

***Brokering a Revolution: Cadres in a Philippine Insurgency.* Edited by Rosanne Rutten. Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2008. Softcover: 400pp.**

Originating in a 2000 conference panel, *Brokering a Revolution* went through an evolutionary process that “ripened” (p. viii) the original set of four papers and added another four chapters. The book’s editor, Rosanne Rutten, seems pleased with the final product and for good reason. This is a unique volume because most of the articles examine the decades old Communist Party of the Philippines’ (CPP) insurgency from the perspective of cadres who played an intermediary role between the people and the party’s leadership headed by founder Jose Maria Sison. Applying this perspective, the articles develop a coherent set of critical themes including regionalism, the clash of ideological perspectives, the frequent divergence of national and local interests, the importance of identities cutting across class lines, the problematics of making contacts and alliances with local elites and the responses of the national and local governments and non-governmental actors to the insurgency. Each of the contributors develops a number of these themes giving the book a level of coherence that is rare for an edited volume.

Vincent Boudreau’s opening chapter is a nuanced theoretical discussion that defines what an “underground” movement is and how its characteristics are a product of a variety of internal and external factors and actors. While the charts he employs can be distracting, his discussion is clear and sets the proper theoretical parameters. The remaining chapters examine the CPP and its more public National Democratic Front (NDF) in a variety of geographic settings. These settings include the Cordillera mountain provinces of Luzon with three chapters by Gerard Finin, Dorothea Hilhorst, and Lynn Kwiatkowski, and the island of Mindanao with chapters by Thomas McKenna and Patricio Abinales while Rutten has a major essay on the Central Visayas province of Negros Occidental and Nathan Gilbert Quimpo adds an illuminating chapter concerning the party’s international work out of its exile headquarters in Utrecht, The Netherlands.

Especially valuable are the three offerings on the mountain province and the chapters by McKenna and Rutten. These chapters effectively elaborate the book’s major themes with detailed discussions of their subjects such as Finin’s examination of “Igorotism”. Here, the problem is the incompatibility of a desire for regional autonomy

based on an ethnic identity that the national movement would not recognize. This impasse led to the January 2000 assassination of rebel priest Friar Conrado Balweg, a former Cordillera CPP-NPA spokesperson, whose killing Finin uses to symbolize the movement's decline. Hilhorst's chapter discusses the clash of gender and patriarchal values within the party that led to the drastic crippling of once vibrant NDF initiated non-government organizations in the Cordillera. This chapter deserves a lengthier discussion than this brief mention and should be considered "must reading". Meanwhile, Kwiatkowski's analysis of the role of local social values and perceptions of proper behaviour is a sensitive study of the impact that cadre and armed insurgent behaviour had on the local population. When the insurgency was young and saw to the needs of the local population, NPA fighters were welcomed in the villages, but as the insurgency grew and standards of recruitment and training declined so too did the behaviour of the rebels, leading to a loss of support that, in turn, allowed government forces to eliminate rebel gains.

In his analysis of the CPP's attempts to achieve a working relationship with Mindanao's Muslim separatist movements, McKenna concludes that Christian chauvinism and a reluctance to offer concrete assistance to the Muslims precluded the possibility of any linkage. In fact, he notes that the party's efforts may have had the counterproductive effect of driving unaligned Muslims into separatist organizations. The problem of seeking alliances is a theme that Rutten develops in her exploration of the CPP and the provincial power structure of Negros Occidental. After initial failures in the 1960s, CPP cadres learned to make common cause with other actors including non-communist student groups, sympathetic clergy and sugar worker unions. By 1986 the NPA had crippled the heretofore invincible power of the province's sugar planters and seemed to be on the verge of taking political power. However the party's fortunes took a drastic turn for the worse from the late 1980s through to the early 1990s when a variety of national and local factors broke the NPA's set of working relationships with other actors and as ideological controversy rocked the underground party.

The two chapters by Quimpo and Abinales do not fit within the tight focus of the volume as they examine internal party relations in which non-party individuals play no role. They do, however, highlight the role of ideological perspectives. Quimpo details the impact of party leader Sison's March 1992 call to "Reaffirm" the party's basic principles. The "Reaffirm" message cracked down on divergent opinions within the party that had been building since

Corazon Aquino's ouster of President Ferdinand Marcos in 1986. Quimpo had been in charge of the party's International Department and had convinced Sison to modify his rigid Maoist stance on international policies. Just as the "Reaffirm" crackdown reversed progress in gender relations and questions of ethnicity in the Cordillera and working alliances with non-party political actors in Negros Occidental, so too did the shift back to Maoist basics lead to drastic convulsions in Europe where, for a time, Sison found himself in a minority in his own party, but here, too, earlier progress was sacrificed for ideological purity.

Abinales' contribution looks even deeper into the Party and revisits the ghastly internal purge and execution of over six hundred cadres in Mindanao from late 1985 to mid-1986 on the suspicion they were government spies. Abinales seeks to refute the explanation of former party leaders and surviving purge victims that the slaughter was a panicked reaction by a thoroughly Leninist party. Abinales cites a recently released internal party document that deals with the bloody purges, and he blames inexperienced local party leaders for the atrocities. However, his alternate explanation is not convincing. Except for one oblique reference towards the end of his chapter (p. 174), Abinales fails to mention that similar purges took place elsewhere. In fact, the purges were a widespread phenomenon and the CPP's top leaders share responsibility along with the local torturers.

Despite some reservations, the present volume is a very important addition to the existing scholarship on the communist insurgency in the Philippines. The assembled authors are top shelf and their effort to illuminate Asia's most persistent armed insurgency is welcome.