



ANG

Bayan

Pahayagan ng Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas
Pinapatnubayan ng Marxismo-Leninismo-Maoismo

English Edition
Volume XXXVII No. 4
February 21, 2006
www.philippinerevolution.org

Editorial

Hold fast to the lessons of EDSA 1 and 2

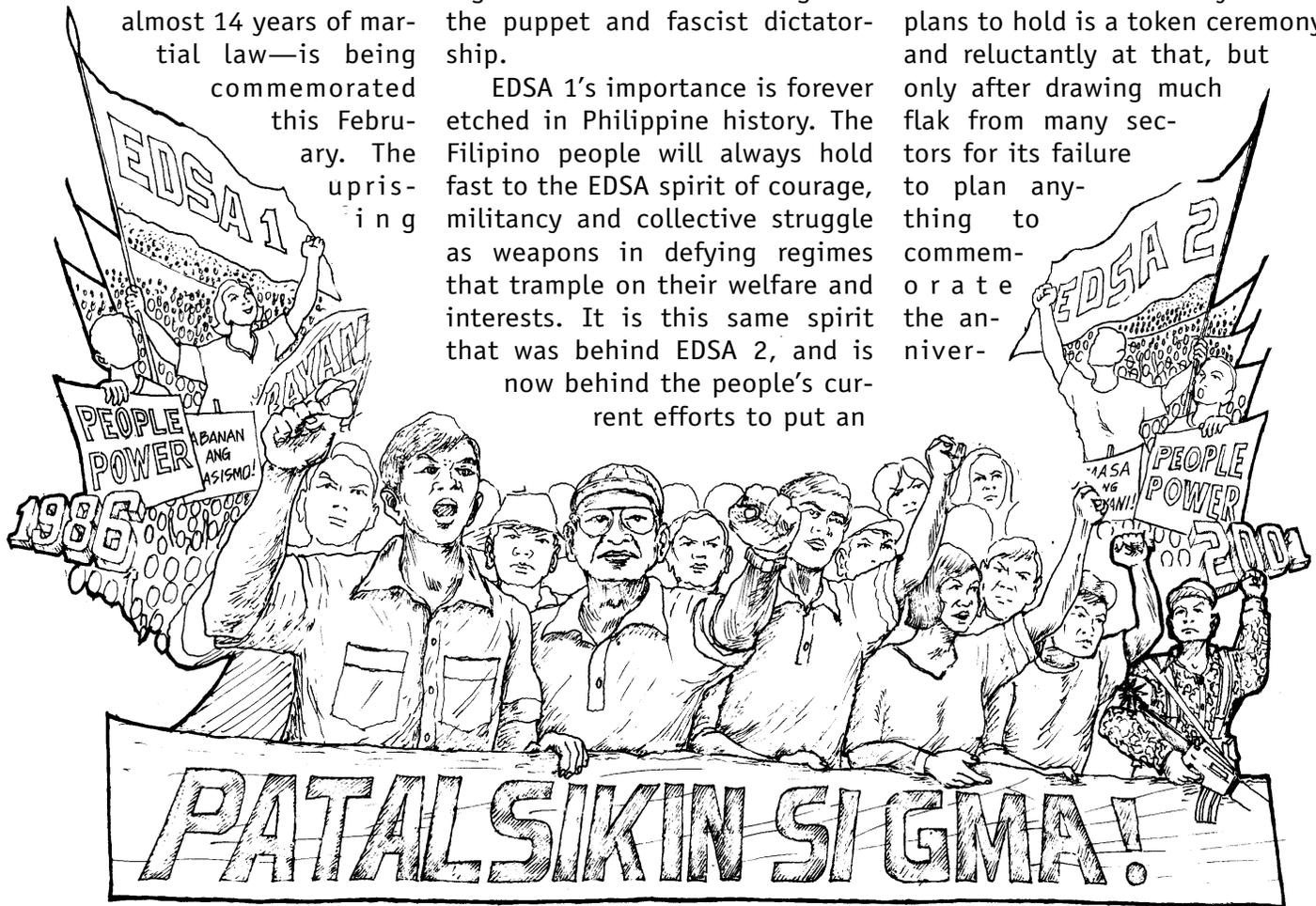
The 20th anniversary of the first EDSA uprising—the uprising that ended over two decades of Ferdinand Marcos’ fascist dictatorial rule and almost 14 years of martial law—is being commemorated this February. The uprising

was the culmination of over a decade of struggle and sacrifice, of painstaking consciousness-raising and organizing and building a broad united front against the puppet and fascist dictatorship.

EDSA 1’s importance is forever etched in Philippine history. The Filipino people will always hold fast to the EDSA spirit of courage, militancy and collective struggle as weapons in defying regimes that trample on their welfare and interests. It is this same spirit that was behind EDSA 2, and is now behind the people’s current efforts to put an

end to the much-detested Arroyo regime.

The Arroyo regime strains to deride the commemoration of EDSA 1’s 20th anniversary. All it plans to hold is a token ceremony, and reluctantly at that, but only after drawing much flak from many sectors for its failure to plan anything to commemorate the anniversary.



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sary.

This should come as no surprise. To Gloria Arroyo, the looming specter of millions of people pouring out into the streets in a powerful uprising that would bring an end to her rotten, puppet and brutal rule is her worst nightmare. Thus has she tried so hard to banish from the people's psyche the spirit and relevance of EDSA 1, and even of EDSA 2, from which she benefited. In fact, she has allocated billions of pesos to bury the lessons of both EDSA 1 and EDSA 2 and "heal the wounds" that these two uprisings have allegedly inflicted.

The lessons of EDSA 1 and 2, however, cannot be smothered by Arroyo's shallow gimmickry. The people are aware of their correctness and continued relevance in the present time.

First, people's street actions are by far the most effective weapon in realizing meaningful social change, compared to other legal forms of struggle allowed by the existing reactionary state. Though incapable of changing the oppressive and exploitative social system itself, street actions can

rock the ruling political system, attain significant concessions for the people and topple a ruling clique.

Second, with every victorious uprising, the people gain experience and the self-confidence to continuously raise the level of their struggles and achieve bigger victories for the benefit of the masses of the people, especially the far greater number of toiling masses. Such uprisings lead to ever more militant and more advanced forms of struggle joined by ever greater numbers of people.

Third, aside from the surging open mass movement and the broad united front of the people and other positive forces, support from a significant section of the state's armed forces likewise proved to be important factors in EDSA 1 and EDSA 2's success.

Fourth, the experiences of EDSA 1 and EDSA 2 have shown that superficial, partial, unstable and fleeting changes are easily overshadowed when the rottenness inherent in the prevailing social system rears its ugly head. A new mass uprising will surely lead to

more urgent demands for greater democracy and freedom in the political and economic system. The people are increasingly aware that their mass struggles must not end until complete victory is achieved and the entire social system is changed.

Once again, there is a reactionary ruler extremely isolated from, and loathed by, the people. She clings to power though the reprehensible use of violence and deception.

Despite its continued use of violence, the Arroyo regime cannot prevent the advance of mass protests. There is need for repeated mass struggles in combination with other forms of struggle until such actions reach a point where they can no longer be stopped by the state's repressive instruments.

The time is ripe to launch another mass uprising in the face of the Arroyo regime's rapidly worsening political crisis and isolation, the steep downturn in the economy and the growing clamor for an end to Arroyo's rotten and puppet rule.

Anti-Arroyo forces, including progressive organizations, opposition parties and disgruntled and enlightened elements in the reactionary armed forces and police are resolutely building a broad front to launch a storm of protests that will shake the ruling clique and remove Arroyo from Malacañang.

They are determined to put an end to the current puppet regime's falsity, corruption and brutality. This was accomplished in 1986 against the Marcos dictatorship. It was accomplished again in 2001 against the corrupt Estrada regime. And it will be accomplished again in the not so distant future against the fraudulent, rotten and brutal US-Arroyo regime. AB



Volume XXXVII No. 4 February 21, 2006

Ang Bayan is published in Pilipino, Bisaya, Iloko, Hiligaynon, Waray and English editions.

It is available for downloading at the Philippine Revolution Web Central located at:

www.philippinerevolution.org

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Ang Bayan is published fortnightly by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines

Resurgence in the broad movement to oust Arroyo

Gloria Macapagal Arroyo is frantic in the face of the unity shown by progressive and militant organizations, middle forces and even reactionary anti-Arroyo forces as they gather strength to launch street protests.

A huge rally will be held February 24 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of EDSA 1 and to intensify the call for Arroyo's removal from Malacañang. On this day, various groups will march from different centers of Metro Manila and converge in Liwasang Bonifacio in Manila.

The demonstration is expected to equal or even surpass the huge rallies launched last year as leading anti-Arroyo forces have now achieved greater unity.

Former president Joseph Estrada and former vice president Teofisto Guingona, erstwhile political foes, issued statements on February 14 expressing support for the Oust Arroyo movement. It will be recalled that it was then Senator Guingona's speech that triggered the impeachment case against Estrada. Guingona later read on February 16 an official statement from the broad Bukluran para sa Katotohanan, saying that it had decided to use "people power" against those who abuse their authority to lie, cheat, and steal.

Guingona added that the essence of EDSA 1 persists against those who have betrayed, trampled upon, and suppressed the achievements of the 1986 uprising. Bukluran called for an end to Arroyo's illegitimate rule and the establishment of a transitional council to run the country.

In an effort to break the unity of political forces opposing her regime, Arroyo sought to appease former president Estrada by offering him "temporary freedom" while his plunder case was being heard by the Sandiganbayan. Estrada refused Malacañang's offer. Even the Sandiganbayan objected to the offer, saying this was tantamount to interfer-

ing with, and exerting undue influence on, Estrada's case.

Resistance within the military

Arroyo is also extremely anxious about the growing movement of officers and soldiers who oppose her regime and the open calls within the AFP to abandon her.

The turmoil within the military was evident from the red clothes worn by most of those who attended the Philippine Military Academy Alumni Homecoming on February 18 in Fort Del Pilar, Baguio City. It showed the breadth of support for patriotic and progressive groups such as "Magdalo" and other anti-Arroyo groups within the military and police. Many of those who attended the PMA homecoming tied red bandannas to their hats or wore red hats and shirts.

Streamers calling on officers from the PMA to take action were hung along the roads going to Baguio City. One streamer carried

the message, "To our mistahs, upperclassmen, and underclassmen, the line is drawn between right and wrong; between truth and dishonesty; justice and abuse. Where will you stand?"

Arroyo was scheduled to attend the annual homecoming of retired and active military and police officers who graduated from the country's premier military academy. She had been touring military and police camps in past months to project the idea that the entire armed forces were loyal to her. But she cancelled her attendance at the PMA homecoming upon the disclosure on February 16 of alleged plans for a coup d'état codenamed "Oplan Hackle". Even as no coup d'état took place, Arroyo would surely have been shamed had she attended the PMA homecoming.

Actually, not only did Arroyo confront the prospect of being shamed; she is terrified by the rapid growth of organizing and resistance in the armed forces. Rumors were rife about recruitment among sol-

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Arroyo terrified of people's power

Arroyo was so terrified with the thought of a "people power" uprising that she tried to arrange a state visit to the US at the time of EDSA 1's 20th anniversary. Pres. George W. Bush refused Arroyo's entreaty. Thus, a press conference arranged by National Security Adviser Noberto Gonzales and Venable LPP with the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. on February 21 had to be cancelled. Arroyo next tried to invite herself to Saudi Arabia, but the King had no time for her. Ever the pariah, Arroyo likewise failed to obtain visits to Spain and Australia.

To avoid being in Manila at the time of the anniversary, Arroyo announced that she would be visiting Boracay, Cebu, Cavite and Bulacan. The reason for Arroyo's avoidance is obvious—she isn't comfortable sharing the stage with former president Corazon Aquino who has continuously called for her resignation. Not only that, Arroyo is afraid of attending an occasion where thousands of participants would surely chant "Gloria Resign!"

AB

Why the GMA-De Venecia cha-cha scheme is rotten and harmful to the people*

The scheme of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Speaker Jose de Venecia to amend and change the 1987 charter of the reactionary Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) is rotten and is extremely harmful to the Filipino people.

The proposed amendments do not only serve the political greed of Arroyo and De Venecia but are a comprehensive attack on the national and democratic rights of the Filipino people.

The pretense is to shift the form of government from presidential to parliamentary, as Marcos pretended before, but the real objective is to use so-called transitory provisions to keep Arroyo in power as a Marcos-type autocratic president in control of the executive branch and a pseudo-parliament under a docile prime minister.

Civil and political liberties are to be curtailed or undermined and the present restraints on the declaration of martial law and emergency rule and on violation of human rights are to be deleted or amended to pave the way for a brazenly anti-

democratic rule in the name of national security and the US-instigated "war on terror."

The right of the Filipino people to economic sovereignty and national patrimony is to be discarded in conformity with imperialist "globalization" through the removal of the few remaining nationality restrictions on foreign investments in the 1987 charter, thus allowing the foreign multinational firms to have 100% ownership and control of land, natural resources, public utilities and all types of businesses.

The provisions in the 1987 charter prohibiting foreign military bases, foreign combat troops and nuclear, biological, chemical and other weapons of mass destruction from Philippine territory are to be deleted.

It is enough to cite the above proposed amendments to prove that Arroyo and De Venecia are hell-bent on betraying and violating the national and democratic rights of the Filipino people. To serve their selfish interests and the interests of their imperialist masters, the two traitors plan to fabricate a "people's

initiative" in order to ram through their cha-cha scheme if they cannot bend the Senate to their wishes.

If Arroyo and De Venecia have their way, with their traitorous and draconian cha-cha scheme, they would further goad and incite the broad masses of the Filipino people to intensify their revolutionary resistance. They would render impossible the resumption of the formal talks in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations because they would have preempted with the cha-cha scheme the substantive negotiations on social, economic and political reforms for the benefit of the Filipino people.

In view of the diabolical cha-cha scheme of Arroyo and De Venecia, the broad masses of the people and the broad united front of patriotic and progressive forces are further intensifying their efforts to overthrow the Arroyo regime. They are outraged by the flagrant attempt of the regime both to deflect attention from its illegitimacy and crimes and to further entrench itself in power with the use of the cha-cha scheme. **AB**

**Statement by NDFP chief political consultant Jose Ma. Sison*

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diers and the police to fight the regime. The AFP and PNP declared a red alert in Metro Manila and augmented security forces for Malacañang, bringing in six Simba tanks all the way from Tarlac. After the disdain it had shown for the Magdalo group's influence, Malacañang has been forced to admit that there is strong sympathy for the rebel group within the armed forces.

On February 13, the eve of a hearing on rebellion charges against soldiers involved in the Oakwood Mutiny last July 2003, four escaped Magdalo members issued a statement calling on the people to pour out into the streets in an expression of massive protest against an illegitimate president and her corruption-ridden government. They called on their fellow soldiers to wear red

armbands as a symbol of protest against the corrupt government.

The next day, the four escaped officers were seen in a rally in front of the Makati Regional Trial Court where the rebel soldiers were being tried. With two other Magdalo members, they mingled with hundreds of their supporters despite the presence of more than 400 soldiers deployed to prevent any escape attempts. 1Lt. Ashley Asedillo of the Philippine Air Force flagrantly ignored the AFP's orders against granting media interviews and made a statement at the trial venue and afterwards handed over to media a brief statement and a kerchief bearing the symbol and slogan of the Oakwood Mutiny. The slogan "Bayan Ko, ituloy ang laban" was written on the kerchief. **AB**

On the Southern Leyte landslide

The Communist Party of the Philippines and the revolutionary movement express their deepest condolences over the death of over a thousand people in a landslide in Guinsaugon, St. Bernard, Southern Leyte on February 17. Several days of rain caused a mountainside close to the village to collapse, burying houses, farms, the village elementary school, barangay hall and chapel in an avalanche of mud, water and boulders.

The Party calls on all revolutionary forces, especially the New People's Army and the democratic organizations in Southern Leyte to help the victims of the disaster as best as they could. The Party Committee for Eastern Visayas will draft a plan to mobilize the revolutionary forces and masses under its jurisdiction to generate resources and extend all available help to the victims of the landslide.

This tragedy illustrates once again how the greed of big foreign mining and logging companies has wrought destruction on the environment, the people and their livelihood. It has been several decades now since St. Bernard and its neighboring towns have lost their forest cover to logging companies that have long since abandoned the area. Not one of the greedy companies that profited from the forest's wealth instituted a reforestation program. Leyte has been the site of many big disasters caused by deforestation. Since the great flashflood that killed about 6,000 people in Ormoc City, Leyte in 1991, four other landslides or floods in the island have killed thousands of residents.

The huge flood and landslide that killed more than 2,000 people in northern Quezon and Aurora in 2004 precipitated urgent calls for an end to the operations of huge mining and logging companies responsible for unmitigated environmental destruction and many disasters. Despite this, the Arroyo administration has intensified its program to expand mining operations in the country. Arroyo has allowed San Jose Timber Corp. to resume operations in the forests of Samar as a political concession to its owner Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile.

This only proves how the Arroyo regime has neglected the people's interests and how it has instead acted as a representative of the large-scale plunderers of the Philippines' natural wealth and national patrimony. The regime has even mobilized the armed forces to protect the interests of foreign and big compradors and suppress the people's legitimate protests. The Arroyo regime is criminally liable for having invited big foreign mining and logging companies that violate the national patrimony, destroy the environment and endanger the lives and livelihood of Filipinos. The regime must likewise be held accountable for the dearth of equipment and facilities required for effective disaster response because Arroyo chose to allot the bulk of the national budget for military expenses and debt servicing.

The Party and the revolutionary movement fully support the democratic mass movement's call for an end to the US-Arroyo regime's subservience to the interests of big foreign capitalists and their local lackeys and their rampant destruction of the environment. The New People's Army, along with local organs of political power and other revolutionary forces, will take steps to support the people's struggles and implement the revolutionary movement's policies on environmental protection. **AB**



NPA seizes 40 firearms

Cavinti, Laguna. An undersized platoon of the New People's Army (NPA) raided and overran the Philippine National Police (PNP) station in Cavinti, Laguna on February 18 without firing a single shot.

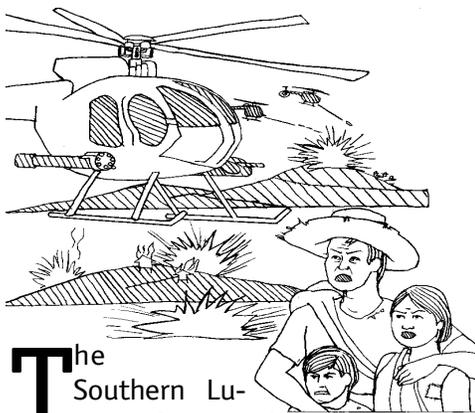
Twenty guerrillas arrived at the police station at about 1:30 p.m. aboard two passenger jeeps. Masquerading as AFP personnel, they were able to swiftly enter and disarm the policemen who were too stunned to fight back. The guerrillas seized 12 M16 rifles, five pistols, a cellphone and other military paraphernalia.

Mankayan, Benguet. The New People's Army in Benguet seized 23 firearms of various caliber in a raid on the 54th IB and CAFGU detachment in Barangay Cabiten, Mankayan on February 10. Seized were four M16s, an M203, seven M14s, 11 Garand rifles, several rounds of ammunition and ammunition belts. Three soldiers and two CAFGU elements were killed, according to updated reports.

In a statement, Sey-ang Rayos, spokesperson of the Jennifer "Maria" Cariño Command (NPA-Benguet), said that the raid was in response to the Party's call to intensify tactical offensives as the NPA's contribution in ousting Arroyo. He added that the raid was also a punitive measure on the military for serving as Lepanto Mining Company's instrument in exploiting and oppressing the toiling masses of Mankayan and surrounding areas, and retribution for the blood debts the fascist enemy owed the people and the revolutionary movement.

The 54th IB and CAFGU elements in the Cabiten detachment are responsible for terrorizing and harassing national minorities fight-
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SOLCOM bombs Quezon villages



The Southern Luzon Command (SOLCOM) conducted indiscriminate aerial bombardment on several Quezon communities for two days in February in retaliation for the NPA's armed actions in the area.

Several hours after the NPA sniped 74th IB troopers along the boundary of barangays Anonang, Burgos and Magsaysay in Mulanay on February 7, the SOLCOM sent hel-

icopter gunships that indiscriminately fired their machine guns at the villages and surrounding areas.

The helicopters again took off on February 9 and bombed the villages all day after an encounter occurred between enemy soldiers and an NPA unit in the area. Hundreds of peasants were forced to flee their homes and farms.

Meanwhile, enemy soldiers abducted and killed Romy Llobit and Frederick Adan, residents of Barangays Burgos and San Narciso. Seven other peasants were abducted, beaten, reported missing and believed to have been killed by the SOLCOM.

This is not the first time that the AFP has resorted to bombings in retaliation for the NPA's actions and presence in an area.

The Northern Luzon Command bombed several barangays in Tarlac in January after reported NPA sightings in the area. The bombings killed more than ten civilians and wounded many others. To cover up its crimes, the AFP cordoned off the barrio and claimed that the civilian casualties were NPA. The soldiers blocked all entry and exit points in the communities and commandeered the peasants' houses as base for their operations.

The bombing of civilians violates all rules of war and international humanitarian law. The AFP nonetheless indiscriminately targets civilians in its reactionary war as a standard tactic against the revolutionary movement in a desperate bid to staunch the people's support for the armed movement and physically isolate the NPA from the people. **AB**

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ing for their ancestral lands and other rights, as well as the protection of the environment. The fascists are guilty of perpetrating, among others, the brutal suppression of the Colalo people's legitimate struggle against the construction of Tailings Dam 5A, and the Bulalacao people's struggle against Lepanto's seizure of their lands to expand its mining operations.

The 54th IB, together with the Mankayan PNP and 1604th PNP Provincial Mobile Group likewise brutally dispersed the picket lines of Lepanto's striking workers from June to September 2005.

They launched vicious military operations resulting in the death of civilian Efren Agsayang (September 8, 2003), the illegal arrest and torture of Joseph Coop (September 28, 2003) and the harassment of residents of Ampontoc, Colalo in September 2003 and of Posdo, Bulalacao in October-November 2003. On August 17, 2005, they tortured, summarily executed and later mutilated the bodies of two unarmed Red fighters in Buguias, Benguet—Antonio (Ka Leyap) Licawen and Brandon (Ka Tub-on) Ginaban. **AB**



Armed actions continue in Northeast Mindanao

FIVE military and paramilitary elements were killed and five others were wounded in separate armed actions launched by the New People's Army (NPA) and people's militia in Northeast Mindanao in the first half of February.

Three soldiers were killed, including an officer, and five were wounded in two harassment operations by Red fighters of Front 19 against elements of the 58th IB conducting operations in Barangay Anahaw Daan, Tago, Surigao del Sur on February 8 and 15.

Another soldier was killed and one wounded when the 10th Platoon of Front 21 harassed 29th IB elements in Sitio Sigamaw, Barangay Wawa, Bayugan, Agusan del Sur on February 15.

Meanwhile, the people's militia and barriofolk disarmed a CAFGU detachment in PICOP and seized two carbines on February 14 in Sitio Maputi, Doña Carmen, Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur. **AB**

No real economic progress from OCW remittances

The huge and continually expanding remittances by overseas contract workers (OCW) in the past 30 years are virtually the only thing holding up the bankrupt Philippine economy from total collapse. But behind this seeming deliverance, the remittances have not brought about real development in the country.

Dollar incomes are in the bankrupt regime's interest. According to the Central Bank of the Philippines, OCW remittances transmitted through banks increased by 25% to \$10.7 billion (P567-588 billion) in 2005. This is equivalent to more than half of the government's 2005 budget or 13.5% of the country's GDP (according to the World Bank).

Remittances have increased these past years—from \$6.9 billion in 2002, they have grown to \$7.6 billion in 2003, \$8.6 billion in 2004 and \$10.7 billion in 2005, based only on bank data. The Philippines is the fifth biggest remittance receiving country in the world, the World Bank said. Among the biggest are India, China and Mexico. Adding the amount of remittances that did not pass through banks, total OCW remittances in 2005 could come to \$12.3 billion, or even \$14-21 billion annually, according to other estimates.

Remittances enter the country in dollar form, with the bulk (around 80%) passing through banks. These dollar remittances are used by the government to increase its dollar reserves that it in turn uses to pay for imports and the foreign debt, to serve as guarantee for loans and to attract foreign investments.

Aside from OCW remittances,

the regime also rakes in huge amounts from workers' fees collected prior to migration. In 2004, the government earned as much as P14.4 billion in fees from 933,588 workers who went abroad. At present, an OCW pays an average of P17,925 before leaving the country, excluding payments collected by recruitment and hiring (manning) agencies. The banks also collect huge remittance fees that amount to a minimum of 5-13.5% of all remittances.

The big growth in remittances has for now stalled the continuous devaluation of the peso that had been the trend in previous years. Arroyo has shamelessly claimed credit for this and even touts it as an indication that the economy is running well under her regime. In reality, the increasing remittances are a temporary and artificial remedy for the extremely bankrupt economy and the chronic crisis besetting the current regime and system.

Backward and bankrupt economy. The migration of millions of Filipino workers just to gain employment is symptomatic of the chronic ills that ail an economy wracked by widespread unemployment and plunging local production. At the root of these ills are unbridled imperialist exploitation, the lack of genuine industrialization and land reform, brazen graft and other corrupt practices under the Arroyo regime and the semi-colonial and semifeudal system in the Philippines.

The government's doctored statistics claim that more than 25% of the labor force is either unemployed or underemployed. If not for the employment of workers abroad, the country would have twice the

current unemployment and underemployment rates and competition for the limited employment opportunities even more severe.

No real economic development delivered. On closer examination, the productivity and wealth created by the OCWs benefit not the local economy but the economy of the countries where they work.

Even the OCW remittances do not contribute any significant development in the economy. Neither do they directly contribute to local production.

The remittances have added nothing or close to nothing in terms of real investments in industry.

The bulk of OCW remittances are actually spent for the immediate consumer needs of recipient families, primarily for food, clothing, house rent, education and medical expenses and for utilities and services such as electricity, water and communication. The balance is spent for electronic devices such as videoke and cellphones or for entertainment and recreation such as dining and watching movies

Ultimately, a huge portion of the billions sent home by the OCWs are recouped by foreign corporations that sell consumer goods and services and repatriate their profits to industrialized countries.

The small portion allotted for negligible investments in constructing or renovating homes, operating tricycles or jeepneys, establishing small retail stores and the like do not constitute real investments in production, but are mere extensions of the consumer economy. Thus, they do not contribute any significant development to the national industry and economy. AB



Anti-imperialism in Venezuela

For close to a decade now, Venezuela has been pursuing significant economic, political, and social changes under the leadership of Hugo Chavez's anti-imperialist government. These changes have brought about better public services and a more active national democracy for Venezuela's people.

Anti-imperialism is key to the changes in Venezuela. The benefits derived by Venezuela's people are the direct result of the Chavez government's militant anti-imperialist stand and policies. This government was elected in 1998 on a platform that promised to end US domination and exploitation and reverse the economic inequality that for hundreds of years has caused hardship to the vast majority of Venezuelans.

Chavez reaped popular support for decisively advancing revolutionary anti-imperialist and antifeudal changes in Venezuela. Through broad changes that promoted national freedom, vast resources that used to be exploited by imperialists are now used for public welfare by way of social services, investments in industry and other productive endeavors.

The nationalization of Petroleos de Venezuela SA (PVDSA), Venezuela's largest oil company, is one of Chavez's important achievements. This has infuriated the US and the Venezuelan ruling class. Venezuela is the world's ninth largest oil producer and the fourth largest exporter of oil to the US. Seventy percent of Venezuela's national income is derived from oil.

Chavez's plan to broaden his government's grip on the oil industry by obligating private oil companies to enter into government-controlled partnerships has angered the

US and the Venezuelan ruling class even more. Among those to be affected by the program are imperialist companies Chevron and British Petroleum PLC. The Chavez government declared that all oil companies should enter into joint ventures with the government by December 31, 2005 under pain of confiscation.

Chavez also nationalized the aluminum industry and prohibited the privatization of industries. He announced plans to revoke all private mining concessions to give way to the establishment of a national mining company. The move is in direct contravention to the dictates of the US and imperialist institutions like the World Bank.

Chavez's moves are outlined in Plan Bolivar 2000, a patriotic anti-poverty program.

Land and Food. Chavez in 2001 implemented the most sweeping land reform program in Venezuelan history. His government put into law limits on how much land one could own, taxed unproductive land, distributed land to the tillers and nationalized large tracts of land privately owned by corporations and prominent families.

Land reform was slow at first due to resistance from landlords. But this did not faze the Chavez government. After three years, land monopoly and feudal dominance in the Venezuelan countryside had largely been broken. In 2005, the Chavez government called for a speedier implementation of the land reform program, especially in the distribution of private haciendas. At the same time, Chavez announced the seizure of the 8,490-hectare Rancho Marquesena to convert it in-



to a state cooperative farm. The land reform program plans to nationalize 500,000 hectares of agricultural land.

Chavez has started a program to nationalize food factories. Last September, government confiscated a factory owned by Alimentos Polar, Venezuela's leading private food company. Prior to this, government seized a tomato processing plant belonging to the American company H. J. Heinz.

Social Services. Aside from the vast state resources available from the nationalization of the oil industry, the Venezuelan parliament passed a law authorizing Chavez to draw funds from the country's \$32.6 billion dollar reserve to use for social services.

Since 1999, the Chavez government has organized programs to deliver services to the poorest communities. Foremost among these are medical and educational missions. Medical missions are implemented by teams of doctors from Cuba sent over in exchange for oil supplies. Aside from providing government-sponsored health care for all those who need it, the doctors help the people organize themselves to enable them to meet their health needs.

The education program provides free education for all up to the college and university level. Govern-

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Who is Hugo Chavez?

Hugo Rafael Chavez Frias is Venezuela's 53rd and current president. At 17, he attended the Venezuela Academy of Military Sciences where he graduated with the rank of sublieutenant.

Besides his military career, Chavez's revolutionary experience has been a colorful one. While in the military, his brother Adan convinced him to join the Party of the Venezuelan Revolution (PRV) which was then anti-imperialist and antifeudal. Chavez became actively involved in secretly recruiting members of the military forces for the PRV.

After a few months of military service, Chavez took up political science at the Simon Bolivar University in Caracas, the nation's capital. It was there where he and the students he organized developed the patriotic and revolutionary "Bolivarian" ideas, guided by the philosophy of Simon Bolivar, a 19th century patriotic and revolutionary Venezuelan leader. After his studies, Chavez served in the military for 17 years. He also

taught at the Military Academy of Venezuela where he began to be known for his radical critique of Venezuela's government and social system. He then established the Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement ("MBR-200"). From then on, he became widely known as one of the most progressive political leaders in Venezuela and gained popularity among the majority of the toiling masses.

Chavez led a failed civilian-military coup d'etat on February 2, 1992 against Carlos Andres Perez's puppet, corrupt and fascist regime. Imprisoned, he regained his freedom after Perez's ouster. In 1998, he was elected President on the basis of his Bolivarian ideas. He was reelected as president in 2000.

Chavez continues to thwart repeated attempts by the US government to incite its agents among the compradors and landlords in Venezuela to topple him through coups d'etat, street actions and a recall referendum in 2004. AB

"Venezuela"...from page 8

ment-trained teams are deployed over a wide scale to implement a literacy program and ensure that all citizens who have not had the benefit of formal education are able to study, regardless of age.

Aside from this, there are other programs for land reform and jobs training that are directly funded and supervised by the president's office. Through these programs, the government is able to deliver to the people the services that have long been denied them. In the seven years of Chavez's administration, up to 1.4 million people learned to read and write and three million of Venezuela's poorest citizens were able to attend school. Seventy percent of Venezuela's 25 million people now receive free health care. Forty-five percent receive food subsidies through cooperatives and special food programs.

Cooperative Movement. The workers' cooperative movement is a

major part of the Chavez program. Through the Ministerio Para La Economia Popular (Minep), government trains workers to be partners in supervising factories such as the PDVSA. Ordinary Venezuelans are given training and funds to set up workers' cooperatives. Many of these cooperatives are small businesses involving up to ten people.

Around 3,000 workers' cooperatives were immediately set up in the first year of the program. By end of 2005, up to 45,000 cooperatives had been set up throughout the country and more than 700,000 people trained to organize and administer workers' cooperatives.

Democracy for the masses. The Chavez government instituted important changes in the political system to allow democracy to flourish. Foremost among these changes is government support for community-based people's organizations known as "Bolivarian circles". Membership in "Bolivarian circles" reached two

million in 2003. These groups promote programs for community improvement and support businesses and political activism among the people. In 2002, the "Bolivarian circles" were instrumental in thwarting an anti-Chavez coup.

The Chavez government leads "Mission Miranda," a program to form a broad people's army and military reserve. Its short-term goal is to organize, train and arm a 1.5 million-strong Venezuelan people's militia as part of the country's self-defense plan. The plan also involved the importation last year of an initial batch of 100,000 AK-47 rifles and combat helicopters from Russia as well as military planes and ships from Brazil and Spain.

Hugo Chavez's second term as president ends this year. Come November, he will face Venezuelan voters to ask for a new mandate. For as long as he keeps his promises for social reform, he may well fulfill his goal of serving as the country's president until 2021. AB

Police raid shabu market in Pasig City

POLICE raided a shabu market (“tiangge”) on February 10 in Pasig City. The market was a mere 250 meters from the PNP station and city hall. Almost 400 people were captured in the raid, including around 50 shabu vendors. Among the captured shabu users were minors.

The illegal drug market’s proximity to the mayor’s office prompted many to believe that it was, at the least, enjoying the protection of Pasig City Mayor Vicente Eusebio and the city police.

A few days after the raid, Eusebio led in demolishing the market, prompting investigators to question his motives as the demolition destroyed important pieces of evidence.

The discovery of the shabu market reveals the gravity of the illegal drug menace in the country and the extent of complicity among government officials and law enforcers. Drug abuse and the illegal drug trade in the country will never be eradicated without revolutionary social change as these are rooted in the corrupt reactionary government and system.

Ambush in Nepal and India

FIGHTERS of the People’s Liberation Army of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist ambushed security troops of King Gyanendra of Nepal on February 9 in Nawalparasi district, southwest of the country. Two soldiers were killed and more than 20 wounded. At least 10 soldiers were also captured by the guerrillas.

This occurred a day after a widely boycotted municipal election called by King Gyanendra. Only 8% of voters actually voted and only 600 candidates ran for 4,000 positions in the local government.

Meanwhile, eight elements of the Central Industrial Security Force were killed and nine others were wounded when guerrillas of the People’s War Group attacked on February 10 a government arsenal containing explosives in Chhatisgarh, India.

Germany to lay off 80,000 workers

SOME 80,000 workers in Germany will lose their jobs in the coming year through massive layoffs by big corporations.

Deutsche Telekom, a state-owned and -monopolized telecommunications company is set to lay off 32,000 workers. It has already laid off about 100,000 workers in the past decade due to “restructuring.”

Volkswagen announced in February that it would also be laying off 20,000 workers or 6% of its total workforce in Germany in the next three years. Volkswagen is one of the world’s biggest car manufacturing companies.

Meanwhile, DaimlerChrysler, a car manufacturer, plans to lay off 11,500 workers while Siemens, maker of electronic products plans to terminate 8,000 more. Karstadt-Quelle, Europe’s biggest department store chain will lay off 5,700 workers. On the other hand, up to 2,400 are set to lose their jobs at the HypoVereinsbank.

The impending mass layoffs will further plunge an already beleaguered economy deeper in crisis. As of January, Germany had a 12.1% unemployment rate. More than five million German workers are currently unemployed, the highest since 1933.

US trade gap widens

THE US trade deficit has gone up to \$725.8 billion in 2005, 17.5% higher compared to the \$617.6 billion deficit in 2004, the US Commerce Department said.

The 2005 deficit was caused by increasing US importation of oil, food, cars and other consumer products. Much of it is due to the \$201.6 billion deficit the US suffers in its trade with China.

The growing US trade deficit in the past four years was caused by the transfer of production by US companies to other countries, especially China, where workers receive slave wages. As a result, more than three million jobs in US manufacturing have already been lost since mid-2000.