

## Philippines NPA: a case of Soviet irregular warfare

by Linda de Hoyos and Dean Andromidas

In an interview with *EIR*, Philippines Sen. Alberto Romulo stated his belief that unless the Philippines economy is given a reprieve in the form of a limitation set on its annual debt service, the government will be unable to defeat the Communist insurgent New People's Army. As the documentation produced here shows, this concern is no exaggeration.

The NPA's expansion took off in 1985-86 with the agitation against then-President Ferdinand Marcos. However, despite ceasefire, negotiations, and rehabilitation projects under the last three years of the Corazon Aquino administration, the NPA has continued to flourish. As of even a year ago, the overall estimated strength of the Communist Party/New People's Army was placed at 25,200, with a total mass base of 2,055,288.

But the actual fighting force of the NPA may be stronger. According to Communist Party founder Jose Ma Sison, in his soon-to-be-published book, *The View from Within*, the NPA has now a total fighting force of 230,000. This includes, says Sison, 10,000 full-time guerrillas, 20,000 part-time soldiers (farmers by day, fighters by night), and 200,000 militiamen (hard-core party members that represent the political backbone of the NPA in the countryside). The full-timers, says Sison, are "armed with automatic rifles," and the part-timers are "carriers of about 8,000 inferior arms."

As of March 1988, the CPP/NPA had built 68 guerrilla fronts deployed over the extent of the country, in nearly every province. Of the total 41,630 *barangays* (districts) nationwide, 18,090, or 19% are affected by the NPA, with 3,066, or 7%, influenced by the NPA, and 4,993, or 12%, infiltrated. Another 7,704, or 19%, of the *barangays* are threatened

with Communist Party expansion.

Militarily, as the Filipino government report indicates, "the active regular mobile force is the leading fight unit of the NPA . . . [which is] used in launching big military operations against government troops; in defending district bases against the 'search and destroy campaign' of the Armed Forces; and the leading force of the independent 'armed regiment' which the CPP/NPA establishes." According to captured documents, the NPA has two battalions and 14 *coys* (100-man formations) in Luzon; one battalion and six *coys* in Visayas; and 13 *coys* in Mindanao. These formations, however, are rarely grouped together for long, but break down into their sub-formations. These mobile regular striking forces are then augmented by militia units (see below) in any area into which they strike.

Given that it takes a government force-to-insurgent ratio of 15 to 1 to defeat an irregular warfare insurgency with a mass base, the challenge that the NPA poses to the Philippines government, under conditions of extreme economic deprivation for the population, is formidable. Sison says that he expects that the NPA will take power within the next decade.

### A Soviet asset

Nor should there be any illusions that the NPA does not represent a deployable asset of the Soviet Union, despite the promises of Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze to Malacanang Palace that Moscow will not support the insurgency.

*EIR's* published investigation has already debunked the



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A Communist demonstration in Manila in 1985. Since that time, the New People's Army has grown to the point that it poses a formidable challenge to the central government.

myth that the NPA is an “indigenous” organization of the Philippines, which sprang out of spontaneous rage among peasants. The party’s leadership is university-educated and includes the sons and daughters of prominent Filipino landowners. Sison himself is a former professor of the University of the Philippines and a scion of a family belonging to the big landlord class of Ilocos Norte. Another leader, Monico Atienza, is the scion of a rich family in Cuenca, Batangas.

Moreover, the NPA has been funded heavily—mostly through the National Democratic Front and its various front groups—by organizations, including those government-sponsored, in Western Europe, Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. Many of these organizations function as fifth columns for the Soviet Union in their respective countries.

The model for the Theology of Liberation-tinged NPA is the Sandinistas of Nicaragua, and in the last few months, evidence has emerged of more direct links to the Soviet Union. In his book, Sison reverses the Communist Party of the Philippines’ 20-year rejection of the Soviet Union, stating, “The CPP has decided to regard the Soviet Union as a country in the process of building socialism and has ceased to call it social imperialist.” Sison claims that the party’s previous charges against Moscow were not based on direct research by CPP members themselves, but came from “secondary sources.”

“Highly informed sources,” cited by the *Philippine Daily Globe* on Dec. 27, 1988, said that the reversal of the CPP’s perception of Moscow is likely to pave the way for early negotiations on cooperation, and that party-to-party relations

may soon be restored.

This is not idle speculation, since some relations already exist. The June 7-9, 1988 conference of the East German-backed West German Communist Party included among its guests Luis Jalandoni, a Central Committee member of the Philippines Communist Party, and a national executive committee member of the party’s National Democratic Front. Also attending were Patricia Verdad, an NDF National Committee member, and Bryan Bocar, a member of the party’s international commission and deputy director of the NDF’s international liaison office in Utrecht, the Netherlands.

### U.S. policy failure

The idea that the NPA is a home-grown insurgency has been used as cover by the U.S. State Department for carrying out a policy of malign neglect toward the poorly equipped Philippines Armed Forces and toward the Philippines economy. However, as the *Philippine Daily Globe* editorialized recently: “After years of wrestling with the insurgency, the nation has come to realize that the Communists cannot be met merely by force of arms, but also through nonviolent, long-term means. The government needs to implement true social reform and strive for tangible economic growth in order to pull out the roots of rebellion. It has to hear and heed not only the voices of the elite, but those of the masses who truly make up the nation.”

This will not be done, however, if the Aquino administration adheres to a policy of debt obligations first, in pursuance of approval from the International Monetary Fund and other foreign creditors.