

[From *Ang Bayan*, #1, January-February 1999]

Revolutionary Movement in Mindanao

Along the path of steadfast advance



"The current of advance is certain."

This was confidently declared by the Mindanao Commission of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) as it reviewed the situation of the revolutionary movement in the island since the Second Great Rectification Movement (SGRM) was launched in 1992- 93. A special issue of *Pulang Tamdanan* (political journal of the Party in Mindanao) published on the occasion of the CPP's 30th anniversary described the reinvigoration of the revolutionary movement in Mindanao in its various aspects.

Said the Mindanao Commission, the revolutionary forces continued to grow and strengthen from 1995 to the present. This is the fruit of resolutely advancing the Second Great Rectification Movement and striving to advance anew in accordance with the correct line of people's democratic revolution and protracted people's war.

Not only did the Party and the revolutionary forces preserve themselves. They have further consolidated by repudiating the grave deviations and errors of the past. They determinedly restrengthened themselves through painstakingly arousing and organizing the masses and militantly leading the people's armed and unarmed struggles. Thus, they overcame the great damage and reversals brought about by military adventurism and urban insurrectionism and the all-out military offensives of the enemy from the mid- '80s to the early '90s. The revolutionary movement in Mindanao is once more treading the path of steadfast advance along the correct revolutionary direction.

Reinvigoration of the Party

The Second Great Rectification Movement's most significant victory in Mindanao is the ideological consolidation of the Party organization. The entire Party's consciousness regarding Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and the line of people's democratic revolution has been raised to a level far higher than at any time in the past.

Ideological building. The Commission and the Regional Committees consider ideological work as their number one priority, particularly the summing-up of experiences, dissemination of the basic rectification documents and studies on the three-level Party course as well as the extensive implementation of criticism and self-criticism.

More than 90% of Party cadres and members have studied the basic rectification documents. Almost simultaneous with this, an education campaign on the Basic Party Course (BPC) was launched. More than 80% of full-time Party members, aside from members of local Party branches and groups have finished the course. An education campaign on the Intermediate Party Course has also been going on since 1995. Since 1997, leading committees and cadres have been taking more intensive studies on the BPC's topics and references while awaiting the Advanced Course which is directly supervised by the Party's central leadership.

The Party's experience in Mindanao from 1979 to 1992 has been comprehensively summed-up, resulting in the revolutionary forces' unified understanding of past revolutionary practice and its concrete historical circumstances. Advances, reversals and the reasons for these were cited, and lessons were drawn to guide efforts to rectify errors and reinvigorate the revolutionary movement. The four regions in Mindanao (Northern, Southern, Far South and Western) and other lower-level territorial Party organizations have likewise summed-up their experiences. Assessments of revolutionary work at various levels of the organization are regularly conducted along with criticism and self-criticism.

Leading Party committees and cadres have been steeled through hard struggle. They have resolutely persevered in the people's democratic revolution through protracted people's war in the face of all-out offensives by the reactionary puppet state and the relentless sabotage and attacks waged by the counterrevolutionary revisionist renegades. It was also necessary to overcome the "Left" and Right tendencies that intensified within the Party due to the longtime dominance of disorientation and lapses and the accumulated damage and worsening problems that complicated each other.

Complicated struggles were waged against the revisionist renegades who resorted to all kinds of intrigues and distortions and fostered regionalism and sentimentalism to divide and destroy the Party. But Party cadres and members—with the exception of a handful who eventually wallowed in revisionism, opportunism and decadence — remained loyal to revolutionary proletarian principles, honorably defended the Party and revolutionary movement's integrity and thoroughly vanquished the revisionist renegades and their counterrevolutionary demolition operations.

Currently, there are continuing efforts to wage the education campaign throughout the Party to further raise the theoretical capability of Party cadres and members. The summings-up of certain regions still have to be documented so that lessons drawn from past practice could be systematically disseminated within their respective areas of responsibility.

The revolutionary forces operate in 18 out of the island's 24 provinces and in 65% of priority towns and cities.

Assessment and study meetings are being systematized to shorten them. Cadres are also in need of additional and more systematic training to accelerate their comprehensive development. In this regard, the Commission has paid particular attention to the need to further train leaders of units and teams engaged in mass work.

Organizational building. Party expansion has also proceeded apace consequent to the rectification movement. The Party has drawn a bigger number of recruits from among advanced mass activists. Overall, the wellspring of new Party members has grown more abundant because of the continued emergence of numerous mass activists from the ranks of the peasantry, workers, youth, women and professionals in the countryside and cities. Party membership, which expanded by 10% from 1994 to 1995, further grew in the succeeding years. It is, at present, 50% greater than what it was in 1994. This is a significant leap compared to the 1992-1994 levels, when Party membership plummeted to about a thousand from a peak strength of several thousands in 1983-84.

Growing numbers of Party members and activists from the cities are being deployed to the countryside. From 1996 to the present, more than a hundred of them have joined the people's army. There is a continuing effort to reinforce this trend. This is in complete contrast to what prevailed in the past, when the exodus was from the countryside to the cities—a practice that was encouraged by the insurrectionist RAWA ("red area - white area") line and which weakened the Party and movement in the countryside and as a whole.

The Party organization in Mindanao consciously upholds the principle of democratic centralism. Ultrademocracy has been rectified along with bureaucratism, both of which were severe organizational problems in the past. Leading organs strictly implement the committee system — which explains why the Party organization evidently functions effectively at various levels.

Nonetheless, the Mindanao Commission cited the need to intensify efforts to enlarge the Party organization relative to the accelerated expansion of the organized masses. In this regard, there is a continuing struggle against the tendency to set excessively high and sectarian standards, aside from simply neglecting to give due attention to systematic expansion.

Armed struggle and movement in the countryside

The leadership and influence of the Party and the national-democratic revolution continue to broaden in Mindanao. The revolutionary forces operate in 18 out of the island's 24 provinces and in 65% of priority towns and cities.

Revolutionary mass movement in the countryside. The scope of guerrilla zones is being assiduously expanded. In 1998, the number of barrios covered grew almost 200% compared to the 1994 level. This includes several hundred lumad communities that actively participate in the revolutionary struggle.

The contraction of guerrilla zones was halted by 1995 and new ones have been opened since then. In 1996-97, a significant portion of what was formerly Central Mindanao was recovered—an area adversely affected by the revisionist renegades' demolition operations. A large portion of Western Mindanao has also been recovered; existing guerrilla zones in Northern, Southern and Far South Mindanao have expanded. Only a few of the former guerrilla zones have not yet been recovered. At present, there are 22 guerrilla zones in the island, representing one-fourth of the total number of guerrilla zones nationwide.

Nonetheless, the Commission called on the entire membership to focus on further accelerating the expansion and consolidation of the mass base. The Commission called the entire Party organization's attention to the need to develop many more full-time cadres and fighters to further expand the mass base and guerrilla zones.

Antifeudal struggles. Since 1996-97, an increasing number of antifeudal struggles has been waged in the countryside. Aside from campaigns to reduce land rent, raise farm workers' wages and reduce interest rates on loans as well as rice milling fees, other types of land-related struggles have also been launched.

In Far South Mindanao, a mass campaign against the landgrabbing Western Mining Company has gained strength. The campaign has mobilized not only the basic masses but has gained the support of many middle forces. In Southern Mindanao, there is a widespread campaign against the IFMA (Integrated Forest Management Agreement). In the municipality of Talaingod, Davao del Norte, the lumad masses are advancing their legal and armed resistance against Alcantara & Sons (Alsons), a logging company that has been grabbing land from the Ata-Manobo. In Northern Mindanao, mass struggles have been waged against landgrabbing by companies owned by the big comprador bourgeoisie. In Western Mindanao, a successful mass campaign has been waged to allow the Subanen natives to return to their lands after having been forced to evacuate in the '80s and early '90s due to intense military operations by the AFP. A mass campaign against landgrabbing by foreign mining companies has also commenced in the region.

Thousands of people throughout Mindanao have been mobilized and are providing support for these mass actions.

The Commission cited the need to further intensify and expand antifeudal struggles because the latter serve as the key link of mass work in the countryside. It is also necessary to improve investigation and analysis of socioeconomic issues in every barrio to identify concrete problems that inflict suffering on the masses and address these through appropriate tactics and mass campaigns.

Since 1995, protests and mass mobilizations have been waged in the leading cities of Mindanao such as Davao, Iligan, Cagayan De Oro, Gen. Santos, Butuan, Tagum and Pagadian.

Within the guerrilla zones, the organs of political power (most of which are at the barrio or front level) enjoy an ever-broadening scope. These organs which serve as the seeds of Red political authority, are capable of enforcing laws within their respective territorial jurisdictions.

Armed struggle. Since 1995, more than 50 tactical offensives have been launched by the people's army in Mindanao, yielding more than 100 high-powered firearms. This February 17, in an operation that sent shock waves to the highest leadership of the GRP and AFP, the NPA Merardo Arce Command in Southern Mindanao captured Maj. Gen. Victor Obillo (commander of the 55th Engineering and Construction Brigade) and Capt. Eduardo Montealto (the brigade's logistics officer) in Bgy. Carmen, Baguio, Davao City. All these are proof of the decisive turnabout from the damage, reversals and inertia brought about by the grave deviations and errors of the past.

Due to victories in expanding and strengthening the mass base, the people's army has further consolidated, become more active and grown in number. Recruitment of Red fighters and expansion of guerrilla forces are once again brisk.

Each front has a main guerrilla unit, usually platoonsize, while those of others are squad-size. These guerrilla units conduct comprehensive military work, mass work and production. They possess a high level of discipline and have intimate links with the masses.

Aside from the full-time NPA units, there are thousands of militia who continue engaging in their livelihood in their farms even as they participate in guerrilla operations from time to time, assist in maintaining order in the barrios and perform other supportive military work.

There is continued dissemination and systematization of politico-military training among Red commanders and fighters. There is a sufficient core of military cadres who have extensive experience in leading the people's army and in planning and commanding military actions.

Revolutionary movement in the cities

The legal democratic movement in the cities is expanding and strengthening. Legal mass organizations that advance national-democratic struggles are at the forefront of open struggles against intensifying exploitation by the past reactionary US-Ramos regime and the current reactionary US-Estrada regime.

Since 1995, protests and mass mobilizations have been waged in the leading cities of Mindanao such as Davao, Iligan, Cagayan de Oro, Gen. Santos, Butuan, Tagum and Pagadian. The number of people joining mass mobilizations has been growing yearly, from a few in the early '90s to hundreds and thousands at present. Big mobilizations have been witnessed in rallies launched against Ramos' charter change ("cha-cha") scheme as well as mobilizations against rising prices of gasoline and other commodities, GATT-WTO, the Visiting Forces Agreement and others.

The progressive trade union movement is resolutely restrengthening along with the determined expansion of of the revolutionary underground movement in factories, plantations, mines and other places of concentration of workers. The number of factories where the Party operates has doubled since 1993-94. Other indications of the expansion of progressive and militant unionism are the ever-bigger mobilizations during May 1 and the growing number of workers joining anti-imperialist, antifascist and antifeudal mass protests. In 1997-98, a handful of labor aristocrats brazenly colluded with big capitalists to bust progressive unions and oust progressive labor

leaders from factories. This was fiercely resisted by the militant workers' movement and the masses of workers.

Meanwhile, the youth and student movement has also been expanding. There are progressive organizations in scores of big schools in various parts of Mindanao. Progressive forces in schools actively mobilize the masses of students in struggles against puppet reactionary rule aside from the suppression of academic freedom and other democratic rights of students and teachers and the continued hikes in school fees. The masses of members of legal youth organizations continue to join sectoral and multisectoral mobilizations. More and more advanced youth activists have decided to go to the countryside to participate directly in the armed struggle.

United front work. With respect to united front work, the development of the basic alliance of the toiling masses is evident. A good number of those from the petty bourgeoisie and other sectors are joining struggles bannering the nationalist and democratic line on various issues. The number of underground cells and chapters of the allied organizations of the NDF has also grown among the ranks of the middle forces. Their membership has grown to thousands, reflecting a 50% increase compared to the 1994 level.

The Mindanao-wide Peace Forum held from May 24 to July 4, 1998 and led by NDF peace negotiators Ka Luis Jalandoni and Ka Coni Ledesma, gained wide support from various sectors. Up to 10,000 attended the consultations conducted in the cities of Pagadian, Ozamiz, Dipolog, Gen. Santos, Cagayan de Oro, Butuan and Davao.

Nonetheless, the Commission stressed the need to further expand the membership of revolutionary mass organizations as well as legal progressive organizations because these serve as channels for waging widespread revolutionary and militant struggles that promote and defend the interests of the broad masses of the people. It is also necessary to win over ever-bigger numbers from the middle forces and to strengthen and expand their organizations.

The revolutionary movement has maintained its links with the Moro masses within or near guerrilla zones. A number of revolutionary groups has been set up among them in areas where the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) does not operate. There has also been progress in alliance work with revolutionary Moros. Political and military cooperation between the National Democratic Front and the MILF continue to develop as the two revolutionary forces face a common enemy (*see related article*).

ON THE WHOLE, it is clear that the Party organization in Mindanao has now gained more solid victories due to its adherence to the correct line and policies. With this, the urgent call to "seize the day, seize the hour" has been issued by the Commission so that the Party and revolutionary movement in Mindanao could achieve even more victories and advance more rapidly.

[From: <http://www.philippinerevolution.net/cgi-bin/ab/text.pl?issue=199901-02;lang=eng;article=07>
(archived on Nov. 10, 2007)]