



ANG

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Editorial

Expose and oppose the rising tide of US military intervention in the country

Intensifying US military intervention in the country, which is now being directed at bastions of the New People's Army (NPA), is a brazen violation of national sovereignty.

In the latter part of February, up to 700 American troops participating in the Balikatan joint military exercises were set to join 12 AFP units assigned to 12 specific areas in Quezon province believed to be NPA strongholds. The soldiers are currently in the towns of Real, Infanta and Nakar.

The American troops are invoking "humanitarian assistance" to victims of last December's calamity as a pretext. Their real objective is to familiarize themselves with these particular areas, gather intelligence and condition public opinion to gradually accept the rising level of US intervention in the counter-revolutionary war in the Philippines.

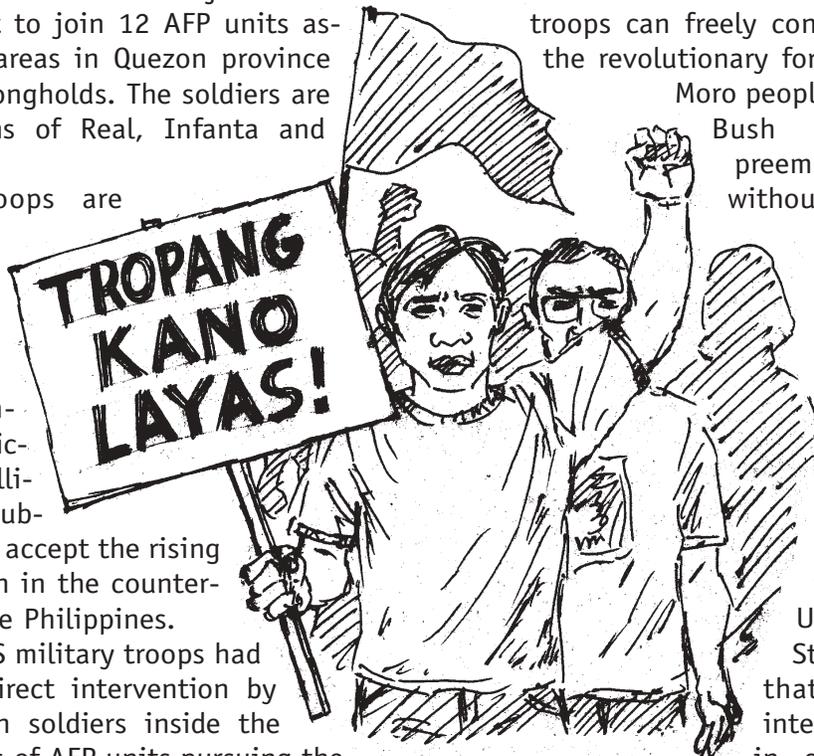
Even before this, US military troops had already begun their direct intervention by deploying 40 American soldiers inside the tactical command posts of AFP units pursuing the Moro National Liberation front (MNLF) in Sulu. The US military officers serve as advisers to the AFP in the latter's operations against the MNLF, which has revived its armed resistance to the Arroyo regime. Also

invoking "humanitarian assistance" as a pretext, the US soldiers in Sulu likewise claim that forces of the MNLF, Abu Sayyaf and the Jemaah Islamiyah are in collusion, something that the MNLF vehemently denies.

The US wants to create a situation where its troops can freely conduct operations against the revolutionary forces of the NPA and the Moro people in accordance with the Bush doctrine of waging preemptive strikes and a war without borders.

In its ambition to rule the world, the US is mercilessly running roughshod over the sovereignty of nations and trampling over the people's human rights.

Dovetailing the rising level of American military intervention is a US project called the Strategic Support Branch that will launch covert intelligence operations even in countries with governments allied with the US like the Philippines. The covert operations will involve not only American spies but Filipinos actively recruited to conduct espionage against their own country. The scheme



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Twin fascists

With its latest statement on the human rights situation in the country, US imperialism is distancing itself from its own sordid human rights record and washing its hands of its own role in funding and training the reactionary Philippine Army.

In a US State Department paper entitled "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices" released on February 28, the US said AFP and PNP forces were responsible for arbitrary, illegal, and in some cases, extrajudicial killings, abductions, torture and detention. The victims are usually civilians and rev-

olutionary forces branded as "rebels." One of the most prominent cases was the arbitrary killing in November of striking workers at Hacienda Luisita by military and police forces.

US imperialism has no one else to blame for the AFP and PNP's record. From the start, it was the US government and armed forces that trained, indoctrinated and supported the AFP and the PNP. The latter are reflections of the US military's utterly fascist orientation as can be gleaned from the arbitrary detention and torture of suspected terrorists in US camps in Guantanamo, Iraq and Afghanistan. **AB**

includes as well the enlistment of criminal personalities whose connections to the US may cause embarrassment should they be revealed.

The US' plans are sure to result in intensified human rights violations and more dirty and underhanded tactics against the US' perceived enemies. In line with this is the Arroyo regime's vigorous campaign to enact the National ID system and other "anti-terrorist" measures that curtail civil liberties.

Even now, the few weeks of pursuit operations in nine towns of Sulu have already resulted in the

forced evacuation of some 100,000 civilians and the destruction of their homes and livelihood due to bombings, harassment of civilians and other human rights violations.

Despite calls for a ceasefire from so many sectors, Malacañang has arrogantly declared that it will relentlessly push through with its military operations in Sulu. The regime surely draws its cockiness from the imperialist consultants it has been consorting with.

In Quezon, the first few days of the Balikatan exercises have already wrought violations of human rights and disruption of the peo-

ple's lives. On March 1, elements of the 76th IB arbitrarily arrested Miralyn Gamba, Leonila Manalo, Nancy Elle and a pregnant Aileen Ramos, all members of the Gabriela Women's Party (GWP) in Sitio Balugbog, Barangay Bataan, Sampaloc, Quezon. The AFP has accused the four women activists of being NPA guerrillas.

The only reason for the AFP to arbitrarily arrest the four women is its inordinate desire to secure the hundreds of American troops operating in northern Quezon. In the twisted logic of the Arroyo government, reactionary military and their imperialist master, all progressive organizations are threats to their security.

The people must never allow the trampling of Philippine national sovereignty, whether open or clandestine.

All opportunities must be exhausted to expose and oppose to the hilt US imperialism's sinister plan to create the conditions for raising the level of military intervention and even military aggression in the future. Once American troops directly participate in offensive military actions, the NPA reserves the right to defend itself and the interests of the masses against foreign intervention and military aggression. **AB**

	
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Violence against the democratic movement

Violence against leaders and supporters of the legal democratic movement has once more reared its ugly head. Aside from the four women activists illegally arrested in Quezon on March 1 (*see page 2*), a prominent leader has been assassinated, another abducted and believed killed and yet another has survived an assassination attempt.

Armed men seized BAYAN-Central Luzon official Danny Macapagal in front of his house in Cabanatuan City on the night of March 3.

That same day, Tarlac City councilor and Bayan Muna member Abelardo Ladera, 43 was shot and killed by a sniper in Barangay Paraiso, Tarlac City while he was buying spare parts for his jeep.

Ladera was one of the staunchest supporters of the Hacienda Luisita strikers and one of the witnesses who testified against the military and police during a congressional investigation into the massacre of workers in November 2004.

Ladera had long been the object of the Northern Luzon Command (NOLCOM)'s ire because of his pro-worker stand. In fact, he was

among the "prominent leftist personalities" identified by the NOLCOM as "inciting" anger and discontent among the hacienda workers. The NOLCOM tried to justify their harassment of Ladera by straining to link him with the NPA in the area. NOLCOM even spread rumors that he was a nephew of CPP spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal.

Prior to this, an attempt was made on the life of Fr. Allan Caparero of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) and vice chairperson of the Promotion of Church People's Response (PCPR) in Eastern Visayas. Caparero and his wife Aileen were wounded when three armed men riding a motorcycle and armed with .45 caliber guns shot them on February 18 in Abuyog, Leyte.



Caparero is known for his opposition to large-scale mining in the region because of the harm it would bring to people living in upland areas.

In a statement, the PCPR implicated in Caparero's shooting Brig. Gen. Jovito Palparan, newly appointed chief of the Eastern Visayas-based 8th ID.

Meanwhile, on March 6, the 63rd IB positioned an armored personnel carrier in front of the office of Bayan Muna-Northern Samar and Katungod-Eastern Visayas in Catarman City. Katungod condemned such outright harassment of progressive organizations and human rights advocate groups. **AB**

Two faces of taxation

The US-Arroyo regime's ruthlessness is on overdrive. Aside from raising the present 10% VAT to 12%, the reactionary congress has also removed this March all remaining exemptions to it. Compared to the 20% VAT increase, the elimination of exemptions has even more lethal consequences.

Among the items that would now be subject to VAT are petroleum products (except liquefied petroleum gas) that would be levied progressively higher rates starting with 4% in the first year to 12% on the fourth year, and "poor people's common fare" like instant noodles, sardines and other canned goods that would be imposed a 6% VAT. Doctors and lawyers' services will also slapped with a 10% VAT.

Even the oil companies do not deny that prices of petroleum pro-

ducts will go on an upward spiral once they are subject to VAT. Electricity charges will definitely rise because power plants use oil as fuel. According to NAPOCOR, the price of electricity that it sells to distributors would go up by a minimum of P0.70/kWh. If independent power producers (IPP) are subjected to VAT as well, Meralco will be adding P0.80/kWh to P1/kWh to electricity charges because aside from what it purchases from NAPOCOR, part of the power Meral-

co sells to the public is supplied by IPPs.

Funds raised by government from the removal of VAT exemptions come on top of the taxes that it already collects from petroleum products like diesel (P1.63/liter), fuel oil (30 centavos) and kerosene (60 centavos). Price increases in these items are in addition to Meralco's P0.0929/kWh hike approved by government just this February based on the deferred accounting adjustment—meaning the company is allowed to recover losses expected in the next two years.

The VAT increase has an immediate and direct effect on the people because it is a tax imposed on consumers and not on producers. It is one of the bills that the US-Arroyo regime has certified urgent

because of the amount and extent of tax revenues that can be siphoned in from it. In contrast, the government has neglected to impose VAT or any additional taxes on luxuries such as expensive watches, imported food items, jewelry, yachts, private planes, perfumes, travels abroad and high-tech toys.

Even as the people are faced with ever heavier tax burdens, big foreign and local companies continue to enjoy reduced tax obligations. Take note of the following:

From the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program of 1998: The income tax of both foreign and local companies was set at 34%. On January 1, 1999, this was reduced to 33%; and on January 1, 2000, to 32%.

From the Omnibus Investment Code of 1987 (for companies in "investment priority areas" like mining) and the *Export Development Act* (for companies inside export processing and special zones): Companies enjoy four- to six-year income tax exemptions. Instead, they pay the equivalent of 5% of their gross earnings. They also enjoy tax exemptions on imported machinery, and tax discounts on local equipment. Up to 50%

of their labor and training expenses may be deductible from their income taxes. They enjoy various exemptions and tax discounts as well on other foreign and local services and equipment, including the transport, distribution and importation of finished products. No taxes are levied on 100% profit remittances.

Special for foreign mining companies: In addition to all of the incentives stated in the Omnibus Investment Code, foreign mining companies will enjoy exemptions from all national taxes starting from the construction and development stage of their operations until the time they recoup their investments.

With the huge amount lost due to these exemptions, where does the government get most of its tax revenues? Studies show that the richest bureaucrats, compradors and landlords do not pay the appropriate income taxes. Businessmen and compradors paid only P7 billion in taxes in 2003. In contrast, workers and government employees paid up to P76 billion in income taxes. Up to 18% of government's gross revenues comes from income taxes and almost 27% of this comes from wage and salary earners. AB

Kept afloat by debt

In December 2004, the reactionary government was indebted to the tune of P3.8 trillion (\$70 billion)—a 13.6% increase compared to the figure at the end of 2003. If we include debts incurred by public corporations as well as those guaranteed by government, the Philippines' total public debt would come to P5.9 trillion (\$108.7 billion).

Expected revenues for 2005 will be insufficient to service debts due for payment this year. To make up for the anticipated budget deficit that would result, the Arroyo regime will once more need to go on a borrowing spree. It floated \$1.5 billion worth of bonds in January, and is expected to incur up to \$4 billion more in debts within the year.

For a long time, the reactionary government has been able to keep up its operations only through massive borrowing. Local export-oriented production has collapsed due to shrinking foreign markets for Philippine exports.

There has been no significant foreign capital infusion. In fact, for the third straight year, foreign capital investments have fallen

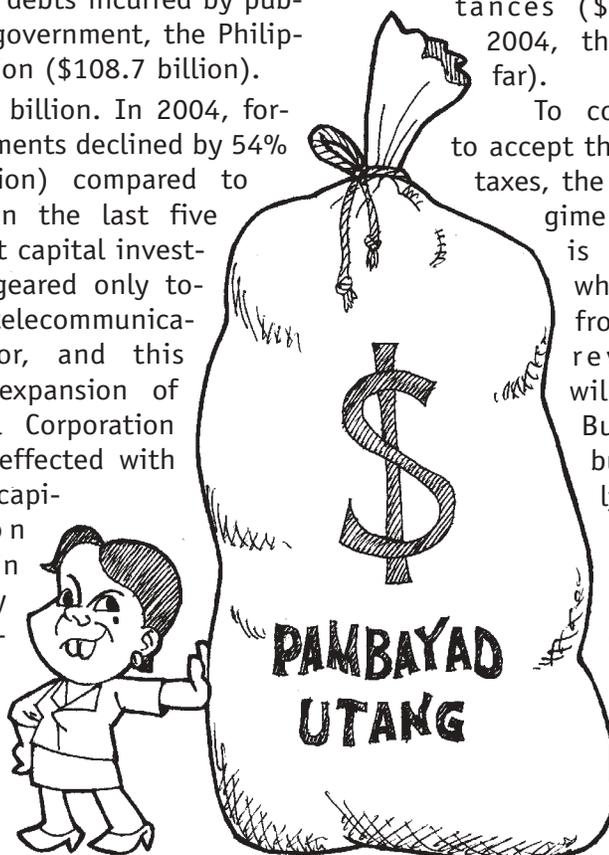
short of \$1 billion. In 2004, foreign investments declined by 54% (\$680 million) compared to 2003. As in the last five years, direct capital investment was geared only towards the telecommunications sector, and this year, the expansion of San Miguel Corporation which was effected with additional capitalization from Kirin Brewery Inc. of Japan.

The country's balance of payments deficit

came to \$595 million in 2004 and was prevented from skyrocketing only through government borrowing (\$1.5 billion this January) and overseas contract workers' remittances (\$8.5 billion in 2004, the biggest so far).

To convince them to accept the slew of new taxes, the US-Arroyo regime claims that it is the people who will benefit from the tax revenues that will be raised. But the 2005 budget hurriedly approved by both congress and the senate contradicts this.

A study prepared by economists states that up to 60% or P545 bil-



lion of the P908 billion national budget has been automatically allotted to debt service and 30% for internal expenses of the reactionary government and military. A huge amount has been set aside for the much-despised pork barrel of politicians. A mere 10% is left

for education, health and other basic services.

Compared to the past five years, the percentage allotted for basic services continues to dwindle, with only 2.5% of national income going to education and 0.3% to health services. AB

Impoverished women are hunger's main victims

Women are worst hit by the widespread hunger stalking the country today. The foremost reason: poverty. Another factor is this decadent society's low regard for women.

While women are just as involved as men in food production and it is they who cook and serve meals, they are disadvantaged in terms of the quantity and quality of the food they eat.

Even from childhood, this disadvantage is already apparent. According to a Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study in 1994, up to 6% of female children are anemic compared to 1% of male children. The usual reason for anemia is the lack of iron in the diet.

The condition of female children has not substantially changed since then. In 1998, the mortality rate of female children from ages 0-5 was 2% higher compared to male children. In 2001, there were more female children aged 0-5 who were underweight compared to male children. A study of a barangay in Puerto Princesa, Palawan in 2002 revealed that 35.6% of female children at that age range were malnourished compared to 14.7% of male children. The reason is the prevalent custom of feeding boys more food than girls, especially when there is not enough food for the entire family. In other instances, male children and adults are fed first, with the females in the family making do with the leftovers.

This and the lack of proper nutrition even from childhood have resulted in the large number of

adult women suffering from poor health. Consequently, they become pregnant with and give birth to sickly babies. Thirty-six out of every 1,000 babies born in the Philippines die before their first birthday, one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world.

The health of child-bearing women in the Philippines is extremely vulnerable. In 2000, an average of ten women died every 24 hours due to various pregnancy and childbirth-related reasons. This is still the leading cause of women's mortality in the country. Up to 43.9% of pregnant women and up to 42.2% of breastfeeding mothers have iron deficiency anemia. Serious anemia is the leading cause of mortality among women giving birth. Anemia in nursing mothers results in sickly babies.

In rearing their families, women usually make huge sacrifices as they try to stretch the family's meager earnings. They usually make do with a few sips of watered down coffee just so their children could eat instant noodles. But with the high prices of instant noodles nowadays, the women resort to serving soy sauce, fish paste or even salt as viand. This has become an increasingly widespread practice. A marketing study has revealed that as early as 2001, over 40% of families with the lowest incomes in Metro Manila already fol-



lowed such a consumption pattern.

Despite all this, the health and welfare of women and children are not among the Arroyo government's priorities. Health received one of the lowest government allocations in the 2005 budget. The Department of Health was allotted a mere P10.3 billion, the seventh lowest out of nine government departments. In contrast, P301.7 billion was allocated for debt service.

A World Bank report likewise states that the number of malnourished children aged 0-5 in the Philippines has been reduced by only 0.6% annually—slower than what Cambodia, Laos and Burma—some of the poorest countries of South-east Asia—have achieved.

Worse, the regime is heaping one tax burden after another that will raise the prices of basic commodities like food and definitely exacerbate the problem of hunger and malnutrition, especially among impoverished women. AB

Peasants oppose fraudulent practices of banana buyers

Banana cultivation is widespread among peasants in South Quezon. Bananas are among the people's secondary agricultural products and one of their staple foods. Banana cultivation also augments the peasants' earnings, especially when it is off-season for making copra, their primary source of income.

Merchants buy bananas as fresh fruit. Bananas are a main ingredient in making ketchup. Raw bananas are made into chips while the overripe ones are sweetened or fermented into vinegar and wine. Fruit oils are also extracted from banana and used to flavor food and beverages like tea. Bananas are likewise useful in treating many disorders like anemia and high blood pressure, among others.

Banana production and trade in the province are small-scale, scattered and backward, unlike in the sprawling corporate farms of transnational companies and banana plantations in Mindanao. Bananas are usually cultivated in small coconut fields by poor and middle peasants who can hardly make ends meet. It takes a whole year of tending ba-

nana trees before they bear fruit.

Bananas are usually bought by small merchants based in sitios and barangays at ₱40-45/hundred. It is these merchants who usually directly transport the bananas to Manila or sell them to haulers at the price of ₱75-80/hundred. A week's haul usually consists of 15,000 to 20,000 bananas.

Merchants generally underprice the peasants by setting extremely low prices for the bananas, cheating in the counting and arbitrarily classifying or setting too high a standard for the bananas. The merchants are able to amass such huge profits because while they buy bananas per piece at low prices in the countryside, in the cities and town centers where bananas are sold by the kilo, the price of bananas doubles.

The most common way for merchants to rake in big profits is

is to cheat in the counting of bananas through such schemes as "pitaw," "talsik", "may bali," "limahan" and "panilyo".

In the "pitaw" system, bananas are counted in pairs. But bunches with odd-numbered bananas are common, since one or two pieces usually fall off the ends. The odd banana is considered "pitaw" (detached or fallen off) and goes to the merchant for free.

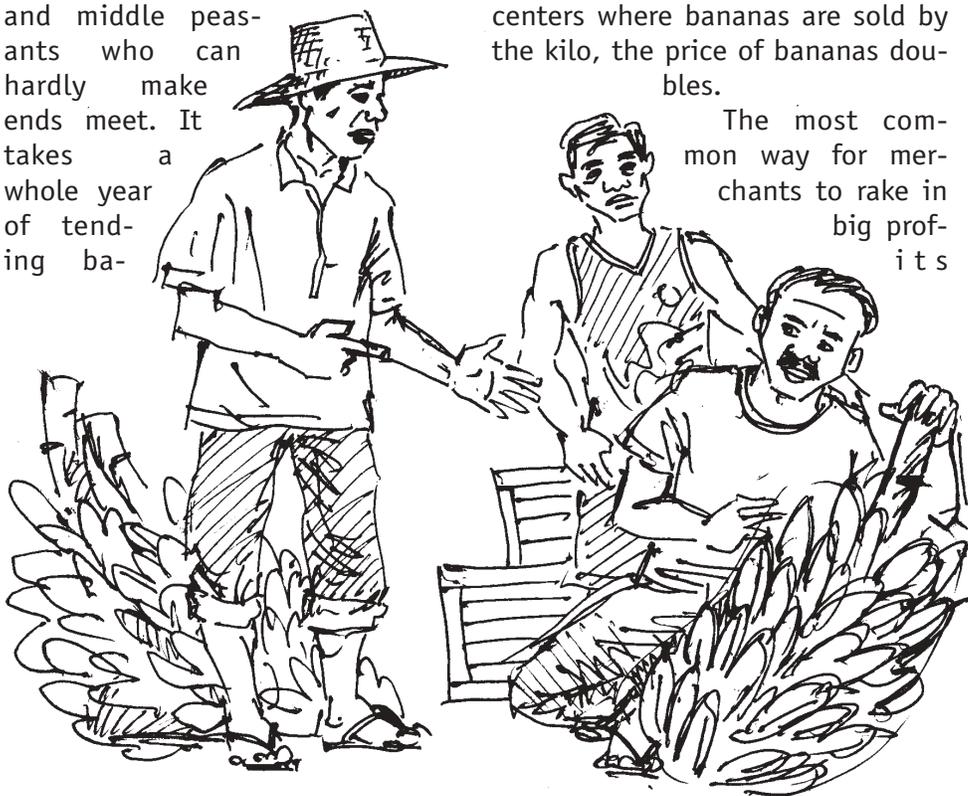
A "may bali" sale takes place when merchants grade the bananas as "undersized". The bananas are likewise counted in pairs, but with each pair priced at only 50 centavos (or 25 centavos a piece) instead of the usual 40-45 centavos per piece.

In "limahan," bananas in a bunch are counted in fives. The odd ones (three pieces of banana, for instance) are considered "talsik" (rejected) and go to the merchant for free.

The merchants receive half a bunch (called "panilyo") for free for every hundred bananas counted. For every 500 pieces counted, they get a whole bunch as "panilyo". The merchants routinely choose the biggest bunch in the lot as their "panilyo."

Resisting fraudulent practices in the system of counting and grading bananas is but one aspect of the overall struggle to raise the prices of all farm products. The ongoing struggle to reap immediate benefits for the peasantry is part of the process of advancing agrarian revolution step-by-step.

Simultaneously, peasant associations are strengthened and expanded until they encompass entire barrios. In the future, the peasant associations may serve as production cooperatives so that peasants can collectively confront exploitative merchants and demand just prices for their products, aside from other benefits. **AB**



Who are Akbayan's bedfellows?

Walden Bello and his Akbayan would pounce on every opportunity just to acquire some prestige and credibility—two things sorely lacking in their crusade to malign the revolutionary movement in the Philippines.

This time, they resort to dropping the name of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, one of the foremost opponents of US imperialist policies. Bello portrays Chavez as an ally in his campaign of slander, even bragging that the Venezuelan president had offered him safe haven in the Latin American country.

Bello has the gall to ride on the coattails of Chavez's prestige. Nonetheless, Bello cannot hide the fact that one of Akbayan's fraternal parties is also one of the most corrupt and reactionary political parties in Venezuela that has done nothing since 1998 but plot to overthrow Chavez's popular government.

Accion Democratica (AD) is, like Akbayan, a member of the social-democratic Socialist International (SI). It is one of the forces behind the US-sponsored coup against Chavez in 2002.

AD has reason to loathe Chavez. For three decades since 1958, AD

took turns with the equally corrupt and reactionary COPEI party in controlling Venezuela's government. Chavez's election as president in 1998 put an end to AD's blissful days.

If Bello is seriously looking for sanctuary, he will not find it in Venezuela. How

could he ever sleep soundly in Venezuela knowing its people despise anyone associated with the old parties that indulged themselves in power for so long and caused their country so much suffering?

What Bello, Etta Rosales and all their party-mates need to do is to be true to themselves. Akbayan is a party that rides on the coattails of the reactionary system. If Akbayan's members now believe

their own lies about being progressive, they need only look at their fellow members in the SI to see their own hideous likeness.

Akbayan's fraternal partners in the Socialist International

Many of SI's member parties now rule their respective reactionary governments. Others, like AD, serve as leading reactionary opposition parties. The SI also has in its fold many reformist parties that serve as adornments of the reactionary ruling system in various parts of the world.

Fraternal parties the Akbayan prides itself with:

1. The Labour Party. Now in power in the imperialist United Kingdom. Headed by Prime Minister Tony Blair. It is the US' main partner in its aggression on Iraq and Afghanistan.

2. Israel Labor Party. Takes turns with the Likud party in controlling the government of Israel, the US' principal partner in the imperialist domination of the Middle East.

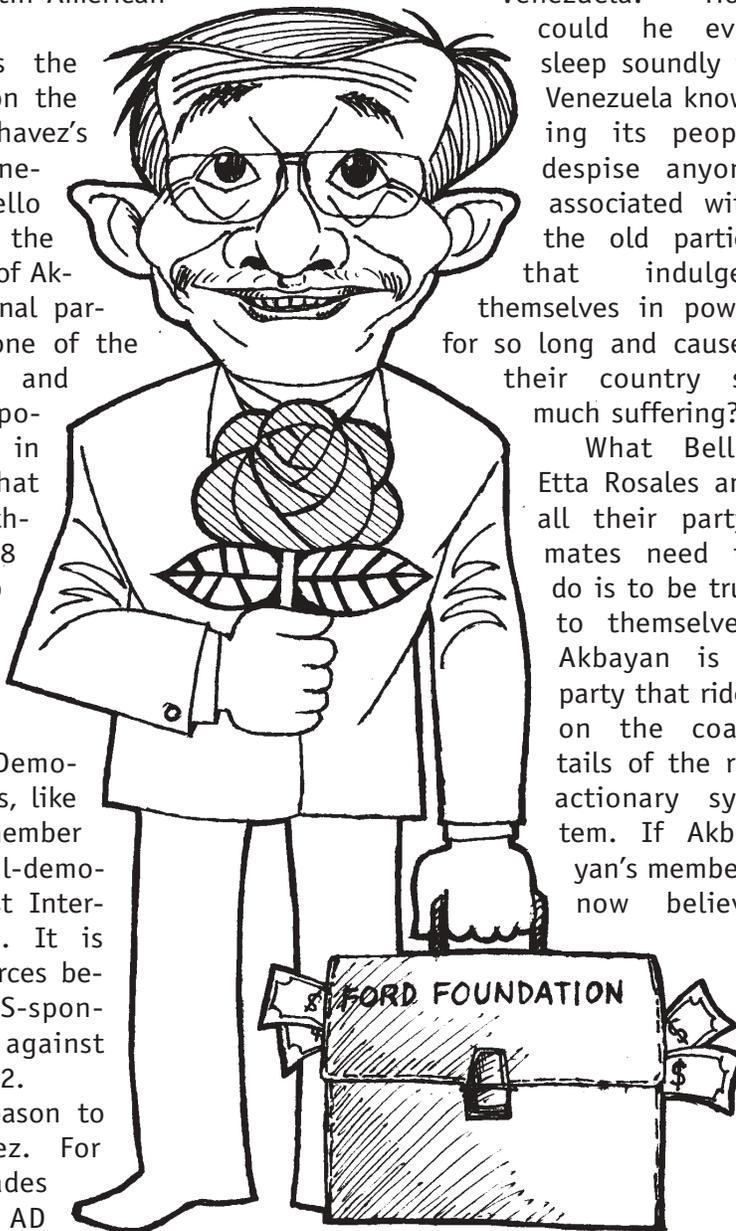
3. German Social Democratic Party. Now in power in imperialist Germany. Headed by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. An ally of the US in invading Afghanistan in 2001.

4. Socialist Party. One of the dominant parties in imperialist France.

5. Nepali Congress Party. Dominant party in the reactionary Nepali parliament. It is the main proponent of the country's feudal constitutional monarchy.

6. Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Dominant party in the Mexican government since 1929. It is notorious for its corruption and suppression of the people.

7. Partido Demokratiko Sosyalista ng Pilipinas (PDSP). Opportunist party of Norberto Gonzales, CIA agent and fascist security adviser of the US-Arroyo regime. **AB**



To all opponents of imperialism

One of the worst things that could befall an anti-imperialist activist is to be hurt, murdered or in the case of Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro of Cuba, be ousted from power through an overt attack by the US and its minions.

But nothing could be worse than to be deceived and misled by the sugar-coated words of those who pose as anti-imperialist but are venomous serpents in reality.

These vipers can be found everywhere nowadays. They are behind, and often also at the fore, of various international organizations and forums that make a show of criticizing imperialist globalization but whose real intention is to derail the world's peoples from the progressive and revolutionary path and to ensure that the imperialists continue to live it up.

They go around the globe spreading their deceitful message, with funding from the Ford Foundation and other imperialist institutions.

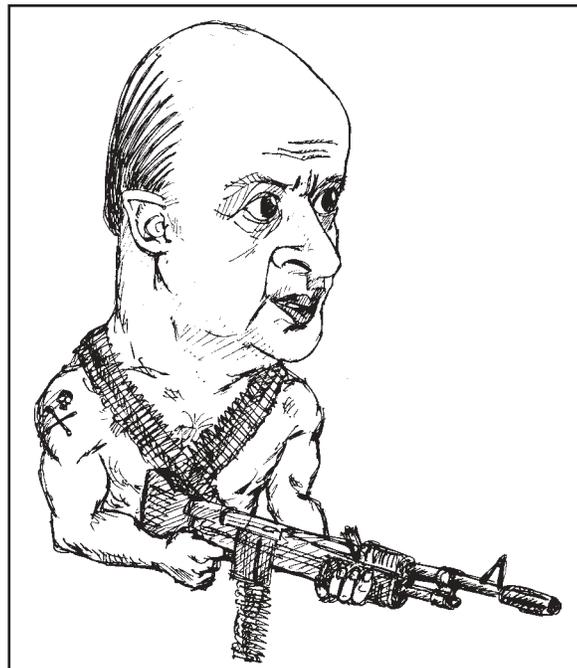
The World Social Forum and the Focus on the Global South are leading examples of such forums. Walden Bello is among the leaders of these two organizations, among others. Standing for nothing but reforms in the imperialist system, Bello is introduced in these forums as "the leading spokesperson against globalization."

Bello uses his international connections to attack the progressive, national-democratic and anti-imperialist mass organizations in the Philippines. Like the military, he accuses the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU), the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) and the Ibon Foundation of being fronts of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

This forms part of his campaign to malign, divide and weaken the anti-imperialist movement in the Philippines. He particularly attacks the CPP and Comrade Jose Maria Sison, spreading the lie throughout the world that the CPP-NPA which he has branded as "fascist" is out to liquidate him.

It is but imperative to remind all forces that genuinely stand against imperialist "globalization" to thwart Bello's campaign to sow intrigue and divide the international anti-imperialist front.

In the face of imperialism's relentless attacks on the world's peoples, it is of utmost importance to expand and consolidate the efforts of genuine and sincere progressive and revolutionary forces worldwide into one international anti-imperialist front. These efforts must include collective vigilance among our ranks against the likes of those who peddle divisiveness like Walden Bello. AB



Who is John Negroponte?

A rabid fascist. An expert in illegitimate military operations. These are just some of the qualities of John Negroponte—newly appointed chief of the US National Counter-Terrorism Center (NCC).

Negroponte's experience in armed counterrevolution was one of George W. Bush's main bases for appointing him to the NCC—the so-called "super-agency" that will oversee 16 intelligence bodies throughout the US. Among the organizations to be placed under the NCC are the Central Intelligence Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the National Security Agency. The NCC was formed upon the enactment of the new US Intelligence Law signed by Bush in December.

Negroponte was a former US ambassador to Iraq and the Philippines. As head of the NCC, he is responsible for coordinating the activities of all intelligence-related agencies. The NCC will enforce repressive measures against the people and suspected foreign terrorists. It will also intensify surveillance of countries accused of funding or providing refuge to terrorists.

Bush had long been pushing the US Intelligence Bill even before his reelection. It

was one of the first bills he signed into law when he won, despite the fact that the American people strongly condemned it. Critics charged that the bill would curtail the people's civil rights and that the US government would be allotting a huge amount (\$40 billion) for intelligence alone.

As US ambassador to Honduras (1981-85) under Ronald Reagan's government, Negroponte approved the CIA's training of death squads formed by Honduras' pro-US government. The death squads arbitrarily killed many civilians and oppositionists. The CIA also trained in Honduras Rightist mercenary troops that wrought havoc in El Salvador. Negroponte likewise led in training the Contra, the CIA-inspired mercenary paramilitary group that overthrew the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. It was then that the CIA manual was issued, a terrorist handbook that outlined bombings and sabotage operations against various civilian infrastructure such as seaports, airports, water and power supplies. All this has prompted the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, a US congressional agency, to brand Negroponte a "Reagan gunslinger."

After retiring from government, Negroponte worked as executive vice president for global markets for McGraw-Hill, the company that owns Standard and Poor's, which rates the financial status of countries around the globe. He was recalled to government service to lead efforts to gather support for the US' war on Iraq, in which he failed. He was transferred to Iraq as US ambassador after the US had installed its puppet government in the country.

Negroponte's expertise in psywar and covert means of overthrowing those the US has chosen to do battle with is unmistakable. Under his watch, expect the use of dirty tactics like the torture and assassination of the US' perceived enemies, the formation of death squads and the subversion of established governments asserting their independence from the US. AB



Air Force lieutenant killed in Batangas encounter

A Philippine Air Force (PAF) lieutenant was killed while two other soldiers were wounded in an encounter with a New People's Army (NPA) unit on February 22 in Barangay Cumba, Lian, Batangas. 1Lt. Moreno Corbito was leading a nine-man patrol of the PAF 730th Combat Group when an NPA sniper hit him.

Corbito's group was part of a composite force of the PAF 730th Combat Group and the Batangas PNP's 401st and 402nd Provincial Mobile Group. They were on patrol in Barangay Cumba when the fighting began at around 6:30 a.m.

Enraged over their defeat, the military began shooting at civilians, killing two who they claimed were NPA guerrillas. Two other civilians were arbitrarily arrested and accused of being NPA fighters. They have since been illegally detained at the Air Force Base in Nasugbu, according to KARAPATAN-Batangas. The military troops also razed two houses in the barrio.

The incidents of violence have forced the villagers in four barrios of Lian (Cumba, Puting Kahoy, Umayingan and Kapit) to flee their farms and homes and settle close to the highway.

The intensive military operations in the four villages are the regime's response to the people's opposition to the planned San Miguel Complex, a project of the big bourgeois comprador Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco. The people are also opposing the establishment of a cement plant in their area.

2 soldiers killed, 3 wounded in Misamis Occidental ambush

Two soldiers were killed and three others were wounded in an NPA ambush on February 28 in Sapang Dalaga, Misamis Occidental.

The guerrillas ambushed a Philippine Army jeep carrying soldiers from the 10th IB led by Lt. Col. Pedro Andanar at around 10:00 a.m. Among those killed was 1Lt. Asangi Tumpilan.

Proposed media gag assailed

THE Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) strongly assailed plans by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to penalize journalists for interviewing anyone perceived as terrorist. The AFP wants to include such a provision in the proposed anti-terrorism law being pushed by Malacañang.

In a statement, CPP spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal said that the regime wants to prevent revolutionaries from airing their ideas which are far superior to, and more truthful than, the lies and disinformation being spread by Arroyo and her spokesmen in the AFP and Malacañang. "Ultimately," he said, "the Arroyo regime will use this law to suppress anyone opposing the government's pro-imperialist and an-

tipeople policies. They include workers struggling for wage increases and peasants demanding genuine land reform."

Ka Roger called on the people to strongly oppose the Anti-Terrorism Bill by launching militant struggles.

The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) and human rights advocates also assailed the proposal. The NUJP said that "it is not for the AFP, or any other government agency to curtail a (constitutional) right on the basis of its oftentimes flawed logic."

Meanwhile, Katungod-Eastern Visayas compared the media gag to martial law, "because only one side will be allowed to be heard by the people."

Opposition to widespread mining intensifies

VARIOUS groups and organizations are waging broader and stronger resistance to large-scale mining that will be carried out consequent to the Philippine Mining Act of 1995. They have put up Defend Patrimony!, an alliance composed of militant organizations, progressive parties, institutions and environmental groups that have pledged to resist the operations of mining companies. Among those strongly opposed to large-scale mining are church groups like the Promotion of Church People's Response (PCPR) and the Catholic Church's National Secretariat for Social Action (NASSA)-Justice and Peace.

In congress, seven representatives have filed a bill calling for the repeal of the Mining Act of 1995. They joined national protests carried out on the 10th anniversary of the Mining Act's passage last March 6.

In related news, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has also declared that it would not allow foreign mining companies to freely enter its areas. The MILF has demanded that the matter be made part of the agenda of peace negotiations scheduled this March, along with attendant issues such as their ancestral rights which would surely be trampled on by foreign mining companies.

Massive displacement, attacks continue in Sulu

DESPITE strong calls from various organizations for a cessation of attacks against the Moro National Liberation Front in Sulu, the Arroyo government ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) on March 5 to intensify its military operations in the area.

Up to a hundred thousand people have been displaced by the AFP attacks and cases of violence against civilians in Sulu continue to mount.

Many homes have also been destroyed by the AFP onslaught. A mosque was reportedly destroyed. The plight of the people in Sulu runs counter to Arroyo's claims that she would ensure the people's safety and security in ongoing military operations.

Like the promises earlier made by the regime to the Moro people during previous attacks by the AFP, nothing will come out of the Arroyo government's assurances that the Moros can safely return to their areas and that they would be given assistance in resuming their normal lives.

In the face of the Moro people's intensifying struggle, the regime claims that the Abu Sayyaf is involved in the armed resistance in Sulu. It is the AFP that planned the terrorist bombings in February in Makati, Davao and General Santos City, making them out as the handiwork of Moros in Sulu and using them as pretext to brand as "terrorists" the Moro people who are now up in arms.