$7.8 billion. "This import-dependent condition of EOI led to the paradoxical result that while export earnings were rising, import payments were soaring even faster, leading to a steadily widening balance of trade deficit," noted Bello in his book.

The debt trap

To bridge the yawning BOP deficit, the regime has resorted to borrowing more foreign loans. By mid-1980, the Philippines owed the IMF almost \$1.6

billion, making it the Third World country most indebted to the agency. The country has since gone deeper in debt to pay off installments in its existing debts.

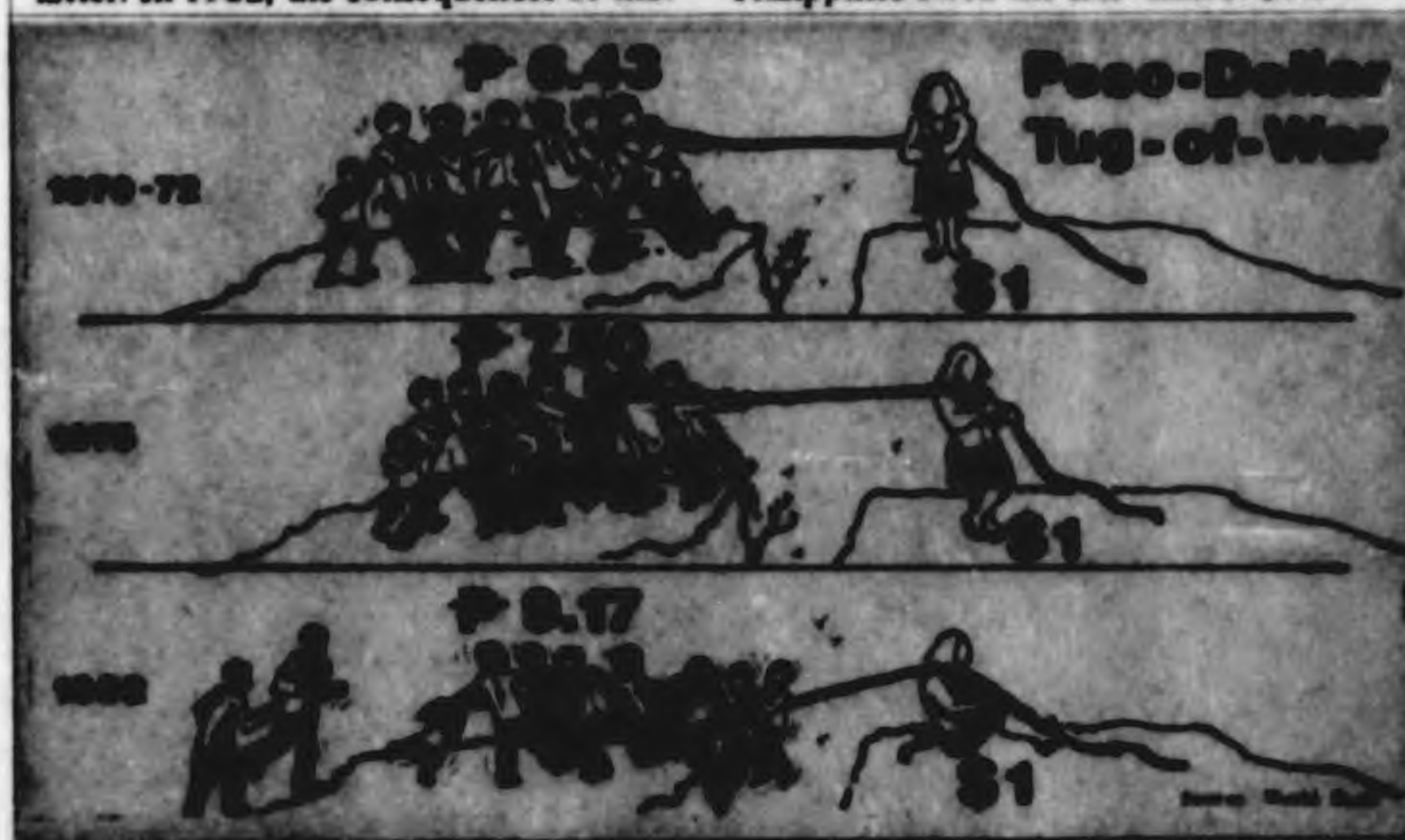
In 1982, the country's outstanding foreign debt swung up to \$16.96 billion. The government hastily assured foreign businessmen that the debt service ratio (debt repayments as a portion of export earnings) of 19.4 percent was still within the statutory ceiling of 20 percent. According to Central Bank Governor Jaime Laya, the country spent \$1.8 billion in 1982 to service the external debt.

As it is, the Central Bank says that the country already spends \$2 million daily on interest repayments alone. Recently, the *Bulletin Today* (Nov. 12, 82) quoted bankers as saying that the repayments could account for the equivalent of nearly 90 percent of exports in 1982. An American research firm, Data Resources Inc., has placed the Philippines near the bottom of a credit risk rating list of 17 major debtors, together with five Latin American countries.

"We have been borrowing not to build up our production capacities but to cripple and weaken our economy," said Alejandro Lichauco, a noted Filipino businessman and economist. One such crippling blow is the stack of loans borrowed by the government for expensive infrastructure projects. These loans which mainly benefit the foreign corporations gobble up a hefty portion of the foreign debt. The burden of paying these loans is being palmed off on the Filipino masses in the form of taxes. (see page 7)

Government infrastructure projects, coupled with emergency subsidies to ailing state and private corporations, are major factors which pushed the government deficit in 1982 to the unprecedented level of P14.4 billion, 25 percent higher than last year and the biggest ever in the history of Philippine government.

To keep the debt-ridden regime afloat, the World Bank has extended "structural adjustment loans" (SAL). These loans come with strings attached and are designed to crush the remnants of protectionism and consolidate export-led industrialization. In 1981, the World Bank released the first \$250 million SAL only when it was finally satisfied with the government's liberalization of import licensing and lowering of tariffs. A second SAL package of \$300 million is currently being negotiated by Virata with the World Bank.



Tale of the shrinking peso (and the shrinking pan de sal)



Devaluation and inflation

Aside from the SAL, the World Bank and IMF have also prescribed another tonic to alleviate the critical balance of payments imbalance. In August 1980, the Central Bank adopted a "more flexible exchange rate" to make exports competitive abroad. Stripped of the economic, this simply means the gradual devaluation of the Philippine peso through a floating exchange rate.

In 1962 and 1970, one-shot devaluations were imposed on the country by the IMF, spurring a tremendous increase in the inflation rate and dispossessing many fixed income groups. In 1980, the government opted for a more "moderate" devaluation, fearing that the imposition of total devaluation would generate massive unrest among the people. Such a policy, however, has not stopped the fast decline of the peso. From an exchange rate of P7.4 to \$1 in 1980 to P8.20 in 1981, the peso further deteriorated to P9.171 in 1982, or a depreciation of 11.8 percent.

The rapid erosion of the peso prompted the National Census and Statistics Office to shift the base year of the consumer price index from 1972 to 1978. This means that prices and the value of money would now be measured on 1978 levels. Using the new base year, the peso today is worth a low 59 centavos. Measured at the 1972 level, its value is a dismal 28 centavos.

Devaluation has jacked up the prices of basic commodities and services, triggering a sharp increase in the inflation rate. This has wrought havoc on the lives of the people whose purchasing power

has been greatly reduced. Marcos posted inflation at 10.4 percent in 1982 but a more accurate figure would notch higher double digit levels. In 1974, a year which parallels the present economic slump, the Central Bank reported an official 40 percent inflation rate.

While devaluation works against the interest of the people, it has worked to the great benefit of foreign corporations since devaluation enhances the latter's purchasing power in the devaluating country. Transnational corporations have taken advantage of this by overpricing their exports to the Philippines while the IMF and World Bank have bloated the price of current external debts and debt-servicing obligations owed by the Philippines. As a policy, devaluation fits perfectly in the IMF-World Bank blueprint since it preserves the open character of the economy and assures foreign capital cheaper access to it.

The twin devils of inflation and devaluation have also sparked a marked decline in economic growth which is evident in the sagging GNP rate. The World Bank says real growth fell from 6.9 percent in 1977 to 6 percent in 1979, 4.4 percent in 1980, 3.8 percent in 1981 to 2.6 percent only in 1982.

Unemployment worsens

At a time when the domestic and international market conditions are unfavorable, the inflationary costs of capital and production requirements have forced many businesses and industries to slow down production, retrench workers or shut down. This has aggravated the unemployment problem.

The dependence of the EOI scheme on cheap and repressed labor has also intensified the unemployment malaise. Such a scheme has resulted in the decline of real incomes, pushing more members of low-income families to seek work in a labor market which has already burst at the seams.

In January to August 1981, the labor ministry reported that 189,561 workers were laid off, majority of whom belonged to the manufacturing sector. In the month of November alone, the ministry received petitions for shutdowns and retrenchments almost daily. In the whole of 1981, one out of every four Filipinos was out of job by the year's end.

IBON, a progressive research office, computed the unemployment rate at 35 percent of the total labor force of 17 million. The labor ministry, on the other hand, posted unemployment at an unbelievably low five percent in 1982.

A revealing indicator of the unemployment crisis is the regime's export of Filipino workers. The labor ministry reports more than 500,000 contract workers abroad, increasing at an annual growth rate of 18 percent. In 1982 alone, about 600,000 workers were reported in 110 countries all over the world.

The regime's recent belt-tightening measure to slash government staffs in order to resolve the mammoth budget deficit will surely exacerbate an already critical situation. Reports reaching Liberation say that many offices have cut their personnel by as much as 30 percent. At the Population Center Foundation, a whole division was scrapped.



Deeper in the quicksand of crisis

To stave off imminent economic collapse, the Marcos regime, in close consultation with the IMF and World Bank, is intensifying export promotion and opening wider the floodgates to foreign capital. Additional incentives to foreign investors shall be given such as tax waivers and guarantees against paralyzing strikes.

Marcos is also mulling a constitutional amendment that will brazenly allow the alienation of public lands for use in long-term projects by big enterprises. At present, the constitution provides only for the lease of public lands. Also on the drawing board is a barefaced move to grant Philippine citizenship to foreigners who will invest \$200,000 equity funds in the country.

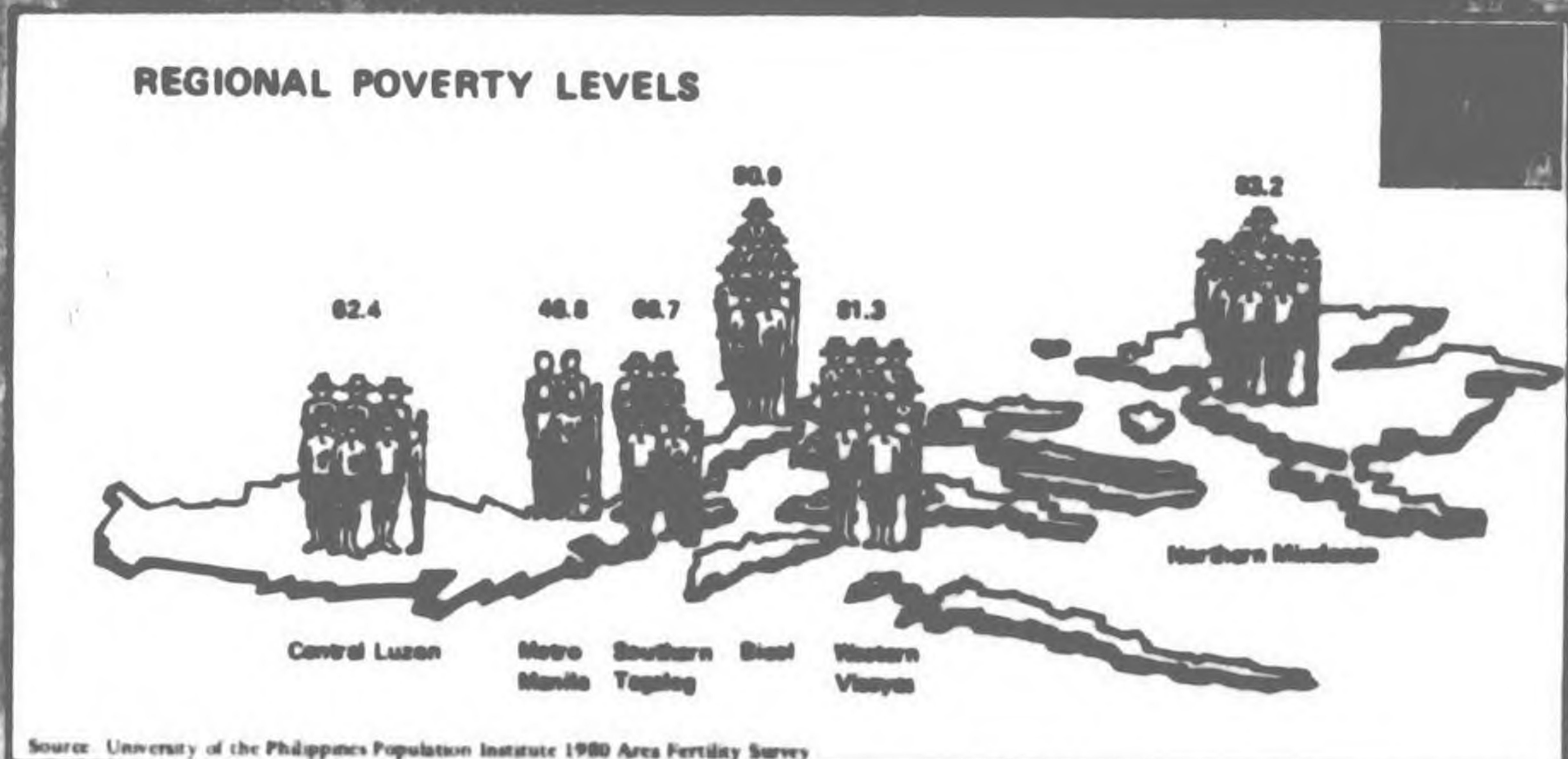
These proposals, however, will only bury the country deeper in the quick-

sand of the economic crisis. As long as the BOI strategy and other similar IMF-World Bank schemes continue, the Philippine economy will not only stagnate but actually regress. Geared toward the international market rather than to the needs of the Filipino people, the economy has not only been subjected to the instabilities of the world market but made completely dependent on advanced capitalist countries, especially the US.

The IMF, World Bank and transnational corporations - the instruments of US economic expansionism - are not interested in national industrialization and economic self-sufficiency and stability for the Philippines. They are not interested in developing basic industries producing heavy and intermediate goods. Neither are they interested in developing Philippine agriculture to serve domestic industrialization. Their only interest is to maximize the exploitation of cheap labor

in the Third World and secure the fastest rate of return on their investment within the limited time frame they operate in their host countries. This falls within the overall master plan of US imperialism to preserve the neocolonial nature of its client states as exporters of cheap raw materials and light manufactures and importers of high-priced capital and intermediate goods.

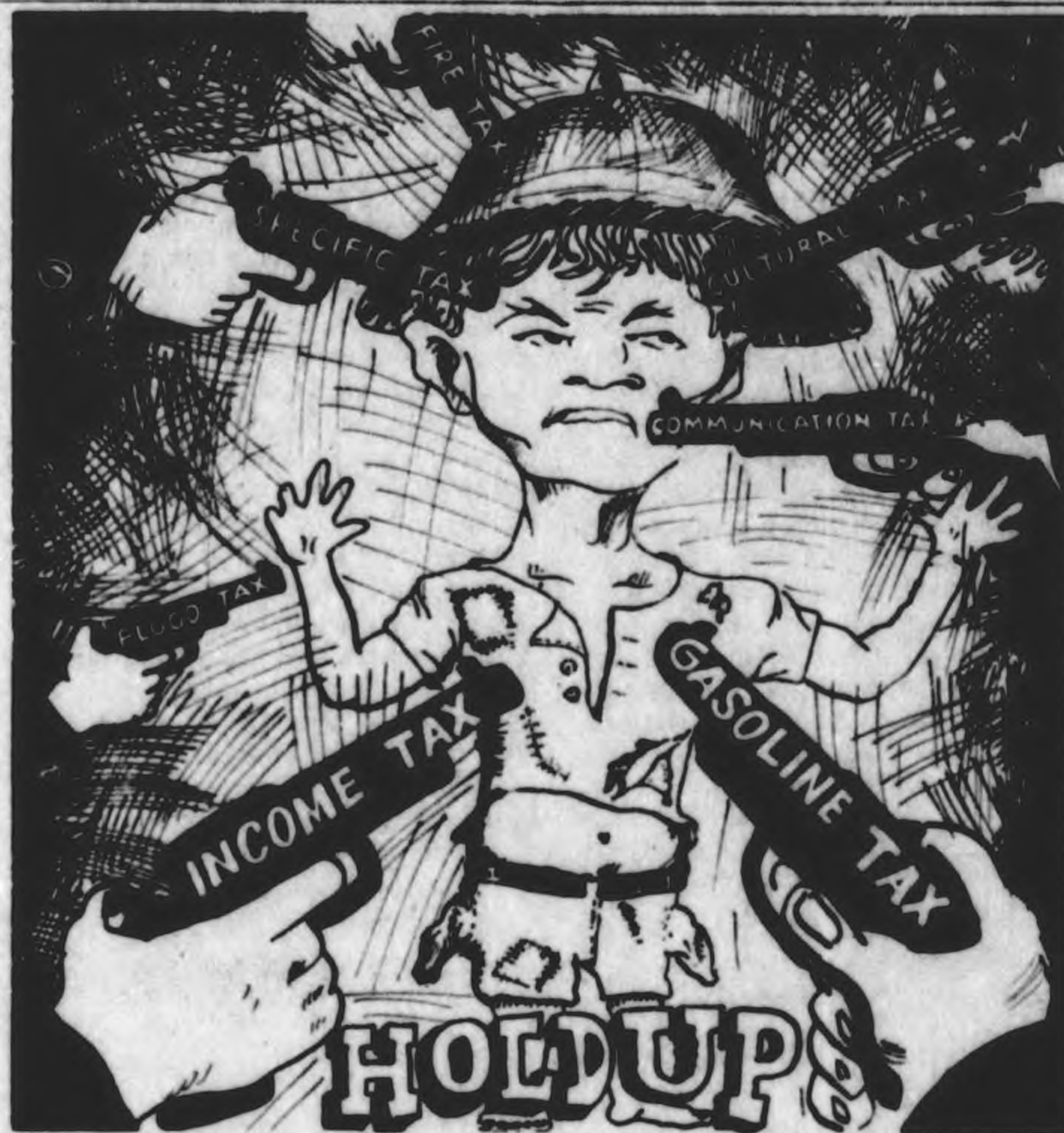
The regime, by committing the country to a strategy which permits the IMF-World Bank complex to determine its economic priorities, dooms the Philippines to a state of perpetual dependence and to the tight stranglehold of US imperialism. The tragedy of it all is that the ones who are made to shoulder the costs of the regime's folly and puppetry are its biggest victims and losers - the Filipino people. For them, the BOI strategy is a blind alley and there is no way out of its vicious trap except resistance. - By Leon Fortales



The overall human cost of the regime's economic strategy is being slowly paid by the majority of the people. Inflation, devaluation and wage suppression have eroded real family incomes to grievous proportions. A study by the Philippine Population Institute...

...the Bicol region, reaching 80.9 percent below the national average. The other poverty levels were...

...the Northern Mindanao region, reaching 63.2 percent below the national average. The other poverty levels were...



Giving more for less

Taxes send chills down taxpayers' spines

A rash of tax measures that sent chills down every taxpayer's spine greeted the new year even as the regime tried to placate the public with pronouncements of a better economic life in 1983.

The newest tax burden comes in the form of a three percent additional tax on imports and advance customs import duties. From oil imports alone, the three percent ad valorem import tax will rake in for the government a cool P700 million and another P1 billion for the advance customs import duties.

For Metro Manila residents, the burden is even heavier. The Metro Manila Revenue Code, the latest tax scheme that aims to increase revenue collection in the region, was silently passed last Jan. 3 without benefit of a public hearing. By adding taxes on business firms alone, the new tax code will hike Metro Manila revenue

collection by at least 50 percent. (*Times Journal*, Jan. 4)

Even before the public could shake off the impact of the new taxes, it had to gird itself for another round of price hikes for diesel and petroleum products — the 14th in the last 10 years. Price increases in other items followed suit: cigarettes, electricity, tuition fees, etc. The latest tax scheme has indeed opened "another Pandora's box of economic woes," said the Task Force on Energy, a new multi-sectoral group protesting the oil price hike.

Government holdup

Much as he is hit by price hikes, the Filipino consumer is most of the time an unwilling victim of a subtle yet pervasive form of government holdup — indirect taxation. In everything he does, he is being taxed.

When he buys a jar of coffee or a can of milk, he pays a sales tax. When he smokes a stick of cigarette or drinks a bottle of beer, he pays a specific tax. When he goes to a moviehouse, he pays a flood tax and recently, a cultural tax. When he pays his Meralco bill, he pays an adjustment tax. When he eats in a restaurant, he pays a caterer's tax. When he calls up or sends a telex to a friend, he pays a communication tax. When he earns his insurance premium, he pays a fire tax. And so on and so forth.

In its 1981 report, the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) revealed that indirect taxes actually account for 78 percent of our taxes. This startling admission is a sharp blow to the Filipino consumer who almost always suffers the brunt of taxation. A topnotch government technocrat showed the treachery of the whole scheme when he admitted: "When indirect taxes are levied on business goods and services, the manufacturers and the middlemen along the way recoup the additional costs by passing it on to the consumer in terms of higher prices."

In short, much of the price hikes could have been averted if only the government cut down its tax impositions. This is not difficult to understand. Every tax imposition creates a situation where everybody attempts to pass on the burden of taxes to the next consumer by raising the price of his product or services. It is a vicious cycle where the poor consumer is placed at the losing end. Not only is he divested of his income; he cannot even run for help to the government.

By its heavy reliance on indirect taxes, the dictatorship deliberately passes on the weight of the tax burden to the poorer sectors of society — the workers, peasants and middle and lower income groups.

Overtaxation

Caught in an economic squeeze, the Marcos regime has relied more heavily on taxes to bail itself out of trouble, even if the tax burdens are already choking most Filipinos. Consider this: "Government collected and spent more money during the last 15 years than in the previous 444 years of RP's existence, seven times more than in the administration of all previous Presidents of the republic and of every Governor-General, both American and Spanish, since Magellan hit the beach of Mactan." (*Diliman Review*, Sept.-Oct. 1980)

Tax figures in 1981 were even more startling. According to official figures released by NEDA, the advance estimates of total taxes in 1981 ran to P41 billion. Of this figure, 10 percent was paid by business while the remaining 90 percent came from individual pockets - mostly in the form of indirect taxes.

While taxes in 1981 multiplied 19 times since 1965, money wage rate (including cost of living allowance and 13th month pay) did not rise proportionately. Increase in direct taxes paid by the worker cut further his take-home pay. Indirect taxes, on the other hand, are marked up on the bundle of goods and services that he consumes daily, affecting his real wage which has slipped five times over since 1965.

Wanted scapegoat: OPEC

When public protest over the impending diesel price hike rose to a high pitch, the dictator desperately tried to find another scapegoat. This time, however, he could no longer point his accusing finger at his favorite whipping boy - the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The public knows that OPEC has actually lowered its prices of oil products. From \$39.5 in March of last year, prices per barrel of crude oil nosedived to \$35 early this year. In the spot market, prices even fell to as low as \$29.50 per barrel.

So why is the regime hiking the prices of diesel and other petroleum products when the price of oil is actually slipping down?

More than any other reason, it is the tight financial crunch that is driving the regime to impose heavier taxes on oil - thus raising the price of diesel and other petroleum products.

The series of financial fiascos that rocked the business sector had drained the government coffers dry as the Central Bank cashed out billions of sums to bail out several business conglomerates run by Marcos cronies.

The specter of economic bankruptcy now looms larger considering the spiraling foreign debt and the balance of payments and government budget deficits. To offset all these, the regime together with the IMF-World Bank complex mainly resorts to heavier internal taxation.

The recent rash of tax measures results from the IMF's sway over the direction of the Philippine economy. Expressing concern over the decline in the ratio of tax revenue to GNP, from 11.5 percent in 1980 to 10.4 percent in 1981, and over

the ballooning annual budget deficit, the IMF pushed for tax increases, especially in the form of indirect taxation. IMF standby credit to meet the deficits has been withheld until the regime implements new tax measures to increase revenues.

While the IMF and the regime tighten the noose on Filipino taxpayers by focusing on domestic taxation, foreign businessmen and investors are given the red carpet treatment. Protectionist tariffs on imports have been lifted and various tax exemptions have been granted to them. Some of these tax incentives are the tariff refunds for raw materials and equipment importation, tax credits on domestic capital equipment, exemptions from export taxes and from municipal and provincial taxes.

Protest mounts

The news of an added tax burden and price hikes quickly drew howls of protest from the already hard-pressed public. Residents in Cebu City turned off all their electric lights last Feb. 11 for five minutes in a symbolic protest over the increase in

electric bills. Drivers and operators of public vehicles promptly registered their protest over the import taxes and the impending diesel hikes. Last Feb. 3, some 1,500 students, drivers, workers and urban poor gathered in front of the Prime Minister's office in the old Congress building in Manila in a stepped-up campaign to oppose the impending diesel price hikes.

To a regime already caught in the bottleneck of economic crisis and mounting people's unrest, any attempt to impose a heavier tax will only intensify the people's anger. Even the Philippine Chamber of Commerce, the cream of Philippine business, is sounding off its protests over the recent tax measures. Warning the government of severe economic dislocations and financial setbacks, the PCCI vigorously battled for the exemption of oil from the new import tax.

Certainly, increasing the taxation burden is a political risk for Marcos. But the dictator has to play the gamble. Not many options are left to stave off the economic collapse. - By Marco Bonifacio

Taxes and more taxes

New and proposed tax burden

- 3 percent ad valorem tax on imports
- 3 percent advance import customs duties
- 25 percent tax on liquor, wine and spirits including beer tax implementation
- 100 percent hike in basic residence tax (proposed)
- P10 flat fee on every motor vehicle using Metro Manila streets
- Flat tax on all telephone subscribers in Metro Manila
- P20 occupation tax for every worker in commercial and service establishments like hotels, restaurants, department stores, beauty parlors, etc. in Manila
- 15 percent additional tax on cigarettes
- P100 increase in high school tuition fee
- 20-25 percent increase for business taxes and fees in Metro Manila under the new Metro Manila Tax Code
- 20 percent increase in taxes on parking for delinquent taxpayers in Quezon City
- Cultural tax on all theater operations
- 100 percent increase in occupation tax
- 100 more types of taxes and charges under Cabinet Order No. 57 some of which include:
 - marriage license from 40 to 50 (without service)
 - civil service commission certification from 20 to 30
 - National University's Board school fee, from P1,000 to P2,000

Wave of repression rises

But so does the tide of people's resistance



Cinema artists rally at Liwasang Bonifacio against Executive Order 868 on censorship

They called it a circus. The judge was banging his gavel, yet no one would listen. Defense lawyers rained insults on the prosecution lawyers, the judge himself and Marcos. The crowd alternately cheered and booed during the proceedings.

Some observers were quick to point out the lack, if not the total absence, of decorum in that trial.

But to the people who have lived through some 10 years of dictatorial rule under Marcos, it was a most fitting way to treat one of the fanciest appurtenances of the regime — the kangaroo court.

On "trial" were the publisher-editor of a tabloid, *WE Forum*, several staffers and all of its columnists. With the newspaper office raided just a few hours before, the newsmen were arrested and scooted to the nearest fiscal's office to be levelled with the charges of subversion.

Painstaking efforts were made to link them to every conceivable enemy of the Marcos regime — the Light-a-Fire Movement, the April 6 Liberation Movement, the Movement for a Free Philippines and even the Communist Party of the Philippines — forcing the newspaper's editor Jose Burgos Jr. to wryly add: "We also have links with the Marcos government."

But nobody, of course, believed that subversion in any form has been committed by the staff. Most were willing to concede it was all a case of frayed nerves on the part of Marcos who could only take so much political and personal affront. *WE Forum* ran a series of articles challenging the authenticity of Marcos' 27 war medals, suggesting that most of them were solicited in behalf of the real war heroes who could not claim them because they were already dead.

The real issue

Frayed nerves, notwithstanding, other observers believe that the *WE Forum* clamp-

down was part of the unfolding scenario of the stepped up crackdown: campaign which started with the arrest of top labor leaders in August and followed by the attack on progressive churchpeople last year. And the media sector was seen as the next target.

The Church got its share of the whip-lash when, on Sept. 1, a social action center in Catbalogan, Samar, was raided by the military. The raid sparked the arrest of various churchpeople including Samar priest Fr. Edgardo Kangleon. Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile followed this up with the declaration that 75 priests and nuns have either joined or are helping dissidents. He also started the rumor that a group of priests was plotting to kill Angel Hobayan, bishop of Catarman, Northern Samar.

The smear campaign was roundly denounced by churchmembers who saw through the government's intention of discrediting the progressive among them. The real aim of the government, it was clear, was to keep the Church from actively opposing the brutal effects of military campaigns and from giving any form of support to the growing mass movement. And the media was seen as the next target.

As shown by events, the *WE Forum* served to signal the regime's renewed repression campaign against the growing militancy of the media sector. Weeks after the first round of hearings for the *WE Forum*, six writers from a leading newspaper and a Sunday magazine were issued "invitations" to interrogations in military camps with the warning that any refusal on the "guests'" part would constitute waiver of his or her rights and would pave the way for more drastic action by the military.

The "invited" writers underwent intense military interrogation with questions

ranging from their motives for writing their stories to their most personal beliefs. The grilling, made without any authorization from any legal body, was meant not only to harass the six journalists but to intimidate other writers as well.

Weeks after the interrogation, the military went a step higher in its renewed drive to tighten the muzzle on the media. Two successive libel suits were filed against the editor of the *Panorama* magazine and several staffers for scurrilous libel committed against the military.

More than any other reason, it is the worsening economic crisis that provides the logic behind the regime's recent wave of crackdown. With the economy veering closer to collapse, the dictatorship is faced with the specter of swelling unrest. Confronted with such a grim scenario, it promptly responded with the campaign to preempt the snowballing of mass protests. And because of their strong sympathy to the people's plight and, on the other hand, antipathy to the regime's policies, foremost public opinion makers — the Church, the media and the cinema artists — are also now the object of government harassment.

Since the year ahead offers no sign of economic relief, repression is bound to intensify and spread to other sectors. This is the inevitable course. With no ready answer to the people's economic demands, the regime has to rely more and more on the logic of violence to quell the rising unrest.

Complementing its preemptive strike and continuing repression, the regime has stepped up its whitewash propaganda drive aimed at creating an artificial atmosphere of stability. The controlled media daily drumbeats rosy prospects for 1983

together with calls for public austerity and discipline. But the pangs of hunger have become so painfully felt by most Filipinos that no amount of reassurances of a better life could comfort their mounting restiveness.

Defiant actions

Despite the regime's all out deception and strong-arm tactics, progressive groups have responded not with submission but with defiance. In many instances, their protest actions forced the regime to temporarily backtrack on its suppressive measures.

In the media front, journalists and writers won important concessions in their militant attempts to push forward the struggle for press freedom and democratic rights. Defying threats of military reprisals, 38 journalists filed an injunction petition against the practice of military interrogation. Their united and even combative stance effectively warded off the regime's plans of conducting more witch-hunting by the National Intelligence Board.

The traditional union-busting practices of newspaper companies failed to avert the paralyzing strike that hit the Menzi



National artist Nick Joaquin stands in front of streamer "Press freedom is dead" at human rights rally

publishing firm last Feb. 6. Staged by the Bulletin Employees Union, the strike protested, among other things, the dismissal of union head Antonio Nieva and *Tempo* editor Recah Trinidad and the non-payment of overtime pay.

The Church, on the other hand, asserted its independence from the regime and tilted away from its stand of critical collaboration with its decision to abolish the Church-Military Liaison Committee. In its six years of existence, the liaison body was not only proven to be inutile. In most cases, it was nothing but a showcase of the double-dealing and hypocrisy of military authorities.

In another strong anti-government stance, Church authorities lambasted the regime's Manila International Film Festival project, a grand affair that was cooked up by the dictator's wife to shore up some profit to finance the festival and other expensive projects. In a stinging criticism of Imelda Marcos' justification for showing pornography, Cardinal Jaime Sin bemoaned the government's willingness "to use power in a capricious and arrogant manner, to treat the people like idiots and expect to get away with it."

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines recently issued a strongly-worded pastoral letter which was very critical of the regime. The letter charged the government with a host of evils such as the arrest and detention of some church-people engaged in social action work,

US cites FM on human rights

The US government will only see what it wishes to see.

Nowhere is this fact more clearly affirmed than in the recently released US State Department report of human rights conditions in the Philippines.

Despite the increasing incidence of violations of human rights and the heightening repression in the country, the State Department credited the Marcos government for "expanding further civil and political liberties in the country."

The report dismissed the recently released assessment of the Amnesty International which deplored the lack of civil and political liberties and military abuses in the country after the lifting of martial law in 1981.

Arbitrary arrests, the report said,

have been investigated and abusive and military government soldiers have been meted with disciplinary action. It went on to attribute the incidence of violence to the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the New People's Army.

"In 1982, freedom of speech was generally exercised more assertively. Greater freedom of assembly has served to encourage political activity on the part of the opposition in the Philippines," the report also stated.

How the State Department could have "missed" the entire picture is not at all surprising.

By giving a passing grade on Marcos human rights record, the US government thus shows its "compassion" for the victims of that human rights record.

pervasive corruption, militarization and questionable socio-economic projects.

Even the entertainment sector took part in the upsurge of popular protest in defense of democratic rights. Last Feb. 11, the country's leading movie directors, actors and actresses, producers and film critics rallied together to assail Executive Order No. 868, a new scheme that aims to broaden the police powers of the board of censors and further curtail the freedom of expression.

Waving banners that cried out "Free the artist!," some 500 artists - who comprise a sector that has heretofore kept its silence about the regime's repressive act-staged an hour-long demonstration at Liwasang Bonifacio in Manila. The strong protest registered by the cultural sector forced Marcos to freeze the implementation of the executive order.

In the wake of popular opposition, Marcos has shifted tactics. Using soft talk, he is trying to placate and win over restive and disgruntled sectors like the Church with invitations to "peace" dialogues. But as economic conditions deteriorate and more people fight back in various ways, the regime will once again start swinging its big stick openly - and more brutally. After all, the big stick of violence and coercion is still the regime's favorite weapon and the people should be prepared for more of its painful wallops in the coming months. - By Minda Rodrigo



Manila public school teachers demonstrate in front of Manila city hall

MAINSTREAM

Weary of waiting

Teachers walk out of classes to press their demands

January 3, the first Monday and school-day of the new year began unexpectedly at Manila's public elementary schools. The schoolchildren were present but a central and imposing fixture in the classrooms was conspicuously absent — the teachers.

In Tondo, where some of the city's biggest public schools are concentrated, many teachers stayed away from school. Some reported for work but refused to teach while others clustered at the schoolgates, explaining to curious parents the reason for the extraordinary action.

"*Hibingi ng panasko ang mga guro sa Presidente at Mayor,*" one mentor said.

The Christmas gift demanded by the striking teachers was the 1982 Christmas bonus which is equivalent to one week's salary to be paid by the national government and three weeks' salary to be paid by the City of Manila. The teachers also

demanded the immediate payment of the clothing allowances due them since 1981 and a stop to deductions made on the salaries of the country's 300,000 public elementary school teachers.

By January 6, the mass leave of absence had swung into full stride. Some 11,000 teachers at 78 public elementary schools in Manila joined the peaceful but paralyzing protest action which affected 680,000 pupils. Similar actions swept public schools in Bicol, Pampanga, Baguio, Davao and Zamboanga.

"The teachers themselves decided to walk out when the government failed to deliver its promised year-end bonus," said Tess, a teacher active in the teachers' protest movement, in an interview with **LIBERATION**. "The decision spread by word of mouth among the faculty clubs until everyone decided no one would go to school."

Mass action begets results

For three tense weeks, the classrooms remained shuttered — and so were government officials to the demands of teachers. Representatives of the Manila Public School Teachers Association (MPSTA) and the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), the organizations in the forefront of the mentors' fight, were given the runaround at the education ministry, Manila city hall, budget ministry, Metro Manila Commission and the Prime Minister's office. "No funds" was the common excuse.

But as the protest action dragged on and as more and more teachers resorted to demonstrations in front of government offices, the authorities were pressed to act. Manila Mayor Ramon Bagatsing ordered the release of P41.7 million as the city's share of the Christmas bonus. Marcos directed the issuance of P69.7 million as the national share.

Government action, though belated and begrudging, on some of their demands made teachers realize the importance and power of concerted and militant action. As Tess put it: "*Walang mangyayari sa pananabimik o sa paisa-isang pagkilos. Kung di kami gumalaw at nag-demonstrate, paninindigan nila (government) na walang pera.*"

Teachers' protests, however, hit a snag at the budget ministry. Budget Minister Manuel Alba refused to budge on the issue of salary deductions, claiming that the teachers had been overpaid since July 1981 due to a "computer error." In truth, the so-called computer error was a mere ruse by the government to collect over P131 million from the teachers' salary cuts.

To break the stalemate with the budget ministry, the teachers forced the issue to a showdown by mounting a demonstration at Malacanang on January 21. The rally swelled to what jittery police units described as "surprising proportions" as over 1,000 teachers jammed Mendiola, Laurel and Aviles streets near Malacanang. A thick phalanx of police and military men sealed off access to the palace. During a tense moment when the teachers rushed towards the barricades, the "cordon sanitaire" quickly sprang into action. "We have orders to stop you at any cost," a police chief growled.

The demonstration dispersed peacefully in the mid-afternoon. But the mood of the crowd was far from peaceful as many teachers angrily denounced the government's delaying tactics.

Tutors win another victory

The following day, Marcos hastily called a two-hour unscheduled meeting with MPSTA leaders in his inner sanctum at Malacanang. The teachers successfully wrested a key concession from him: the stoppage of salary deductions. It was another victory in their long drawn-out struggle for their economic welfare and democratic rights.

To show, however, that it was still on top of a potentially explosive situation, the regime tried to scale down the momentum of protest. Applying his usual witch-hunting tactics, Marcos warned the teachers against "infiltration by subversives." He disclosed that he had vetoed a proposal by the military council to lay off teachers who join mass actions and replace them with military men. Earlier, he had admonished that civil service rules ban government employees from striking and forming unions, and that anyone who violates this will face charges of abandonment of work.

The government-controlled press as well tried to undercut the teachers' struggle and public sympathy for their cause. Exhorted the *Times Journal*: "The teacher will always be and must remain a teacher. To teach is to sacrifice at almost every turn for the benefit of the young mind." (*TJ*, 15 Jan.)

What the press, however, and the regime as a whole conveniently gloss over is that teachers - and teaching - have actually been the sacrificial lambs in the altar of misprioritized education. Hardly any funds are left for the poor and lowly teacher because these are eaten by costly infrastructure projects and the military budget. While the Marcos Constitution recognizes education as a prime responsibility of the state, education ranks a low fourth or fifth in the regime's priority list.

"It is ironic that the teachers who are used as instruments of the status quo are themselves the victims of the very same system they are made to preserve," laments Asteria, a cadre of the Katipunan ng mga Gurong Makabayan (KAGUMA), the teachers' revolutionary underground mass organization.

She explained that as instruments, teachers are utilized by the regime to propagate ideas, values, and attitudes that are necessary for maintaining the iniquitous system. As victims, they endure economic deprivation and political oppression

in the present system aside from being exploited by state or private education capitalists.

Rising politicalization

But as recent protest actions show, teachers are increasingly becoming aware of their exploited condition and the basic problems at the root of such condition. Both Asteria and Tess observe a qualitative change in the development of the teachers' open mass movement since 1981. They note that more of their fellow teachers are realizing the value and necessity of unity, organization and mass action in fighting for their interests.

Proof of this is the string of well-attended demonstrations that unwinded last year against the Education Act. Teachers and students alike assailed the Act as a scheme designed to create an abundant reservoir of skilled, cheap and subservient labor for US transnational corporations. The recent mass actions and the formation of such organizations as the Alliance of Negros Teachers and the State Colleges and University Faculty Association are also positive signs of the growing politicalization of a traditionally placid and compliant sector.

The significance of the teachers' active participation in sectoral, multi-sectoral and local struggles cannot be

underestimated. These temper and prepare them for their dynamic role in the national democratic cultural revolution. "Teachers play a most decisive role in spreading public opinion in favor of the revolution," stresses Asteria. "They can use the classroom as a venue to teach students progressive ideas and values and skills needed in the course of the revolution."

Indeed, by becoming conscious propagandists of the revolution, teachers can turn the school - the very instrument used by the state to perpetuate itself - against it.

Meanwhile, the teachers are girding for a long and hard struggle ahead. Though they have partially won the promised Christmas bonus, they have yet to realize this fully and their other demands. "It will be a rather long bout," declared the Alliance of Concerned Teachers in a manifesto. "Because even while the bets get higher with devaluation, inflation and soaring prices, the government seems to think it can keep us down by knocking us out."

The ACT and other militant organizations vow to stay on their feet and keep on fighting. Undoubtedly, their best punch in the arena of battle and best chip in the bargaining table lie in concerted struggle. - By Leon Fortaleza

The travails of teachers

In the past, to be a *maestra* or *maestro* meant a position of high esteem in the community. The pay was meager but it was enough for those days' living standards.

Today, conditions have radically changed. Teachers and educational workers - who number 450,000 nationwide and who comprise 60.2 percent of the entire professional force - stand out as the most underpaid, most overworked and most exploited of their class.

The ACT reports that the average monthly salary of public elementary and high school teachers is P774. In private schools, it is P350 to P650. This is way below the poverty line of P1,750 a month pegged by the National Wage Council in 1981 for a family of six.

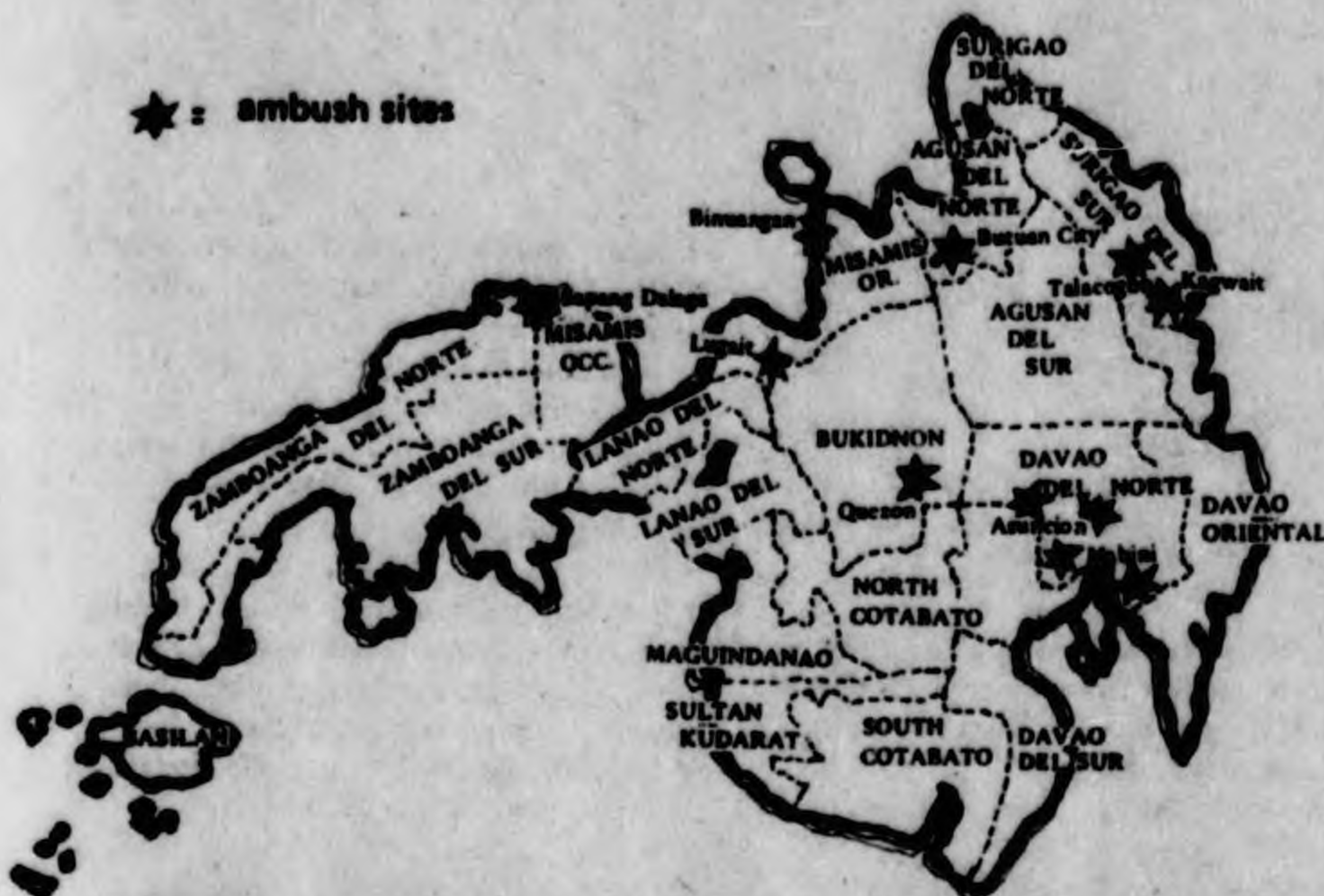
To compound their woes, teachers are made to render services without compensation and which are alien to their profession. "Contributions" to athletic meets, beauty contests,

scouting and even the entertainment of visiting government officials are shelled out of their own pockets. Recent research studies sum up these unpaid tasks to a total of 75.

Teachers have also to contend with poor working conditions and inadequate school facilities. In private schools like Jose Rizal College, Lyceum and University of the East, an average class comprises 60 to 70 students. In Araneta University, a laboratory teacher handles up to 120 students per class.

In addition, teachers have to shoulder expenses for teaching aids and devices like chalks, erasers and posters. In laboratory classes, they have to make do with empty softdrink bottles as substitutes for test tubes. To make ends meet, they are forced to take sideline jobs such as peddling insurance, memorial plans, textiles and the like. They also have to borrow money from unurers, trapping them in an endless cycle of debt and penury.

★ : ambush sites



NPA advances in Mindanao

Regime scours for more guns and more troops

Like a forest fire, one successful offensive after another of the New People's Army, have been sweeping Mindanao, making the island the latest flashpoint for the regime's military campaigns. With the spate of guerilla offensives, Mindanao assumes a spearhead role in the nationwide intensification of guerilla warfare.

In barely two months, at least 11 military operations were conducted by the NPA in various Mindanao provinces. The operations yielded scores of high-powered firearms, resulted in the death of a battalion commander and gave the regime ominous warning of the power and strength of the people's army.

On Jan. 12, a company sized formation of Red fighters - without firing a single shot - confiscated 51 rifles in a raid conducted in broad daylight in Mabini, Davao del Norte. Effectively employing ruse, the NPA entered the town wearing military uniforms of the regime and swooped down on the municipal hall and police station. Another team of NPA guerillas raided the Manicor logging firm nearby.

About 47 rifles and assorted firearms were seized from the police armory while four rifles and three pistols were taken from the logging firm. As they withdrew, some NPAs fired at the 437th PC company camp nearby to divert the attention of pursuing soldiers.

On Jan. 21, a bigger ambush awaited Lt. Col. Jaime Somera, commanding officer of the 9th Infantry Battalion, and his men in Barangay Guinabot, Sapang Dalaga, Misamis Occidental. The military convoy was on its way to a government-sponsored

meeting when attacked by about 60 NPAs on a dirt road, about 12 km. away from the town. Killed in the ambush were Somera, the town mayor of Sapang Dalaga, a captain, two corporals and two sergeants.

Less than two weeks later, on Feb. 4, six more paramilitary troopers were slain when a company formation of NPA fighters raided two barangays in Asuncion, Davao del Norte. The next day, another ambush was staged in Asuncion, killing eight government men, including a lieutenant.

Other NPA operations were reported in Binuangan, Misamis Oriental (Jan. 20, one policeman killed); Butuan city, Agusan del Norte (Feb. 3, a PC squad disarmed); Aras-aan, Kagwait, Surigao del Sur (Feb. 8, eight soldiers killed including a PC captain); Nabrin, Talacogon, Agusan del Sur (Feb. 8, five policemen disarmed); Miramiran, Quezon, Bukidnon (Feb. 8, four PC troopers and two security guards killed); and Lugait, Misamis Oriental (Feb. 14, three policemen killed including a lieutenant).

Growing capacity

The series of successful tactical offensives attest to the growing capacity of the NPA force in Mindanao to deal heavy blows on the regime. NPA offensives have not only increased in number but have also become more widespread and more evenly distributed in various provinces of the island. Guerilla units have reached bigger formations and are now capable of launching medium-scale tactical offensives, combatting oversized military squads and undersized platoons of the enemy.

Even PC chief Lt. Gen. Fidel Ramos has grudgingly recognized the marked development of the NPA in Mindanao. In a "peace dialogue" with public officials and military field commanders last Feb. 8 in Davao City, Ramos said the "rebels are no longer guerillas but are now 24-hour warriors, armed with sophisticated weapons and supported by a mass base." (*Bulletin Today*, Feb. 9)

Displaying increasing alarm over the escalating armed struggle, Marcos called a general military council meeting last Jan. 21 and Feb. 7. He berated the military officials present, saying that the increasing military casualties were not mainly due to negligence and laxity but due to "plain stupidity." He directed Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and Armed Forces chief Gen. Fabian Ver to deploy four additional battalions in Northern and Eastern Mindanao.

Marcos also ordered the reassignment of battle-tested commanders to the island, the sending of armored vehicles, helicopters, navy gunboats and more sophisticated communication equipment, and the intensive training of the various commands of the major services under the AFP. He said added war materiel shall be procured from the United States under a foreign military sales agreement.

Hamletting on the rise

With the stepping up of military operations, the incidence of forced evacuation, hamletting, arbitrary arrests, torture, and looting has expectedly multiplied. Initial reports say that thousands of barrio folk have been uprooted by the military in its renewed attempt to rid the people's army of mass support.

At present, Vietnam-style "strategic hamlets" now cover over 150 barrios in Davao del Norte and Agusan del Sur, 135 barrios in Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga del Norte and 80 barrios in Davao del Sur and North Cotabato.

Meanwhile, Enrile said recently that he welcomed the report "that the NPA has shifted its armed activities to Mindanao." He was quoted by the *Manila Evening Post* (Feb. 7) as saying: "Let the NPAs stay in Mindanao because this is a good area for us to encounter them."

Enrile may just have to eat his words. As things look in Mindanao, the NPA is there to stay - and waiting for more encounters with the regime's minions.

1982: A year of steady growth

CPP reports on the advance of the revolutionary struggle

"1982 was a year of steady growth in strength and quality for the national democratic revolution," said the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) last Dec. 26, the 14th anniversary of the Party's reestablishment. The revolution's growth comes at a time when the Philippines is reeling from the worst economic crisis since the 1930s and the regime is intensifying its repression of the people.

Ang Bayan, CPP official publication, reported that NPA units launched tactical offensives at least once every two days in 1982, an increase over the rate registered in 1981. More high-powered rifles were seized from the enemy last year than in the previous year and more military troops and officers were wiped out in ambushes.

The upgrading of the NPA's combat capability in the advanced substage of the strategic defensive is evident in the formation and rapid progress of fullfledged guerilla units in most of the guerilla fronts, *Ang Bayan* said. Progress was also made in the formation of people's militia units and partisan units.

From 34 in 1981, guerilla fronts expanded to 39 last year with the opening of two guerilla fronts in Luzon, one in the Visayas, and two in Mindanao. The rest of the fronts have expanded. Army work in the coming period will stress the all-round strengthening of the NPA, the continued spread and intensification of guerilla warfare, and the rapid formation and development of fullfledged guerilla units.

While mass actions in 1982 in the cities and countryside did not match the 1981 mobilizations in quantity and frequency, progress was made in raising the masses' level of political consciousness and linking their actions to broader issues and struggles. This was carried out through vigorous propaganda and education campaigns and social investigations, the CPP publication added.

Close attention was given to problems on mass organizing in preparation for more drastic repression by the enemy. In the coming period of time, the CPP said that stress will be laid on heightening

the efforts to establish, expand and strengthen the revolutionary mass organizations and the launching of different types of open mass struggle.

In 1982, mass actions by the people, especially among the workers and petty bourgeoisie, became bolder and more creative. The strike movement continued to grow in the earlier part of 1982. This is evidenced in the work stoppage by 18,000 workers at the Bataan Export Processing Zone in June. The regime reacted by imposing more repressive laws and imprisoning scores of union leaders in August.

Also persevering in their struggle are the revolutionary Moro people and the Moro National Liberation Front and Bangsa Moro Army that carry on armed resistance. Other groups, some of whom are armed, also developed whose relationship with national democratic forces is one of "mutual help and openness to more advanced cooperation," *Ang Bayan* reported.

The advance of the revolutionary movement pushed many politicians into seeking a place for themselves among the anti-dictatorship and pro-people forces. In the international front, the movement is gaining

the warm support of friendly governments, political parties, organizations and individuals in many parts of the world.

"United front work in the coming period of time will emphasize efforts to forge greater unity and cooperation among all forces fighting the US-Marcos dictatorship," *Ang Bayan* added.

On its part, the CPP said that in 1982 the Party learned valuable lessons in leading more complicated and higher-level struggles, as well as in administering a growing organization. Although some parts of the Party organization sustained damages in the past year and several leading cadres fell into enemy hands, this did not halt the Party's rapid growth and leadership of overall affairs.

The CPP noted a satisfactory increase in the number of new Party members in 1982, both in the rural and urban areas. Of all the forces that are fighting the regime today, the CPP said that Party-led forces are the "most numerous, most consistent and most organized."

"Conditions for making revolution are getting better," *Ang Bayan* reported. "Dim prospects await the US-Marcos dictatorship in the years to come. The economic crisis in the US and the capitalist world will continue to worsen; on the other hand, the reactionary Reagan is given only a slim chance of being re-elected US president in 1984."

Meanwhile, *Ang Bayan* added, "the revolutionary movement inexorably marches on and gains strength, tempering itself at every twist and turn of the road to victory."



NPA's make a cross-country bivouac in the Cordillera mountains

SPARKS

22 MASS ACTIONS STAGED IN MINDANAO

More than 54,000 people took part in 22 mass actions launched in North Central Mindanao from April to September 1982. This was reported in the maiden issue of *Linghuan*, the region's revolutionary newspaper.

Issues like workers' and students' rights, US military bases, the holding of elections for the region's "regional autonomous government" in Regions 9 and 12, and military abuses drew the support of workers, farmers, students, churchpeople and professionals.

The mobilizations were held in Iligan City (8 rallies), Cagayan de Oro City (5), Marawi City (3) and in the towns of Kolumbagan, Maranding and Tubed in Lanao del Norte, and Balingang and Lagait in Misamis Oriental.

NPA CAPTURES RIFLES IN BICOL AMBUSH

Seven assault rifles including an M 203 (armalite-grenade launcher) and several rounds of ammunition were added to the NPA's arsenal in Bicol last Jan. 1 after a successful ambush of six army soldiers.

The troops, belonging to the 522nd Army Engineering Battalion, were aboard a mini-cruiser when they were waylaid and killed along Maharlika highway in Bato, Camarines Sur.

Only last November, eight soldiers were killed in a surprise attack along the same highway in Guinobatan, Albay. Last September, Col. Jose Laborante of the engineering battalion and three other soldiers were killed in Napua, Camarines Sur.

AMBUSHES MOUNTED IN NEGROS OCC.

In two weeks, NPA guerrillas in Negros Occidental have staged two successful ambushes which killed two officers and four enlisted men of the First Long Range Patrol Company, as well as two policemen.

The first ambush occurred last Jan. 6 along the national highway in the town of Casayon. The Red fighters waited till early morning for the troop's Isuzu pick-up along a curve of the highway.

The second ambush took place on Jan. 21, 9:30 p.m. in Sipalay town where the NPA intercepted a 14-man team sent earlier to track them down.

The team had just gotten out of their vehicle when they were ambushed. A rescue unit sent to reinforce the embattled policeman was met with gunfire as they approached the site of battle. Two other policemen of the rescue team were seriously wounded.

PC PATROL BASE RAIDED IN ABRA

A well-executed assault on a PC patrol base in Barangay Tulampac, Lacub, Abra last Jan. 9 sent the base's 10-man team running for its life after a one-hour gunbattle. The fleeing

troops left behind 10 assorted high-powered firearms, one radio set and assorted ammunitions.

Two soldiers were killed and four wounded, while the rest of them abandoned their posts and scampered for safety.

The incident prompted PC chief Lt. Gen. Fidel Ramos to confer with his top military commanders in the region to boost the sagging morale of the AFP in Abra.

PC COMMANDER AMBUSHED IN LEYTE

Lt. Col. Ruperto Legarda, commander of the 55th PC Battalion stationed in Leyte, was killed in an ambush staged by NPA guerrillas in Barangay Sogod, Mahaplag, Southern Leyte last Jan. 11. Three of the colonel's men died with him.

The government troops were on their way to attend a meeting in Tacloban city when they were ambushed by the waiting Red fighters.

Before leaving the site, the people's army was able to confiscate the troop's firearms and ammunitions and set the colonel's jeep on fire.

REGIONAL ALLIANCE FORMED IN CL

Damdamin ng Bayang Nagkakaisa (DAMBANA), a multi-sectoral alliance of people in Central Luzon, was formed on Feb. 5 at the Holy Family Academy in Angeles City, Pampanga. Some 600 people from all walks of life attended the founding convention.

The new mass-based alliance is intended to provide a forum for the participation of the Central Luzon people on issues in their region such as the US bases in Pampanga and Zambales, the nuclear plant in Batan, the export processing zone and militarization.

Former Bulacan Congressman Rogaciano Mercado is the chairman of the alliance. Also present in the meeting was Abraham Sarmiento, former Constitutional Convention delegate and head of the Kilusang Bayan ng Timog Katagalugan.

LPS PICKETS MANILA INT'L FILMFEST

Members of the League of Filipino Students (LFS) staged a picket last January 31 at the Manila Film Center, site of the Second Manila International Film Festival.

They distributed a manifesto lambasting the "decadence and wastefulness" of the filmfest. Metrocom forces drove the rallyists away from the steps of the film center.



Students lambast filmfest in a picket at the Manila Film Center



List of world's worst leaders

Marcos makes it to Terrible Ten

The poll was conducted by veteran American columnist and political journalist Jack Anderson and his team of six reporters among 51 international specialists, including foreign affairs specialists in the State Department, Pentagon, Central Intelligence Agency and congress and academics, journalists and foreign diplomats.

In the list's accompanying article, Anderson wrote that "most of the selections are related, indeed, with inter-

national violence, particularly sponsored by the hierarchy of arms and aggression."

The respondents were asked to answer the question "In descending order, who, in your opinion, are the world's five worst leaders?" and to consider five criteria, namely despotism, ineffectiveness, irresponsibility, personal greed and personal instability. Voting was done by giving five points for a first-place mention, four points for a second-place mention, and so on.

"How do these crooks and clowns stay in power?" Anderson wrote. "For one thing, the American intelligence community to help keep them in power. They're afraid of the military." Anderson said.

Marcos, described by the respondents as one who "has managed to self-perpetuate and build a machine to maintain his dictatorship," received \$7.5 million in US economic aid to the Philippines in 1981 and \$75.6 million in military aid. "Marcos has managed to take his anti-communist hobbyhorse ... into the great game of the Soviet superpower," the respondents said.

Anderson's list of the world's worst leaders was published in his column "The World's Worst Leaders" in the New York Times on Jan. 9, 1983. Anderson's list of the world's worst leaders was published in his column "The World's Worst Leaders" in the New York Times on Jan. 9, 1983.

New York's Parade magazine published the poll results and featured it as its cover story in its Jan. 9, 1983 issue. Parade dubbed the list "the list of the world's worst leaders."

COALITION URGES OUSTER OF US BASES

Some 1,500 workers, farmers, students, churchpeople and professionals held a symposium at the St. Joseph's College auditorium in E. Rodriguez St., Quezon City on Feb. 12 to demand the immediate removal of US military bases in the Philippines and the dismantling of nuclear weapons in the Asia-Pacific region.

The symposium was sponsored by the Anti-Bases Coalition, a newly-formed group composed of civil libertarians and representatives from various organizations. Former senators Lorenzo Tanada and Jose Diokno are the coalition's acting chairman and acting secretary, respectively, and former Justice Jose B.L. Reyes is the treasurer.

In a declaration, the group denounced the scheduled review this year of the bases treaty as a "process of deceit that will serve only the interests of the US government and of the Marcos administration and whatever authoritarian regime succeeds it."

NFFC PROTESTS NUKE PLANT LOAN

The Nuclear Free Philippines Coalition (NFFC) continues to protest the just concluded loan agreement between the Philippines and Eximbank totalling \$204.5 million to finance the construction of the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant.

Branding the nuclear plant a "potential public hazard," NFFC reiterated its concern over the safety of both the reactor's design and its earthquake-prone and volcanic site.

Eximbank President William Draper III reportedly said that the Bataan Nuclear Plant Project "is very good for our business and the American economy."

PROTEST BROWNOUTS HIT CENTRAL VISAYAS

People in Central Visayas switched off their electricity last Feb. 11 in a 10-minute symbolic brownout which saw 90 percent of all households in the region participating. The next day, more than 1,000 people picketed the regional office of the National Power Corp. (NPC).

The protest brownouts were staged to dramatize opposition to the 10 percent power rate hike imposed by the NPC. Consumers complained that the rates in Central Visayas are already the highest in the country and that the NPC implemented the increase without public hearing.

Hour-long voluntary brownouts will continue to be staged every day starting Feb. 19. Various business, social, civic and political organizations in the region are supporting the protest actions.

FQS COMMEMORATED IN LIWASAN

Some 600 students from various schools in Metro Manila marched on Liwasang Bonifacio last Jan. 26 to commemorate the First Quarter Storm. The FQS refers to the series of demonstrations that were held in the country from January to March 1970.

The rally was capped by the laying of a wreath at the foot of the monument of Andres Bonifacio. A bouquet of red roses was also offered by some policemen.



Fr. Agatep singing in a cultural night of the NPA in Del Pilar, Ilocos Sur

Last year saw the deaths of two comrades who led exemplary lives in the Philippine revolutionary struggle. Fr. Zacarias Agatep and Edgar Jopson were killed fighting for the people's cause. Though they never met each other, they led parallel lives. Both had middle class backgrounds. Both integrated themselves with the masses, Fr. Agatep with the peasants and Edjop with the workers. Both were noted reformists of their respective organizations before martial law. Both later turned radical and took up the option of armed struggle. In this issue, LIBERATION pays tribute to Fr. Agatep and in the coming one, to Edjop.

If there is one aspect in Fr. Zacarias Agatep's over-all revolutionary commitment that can be singled out as his most intense devotion, it is his dedication to the masses of the peasantry. To them, he gave his strength, talent and passion.

During his seminary days in San Vicente, Ilocos Sur, while many of his classmates spent the summer break in the houses of their landlord benefactors, he spent it more simply yet more meaningfully. He lived with some poor peasant families just next to the seminary's compound and helped around the farm.

A son of a middle peasant, his heart seemed more attuned to this surrounding than to his landlord benefactor's big house in Vigan. Later on in his priesthood, his parish house would become a hub of peasants who, touched by his concern for them, sought his moral and material assistance.

In 1964, he wanted to attend more to the problems of the farmers. He took a leave from his parish duty in San Esteban, Ilocos Sur. He became a fulltime chaplain for the Northern Luzon chapters of the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF), a legal reformist farmers' organization which at its peak in 1971-72 counted about 500,000 card-bearing members. He championed the peasant's cause by organizing them into local FFF chapters.

As an FFF chaplain, he set up farmers' cooperatives to protect them from being sucked dry by usurers and unscrupulous merchants. He educated the peasants of their rights under the then land reform law which, though already pro-landlord, was circumvented by the latter to further squeeze their tenants. He roused the peasants of Sta Cruz, Sta Lucia, Salcedo, Galimuyod and other towns of Ilocos Sur in mass campaigns calling for the reduction of land rent from 50-50 to 70-30 as provided for by the law. When landlords threatened the farmers' ejection, he exhorted the latter to band together and assert their right to continue tilling the landlord's field.

Though a social reformer working within the framework of the law, Fr. Agatep knew that in practice the law is unkind to the poor who have to sweat it out to acquire its minimal benefits. When he taught politics to the peasants belonging to the FFF, he therefore stressed the principles of mass pressure and armed defense: to guard their harvest lest the landlord's goons steal from their 70 percent share, to mass up and collectively plow the field when the landlord bans a tenant from tilling it, to negotiate in groups and to keep their bolos tucked

to their waist when arguing their case against the hacienda overseers.

Option of armed struggle

The imposition of martial law in September 1972 shattered Fr. Agatep's reformist outlook. It dawned on him that armed struggle and participation in a comprehensive national democratic revolution are the key to solving the peasants' demand for land.

He realized this when martial law banned any form of mass action, the only weapon proven effective in the experience of most FFF chapters in wringing some concessions from the landlords. He became disgusted with the FFF national leadership which started to sing hosannas to the dictatorship -- "better martial law with land reform than democracy without land reform." FFF chairman, Jeremias Montemayor, and his group were by now campaigning for a yes-vote in the 1973 referendum.

Fr. Agatep could not swallow the betrayal committed by the FFF national leaders with their support of the regime's land reform decree. He had carefully studied the provisions of the decree and realized that it was all sham and would work against its supposed beneficiaries. Hence, he exposed before his own following the leadership's stand as rank opportunism. And instead of following orders from above to support the regime in the 1973 referendum, he campaigned for its boycott.

Montemayor, threatened by his militancy expelled him from FFF. Along with other radical FFF leaders, he was given away to the military in Leyte at the time of the FFF conference there in 1972. He was detained for a week. Pushed against the wall, he decided in favor of the radical option and tried to establish contacts with the New People's Army. At this early, he already entertained thoughts of becoming a guerilla fighter himself in his home province.

While awaiting the NPA's response, he made the rounds of all the FFF chapters under him, explaining the anti-peasant features of the new land reform program to mass members and discreetly discussing the option of armed struggle to his most trusted mass leaders. Though officially expelled from the FFF, its members regarded him as their legitimate FFF leader in Ilocos while Montemayor lost credibility in the area.

He established contact with the National Democratic Front (NDF) in 1977. At once, Fr. Agatep devoted himself to the task of converting FFF bailiwicks in the second district of Ilocos into a guerilla zone. He passed all his peasant friends and followers in several municipalities over to NPA expansion cadres. When introducing pioneering NPA cadres to his mass leaders, he told the latter: "Give them the trust that you have given me. They are here to help us raise our level of struggle against the Marcos regime. Our old non-armed ways won't do now."

Fr. Agatep never left an outside cadre alone until he was well received in the locality. As a result, the NPA was able to gain a foothold in the countryside of Ilocos Sur for the first time.

Always concerned with meeting the basic requirements of setting up the first NPA squads in the province, he constantly looked for rifles to buy in the clandestine arms market of Ilocos Sur where he put into good use his wide connections. Whenever he got word that a good gun was for sale, he raised money to buy this immediately. Disguised as an ordinary peasant -- in buri hat, faded T-shirt and rubber sandals -- he carried the arms in a sack. In a tricycle he smuggled them to an interior barrio for stockpiling. Through his efforts, enough rifles to arm the first three five-man squads were garnered.

Apart from covert arms purchasing which he conducted always successfully and neatly, Fr. Agatep also engaged in open political activities to maximize his contribution to the revolutionary work in the province. He drew fellow priests and church workers into legal programs meant to organize and conscientize tobacco farmers. Ironically, it was these overt and legal political activities that drew the ire of the provincial military commander of Ilocos Sur. On September 4, 1980, while on his way home, Fr. Agatep was arrested right after several guns had been planted by the military in his convent. On the basis of this false evidence, he was taken under military custody.

With the NPA

After his release from the Bicutan stockade in December 1980, Fr. Agatep at once contacted the NPA cadre in charge of Ilocos Sur. He said: "The military says I could work out my amnesty instead of only a temporary release paper. But do I need an amnesty paper if I will

be bearing a rifle? I intend to join the NPA in Ilocos immediately." He added, "I've heard that our NPA comrades lack arms. I just sold my refrigerator, sala set and TV for a total of ₱5,000. Take this money. It can buy us one M-16. If you find one please send it at once to our new guerilla front in Ilocos so that no one would be without a rifle with my entry."

At 45, Fr. Agatep seemed strong and agile for his age. But the mobility of a guerilla army made up of Red fighters who are either teen-agers or in their early twenties and tempered since childhood by a spartan rural and mountain life, could be physically taxing for a man already well past his prime.

"Being here in the army is no easy matter. But I take the difficulties as a challenge to make myself truly worthy of the movement's calling," he often confided to his close comrades.



Younger squad members always treated him considerately. But he had to overcome many difficulties. He was oftentimes the last man to appear on the ridge while the rest had already gone downhill. When silence during walking in pitch dark was broken by a splashing in the wet rice paddies, chances were it was Fr. Agatep.

But then, upon reaching the barrio a different scenario unfolded. The strength of many younger ones gave out while that of the "old" warrior gathered. In many instances, after arriving from a daylong mountain trek, Fr. Agatep would be heavily engaged in political discussions, tirelessly explaining things to his peasant audience until the wee hours. At this point, many young Red fighters would already be sound asleep, dead tired.

Close integration

When it came to close integration with the peasant masses, Fr. Agatep was a full step ahead of the rest. Here, his rich and long experience with the peasantry came to the fore.

A good evidence of his close integration with the Ilocano farmers was his very intimate knowledge of tobacco production, their main occupation. When in 1979 a researcher from the Luzon Secretariat for Social Action, asked him many facts and figures on the production side of the industry, he still had many more important data to add.

Even when he was already with the NPA, people in the guerilla zone still addressed him as *Apo Padi* or Father, a traditional mode of respect for a priest. Politely, he discouraged it, aware of the exclusivistic ring of the word. He explained to the masses: "I'm no different from you now. In weal and woe I am with you. Just call me *kadwa*." *Kadwa* is the Ilocano word for comrade.

He spoke the language of the peasants-- living and concrete. Hence, his message always came across. Comrades remember many memorable statements.

"Foreign big capitalists, are like sparrows, they peck at the ripened grains in the field and fly them away."

"*Aplet* (a type of worm) prevents tobacco leaves from growing and causes them to blacken. Bureaucrat capitalism hinders prosperity and causes mass suffering; like the *aplet* it should be sprayed out."

Such metaphors drawn from the day-to-day experience of the peasants held the audience attentive and animated. Because of his skill in communicating, he became some sort of star propagandist whose schedule was apportioned by the peasant organizing committee so he could cover different parts of a barrio to meet the people's requests.

On Oct. 11, 1982, Fr. Agatep was killed by paid assassins of the regime. He is the first priest to die in the people's democratic revolution. His life, his struggle, his dream will live on in the hearts and minds of the people of the Ilocos region.

In the coming months, especially in April when the farmers shall keep a 24-hour vigil beside their *pagon* (kiln,) watching their newly harvested tobacco leaves turn into a golden brown, their conversations will acquire an even more serious turn. The farmers will remember their beloved organizer, teacher and friend in the revolutionary struggle. Through the long nights, they will talk about Fr. Zacarias Agatep -- with admiration, with respect, and with a resolve to carry on where he left off.

- By Alfredo Amuyao



CULTURAL

Notes on MI's FF

Making money by way of pornography

People -- critics included -- can be quite vicious to their fellowmen, but sometimes with enough justification. For instance, one of the more salacious interpretations of the acronym MIFF is Madame Imelda's Film Fleshtival. This was occasioned by her having launched the "Porno for a Good Cause" off-ECP bold film exhibition. The funds generated from this staggering showcase of local and foreign skinflicks were supposed to be channeled to projects benefiting the Philippine's disabled.

Cardinal Sin, the Concerned Women of the Philippines, parents and a good many others raised a collective howl of protest. By more than ten to one, letters to editors condemned, rather than praised, Madame Imelda's latest brain-child. Stung by the initial criticism, MI held a press conference for local and foreign journalists and film people. She insisted -- in that celebrated "beyond the physical" speech -- that one or two movies would not lower the values of our youth.

One does not need to be an anti-government radical to be outraged by the Imelda Proposition: the end justifies the

means, especially when one is aware of the lady's history of "altruism." Ever the bleeding-heart Lady of Compassion, she caught upon the idea of using the disabled this time as the lucky beneficiaries of her stunning imagination. In truth, there is nothing charitable at all about the whole caper. Using the disabled as the charity recipient exempts the MIFF from tax requirements.

The primary reason for MI's FF could not have been other than pecuniary. This is to be understood in two ways: one, the regime, desperate for cash, temporarily shelved its moral crusader image to squeeze profits out of the fleshtival scheme; and two, the scheme apparently worked since it enriched private coffers by a hefty P40 to P50 million. Only a measly P10 million will go to the disabled unless it is pocketed by the fleshtival sponsors.

The promoters -- the Mater Materiosa herself, her showbiz alter-ego Johnny Litton and her EnterPhil cohorts -- are now counting their millions, extorted at 10 pesos per cheapest ticket from the movie public.

And it cannot be said that the thousands who chipped in for MI's latest racket fully supported her FF. Many deplore the fact that they saw nothing of the spiritual and metaphysical "upliftment" ranted about by MI to the press in her patented gibberish. Why -- the question continues to vex -- out of the more than 300 films from all over the world, including a number of very delightful children's films, as well as very powerful historical dramas -- did MI's FF have to show mostly local and foreign garbage?

One noted that Bertolucci's *1900* showed only for a few days, and there was hardly any drumbeating for it. On the other hand, movie ads splashed huge come-ons to *Julia*, *Joy of Flying*, *Lady Chatterly in Tokyo*, but most of all to the "technically proficient" but undoubtedly exploitative, anti-woman, dehumanizing sex films of the notorious pornographer Celso Ad. Castillo and his ilk. MI and CC -- what an explosive box-office combination!

But did MI's FF harm anybody, morals excluded? Well, the papers reported that a man died from a heart attack while watching *Naiibang Hayop*. The destiny of Mater Dollarosa must really be tied up with hearts: MI stands for myocardial infarction.

The morality of Gross Receipts totally swamped the gross immorality of MI's FF, even if by the latter we only mean the injustice committed against the "cultural upliftment" of Filipinos. This is not to disparage MI who will long occupy a special niche in culture as an active promoter of decadence and licentiousness. The MIFF will similarly be enshrined as a classic case of "if-you-can't-give-them-bread, give-them-a-circus." Held in the midst of economic decline and poverty for plenty, the 12 days and nights of the MIFF extravaganza will be remembered as the days when the Emperatriz fed the people with a diet of skinflicks.

There's an ironic footnote to all this.

After all the brouhaha about the morality of immoral movies, the regime is now singing a different tune. After making millions out of pornography, FM is now riding his white charger, threatening to arrest the violators of the censorship law.

Meanwhile, what's happened to Chief Censor Maria Kalaw Katigbak, the damsel in distress? Will she resign or not?

Is she part of the cast, after all?

Abangan ang susunod na kabanata.

—By Hansel Menz



Laughing is fine

MABINI lawyer Jojo Binay was fined P 200 when he laughed loudly in court during the *We Forum* trial. Moral of the case: Laughing is fine but when you laugh at the Marcos court, laughing is fined.

The Second Manila International Film Festival (MIFF) formally opened with some of the world's brightest talents but the First Lady and MIFF founding chairwoman outshone them all with her huge diamonds.

After being treated to a cinematic orgy of boobs, asses and bare skin, Manilans will forever remember the MIFF as the Manila International Fighting Fish.

Since one award was missed out during the awarding ceremonies, to the First Lady we hereby give the prized plum: Porno Princess of the Philippines.

We hesitate to name her the Porno Queen unless she is willing to fight out the title with Pepsi Paloma, Myrna Castillo and Irma Alegre.

To the *jus sanguinis* principle of citizenship by blood in the constitution will soon be added the principle of *jus sale* -- or citizenship for sale. Foreigners with \$200,000 can now buy Filipino citizenship.

Intelligence chief Gen. Ignacio Paz succumbed to a fatal heart attack after a military council meeting. His heart couldn't take the news about the escalating NPA raids and ambushes.

Gen. Hamilton Dimaya, AFP judge advocate general, recently bought 88 apartment units in New York city. It pays to be a general and judge under the regime.

"Florida man marries his dog," reports a UPI dispatch. That's nothing new in the Philippines where Uncle Sam and his running dog have been living together for the past 18 years. That's 126 in dog years.

There's no truth to the rumor that Metrocom soldiers seized 43 sets of pornographic films because they haven't seen these yet. The truth is they want to see these again and again and again.

The government is converting the Welfareville compound in Mandaluyong which houses schools and facilities for the destitute into a garbage dump. That's what the government thinks of the welfare of the poor.

Marcos can't decide whether or not to raise the prices of gasoline and diesel oil. He's waiting for the oil companies to make up his mind.

Imelda counted the blessings that teachers will receive from the teachers' BLISS condominium in Pasay City during the inauguration ceremonies. Monthly amortization per condo unit is P800 and monthly rental is P400. But the average monthly pay of teachers is less than P1,000.

The teachers should teach Madame a little arithmetic.

The KBL held a caucus in its headquarters in Malacanang to agree on bloc voting, turncoatism, the campaign period, a new voting list and the winner in the 1984 Batasan elections. Guess who?

KBL Assemblyman Anacleto Badoy who recently lost his Batasan ID card warns the public against any impostor who may use the ID for criminal purposes. The ID card has reportedly filled up its quota of crimes.

The minority at the Batasan appealed to Marcos to suspend implementation of the power rate increase. The Gods heard their prayer and two brownouts quickly suspended the debate.

The government is worried over the huge oversupply of rice. This might cause panic among the people who are not used to a full bowl of rice.

Justice Minister Ricardo Puno, on a visit to the national penitentiary for the traditional Christmas program, decided to give the inmates something novel for lunch. Food.

OVER A BOTTLE OF BEER

