

Filling the Gaps

THE Communist Party of the Philippines has survived the collapse of Communism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the 1990s. Although the collapse led to the fragmentation of the Party into several factions, the Communist movement in the Philippines has earned the distinction of being the longest running Communist insurgency in Asia where Marxist regimes remain in power. The Chinese, Vietnamese and North Korean Communist parties have remained at the helm even after the end of the Cold War, although they have incorporated into their economic systems the principles of the market economy in response to the demands of promoting economic growth.

The Philippine Communist rebellion began in 1946 hot on the heels of the declaration of Philippine independence from American rule. The Party carried out the rebellion while being wracked by factional power struggle. In this issue, two of the leaders of the Communist Party—Jesus Lava and Francisco Lava Jr—reveal the internal Party upheavals that led to changes in leadership and strategy for carrying out the Communist revolution.

While the Communist rebellion was the most threatening challenge to the conservative political leadership that has dominated Philippine democracy since independence, not much is known about the internal dynamics of the Party. The lead essay written by the Lavas therefore fills the gaps in information about the internal tensions in the movement and the ideological issues that divided them and the Jose Maria Sison faction of the Party. It seeks to correct what they call erroneous perceptions fostered by their rivals within the Party. In this respect, their essay is a valuable contribution toward a fuller understanding of the Communist revolution in the Philippines and the causes of its failure to seize power.

Also in this issue is a retrospective account of and reflection on the controversial hanging of Flor Contemplacion in Singapore five years ago. Contemplacion was a Filipino domestic worker convicted by a Singapore court of double murder, an offense she steadfastly claimed she did not commit. The case struck a blow at Philippine-Singapore relations, leading to the withdrawal of ambassadors of both countries for some time. Its domestic

repercussion was that it pulled down the popularity of the regime of President Fidel Ramos over the issue of its insensitivity to the conditions of overseas Filipino workers. Daiva Stasiulus and Abigail B Bakan examine the issues in the Flor Contemplacion hanging and the international movement for the protection of migrant workers' rights that campaigned against it.

Carolina Hernandez, a professor at the University of the Philippines who is known for her scholarly contributions to the understanding of security issues, in particular those affecting Southeast Asia, discusses how national states are shedding a part of their sovereignty to accommodate dynamic changes in interstate relations. She cites examples from the experiences of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Doracie Nantes discusses the impact of the indiscriminate conversion

of agricultural land in the Philippines to residential and industrial use on farmers, agricultural productivity, agrarian reform and the state of the environment. She argues that land conversion, which the Philippine government has pursued as a strategy for developing the countryside and making the Philippines a key player in the global economy, creates more problems than solutions to the long running problems of resource control, access and development in the Philippines.

Fourteen years after the fall of the Marcos dictatorship, the Philippines is still struggling to come to terms with its past and achieve national reconciliation. In his essay, Fr John Carroll explains why Filipinos have elected to office people who were associated with the tortures and repression of the Marcos regime rather than prosecute them to stand trial.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Daiva Stasiulus' and the signature on the right is 'Abigail B Bakan'. Both are written in a cursive, flowing style.

