

LIBERATION

PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF

XI NO. 2

I won!

**UNCLE SAM'S
HAND IN
PHILIPPINE
POLLS**

**REACTIONARY
ELECTIONS
GETTING
MORE ROTTEN**

**POLITICAL
DYNASTIES
STILL RULE**



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The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) is an alliance of revolutionary organizations with roots in the various sectors and regions of the Philippines.

Its goal is to build a society that enjoys national sovereignty, authentic democracy, social justice, progress and peace.

It seeks to unite with all forces willing to achieve these goals.

LIBERATION is the official publication of the NDFP

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MIGUEL MIRANDA, MEMBER, NDFP NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

'The elections demonstrated that the revolutionary Left is a political force of national significance'

Interview by Juan Victor

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) believes that the masses will be able to achieve genuine change only through the national democratic revolution. Reactionary elections are mere exercises where the masses are made to choose who among the factions of the ruling class will oppress and exploit them. It is also a venue where the contradictions between the different factions within the ruling classes are settled thereby consolidating the reactionary ruling system.

But the NDFP does not remain passive during any political event. During reactionary elections, the NDFP, by using its united front tactics, tries to acquire concrete gains for the masses and the revolution, exacerbate the contradictions between the different factions of the ruling classes, and broaden the reach of the national democratic revolution.

During reactionary elections, the NDFP engages the reactionary classes, not by submitting itself to the latter's futile processes, but by utilizing these same processes to weaken the reactionary state and to advance the national democratic revolution.

In an interview with *Liberation*, Miguel Miranda, National Executive Committee member, discusses the NDFP's analysis of the recent elections and its aftermath, and the gains of the revolutionary Left and other progressive forces.

LIBERATION: Reactionary elections are supposed to ease the contradictions among the different factions of the ruling classes specifically on the question of getting and sharing political power. Was this achieved in the just concluded elections? What are the indications?

On the contrary, the factional strife among the reactionaries has worsened. Unpopular even in her home region, Arroyo had to resort to anomalous use of government funds for her campaign, massive cheating and outright tyranny of the majority in the joint session of the Senate and Lower House to win the presidency over Poe with a slim margin. Poe and his allies were up in arms against Arroyo for robbing them of victory. Moreover, they were incensed by Macapagal-Arroyo's use of the AFP-PNP in depicting their protests against fraud as destabilization and in violently repressing their rallies. Even Bro. Eddie Villanueva had bluntly declared that he would not recognize Macapagal-Arroyo for she is a bogus president.

Poe and Villanueva's protests against massive fraud cannot be dismissed as sour graping. Despite her incumbency and ample funds to oil her campaign machinery, Macapagal-Arroyo lost in most regions, including the vote-rich NCR, Southern Tagalog and Central Luzon. Though the Josons of Nueva Ecija campaigned for her and Poe had no campaign machinery there to speak of, Poe won with a 250,000-vote margin over her. Arroyo is the first incumbent president to lose in her supposed bailiwick.

On the other hand, Poe, though lacking in fund and campaign machinery, was able to transform his popularity into votes.

Arroyo was able to eke out a win largely by posting an unusually big margin in Cebu, including Cebu City, and Iloilo – more than 1.2 million votes – and by reversing the results of the canvassing in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). NAMFREL's tally in the ARMM showed Poe won, but the final Comelec tally reversed it with Arroyo winning

by 300,000 votes. The president was helped by the AFP and PNP no less in the Moro provinces where the counting of votes were held in military camps. Such cases of cheating could not be regarded as isolated.

Arroyo's tactics during the canvassing was to pad her margin of votes where she could on one hand and, in the other, shave off Poe's big margin in many provinces. But because of Poe's popularity, Arroyo could only conjure up a margin of less than a million votes.

Clearly robbed of victory, Poe and his allies could not simply accept defeat and be a sport about it.

Knowing the real score, Arroyo is not confident of her electoral victory. This is the reason why her administration is so sensitive to protest rallies being launched by Poe and his followers. She has to rely more on the coercive power of the state to keep herself in power.

The results of the presidential elections have all the more emboldened some political groups, especially those with military and police elements, to promote seizure of political power through a coup d'etat, with some semblance of popular uprising. These groups are supported by some sections of the reactionary classes.

Cracks have in fact begun to emerge in the ruling coalition. Arroyo has eased out some of her old allies in the cabinet to accommodate new ones. She has also revitalized KAMPI, her own political party, to strengthen her leverage against Jose de Venecia in the House of Representatives and in her bid for prime ministership should there be a charter change.

LIBERATION: If anger against electoral fraud intensifies, where do you think the situation could lead? What will be the position of the revolutionary movement if this happens?

Although Arroyo has been formally proclaimed the winner of the presidential elections, the issue of fraud will not simply fade away. Already, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has decided to consider cases of fraud reported by some of the

influential bishops. This issue, together with problems exacerbated by the worsening socio-economic crisis, will engender the development of mass protest actions and a broad united front against the Arroyo clique. Should there be enough prodding for the military and police to withdraw support from Arroyo, she will be ousted even before her term ends.

In this situation, the revolutionary movement will continue to launch tactical offensives against the AFP and PNP. The legal democratic movement in the urban areas will unite with political groups in going for the ouster of the Arroyo regime.

LIBERATION: How do you assess the party-list elections? How did the progressive parties fare? What do you think of the entry of groups identified with the military and other reactionary groups, particularly those which are out and out campaigning against the progressive party-list groups?

The party-list system has become a misnomer. Although it is meant to give the marginalized and the under-represented an opportunity to be represented in Congress, it is quite difficult for a political party of the poor to get enough votes to reach the minimum of two percent of the party-list votes cast to gain a seat in the House of Representatives. In the 2004 elections, a party-list group needed about 260,000 votes to win a seat while a representative in a regular congressional district can be elected with just 40,000 votes.

The progressive political parties topped the recent party-list elections. But these parties had to pay a heavy price to overcome concerted and harsh opposition by the AFP and PNP. More



than 60 local leaders and campaigners of the progressive parties were killed. Special operations teams of the Philippine Army openly warned people in the countryside against voting for the progressive parties. These parties were subjected to intense psy-war operations during the electoral campaign. They were also victims of cheating during the canvassing of votes. In the Moro provinces, where canvassing of votes were held in military camps, votes for the progressive parties were not counted.

But the progressive parties could not be denied of victory. Bayan Muna garnered a total of three seats in Congress. Anakpawis got two seats and the Gabriela Women's Party, one seat. They won because they have sizeable organized mass following. Many allies supported them despite warning by the military not to support

any of the progressive parties. Lastly, the general public has a high regard for the progressive parties as reflected in the market votes that they garnered.

Some extremely reactionary political groups like the National Alliance for Democracy (NAD) and Bigkis Pinoy, which have been attacking the progressive political parties, also joined the party-list elections but did not get enough votes to get a seat in Congress. Bigkis Pinoy and NAD were financed by the Philippine Games and Amusement Corporation (Pagcor).

LIBERATION: How do you assess Akbayan and other pseudo-Left groups's performance in the elections? What do you think of Sanlakas not being reelected?

Akbayan did have more votes in the 2004 election than in 2001, but it was helped immensely by the AFP and PNP. In the rural areas, special operations teams warned people against voting for progressive parties, while actively campaigning for Akbayan. The AFP and PNP have found in Akbayan a willing partner in their propaganda campaign against the CPP and NPA, like the campaign against the "permit to campaign." "Social democrats" in some dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church also campaigned against the progressive parties and for Akbayan.

Like high-spending traditional parties and candidates, Akbayan spent millions of pesos for TV political ads which cost at least P250,000.00 for a 30-second spot. That it was able to spend so much money belies its claim of being a party of the marginalized. Akbayan also resorted to vote buying. Rosales had the temerity to accuse Sanlakas of vote buying when in fact, operators of Akbayan and Sanlakas bumped into each other while on the prowl to buy certificates of canvass in the provinces.

Sanlakas was not able to make it because it did not have enough mass following of its own. Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino (BMP), the labor center identified with Felimon Lagman, decided to concentrate its campaigning for the Partido Manggagawa (PM) which got a seat in Congress.

Alab Katipunan, the party-list formation of the Tabara-de la Cruz group, could only muster a little over 100,000 votes.

LIBERATION: What are the gains for the underground Left from the recent elections?

The recent elections demonstrated that the revolutionary Left – the Communist Party of the Philippines, New People's Army and National Democratic Front – is a political force of national significance. Almost all the major candidates for national political offices sought the support of the revolutionary Left – for its mass base and political influence. In a left-handed compliment, the national security adviser commented in a national security briefing that the communists can now decide the outcome of an election.

The massive cheating committed by the Arroyo clique against her major opponents and the violence inflicted on the progressive parties and their supporters by the AFP and PNP have made it all the more clear why reactionary elections cannot be the main method for the people to gain genuine political power. This power is now being exercised by the people and their organs of political power in many areas in the countryside because of gains in the people's democratic revolution that they are waging.

In the urban areas, the underground Left has been able to reach more workers, urban poor and sections of the middle classes. It has also been able to gain new allies.

The recent elections exposed further the reactionary and fascist character of the state, the bankruptcy of the ruling system and the futility of its processes. The masses are discontented and there are grumblings even within the ruling classes. The US-Arroyo regime failed to gain legitimacy for its continued rule. On the other hand, the revolutionary forces, under the CPP-NPA-NDFP, were able to gain more ground. And as the US-Arroyo regime demonstrates its inability to solve the worsening economic, social, and political crisis, the CPP-NPA-NDFP will be able to unite more people under the banner of the national democratic revolution with a socialist perspective. ▲

REACTIONARY Elections Getting More **ROTTEN**



by Ama San Isidro

Electoral contests in the semi-colonial and semi-feudal Philippine society have historically brought the masses nothing but illusions of democracy. For the different factions of the ruling elite on the other hand, elections are a venue for battles for political dominance and subsequent economic power that poll victory brings. To get the people's votes,

reactionary candidates declare empty populist promises, engage in costly gimmickries, and take advantage of the culture of feudal patronage. Guns, goons and gold have always been the decisive factors in the outcome of reactionary elections.

And there was no reason for the May 2004 elections to be different.

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo got elected as the Philippine President only through deception and coercion, the use of public funds and government facilities to fuel her campaign, buying of Certificates of Canvass (COCs), and conditioning the mind of the public through manipulated surveys. Even the token space allowed for progressive parties was marred by the killings of its members and the suppression of its votes.

The May 10 reactionary elections illustrated just how rotten the whole ruling system has become. And it is getting more rotten as the political and economic crisis worsens.

Public funds for private consumption

It was the first time since the promulgation of the 1987 Philippine Constitution that an incumbent president ran for a fresh term. The extraordinary situation was brought about by the assumption to power of then Vice President Arroyo to complete the unfinished term of Joseph Estrada who was ousted in January 2001.

Being an incumbent allowed Arroyo to blatantly use government funds and resources for her election campaign.

For instance, Arroyo distributed PhilHealth

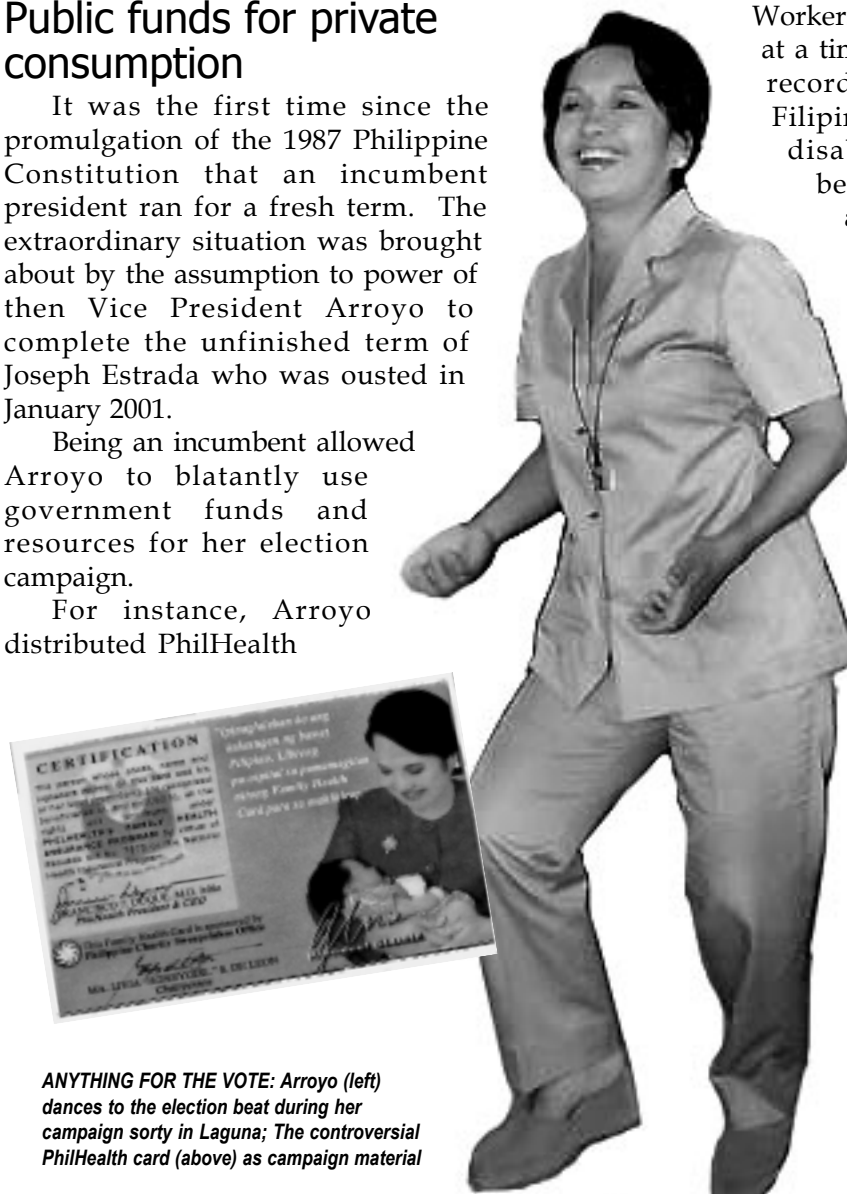
insurance cards to millions in vote-rich areas. Not only was it deviously done during election time but the card, newly designed, has a picture of Arroyo cuddling a baby and the words, "*Ipaglalaban ko ang kalusugan ng bawat Pilipino. Libreng pa-ospital sa pamamagitan nitong Family Health Card para sa mahihirap*" (I will fight for the health of every Filipino. Free hospitalization through this Family Health Card for the poor).

It was also no secret how Arroyo shamelessly diverted government funds to her campaign coffers.

A total of P6 billion for example was diverted from the funds of the Overseas Workers Welfare Assistance (OWWA) at a time when its First Quarter 2003 records showed that 936 overseas Filipino workers came home sick, disabled, mentally ill or dead because of maltreatment and adverse working conditions.

Worse, to be able to cope with its dissipated funds, the OWWA has limited the coverage of its assistance and enforced stricter policies and requisites. For example, it has excluded returning workers who became mentally ill from being beneficiaries. Overseas workers with arrears in contributions automatically forfeit their benefits.

The regime's token agrarian reform was also made more scant by the misappropriation of P728 million. Another P1.1 billion was taken from the funds of the Department of Agriculture, purportedly to fund farming needs, and P1 billion from the Department of Agrarian Reform. Even some Metro Manila mayors and



ANYTHING FOR THE VOTE: Arroyo (left) dances to the election beat during her campaign sorty in Laguna; The controversial PhilHealth card (above) as campaign material



NOT FUNNY:
Presidential candidates Arroyo, Fernando Poe Jr., Panfilo Lacson, Raul Roco and Eddie Villanueva are the lead clowns in the elite's circus called elections

congressmen received funds for farm inputs!

Meanwhile, Arroyo launched the “Kalsada Natin, Alagaan Natin” (Let us take care of our streets) project, for which the government allotted P2.3 billion. It consisted mainly of hiring street sweepers who were made to wear uniform t-shirts emblazoned with Arroyo’s name. The project of course lasted only as long as the campaign period. Larger than life billboards of Arroyo and the project however were displayed at strategic places, serving as free campaign materials.

Local politicians, from the mayor down to the barangay captain, were also given the Municipal Building Fund of P7.3 billion. The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) on the other hand gave P714 million as “grease” money, or *pampadulas*, to barangay officials.

According to reports, Arroyo spent as much as P15 billion for her entire campaign.

Manipulation of results

As in every election, money poured like rain. It is ordinary occurrence for a P100 to P500 peso bill to be pocketed, or even of higher amount depending on the political stake. Handing out of money, sometimes gift certificates, even near polling places were so common that some were even caught on television.

But what distinguishes the May 10 elections is the brazenness by which the Commission on Elections was utilized to channel bribes and manipulate results. Thus, fraud was committed more systematically and on a very large scale.

In one instance, Regional Director Armando Velasco of the Commission on Elections in the Cordillera Administrative Region (Comelec-

CAR) was reported to be distributing money to provincial election officers and supervisors. The source said that “the distribution was made to ensure that incumbent president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo would get the maximum possible Cordillera votes.”

The manipulation was so widespread that the results were ludicrous. There were areas, such as in Pangasinan and most especially in Mindanao, where none of Arroyo’s rivals got a single vote. There were also a lot of cases where the total number of votes that presidential candidates received exceeded the number of votes cast.

In Cebu and Iloilo, where Arroyo supposedly got her winning votes, the voter turnout was very high compared to the national average and the turnout in these provinces during previous elections. Arroyo cannot claim overwhelming popularity so as to motivate the masses to uncharacteristically turn up en masse and vote for her. How can she when she lost even in her home region!

Certificates of Canvass were obviously switched in favor of Arroyo. The most contentious issue during the joint committee canvassing in the Philippine Congress was the opening of election returns. The administration party refused to open even one for fear that it will not tally with the CoC.

The independent election watchdog Patriots documented 1,427 cases of disenfranchisement, 26 cases of electioneering, 75 cases of vote buying, 87 cases of irregularities in the canvassing of votes, 27 cases of ballot box snatching/switching totaling to 1,642 cases of general fraud incidents. The report was based on the group’s monitoring from May 9 to 14 in selected areas.



ELECTION SCENES: Voter finds it hard to choose



Mysterious brownouts changed the election results in many areas

No space for progressives

Violence against progressive parties has been evident in the history of Philippine elections since 1947.

In 1987, the Partido ng Bayan (People's Party or PNB) was formed by political detainees freed by the Aquino administration in 1986. Some known leaders of the legal mass movement ran under PNB for seats in Congress and Senate. But this entry in the field of mainstream politics is remembered more by the murder of PNB president and KMU chairperson Rolando Olalia. At least 35 members and officers of the PNB were killed during the campaign period in 1987.

Needless to say, not a single PNB candidate won at the national level. There were winning candidates at the local and congressional levels in areas where attempts at totally disenfranchising the PNB candidates were too obvious and would only create too much political tension as in the case of Samar and Davao.

It was the last time that progressive forces participated in the elections until in 2001 when the political party Bayan Muna was formed. It was a baptism of fire as four of its members were killed during the campaign period alone.

The ruling classes seemed to be incensed with having to deal with three progressive representatives, who won during the 2001 elections, out of the 250 representatives from their own kind that it utilized the whole state

machinery especially the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), in an effort to prevent them from winning again. The state thus launched a systematic campaign of terror, murder and slander against progressive parties and candidates.

As if on cue, the election campaign period was signaled by the murder of two Bayan Muna members in Mindoro. The AFP murdered Atty. Juvy Magsino, human rights lawyer and mayoralty candidate for Naujan, Mindoro Oriental, and Leima Fortu, public elementary school teacher and Bayan Muna provincial coordinator. They were killed on February 13, just three days after the start of election campaign.

The number of Bayan Muna members killed has reached 38 as of this writing while two Gabriela Women's Party coordinators have been slain.

Violence is also directed toward candidates endorsed by progressive party-list groups. In Barras, Rizal for instance, the mayoralty candidate openly endorsed by Bayan Muna was abducted just before the elections. He has not been seen since.

In some Moro provinces in Mindanao, gubernatorial candidates who supported the progressive political party Suara Bangsamoro were coerced by the military to withdraw their support during the final stretch of the campaign period.

The most unabashed cases of fraud were reported from Moro communities in Mindanao and the National Capital Region. Election



Ballot boxes tightly guarded by soldiers



AFP soldier meddles in the tabulation of votes in Abra

Returns collected by the Suara Bangsamoro showed that the progressive political party was denied of at least 55,000 votes.

No less than the Arroyo regime's National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales was the principal author of the red-tagging and red-baiting campaign against the progressive groups. A few days before election day, Gonzales announced that the six progressive party-list groups were communist fronts and that funds allocated for Bayan Muna during its first term in congress were channeled to the NPA.

In the countryside, posters, leaflets and other propaganda materials, were posted and distributed to the masses by government troops, intelligence agents, and co-conspirators from the bandit Revolutionary People's Army (RPA).

Even the Church-based, independent monitoring center called the Patriots was not spared. After it started exposing the deception and coercion taking place in many provinces, the Philippine National Police (PNP) maliciously tagged it as a communist front.

Worsening crisis and contradictions

Contrary to what the Arroyo clique expected, the May 10 elections did not give her a clear mandate to rule for another six years. Even the CIA sponsored "election observers"

failed to give a semblance of credibility to the results of the reactionary elections.

Instead, the results of the reactionary elections further worsened the contradictions between the different factions of the ruling class. Not even the ruling reactionary political party is spared from such contradictions. The Arroyo faction immediately revived Kampi to serve notice to the Lakas-NUCD that it is the dominant group within the ruling faction.

Expectedly the disenfranchised as well as other factions of the elite are planning civilian and military actions to oust the Arroyo ruling clique. The ruling clique reacted with severity, violently dispersing any form of mass action. At the same time, it tried to court the Estrada faction by granting its request for house arrest.

The contradictions between the reactionary state and the Filipino people are likewise worsening. The masses are becoming more restless. There is a strong public sentiment that there was massive cheating during the elections. The potential for mobilizing the millions who voted for the opposition cannot be totally discounted. While it may seem that the opposition had lost steam in its campaign to assert its victory, the increasing awareness regarding the futility of reactionary elections that the masses have gained because of their experience will provide the fertile ground for organizing for the national democratic revolution.

Thus, the hold to power of the Arroyo regime is very tenuous. Not only did it fail to get a fresh mandate but it is also confronting an economic crisis that is beyond its will and capability to solve or even mitigate. The only way it can prop up the economy is to acquire more debts, send more overseas workers abroad, and make the Filipino people bear the brunt of the crisis. Thus, it has come to the extent of sending workers to support the US war machine in the Middle East thereby endangering the safety of overseas Filipino workers.

The regime continues to incur more debts. Consequently, it had to kowtow to the demands of US imperialism to push further the policies of liberalization, deregulation, and privatization. But these policies translate into worsening the country's trade and fiscal deficits as a consequence of more imports but with lesser tariff revenues.

From 1995-2001, tariff collections by the reactionary government plunged from US\$ 4 million to US \$2 million. Furthermore, these increasing deficits pull down the value of the peso thereby pushing the country deeper into debt. With a public debt of PhP5.2 trillion, which is larger than the Gross Domestic Product by 137%, the Philippines is on the brink of a crisis

similar to that which led to the financial collapse of Argentina.

The US Arroyo regime is making the Filipino people bear the brunt of the crisis not only through imposing new taxes. The new tax measures in itself will have the effect of raising prices, as the taxes will be passed on to the consumers by businesses, and will bleed the ordinary Filipino of his/her meager income. The masses are already suffering from the deregulation and privatization regimen as the government has practically abandoned them to the profiteering schemes of foreign monopoly capitalists and their bourgeois comprador lackeys. Oil prices have increased with impunity without a token of intervention from government. Water companies have been pushing for more rate increases. The Lopezes and their foreign partners are raking in profits as both independent power producers and electricity distributors.

As the revolutionary forces consistently grow stronger, ideologically, politically, and organizationally, its capability to politicize, organize, and mobilize the masses increases by leaps and bounds. It is in a better position than ever before to maximize the worsening contradictions between the reactionary state and the Filipino people and utilize its strength and

influence as well as its united front capabilities to oust the Arroyo clique from power and thereby further weaken the rotten ruling system.

At the same time, it can maximize the worsening contradictions between US imperialism, the comprador bourgeoisie, and big landlords on one side and the Filipino people on the other and tenaciously build up its revolutionary strength towards bringing the national democratic revolution to a higher phase. ▲



ANTI-COUP: Several battalions of AFP troops deployed in Metro Manila during the election period

FPJ **won** IN MINDANAO BUT LOST

by Jorge "Ka Oris" Madlos

The recent May 10 national elections is a rehashed tale of how a winner lost and a loser won in an election attended by violence and fraud, where the real losers are: truth, democracy and the people.

According to the Social Weather Station (SWS) exit polls, Luzon goes to Fernando Poe, Jr. (FPJ), but Visayas and Mindanao go to Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (GMA) offsetting the margin of FPJ in Luzon. These jived with the logic of the GMA camp, forecasting a more than a million votes margin over FPJ. This is also reflected in the COMELEC canvass and expectedly in the Joint Congressional Canvassing. This scenario presumed that there were only isolated and local level frauds, not qualified to be called a "nationwide conspiracy" and cannot affect the outcome of the presidential derby.

Their general assumption is that Luzon represents more or less half of the total number of votes nationwide, while Visayas and Mindanao, more or less shared the other half of the votes. In Luzon, the GMA camp admitted to losing to FPJ by a margin of 1.7 million votes, but they claimed victory in Visayas with a wide margin of 2.3 million votes and in Mindanao with a margin of 470,000 votes. The result is that GMA's big margin in the Visayas plus that of

Mindanao is more than enough to offset FPJ's lead in Luzon even allowing an overall victory for GMA of more than 1 million votes.

Our own study shows that GMA lost in the May 10 national elections. GMA's highly questionable 2.3 million margin in the Visayas is not enough to offset her big combined deficit in Luzon and Mindanao. But since the GMA camp claimed they won in Mindanao by almost 500,000 votes, as Mindanaoan we owe it to the whole country to tell the truth that GMA indeed lost in Mindanao.

First, let's take a critical analysis of the COMELEC data per region in Mindanao. Let us focus on the votes of GMA and FPJ considering that Lacson, Roco, and Villanueva are very much behind.

GMA got the biggest lead in the whole of Mindanao in ARMM, where she led by 251,515 votes over FPJ. Ironically, she "won" in the area where GMA unleashed her "all out war" and



“anti-terrorism campaign” that launched urban bombings, committed rampant human rights violations and left 500,000 refugees. The combined efforts of the COMELEC, the 6th Infantry Division, Philippine Army (ID, PA) and the Ampatuan-Datumanong political clans delivered winning votes through massive fraud. In 11 municipalities in Maguindanao, “election” was already done the day before the scheduled election. Many precincts were canvassed inside the 6th ID, PA headquarters where no media and poll watchers were allowed to enter. In Lanao del Sur where COCs are sold to the highest bidders, GMA led by 84,999 votes, and by 32,470 votes in the provinces of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-tawi where the military reigned supreme.

In the CARAGA Region, GMA got the second highest lead of 210,775 votes from among the regions in Mindanao through rampant vote buying ranging from 200 to 1,500 pesos and through selective “special operations” during power outages in Agusan del Norte, Surigao del Norte, Butuan City and Surigao City. All the big political clans and the personalities in the region such as the Barbers, the Amantes, the Plazas, the Pimentels and Butch Pichay supported GMA. Moreover, representative Glenda Ecleo of Dinagat Island delivered a big margin of votes in gratitude for

the release of her parricide convicted son Ruben Ecleo Jr. prior to election. More still, it was reported that ballot boxes from Dinagat were tampered with while in transit to the provincial canvassing center.

In Region IX, GMA led by 88,927 votes over FPJ. In Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga del Norte, GMA led by 106,566 votes and 99,845 votes respectively where all the leading congressional and gubernatorial candidates were pro-GMA and where vote buying ranged from 500-1,700 pesos. Five barangay captains were killed in election related incidents in Zamboanga del Sur alone, the highest number of casualties among the non-Moro provinces. GMA’s big defeat in Zamboanga City by 80,927 votes and by 29,841 votes in Zamboanga de Sibugi slashed GMA’s lead. The biggest irony though, is the 7,112 votes lead of FPJ over GMA in the very province which Arroyo claims to be her second home province, Lanao del Norte. Here, the Dimaporo clan saw to it that FPJ got the statistically improbable zero in some precincts.

In Region X, GMA is ahead of FPJ by 19,451 votes only. With the help of Kuratong Baleleng druglords and the incumbent local leaders she got 55,819 votes over FPJ. She also led by 41,422 votes in Bukidnon with the help of the Zubiris. But she lost by 15,645 votes in Cagayan de Oro City and by 68,722 votes in the whole provinces of Misamis Oriental even as her most reliable politicians, Mayor Emano and now governor Oscar Moreno both won by a landslide. In Region XII, FPJ won over GMA by a margin of 91,660 votes. She was beaten in the bailiwicks of her own winning candidates. The Malacañang man Domiguez has only succeeded in reducing the



Soldiers and armored tanks stationed in polling areas such as this Mindanao school ensured Arroyo's victory

lead of FPJ to 19,825 votes in Saranggani province, an Alcantara-Domiguez turf. In North Cotabato, pro-GMA governor Piñol has succeeded in reducing the lead of FPJ to 40,201 votes only. FPJ's margin of 177,568 votes was further reduced by half when the questionable 85,908 votes lead of GMA in Sultan Kudarat came in. It must be noted that the election returns in 5 municipalities of Sultan Kudarat were questionable, particularly in the municipality of Columbio where 4 persons were killed as the people defended their ballot boxes.

In Region XI, GMA is behind FPJ by 8,676 votes, although she won by 1,800 votes in Davao City inspite of the 150,000 votes margin of her trusted leader Mayor Duterte over his rivals. She also lost by 1,481 votes in Davao del Norte, the bailiwick of Governor del Rosario, the national president of the league of governors, her trusted leader. But she got 14,323 votes and 15,092 votes over FPJ in Compostela Valley province and Davao Oriental respectively where militarization is most intense and where 5 Bayan Muna leaders and members were killed by the military.

The COMELEC figure would show that GMA won by 470,402 votes in Mindanao. But the FPJ camp claims that they were robbed of over 800,000 votes in Mindanao alone. Our own study shows that had there been no massive vote buying and vote shaving, it would have been an easy win for FPJ in Mindanao. As shown in the above, the GMA winning formula in Mindanao is win through strong organization, money and selective special operations in non-Moro areas and prevent an FPJ landslide in Moro areas by employing massive fraud, money and terrorism through the combined assistance of the COMELEC, military and local warlords.

The FPJ strength in non-Moro areas is shown in his victory in major cities and in relatively fair elections in some provinces in Mindanao. Had there been no massive vote-buying and some vote shaving FPJ would have easily thrashed GMA in these areas. The spontaneous Moro vote for FPJ was demonstrated in the 1:2 vote ratio in Cotabato

City and in other areas. Had there been relatively fair elections in Moro areas, an overwhelming Moro vote would have wiped out whatever gains GMA got through massive vote buying in non-Moro areas in Mindanao. The massive fraud was therefore necessary to prevent a landslide victory for FPJ in Moro areas.

Electoral fraud and violence that gave GMA a lead over FPJ in Mindanao also affected the progressive partylist groups. Due to poll fraud, the actual votes cast for these progressive partylist groups were greatly reduced and pegged to an equivalent of only 6 congressional seats for the progressive groups. These benefit the reformist and counter-revolutionary partylist groups which were supported directly or indirectly by the government and the military. It is not surprising then that the opposition groups and the progressive partylist groups are all complaining against election cheating.

In fact, the intimidation and acts of violence from the Macapagal-Arroyo camp against the FPJ group is much lesser compared to that against the progressive partylist groups. At least 5 leaders and members of progressive partylist groups were killed during the election campaign period in Mindanao alone aside from the numerous physical harm, threat, intimidation and psywar propaganda against them.

A clear example of fraud is the case of the Suara Bangsamoro Party which undisputedly topped majority of precincts in the Moro areas, ahead by as much as 50% against its next rival partylist. The COMELEC rules that the Suara Bangsamoro Party did not get the 2% vote requirement but ironically declared Amin Partylist the winner whose actual political presence and influence are way behind that of Suara Bangsamoro Party.

Wittingly or unwittingly, some sectors among the religious, business and mass-media lent a hand in justifying that the election was generally peaceful and clean; that fraud is isolated and not affecting the over-all presidential contest. They reasoned that the opposition has not presented hard evidences;

that if there are evidences it should be presented to the proper courts; that confirming massive fraud is tantamount to helping the destabilization plots; or simply difficult for them to imagine living under an FPJ-led government.

But objectivity is not wholly dependent on so-called hard evidence. Only an honest critical analysis can get us nearer to the truth when official statistical records and so-called hard evidence can get us nowhere. When dictator Marcos rigged the 1986 presidential elections, fraud was done in such a sweeping and vulgar manner. Both planners and operators are more sophisticated now making it difficult for the opposition and independent poll watchdogs to gather hard evidence. Dictator Marcos was booted out of office not through reactionary legal processes and institutions but through the peoples' collective will.

Nonetheless, it is not difficult to believe that government funds, resources and facilities were used for electioneering purposes. The 780 million pesos agricultural fund anomaly is just the tip of the iceberg. It is an undisputable fact that vote buying from both parties was rampant but this form of election fraud favored the more moneyed GMA camp. It is also not hard to believe that in many Maguindanao municipalities election was already done by May 9. It is also common knowledge that in Lanao del Sur and other Moro provinces COCs were sold to the highest bidders. The mass media themselves captured through their cameras the military's dirty role in the Moro island provinces.

Our own monitoring shows that the May 10 national elections was not generally peaceful as projected by the GMA regime. Instead it was characterized by widespread violence. In 19 out of 25 provinces in Mindanao alone, there were 82 election-related incidents where 36 individuals were killed from April 1 to May 12. Eighty percent (80%) of this were perpetrated by the government's armed forces and by political groups and parties allied with GMA. Intense military operations were also launched in New People's Army (NPA) areas to ensure a GMA victory.

It is common sense that most if not all of these election related violence and fraud benefited GMA's election bid rather than FPJ's. It is also not hard to calculate that the rampant fraud in Moro areas, vote-buying and selective fraud in non-Moro areas in Mindanao can greatly affect GMA's false claim of nationwide victory.

Granting that evidences are available, the COMELEC electoral tribunal and supreme court can hardly pass the test for impartiality and fairness. As it turned out, the opposition lawyers, the accusers of fraud in Moro land, are now the defendants. To whom will the aggrieved go? The last bastion of truth and justice is the people themselves through their collective resolve and action.

What is more scary and destabilizing than to have an unpopular president who would probably be unseated sooner than expected through another People Power or a president who rightly or wrongly was chosen by the people? The people, by voting for her opponent, have decided to vote out GMA's graft ridden administration, puppetry to big landlords, big businesses and US imperialist dictates and insensitivity to the people's welfare.

To those who are in fear of an FPJ-led government, we do share the same apprehension considering his close association with the plunderers and human rights violators and his ambiguous stand on basic peoples' issues. The people themselves shall eventually judge FPJ as he fails their minimum expectations. Be it GMA or FPJ at the helm of this rotten system, the ever-worsening politico-economic crisis is inevitably bringing us to the eventual collapse of the semi-feudal and semi-colonial social system until a new just society emerges. Our recognition of the current concrete social realities can hasten the coming of the dawn.

Come June 30, GMA, the loser, shall be declared the winner. But as in all reactionary elections, the real losers are: truth, democracy and the people. ▲

George Madlos is the spokesperson of NDF-Mindanao

COVER STORIES

On today's significant issues and events

Political Dynasties Still Rule

*by Jacinto Maypagasa and
Victoria de la Gente*



The outcome of the recent reactionary elections is not surprising -- political dynasties still lord it over in reactionary politics. Political dynasties are a product of the semi-colonial, semi-feudal Philippine society. It is a testimony of the political and economic power of big landlords in the countryside and the dominance of the comprador bourgeoisie in national politics.

Political dynasties emerged when US imperialism instituted reactionary elections in the Philippines as a process for legitimizing its continued dominance over the political, economic, and socio-cultural affairs of the country and ensuring the joint class dictatorship of its most reliable allies, the comprador bourgeoisie and the big landlords. During the first reactionary elections in 1907, only propertied men, 21 years old and above, and able to write or speak Spanish or English, were eligible to vote and qualified to run. By the time US imperialism granted bogus independence to the Philippines, it had already taken a firm hold on reactionary political parties, which remained beholden to them till the present.

The essence of reactionary elections in the US and the Philippines are the same. It is a process by which, once in every few years, the masses are made to choose who among the factions within the ruling class will oppress and exploit them. No amount of changes in people occupying positions in government can change the nature and character of the state. Elections are mere venues for resolving the contradictions among the factions within the ruling classes as to who will get the lion's share of the wealth society has generated.

The difference lies in the fact that reactionary politics in the US and other imperialist countries are more discreet. As Lenin aptly

The dominant trend remains the same, political dynasties rule Philippine politics perpetuating themselves in multiple positions from the north to the south.

puts it, "Bourgeois democracy is the best political shell for capitalism". It obfuscates the dictatorship of the capitalist class by giving a semblance of democracy, the main and only expression of which is reactionary elections.

In the Philippines, as in all semi-colonial, semi-feudal societies, reactionary politics is vulgar, and characterized by blatant patronage, vote buying, and violence. The battles between feudal warlords for supremacy are settled through local elections, spiced up by armed skirmishes. Vote buying is rampant because the masses are impoverished and they do not see any benefit resulting from reactionary elections so they cash in on their votes.

While name recall is a plus factor for individual candidates on the national level, elections are won by the faction with the most resources to bid for the support of the local warlords who have the machinery to gather votes and

change election results. At the same time, the comprador bourgeoisie have their regional bases as their economic and political capital.

While the faction in power has the advantage over their rivals in terms of machinery and resources, the US can influence the results of elections through the use of its economic and political power as well as its propaganda machinery.

Old faces

The results of the May 10 elections reveal the political dynasties that remained in control through the years. Some new dynasties have also cemented their hold to power. There are pockets of new faces in elective positions especially in regions where the masses are fed up with the old dynasties. But the dominant trend remains the same: political dynasties rule Philippine politics perpetuating themselves in multiple positions from the north to the south.

The Marcoses, ousted from power in 1986, continue to lord it over in Ilocos Norte by taking hold of the governor and congress positions. Their ally Ablan also won during the last elections. Their only competitor is Farinas who won a mayoralty position. Farinas is a former Marcos ally and his is a reactionary clan to the core.

The Singsons of Ilocos Sur have cornered all major positions at the local position from governor,

vice-governor, mayor and congressman. The Dy clan may have lost the elections for governor but took the position of congressman and mayor. Enrile made a comeback as senator while his son won as congressman.

De Venecia perpetuated his firm hold in Pangasinan. Angara did not seek an elective position at the national level but his son won as congressman and his sister as governor. The Garcia family held the congressional representative and gubernatorial positions in Bataan. The same is true for the Magsaysays of Zambales.

The Gordons have a senator while still in control of Olongapo City. Noytoy Aquino held on as

congressman of Tarlac. The Josons also perpetuated themselves holding on to the positions of governor and congressman. Mikey Arroyo, Arroyo's son, won as governor of Pampanga.

Even if Maliksi, a former Remulla ally, won as governor of Cavite, the Remullas got two congressional positions. The Chipecos took the position of Calamba mayor and congressman. The old political clans of Rodriguez and Sumulong took hold of the congressional positions in Rizal and Antipolo respectively. The province of Mindoro Occidental is the battleground between the Villarosas on one side versus the Sato-Quintos tandem on

the other. The Mitras still hold considerable influence in Palawan and has taken the congressional position. While Hagedorn still lords it over Puerto Princesa.

In Cebu, the Osmena, Garcia, Cuenco, and Durano clans have taken different positions. The Durano clan held to the position of Danao mayor and congressman. Negros Occidental belongs to the Cojuangcos. Arroyo's brother-in-law, Iggy Arroyo, won as congressman. Other dynasties in the Visayas include the Petillas, governor and congress, and Romualdez of Leyte and Daza of Samar.

In Mindanao, Jalosjos still lords it over Zamboanga del Norte taking the mayoralty and congress



FAMILY AFFAIR: A seat in Congress is treated like a family heirloom by the elite, to be passed on from generation to generation



Binays of Makati, Zamora of San Juan, Abalos and Gonzales of Mandaluyong, Fernando of Marikina, Eusebio of Pasig, and Asistio of Kalookan.

positions. The Zubiris of Bukidnon got the gubernatorial and congressional positions. The same positions were taken by the Romualdos of Camiguin. Likewise, the Dimaporo clan still controls politics in Lanao del Norte. The Plaza clan held to the positions of governor and mayor in Agusan del Sur. Other clans that have perpetuated themselves in power are Cagas in Davao del Sur, Amante in Agusan del Norte, Barbers in Surigao, Salapuddin in Basilan, and Datumanong in Maguindanao.

Senatorial positions were taken by old wealthy families such as Roxas, Madrigal, Enrile, Osmena, Recto, as well as bureaucrat capitalists who have gained wealth and power such as Defensor-Santiago, Lim, Cayetano, Biazon, and Revilla. The ability of the Estradas to corner two senatorial positions and the mayorality of San Juan even after the ouster of Joseph Estrada is a manifestation of the wealth and resources they were able to accumulate during Estrada's stint in power.

In Metro Manila, the bureaucrat capitalists who have perpetuated themselves in power are the Atienzas of Manila, the

Worsening crisis

Changes in the political landscape are a reflection of the worsening economic and political crisis. Contradictions between the different factions of the ruling classes become more intense and violent. The unorganized masses express their disgust over those in power through reactionary elections in the hope of seeking change. Voter turn-out is high during periods of intense political crisis whether in local or national elections.

The elections for representatives to the Interim Batasang Pambansa in 1978 and the snap presidential elections of 1985 manifested this trend. The overwhelming victory of a movie actor, Joseph Estrada, in 1998 also demonstrated the frustration of the masses who are suffering from the effects of the economic crisis. At the local level, this also explains the victory of people like Grace Padaca in Isabela.

But as the crisis worsens, the reactionary system is wracked by convulsions erupting in people's uprisings as what happened in People Power 1 and People Power 2. It is worth noting that People Power 1 erupted after 14 years of the Marcos fascist dictatorship but People Power 2 happened only

three years into the Estrada regime.

The hold of the Arroyo regime to power is tenuous because of the political and economic crisis it is confronted with and the massive fraud it had to undertake to steal the victory from another movie actor, Fernando Poe Jr. Another convulsion leading to its ouster from power will effectively weaken further the reactionary system. It will make the masses realize the power it wields through its collective strength.

But the joint dictatorship of the ruling classes, the comprador bourgeoisie and the big landlords, cannot be overthrown and genuine change cannot be achieved without effectively eroding their political and economic power in the countryside and supplanting it with the revolutionary power of the masses until it is possible for the national democratic revolution to achieve victory on the national scale.

The worsening political and economic crisis makes the conditions favorable for the advancement and eventual victory of the national democratic revolution with a socialist perspective. It is up to the forces of the national democratic revolution to awaken and arouse, organize and mobilize the masses in their millions and, as part of the process, convince them that it is not through reactionary elections nor people power uprisings that they can effect genuine change but through the armed revolution. Only then will political dynasties cease to exist. ▲

COVER STORIES

On today's significant issues and events

Uncle Sam's Hand in Philippine Polls

by Jacinto Maypag-asa



With Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo having been proclaimed last June 24 amid compelling evidence of widespread fraud, it might be a big wonder to some why the US – which had sent observers to the Philippines under the auspices of its Agency for International Development (USAID), supposedly to ensure the credibility of the polls – had congratulated her on her “victory” even before the canvassing of votes could conclude.

But then, it shouldn't be too much of a wonder at all. In 1985, then US president Ronald Reagan declared that the presidential snap election was generally peaceful and orderly and congratulated the dictator Marcos. It was only after the Filipino people started a popular uprising did the US withdraw its support from the Marcos regime.

The very composition of the US observer team that came to the Philippines weeks before the election—and the very history of US dealings with the Philippines—shows that in fact, the credibility of the polls were never in the US list of concerns.

Watchers' cut

The poll observer team was under the umbrella of the Consortium of Electoral and Political Processes Strengthening (CEPPS), which has a cooperative agreement with the USAID. Consortium partners are the International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems.

The IRI and the NDI – representing the US Republican and Democratic Parties, respectively – are among four organizations affiliated with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), an organization funded by the US government purportedly to “carry out democracy initiatives” worldwide. Other organizations affiliated with the NED are: the Center for Private International Enterprise (CPIE, US Chamber of Commerce), and the Free Trade Union Institute (FTUI, American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations).

The origins of the NED can be traced to the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) covert action operations. It was conceptualized soon after the Washington Post, in February 26, 1967, exposed the CIA's covert action operations and its funding conduits worldwide. Patterned after the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung of the Social Democrats of West Germany and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung of the Christian Democrats, the NED was conceived as an “open”, “private” foundation but with US government funding.

The NED was created by the US Congress in 1983. Officially, its aim is to propagate the “virtues”

of the American economic and political system among the influential sectors of its target countries, as well as the ideas of free-market economics, class collaboration, and anti-socialism. It was established to channel US government funds for subverting socialist and progressive governments and organizations and propping up anti-communist, pro-imperialist governments and so-called “civil society” groups. According to a former CIA operations officer, “Whereas the CIA had previously funneled money through a complex network of ‘conduits,’ the NED would now become a ‘mega-conduit’ for getting US government money to the same array of non-governmental organizations that the CIA had been funding secretly.”

For its work, the NED receives from the U.S. government an annual budget of some \$33 million. It channels the budget to four affiliate foundations and from these to rightist churches, judiciaries, media, professional and employers' associations, universities, “opposition” movements, and civil society groups promoting US interests.

In particular, the NED, together with the CIA and the AID, has been funding Cuban exiles and “opposition movements” in an attempt to topple the socialist government of Fidel Castro. The NED, AID, and CIA have also orchestrated riots and military coups against presidents Hugo Chavez of Venezuela in 2002 and Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti earlier this year. Both are known to oppose the US policy of imperialist globalization.

Chavez was ousted from the presidency, but he was able to return to power through the support of the Venezuelan masses. Aristide was not as fortunate.

The Philippine setting

The US has a history of interfering in the Philippine electoral process. Which is not surprising since the present Philippine electoral system is, itself, a by-product of the American occupation, which – as US Sen. John F. Miller himself admitted in the late 19th century – was part of a larger drive for additional markets for the products of American factories.

The US justified its usurpation of the Filipino people's hard-earned freedom from Spanish colonial rule by employing the garb of “tutelage in the

democratic way of life.” Along this line, it established an electoral system in the Philippines.

The first Philippine elections were held in 1907. In these elections to the National Assembly, only propertied men 21 years old and above, able to write or speak Spanish or English were eligible to vote and qualified to run.

Elections continued to be held in the succeeding decades, which saw the further entrenchment of an elite leadership loyal to US interests. Heavy propaganda and financial support from US imperialism always works in favor of a particular candidate.

“Independence” was “granted” to the Philippines in 1946, but the Philippine government has continued to be bound by economic and military “agreements” favorable to the US agenda.

Meanwhile, political leaders opposed to US intervention in the Philippines, historically, have had to put up with being maneuvered out of their positions.

Such was the experience of the six representatives of the Left-led Democratic Alliance (DA) in 1949, whose votes constituted a block to Congress’ passage of the Bell Trade Act which allowed US capitalists equal “rights” with Filipino businessmen in exploiting the country’s resources. Then President Manuel Roxas, with the support of the US, invented charges of “electoral terrorism” against the DA representatives and succeeded in having them ousted from their posts.

In 1953, the US directly participated in Philippine elections with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) propping up the candidacy of then Defense Sec. Ramon Magsaysay. Col. Edward Lansdale, a CIA operative in the Philippines, was the organizing and directing brains behind the Magsaysay for President Movement (MPM), a campaign and “poll watch” group that built up Magsaysay’s image as a “Man of the Masses” and worked to ensure his electoral victory.

The MPM received financial aids from the CIA enabling it to mount a propaganda campaign and pay a number of journalists to do public relations work for

Magsaysay in the very publications they worked in.

It was also around this time that the National Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel) was first heard of. Ostensibly a poll watchdog group, the Namfrel was controlled by MPM operatives who released skewed tabulations of the election results to conjure an early perception that Magsaysay was a runaway winner.

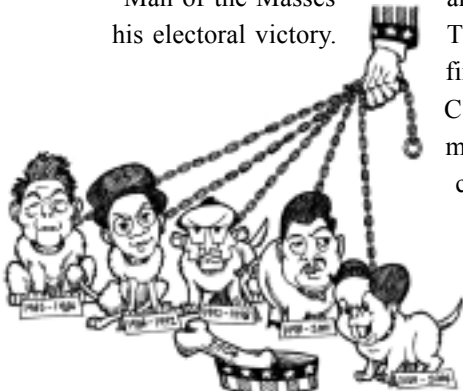
Nationalist statesman Claro M. Recto on the other hand was subjected to a smear campaign during his 1957 presidential bid because of his staunch opposition to US economic domination of and military presence in the Philippines and this contributed to his loss. Meanwhile, former President Carlos P. Garcia, who won in that year’s election, was castigated for implementing a Filipino First economic policy. Although Garcia was basically a US puppet, he was consistently harassed by the US, which orchestrated a number of coup attempts against him.

Just recently, progressive party list groups were the object of attack by the reactionary regime’s national security adviser, Norberto Gonzales. Gonzales is a leading figure in the clerico-fascist-led social democrats and a lackey of US imperialism.

Stable US interests

Arroyo is the most loyal ally of the US in Asia. She is the first Asian leader to support the US “war on terror,” even unabashedly declaring her support to the US invasion of Iraq before the meeting of non-aligned nations. Thus, the Arroyo regime was called by war-mongering Bush as the most reliable US ally from among the non-members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

In the economic field, she is the most assiduous promoter and implementor of policies favoring US imperialist thrusts from the time she was still a senator. When Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo took over as president, after a people power uprising ousted Joseph Estrada, she relentlessly pursued the liberalization, deregulation, and privatization policies of imperialist globalization. To prop up the crisis ridden economy, her regime plunged the country deeper in debt. With Arroyo set to sit in Malacañang for six more years, the US is very much assured of continued unflinching support for its agenda in the Philippines. ▲



Akbayan and its 'SOCIALIST' PRETENSIONS

by Victoria de la Gente

"This forgetting of the great main standpoint for the momentary interests of the day, this struggling and striving for the success of the moment without consideration for the later consequences, this sacrifice of the future of the movement for its present may be 'honestly' meant, but it is and remains opportunism and 'honest' opportunism is perhaps the most dangerous of all.."

This passage was lifted from Frederick Engel's "On the Critique of the Social Democratic Draft Program of 1891." Engels was criticizing the German Social Democratic Party for dreaming of a "peaceful" path to socialism. This dream of a peaceful path put forward by the German Social Democratic Party in its Erfurt Program was prompted by its fear of another crackdown and the renewal of the Anti-Socialist Law.

The passage best describes the Akbayan Citizen's Action Party. Part of its core is comprised of incorrigible opportunists such as Ricardo Reyes, Joel Rocamora, Sixto Carlos, and Byron Bocar along with their underlings such as Etta Rosales and Walden Bello. All of them bolted the CPP-NPA-NDF after failing to destroy the movement from within by leading it towards a reformist path. Ricardo Reyes, the highest ranking former party member among them, collaborated with the late Popoy Lagman in their insurrectionist adventures before swinging to the right towards reformism after being pressured by police intelligence officers who arrested him.

These opportunists have found common ground with BISIG, a group of petty bourgeois reformists with Trotskyite leanings. BISIG began as an "elite" organization established by UP professors who fancy themselves as socialists. They later on started organizing efforts among workers based on a very strong anti-communist stand.

Joining them are the social democrats who became infamous after egging the government to float bonds which they themselves conceptualized and sold thereby earning a hefty P1.6 billion profit. This was popularly known as the Peace Bond scam. These social democrats are being led by clerico-fascists based in Ateneo de

Manila University. Aside from collaborating with government since the time of the US-Aquino regime up to the present, their main preoccupation is attacking and destroying the national democratic movement. They create obstacles to the peace negotiations while serving to prettify the rotten ruling system.

The coming together of incorrigible opportunists, petty bourgeois reformists, Trotskyites, NGO racketeers and clerico-fascists resulted in a conservative bourgeois political party with pretensions of pursuing socialism. All Akbayan aims for is to win seats in a parliamentary government and to institute nothing more than insubstantial political, economic, social and cultural reforms without altering the essence of political and economic relations in the semi-colonial, semi-feudal Philippine society.

Bourgeois "Socialism"

Akbayan describes its programmatic vision and line as participatory democracy or participatory socialism. The form which its participatory socialism will take is a parliamentary government and a party list electoral system, with an organized civil society which engages it on matters of policy regularly.

The tasks of its ideal government are the following:

- ensuring the provision of social services such as health, education, and housing even as it is open to the privatization of these services
- regulate economic activity through a stable legal and administrative system
- development planning
- negotiating with other countries in the pursuit of national interests

It does not seek to change the character of the state. In fact, Akbayan tries to differentiate itself from the "old statist models, whether of the representative democracy under the capitalist order or the then existing socialism which collapsed".

Based on a flawed analysis that the Philippines is already capitalist, it merely aims to change the form of government from presidential to parliamentary. It has the illusion that changing the form of government will alter the nature and character of the semi-feudal and semi-colonial state and the patronage politics this state engenders. It also seeks to institute some administrative reforms to address the problems of

corruption, peace and order, judicial reform, civil service reform, and decentralization.

Akbayan merely aims to make the dictatorship of the comprador bourgeois and the big landlords more efficient for the "benefit of the working people". Akbayan has the illusion that it can solve the problem of corruption, which is at the core of the rotten system, without wresting the state from US imperialist control and the dictatorship of the comprador bourgeoisie and the landlord class.

Of course, the people will supposedly be free to engage the government and the ruling classes through their unions and associations with the assistance of civil society (read: NGO bureaucrats). But aren't these so-called engagements already happening? Numerous unions have been destroyed "legally" with the assistance of the Department of Labor. Thousands of peasant leaders and organizers have died, have been incarcerated, and displaced trying to engage their landlords in claim-making struggles. The ruling classes have the bureaucracy, the courts, the police and military forces to protect its interests.

No amount of laws and policies or changes in members of parliament can alter the existing oppressive and exploitative relations. Marcos made a show of transforming the government from presidential into a parliamentary form while instituting a fascist dictatorship. The Aquino regime restored formal democratic processes and even came out with a liberal constitution while militarizing the countryside and displacing more than a million peasants.

Even in welfare states of Europe where Labor Parties won in parliamentary elections, the liberation of the working class was never realized. It was able to provide better salaries and benefits for its workers by intensifying the rate of their exploitation and passing on labor intensive processes to its semi-colonies. Their governments also co-opted labor bureaucrats to weaken unions. Currently, their workers are suffering pay cuts; their social benefits are being reduced and removed; and they were the first to suffer the fate of contractualization.

The ruling Labor Party in Britain merely continued the political and economic policies initiated by the Tories of Thatcher. In fact, the difference in their programs of government is indistinguishable. The administration of Tony Blair and the Labor party

became the staunchest supporter of US imperialism in its war of aggression against Iraq. It is on the verge of losing its majority hold on government because of popular discontent over their administration.

Even if Akbayan realizes its dream of being a force in parliament, it is doubtful that it will work for the interest of the working classes. Its economic program does not in any way seek to neither radically transform existing economic relations nor address the fundamental problems that are pushing the economy deeper into a state of chronic and terminal crisis.

Global competitiveness: A solution to poverty and the crisis?

“While we believe that economic growth and redistributive reform are the most important instruments against poverty, an anti-poverty program targeting the poorest of the poor - especially upland farmers, seasonal rural workers, fisher folk, women and children, and indigenous peoples - is necessary. For labor, a key consideration is that more rapid growth of GNP means more rapid growth of employment. If growth is sustained until labor surplus conditions are replaced by labor shortage, wages will rise and the conditions for labor organizing will improve.”

This summarizes the first plank of Akbayan’s economic program, Growth and Equity. It also reflects how Akbayan intends to fulfill its claims that it will take the standpoint of the working people.

The other planks of its economic platform are the following: fiscal and monetary policy, industrial policy, selective liberalization, agriculture, asset reform, sustainable development, and strong and activist government

The key aspects of Akbayan’s solutions to the chronic and terminal crisis confronting Philippine society is to attract foreign investments in export industries and infrastructure projects; tax transient capital; lower interest rates; develop small to medium scale rural non-farm enterprises; increase agricultural productivity; institute an improved version of the current agrarian reform law; tax reform; urban

land reform; environmental sustainability; and electing a government capable of implementing all of the above.

Akbayan never touched US imperialist control over the political and economic life of the country. It never called for the abrogation of unequal treaties and agreements that bind the Philippines into subservience to US imperialism. Akbayan does not aim to change the import-dependent, export-oriented characteristic of Philippine economy. It is silent on the issue of foreign debt which is draining the resources of the country. And Akbayan merely seeks to moderate the implementation of the structural adjustment program and the policies of liberalization, deregulation, and privatization.

Global competitiveness and economic growth under the crisis-ridden world capitalist system is an illusion. A semi-colonial, semi-feudal economy can never compete under the current state of affairs where a few multinational corporations corner the lion’s share of the world’s wealth and capital; control the production and market of goods; and uses the political and military power of its base countries to pursue its interests. Aiming for global competitiveness is a fallacy when the world economy is confronted with a crisis of overproduction affecting all types of goods most especially what semi-feudal, semi-colonial economies like the Philippines are producing.

Lowering interest rates and taxing transient capital will not lead to an increase in foreign direct investments in a situation where speculative finance capital lords it over the world and constitutes from 80-90% of foreign capital entering the country. It can never stimulate export industries which are suffering from a glut in the world market or industries for the domestic market which is flooded by cheap surplus goods from imperialist countries. Rural industrialization and increasing agricultural productivity is a dream without breaking the monopoly of land by a few big landlords and addressing the backward, agricultural, pre-industrial character of the economy.

Sustainable development is an illusion for a country dependent on raw material exports. It is merely a catchphrase that is impossible to

**Being in cahoots
with the Marcos
family, ruling
Arroyo clique,
CIA, and AFP,
Akbayan is in the
company of the
most reactionary
elements of
Philippine society.**



achieve globally within the framework of an extractive capitalist order.

The problem of poverty affecting the majority of the Filipino people cannot be effectively addressed by token redistributive reforms being advocated by Akbayan.

Safety nets, tax reform, and its version of agrarian and urban land reform will

merely scratch the surface of poverty if it will have any impact at all.

Reactionary to the core

Not only is Akbayan's socialism a sham, its reformism is even belied by its actions. Akbayan has been in the House of Representatives of the reactionary government since 1998. But it has not made any concrete action whether in the form of resolution, legislation, or project that promotes the interest of the masses.

It has always aligned itself with the ruling faction in order to gain committee chairmanships and easy access to funds. Accordingly, its positions on issues wholly reflect that of the ruling party. It even campaigned openly for Gloria Macapagal Arroyo during the 2004 elections. But its stint in the House of Representatives became memorable for its two infamous actions.

First, Akbayan tried to water down the bill providing for compensation for victims of human rights violations by the Marcos fascist dictatorship. As Chairperson of the Committee on Human Rights, Etta

Rosales made a deal with the Marcos family that would allow the latter to evade culpability over the human rights violations committed under the fascist dictatorship. In exchange, the Marcos family promised to withdraw all petitions contesting the release of the funds held in escrow by the Philippine National Bank. Only the stiff opposition by Bayan Muna prevented Akbayan from railroading the passage of the revised bill.

Second, Akbayan tried to catch public attention in order to win votes in the 2004 elections by launching a campaign to outlaw the collection of Permit to Campaign access fees; falsely and maliciously claiming that its representative Etta Rosales is the target of an NPA hit squad; and echoing the accusations of CIA agent and National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales and the AFP that Bayan Muna and five other progressive party list groups are fronts of the CPP-NPA-NDF. The AFP was so pleased with Akbayan that it actively campaigned for the latter to lure votes away from Bayan Muna and other progressive party list groups.

To quote Ka Roger, "Its (Akbayan's) political attacks against both the revolutionary movement and progressive parties smacks of Red baiting that is in perfect agreement and consonance with the mad rantings of US intelligence agent and national security adviser Norberto Gonzales and AFP psywar departments. In fact Akbayan's Joel Rocamora has been issuing out statements with exactly the same lies and ultra-reactionary diatribes spewed out by Gonzales and the AFP against the CPP-NPA and the progressive organizations....Akbayan knows, however, that their political attacks against both the revolutionary movement and progressive parties are grist for the fascist mills and stirs up the saliva of the vicious dogs-of-war who only need such cues to violently attack the progressives if they cannot get hold of revolutionaries..."

Being in cahoots with the Marcos family, the ruling Arroyo clique, the CIA, and the AFP, Akbayan is in the company of the most reactionary elements of Philippine society. Akbayan is described as an opportunist only because it is still able to project itself as progressive by occasionally criticizing the government and the policies of globalization. But in time it will expose itself for what it truly is, reactionary to the core. ▲

CULTURAL

The cyclical carnival, a shield of gold
Whirls on a titling deluge of darkness
Grasping and gathering the stars
Into a violent net of neon, shrieking
For reverence to the vendible ultimate.

The infinite shape, a playful palisade
Of signboards of decent deceiving
Is unlocked by a fee to the gainful gate
That swallows like a courteous cat –
The crownfront of bribeable bureaucrats
Keeping the privateering spirit of general rules
In the big bidding for space and building.

On the capital surface of the crowded circle
Bright barkers interweave a fiery texture;
The blaring pattern conceals the hammering hands
That have built and bear it, Atlas-like.

The monopoly tents in anarchic array
Feature the best feats of client-conscious beasts.
Politicians and professional specialists
Do the rightrope and somersault,
The role of horses, lions and elephants,
Bear and chimpanzee.

The pedants make good clowns on the periphery,
Beside their castrate charms.

The sideshadows offer freaks when funny,
Taken funnily when serious
And a monkey conducting a recorded symphony.

The sideshows offer faithful fakes like
The original snake of the forbidden tree
And the boy with genitals overgrown.
The peepshows augur more than ogled,
Charity ladies giggling with gigolos;
The maze of mirrors sate solipsists;
The house of horrors offers free admittance
Under the sponsorship of a softdrink company.

The scape and studied speech of ferriswheels,
Flying saucers, swinging planes, roller coasters,
And trains – all congeal the terrible season
Of the carnival cosmos of gawkers
And growing children that abandons the ground bald
After coronation night of the moneyed muse.

CARNIVAL

by Jose Ma. Sison