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Advancing the revolutionary alternative

The democratic coalition government

With the upsurge of the anti-dictatorship movement following the assassination of opposition leader Benigno Aquino Jr., various alternatives to replace the Marcos regime have emerged. In this article, reprinted from the January issue of LIBERATION, the National Democratic Front presents in capsule its alternative program for the formation of a democratic coalition government. The following 14 questions and answers are intended to provide the people a background on the most essential features of the democratic coalition government. This article is the first of a series explaining the general program of the NDF.

1. How will the new democratic republic differ basically from the present so-called Fourth Republic under the US-Marcos dictatorship?

The new democratic republic will be a state system where the various democratic classes and sectors constituting the broad majority of the Filipino people exercise joint leadership over a handful of comprador big bourgeoisie and big landlords. In its constitution and in practice, this state system will uphold certain essential elements of a genuine modern-day republic.

To wit:

- ▶ the people are sovereign and enjoy national independence;
- ▶ the people are the source of political authority and officials are merely their representatives and servants;
- ▶ elected representative assemblies at every level rather than a single individual make the laws according to the sovereign will of the people;
- ▶ this popular will is determined through suffrage and other democratic means; and
- ▶ the people enjoy basic democratic rights and their free exercise.

The so-called Fourth Republic proclaimed by Marcos in 1981 is the exact opposite. It is a pseudo-Republic. In essence, it is a continuation of the open terrorist rule of a reactionary clique with big comprador and big landlord interests instituted by the Marcos coup in 1972. In fact, it is a fascist Republic, similar in a large sense to the fascist Republic of 1943 installed in the country by the Japanese imperial forces. The present pseudo-Republic, while paying lip-service to the sacred republican principle of popular sovereignty, violates it at will. Its showcase representative assembly, the Batasan Pambansa, is but an embellishment of autocracy. All electoral exercises and plebiscites held under the Fourth Republic -- and those held during the period before the so-called lifting of martial law -- are all travesties of democracy and its processes. Key officials in the bogus legislature, executive departments, judiciary and the military are not representatives of the people but handpicked by and beholden to one man. Basic democratic rights of the people such as free assembly, speech, press, and their free exercise, remain shackled by a chain of repressive decrees and laws or are brazenly suppressed. Moreover,

the present sham Republic is a state subservient to a foreign entity -- US imperialism -- and one that has worsened the semi-colonial status of the country.

2. What in essence is the democratic coalition government?

The democratic coalition government is the form of government or the particular arrangement of the apparatus of political power of the democratic republic. It is democratic because it promotes the people's will and their interests, ensures proper representation of the workers, peasants, urban petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie in the government and also because it upholds the people's basic democratic rights.

It is a coalition of all allied classes, parties, mass organizations, groups and forces that have caused the downfall of the



Boycott movement: Thwarting the regime's stabilization scheme

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Snowballing urban protest: Strengthening the people's will and unity to bring down the US-Marcos dictatorship

US-Marcos dictatorship or any incumbent reactionary regime, with no party, group or individual monopolizing decisions and affairs of the government.

The democratic coalition government is antithetical to the present government which is a fascist autocracy run by the most brutal and rapacious clique of big comprador-landlord-bureaucrats headed by the autocrat Marcos. It is also different from the pre-fascist government before the declaration of martial law where democratic processes were mainly token; where the people's choice of representatives was determined by the ruling reactionary classes which controlled the government, the two major political parties, the mass media and other pillars of reactionary rule; and where the democratic aspirations of the people were openly asserted not as a result of a deliberate government policy but as a result of the people's democratic movement's own highly developed strength favored then by the opportunities laid by intra-elite political rivalries.

3. How will this new government be established to take over the reins of power with the downfall of the reactionary regime?

On the eve of nationwide victory of the people's armed revolution against the incumbent reactionary regime, a political consultative conference shall be convened composed of all representatives of allied classes, parties, mass organizations, groups and all positive forces. This conference will form a council that will temporarily assume the reins of government. The council's tenure will depend on a previously agreed upon length of time - a short but reasonable span of time for it to complete its transition tasks.

It will be the task of this council to pave the way for the setting up and launching of the democratic coalition government on a nationwide scale. The council will ensure a smooth, orderly and speedy transition from conditions of war to conditions of peace.

The council shall lead the country in solving the economic and social disorders, which are the inevitable results of war, by immediately normalizing production combined with a judicious exercise of political authority. All government officials and employees who did not commit serious crimes against the people shall stay on in the government to avoid disruption of necessary public services.

4. What will be the criteria for membership in the interim council?

Consistency in the people's revolutionary struggle, general approbation of the people and commitment to the task of rebuilding the war-ravaged motherland are the major criteria to be applied in the selection of the council's members. As in the conduct of the people's war, a basic united front principle shall guide the council's composition and exercise of authority, with no one monopolizing the decisions and affairs of government.

5. What comes next after this short interim period?

Upon the attainment of total victory, the people's democratic coalition government shall be inaugurated and the democratic republic proclaimed. Soon after, a constituent assembly shall be elected to draft the constitution of the democratic republic. After the constitution's ratification by the people, general elections shall be held.

6. Will the democratic coalition government have its own armed forces?

The army constitutes an important part of the apparatus of the new democratic state power. As in the case of many victorious liberation movements in other countries, the new government will be faced with serious internal and external threats. Remnants of the overthrown elite will attempt to restore their lost power. The US will likely intensify clandestine or open support for subversive activities against the new state. Opportunists and saboteurs will also join in the fray. All these forces will take advantage of the initial problems of the new democratic regime and foment disorder. Thus, a strong people's armed force is needed to deal appropriately and immediately with these threats, preserve the gains of the revolution and ensure long term peace and stability necessary for the country's overall progress and prosperity.

7. How will the new armed forces be formed?

The revolutionary armed forces that have arisen under various armed anti-fascist initiatives shall be integrated to form

a unified national revolutionary army under the democratic coalition government. This new army shall be put under a ministry of national defense and shall have ground, naval and air forces. Aside from the regular army, there shall be national and local police forces and the people's militia that shall fall under the ministry of public security to safeguard public order and safety.

Both the forces of national defense and the forces of the national police and militia shall draw the bulk of their personnel from battle-tested guerrilla forces at various levels. But even as these veteran revolutionaries assume firm command of the armed forces, former enemy officers and men who joined the revolutionary cause on the eve of total victory and who have not committed any serious crime shall be allowed to stay in the military service on a selective basis. They shall pass on their useful knowledge and expertise to the revolutionary fighters even as they themselves undergo revolutionary education.

8. What basic freedoms shall the people enjoy under the new democratic republic?

The constitution and the practice of the new democratic republic shall uphold the people's democratic rights and promote the free exercise of those rights. All the basic democratic rights provided for in the Bill of Rights of a liberal democratic constitution shall be adopted in the constitution of the democratic republic. These include the rights to life and liberty; to due process; against arbitrary search and arrest without judicial warrant; to privacy of communications; against self-incrimination; to legal counsel of choice; to free choice of domicile and free movement; to free association and assembly; to free speech and press; to freedom of religion and belief; to the freedom of suffrage through secret ballot; and other basic rights.

Aside from promoting individual rights, the new democratic republic shall promote social justice and advance the interests of the overwhelming majority of the toiling masses.

9. Will the basic freedoms to be enjoyed by the people include the right to own private property?

Yes, the new democratic republic shall protect and encourage all appropriate forms of private property. The state shall protect and promote private ownership of both the means of production that do not dominate the livelihood of the people and the means of consumption that do not restrict the growth of the forces of production. These means of production and consumption must have been acquired legitimately through land reform, honest labor, entrepreneurship and skill, inventiveness and intellectual merit.

The democratic republic shall also guarantee and assist private entrepreneurship and also individual initiative in intellectual and creative pursuits which are beneficial to the people.

10. What are the cornerstone economic policies of the democratic coalition government?

One cornerstone policy of the democratic coalition government is the completion of the process of land reform throughout the country that has been initiated in the course of the people's war in the form of progressive land rent reduction and elimination of usury. The general land reform policy shall be to distribute land to the landless tillers equitably and at no cost to them. Landlords who have supported the the revolution shall receive proper compensation for their redistributed lands.

The beneficiaries of land reform and other owner-cultivators shall be encouraged to increase production in agriculture and related occupations. Likewise, agricultural cooperation and mechanization shall be advanced step by step. On an expanding scale, the agricultural sector shall provide the food and raw materials for the industrial sector and also serve as a major market of capital and consumer goods produced by the latter.

Another cornerstone policy is national industrialization which shall be carried out as the leading factor of economic development, complementing agriculture which will serve as the main base. Capital for national industrialization will be generated from the agricultural surplus which are now being fleeced and squandered by the parasitic big landlord class; from nationalized industries and plantations of transnational corporations, big compradors and big bureaucrats whose profits are currently being remitted abroad, wasted in luxury spending or reinvested to further entrench non-industrialization; and, from large savings resulting from radical cutbacks of unnecessary and unproductive government projects.

Also a cornerstone policy is the building of a strong industrialized economy to break the colonial and agrarian character of the economy which presently and mainly produce agricultural and extractive materials for export to capitalist countries. The new economy shall be based on a wise utilization of the comprehensive natural resource and manpower base of the Philippines. There shall be objective and regular economic planning to effect a well-balanced and well-paced development of industry and agriculture, heavy and light industries, and centralized and dispersed industries.

In lieu of foreign transnational corporations and their local business surrogates, the public sector shall take charge of large industrial projects and take the lead as well in national industrialization. But at the same time, the Filipino private sector shall be encouraged to invest wherever its capital is most suited. Aside from enjoying various forms of state assistance, the private capitalist sector may form cooperatives among themselves or enter into joint ventures with the public sector.

Effecting full employment and raising the people's living standards shall be a constant cornerstone policy of the democratic coalition government.



Laying the foundations. The NPA presently assists in building up local organs of political power in the countryside



NPA military training: Heightening guerrilla warfare nationwide

11. What type of culture shall the democratic coalition government promote?

The democratic coalition government shall promote a patriotic, scientific and pro-people culture. It shall cultivate love of country, inculcate a deep sense of nationalism and combat colonial mentality. It shall develop and promote a national language while allowing local languages to flourish. The natural sciences shall be geared to serve the requirements of national industrialization and the advancement of agriculture. Social sciences shall be geared to studying the basic laws of history and society and promoting the people's revolutionary struggles.

The democratic coalition government shall also promote and expand free public education at all levels to accommodate most especially the majority of the population, the workers and peasants.

12. What is the basic foreign policy of the new democratic republic?

The new democratic republic shall adopt and practice a revolutionary, independent, non-aligned and peace-loving foreign policy. It shall develop trade and diplomatic relations with all countries irrespective of ideology and social system, on the basis of mutual respect for each other's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and mutual benefit in every possible field. It shall develop cordial diplomatic and trade relations with the United States, provided the US will give up its imperialist policies and privileges in the Philippines and such relations will not prejudice support for other people's struggles for national and social emancipation.

The new Philippines shall be non-aligned and shall join the organization of non-aligned countries. It shall not side with any of the big powers in their contests for hegemony and military supremacy and shall work consistently for world peace.

13. How can victory be attained and what are the most important conditions for the nationwide establishment of the democratic coalition government?

Through a united front waging both armed and political struggles, the most formidable popular force can arise and develop which is capable of achieving total victory for the national democratic revolution against the historic evils of US imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism and of establishing the democratic coalition government and the new democratic republic. This united front should draw the largest mass support from the toiling masses of workers and peasants, linking the urban petty bourgeoisie to them. The united front

shall utilize contradictions among such reactionaries as the big comprador bourgeoisie and big landlord classes in order to isolate and destroy the fascist enemy.

The Filipino people can hope to win total victory in the national democratic revolution only by carrying out a people's war - an all-out mobilization of the broad masses of the people mainly for revolutionary armed struggle. Without building their own armed strength through revolutionary armed struggle, the people have nothing by which to assert effectively their sovereignty, independence and democratic rights. The history of the struggle of the Filipino people, especially in the present period of the fascist dictatorship, bears this out.

At the same time, armed struggle must be complemented by different forms of open and secret, legal and illegal struggle. The combination of various forms of struggle draws the widest possible number of people to active participation in the effort to overthrow the reactionary ruling system.

It is in the course of the development of the people's war that major conditions will arise to make practicable the nationwide establishment of the democratic coalition government. The most important of these are: the building of strong and victorious people's armed forces; the disintegration of the reactionary armed forces through a series of major defeats; the setting up of wide liberated areas and a nationwide system of political power by the revolutionary forces; complete paralysis and disintegration of the reactionary regime; total domestic and international political isolation of the ruling regime on one hand, and immense domestic and international support and recognition of the revolutionary united front, on the other.

On the eve of total victory, the task of establishing the democratic coalition government nationwide will be one of largely unifying and consolidating widely laid out and tested organs of political power.

The greater and stronger the organized and armed forces for advancing the people's war are, the nearer will be the nationwide establishment of the democratic coalition government.

14. Is there a possibility that the downfall of the Marcos dictatorship shall not immediately lead to the establishment of the democratic coalition government?

To be sure, the downfall of the Marcos dictatorship is imminent. The prospect, however, of establishing a democratic coalition government right after its downfall may not be as imminent. If the present regime is brought down by a strong momentum of people's war carrying the national democratic line, the democratic coalition government and the democratic republic will immediately rise upon the downfall of the present dictatorship.

It is also possible, however, that the US might decide to change horses and junk Marcos and his ilk in the near future, if it sees that the dictator is already bringing down US interests with him and if it seeks to derail the strong and relentless advance of the popular national liberation movement. In such a post-Marcos scenario, a possible reversion to a bourgeois republic looms which, while still subservient to US imperialism, retains tokens of representative government and formal processes of bourgeois democracy. On the other hand, the US can institute militarist rule through a military-led coup d'etat.

Whatever may be the immediate outcome of the people's struggle against the present dictatorship that will fall short of total victory, the people and revolutionary forces, adapting to new circumstances, should persevere in their struggle to win national liberation and democracy and ultimately establish the democratic coalition government and the democratic republic.

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDF) is a framework or channel for the unity, cooperation and coordination of all national democratic forces in the country. It traces its beginnings to the establishment of the Preparatory Commission for a National Democratic Front on April 24, 1973. The 1973 NDF Ten-Point Program upholds armed struggle as the main form of struggle to overthrow the US-Marcos dictatorship. LIBERATION is the official publication of the NDF.