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Editorial

Thwart the US' imposition of imperialist power worldwide

Intensifying US imperialist militarism and aggression will be resisted and thwarted by the world's peoples

After imposing its power on Iraq, the US is ever so arrogantly intensifying armed intervention and unbridledly threatening direct armed aggression in other parts of the globe.

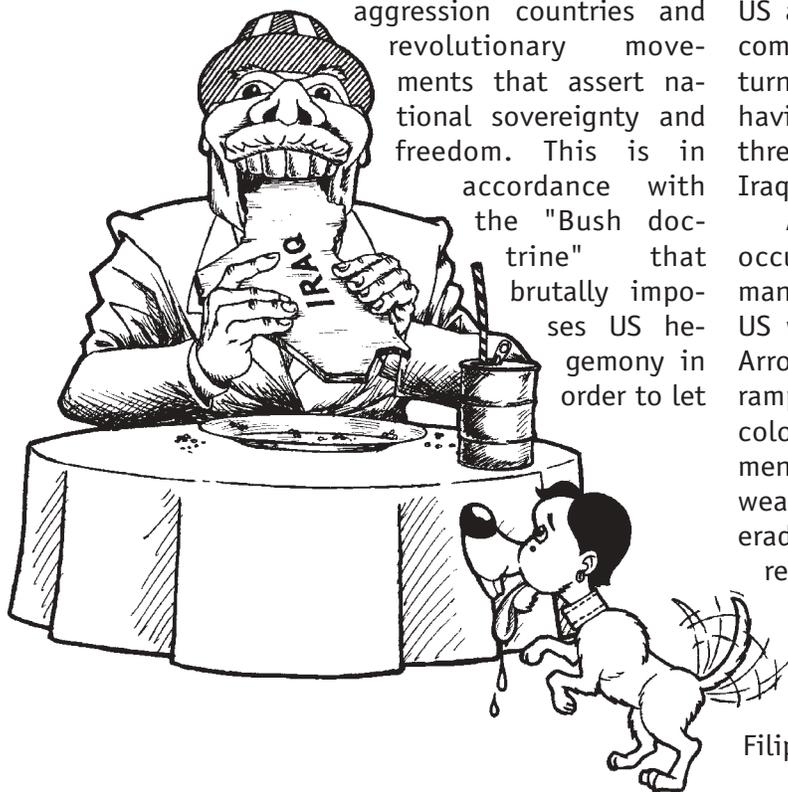
The US continues to threaten with armed aggression countries and revolutionary movements that assert national sovereignty and freedom. This is in accordance with the "Bush doctrine" that brutally imposes US hegemony in order to let

"Pax Americana" prevail for the benefit of US monopoly capitalism.

With the smoke from the bombed-out cities of Iraqi yet to clear, the US is now threatening war anew against Syria, one of Iraq's neighboring countries. The US accuses Syria of aiding Iraq. With its failure to come up with weapons of mass destruction even after turning Iraq inside-out, the US now accuses Syria of having harbored these weapons. The US continues to threaten Iran and North Korea, which, along with Iraq, the US considers part of the "axis of evil."

As the US struts proudly in its aggression into and occupation of Iraq, the Arroyo regime further manifests such shameless puppetry and submission to US world hegemony and all attendant US measures. Arroyo was reverently jubilant and applauded the US' rampage in Iraq and its imposition of imperialist colonial power in that country. She repeatedly mentions the US' thoroughly discredited lies about the weapons of mass destruction and the supposed eradication of threats to peace due to the Hussein regime's collapse.

With such slavish eagerness, Arroyo waits for the crumbs to fall from the table of American monopoly capitalists who are now slaughtering Iraq. The regime most ardently hopes that more Filipinos could work in Iraq with the onslaught of US



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monopoly capitalist vultures who have bagged contracts for the "reconstruction" of Iraq.

Arroyo's obsequious acquiescence to US international policy and hegemony is mirrored in her own policies that are militarist, repressive and dependent on US intervention in the Philippines' internal affairs. But Arroyo relentlessly pushes US armed intervention in the Philippines. This faces widespread opposition from the people and other sectors in the country and even the reactionary constitution forbids it.

Arroyo rode on US imperialism's jubilation over its occupation of Iraq. She immediately announced that she will push through with Balikatan 03-3 which calls for the entry of armed US combat troops to Sulu. This is in utter obedience to US President Bush's order to position and train US forces against the revolutionary forces of the New People's Army and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. The deployment of US combat troops against the Abu Sayyaf is being used as a trial balloon.

The Arroyo regime's out-and-out puppetry marks its intense des-

peration in the face of a very severe economic and social crisis. The regime grows ever more corrupt and isolated and continues to collapse. The people can no longer stand the regime. They have become impervious to its various gimmicks to deodorize itself and deceive the people. Opposition to the regime is growing and intensifying.

The fires of patriotism are rapidly spreading and blazing. They will certainly block the armed intervention and aggression of American troops in the Philippines. They will also resist the economic, political and other forms of imperialist intervention, domination and oppression in the country.

The patriotic united front is expanding. It broadens the ranks of the people resisting the intensifying armed intervention and growing threat of direct armed aggression by the US in the Philippines. It draws in the broadest international support for the struggle of the Filipino people.

All this takes place amid fervent and expanding international protests against US imperialism's avarice, militarism and belligerency. World protests against US

armed aggression in Iraq are unprecedented in history. Various forms of resistance by the world's peoples continue vis a vis all attempts by US imperialism to impose and expand its hegemony and further perpetrate enslavement and oppression and sow disorder worldwide.

The revolutionary movement and the Filipino people's anti-imperialist struggles play a growing role and represent a significant contribution to the international anti-imperialist movement. Aside from this, the Party and the revolutionary movement in the Philippines also consciously perform their internationalist duty to support the struggles of revolutionary forces and the exploited and oppressed peoples in different parts of the globe.

We support the cry of the Iraqi people for the expulsion of armed American occupation troops from their country. We support the peoples of Afghanistan, Palestine and other semicolonies and countries undergoing colonization against occupation by the US and its allies. We oppose the US' warmongering and threats of war against Syria, Iran and North Korea.

Revolutionary movements and countries that assert and fight for their national sovereignty as well as peoples advancing just struggles are one with us in resistance.

The international struggle against the US' greed, militarism and belligerency favors the ever rapid advance of the anti-imperialist and revolutionary movement the world over. It is the duty of the proletariat and its party in all parts of the globe to unite all enslaved and oppressed peoples, promote their interests and lead and advance all their struggles against fascism, imperialism and reaction and for national liberation, democracy and socialism. AB

	
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Lessons from the 12-year imperialist suppression campaign against Iraq

The recent 22-day attack by US and UK troops on Iraq was but the height of 12 years of oppression and suffering imposed by US imperialism. The attackers used their absolute superiority in terms of military power to defeat a small country that they had been punishing for more than a decade and which had likewise been in resistance for more than 10 years.

The US used tanks and bombs to attack and defeat Iraq. The attack culminated in the entry of American troops into Baghdad and their control of the national capital.

The more than a thousand Iraqis killed by American troops in their relentless bombing sorties and shooting sprees in Baghdad and other cities were in addition to the more than 150,000 killed during the 1991 bombings and the more than 1.5 million Iraqis who later died due to the merciless US embargo on the entry of food, medicine and other essential needs of the Iraqi people.

In almost all towns and cities seized by the invaders, the latter were resisted by Iraqi soldiers and militia who used even inferior weapons. But the Iraqi soldiers' armed resistance did not endure. It was a grossly lopsided fight in terms of weaponry, a fact that the Iraqi government failed to overcome through good leadership and the mobilization of what could have been an even more powerful resistance mounted by the people.

From this experience, we can draw the following lessons:

1) The Hussein regime firmly resisted US imperialism for more than a decade and did not capitulate. But the regime failed to arouse and unite the people for the patriotic defense of the country.

2) Many loyal soldiers and people fought for their country. But the government and the political leadership in Iraq were wanting in terms of preparing a broad, firm and intelligent military defense relying on a combination of regular and guerrilla warfare through the regular armed forces, irregular militia forces and the

armed citizenry.

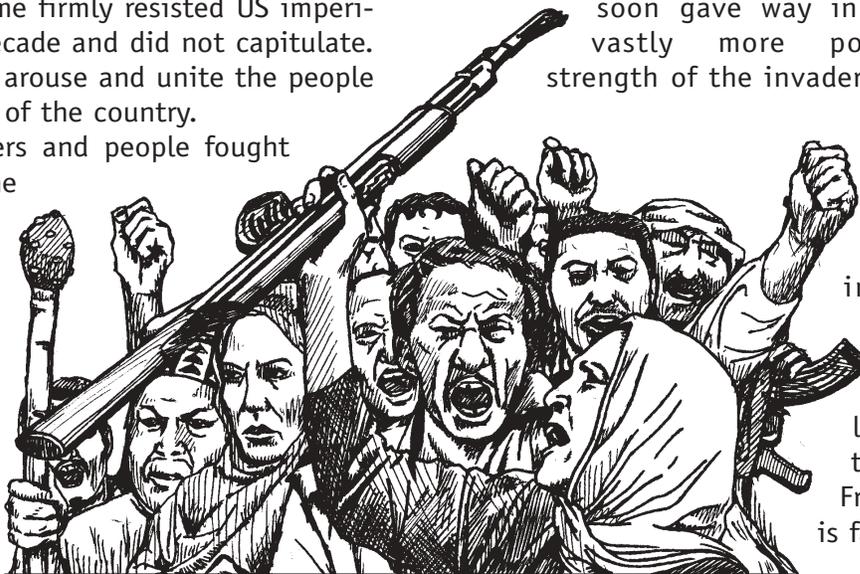
3) There were some spontaneous actions by the Iraqi people. But there was no organized mass movement and no effective leadership that would have given direction to the mobilization of millions of people in militant and pointed unarmed struggles against the invaders and occupying forces, in combination with armed struggle.

4) The invaders used the divisive tactic of firing up ethnic and religious divisions that ran long and deep. Though imbued with a strong sense of patriotism against the US occupation forces, the Kurd leaders were directly utilized by the US to overthrow the Hussein regime.

The invaders' exploitation of such divisions could have been avoided through efforts to resolve the contradictions between the government and those opposed to it to form a national united front against the imperialist attack and colonization of Iraq. Such unity would have had to include the various ethnic groups and groups opposed to the Hussein regime.

5) The fulfillment of all tasks related to resisting the imperialist armed invasion can only be guaranteed by the existence of a revolutionary proletariat that could unite the entire people, lead their revolutionary movement and provide good direction in defending the motherland.

Because of weaknesses with respect to these important factors, the resistance put up by the armed forces and the Iraqi people soon gave way in the face of the vastly more powerful military strength of the invaders.



Although the US was able to overthrow the Hussein regime in Iraq and is now installing as its successor a colonial and eventually a neo-colonial regime in the name of "Iraqi Freedom", the fight is far from over.

Anti-US rallies

are advancing in the various cities of Iraq. In Baghdad no less, tens of thousands rallied on April 18, with the reverberating cry to expel American troops from their country. The American troops are severely isolated.

On April 15, simultaneous with a meeting held to set up the colonial government, thousands of Iraqis rallied against it in the city of Nasiriyah. They condemned plans to establish a government to be headed by a retired American

general and manned by hundreds of other American generals, bureaucrats and other Pentagon protegés.

Meanwhile, on April 19, the Arab nations unanimously issued a statement calling for the exit of American troops from Iraq. They oppose measures that would give the US control over the Iraqi oil industry.

US imperialism will only further its exploitation and oppression of the Iraqi people and contradictions

between the Iraqi people and US imperialism will further intensify. The Iraqi people have no other recourse but to resist US imperialism and its reactionary puppet conspirators through revolutionary means. Under correct revolutionary leadership, the Iraqi people can successfully resist US imperialist rule and that of its puppets, resist their exploitation and oppression and attain national liberation, democracy and development for their society. AB

The imposition of a new "Pax Americana"

The US' direct colonization of Iraq signifies major global rearrangements resulting from US efforts to impose worldwide a "Pax Americana"—the concept of a world order that is subsumed to, defined by, and exists for the benefit of, the brutal power of US imperialism.

US imperialism has become more aggressive in the use of military means to effect the imperialist redivision of the world, pave the way for the US' seizure of much-coveted additional territory and spheres of influence, and further impose the sole superpower's hegemony and interests worldwide.

The invasion of Iraq was in accordance with the Bush regime's "preemptive strike" policy that calls for the US' arrogation of the "right" to strike first at any country, government or organization that, for whatever reason, supposedly threatens US security. In the case of Iraq, the US used as pretext its claims that the country harbored weapons of mass destruction despite the US' failure to prove that Iraq possessed such weapons before or even after the US had occupied the country and searched it inside-out.

The process of establishing a new government in Iraq is completely subservient to the US' control and discretion. The US will allow a number of key Iraqi puppets to participate in the process just so it could be said that the new government represents the people. To transform Iraq into a semicolony, the US first plans to install and ensure a system by which it would rule Iraq, plunder its wealth and secure the new government's loyalty to US interests.

By directly controlling Iraq's oil wealth, which is the second richest worldwide, it can have a tighter grip on the oil supplies in the Middle East, render inutile or manipulate the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and achieve decisive control over the world's oil supply.



Prior to this, the US' seizure of Afghanistan had given it strategic influence and control over Central Asia and the Caspian Sea region. From this, the US now has greater control over oil routes from these areas to the Arabian Sea and South Asia.

The US also has its eye on obtaining significant control over Latin American oil reserves, particularly those of Venezuela, which persists in its refusal to denationalize the oil industry.

After Iraq, the US is now putting the squeeze on Syria and Iran. Aside from having its own oil exports, Syria is also a

"Pax Americana", to page 5

Denationalization, privatization and plunder in the name of "reconstruction"

After crushing and ensuring the destruction of basic infrastructure in Iraq due to three weeks of bombings, the US is now set to begin the so-called reconstruction of Iraq and the task of putting it in order.

The US government and American companies would like to make it appear that they are pouring billions of dollars into Iraq to "raise Iraqi society" from the doldrums out of the goodness of their heart. In truth, these companies are out to pass on the financial burden of "reconstructing" Iraq to the people and government of Iraq. The Bush has set aside a mere \$7.5 billion for war reparations. Most of it will end up with American companies that have been granted contracts for the "reconstruction." Initial estimates already put the amount needed to revive Iraqi cities at tens of billions of dollars. In fact, even before the aggression had ended, the Bush

government had already seized more than \$1.74 billion deposited by the Iraqi government in US banks.

Part of the "reconstruction" involves the rehabilitation of roads, seaports, airports, schools, hospitals, electric power plants, water supplies and other public facilities and infrastructure destroyed by the invading troops.

As early as February, even before the US had rained bombs on

contracts for the "reconstruction" of all roads, seaports, airports and other public infrastructure in Iraq programmed for destruction. The US has no plans to leave efforts to "reconstruct" Iraq to the United Nations, as called for by most of the countries that had opposed the war. This is lest it lose control and the ability to maximize the spoils of war and occupation for US monopoly capitalists. Neither



Baghdad, the US had "given out"

"Pax Americana", from page 4

leading exporter of refined oil from Iraq. Simultaneous with its war on Iraq, the US likewise bombed Syrian oil pipelines from Iraq, thus reducing Syrian oil exports by 40%. This early, the US is making sure it has enough troops and bases surrounding these countries for another possible blitzkrieg attack and occupation.

The US is also likely to shift the

focus of its wars of aggression to Latin American countries that have governments hostile to the US or strong anti-US revolutionary movements. The US is currently being plagued by the anti-imperialist Chavez government in Venezuela that has refused to dismantle national control over the country's oil. The US has thus been actively intervening to topple this government. The US also wants to monopolize Colombia's oil and is

actively interfering in the counterrevolutionary war in the country on the pretext of conducting an anti-drug campaign.

It is likewise itching to intervene directly in armed counterrevolution against the revolutionary forces in the Philippines. The US considers the revolutionary movement in the Philippines as one of the most significant threats to its interests in the Asia-Pacific.

AB

does the US want the UN Arms Inspection Team to return to Iraq as this would once more highlight the already discredited US claim that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction.

Instead of cursing things through the UN, the US plans to eventually let the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund take over the supervision of Iraq's "reconstruction."

For now, the US is using the USAID to prettify the entry of US monopoly corporate vultures and manipulate the "distribution" of contracts to the White House and Defense Policy Board's favorites.

US corporate vultures are scrambling to bag lucrative contracts for "reconstruction." Much like the practice of bureaucrat capitalists in the Philippines, corruption, nepotism and other anomalies proved decisive in the "distribution" of contracts, which mo-

nopoly capitalists gobbled up. Five companies known for their close relations with the Bush family and the administrations of both the elder and younger Bush have cornered all the contracts.

The first contracts given out were for one to four years. But US plans for Iraq are for the long term.

Actually, the "reconstruction" is but the beginning of the longer process of incorporating Iraq into the devastating framework of "globalization" and "free trade," a process that will subsume all aspects of Iraqi life and society.

It is the Iraqi economy nationalized by the former Ba'ath government that it now much-coveted by US monopoly capitalists. They plan to thoroughly denationalize and privatize the economy to siphon off the country's natural resources, pry it open as a market for excess capital and excess goods and intervene in it in

every way to make it serve their interests completely.

The US is primarily pushing the denationalization and privatization of oil extraction and processing in Iraq. With opposition to such plans a certainty, the US intends to let its puppet Fadhil Chalabi oversee the process of denationalizing and privatizing the Iraqi oil industry. Chalabi, a former Iraqi petroleum minister, currently heads a pro-imperialist institution based in the UK. He was also a longtime consultant of the US State Department on the privatization of the Iraqi oil industry. Chalabi is set to grant the first contracts to extract Iraqi oil to ExxonMobil and Shell. This early, Chalabi has declared that "reconstruction" efforts would entail huge amounts of foreign exchange, a need that he claims could only be met by selling Iraq's oil fields to foreigners. AB

A vultures' feast

US imperialism purposely granted contracts only to American companies in its desire to monopolize Iraq's wealth. Thus, "lesser vultures" are complaining of being left out in the distribution of the spoils of war. Among them are British and Australian companies that have been shunted aside despite their countries' obsequiousness to the US at the height of the war. Within the US itself, there is widespread grumbling about cronyism, fixed deals and other anomalies related to the "distribution" of contracts.

Among others, the following have been granted lucrative contracts:

►Bechtel Corporation, a company with a lifeline to the Republican Party and one of the latter's major campaign donors since the 1980s. Formerly headed by George Shultz, Secretary of State under the Reagan regime, it is now led by a member of the Presidential Export Council under the Bush regime. With the help of the US Defense Policy Board and USAID head Andrew Natsios, the two of

them fixed a contract for the reconstruction of public utilities in Iraq by overpricing the deal and ensuring that Bechtel bagged the contract. The contract is initially valued at \$680 million. Bechtel is expected to rake in even more with the growing cost of Iraqi "reconstruction" which is expected to hit \$100-200 billion.

►Kellogg Brown & Root, a company under Haliburton which was headed by Richard Cheney before he became vice president under Bush. USAID has offered Kellogg a \$7 billion contract to clean up Iraqi oil fields.

►Stevedoring Services of America, long known to be a major electoral campaign contributor to Bush's party. The company has been granted a \$4.8 million contract for the administration of the port at Umm Qasr. In granting this contract, the US has set aside the UK's interests despite the fact that it was British forces that fought fierce battles for the control of Umm Qasr and are now administering its seaport. AB

On its 30th founding anniversary

NDF: The indestructible bastion of the Filipino people's struggle

All the cadres and members of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the Red commanders and fighters of the New People's Army are in solidarity with all of the 17 allied members comprising the National Democratic Front on the occasion of the latter's 30th anniversary.

It is but fitting for us on this day to reaffirm our dedication to the relentless struggle to attain national liberation and democracy. Let us dedicate this celebration to all the martyrs and heroes of the national-democratic revolution. Let us remember Comrade Antonio Zumel—the late NDF chair Manuel Romero—and draw inspiration from his unstinting offer of life and talent to the people's service.

This celebration takes place amid the intensifying crisis in our country and the world, which is ever favorable for advancing the revolution.

The revolutionary movement in the Philippines has rapidly and all-sidedly advanced especially in recent years. The revolutionary forces have completely taken on the

serious tasks related to advancing people's war, the mass movement and the united front.

In many more aspects, the revolutionary movement is now once again at the peak it reached before it was dragged down by errors and deviations more than a decade ago. We will definitely surpass this peak in the next few years. The revolutionary forces stand ready to further advance people's war on all fronts and bring it to the middle stage of the strategic defensive.

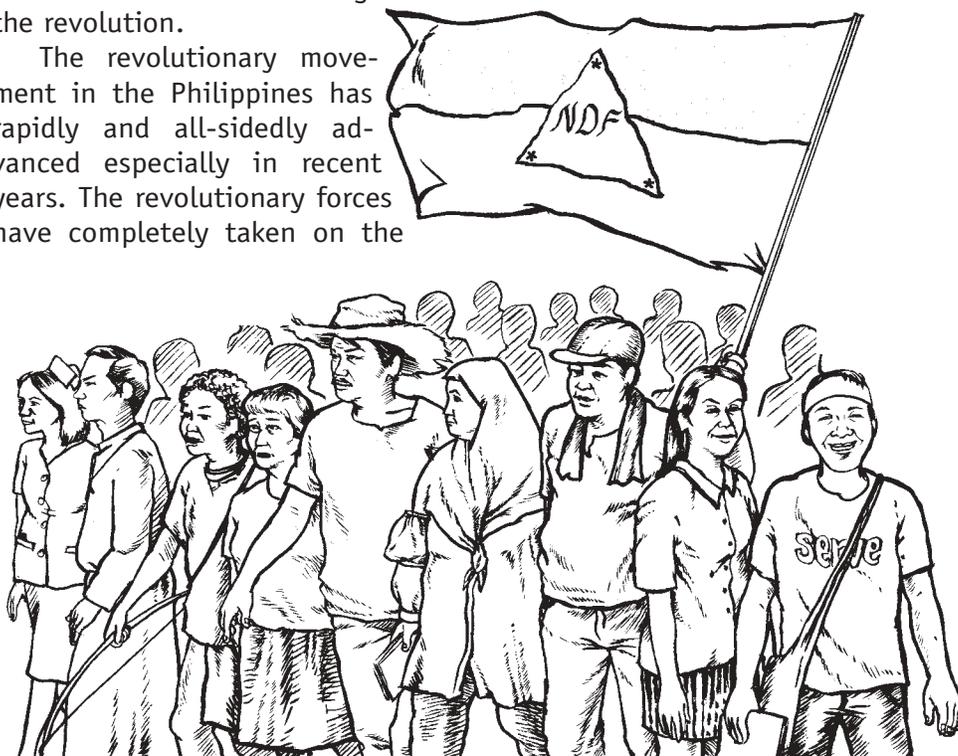
The NDF has a brilliant record in advancing and defending the Filipino people's national-democratic interests and their revolutionary armed struggle. Through the NDF, there is broader support for the revolutionary armed struggle in the Philippines from the various sectors in the country, among them the workers, semiproletariat, peasants, national minorities, youth and students, teachers, professionals and government employees.

The NDF plays a featured role in representing the revolutionary movement in peace talks with the reactionary government—despite twists and turns in the negotiations resulting from the various obstacles set up by the government.

The NDF also has a significant role in conducting proto-diplomatic work and representing the revolutionary movement in its relations with various countries and international organizations and institutions. Because of the NDF's work in these areas, many entities recognize the legitimate cause and activities of the revolutionary movement in the Philippines and its status of belligerency. The broad recognition and support enjoyed by the NDF serve as a shield against the "anti-terrorist war" perpetrated by US imperialism and the reactionary state.

The revolutionary forces nationwide are jubilant over the NDF's celebration of its 30th anniversary. The NDF is the indestructible bastion of the Filipino people's anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and antifascist struggle. **AB**

(Based on Comrade Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal's message on the National Democratic Front's 30th anniversary on April 24, 2003.)





NPA gains strength in Mindanao

(Based on the National Democratic Front-Mindanao's solidarity greetings to the New People's Army on the latter's 34th anniversary last March 29).

At present, the New People's Army (NPA) operates in 19 provinces and more than 200 town centers and cities in the island of Mindanao. Island-wide, there are 35 guerrilla fronts that are ever expanding in breadth and number. The NPA operates in thousands of barrios, with hundreds of thousands of people encompassed or influenced by Red political power. Compared to that of previous years, the number of villages where the NPA operates grew by 36% and tens of thousands have been added to the organized mass base.

The NPA has launched more than 100 tactical offensives in various parts of the island since last year, the latest being the successful raid on the armory of the Paper Industries Corp. of the Philippines (PICOP) in Bislig City, Surigao del Sur on March 21 that yielded 92 high-powered rifles (HPR) as well as ammunition. Also prominent were the following:

(a) raid on the capitol of Mati, Davao Oriental where seven HPRs were seized;

(b) ambush on a company of the 72nd IB in Talaingod, Davao del Norte that yielded nine

HPRs;

(c) raid in Talacogon, Agusan del Sur, where 10 HPRs were confiscated;

These three tactical offensives were all launched last February.

(d) raid on the municipal hall of Carmen, Agusan del Norte in December 2002 that yielded nine HPRs;

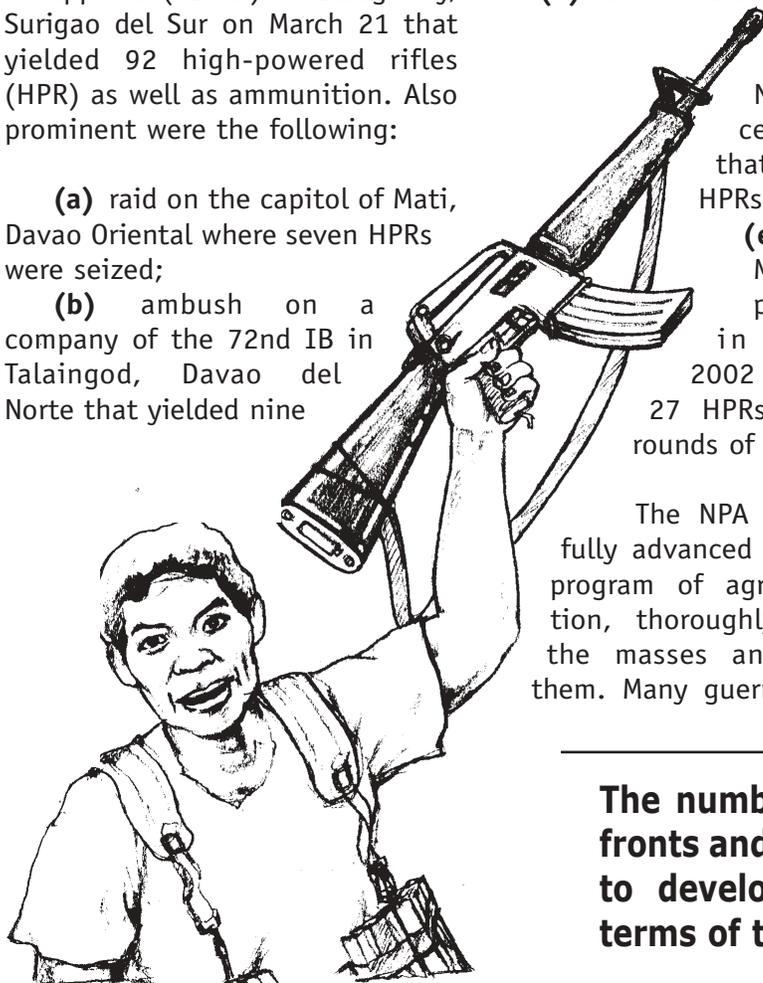
(e) raid in Maco, Compostela Valley in September 2002 that netted 27 HPRs and several rounds of ammunition.

The NPA also successfully advanced the minimum program of agrarian revolution, thoroughly gladdening the masses and benefiting them. Many guerrilla fronts in

Mindanao were able to wage various forms of antifeudal mass actions such as, among others, campaigns to raise wages of farm workers, reduce land rent and raise farmgate prices. Thousands of people benefited from these struggles. In northcentral Mindanao, more than 30 barrios were able to launch antifeudal mass actions directly benefiting more than 3,500 people. In northeastern Mindanao, more than 30 barrios launched mass actions, with more than 5,500 people benefiting from their victories. In southern Mindanao, widespread mass actions covered 71 barrios in 14 town centers and were joined by thousands of persons. Other mass actions were also launched in other parts of Mindanao.

The NPA continues to grow in Mindanao. There are thousands of Red fighters, whose number grew by 20% in recent years. The number of main guerrilla units in guerrilla fronts and regions also grew. The NPA continues to develop its guerrilla units' capabilities in terms of tactics and techniques. Aside from successfully launching its own tactical offensives, the NPA was able, in a number of instances, to seize the initiative from attacking enemy forces that had bigger and more advantageous formations.

AB



The number of main guerrilla units in guerrilla fronts and regions also grew. The NPA continues to develop its guerrilla units' capabilities in terms of tactics and techniques.



Active defense in Bulacan

Ang Bayan publishes the following statement by the New People's Army-Eastern Bulacan command regarding the encirclement of Red fighters in Eastern Bulacan by a joint AFP-PNP force on March 29, 2003. The statement belies claims by the PNP and AFP that they had killed 20 Red fighters in that clash.

The NPA fought back, brilliantly employing guerrilla tactics to defeat a stronger enemy. It was a manifestation of the Red fighters' heroism and the masses' undeniable support for the NPA.

We belie statements by the police and military on the firefight that took place on March 29, 2003 in the town of Angat, Bulacan. The claims made by AFP Maj. Gen. Alberto Braganza of the 7th ID and PNP Supt. Felizardo Serapio are all lies and are a clear indication of their stupidity.

It was a 25-strong platoon that saw action that day. They were at Barangay Pulong Yantok to conduct a study meeting to commemorate the 34th anniversary of the New People's Army.

The NPA spotted the approach of a joint force of the PNP and the Philippine Army's 56th IB at around 5:30 in the morning. The Red fighters were at an advantageous position and were able to fire first at the attacking enemy. This early, several police and military forces had already been hit. On its part, the NPA had one wounded and one dead (Norbel "Ka Carmi" Ortega of Norzagaray, Bulacan).

After a series of maneuvers, the NPA platoon reached Barangay Siling Matanda, Pandi where it decided to await the enemy forces in ambush and

inflict casualties on them. They positioned themselves atop a high hill and let the police and military forces come to within 10 meters of their position. An enemy team was wiped out on the spot, with the rest scampering away. The NPA seized six M16 rifles and a .45 pistol in this phase of the battle.

The Red fighters were astonished at the unexpected immense stupidity of PNP and AFP officials who mercilessly ordered their men to charge even if they knew how hard it was to get near the Red fighters' position. Even the two armored personnel carriers they dispatched failed to climb up the hill and get near the NPA's position.

During the day-long exchange of fire, there were at least 20 fallen police and military elements sprawled in the area between the two sides. On the part of the NPA, another Red fighter, Arnel "Ka Gerald" San Juan, was martyred.

By nightfall, the Red fighters quietly left. They were joyously welcomed by the masses in a secure place and were offered cold water, bread and candies. The people rejoiced at the NPA's





victory and the heroism of the two people's martyrs.

Gen. Braganza and Supt. Serapio's lies are part of the AFP and PNP's psywar tactics to cover up their successive battle losses and malign the revolutionary movement.

Also part of their psywar was the murder of Michael Santiago, a barangay tanod from San Roque, San Rafael, Bulacan who had no connection whatsoever to the revolutionary movement. After killing Santiago, the military dressed him in a worn-out NPA uniform and came up with the story of an encounter in Pasong Intsik, San Rafael.

But whatever lies the fascist military weaves, there is no denying the revolution's rapid advance to victory. AB

Twenty-two year old Ka Gerald hailed from a poor peasant family. He did not find it difficult to grasp and embrace the revolutionary cause, as his own family's experience was fraught with oppression and exploitation. They had no land of their own and tilled a parcel of public land. But a landlord seized the land and drove them away. Ka Gerald became politically conscious and joined the NPA amid the struggle of the peasant masses in the town of San Miguel for genuine land reform. He held a Garand rifle and was a sniper. Ka Gerald inflicted heavy losses on the enemy during the firefight.



Twenty-three year old Ka Carmi hailed from a politician family in the province of Palawan. He lived in Norzagaray town where he came into contact with the revolutionary movement and became politically conscious. Ka Carmi swiftly grasped the correctness of the revolutionary cause and the youth's role in social change. He lost no time in joining the Kabataang Makabayan and became an active organizer in their community. Ka Carmi immediately volunteered to join the people's armed upon finding out that the NPA unit in their area needed reinforcements. He had been with the unit barely two months but already his abilities shone through.

Armed struggle continues to advance



The New People's Army (NPA) continues to reap brilliant victories, in apt response to the CPP's call to raise the level of people's war.

Albay. An NPA platoon under the Santos Binamera Command successfully ambushed troops from the 22nd IB's Alpha Coy, in Barangay Pinamaniquian, Ligao City on the morning of April 17. The Red fighters seized six high-powered firearms and killed five enemy forces, including a sergeant, two corporals and two ordinary soldiers. Nine soldiers were wounded, including their commander, 1Lt. Vladimir Sta. Maria. There were no casualties on the NPA side.

Pampanga. Red fighters aboard a truck successfully raided a PNP Kababayan Center in Barangay San Antonio, Arayat on the night of April 11, killing two enemy forces and wounding a policeman and a CAFGU element. They seized three M14s and an M16.

One CAFGU element was immediately hit in the first volley and died on the spot. The enemy forces who were taken by surprise tried to fight back but were easily subdued and the detachment was overrun. Unfortunately, a civilian watching television inside the detachment was hit in the crossfire and died.

"Kalbaryo ng Bayan". Progressive organizations from Southern Tagalog staged a "Kalbaryo ng Bayan" (People's Calvary) during Holy Week. They began the cultural caravan at the Lucena City public market and brought it to the Southern Luzon Command headquarters where they held a rally. They showed the pitiful plight of the people in the region under the puppet-fascist Macapagal-Arroyo regime. The following day, they went to the US Embassy and Malacañang where they staged a rally to oppose US military intervention in the Philippines.

1,500 US soldiers arrive. Despite protests, 1,500 American soldiers quietly slipped into the country on April 17 to participate in the scheduled "Balikatan 2003" to be held in Batangas, Pampanga, Nueva Ecija and Cavite from April 25 to May 9.

Meanwhile, Macapagal-Arroyo declared on April 9 that Sulu will definitely be the site of another "Balikatan" that will feature joint combat operations of Filipino and American soldiers. This is in spite of opposition from the majority of the people in Sulu.

\$557 million BOP deficit. The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported a \$557 million balance of payments (BOP) deficit in March resulting from debt servicing, importations and dollar repatriations due to the US war against Iraq. It was the biggest BOP deficit since December 2001. It has wiped out the vaunted \$141 million surplus in January as well as the \$55 million surplus for February. The BOP is the sum total of the Philippines' trade and financial transactions with other countries.

SM and Rustan's workers strike

Thousands of SM workers firmly announced on April 9 that they would push through with their strike despite a "return to work order" issued by the Department of Labor and Employment on April 2. The workers also condemned the violent dispersal of their picket line at SM North Edsa.

Led by the Sandigan ng mga Manggagawa sa Shoemart (SMS), workers at SM North Edsa set up their picket line on March 25 after management refused to continue negotiating for a new collective bargaining agreement (CBA).

The workers are demanding, among others, a P40 hike in their daily wage and additional benefits. They also demanded the regularization of contractual workers who are deprived of the right to have job security, receive benefits and join unions. Each year, SM hires up to 80,000 workers, most of them young women, and fires them after they finish their six-month contracts.

In addition, the workers protested the two-fold oppression suffered by women workers who comprise 85% of SM's workforce. They are obliged to wear very short uniforms and high-heeled shoes while standing at work for practically the whole day. They even need passes to use the toilet and are allowed to do so for only three to five minutes. Also, even pregnant workers are not provided chairs where they could rest.

The workers condemned management's repeated attempts to bust their union.

MEANWHILE, workers at Rustan's Commercial Corporation (RCC) also struck on April 4. It was the peak of a struggle that the Rustan's workers had been waging since December 2002.

In response, the Rustan's management connived with the police to disperse the workers' picket line. Eight workers were arrested and four were injured and detained at the Mandaluyong City Hall.

Rustan's has deprived its workers of a CBA for 52 years. Wage and labor issues are settled at the Rustan's Employees Council (REC) which was formed by management. Management strictly forbids unionizing and still refuses to recognize the Rustan's Democratic Employees Union (RDEU).

The workers are paid measly wages. Sales associates, store clerks and cashiers receive a mere P270-280 daily wage even after nine years of service.

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