

**ANG****Bayan**

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Pinapatnubayan ng Marxismo-Leninismo-Maoismo

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Editorial

Wanton opportunism and decadence



Tis the season for reactionary elections. Again, we are witness to the wanton opportunism, the utter lack of principle and the brazen decadence that become more prominent every time election season comes. Candidates suddenly change parties and embrace new allies and coalitions. Even the erstwhile bitterest rivals become allies. What drives them to do all this is no other than the unabashed desire to advance their personal interest and political ambition and their hunger for power. The jockeying, collusion and maneuverings among the reactionary ruling classes know no bounds. In truth, reactionary parties and political coalitions are no different from one another. Which is why the shape and content of reactionary alliances keep on changing.

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's opportunism is relentless, limitless and blatant. She chose as her running mate the senator, broadcaster and Lopez protégé Noli de Castro to corner the political and financial support of the powerful comprador-bourgeois

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family. She also relies on de Castro's popularity to shore up her sagging reputation. This is in exchange for many promised concessions to Meralco, Maynilad Water Services, Benpres Holdings and other big businesses owned by the Lopezes.

Arroyo has furthered her opportunism with the kind of people she has chosen for her party's senatorial slate. Among them are principal Estrada allies Miriam Defensor-Santiago, John Osmeña and Orlando Mercado, Estrada's former defense secretary. Arroyo's selection of these three is part of her compromise with Estrada, whose People's Movement Against Poverty (PMAP) remains behind Defensor.

Even the social-democratic and reformist groups that supported Arroyo's ascendance to power are concerned by her dalliance with people who come from the hated Marcos and Estrada camps.

Arroyo's principal rival candidate, the movie star Fernando Poe Jr. is not much different.

Aside from Estrada's son Jinggoy, and Juan Ponce Enrile, Ernesto Maceda, Francisco Tatad, Jamby Madrigal and Didagen

Dilangalen, who are all with the Estrada camp and are fierce defenders of Estrada, Poe's senatorial slate includes Imee Marcos, the daughter of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Carlos Padilla, a close supporter of Panfilo Lacson, is also a candidate in Poe's coalition and will supposedly serve as liaison between Poe and Lacson.

Poe's running mate is Loren Legarda, who imprudently joined a party full of personalities close to Estrada.

No one believes their reasoning that their actions are meant to foster "unity," "reconciliation," and the "healing of wounds." In truth, reactionary politicians, their political parties and coalitions and the entire run of reactionary elections in the Philippines lack seriousness and have merely become ludicrous.


This goes in tandem with the other face of reactionary elections and reactionary politics in the country. There is serious fraud, vote-buying, deception and intense violence not only among rival reactionary politicians and their supporters, but worse, against progressive parties and



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forces and other people.

Behind all this is the essential character of reactionary elections. They serve as the means by which the reactionary ruling classes deceive the people into believing the alleged existence of democracy even as they resolve who among them will take charge of the fascist state that will safeguard their common reactionary interests, further their exploitation and oppression of the people and suppress the people's resistance. **AB**

	
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Intensify the anti-imperialist, antifeudal and antifascist struggle

The puppet Arroyo regime and the entire ruling system in the Philippines are now mired in a crisis of unparalleled intensity. The local reactionary system is being battered by an extremely grave socio-economic crisis, unbridled corruption, puppetry and repression.

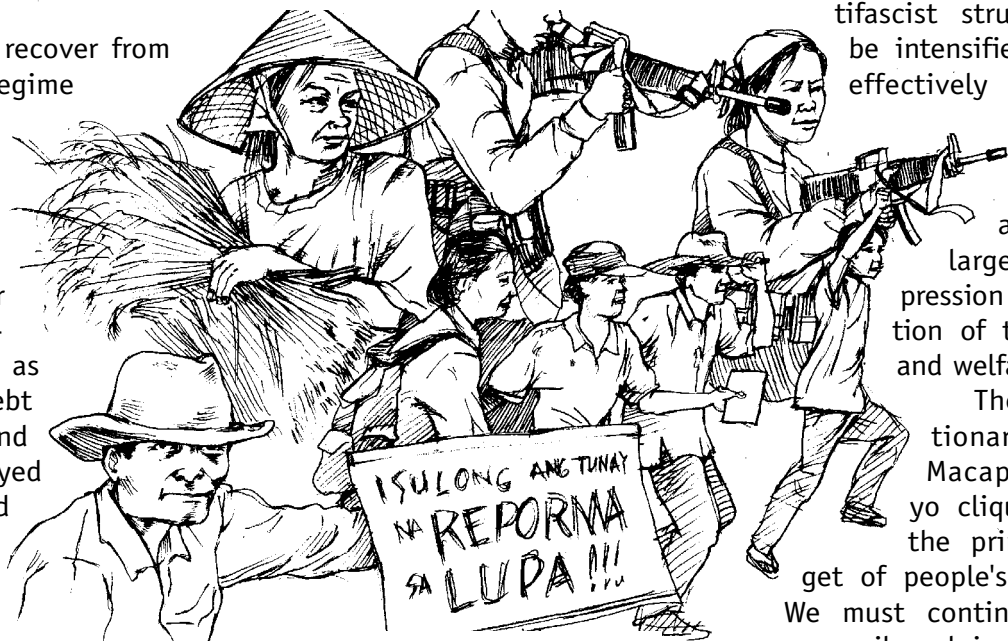
The semifeudal economy is collapsing based on all major indicators. The Arroyo regime's complete subservience to the US policy of "free market" globalization has condemned the economy to further bankruptcy. The regime has turned a deaf ear to all issues related to economic sovereignty, protection of the national patrimony, land reform and national industrialization.

In its attempt to recover from its bankruptcy, the regime is further weighing down the people with an even heavier debt and tax burden even as it continues to pour funds into unproductive ventures such as the military, police, debt service, corruption and various luxuries enjoyed by big bureaucrats and the ruling classes. Thus, the people suffer even more and are being denied even the most basic social services.

With the ruling classes scrambling over dwindling resources, corruption in the Arroyo regime has become quite brazen. The Arroyos are themselves implicated in major cases of plunder. It is but fitting that they be prosecuted and stand trial for

their crimes. The soldiers who mutinied in July 2003 likewise exposed grave cases of corruption in the AFP and government.

Resistance is met with fascist violence. Of all the regimes that have ascended to power since 1986, it is the Arroyo regime that has the worst record of violating both the people's socio-economic and civil and political rights.



Bigger and more widespread battles between the forces of reaction and revolution in the country are looming. The reactionary ruling system is desperate to bail itself out of crisis, and is thus mercilessly squeezing the people dry, especially the most exploited and oppressed classes and sectors.

The victims of the system's

greed and brutality have endured the unendurable and are seething with anger.

With the gravity of the situation, the toiling masses and other exploited and oppressed sectors desire intensely to overthrow the Arroyo regime.

The revolutionary forces must take advantage of this most intense economic and political crisis to exert all efforts to raise the level of guerrilla warfare, the mass movement and the united front. The anti-imperialist, antifeudal and an-

tifascist struggle must be intensified to more effectively lead and mobilize the broad masses against the large-scale repression and violation of their rights and welfare.

The reactionary puppet Macapagal-Arroyo clique remains the principal target of people's struggles.

We must continue to expose, assail and isolate it. At the same time, we must prepare for the growing possibility that the present ruling clique may be replaced with another principal reactionary puppet because of its rapid isolation. Thus, we must raise the people's consciousness of the fact that there is no guarantee that whoever replaces Arroyo will be fundamentally different. AB

The Party continues to rectify the errors of the anti-infiltration campaigns of the 1980s

For more than a week starting from the Party's 35th anniversary on December 26, 2003, an intense campaign to vilify the Communist Party of the Philippines was undertaken in connection with the anti-infiltration hysteria that took place in the 1980s. The campaign to demonize the Party before the public was coursed through a national bourgeois paper. To make the smear campaign seem authentic, it based itself on a number of real events. But mixed with the facts were lies, distortions and half-truths. The abuses that took place were detailed but no details were provided on what measures the Party took to correct them.

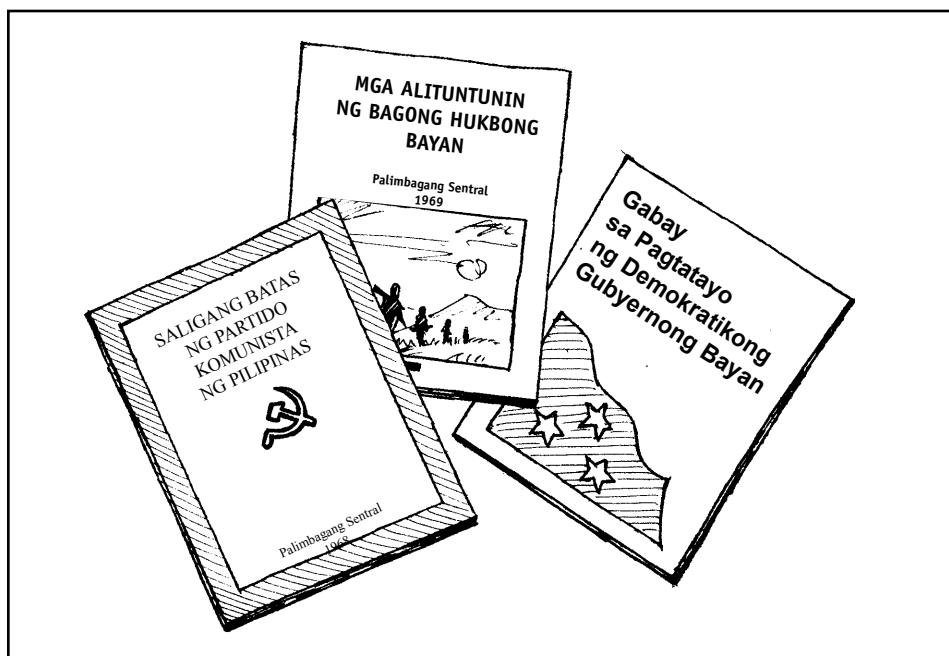
At the height of the vilification campaign, the paper's editorial section was transformed into a pulpit for spewing an outrightly anti-communist sermon that spit out completely uncalled-for and baseless accusations that the Party supposedly "remained silent" and "refused" to confront the issue. It used as scare tactics the counter-revolutionary and anti-communist line that "the revolution devours its own children" and that "the communist revolution seems to

breed the utter nightmare of paranoia" and that "purges and executions are a way of life in the CPP."

Even with such blatantly twisted accusations, the Party tirelessly explains its stand and policy and the truth about this issue. The Party repeatedly reminds its detractors that it has long since condemned, repudiated and rectified these errors.

Those who attack the Party have even called for the formation of a "Truth Commission" with the purpose of stripping the Party of its independence, scrutinizing issues internal to it, dissecting its history, organization and actions, and lay it bare not only for their consumption but for the enemy's. They would like to put the Party on the defensive and look for more pretexts they could use as ammunition to demolish the Party. In sum, it is their objective to destroy and liquidate the Party.

As a party imbued with integrity and independence and as one that is true to itself and its ideals, the CPP has its own way of conducting its own investigation and rectification of errors and decisively preventing their recurrence. In fact, the Second Great Rectification Movement encompassed the anti-infiltration hysteria, resolved up to the very roots the errors and violations that were perpetrated and reaffirmed correct revolutionary principles. The Central Committee assiduously studied the reasons why such events occurred



OUTRIGHT VIOLATIONS. *Torturing and inflicting other forms of inhumane treatment on suspected enemy spies or anyone accused in the people's courts are violations of the Constitution of the Communist Party of the Philippines, the Rules of the New People's Army and the Party's Guide for the Establishment of the People's Democratic Government.*

in order to draw lessons, reaffirm and institute correct policies and processes and avoid the repetition of errors in the future.

Prior to this, a number of regional committees and other lower organs that went through similar errors had also made their own partial summings-up and rectification.

The Party vehemently denounced the anti-infiltration hysteria as products of grave bourgeois and petty bourgeois subjectivism and impetuosity and the serious distortion and violation of the Party, people's army and the revolutionary movement's principles, line, policies and rules. Negligence of ideological work, habituation to urban life and the predominance of the erroneous lines of military adventurism and urban insurrectionism in the 1980s served as conditions for these errors to exist.

Those who carried out these anti-infiltration hysterias went through rectification, reeducation and the strict disciplinary processes of the Party in accordance with the gravity of their participation and responsibility—disciplinary action ranged from criticism for those who committed the lightest offenses, to expulsion from the Party for those guilty of the gravest crimes.

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Those who remained loyal to the revolution criticized themselves in front of affected comrades and the masses and helped in repairing the harm wrought on the revolution's work and organization and the masses. They also participated in the rehabilitation of both the victims who survived and the loved ones of those who did not survive.

But the principal perpetrators and those with the gravest criminal culpability for the anti-infiltration hysteria refused to answer for their crimes and other serious errors. At the peak of the rectification movement in the early 1990s, they furtively left the Party and the revolutionary movement. They believed themselves fortunate for having evaded their accountability and responsibility.

They are now among the leaders of the small pseudo-reformist and Trotskyite groups whose mission is to destroy the Party, obscure their own crimes and errors, and strive to maliciously pass these on as the "original sins" of the Party itself.

They form pseudo-reformist groups and institutions that publish materials mixing distortions, sensationalism and half-truths, and launch anti-Party campaigns. They are propped up and funded by international and local anti-communist and counterrevolutionary organizations and institutions. Some of them now directly offer their services to reactionary politicians and US and Philippine intelligence agencies. They inveigle and incite others who are still in a state of confusion and are unable to accept the truth and the correct explanations.

The Party has maintained its revolutionary integrity and has purified its ranks through the rectification and education movement to combat the ideological

and political roots of opportunism and criminality and completely prevent their recurrence. It metes out disciplinary action without resorting to the death penalty and has not waged other acts of hysteria. Those who sincerely express remorse and commit minor transgressions are always forgiven and given a chance to change, remold themselves and remain as revolutionaries, or in any case, are granted amnesty.

Most of those victimized by the anti-infiltration hysteria who survived and remain loyal to the Party and revolution continue to be active in, or support, the revolutionary movement. They clearly grasp the Party's explanation of the whys and wherefores of the events that took place. They understand that the errors were not inherent in the nature of the Party and the revolution, but were the acts of certain elements who deviously distorted and violated the basic principles and fine practice of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and the proletarian revolution.

To the extent of its ability, the Party has made efforts to provide the surviving victims and the families of those who did not survive with the necessary ideological, social, medical and material support to help them in their rehabilitation and to overcome the blows of their bitter experience and grave loss.

The Party views with understanding that there still are some victims and families of victims who still find it difficult to accept the movement's explanation and rectification but who have not ended up attacking the Party and betraying the revolution. It is the Party's wish to get in touch with and resolve matters with them. The Party continues in its efforts to reach out to the few families that it has been unable to get in touch with until now.

AB



Prevailing over conservatism

Armed revolution advances in Central Luzon

"The armed revolution is advancing in the region's mountainous areas and even in the plains."

Thus declared the Central Luzon Regional Party Committee on the 35th anniversary of the CPP's reestablishment. In particular, it said that "The Party and the people's army have achieved gains in overcoming military conservatism."

NPA Red fighters seized 38 firearms from both tactical offensives and defensive battles. The firearms seized included 19 M16s, five M14s, two M203s, an M60, five shotguns and six pistols. The NPA also confiscated some communications equipment.

At least 48 enemy forces were killed. Twenty of them were killed in tactical offensives such as raids, ambushes and harassment and punitive operations, and 28 were slain in defensive battles. Among the enemy casualties was the

deputy commander of the 305th Provincial Mobile Group in Bulacan; a captain detailed with the MICO (Military Intelligence Company) in Dingalan, Aurora; a PNP station commander in Iba and another PNP official in Olongapo, both in Zambales.

The tactical offensives and counteroffensives took place between February 1 and November 26, 2003. They included raids on PNP detachments in Hagonoy, Bulacan; in Arayat, Pampanga; in San Jose, Tarlac; and in Dingalan, Aurora. The enemy also suffered ambushes in Barangay Carag, San Marcelino, Zambales and in Barangay Kapintalan, Carranglan, Nueva Ecija. Four elements of the bandit Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan (RHB) were likewise killed in an encounter in Barangay Malusac, Sasmuan, Pampanga. The bodyguards of Zambales Gov. Vic Magsaysay were also arrested and disarmed.

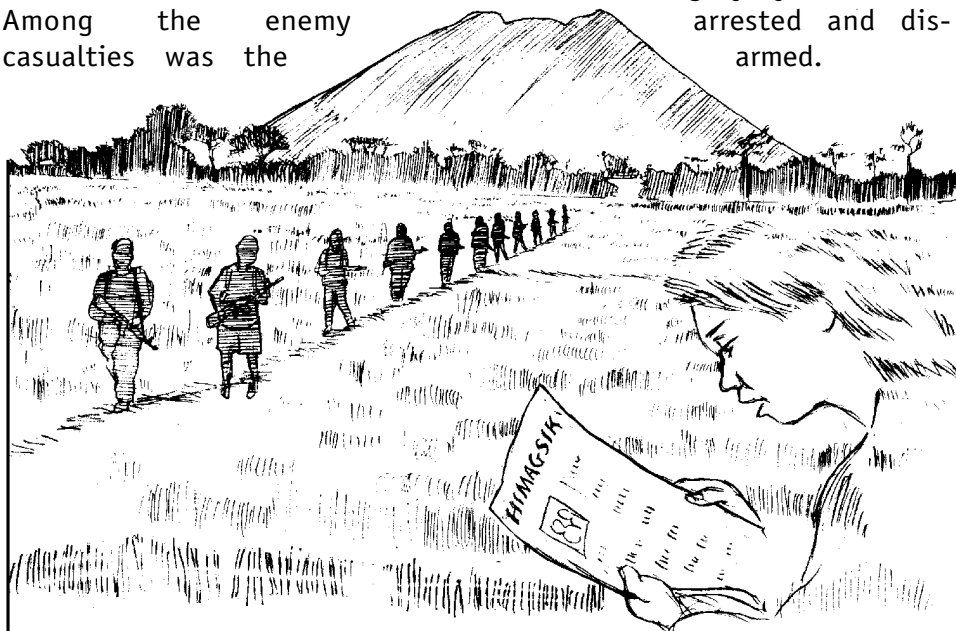
The NPA was able to seize the initiative from the enemy, overcome disadvantages and launch counterattacks during defensive battles in Angat, Bulacan; in Botolan and twice in San Marcelino, both in Zambales; and in Sasmuan, Pampanga.

Said the Central Luzon Regional Party Committee: "These tactical offensives, counterattacks and instances of coordinated support demonstrated the NPA's high fighting spirit and readiness for sacrifice, and the development of its guerrilla tactics. They also demonstrated the advantages of having a platoon-size formation during offensive and defensive battles."

The vigorous advance of armed struggle in Central Luzon in the past year showed that "the lack of mountainous and forested terrain in certain areas poses no hindrance to the people's army's existence. The proximity to Manila, the center of reaction, likewise poses no obstacle. Like fish in water, the masses comprise the vast ocean that the NPA swims in."

In the revolutionary mass movement, agrarian struggles were successfully advanced in Bulacan, Aurora, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga and Tarlac. The region is assiduously striving to set up full-fledged mass organizations and organizing committees compared to the previously predominant organizing groups. It is determined to overcome the trend of conservatism in mass work characterized by slow-paced organizing and infrequent and intermittent antifeudal struggles.

In Party-building, the region continues to conduct formal Party



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From Southern Tagalog

ST continues to advance in the face of intense attacks by the regime

The regime's all-out attacks in Southern Tagalog (ST) have failed to stem the revolutionary movement's continued advance in the region.

Since 1998, the reactionary government has been experimenting with various tactics and doctrines aimed at destroying the revolutionary forces' strongholds. For this, the Arroyo regime has made ST, Mindoro island in particular, a national priority, deploying more military, police and paramilitary forces. The 13 assault battalions assigned to the region in 1999 have since been reinforced, bringing the number to 38 by the first

half of 2003. The regime has unleashed terror in the region through widespread and intense violations of the people's human rights.

The revolutionary movement in Southern Tagalog, however, has not been cowed to submission.

The entire region celebrated the revolutionary movement's most recent victories on the occasion of the Communist Party of the Philippines' 35th founding an-

niversary. In a statement issued by the Southern Tagalog Regional Party Committee (RC-ST) Secretariat, the RC-ST said that the Party, people's army and the revolutionary people have been drawing valuable lessons in their more than five years' experience in confronting the enemy's intense suppression. These lessons have been taken to heart to further advance the revolutionary struggle in ST.

During the period covered, the Party in Southern Tagalog enjoyed the biggest membership ever in the region's history. In addition, Party members in the region are now more well-versed in Marxist-Leninist-Maoist theory and in the theory and practice of the democratic revolution.

The mass base in both the region's countryside and urban areas continues to expand and gain strength. Guerrilla fronts that had to go on a temporary retreat in the last few years because of intensified enemy operations have started to advance anew. In fact, the NPA has been able to launch resounding tactical offensives in



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courses at the basic and intermediate levels. A big majority of full-time forces in the countryside and cities have already taken the Intermediate Party Course (IPC). In 2003, some 130 comrades took these courses in Aurora, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac and Bulacan and the region's cities. The IPC is already being conducted at the local Party branch level.

The region also reports that "the study of *Ang Bayan* has become a habit among Party members, Red fighters and members of mass organizations. Comrades and the masses are elated with *AB*'s more frequent and regular release and eagerly await each issue." Up to 7,000 copies of each issue of *AB* is published and distributed. On the other hand, the region publishes and circulates 13,000 copies of each issue of its mass newspaper *Himagsik*. AB



Statement of the CPP-Northeastern Luzon on the Party's 35th anniversary

Mass movement surges forward

The masses and comrades in Northeastern Luzon hailed the huge gains of the revolutionary movement in the region on the Party's 35th anniversary. In a statement issued on December 26, the CPP Regional Committee presented the important advances made by the Party, New People's Army and revolutionary movement in the region.

Peasants surged to the town centers in 2003 to launch large-scale campaigns to eradicate or reduce usury. Prevailing interest rates were reduced by up to 50% in 300 barrios in 10 towns. Five thousand peasants in 130 barrios mobilized for the campaign that benefited about 300,000 individuals

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these guerrilla fronts.

Tens of thousands of people have been organized and several hundreds of thousands have come under the revolutionary movement's influence in more than 10 guerrilla fronts in the region. In these guerrilla fronts, there are several score platoons of the people's army armed with high-powered rifles and some heavy weapons with anti-aircraft, anti-tank and anti-fortification capabilities. There are also several thousand people's militia and self-defense corps armed with indigenous weapons, low-powered firearms and pistols.

The people's army in the region was able to launch a number of significant tactical offensives. On September 19, the NPA launched simultaneous raids on a Philippine Navy ship and a Philippine Coast Guard detachment in Ungos, Real, Quezon, seizing high-powered rifles and three .50 caliber machine guns. Successive ambushes were also undertaken on military and police forces in the two Mindoro provinces on September 19-20 and October 11.

Implementing the policy of maintaining the platoon as the

people's army's basic formation has proven effective in strengthening the capabilities of NPA units during offensive and defensive battles and in conducting mass work. In guerrilla fronts, the people's army has been upgraded to company strength and has undergone consolidation. Thus, the NPA in the region now has a stronger capability to frustrate the enemy's attempts to annihilate the people's army and wipe out guerrilla fronts and guerrilla zones.

The revolutionary movement in ST regards the holding of the Second Regional Conference on Mass Work in the Countryside as a great victory. It was in this conference that the experiences of the various provinces were compiled, systematized and studied in detail to come up with a comprehensive approach in solving problems encountered in advancing agrarian revolution, base-building and setting up organs of political power.

The democratic mass movement in the urban areas remains ever militant in the face of the all-out suppression of democratic organizations and the murder of their members. The mass movement in the urban areas also plays an important role in resisting

fascism and militarization in the countryside. The mass movement consistently exposes and assails every act of violence against the people. At the same time, the growing list of crimes perpetrated by the military's RSOT (Reengineered Special Operations Team) during its operations continues to teach the people not to support the enemy.

Notwithstanding the victories it has achieved, the entire revolutionary movement in the region faces many more challenges, stated the RC-ST. These challenges include, among others, the continuous application of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism in the revolution's daily life, upholding the proletarian style of work of simple living and hard struggle, and continuing efforts to consummate the victories of the Second Great Rectification Movement. Said the Secretariat, the Party is fully confident that the revolutionary movement will reap even bigger victories in the months and years to come and continue gaining strength towards the further advance of Party-building, armed struggle, united front and alliance work, the revolutionary mass movement and mass campaigns. AB



"Surges forward..." from page 8

or 55,000 families.

Not just members of peasant organizations benefited from the reduction of interest rates but all peasants who borrow from merchant-usurers. They were likewise able to assert something that was previously thought impossible—the right to sell their produce not only to their creditors who buy the products at lower prices but to other merchants as well. Another burden lifted from the masses' shoulders was the eradication of fraud perpetrated by merchants who buy their produce and the reduction of transport costs for their farm products.

The major gains began with mobilizations at the sitio and barrio level to reduce land rent, raise farm workers' daily wages by P10-30, resist the ejection of tenants, reduce irrigation fees, reduce the prices of goods sold in village stores and resolve the masses' many other problems. With the accumulation of small victories and with the masses' enthusiasm and readiness to take action even in the midst of enemy operations, confidence in their capacity for even bigger struggles grew even stronger.

The victories included, among others, the

advance of struggles against attempts by imperialists and Gov. Faustino Dy to eject peasants and grab the lands they had long been cultivating so Dy and the imperialists could mine the inexpensive coal found in the area.

Revolutionary propaganda now enjoys a broader audience, reaching the peasant masses and middle forces through various means. The masses are elated whenever they hear their fellow peasants and mass leaders boldly and sharply discuss their problems, demands and their side of the issues in the media. Even they are emboldened to speak out, respond and write letters to radio stations, convinced that there is no other way but to fight for their rights.

The mass base has doubled in size. The overall organized masses, especially the organized women and youth, have tripled in number.

In military work, tactical offensives burst forth and reverberated in all guerrilla fronts. At least 50 enemy forces were killed in 2003. Meanwhile, five Red fighters in the region sacrificed their lives.

The NPA in Northeastern Luzon has further grown since 1999 and continues to undergo consolidation by the Party. It was in 2003 that the largest number of Red fighters finished taking the Intermediate Party Course.



The CPP in Northeastern Luzon declared that their advances were dedicated to the masses of the region, to the people's martyrs and the ordinary fighters and cadres of the people's army. It is determined to further expand the people's army, add more formations, expand and add more guerrilla fronts and increase the number of activists, Party members and Party branches in the localities.

"Our movement continues to grow and gain strength under the guidance of the higher organs and the unmitigated revolutionary vigor of the masses in the guerrilla fronts. The upsurge of the mass movement and the initial salvos fired by guerrilla units signal even bigger upsurges in the years ahead." **AB**



US crisis continues to worsen

The current much-vaunted US economic "growth" does not present a picture of recovery but of the further intensification of the crisis within the US. This "growth" is marked by the intensification of production and the attendant intensification of workers' exploitation, suffering and oppression.

In October, the Bush regime announced a US GDP growth of 8.2% for the third quarter of the year, up from a mere 2% growth in the first six months of 2003. Thus, GDP growth for the entire year is projected to reach 4%, higher than the initial 2-3% estimate.

US statistics indicate that the growth has been pushed by greater consumption (6.6%) and investment (11.1%), mainly through an increase in the seasonal demand for consumer goods such as automobiles and other products. The demand for housing and other vehicles, (new airplanes in particular), has also risen.

It will be recalled that the US economy plunged into recession in March 2001 after the high-tech bubble burst. Overvalued stocks of internet and high-tech companies plummeted in the stock market.

In November 2001, the Bush regime declared the end of the recession because GDP grew by 2.6%, a rate that has turned out to be inadequate to sustain growth and fully eradicate the recession.

Economic growth slowed down to a crawl in the following months. Growth in the US' basic industries was insignificant. Industrial production remained sluggish. Production in the manufacturing sector—of consumer and high-tech products such as compu-

ters, semiconductors and communications equipment, in particular—grew by a mere 1%. On the average, the number of factories operating at present is still far below the level that prevailed 30 years ago.

Sluggish production has worsened the US' ballooning trade deficit. This November, imports further increa-

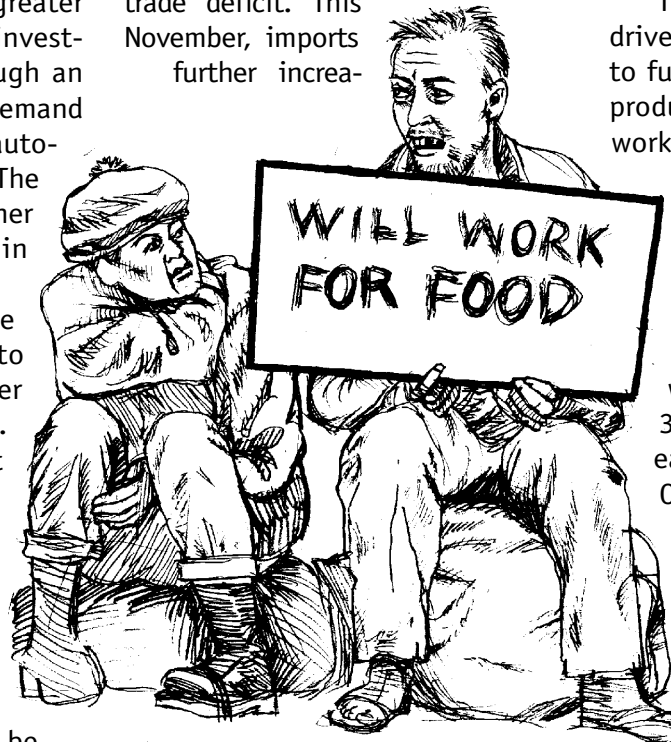
sed by \$2.5 billion even as exports increased by \$1.7 billion—swelling the trade deficit to \$47.4 billion. Most of the imported products were consumer goods and automobile spare parts.

Amid the much-vaunted "recovery," no new or additional jobs have been created—which is why economists have come to regard it as "jobless recovery." In truth, jobs are being massacred on a wide scale and unemployment has further worsened in the US.

The reason behind this is the drive by big capitalists in the US to further increase workers' overall productivity and lengthen their working day in order to intensify exploitation using an even smaller number of regular workers.

Since November 2001, up to 400,000 on the average lost their jobs each week—even higher than the 305,000 who lost their jobs each week during the recession. Over three million Americans have lost their jobs just in the last two years. This August, the unemployment rate came to 6.1%—the highest in the last 20 years.

Even those with jobs have not benefited from this economic "recovery." Real wages have either remained pegged, or have fallen. Since November 2001, wages and salaries increased by a mere 0.8%. In the last few months, however, real wages fell by 0.65% even as corporations' net income skyrocketed by 40% (the steepest in 60 years). ■



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Intense demoralization of American soldiers in Iraq

Demoralization among American soldiers in Iraq is worsening in the face of the ongoing and organized resistance of the Iraqi people.

The biggest factor in the demoralization of the majority of American soldiers is their skepticism over what their government claims to be the basis for the invasion and occupation of Iraq. They realize that they are mere cannon fodder in a senseless, directionless and seemingly endless war.

As of December 3, up to 443 American soldiers have been killed as a result of guerrilla attacks. Likewise, up to 1,209 soldiers have been wounded since September. Over 20% of the wounded sustained serious head wounds while many more have been crippled. The number of casualties has more than doubled in the past four months compared with the first four months since the war was declared to be "over"—signaling a better organized and higher level of resistance by Iraqi patriotic forces. American forces face up to 30 attacks by Iraqi guerrillas on a daily basis.

It is not surprising that the 130,000 American soldiers regard their extended deployment in Iraq as hell. In addition to the growing perils, they suffer from shortages and face hardships.

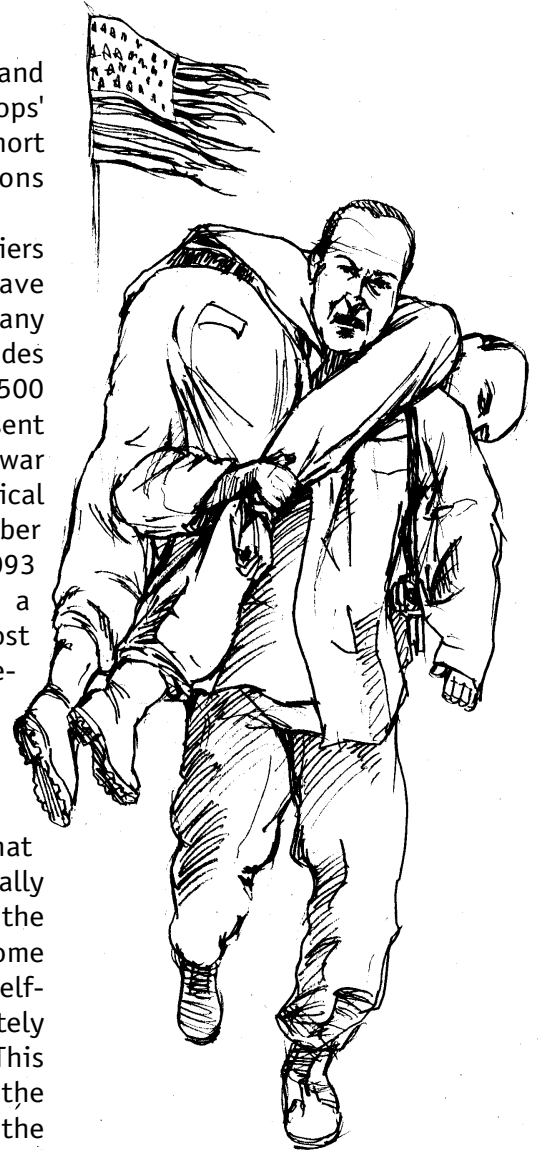
They are easy targets of guerrillas who constantly monitor their movements, especially since they lack protective equipment. Due to a shortage of bulletproof vests for soldiers who go on patrol, soldiers' families have resorted to

buying such vests on their own and sending them to Iraq. The troops' water rations are also in short supply and their food rations frequently affected.

Since May 1, up to 17 soldiers have been confirmed to have committed suicide. There are many more cases of probable suicides now being investigated. Over 500 soldiers have already been sent home to the US as a result of war trauma and intense psychological problems. This is a small number compared to the reported 8,093 patients now being treated in a military hospital in Germany, most of them American soldiers deployed in Iraq who have been brought here because of depression and other psychological illnesses.

There are also reports that some soldiers did not intentionally commit suicide. According to the US Army's own investigation, some of the fatal injuries were self-inflicted by soldiers desperately looking for a way out of Iraq. This was after the US imposed the "stop-loss order" extending the tour of duty of all American soldiers in Iraq, including those scheduled to return to the US and those slated for retirement.

Aside from those who have committed suicide, more and more soldiers have been filing leaves and refusing to report back to their posts afterwards. As of December, up to 1,700 American soldiers have refused to return to Iraq after having been granted temporary leave to go to the US and are now in hiding.



The biggest factor in the demoralization of the majority of American soldiers is their skepticism over what their government claims to be the basis for the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

NPA attacks RPA camp

THE New People's Army successfully assaulted an RPA-ABB camp in Sitio Kakha, Barangay Tamlac, Sta. Catalina, Negros Oriental in the morning of December 16, seizing 11 M16s and an M79.

The team leader and one other element of the RPA-ABB "Third District" were killed. According to the NPA-Southeastern Negros Front, the operation was carried out to recover firearms of the CPP that the RPA-ABB carted off when they bolted the NPA and later merged with the reactionary army.

According to the NPA in Negros, the operation was also a punitive measure against the counterrevolutionary bandit group for having carried out a series of holdups and engaging in carabao rustling, robbery and illegal drug trafficking activities. The RPA-ABB is also used by Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco and Negros Oriental Gov. George Arnaiz to carry out projects detrimental to the peasants' livelihood.

Military kills 2 leaders of legal democratic organizations

TWO leaders of legal democratic organizations were killed by the military in separate incidents in December.

Bayan Muna leader Romy Malabanan was shot dead on December 23 in front of his house in Bay, Laguna. He was executive secretary to the incumbent mayor and Bayan Muna general secretary in Bay when he was killed. He was secretary of the KASAMA-Southern Tagalog executive committee before transferring to Bayan Muna.

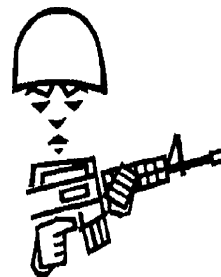
He firmly opposed the AFP's attempts to set up a camp along the border of Bay and Los Baños and launch military operations in Bay.

Thirty-eight Bayan Muna members have been slain so far. Malabanan, meanwhile, was the 74th activist to be killed in Southern Tagalog in 2003.

Meanwhile, in Sorsogon, militant organizations and the five orphaned children of Susan Habac Aringo, a 38-year-old widow and municipal coordinator of the Gabriela Women's Party in Sorsogon, are also crying out for justice. Aringo was on her way to her farm on December 7 when she was shot in the back by military and CAFGU elements in Sitio Muladbulad, Barangay San Isidro, Castilla.

The military displayed the wounded Aringo in the town plaza because she was supposedly a New People's Army member. Two of her children brought her to the hospital where she expired because she had lost too much blood.

The criminals also stole Aringo's cellphone and money.



Military in Panay charged with human rights violations

PEASANTS filed charges against troops of the 47th

IB and Task Force Panay in Iloilo for committing human rights violations. The complaint of widespread military abuse was formally brought before the Commission on Human Rights regional office in Iloilo City on December 22. The leaders of the Alyansa sang mga Mangunguma sa Igaras (AMI) and officials of two barangays in Igaras and Tubungan demanded the immediate withdrawal of military forces from southwestern Iloilo.

Meanwhile, in Negros Oriental, militant organizations and church people presented proof that the 61st IB had indeed committed human rights violations in the barrios of Siaton. They documented 36 cases of human rights violations after conducting a fact-finding mission in the area.

Cheney to be charged with bribery

A FRENCH court is poised to charge US Vice President Richard Cheney with bribery, exploitation of corporate assets and money laundering in relation to the Halliburton Corporation's establishment of a liquification factory in Nigeria in the 1990s.

French investigators estimate that Halliburton used up to \$180 million to bribe the Nigerian government to allow it to immediately set up the factory. Cheney headed Halliburton at that time before being elected vice president of the US in 2001.