

# New People's Army: 'Theo-lib' in Asia

by Allen Douglas

In April 1984, at the time of *EIR*'s last cover story on the Philippines, the New People's Army fielded a force of some 5,000 men, and killed an average of 8 people per day nationwide. Sixteen months later, their armed force of 12,000 now kills 14 Filipinos per day, the majority of whom are civilians. Over the last year, 100 local officials, including 60 mayors, have been assassinated. On a typical rampage in March 1984, to celebrate their founding 15 years ago, the Maoist NPA entered a village and gunned down 70, allegedly in retaliation for the villagers' supposed participation in the killing of two NPA terrorists. Crucial parts of the country's infrastructure, particularly electricity grids, have been destroyed—an estimated \$10 million worth in the last year.

Contrary to the media-created images of Maoist Robin Hoods or "freedom fighters," the NPA is of the same species as the Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso*) of Peru, or the Pol Pot butchers of Kampuchea. Their ideology is a fanatically anti-technology, anti-civilization blend of Maoism and the Marxist-flavored Theology of Liberation. Outlined below is the face of the enemy which could soon be running the Philippines and polluting all of the ASEAN countries, if the State Department-run destabilization of the Philippines succeeds.

**Strength:** estimated at 12,000 armed regulars of the NPA. The NPA's parent group, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), has control over some 20 trade unions. The mass political arm of the CPP, a coalition of front groups called the National Democratic Front, is an integral part of the "left opposition" to the Marcos government, valued for the ability to turn out mass numbers for anti-government rallies in Manila and elsewhere. The "mainstream" of the left opposition, the Convenors' Group of Lorenzo Tanada and José Diokno, has in its official platform, a call for the legalization of the CPP. In April 1985, the NPA held a press conference on the island of Mindanao in the south (see map, page 33), to announce that an alliance had been struck with the other major terrorist groups—the Qaddafi- and Khomeini-funded Moro National Liberation Front, the People's Liberation Movement (specialists in the assassination of police), and the Sandigan Army of the Social Democrats.

**Locations:** Operating from strongholds in the Cordillera Mountains of northern Luzon, the central islands of Samar and Panay, and the southernmost island of Mindanao, the NPA is active in 5,400 of the country's 41,615 provinces. In certain areas, like the city of Davao in Mindanao, their estimated active support is 25-30% of the population. In northern Luzon, their estimated active base is 15-20%. Functioning largely in rural areas only a short time ago, they are now, according to Philippine sources, "knocking on the doors of the cities," and fielding assassination squads, called the Armed City Partisans, in Manila.

**Financing:** Originally financed by the old Filipino oligarchical families such as the Lopezes (a practice which continues to this day), and the Chinese Communist Party (at least in the early period), these sources have been supplemented more recently by the Soviet Union. The NPA is reportedly supplied through Sabah, the northern Borneo province in Malaysia, where the Soviets maintain training grounds. In addition, the Soviets fly in supplies directly to the Philippines from Vietnam. Two Soviet pilots have recently been captured, landing supplies on the jungle airstrips in Mindanao built by the U.S. military near the end of World War II.

Several sources have also confirmed that the NPA derives funds from the multinational corporations that operate particularly in Mindanao. This is alleged protection money, which of course, many of the Filipino planters are unable to pay.

The NPA is also increasing its funds from the vast marijuana plantations maintained under contract with local farmers, 11 of which were discovered by the government last year. Also critical is the vast amount of money pouring in from the National Council of Churches in the United States and the World Council of Churches in Europe, according to sources in the U.S. embassy in Manila.

## The left-wing of the IMF

The NPA began in the mid-1960s with a group of radical students, the Students' Cultural Association of the University of the Philippines, around Prof. José Maria Sison. The Sison group joined the Youth Section of the old Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP), founded in 1930 with Comintern money and personnel. Arguing for armed revolution, Sison and associates pitted themselves against the older leadership of the PKP, mostly veterans of the Huk rebellion of the 1940s and 1950s which had been crushed by the Philippine government and the U.S. Military Assistance Groups of Col. Edward Lansdale.

After being expelled from the PKP for arguing this line, Sison and 11 others formed the nucleus of a new organization, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), in December 1968. In April 1969, they hooked up with a middle-level commander of a Huk unit which never surrendered, Bernabe Buscayno (Commander Dante). The New People's

Army (named after the "People's Liberation Army"—the Huks) was born as the armed forces of the CPP.

By 1972, when the terrorist activities of the NPA and allied groups forced President Marcos to declare martial law, the number of NPA regulars was less than 1,000. The exponential growth began particularly after 1982, as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) began shutting down the major development projects begun by the Marcos government, producing increasing misery in large sections of the population.

The NPA functioned then, as now, as the left wing of the IMF. For instance, the government identified the shortage of electricity by 1980 as a crucial bottleneck of national development and planned the Chico River Dam Project in northern Luzon. This project, which would have been the largest hydropower project in Southeast Asia, providing electricity as well as water for irrigation, was stopped by an alliance of the NPA, radical anthropologists, missionaries, and the Kalinagan tribe. The latter, a tribe of headhunters who lived in the area of the scheduled project, entered an alliance with the "progressive" NPA.

The NPA provided a crucial part of the manpower for a June 1985 riot protesting the construction of a nuclear power plant on Bataan peninsula. For several hours, 7,000 demonstrators barricaded the main highway on the peninsula, requiring the deployment of government tanks and armored personnel carriers. The demonstration, led by Sen. Lorenzo Tanada, the head of the Nuclear Free Philippine Coalition, is typical of the NPA's joint deployments with leading elements of the "left opposition" grouped around NPA-sympathizer José Diokno and Tanada.

## The role of the Church

The reports of radical priests such as Conrado Balweg, S.J., joining NPA assassin squads, and the romantic media coverage of the "theology of liberation" movement, has purposely obscured some deeper truths. The Philippines, since its colonization by Spain in the 16th century, has been an overwhelmingly Catholic country (85-90%). Throughout the archipelago, there are two, and only two, mass organizations: the Church and the State. To an ever increasing extent, a major faction of the former is in insurrection against the latter. The NPA, supported by this faction of the Church, is, like Peru's Shining Path and a major faction of Nicaragua's Sandinistas, a product of the theology of liberation, set in motion by the Second Vatican Council of 1962-64, with its "orientation toward the poor" and its "dialogue with Marxism." The insurrectionist Church faction is directed by the Benedictines and the Jesuits, under the theology of liberation banner, and in the Philippines enjoys the protection of the so-called moderate faction of the Church led by Cardinal Sin. Complementing his support for the theo-libbers, Sin is a major opponent of Marcos and a defender of the IMF.

For the Philippines, the Vatican II process, coordinated

by the ancient Venetian oligarchy, and their agent, the former Patriarch of Venice, Pope John XXIII, meant that the Jesuits, for instance, were reoriented from their "anti-communist" profile of the 1950s toward Jacobin revolution. From the Jesuits' elite Ateneo de Manila University, training ground for much of the oligarchical elite, came the theological arguments for insurgency. As a chief Jesuit theoretician (*jesuita*, in its common Spanish usage, is a synonym for "liar"), Vitaliano Gorospe, put it: "It is high time that the Church rethink its previous theories, re-examine its relationship with the keepers of the established power and develop a theology of organized violence in behalf of the poor and oppressed, in keeping with the total message of the Gospel."

Not surprisingly, the central figures in the post-Vatican II "reform" of the Philippines Church, such as those leading the 59-day demonstration outside Manila's San Miguel Cathedral in 1969, such as Fr. Luis Jalandoni and Fr. Ed de la Torre, later became chief apologists and collaborators of the NPA. The head of Ateneo's Loyola School of Theology, Fr. Antonio Lambino, intoned in 1976, "I believe that even the more radical liberation theologians in our midst serve a function and do a service to the Church in the Philippines." This was, and is, an unmistakable endorsement of the Balwegs and others participating in the assassination squads of the NPA.

In keeping with this orientation is the vast infrastructure of insurgency being built through the Church's National Secretariat for Social Action, with its regional units in Mindanao, Luzon, and the other islands. Complementing this, are the various task forces of the Association of Major Religious Superiors on "squatters, laborers, farmers, cultural communities, and political detainees." In urban centers, such as the Tondo slum of Manila, elements of the church have built an extensive infrastructure modeled on the Saul Alinsky "community organizing" methods, the methods which created the black-urban gangs in the United States.

One of the most important recruiting vehicles for the NPA is another post-Vatican II development, the "Basic Christian Communities" (BCCs). Set up particularly in isolated rural areas, the BCCs are groups of 30-50 people set up in decentralized groups (as opposed to centralized parishes) run by "lay ministry" appointed by the Jesuits and their allies. Through the process of "conscientization," modeled on "attack therapy" forms of brainwashing used to create cults in the advanced sector, the peasants are made to believe that the government is evil, technology is evil, and progress is evil. The same process has been used extensively to build the radical unions like the National Federation of Sugar Workers. The debate on whether the BCCs are really vehicles for the NPA is a fraud, since as the economic situation worsens, the BCCs necessarily, from the gnostic theology they embody, become part of the expanding mass base of the NPA, precisely as in Nicaragua they fed the Sandinistas.