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Editorial

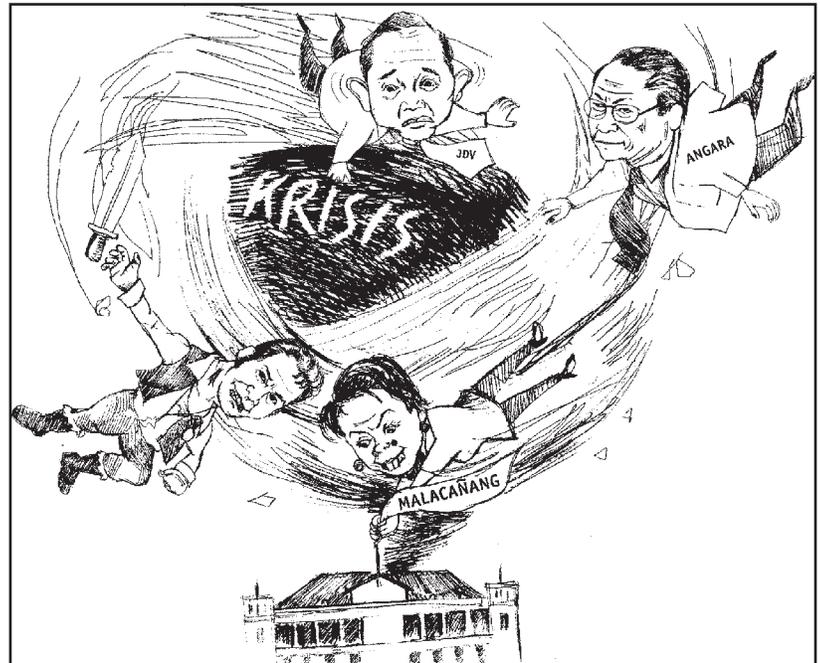
## Political crisis is fertile ground for revolution

A grave political crisis is on the verge of erupting. Already intense conflicts among rival reactionary factions have been exacerbated by the most fraud-ridden, violent and chaotic election in Philippine history and by excessive repression against progressives. The next regime will never be at ease.

The polls have brought intra-reactionary disputes to an extremely high level. The fraud and repression perpetrated against progressive parties and candidates that participated in the elections have further outraged the people against the government, its armed forces and rabid reactionaries, especially since more than a third of those slain during the election period were candidates, leaders and organizers of progressive parties.

Arroyo's camp wants to make it appear that she has managed to best her leading rival for the presidency despite the fact that the people have massively repudiated her. She used government personnel and huge amounts of government funds and resources, including her tight control over the COMELEC, AFP and other armed forces of the reactionary state to manipulate the election results. This, Arroyo's leading rival could never accept. Neither could this be swallowed by the people who despise the Arroyo regime so intensely.

Both the Arroyo and Fernando Poe Jr. cliques are claiming victory. Due to the heightened animosity surrounding the canvassing of votes for president and vice president by the congress in joint session, it will



take a very long time before the winners of the electoral race could be proclaimed. The reactionary opposition has likewise been relentlessly coming up with maneuver after maneuver. It would not be farfetched if neither the winning president nor the vice president could be proclaimed by the June 30 deadline.

In the history of reactionary polls in the Philippines, the recent electoral exercise is without precedent in being fraught with dissension and being excruciatingly slow in resolving who has won the presidential race.

Because Arroyo has the majority in congress on

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# Cases of electoral fraud and violence

In spite of the wanton and incessant smear campaign, violence and fraud inflicted on progressive parties, Bayan Muna posted a big lead in the party-list elections and won three seats in congress. Anakpawis likewise won two seats and Gabriela Women's Party, one. Other progressive parties were nonetheless prevented from winning in the face of the zealous and brazen actions taken by the military, police and various anti-communist fanatical groups against them.

Simultaneously, National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales relentlessly tried to prevent the winning progressive parties from taking their seats in congress. Before the election, Gonzales led a systematic campaign of slan-

der and harassment against six progressive parties. Failing in this, he resorted to blocking the proclama-

tion of progressive parties by pushing for their disqualification.

To gloss over reports of massive fraud and terrorism in the recent polls, Gonzales and his ilk have accused Patriots, a group composed mostly of church people advocating clean and credible elections, of being a communist front. Gonzales strains to implicate Patriots in so-called destabilization plots against the Arroyo regime such as "Oplan Aklas Bayan" and more recently, "Oplan



Evergreen."

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her side, her proclamation can be railroaded. Nonetheless, exposés of systematic and widespread fraud, the tiny difference between Arroyo and Poe's votes and new cases of plunder and anomalies being dredged against the Arroyo regime

will greatly put to doubt the legitimacy of Arroyo's continued hold on power.

The Arroyo regime will always feel restive as it sits in power in Malacañang. Gloria Arroyo's reign will forever be hounded by such weakness until her eventual ouster.

All this portends great political

upheaval, serves as a condition for even more heightened conflicts and provokes violent clashes among the reactionaries.

Arroyo's rivals will not relent in exploiting every opportunity to attack and bring her down. The ruling regime will continue to find itself in a defensive position and feel the need to protect itself in the face of its extremely unstable status.

The revolutionary forces and the people must expose and take advantage of the situation that the reactionary ruling classes and the government find themselves in, in order to more effectively fight reactionary rule as a whole and advance revolutionary struggle.

More than this, this also serves as a condition for the revolutionary forces to strengthen themselves, expand the revolutionary united front as well as tactical alliances, advance both armed and unarmed struggles, obtain tactical advantages and greatly advance revolutionary and people's struggles. **AB**

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Nonetheless, the malicious campaign Gonzales spearheaded has failed to prevent the progressive parties from taking their seats. BM, Anakpawis and Gabriela have already been proclaimed. The progressive parties are now pushing for the ouster of Gonzales as well as military and police officers and personnel who directly intervened in the recent polls.

The following is but a partial listing of incidents of fraud and violence against progressive groups and individuals:

In Southern Mindanao, Anakpawis reported massive fraud in hinterland barangays of Compostela Valley, Davao Oriental and Davao del Sur. In Compostela Valley, there are 40,000 Anakpawis supporters but only 9,000 of them were able to vote.

In Maguindanao, Suara Bangsamoro complained of cases of "dagdag-bawas" (vote-shaving). In Datu Montawal town, for instance, Suara Bangsamoro got 2,449 votes but only 606 votes were reflected in the certificate of canvass. In Sultan sa Barongis, not a single vote was credited to Suara Bangsamoro when the military took over the canvassing. In Ampatuan town, the board of canvassers refused to acknowledge votes for the party due to intense pressure from the military. Meanwhile, Suara Bangsamoro poll watchers in Sulu complained that elements of the Philippine Marines forbade boards of inspectors from reading and counting votes for the party.

There were instances where votes were canvassed inside military camps in Mindanao, although this is illegal. The provincial canvassing for Maguindanao was conducted in

Camp Sionco (headquarters of the 16th IB) while the municipal canvass for Parang and Matanog towns in the same province were done in Camp Salipada Pendatun.

In Iloilo, elements of the 47th IB set up checkpoints and stopped Bayan Muna supporters on their way to the precincts. Military officials also reportedly promised a P10,000 reward to every barangay captain who could convince the electorate against voting for Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and other progressive parties.

Philippine Army, Air Force, Navy and Philippine National Police elements who came all the way from Jolo, Basilan and Zamboanga meantime swarmed Moro communities in Maharlika Village, Taguig, Rizal and precincts at the Taguig National High School. In Moro communities in Quiapo, Manila, elements of the Philippine Marines freely streamed

## **NDF warns of possible withdrawal from talks**

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) warned that it may withdraw from the peace talks if the reactionary government fails to put a stop to mounting cases of human rights abuses committed by the military and police in the countryside. The NDFP likewise took note of reports on massive fraud and terrorism, especially against progressive parties. NDFP peace panel member and Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) co-chair Fidel Agcaoili said these developments pose a big obstacle to the peace talks' continuation. The NDFP and GRP are set to conduct their second round of talks in Oslo, Norway on June 22-25.

The NDFP belied the AFP's exaggerated claims that violations of human rights committed by its men have abated. KARAPATAN and the Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace have recorded 3,150 cases of human rights violations during Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's 40 months in office. There were 171,369 victims of killings, abductions, bombings, forcible evacuations and harassment. Most of the incidents occurred in the countryside.

This contradicts claims by Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero, AFP Information Office chief that only 55 cases of human rights abuse were filed against the military in 2003.

Meanwhile, on June 4, Rev. Fr. Allan Archebuche, Promotion of Church People's Response president, submitted cases of human rights violations to the JMC office at the Immaculate Concepcion Parish in Quezon City. The PCPR requested an investigation on the series of bombings in Davao City where Gen. Angelo Reyes, former defense secretary and the regime's current anti-kidnapping task force chief has been implicated.

The PCPR likewise cited the long list of brutal murders, attempted murders, forced disappearances, harassment and grave threats committed against civilians and activists by 204th IBde troops in Oriental Mindoro. Also reported was the case involving Biring Pasia, a 72-year-old farmer from Candelaria, Quezon. Pasia, who was suspected of being an NPA guerrilla was tortured for a whole day by elements of the Philippine Army. ■

in and out of polling precincts. The Marines took down election data while the police pored over tally sheets.

On the eve of the elections, seven armed men suspected of being military forces barged into the Bayan Muna office in Angeles City. They dragged, kicked and warned Divine Zamboanga from continuing her work. Zamboanga was the lone Bayan Muna member in the office when the armed men came. They ransacked and took away documents, a computer and other office equipment.

In Mindoro island, roads leading to and away from suspected bailiwicks of Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and other progressive parties were dotted with checkpoints. The military questioned persons coming from such areas, asked for their residence certificates and told those who planned to go to the precincts to vote to go home. In Mangyan communities like Paluan, Abra de Ilog, Sta. Cruz, Mamburao and Baco towns, the military blatantly campaigned against progressive parties and for reactionary and pro-military candidates. In Mindoro Oriental, they brazenly campaigned for the fascist and pro-military Bert Marasigan who was running for governor.

The military also oversaw the implementation of the so-called "pala-pala" where Mangyans were gathered in one place and "taught" how to write down the name of individual candidates and party-list groups. But the AFP only taught them how to write the names of candidates who were in league with them and the fascist party-list group ANAD.

In Isabela, the COMELEC rescinded on June 7 its order dated May 22 that suspended the proclamation of Grace Padaca on the basis of trumped-up cases filed against her by her fiercest rival Faustino Dy Jr. The Dy family is doing everything—barefacedly employing violence and perpetrating fraud and other dirty tactics to block Padaca's proclamation. Dy has hurled utterly baseless charges against Padaca, saying she conspired with the NPA to perpetrate fraud and violence to secure her victory. Religious leaders, the mass media and various other people's sectors have strongly and widely assailed Dy for maligning Padaca and the NPA. AB

## Economic crisis worsens

The economic crisis and the Filipino people's impoverishment have continued to worsen even as the political crisis afflicting the ruling system intensifies. The Filipino people's rapidly exacerbating wretchedness has driven them to fight for their economic interests and bring their struggle to the political realm and the arena of revolutionary struggle.

Government statistics declaring the supposed development of the economy have failed to relieve the people's hunger pangs. The much-vaunted 6.4% growth in the local economy in the first quarter of 2004 merely conjures an illusion of economic advance and a false picture of development.

In fact, the economy of the semicolonial and semifeudal system in the Philippines is in a state of chronic crisis. It remains backward, agrarian and unindustrialized.

The Filipino people are mired in poverty and their suffering grows by the day. Daily expenses continue to shoot up, especially for the people's basic necessities. Meantime, minimum wages pegged at very low levels do not even measure up to half the amount needed by a family of six to live decently. The peso's real value continues to dwindle. Unemployment levels continue to rise.

The Filipino people are outraged in the face of deteriorating economic conditions and the government's failure to address these problems.

Grievances abound:

- ▶ among workers, for relentlessly growing rates of unemployment and underemployment; for the worsening casualization of labor; for government's refusal to raise extremely low wage levels pitifully inadequate for their sustenance; for violations of their right to organize and strike in the factories;

- ▶ among peasants, for the seizure of their lands by landlords, the comprador bourgeoisie, foreign enterprises and the reactionary state, for the absence of genuine land reform, for the flooding of the local market by foreign agricultural products and the death of local agriculture;

- ▶ among rank-and-file government employees, for their very low salaries, for widespread layoffs due to the privatization and denationalization of government corporations, for bureaucratic corruption and for the repression suffered by the rank-and-file in the hands of bureaucrats;

- ▶ among the youth and students, for constantly rising matriculation and other school fees, for the dismal quality of



education and the latter's focus on producing cheap labor for imperialist corporations;

▶ among the majority of urban dwellers, for the absence of jobs, for the demolition of their homes and the absence of permanent and decent dwelling for the poor, for spiralling water and electricity rates vis-a-vis the deterioration of such services, and for the serious lack of health services and high cost of medicines, for exorbitant prices of the people's basic necessities, for incessant hikes in the prices of petroleum products and other basic commodities, and for the added tax burdens imposed by government.

The people are furious over the greed of imperialists and the local ruling classes; continued interven-

## Stark figures on widespread poverty

- ▶ A family of six in Metro Manila needs P464 daily for food, housing, transportation, clothing, medicine and other basic needs
- ▶ The minimum wage for Metro Manila is pegged at a mere P250 and at even lower levels in other regions
- ▶ 69 million or 90% of Filipinos live on P137 or less daily
- ▶ 23.7 million or 48% of Filipinos from age 15 to 65 years, excluding students, are unemployed or underemployed
- ▶ Water service rates charged by Manila Water rose by 253% from 1998-2003
- ▶ Water service rates charged by Maynilad rose by 426% from 1998-2003
- ▶ Electric service rates rose by 150% from 1995 to 2003
- ▶ Government officials steal P100 million daily from public coffers

tion by the US government and its international agencies like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization and their imposition of poli-

cies that merely serve the interests of imperialists and their local lackeys; the reactionary government's obsequiousness to the imperialist policies of liberalization, deregulation, privatization and denationalization which have further ruined the country's productive forces and economy; continued government neglect of strategic industries and social services and its having ceded control over them to big foreign and local capitalist vultures; the hundreds of billions of pesos wasted in servicing debts incurred by government and the comprador bourgeoisie, gargantuan military expenditures and the plunder, criminal activities, corruption and scandalously extravagant lifestyles of big bureaucrat capitalists; over all of these things that have further condemned the people to servitude.

All of this is sure to culminate in the people's resistance. The reactionary government will definitely be confronted by protests and struggles that will break out nationwide.

The mass movement and the armed revolutionary struggle are fast advancing. Simultaneously, a political crisis is erupting, threatening to rock the regime in power.

Efforts to further and expand

## A fleeting illusion of development

A detailed analysis of the data released recently by the government describing a so-called 6.4% growth in the economy in the first quarter of 2004 will show that the factors behind such growth are non-productive and fleeting in character. The figure merely conjures an illusion of development in the face of an economy that has long been bled dry and is in a state of inexorable decline.

The so-called economic growth was due to (1) soaring election-related expenses (5.9%); (2) the further expansion of telecommunications services (13%) arising from the millions of additional cellphones in use; (3) the temporary rise in agricultural production due to good weather conditions; (4) a tenuous rise in the production of electronic parts, from a previous decline; and (5) the growth in remittances from overseas contract workers.

None of this indicates genuine economic growth or long-term future development. Even some bourgeois economists doubt if the so-called development is sustainable.

Manufacturing has already registered an 11% plunge as the quarter ended in March. Exports dropped anew by 11.4% in April, mainly due to a fall in semiconductor exports which comprise the Philippines' leading export product. Production is likewise expected to drop in the following months due to the excessive rise (130%) in inventories of agricultural products and stored commodities in the first quarter. The return to normal consumption levels after the election, continued hikes in oil prices and the overly swollen government deficit and debt service payments are also expected to exert a major downward pull on production. AB

*Continued on "Economic," on page 6*

# Oil prices shoot up

Whenever the oil giants wish to raise the prices of their products, they have ready-made excuses at their disposal. They often say the price hikes are necessary to cover company losses or that the increases are brought about by rising prices of crude oil in the world market. Among others, they also usually blame the depreciation of the peso and rising operational costs.

These are all lies. First of all, never in history did the largest multinationals that own the biggest oil companies in the Philippines go bankrupt.

Recently, the annual profits of companies comprising the international oil cartel have not only doubled but have nearly tripled. In 2002, for instance, profits of the world's five largest oil companies grew by an average of 298%. In 2003, their profits swelled by a whopping 926% or almost tenfold owing to the US and UK's heightened control over the oil industry as a result of their occupation of Iraq. Among these companies are Royal Dutch Shell which owns Pilipinas Shell and Chevron-Texaco which owns Caltex Philippines.

Secondly, regardless of whether world crude prices rise or fall, these companies usually hike the prices of their products. They are quick to the draw and immediately raise prices at the slightest increase in crude prices. Despite having two months' worth of oil inventory bought at previous rates, they raise their prices forthwith based on the most recent increase in world crude prices.

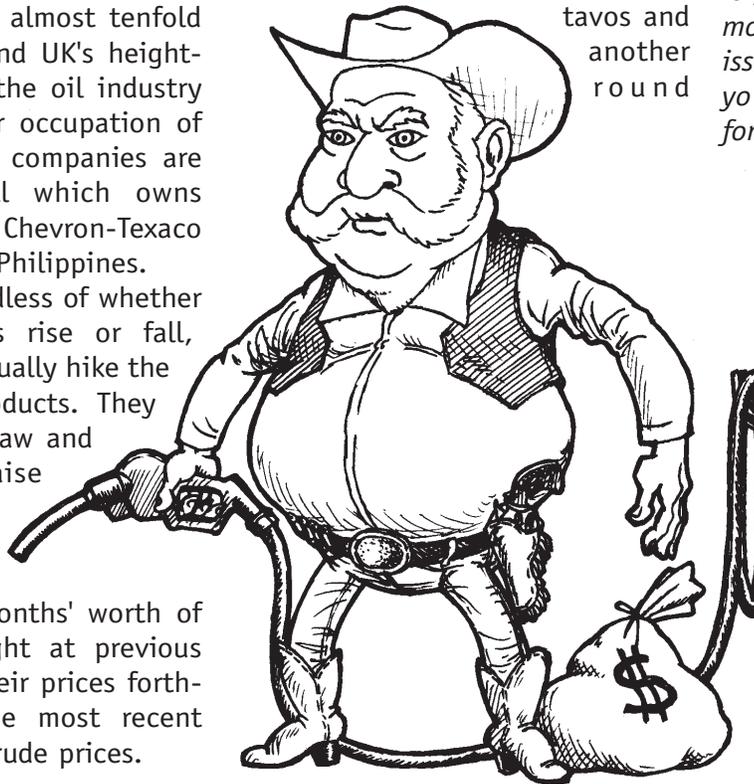
Recent developments provide a stark example. On May 14, Caltex and Shell added P1.00 per liter to the prices of their products when world crude prices soared to a 21-year high of \$41.83 per barrel. Barely two weeks later, Shell added another peso to every kilogram or P11.00 to every tank of liquefied petroleum gas.

In June 4 and 5, prices of petroleum products were raised by another 90 centavos and another round

of price hikes is being planned for next week. The oil companies are expected to raise their prices by P1.25-P1.80. The cartel is taking advantage of skyrocketing prices of crude oil due to the turmoil in the Middle East.

Although this has been the trend since the beginning, such behavior by the oil giants gained more momentum when the reactionary government deregulated the oil industry in 1996. (See chart)

At any rate, the cartel's pretexts for hiking oil prices are worn-out. They can no longer gloss over the fact that it is greed for profit that has been jacking up prices of petroleum products. The avaricious oil companies are experts at perpetrating all manner of fraud to satisfy their selfish interests. (For a more thorough discussion of the issue, refer to the primer "Monopoly atbp." published by the CPP Information Bureau in May 2002.)



**PRICE OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS UNDER DEREGULATION (1996-2001)**

Year	Average price (P1 per liter)
1996	6.07
1997	6.71
1998	7.19
1999	8.44
2000	11.52
2001	13.52

**"Economic," from page 5**

people's struggles to achieve badly needed immediate relief from the blows of the current economic crisis are focused on the basic economic, political and social ills that lie at

the root of the presently intensifying crisis.

The long-term solution to the people's impoverishment lies with ending the existing decadent, exploitative and oppressive semi-colonial and semifeudal system.

Only the establishment of a new revolutionary order that is free, democratic, progressive and truly serves the people's interests and welfare can thoroughly resolve the crisis and save the country from poverty and oppression.

# The intense oppression of women peasants

Women comprise half of the Filipino peasantry which make up 70% of the national population. Like the rest of the peasantry, they suffer from intolerable oppression and exploitation due to the feudal and semifeudal order in the countryside. Peasant women and men alike bear the problem of not having enough land to till. Moreover, a sizeable portion of their produce meant for their consumption and income generation is appropriated by the exploiting classes through exorbitant land rent and production costs, usury and low farmgate prices. Farm workers, both men and women, receive meager wages.

Peasant women are more exploited compared to the men of the peasantry. Women suffer from low status in a semicolonial and semifeudal society. In the countryside, their roles are often confined to that of being housewives and mothers whose responsibilities are limited to family matters.

Their significant role in production is not even recognized in official statistics. One study reveals that only 47.55% of rural women are actually included in the labor force. On the other hand, 84.24% of men are considered part of the rural workforce.

In addition, rural women usually earn wages or incomes that are even lower than the measly wages men receive. According to a 1997 survey by the National Statistics Office (NSO), men are paid P14.92 more than women for a day's work. The real wage of men is P6.26 higher than women's.

The NSO adds that 52% of the 2.96 million women farm workers

in 2002 were classified as unpaid family workers.

In rice and corn lands, women receive only P80 in daily wages while men are paid P100.

Women in other areas are paid even less. In Negros, women working as seasonal farm hands receive only P50 a day. In weeding, where the contractual *pakyaw* system is employed, 15-20 women are paid only P600 per hectare covered. The women's lower wages make it even harder for their families to earn P398.28 daily, the amount the government considers necessary for a family of six in agricultural areas.

Ever since the government thrust the Philippine economy into the "globalization" framework by joining the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the World Trade Organization (WTO), the country has been swamped by cheap agricultural imports. This has caused the further decline of agricultural production and peasant incomes. The number of unemployed rural women has grown, a fact that not even the government's manipulated statistics could hide. The documented unemploy-

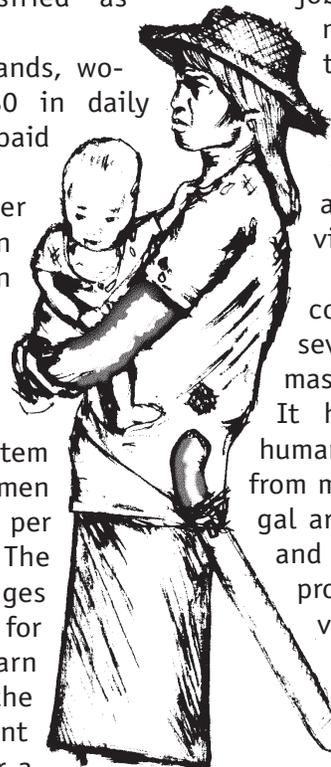
ment rate among rural women grew from 8.4% in 1988 to 10.1% in 1998. It rose to 10.6% in 2001, three years after the country's entry to the WTO.

"Globalization's" continued devastation of the peasants' lives and livelihood is forcing women to leave their communities to seek jobs elsewhere. They often find work as salesladies, laundry women and domestic helpers in town centers or in Metro Manila. Or, if they manage to go abroad, they land jobs as domestic helpers if not entertainers. Due to the enormous lack of opportunities to find decent jobs, many are forced into prostitution and other antisocial activities just to earn money.

Militarization in the countryside is another severe blow on the peasant masses' lives and livelihood. It has wrought mounting human rights violations. Aside from murders, abductions, illegal arrests, forced evacuation and destruction of crops and property, many women fall victim to sexual abuse by military and paramilitary forces. In Cordillera alone, there were 25 recorded cases of rape, attempted rape and sexual harassment between 1986 and 2002.

More than ever before, it has become necessary for women to crush the rotten system prevailing in Philippine society.

Women, like men, have the right to take part in production and enjoy the benefits of development and social services, among other gains. They have the equal right to participate in politics and other affairs outside the home and to develop their talents and capacities as citizens.





# The use of torture is official US policy

In the past few weeks, the US forces' systematic and widespread use of torture on Iraqi fighters and even civilians detained at the Abu Ghraib prison came into the open. US government and military leaders attempted to mount a coverup, saying the atrocities were the handiwork of a few unscrupulous individuals and were never officially encouraged.

As a matter of fact, the US' use of torture, abuse and brutality against civilians and prisoners of war is a deliberate and pervasive policy. The events that took place at the Abu Ghraib prison are no different from those in other prisons run by the US in other parts of the world.

The US military bureaucracy itself has churned out books and manuals on the "science" and techniques of torture employed by its armed forces. It operates schools, like the School of the Americas, that train regular military and police forces and vigilante and paramilitary groups in different parts of the world on the most sophisticated methods of torture, extortion and assassination. Those trained in these schools perpetrate the worst cases of torture, massacre and state terrorism in the world.

It was revealed last year that the US Defense Department has approved the use of 20 techniques in the interrogation of prisoners of war. One of these techniques is the use of psychological and physical violence.

The use of the most brutal methods has been made official policy. They include indefinite solitary confinement, extreme intimidation and noise to deprive prisoners of sleep and manipulation of their food. Stripping and humiliating prisoners has likewise been allowed.

In Afghanistan, thousands of Taliban fighters captured by US

forces in November 2001 were packed into a container van and left there to die of starvation and unbearable heat. Also documented were the torture and killing of more than 3,000 Afghan men at the Mazar-i-sharif prison in the US military base in Afghanistan. As in Abu Ghraib, the brutality of the American forces was revealed in television broadcasts and newspaper photographs of naked, bound and gagged Afghan prisoners. Even John Walker Lindh, an American captured with Taliban forces and who came to be known as the American Taliban, was not spared. Lindh revealed that he was among those imprisoned in a container van without air, water and food. The American soldiers stripped and tied him like an animal to humiliate and intimidate him.

In its military base in Guantanamo, Cuba, the US runs Camp X-Ray where more than 600 alleged terrorists have been illegally detained for two years now. The US refuses to place the prisoners under the jurisdiction of the Geneva Conventions which stipulates the just and civilized treatment of prisoners of war. To the US, no prisoner detained at the facility is entitled to any human rights. Those released from the prison due to exposés and campaigns against US brutality in Guantanamo have attested to the fact that prisoners there suffer the most cruel forms of torture and abuse in the hands of their interrogators and guards.

Although US government and military officials insist that the policies and methods employed in the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo are different from those in other US prisons, they are generally the same policies and methods at work against their captives in Afghanistan, Iraq and other areas. AB



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## NPA raid in Pampanga, a success

SPO4 Pedro David was caught unawares when a 10-man NPA unit attacked a PNP detachment he was manning alone at the Bulaon Resettlement Site in the City of San Fernando, Pampanga on May 26. He never managed to fight back. The guerrillas seized five M16 rifles and a 9 mm pistol in the 10-minute raid.

When reinforcements led by Supt. Nicanor Targa, San Fernando police chief, arrived at the scene, resi-

dents turned off their lights. The enemy was compelled to retreat for fear of being ambushed. The resettlement site is a community of 2,000 families displaced by the Mt. Pinatubo eruption in Zambales in 1991.

Earlier, on May 21, the NPA ambushed several PNP troops in Porac, Pampanga, killing an intelligence agent and wounding another.

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## Military behind abduction of DENR official

NDF-MINDANAO spokesman Jorge "Ka Oris" Madlos condemned AFP units in Agusan del Norte as the brains behind the abduction of Cristopher Kuizon, regional technical director for operations of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Caraga on Mayo 29. Kuizon was abducted by the Bungkatol Liberation Front (Bulif) in Buenavista, Agusan del Norte. According to Ka Oris, the AFP was not pleased by Kuizon's serious enforcement of the DENR's campaign against illegal logging.

Bulif, a paramilitary group operating among the Lumads in Caraga, was forced to release Kuizon after Ka Oris ordered the NPA to launch a rescue operation.

## College tuition fees to rise 15%

TUITION fees in colleges and universities are set to rise when school opens. Some 214 colleges will raise their fees which at present average P313.20 per unit.

Fee hikes will be steepest in Metro Manila where 83 colleges and universities are set to raise them by an average of P60 from their current rate of P614.50 per unit. Region 7 comes in second with a P34.40 per unit increase and Region 11, third, with a P33.35 per unit hike.