



EDITORIAL

Draw lessons and inspiration from the great resistance to martial law

The Filipino people commemorates this month the 50th anniversary of Ferdinand Marcos Sr's martial law declaration on September 21, 1972 which established a brutal dictatorship and commenced a 14-year rule of fascist terrorism, corruption and puppetry to foreign imperialist powers. This commemoration is singularly significant amid the current people's suffering under Ferdinand Marcos Jr., son of the dictator who is now sitting in power.

Let us salute all heroes and martyrs, and veterans who fought the US-Marcos dictatorship. Let us look back at the key role of the Communist Party of the Philippines in leading and uniting the Filipino people.

The Party's perseverance was the key factor in shattering the fear imposed by martial law, and engendering the widespread democratic mass movement starting the mid-1970s and the geometric expansion of the New People's Army (NPA) in the countryside. The Party

grew several times and the people's democratic revolution spread throughout the archipelago.

All forms of resistance, including the armed struggle, intensified by the early 1980s, leading to giant mass actions which overthrew the dictatorship in 1986.

Marking the 50th anniversary of the declaration of martial law is propitious in the face of increasing fascist tyranny under the Marcos II regime. It serves as an opportunity to amplify the demand for justice for all victims of military abuses,

and to further push the Marcoses to be punished for all its crimes and transgressions against the people.

Draw lessons from the great struggle against the dictatorship. Primarily grasp the key role of the Communist Party in leading the oppressed classes and sectors, in enlightening and inspiring, and serving as the steel core in the efforts to march the difficult and dangerous path of struggle, despite being small, weak or meeting failures at the beginning, but always advancing wave upon wave until no obstacle can stop it.

While the Party promotes legal forms of organizing and struggle both in the city and countryside, it also thoroughly builds the underground movement. It recruits cadres from the advanced section

of the masses. The Party also builds secret cells and underground national-democratic mass organizations in the cities, to serve as shield against the vicious attacks of the state, to train cadres, and to expand political and material support for the armed struggle.

The party developed its leadership centers throughout the archipelago, starting with the major islands, especially Mindanao, and subsequently, the smaller ones. This spread played an important role in taking away the fascist regime's capacity to concentrate its terrorism in one or a few places. The Party also knows the significance of combining the mass movement in the cities and the countryside; and the mutuality of the legal forms of the struggle of the masses and the armed struggle.

A key lesson for the party is to mobilize the working class to lead not only the mass struggles in the cities, but also the armed struggle in the countryside. They also play a key role in strengthening the mass movement in the cities, and in combining with the student movement to arouse and mobilize the broad masses and shake the pillars of the reactionary state.

The peasant masses also played a powerful role in the anti-dictatorship struggle. The peasant movement is a giant force. Advancing their struggle for land is the key to galvanizing them. They are the main force and foundation of the people's war in the countryside. Patient mass work and antifeudal struggles are the main factors that allowed the armed struggle to rise from one level to a higher level, and for the NPA to deepen its roots and grow in strength.

Another key lesson is the need to establish and expand the different levels of the united front to unite the people. The foundation of the united front is the alliance of workers and peasants, primarily in the form of the leadership of the Party and the working class of the people's army, a largely peasant army. On the basis of the widespread mobilization of the working class and peasants, further alliance is formed with other democratic and progressive classes, as well as with other patriotic classes. On this basis, a broader antifascist front is formed together with the out-of-power sections of the ruling classes.

The Party should grasp these






basic lessons. As it was during the Marcos dictatorship, the Party, tempered in five decades of struggle, is presently in a position to lead the people in their revolutionary resistance. It is deeply and widely rooted among the toiling masses and the middle classes, and ready to mobilize them in various fields of struggle. The Party is continually infused with fresh blood among the young revolutionaries.

The NPA serves as the arm of the Party and people. Thousands of Red fighters are determined to advance guerrilla warfare throughout the archipelago to defend the Filipino people. The NPA has frustrated five decades of the enemy's military offensives. It will surely continue to expand and grow stronger in the coming years. The NPA is determined to strike at the pillars of fascist rule.

The reign of the criminal clique of Marcos Jr, alongside Duterte and the fascist AFP, is clear manifestation of the moribund ruling semicolonial and semifeudal system. The social conditions of the toiling masses are rapidly deteriorating while a few continue to accumulate wealth in collusion with foreign capitalists.

Amid these conditions, the Party and all revolutionary forces are determined to arouse, unite and mobilize the Filipino people. In commemorating the 50th anniversary of the martial law, the Party vows to continue to lead the broad masses of the people to advance their revolutionary struggle until their aspiration for genuine national freedom and democracy is achieved.

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3 women activists illegally arrested; indigenous people's leader abducted

Adora Faye de Vera, 66, poet, veteran anti-dictatorship activist and a former national officer of Gabriela, was unjustly arrested at Teachers Village East, Quezon City on August 24. The arrest was made based on trumped-up charges lodged against her in Panay in 2006. She is currently detained in Calinog, Iloilo.

De Vera is a symbol of the brutality of martial law against politically detained women. It was in 1976 when she was abducted, along with Rolando Federis and Flora Coronacion, by state elements in Quezon. She and Coronacion were repeatedly raped. She managed to escape after nine months of illegal imprisonment. Federis and Coronacion were never again seen.

In Panay, police arrested Lenilyn Costurio Jaynos, a former daycare teacher in Iloilo City and a member

of Buylog-Capiz, on September 2. Not less than 30 police officers raided her home in Happy Homes Subdivision, Barangay Sibaguan, Roxas City.

Meanwhile, peasant group Pamanggas also reported the military harassment against Nanay Lucia Capaducio, its current chairperson, on September 3. Police visited her residence in Leon, Iloilo.

In Agusan del Norte, 76-year old Atheliana Hijos was arrested on August 30 in District 8, Barangay

Kamangjangan, Nasipit on false statements of soldiers that she is an NPA combatant and was involved in NPA tactical offensives in Caraga. Hijos is a retired teacher and a founding member of the Women's Alliance for True Change-Mindanao. She is also an official of the Gabriela-Caraga.

In Kalinga, 63-year old Steve Tauli, a member of the Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA) council, was abducted on August 21. He was taken at Ag-a Road, Tabuk City, near the CPA's office, by five men. He was forced into a van where he was threatened to be killed if he did not agree to become a state intelligence agent. His relatives found him the following day.

AB

Court dismisses arrest warrants used against 30 detainees

AT LEAST SIX false search and arrest warrants used against 30 activists have been dismissed one after another by different courts since January 2021. The warrants were all signed by Judge Cecilyn Burgos-Villavert, the so-called "search warrant factory" and issued on the basis of fictitious statements of the military and police. In the said six cases, the courts also dismissed all the "evidence" that the police had planted against the arrested and voided the cases against them.

The latest of these was the voiding last September 5 of the warrant used against Reina Mae Nasino and her two other companions Ram Carlo Bautista and Alma Moran. It can be recalled that prisoner Nasino gave birth to Baby River, who died in October 2020 after being separated from her. The state only granted Nasino a few hours to visit her baby's funeral.

Earlier, the warrant used against Renante Gamara, consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) for the peace negotiations, was voided on August 3. In April 2022, the search warrants used against Alexander Birondo and Winona Birondo, both NDFP staff, were also voided. The dismissal of warrants saw the release of Dennise Velasco, Cora Agovida, Michael Bartolome, Lady Ann Salem and Rodrigo Esparago.

Bayan-Central Luzon leader Pol Viuya was temporarily released on August 31 upon posting bail after the court junked the "incredible" statement of the witness. He was arrested with Joseph Canlas, vice chairperson of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas in March 2021. Canlas died in jail in May 2021.

AFP kills Ka Oris' son, daughter-in-law

ELEMENTS OF THE 4th ID summarily killed while in custody Vincent Madlos and wife Glorivic Campos Belandres on September 3. Vincent was the son of Ka Oris and Ka Maria Malaya.

Contrary to military pronouncements, the two did not die in an encounter in Barangay Capitan Bayong, Impasug-ong, Bukidnon. The New People's Army-North Central Mindanao Region (NPA-NCMR) immediately reported that the two were arrested while waiting at the Atugan Bridge in the same municipality on September 1. No encounter took place in Barangay Capitan Bayong on that day, according to NPA-NCMR. This village is 1.5 kilometers away from the Atugan bridge.

Their killing is a violation of the rules of war which guarantees the life and dignity of any combatant arrested or incapable of battle. The desecration of cadavers of victims, like how the military poses these to make them appear to have died in an "encounter," also violates the rules of war.

3 NPA armed actions in two days

UNITS OF THE New People's Army (NPA) mounted an ambush in Albay, a harassment operation in Negros and a checkpoint in Surigao del Sur in August. In addition, the NPA-Nueva Ecija scored a victory against the police's Special Action Force in an encounter.

An NPA unit ambushed at least 20 soldiers of the combined units of the 31st IB and 49th IB in Barangay Mamlad, Pio Duran, Albay last August 31. Two soldiers were killed. This action is part of the NPA's efforts to punish AFP's abusive and fascist troops.

The said AFP unit has been combing the area and sowing terror among civilian communities at the borders of Pio Duran, Albay and Don-sol, Sorsogon.

In Negros Oriental, two soldiers were killed while another was injured in an NPA harassment operation against the 62nd IB's Alpha Coy detachment on August 30 in Sitio Casingan, Barangay Trinidad in Guihulngan City.

This is the NPA's response to military coercion and harassment against civilian communities, which includes holding Johnny Dela Peña at gunpoint, as soldiers ransacked his home in Sitio Nangaran, Barangay Macagahay, Moses Padilla, Negros Occidental on August 23. The houses of Eboy Pitulan, Jonard Pitulan, Tornie Pitulan and Linda Villacoher, peasants and residents in the area, were also ransacked.

The NPA mounted a checkpoint and blocked police elements of the Simultaneous Anti-Criminality Law Enforcement Operations (SACLEO), a modus operandi in sowing terror in communities, aboard a vehicle in Barangay Libas Gua, San Miguel, Surigao del Sur August 30. The action sought to prevent the police's plan to attack civilians. Instead of stopping, they ran away firing.

Meanwhile, two troopers of the fascist Special Action Force (SAFs) were killed even as an undetermined number were injured in an encounter between the NPA and joint forces of the 91st IB, 84th IB, 2nd Special Action Battalion, and SAF on September 1 at the border of Gabaldon and Gen. Tinio, Nueva Ecija. There were no casualties on the part of the Red fighters.

NTF-Elcac harasses unions relentlessly

WITH ITS DOORS and windows destroyed, the offices of ADLO and ANGLO-KMU in Barangay Pinyahan, Quezon City were ransacked last September 5 at 3 a.m. Workers who were set to meet in office reported that when they arrived, their belongings were scattered and the office door opened.

On orders of the NTF-Elcac, police and intelligence agents' relentlessly harass union members in Laguna and Manila. Their latest victim is Mario Fernandez, head of the Technol Eight Phils. Workers Union, who was openly threatened last August 12.

About 200 unionists have reported that they have been "visited" by soldiers and police in their homes since 2021 to threaten them and their families. These were reported by unions in Gardenia Bakeries, Wyeth Philippines, NXP Philippines and Daiwa Seiko Philippines. The fascists' house-to-house campaign intensify when unions are set to engage in negotiations in the CBA (Collective Bargaining Agreement.)



Urban poor protests in Quezon City. Hundreds of destitute residents from Barangay Tatalon, Sitio San Roque, Payatas and Commonwealth in Quezon City protested on September 5 in front of the city hall to demand subsidies, wages, jobs, and affordable housing for all. The protest action was led by the Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap or Kadamay.

Following the action, the local government was compelled to host a dialogue with the leaders of each community and the city's Housing Community Development and Resettlement Department (HCDRD). On August, Kadamay-San Roque sent a letter to the local government of Quezon City in connection with their grievances.

Navotas residents march against reclamation. Fishermen, *tahong* farmers and residents marched to the Navotas City Hall on September 5 to oppose the local government and San Miguel Corporations' 576-hectare Navotas Coastal Bay Reclamation project, which will evict 1,000 fishermen, *tahong* farmers and fishpen workers. The planned reclamation will also destroy the environment. The protest was led by the newly-established Samahan ng Mang-ingisda at Magtatahong sa Navotas.

Protest on first day of classes. Youth groups launched protests on the first day of in-person classes in various universities on September 5. Student protests were held in the University of the Philippines (UP)-Manila, Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila, UP-Diliman and the De La Salle University. They opposed the planned budget cut to education, mandatory ROTC, red-tagging of progressive organizations and infringement of academic freedom.

Budget for corruption and fascism

The Marcos Jr regime is prioritizing debt payments, fascism and corruption in its proposed 2023 budget.

About a third (P1.6 trillion) of the P5.263 trillion budget is allotted for debt payments—higher compared to P1.3 trillion allotted for the current year. It is far greater than the P852.8 billion budget for education which is shared by four departments and agencies.

This is followed by the budget for the Build, Build, Build program of the former Duterte regime and joint allocation for the military and police.

In a study, the Ibon Foundation pointed out that the Department of Public Works and Highways will get the largest chunk of the total budget (13.6% or P718.4 billion). This agency holds the bulk of infrastructure projects known to serve as milking cow of the ruling clique and their bourgeois partners.

This is higher than the 13.5% or P710.7 billion allotted to the DepEd. Other funds are allocated for the Commission on Higher Education (0.6% or P30.5 billion), state universities and colleges (1.9% or P97.7 billion) and DTI-TESDA (0.3% or P13.7 billion).

The budget for the Department of National Defense (4.6%) and the Department of Interior and Local Government-Philippine National Police (3.6%) followed with a combined P432 billion fund.

The allocation for the Department of Health (3.7% or P196.1 billion) and PhilHealth (1.9% or P100.2 billion) follow way behind.

The Department of Agriculture's allocation of 1.9% or P102.2 billion, Department of Agrarian Reform (0.3% or P15.9 billion) and Department of Labor and Employment (0.5% or P26.2 billion) are far less.

Items allocated for social protection, including aid, described by an official of the regime as a "waste of funds", was reduced by P49.1 billion or 8.7%.

Meanwhile, Marcos Jr's minions quickly approved the P9.6 billion budget for the Office of the President. The P2 billion budget for Vice President Sara Duterte, three times more than previously allocated for former Vice President Leni Robredo, is also set to be approved.

Sectors mount protests vs 2023 budget

Successive protests were launched by various sectors in front of Congress and in their workplaces from August 25 to September 5 as deliberations of the Marcos regime's proposed budget for 2023 began. They demand rechannelling funds to social services, aid and production subsidies.

September 5. In the morning, the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas and Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas protested to demand a bigger budget for their sector. In the afternoon, a few hundred public school teachers protested to demand salary increases and doubling education funds for 2023. They mounted the protest in time for the opening of the National Teachers Month.

September 2. Hacienda Tinang farmers and farmers' groups trooped to Congress during the hearing of the Department of

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Grab drivers halt operations in Pampanga. About 500 riders of the delivery company Grab halted operations on August 25 in protest to the company's new policy of lowering delivery fee rate from P49 to P26 per 3 kilometers. Riders gathered in front of the company's office in Balibago, Angeles.

Commemoration of Lianga Massacre's 7th anniversary. Human rights and national minorities groups mounted a protest and lit candles on the Commission on Human Rights grounds on September 1 in commemoration of the 7th anniversary of Lianga Massacre, which saw the killing of Dionel Campos, Aurelio Sinzo, and director of Lumad school Emerito Samarca by paramilitary forces in Han-ayan Village, Diatagon, Lianga, Surigao del Sur.

Bring Mary Jane Veloso home. Led by Migrante International, progressive groups held a prayer rally on September 5 in front of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) in Pasay City for Mary Jane Veloso, a Filipino migrant worker who became a victim of human trafficking, and imprisoned in Indonesia over the past 12 years. Groups insist that the Philippine government should push for Veloso's release and be sent home to the Philippines. This was raised during the recent state visit of Ferdinand Marcos Jr to Indonesia.

BJMP chief in Panay ousted. The protest and noise barrage of more than a hundred prisoners in Pototan, Iloilo forced the ouster of the cruel jail warden on August 24. Prisoners climbed to the prison roof and raised placards bearing calls "Oust warden!" and "We're hungry!" As a result, Chief Inspector Norberto Miciano Jr. was removed from office.

They complained that, apart from having nothing to eat, the warden prohibited visitors to bring food. Among those in the jail are political detainees who are activists and organizers on the island of Panay.

Neoliberalism killed the salt industry

After three decades of favoring imported salt, capitalists and politicians are now complaining of its imminent shortage and rising prices in the market. Iodized salt is now priced at ₱29 per kilogram from ₱12 in 2018. Concerns are also being raised about supply issues, especially after the pandemic exposed vulnerabilities of import dependence.

A senator even said it is embarrassing for a country surrounded by seas to import salt. The country imports 93% (550,000 metric tons) of its salt needs, according to state statistics. The senator did not mention that the local salt industry in the Philippines has been on the throes of extinction for the past three decades. It was killed through a series of neoliberal measures and unbridled importation.

Salt is used in cooking and preserving food. It is also used in food and medicine manufacturing, steel making, fabric, paper and even bullets, as well in animal food and fertilizer.

Killing local production

Local salt farmers previously supplied all the country's needs. It was in the 1940s when commercial salt was first developed, mainly on the Bulacan coasts which supplied 45% of domestic needs. Other large salt farms were found in Pangasinan, Mindoro, Las Piñas and Cavite. There were also special salt farms in Zamboanga, Bohol and

Negros.

This was reversed starting in the 1990s when the then Ramos regime banned the sale of salt that was not "iodized" purportedly to address the lack of iodine in the Filipino diet. The state blamed the downfall of the industry on the backward salt production. But the fact is salt farmers were bankrupted with the flood of cheap imported salt.

Instead of developing the capacity of local producers to refine and iodize their salt, the Ramos regime opened up the industry to unlimited importation. This was in line with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade which he signed, and the country's entry into the World Trade Organization in 1995. To further favor importation, he prohibited the selling of non-iodized or local salt.

Revenues of local salt farmers



plunged when traders turned to cheap imported salt. From ₱100 per cavan in the 1990s, merchants bought local salt at ₱35 per cavan in 2003. Local salt makers lost their income. From the 1990s to early 2000s, 32 out of 52 salt farms in Bulacan were forced to close. The farms were further decreased when reclamation in Manila Bay commenced. Hundreds of salt workers lost their jobs when the salt farms closed.

By 2010, 150,000 metric tons or 28% of the country's needs were produced by local salt makers. In 2022, only 7% of the salt supply was local. The bulk of salt needs is imported from Australia and China.

AB

From page 5

Agrarian Reform's budget. They raised the demand for genuine land distribution to farmers. In Manila, health workers of San Lazaro Hospital and Jose Reyes Memorial Medical Center, led by the Alliance of Health Workers, protested in front of their hospitals to demand a higher health budget. They also called for the distribution of the

delayed Covid-19 benefits.

August 30. Various groups under the All Workers Unity went to Congress to demand wage increase, lower prices of goods, and regular and decent jobs. Police violently dispersed the workers' protest.

August 25. Various sectors of the University of the Philippines

(UP) protested in front of the Quezon Hall in UP Diliman, Quezon City while a meeting of the Board of Regents was ongoing. They opposed the proposed 2023 budget cut to the UP System. They also called for the safe return of in-person classes and implementation of pro-student university policies.

AB

Monopoly in the sugar industry under martial law

Crisis, hunger and deep inequality are the legacies left by the US-Marcos dictatorship in the island of Negros. Under Marcos Sr, Negros was further tied to the production of sugarcane which he controlled, in collusion with his cronies, to overly profit from sugar exportation to US.

In the wake of the decreasing prices of sugar since the mid-1970s, severe hunger hit Negros which affected about a million toiling masses. Serious malnutrition affected a hundred thousand children. Until 1986, 490 children died of starvation. These ignited popular uprisings by the toiling people, participated by democratic and religious sectors, which were brutally suppressed by the military such as the Escalante Massacre of September 1985.

Cronyism in the industry

Sugarcane farmers and workers of haciendas and sugarmills show mighty resistance as they refuse to relive the hunger they had experienced in the 1980s. It can be rooted in the crop-for-export economy and monopoly control of big bourgeois-compradors like Roberto Benedicto, which is further exacerbated by the absolute control of the US-Marcos dictatorship in the sugar industry.

The suffering of workers and the people who rely on the sugar industry began when dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr established the Philippine Sugar Commission (Philsucom) in 1974. He gave the Philippine Exchange Company, Inc., owned by his friend Benedicto, monopoly power in exporting sugar. After that, he appointed Benedicto to lead Philsucom. Benedicto used his position to lower the price of sugar purchased in the local market to earn more profit from selling it to the US.

Up to 27% of the government's dollar revenue comes from export-

ing sugar mainly to the US. But US imports of sugar in the Philippines dropped in 1974 when the US lowered the sugar quota or the amount of its sugar imports from the Philippines. Its price dropped in 1977 to \$ 0.06 per pound of sugar from \$ 0.65 per pound in 1975. By 1985, it fell to \$ 0.04 per pound.

Stored sugar in the country were damaged and sugarcane farmers were forced to reduce production. Thousands of sugarcane and sugarmill workers lost their jobs. In the face of this situation, Marcos Sr and Benedicto selfishly acquired vast amounts of dollars while the majority of those in production suffer from hunger. In 1977, the National Sugar Trading Corporation (Nasutra) was built to control sugar trading and once again given to Benedicto.

In 1982 the US returned the sugar quota. But it's lower. For example, the country's estimated sugar production is about 1.6 million tons but the US sugar quota was only 312,000 tons in 1984-1985. Many sugarcane farmers were buried in debt, and eventually, sugarmills shut down. More than 190,000 sugar workers in the sugar industry lost their jobs in 1984.

Meanwhile through Nasutra, Benedicto's monopoly operation continued. He buys sugar in the local market for \$18.16 per *picul* (60 kilograms) and sells it for \$63.70

per *picul* abroad. At the estimates of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, Benedicto earned \$700 million in its first three years of operation. Benedicto and Marcos Sr's loot in the sugar industry reached up to \$1.15 billion from 1975 to 1984.

Burden in the sugar industry

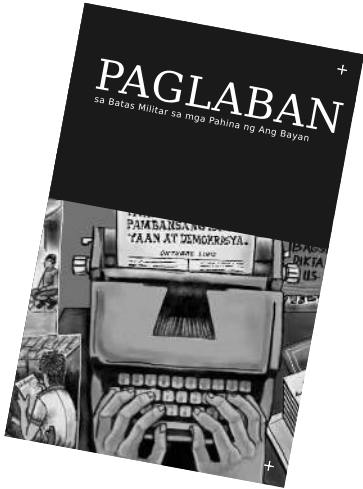
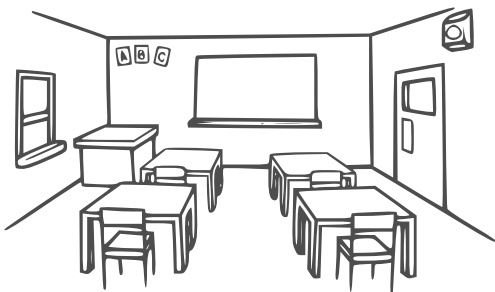
The recent hullabaloo pushing for the importation of 200,000 to 300,000 metric tons of sugar is a reflection of the control of bureaucrats and businesses of the sugar industry. Since mid-1990s, under neoliberal policies, the local sugar industry has been repeatedly in crisis as a result of growing imports and smuggling, and supply and price manipulation. This policy contradicts with local sugar mill owners, although they also collude with traders and smugglers to manipulate market price.

The masses in Negros are very concerned because the economy of the island depends on the production of sugarcane. If this importation continues, imported sugar will flood the market and the price of local sugar will decrease. It is feared that 66,000 sugarmill workers will lose their jobs, and will greatly affect up to 700,000 people working in sugarcane fields, as well as 5-6 million more indirectly employed by the sugar industry in various ways.



36,000
teachers
91,000
classrooms

what DepEd Secretary
Sara Duterte failed to
address on the opening of
in-person classes last
September 4.



#ML50 sa AB

The AB editorial board
published the book “**Paglaban
sa batas militar sa mga pahina
ng Ang Bayan**” last September
3. This contains 50 articles
reflecting the heroic struggle of
the progressive and
revolutionary people against
the US-Marcos dictatorship.

Visit: <https://ab-ml50.pages.dev/>

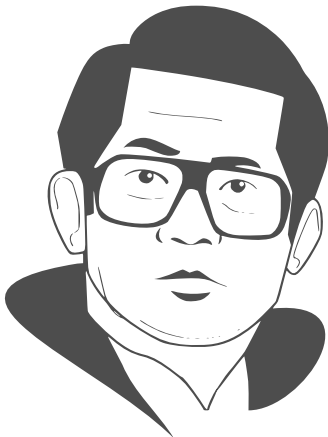


September
12, 1907

Execution in Manila of
**Macario
Sakay**,
one of the last anti-colonial
revolutionaries, after
surrendering to the American
colonial government.

1,900
number of
desaparecidos from
1972 up to the
present.

Source: Desaparecidos



Benigno
Aquino Jr

buried on **August 31, 1983**, 10 days after
being assassinated on orders of the Marcos
Sr. clique. **Millions** joined his funeral
march which lasted the whole day.

\$12B

value of **arms and aid poured by
the US to Ukraine** from February
to August 2022 in order to prolong
its proxy war in the country and
retain the puppet president
Zelensky.

70,000

marchers in Czech Republic against
EU and NATO last September 3. They
demanded neutrality in the war and
criticized the government's inaction
in the face of price increases.

44

Palestinians killed, 15 of
whom were children, and
hundreds more severely
wounded during Israel's 3-
day bombing of Palestine
in August.

"Insurgency-free" declarations will lead to intensified abuse

Since June, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) declared the provinces and cities of Davao (Region 11) "insurgency-free" and plans to soon include Davao Oriental. Earlier, the AFP Northern Luzon Command made a similar declaration in connection with the Ilocos Region.

These declarations follow Rodrigo Duterte's empty boast of "crushing" the revolutionary movement. Supposedly, five provinces in Southern Tagalog, Zamboanga del Sur, several towns in Isabela, and others have also been "cleared."

In the US counterinsurgency book, which serves as AFP doctrine, "insurgency-free" declarations are issued purportedly as preparation for so-called development. It forms part of the "clear-hold-consolidate-develop" (CHCD) tactic where counterinsurgency campaigns are underway.

Over the decades, the AFP's CHCD went by different names, which is first implemented at the village level. In "cleared" villages that are under control of military forces, it is common to have a small building constructed which the AFP claims to be a symbol of progress.

In the case of Davao, Ilocos and others, more grand projects are planned. On the AFP's goading, Davao's Regional Development Council poured ₱287.6 billion for 2022, with a larger share (67%) dedicated to infrastructure projects. These serve mainly as milking cow for military officers, local ruling factions and their business partners.

A 2020 study esti-

mated that by 2023, land under capitalist plantations in Mindanao would increase by 600,000 hectares. This is in addition to a million hectares targeted for the expansion of palm oil plantations. These are set to take over the land being tilled by farmers and the sacred ancestral land of the Lumads.

Ka Rosa Guidon of the National Democratic Front-Ilocos pointed out that despite declaring the region to have been "cleared of rebels," soldiers and police continue to pour into the provinces of Ilocos. Military operations are focused on communities that are to be affected by, and are opposed to destructive mining, dam and wind-mill projects. The soldiers and police serve as security of these projects and suppress the residents' protests.

Despite involving anomalies and lacking paperwork and accounting, the National Task Force (NTF)-Elcac's purported "barangay development program" will get ₱15.6 billion in the Marcos regime's 2023 budget. This is in addition to the funds allocated to the agency under various departments. This will feed the corruption of generals and officials in the coming year with a plan to raise NTF-Elcac's dedicated funds to "cleared" villages.

In the context of the fluidity of guerrilla warfare, it is nonsense to declare an area "insurgency-free," while guerrilla forces continue to shift areas of operations in order to widen and expand its forces. The AFP has issued these declarations many times in the past and has always eaten its words.

Such declarations are accompanied by wanton attacks against the masses and a show of military strength. Tens of thousands of individuals and families have suffered at the hands of the military and police in various types of abuses, including a number of murders. In Davao region, at least 1,500 victims have been victims of human rights violations in the past two years.

The AFP declarations mean "development" for landlords, businesses, big politicians and the military. But to farmers and indigenous people, it is the equivalent of losing their land, their livelihoods and identities.



The revolution cannot be erased in Davao Occidental

The 10th ID of the Armed Forces of the Philippines declared on August 18, Davao Occidental as "insurgency free" or "safe" from insurgency. The military celebrated their declaration along with the province's warlords and political dynasties and their allied landlords and capitalists. However, this will not dampen the people's determination to fight.

The military and the local ruling class rushed this declaration. They dread the people's democratic movement and the existing revolutionary power in the countryside. Before the declaration, they subjected Lumad and peasant communities to widespread militarization and killings. To justify their attacks, they accused people who dare fight as connected to or supporters of the revolutionary movement.

Poverty enclave

Davao Occidental has a total area of 216,345 hectares. It is at the southeast end of Mindanao. Its shores and vast mountains are occupied by a large population of minority Lumads such as the B'laan, Tagaka and Sarangani Monobo, Moros, some groups of Marures and Sangirs (tribes that have come from Indonesia) and many settlers.

The province is ranked among those with the biggest number of poor families. Majority of its people are farmers who have no land and fishermen. Coconut is the main product of the province, also having significant rice, corn and coffee production. Land and production are controlled by a few wealthy clans.

Small farmers in the province suffer from low productivity and lack of income. In addition, there is no transportation system in many villages. As a result, increasing number of farms are being abandoned and left idle. The province's farm workers receive the lowest wages in the whole region, although in some areas, farm wages were increased following peasant mass actions.

The land problem faced by peasants and lumads in the province is worsening. In Malita, San Miguel Corporation continues to expand its operations despite opposition of affected residents and environmental groups. In 2016, the company was exposed for engaging in fraud to get approval for the construction of a coal fired power plant and an industrial park project covering thousands of hectares and evict many farmers and fishermen.

Mining operation of foreign companies are also set to commence in different parts of the province. Up to 77,861.56 hectares in total are set to be covered by separate concessions of seven foreign companies. These will cover lumad ancestral lands.

The local government expects tourism and agribusiness plantations to expand along with ongoing repairs to the major provincial roads. These will evict farmers and destroy the environment.

Lorded over by warlord-politicians

The province of Davao Occidental was created in 2012 from the territory of Davao del Sur as accommodation to the despotic Bautista and Joyce cliques. These two families, both criminals and warlords, rule the province. They use armed violence to maintain their domination and silence anyone who oppose them and their political enemies. Under their reign, farmers and minority peoples suffer from severe

oppression and widespread injustice. They arbitrarily punish civilians who made mistakes or were accused of crimes.

One of the largest dynasties in power is the Bautistas. Nine members of this family currently occupy key positions in the bureaucracy. Their family holds the positions of governor, vice governor, the representative of the lone district, a member of the provincial council, two mayors, a vice mayor, a council and a partylist representative. Meanwhile in Jose Abad Santos, the father-and-son Joyce occupied the mayoral seat (child) and vice mayor position (father), one child became a councilor, and one became a barangay captain.

Bautista Sr is known as a strong ally of the dictator Marcos Sr in the 1960s to 1970. He was in charge of the entry of the Cojuangco's businesses in Davao del Sur. Joyce's patriarch John Joyce became the first mayor of Jose Abad Santos (formerly Trinidad). The Joyces reign with brazen suppression and accumulate wealth while their constituents suffer from extreme poverty and injustice.

The Joyce family are in collusion with the police and military in their crimes and syndicate activities including gambling and smuggling of drugs and contraband.

