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Editorial

The Arroyo regime's isolation from the people is worsening

Gloria Arroyo's political isolation is without let-up due to her corrupt and brutal rule and the intensifying havoc and hardship wrought on the people by her shameless puppetry to US imperialism.

Serious doubts linger among the majority of the people about her electoral victory. The people are angered by the regime's suppression of protests against the recently concluded polls which were the filthiest, most fraudulent and most violent in the history of reactionary elections in the Philippines. Further fueling the people's ire is the fact that the Arroyo regime has been ramming down the people's throats its "reconciliation" with the Estradas, Marcoses and others on whom the people have already passed judgment for their heinous crimes against the masses.

Every day, more and more are convinced that the perpetuation of the pro-imperialist economic policies zealously being pushed by the regime is extremely onerous for the masses. These policies merely serve the imperialist companies' hunger for superprofits. They stifle local businesses, destroy productive forces, condemn the national economy to a state of backwardness and exacerbate the people's poverty.

It is neoliberalization and the attendant dumping of imported goods that overwhelm local commodities



that lie at the root of the further decline of both local agriculture and business and the rampant unemployment and poverty nationwide. Joblessness and the bankruptcy of the Philippine economy would be far worse were it not for the migration of over eight million Filipinos to find employment abroad.

It is the oil industry deregulation law that brings about the relentless increases in the prices of petroleum products and the unbridled accumulation of superprofits by oil multinationals.

It is the deregulation and privatization of basic services that are behind the unremitting increases in the costs of electricity and water, health services and

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education.

In the face of all this, the government intentionally keeps low the wages and salaries of workers and employees in both the private and public sectors. The government also deliberately skimps on basic services to comply with the wishes of imperialist agencies. It likewise plans to bleed the people by imposing additional taxes, also in accordance with imperialist dictates.

Arroyo's subservience to her imperialist master on economic issues is also reflected in her blind implementation in the Philippines of the the Bush government's "anti-terrorist doctrine". As the so-called "second front" in the "anti-terrorist war" being pushed by the US, the Arroyo government stands out as a sore thumb in Asia as a fierce supporter and implementor of all of the Bush regime's antinational, antipeople, repressive and terrorist policies in the Philippines and even overseas.

In its complete subservience to its imperialist master, the regime allows the US to trample on the nation's sovereignty, violate the national territory, transform the

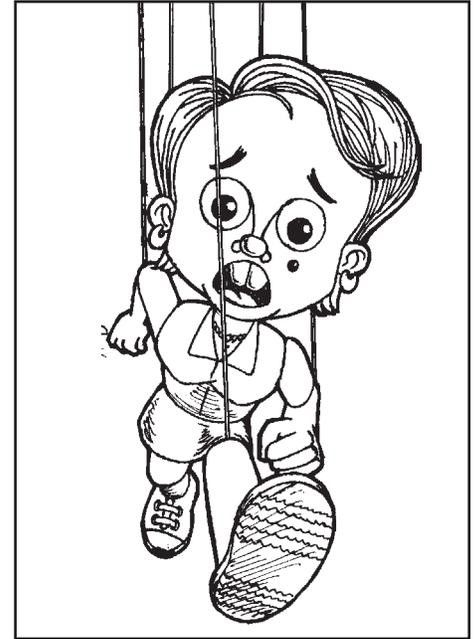
entire Philippines into a military base, and intervene in the country's internal affairs. Military operations of American forces in areas believed to be "Moro terrorist" bases are dubbed as military exercises.

In the name of the "anti-terrorist war," government forces conduct fierce military operations continuously and on a wide scale, relentlessly unleash terrorism and perpetrate human rights violations in suspected NPA and MILF/BIAF strongholds. American forces also plan to penetrate revolutionary areas.

To show its complete puppetry to Bush, the Arroyo regime dispatched a 97-man "humanitarian" contingent as political support for the US imperialist occupation in Iraq. Fifty-five of them were military troops.

But the political implications of the capture of worker Angelo de la Cruz by Iraqi militants alarmed the regime. It was forced to repatriate the Filipino troops not only to save Angelo de la Cruz's life, but more importantly, to save itself from the people's ire should the captive be decapitated.

Arroyo knows that her imperial-



ist masters would still give more importance to her complete subservience in implementing far more significant policies on imperialist "globalization" and the "anti-terrorist war" rather than the loss of the symbolic presence of a few Filipino troops in Iraq. Nevertheless, the regime is sure to grant huge concessions to its imperialist master because the withdrawal of Philippine forces amid successive troop withdrawals by former supporters of the US war and occupation of Iraq still constitutes a great insult to the US.

The Arroyo regime may be able to ingratiate itself to the people for a brief period, but its true pro-imperialist and antipeople stance will surely emerge. It will eventually impact on the people that Arroyo has no right to remain in Malacañang and continue to cause the people to suffer for six or more years.

The people will have the intensifying desire to end their agony. Arroyo's isolation from the broad masses of the people will relentlessly worsen. The people will unite in their numbers to challenge Arroyo's continued hold on power. **AB**

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Angelo de la Cruz's release is the people's victory

Filipino driver Angelo de la Cruz was released by his Iraqi captors on July 20, a day after the Philippines' mercenary troops were withdrawn from Iraq.

De la Cruz was abducted in Baghdad on July 7 by members of the Khaled bin al-Waleed Corps, which is part of the Islamic Army fighting the US occupation of Iraq. His captors threatened to behead de la Cruz if the 51-man Philippine contingent supporting the US' war of aggression and occupation of Iraq did not leave by July 20. The date set by the Iraqi guerrillas was a month earlier than that set by the Arroyo regime.

At first, Arroyo declared her refusal to withdraw the troops earlier than her set deadline. She preferred to sacrifice de la Cruz's life in support of the US' "anti-terrorist war" and maintain an excellent, obsequious relationship with her imperialist master.

The Arroyo regime is now using de la Cruz's release to ingratiate itself before the people and salvage its plummeting popularity. The regime shamelessly plans to parade de la Cruz during the State of the Nation Address (SONA) to brag and make it appear that it was Arroyo who saved his life.

This is another one of Arroyo's deceptions. In the first place, it was her regime's all-out support for US imperialism's invasion and occupation of Iraq that endangered de la Cruz's life and that of millions of other Filipino workers in the Middle East. But now Arroyo wants to abrogate the honor of saving de

la Cruz's life.

The Arroyo regime has stood by and repeated the discredited lies used by the Bush regime in the US invasion of Iraq. However, Bush's pretexts for forcibly removing the Saddam Hussein regime from power—harboring weapons of mass destruction and maintaining links with al-Qaeda—have proven to be huge prevarications. The US war and occupation of Iraq and by extension, the Arroyo regime's fierce support for it, have both been proven to be devoid of any just or legal basis. This leaves only one thing that ought to be done, and that is to repatriate the Philippine mercenary troops from Iraq.

Widespread protests throughout the country greeted Arroyo's intransigence. In the two weeks of de la Cruz's detention, protest actions nationwide brought to the fore the Filipino people's fervent opposition to the Arroyo government's total support for US imperialism's unjust aggression in, and occupation of, Iraq.

The regime sought to prevent the street demonstrations demanding the return of the mercenary Filipino forces in Iraq by ordering the police to brutally and arbitrarily disperse them. The regime also tried to gag the mass media and others expressing opposition to the regime.

The government likewise tried other means, including negotiating and offering a \$6 million bribe to the Iraqi guerrillas to secure de la Cruz's release without having to send home the Filipino soldiers in Iraq. But the guerrillas rebuffed them.

Calls for de la Cruz's immediate release reverberated throughout the country and people's protests against the all-out support for the



US imperialist occupation of Iraq and the dispatching of Filipino troops to that country became widespread.

In the face of all this, the Arroyo regime had no choice but to withdraw its mercenary troops, not so much to save de la Cruz's life but to salvage its own.

On July 12, Arroyo declared that the Philippine troops would be sent home earlier. By the 19th of July, the entire Philippine contingent had been sent back from Iraq.

It was not really Arroyo who secured de la Cruz's release but the Filipino people's strong, militant and broad struggle to effect the repatriation of all Filipino troops from Iraq and save not only de la Cruz but all other Filipino workers in Iraq and the Middle East who had been put in harm's way.

De la Cruz's release is a victory of none other than the Filipino people against the US' pointless "anti-terrorist war" in Iraq which receives the puppet Arroyo regime's complete support. It is a victory that will be celebrated not only by the Filipino people but by the Iraqi people and all peoples opposed to the US' trampling on the sovereignty and independence of other countries around the globe.

The withdrawal of Filipino troops from Iraq has disappointed the US, especially since the Philippines is but the latest in a growing list of former supporters of the US war that have likewise recalled their troops. Spain, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Honduras, Norway, Moldova and Singapore have earlier pulled out their troops. Thailand and New Zealand have set their troop withdrawals in September. The Netherlands and Poland have also announced their planned withdrawals.

US government spokespersons

claim that withdrawing troops is tantamount to surrendering to the terrorists and signals them to resort to the same actions over and over. This statement obscures the fact that it is the avarice and

aggression of the world's number one terrorist—US imperialism—that is the alpha and omega of all the current turmoil in Iraq, the entire Middle East and elsewhere in the world. AB

Rally dispersal assailed

National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) negotiating panel chair Ka Luis Jalandoni strongly condemned the brutal dispersal of a rally held July 13 calling for the immediate repatriation of Filipino soldiers from Iraq. Jalandoni said the integrity and sincerity of the Arroyo government to continue the peace negotiations have been put to doubt because of the anti-riot police's outright violation of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). He said that the police violated Article 2, No. 12 of the CARHRIHL which guarantees the freedom of expression, association and assembly.

Jalandoni also assailed the Arroyo regime for putting the lives of millions of OCWs in danger with its lap-dog support for the US' illegal occupation of Iraq and by sending Filipino troops and workers there.

Elements of the Western Police District truncheoned and arrested a number of officers and members of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) and other progressive organizations during the brutal dispersal in Plaza Miranda. BAYAN vice chair and Plunder-Watch chair Dr. Carol Pagaduan Araullo sustained serious head wounds. Among the five who were arrested and detained was BAYAN spokesperson Renato Reyes. AB

Bayan Muna to pursue cases against Palparan

Now that he has returned to the country, Bayan Muna intends to have Brig. Gen. Jovito Palparan, commander of the repatriated Philippine contingent to Iraq, stand trial immediately for criminal cases filed against him before the Department of Justice. The butcher Palparan was able to evade trial last year when Arroyo chose him to lead up the Philippine "humanitarian" mission in Iraq.

It may be recalled that hundreds of human rights violations took place in Mindoro within the two years that Palparan served as commander of the 204th Infantry Brigade. The violations include the murder of 18 Bayan Muna members and supporters. Among the more prominent cases were the murder of Mindoro Bayan Muna coordinator "Choy" Napoles Jr. in 2002 and the abduction and summary execution of KARAPATAN-ST officer Eden Marcellana and Southern Tagalog peasant leader Eddie Gumanoy in 2003. AB

Worsening human rights violations in Eastern Visayas

Human rights violations in Eastern Visayas continue to worsen due to unbridled militarization in the countryside.

In Eastern Samar, three innocent civilians were killed by fascist soldiers conducting operations in June and July.

The most heinous case involved the summary killing of Rogelio Nurcio, 32, a peasant from Barangay Tangbo, Maslog. His decomposing body was found inside the village chapel on July 2 by peasants who had returned to the barangay after

having evacuated due to military operations conducted in their area by the 14th IB Charlie Company. Nurcio was shot in the temple and sustained hack wounds on his head. His eyes were gouged out.

He was killed simply because he had a brother who is known to be a member of the New People's Army (NPA).

Two days after, elements of the same unit mercilessly killed Bernardo Amado, a peasant from Sitio Baynag, Barangay Canilay, Can-avid. Amado, who is mentally challenged, was arbitrarily accused of being an NPA member when he failed to answer the soldiers' questions.

On June 12, a soldier of the 14th IB by the name of "Garcira" and two CAFGU elements summarily executed Freddie Rebato, a peasant from Barangay Tugas, Maslog. Rebato was found with his arms stretched out and firmly bound to a tree trunk, his head bashed in and his body riddled with wounds.

In Samar, soldiers of the 34th IB and the 7th Scout Rangers Coy abducted and illegally detained eight people from Barangay Sto. Niño, Motiong this July. The victims include a peasant family and a barangay captain, a councilor and two barangay sentries who proceeded to the military camp to look for the missing family.

Thirty-nine year old Artemio Lazarra's family was

working on their farm when some 20 soldiers conducting operations arrived on July 4. They trained their guns on Lazarra and forcibly took him and his children Josephine, 13; Jocelyn, 12; and Jonathan, 9, with them. A certain Lieutenant Penson and a Sergeant De Guzman were identified as among the members of the military unit.

The following day, at around 2 pm, Barangay Capt. Leonario Gabane and three others looked for the Lazarra family, but they too were detained by the military.

The AFP held the victims for five days without having charges filed against them. They were released only when the incident was reported to Katungod (the KARAPATAN chapter in Eastern Visayas) and the Bayan Muna provincial chapter.

Prior to this, elements of the 34th IB also seized Liberato Racab, a peasant from Sitio Tar-as, Barangay San Miguel, Jiabong. He remains missing to date.

In Leyte, 19th IB troops led by 1Lt. Onofre Nelmda opened fire with machine guns and M14s for three minutes on 13 peasants who were on their way to their huts to rest in Dinawan, Ormoc City on March 27.

Seven of them—Marcelo Custodio, 20; Orteliano Dador, 55; Reynaldo Dador, 33; Christopher Muya, 22; Macario Tumampo, 22; Crispin Tumampo, 25; and Mario Cabacoy—were abducted and forced to serve as guides in the 19th IB's operations. The soldiers also mauled Cabacoy and the elder Dador. The six others were able to flee.

That same day, soldiers from the same military unit also took three other peasants—Jonie Polenio, Avelino Evan and his wife—and forced them to serve as guides. AB





Forty soldiers fail to defeat four Red fighters

On the 5th of May, Red fighters in Northern Samar demonstrated their excellent capability to preserve themselves and deliver powerful blows on the enemy. Armed with four high-powered rifles and a pistol, a team from the Rodante Urtal Command successfully defended itself against 40 soldiers of the 20th IB who attacked an NPA camp in Barangay Palanit, San Isidro, Northern Samar.

Not a single member of the NPA team was killed or wounded in the two-hour firefight. Meanwhile, the enemy sustained six to eight killed and five wounded. The experience has further boosted the Red fighters' morale and fighting capacity.

On the day of the raid, there were only 10 Red fighters in the camp. The others were engaged in mass work in a nearby barrio. It was around 7 a.m. when two comrades who were atop a hill spotted the approaching soldiers. They immediately opened fire at them, hit the ground and sought cover. The enemy retaliated and rained bullets on the comrades.

Other comrades in the camp took swift action: they took position to defend themselves, put away valuable equipment and other belongings, and dispatched another comrade to help the two others who were detached from the rest of the squad.

Under heavy enemy fire, the three comrades managed to retreat safely back to the camp. There, the unit's leaders quickly held a consultation and decided to designate a team of fighters to pin down the enemy while other members of the squad retreated.

The team of four Red fighters immediately took position on excellent terrain, ready to open fire on any advancing enemy soldier. Their weapons: two M14s and two M16s. One member of the team also had a .45 pistol with him.

Despite their superior number, the 40 soldiers failed to gain control of the firefight. The Red fighters who engaged the enemy showed their skill in guerrilla warfare, both in terms of their familiarity with the terrain and in combat tactics. They were also disciplined in the use of ammunition, using up only one magazine each for the entire duration. But they

were able to fire effectively and maneuver towards various positions along the terrain they knew like the back of their hand, thoroughly confusing the enemy and frustrating any attempt on its part to advance.

The enemy's complete befuddlement was evident as the comrades heard the soldiers shouting out the NPA's supposed positions several times. In fact, the positions they pinpointed were those of their fellow soldiers. In the end, the enemy troopers were firing at each other.

The Red guerrillas' fighting spirit remained high. The soldiers, on the other hand, were extremely demoralized as their officers relentlessly ordered them to advance despite the fact that they were proving to be easy targets of the Red fighters' concentrated firepower. Up to the time the Red fighters retreated at around 9 a.m., not a single one of them was hit. In contrast, the comrades reckoned that one soldier was killed and five were wounded. Peasants who live nearby, however, recalled seeing eight soldiers killed or wounded being carted off by their fellow troopers from the scene of fighting.

The following day, the comrades and the peasants who knew what really happened were flabbergasted and rolling in laughter when Maj. Gen. Glen Rabonza of the 8th ID boasted before the mass media that 20th IB troops had supposedly killed seven Red fighters. The fact is that aside from the comrades not sustaining a single casualty, the enemy also came up almost empty-handed. All they recovered was a 9 mm magazine that was left behind and two generators which the soldiers stumbled into when they returned to the camp using dogs in their search. AB

Struggle against intense militarization in Quezon

Southern Tagalog remains a “national priority” of the Arroyo regime in its fight against the revolutionary forces, with Quezon province ranking next to Mindoro as the most militarized province in the region. The revolutionary forces and mass base in Quezon have nonetheless been resisting militarization firmly and effectively.

The 201st Bde with two battalions (74th and 76th) and 38 CAFGU companies are permanently deployed in the province. Most of the personnel of the 74th and 76th IB are former Scout Ranger troops well-trained in “counterinsurgency” tactics. The Laguna-based 59th IB occasionally joins them in military operations. In addition, three companies of the PNP Provincial Mobile Group (416th, 417th and 418th) launch regular operations in the province’s interior areas.

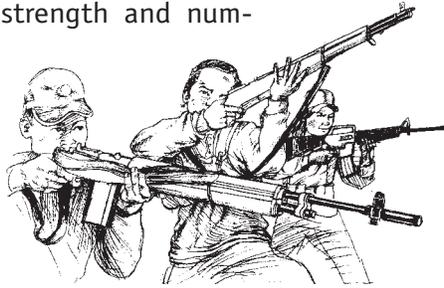
The enemy concentrates on areas suspected to be NPA bases and where the people’s army reportedly maintains a frequent presence. It also concentrates on densely populated plains areas, town centers and cities where the democratic mass movement is strong.

As in other parts of the country, the AFP uses “siege” tactics in Southern Tagalog, employing big enemy forces. “Siege” tactics involve combining various AFP and PNP units in operations and employing different means for the more rapid deployment of troops in fields of battle.

Together with conducting large-scale military operations that could be launched on short notice, the AFP strengthens its territorial forces. It also sets up several encampments, conducts massive recruitment for the CAFGU and builds the Barangay Intelligence Network to control and monitor its target areas.

The revolutionary people of Quezon have resolutely confronted all this. They actively oppose increasingly bigger military operations in guerrilla fronts and the simultaneous attacks on the democratic mass movement.

Despite the military’s strength and num-



ber in the province and the large-scale operations it launches, the NPA is not only able to preserve itself and its mass base, it has also been able to deliver intense blows on the enemy.

From May to June this year, NPA forces thwarted four large military operations and demonstrated its defense and fighting capacity. Relatively small guerrilla units were able to prevail over the far bigger AFP formations employing “siege” tactics. The greater number of fascist troops entering revolutionary areas have provided the NPA with more targets for its tactical offensives.

On June 20, the Maria Theresa De Leon Command (MTDLC) encountered elements of the 74th IB conducting operations along the border of Mulanay and San Francisco towns. The Red fighters were on their way to a neighboring barrio when they chanced upon the mili-

tary resting on the edge of a stream. They immediately opened fire on the enemy troops, killing three of them. This AFP unit has perpetrated a long list of human rights violations in Far South Quezon.

Earlier, the MTDLC had conducted harassment operations against troops of the 74th IB in Barangay Taingon, San Francisco, Quezon, killing four soldiers. The AFP forces were not able to return fire. Severely demoralized, the rest of the troops returned to camp.

On June 16, a unit under the NPA Apolonio Mendoza Command (AMC) was ambushed by a platoon of the 74th IB in Barangay Nana-diego, Mulanay. The firefight lasted three hours but the Red fighters were able to seize the initiative in the first volley of fire. The AFP troops immediately beat a retreat, thus enabling the comrades to launch an assault, driving the military forces to scamper in different directions.

Meanwhile, an NPA blocking force effectively stopped enemy reinforcements who had come aboard an armored personnel carrier and two six-by-six trucks. The NPA detonated a land mine on one of the trucks, the convoy’s lead vehicle.

The NPA seized one M16 from this battle. Fifteen military men were killed and an undetermined number wounded. Shamed, the soldiers brought out their dead and wounded through different towns and reported to the media that they sustained only one dead and three wounded.

Meanwhile, the Red fighters suffered one casualty—Renato Vergara (Ka Medel)—who was wounded. He died while being evacuated from the scene of the fighting.

On May 5, a 70-man composite unit of the 59th, 74th and 76th IB encircled an oversized platoon of

the AMC encamped in Barangay Anyaw, Catanauan. The Red fighters were able to fight back and immediately broke free from the enemy cordon. Nonetheless, five fighters were killed in the defensive action.

Four soldiers were killed on the spot on the AFP side, including one Lieutenant Ferrer, the commander of the assaulting unit. Residents of the area reported

that up to 16 enemy soldiers were killed.

Just as what transpired in Mulanay, the military brought out its dead and wounded through Catanauan's neighboring towns, with some even being airlifted by helicopter, to prevent the townspeople and the media from learning the real extent of the AFP's casualties. AB

Revolutionary cultural work blooms anew in Panay

Revolutionary cultural work has gained new vigor in Panay after more than a decade of being in a slump. Several published works comprising poetry, songs, anecdotes, short stories, comics and drawings are now circulating in the region. The production of video documentaries has also begun.

In February 2004, *Sublak* (sprout), a revolutionary cultural magazine, was published once more in the region. It folded up in 1989, when the erroneous line of military adventurism and urban insurrectionism prevailed and cultural work was neglected. *Sublak* has resumed publication to popularize the revolutionary aspirations and experiences of Red fighters, the toiling masses and other democratic and patriotic sectors through literature and the creative arts.

Collection of songs and poems. The new edition of *Sublak* is divided into four parts.

The first part comprises 23 poems in Hiligaynon, some of which have English and Pilipino translations. It is notable that most of those who contributed their poems are from a new crop of writers—Party cadres, Red commanders and fighters, worker, peasant, fisherfolk and urban poor organizers and national minorities.

Four songs (*ambahanon*) comprise the second part. In the popular and traditional style of the *composo*, *sugidanon* or *ismayling*, "Igpahu," "Kasaysayan sang Baryo," "Grupong Binuligay," and

"Ambus sa Malinao" effectively express the people's sentiments, aspirations and struggle in advancing agrarian revolution and improving production and opposing militarization, forced evacuation and land confiscation. They likewise extol the NPA's heroism and encourage everyone to join the burgeoning ranks of the national-democratic movement. The songs were composed by the NPA's cultural groups in Panay's Central and Southern Front.

Sugilanon (stories). The third part contains two short stories (*sugilanon*). *Dalugdog sa Septyembre* by Rio Roja portrayed the experiences of a newly formed armed propaganda unit in the Northern Front in the early 1970s, from being a neophyte in building the mass base and people's army to the first time it launches an ambush on enemy troops. *Tinipik sang Kasaysayan* by Maya Mor vividly recalls the massacre of 37 cadres, commanders and members of the Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan (HMB) by Magsaysay's fascist troops during a meeting in Taruytoy, Libacao, Aklan on April 27, 1953. Two of those who escaped, Commander Coronacion "Waling-

Waling" Chiva and her husband, played a major role in the NPA's expansion along the Iloilo-Capiz-Aklan Border Area in 1972.

Sublak's last part consists of a comics section entitled "Caduy," featuring a youth who became the character of a popular comic strip that first came out in 1982 in the region's mass paper *Daba-Daba*.

Rebanek. Revolutionaries are not always "serious people". Many humorous incidents crop up, intentionally or otherwise, in the course of their daily life-and-death struggle. To draw lessons from these incidents, Rubio Rus Lucha and Maya Mor compiled 44 vignettes and dubbed them REBANEK or revolutionary anecdotes.

Aside from these, collections of other writings have also been published, such as *Poems, The Enemy's Son and Other Poems from the Warfront* (23 poems) and *Hiwalaybay nga Walay Prosodyo* (30 poems)—all by Maya Mor—and *Pila ka Binalaybay kag Ambahanon ang akon Gingikanan* (letters, songs and poems) by Bayani Obrero.

With the reinvigoration of revolutionary cultural work comes the hope that many more will find the time and inspiration to express their sentiments about themselves, their loved ones, society and revolution through artistic means, even amid fighting the enemy and carrying out various practical tasks for the revolution. AB

The works mentioned in the article are available for browsing at the cultural section of the Philippine Revolution Web Central @ www.philippinerevolution.org.

Short video

In March 2003, comrades in Panay produced a short film, *Panait sang Tumanduk* which in the Kinaray-a language means a ritual of songs and dances for rain and a good harvest.

The video production, which runs for more than 20 minutes, discusses how the NPA successfully united the Tumanduk who live along the Aklan-Capiz-Iloilo border to oppose the seizure of 33,310 hectares of their ancestral lands by the Philippine Army's 3rd Infantry Division.

The narration begins with the Panay people's epic about Labawdungon's struggle with foreigners and culminates with the beginning of the NPA's

organizing work among the Tumanduk, and how from 1973 onwards the Tumanduk have regarded the NPA as a partner in their struggle to regain their ancestral lands.

Standing as a testimony to the firm unity between the Tumanduk and the NPA is Ka Bob (Ismael Giganto) who advanced from being a Tumanduk youth activist fighting for his tribe's right to its ancestral lands to a responsible Communist Party cadre and a Red commander of the NPA. Ka Bob was martyred in a successful ambush against an SOT under Task Force Panay in February 2003. AB

US suffers successive foreign policy setbacks

The US is increasingly being isolated in the international community due to its unjust foreign policy, especially concerning the Middle East. The Bush government suffered a series of blows in the last few weeks in the legal, political and diplomatic fields both within and outside the US.

It may be recalled that in 2002 and 2003, the US succeeded in gaining the UN Security Council's nod for American troops to enjoy immunity from prosecution by the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC, a court established by an international treaty in 1998, tries cases of genocide, war crimes and systematic violations of human

rights. The US demanded immunity to have free rein in its aggression on Afghanistan, Iraq and other countries it may occupy in the future. It gained such immunity by threatening to veto UN peacekeeping operations if it did not get what it wanted.

This year, however, the US could do nothing in the face of stronger opposition by council members to another year's extension of immunity. During the council's meeting on June 24, UN secretary-general Kofi Annan emphatically stated that an extension was out of the question in the face of exposés of abuses by American troops on Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib.

In particular, the council strongly opposed the US' request to have its immunity renewed on a yearly basis "for as long as necessary." Annan condemned the move as an attempt to make permanent a

temporary contingency measure.

Meanwhile, within the US, there now is official admission that the war on Iraq was baseless. A report released by the US Senate Intelligence Committee on July 10 states that the intelligence information upon which the decision to invade Iraq was based was "flawed." The report further states that the US' conclusions concerning Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) were either overstated or unsupported by intelligence reports. The Bush government used the purported WMD to justify its aggression on Iraq.

According to Sen. Jay Rockefeller, a ranking member of the committee, the errors identified "rank among the most devastating losses and intelligence failures in the history of the nation."

The US Senate report has been buttressed by the results of an official inquiry in the United Kingdom. On July 14, the commission that conducted the British inquiry concluded that Iraq did not have chemical and biological weapons when it was attacked by the US-led coalition. The commission stated that British intelligence information regarding this matter was "flawed, unreliable and incomplete." AB



Peasants demand abusive troops pullout from Negros

PEASANTS from Barangays Kalupaan, Trinidad and Mani-ak in Guihulngan, Negros Oriental demanded the immediate pullout of abusive military, police and paramilitary forces from their area.

According to Kaugmaon-KMP, a peasant organization in Guihulngan, violence against civilians has worsened since the encounter between the AFP and the New People's Army on June 12 in Barangay Tacpao, Guihulngan where a soldier and two Red fighters were killed. The peasants identified the abusive troops as those belonging to the 11th and 12th IB, the PNP

regional mobile group and the Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPA-ABB).

Kaugmaon-KMP assailed the fear and aggravation wrought by the military's constant surveillance of farmers whom the AFP claims are peasant leaders included in the military's order of battle. Consequently, said Kaugmaon, the peasants are no longer able to earn a living because they fear going to their farms. The peasants also condemned the soldiers for destroying their crops and entering their homes without permission.

Israel's security barrier illegal —ICJ

THE Israeli government, a major US ally and cohort in its imperialist aggression in the Middle East, has likewise lost a case recently before an international court.

On July 9, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) declared that Israel's establishment of a security barrier inside the West Bank was illegal. The ICJ, which is also known as the World Court, is the UN's highest judicial authority. The ICJ said that the establishment of the barrier was "tantamount to annexation" and must be stopped immediately. It likewise ordered that parts of the barrier already completed be torn down.

The US and the UK openly supported the barrier's construction, each stating earlier that the court should keep its hands off the issue. Out of the ICJ's 15 judges, only Thomas Buergenthal of the US opposed the decision.

Although the ICJ's ruling is non-binding, and Israel, in fact, openly defies it, it has great significance since the case was filed not only by Palestine but by the UN General Assembly. The court's ruling affirms the just basis of the opposition by the world's peoples and countries to Israel's oppression of Palestine and the US' support for it.

Arroyo snubs order to indemnify rights victims

MALACAÑANG brushed aside on July 14 orders from a US federal court in Honolulu, Hawaii to transfer \$40 million out of \$684 million of the Marcoses' ill-gotten wealth to a bank account created for victims of human rights violations under the Marcos dictatorship. The \$40 million fund would have formed part of the indemnification payments for nearly 10,000 victims who filed a case in the US against the Marcoses. The US court ruled in favor of the victims in 1995.

It may be recalled that one of the reasons the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) was disappointed with the third round of negotiations with the GRP in June was Arroyo's failure to deliver on a promise to facilitate the payment of indemnification to the victims.

The Arroyo regime's defiance of the US court's order is likewise linked to Macapagal-Arroyo's current attempts to strike a deal with the Marcoses. Arroyo is also scrounging for funds to offset the ever-rising government budget deficit, spend on her pointless 10-point program and on military expenditures, among others.

AIDS conference assails US

U.S. POLICIES and measures that run counter to the dissemination of inexpensive anti-HIV drugs were criticized in the international conference on AIDS held in Thailand on June 11-16.

The delegates assailed the bilateral agreements forged by the US to protect the interests of pharmaceutical firms in violation of an international agreement ratified by the World Trade Organization in Doha, Qatar in 2001. The agreement allows poor countries to disregard patents of pharmaceutical companies to enable them to gain access to cheaper medicines against AIDS and other diseases.

The Doha agreement, which has shattered the giant multinationals' tight grip on the production and sale of HIV medications, has helped reduce the cost of treating AIDS from over \$10,000 (P550,000) annually to a dollar (P55) or less daily.