

On The Issue Of The Environment In The World And In The Philippines

*International Department
Central Committee
Communist Party of the Philippines
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We are posting this document in light of the widespread catastrophic landslides and flashfloods in the Sierra Madre mountains resulting from the dire ecological state of the Philippine forests. In several days, close to a thousand were killed; hundreds of thousands displaced. The Communist Party of the Philippines has expressed profound sympathies with the victims. At the same time, it has reiterated its commitment to stop widespread deforestation especially by the biggest logging concessionaires which carry out their destructive operations under the protection of the reactionary state and its armed forces.

It is utterly contemptible for the Arroyo regime to accuse the New People's Army (NPA) for being involved in illegal logging activities when it has been vigorously launching campaigns to stop the widespread destruction and pollution of forests and the environment in general. This document expounds on the stand and record of the CPP against the widespread destruction of the Philippine environment by foreign monopoly capitalists, local big bourgeois compradors and bureaucrat capitalists.

-- CPP Information Bureau, Dec 4, 2004

In the last more than two centuries in the world, the bourgeoisie has increasingly exploited the human and natural resources in the development of industrial capitalism. In the era of modern imperialism in the 20th century, the monopoly bourgeoisie has carried out on a global scale unprecedented plunder, destruction and pollution of the natural environment. The world capitalist system has been repeatedly afflicted by the crisis of overproduction leading to two global wars and the invention of one genocidal weapon after another.

Following World War II, the imperialist countries headed by the United States have ferociously opposed the socialist countries and national liberation movements, accelerated the production of nuclear and other genocidal weapons in the arms race during the cold war and used the methods of neocolonialism to undermine and negate the national independence of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, aggravate their underdevelopment and force the people down into the mire of poverty by exploiting their labor power and natural resources in order to extract superprofits and debt service payments.

Monopoly capitalism has used all kinds of methods to prevent, stunt or derail the industrial development of countries that dare to assert national independence or build socialism. These methods have included political and military acts of interference, intervention and aggression. But economic, financial and technological manipulation and blockades have been the most effective methods for long-term domination and control of underdeveloped client states and for tightening the encirclement of and undermining socialist and anti-imperialist countries.

The Environmentalism of the U.N. and Monopoly Capitalism

Now gloating over the ruination of countries subjected to neocolonialism as well as those countries subjected to decades of revisionist betrayal of socialism by the monopoly bureaucrat bourgeoisie, the imperialist countries preach that any attempt at industrial development outside the world capitalist system is not only futile but destructive to the environment. In the name of environmentalism, darkened pictures of state-owned industrial plants and the landscape in the former Soviet bloc countries are used in the bourgeois mass media to mock at the very idea of seeking industrial development independently of the imperialist countries.

The tale repeatedly told to terrify the people is that if they dare work for economic and social development under the banner of national independence or socialism, they would suffer economic blockade by the world capitalist system, they would be deprived of advanced, "environment-friendly" and fuel-efficient technology and they would devastate their environment and incur social costs which will make any degree of self-reliant industrial development "unsustainable".

Since the '70s, the imperialists and their retinue of bourgeois scientists, ideologues and publicists have adopted environmentalism to deflect attention from the anti-imperialist and class struggles in the world, to stress to the world that they are economically and technologically supreme and must therefore be the ones to determine the development of the world, to exaggerate the scarcity or limitedness of natural resources, to blame the people of the world themselves for the destruction of the environment and to make the people in the industrial capitalist countries think of clean air and clean water and good health in a self-indulgent way.

The worst propaganda of the pro-imperialist environmentalists idealizes underdevelopment as the preservation of the natural environment and obscures the unhealthy conditions and consequences of underdevelopment and poverty as well as the vulnerability of the underdeveloped and poor countries to imperialist plunder and pollution. Indeed, the monopoly firms have had all the license to pollute and damage the environment in the underdeveloped countries.

The imperialists have systematically misappropriated the issue of environment and have pushed under the auspices of the United Nations an ideological line and political agenda which pretend to allow criticism of the "worst" environmental abuses of governments in general (first sector) and big business (second sector) but which in fact prettify these on the false promise of their becoming "environment-friendly". The two sectors cultivate and promote a pro-imperialist "third sector" of "nongovernmental organizations" and "people's organizations" that go through the motions of "criticizing" environmental abuses and environmentally destructive practices and policies from a classless civic viewpoint in order to beg from the monopoly capitalists and governments for reforms and for measly amounts of money to promote bureaucratic, tokenistic and palliative environmental projects.

Within the neocolonialist framework drawn up by the imperialists and propagandized through the U.N. Conference on the Environment and Development and the U.N. network in general, environmentalism and "sustainable development" are most efficiently promoted by monopoly

capitalism because it is supposed to have the capital and most advanced technology that cause the least or no damage at all to the environment and that it is interested in a kind of development that maximizes the use of limited resources and makes profit-taking sustainable. The phrase "sustainable development" is an ill-intentioned paraphrase of Mao's concept of self-reliant development, overstates the limits of natural resources and consequently the "limits of growth" as earlier decreed by the Club of Rome and plays up the global hegemony of the imperialist countries over development and the environment.

It is pure hypocrisy and chicanery to speak of environmental concerns without criticism and repudiation of the monopoly bourgeoisie and imperialism. We must expose the fact that special funds have been made available through U.N. agencies and directly by the imperialist governments, big business and pro-imperialist institutions in order to finance the propaganda -- in the bourgeois mass media and among the "NGOs" and "POs" -- for obscuring the criminal responsibility of monopoly capitalism in the plunder, destruction and pollution of the natural environment, ameliorating the image of the so-called first and second sectors on the issue of ecology, discouraging self-reliant industrial development in the underdeveloped countries and in a subliminal way romanticizing as idyllic the conditions of underdevelopment.

Since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992, the imperialist countries have not decreased but aggravated the destruction of the environment and have not cut down but have even increased the emissions of carbon dioxide, methane and fossil fuel which cause global warming. The United States -- the world's biggest spewer of carbon dioxide -- is at the head of the imperialist countries which refuse to take drastic measures to cut down the greenhouse gas emissions but which demand that the underdeveloped countries remain underdeveloped to minimize the "greenhouse effect". The U.N. global climate conference in Berlin is one more exercise in muddling the issue of environment and obscuring the culpability of imperialism for global warming and underdevelopment.

The genuine advocates of environmental protection for the wellbeing of the people, self-reliant development and conservation and wise utilization of natural resources are those who condemn and repudiate imperialism, neocolonialism and reaction and, better still, those who act to combat and overthrow these malignant forces and establish a new social system which promotes both industrial development and a clean and healthy environment in countries like the Philippines.

Destruction of the Environment in the Philippines

Let us consider the Philippine historical experience with regard to the issue of the environment. It was in the 19th century when deforestation was pushed more vigorously than at any previous time under Spanish colonialism. This was done in connection with expanding the friar estates for producing crops exported to the industrial capitalist countries. There was a chain reaction of crop specialization for export and domestic consumption and the rapid land dispossession of peasants who resorted to [swidden agriculture](#).

In the first half of the 20th century, under the direct colonial rule of U.S. imperialism, deforestation accelerated at a rate that made that in the 19th century look like kindergarten work. U.S. and local comprador firms deforested large areas in all major islands to take the logs for

export and increased domestic use. The further expansion of the plantations for export, the opening of the mines and encouragement of homesteading also contributed to unprecedented deforestation. In exploiting the mineral resources, the U.S. firms cut trees to make shafts and fuel, polluted the rivers with chemicals and mine tailings and caused soil poisoning and erosion over extensive areas. They did not bother to adopt any filtration method nor pay for the damage to the land.

In the second half of the 20th century, the deforestation of the Philippines went ahead exponentially from decade to decade, with the logs exported predominantly to Japan in the course of its rapid economic reconstruction and subsequent construction booms. Japan financed the big compradors in their logging operations. The wanton deforestation has caused increasingly severe floods, soil erosion and silting of rivers, lakes, hydroelectric dams, irrigation systems and the coastal waters and higher rates of dehydration during droughts.

In the '50s, more than one-third of the Philippine land area of 30 million hectares was still covered by tropical rain forests. Now, less than one million hectares of this remains. And the forests are being cut down at the rate of 200,000 per year. At least one billion cubic meters of prime top soil are eroded every year. Thirty percent of the rivers have died. There has been a tremendous loss of biodiversity on land and in waters and thus a drastic reduction in agricultural and marine productivity. Deforestation, together with its consequences, are the principal ecological problem in the Philippines. It is also contributory to the problem of global warming.

Greenhouse gas emissions come from crude oil and coal-fired energy plants, some manufacturing enterprises and the heavy urban traffic of motor vehicles. Due to the gross underdevelopment of the country, these emissions are not yet as problematic as those in the imperialist countries with regard to global warming, although these emissions are immediately detrimental to the health of the people in urban areas.

Since the '60s, U.S. and Japanese monopoly firms and their big comprador-landlord partners expanded the mines and plantations for export without consideration of ecological balance and the social costs. The destruction of agricultural land by toxic chemicals and tailings from the mines and the grabbing of the best land by agrocorporations have forced many peasants and indigenous people to clear land even on steep slopes. There are now 26 large active mines producing gold, copper, bauxite, iron, nickel ferrochrome and other mineral ores; and a great number of plantations producing sugar, coconut, banana and pineapple for export as well as aquafarms producing shrimps, fish and other marine products for export.

Big hydroelectric dams have been built without consideration of ecological balance and without adequate compensation and proper resettlement of the people displaced. The power generated is mainly for consumption related to the sale of imported appliances (including emitters of carbon dioxide) and secondarily for import-dependent enterprises. The corollary irrigation systems built have also encouraged the agrocorporations and landlords to accumulate land.

Since the '70s, the "green revolution", involving the "miracle rice" varieties, has resulted in dependence on imported chemical fertilizers and pesticides, which have damaged the health of peasants and work animals, made the soil lose fertility and turn acidic, polluted the streams and

rivers and killed off the fish and other marine life which previously provided the protein in the diet of the peasants. The rising costs of imported inputs have bankrupted the peasants and have brought down the level of rice production.

Agricultural chemicals already banned for being harmful to users in the developed countries are sold to and used in the Philippines. Dubious chemical products, agricultural or medicinal, are also frequently trial-tested in the country with Filipinos, especially the poor, serving as guinea pigs of the foreign monopolies before these products are approved for marketing in the United States, Germany, Japan and other imperialist countries.

A few pollutant industries in the primary stage of production, like the Kawasaki iron sintering plant, have also been shifted from Japan to the Philippines. But the general preference of the imperialist countries is to simply transport their toxic wastes, including computer scraps, used batteries, PVC scraps and nuclear wastes, and dump these on Philippine waters and soil. Officially and unofficially, the U.S., Japanese and West European countries, especially Germany and the Benelux, are dumping huge amounts of toxic wastes on Philippine territory.

The import-dependent manufacturing enterprises owned by foreign monopoly firms and Filipinos let their industrial wastes flow into the ground and into the water system with impunity. Thus, the streams, rivers, lakes and coastal waters near manufacturing sites are clogged with these industrial wastes. Real estate development projects have also been undertaken on the pathways of water to the reservoirs for drinking water and have caused the dwindling of water supply in urban areas. In the urban areas, large amounts of solid garbage waste are piled up on the ground or thrown directly into rivers and the sea.

Due to soil erosion and toxic flows from the land and the massive cutting of mangroves for export to Japan (for the production of synthetic cloth fiber and for fuel), mangroves forests have either disappeared or become inhospitable to marine life. The factory ships and fishing fleets from Japan and Taiwan have raided and depleted the fish, seaweeds, corals and other marine resources and destroyed the marine ecosystem over extensive areas of the Philippine territory. At the same time, corrupt bureaucrats in the localities have encouraged dynamite and chemical fishing. The honest poor fisherfolk are shunted off the fishing grounds.

Soon after the official termination of the U.S. military bases in the Philippines in 1991, the U.S. government acquired for its military forces "access rights" to the Philippines in 1992. Thus, the U.S. military forces have continued to carry to the Philippines nuclear and chemical weapons of genocide under the guise of transit, acquisition of supplies and advanced deployment. The United States has also refused to clean up the pollution its forces have left in the erstwhile U.S. military bases.

Friends and Foes of the Environment

Like its predecessors, the U.S.-Ramos regime is the principal domestic force in the service of foreign monopoly capitalism wreaking havoc on the environment in the Philippines. It has expanded and liberalized the privileges of foreign monopoly firms and the local reactionaries to exploit the human and natural resources.

It has continued the open rule of terror and perpetrated grievous human rights violations. It has launched the most vicious military campaigns which are destructive to the lives, property and environment of the people in order to make the human and natural resources of the country available for exploitation and profit-taking by the imperialists and the local reactionaries under its so-called Medium Term Philippine Development Plan or Philippines 2000.

The regime sheds crocodile tears over the issue of ecological destruction and echoes the U.N. slogans on "environmental protection", "people's empowerment" and "sustainable development". But it works to destroy the environment. Despite the official log ban, it issues logging concessions under various pretexts as a way of enriching its coterie of military officers and bureaucrats. It has allowed foreign investors 100 percent ownership of mines and encouraged open pit mining. It has encouraged the dumping of toxic wastes on Philippine territory as a way of earning foreign exchange.

Historically and currently, the communist and noncommunist advocates of national industrialization that is free from imperialist domination have always been ahead in criticizing and condemning the wanton plunder of the human and natural resources of the Philippines and in advocating the conservation and wise utilization of natural resources.

Before and after reestablishing the Communist Party of the Philippines in 1968, the proletarian revolutionaries have presented comprehensive and profound critiques of the exploitation and plunder of the Philippines by imperialism and the local reactionaries. The CPP's Program for a People's Democratic Revolution encompasses the issue of environment. The CPP has also issued social investigation reports and timely analyses explaining the increasing degradation of the environment as well as the increasing severity of the floods and droughts.

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines and the mass organizations, sectoral and multisectoral alliances of the national democratic movement have included in their programs of action the issue of ecology. They have become the powerful mass base for the environmental movement in the Philippines in opposition to the plunderers, destroyers and polluters of the environment -- the imperialists and the local reactionaries.

The imperialists and local reactionaries blame the people for the environmental destruction. For instance, they obscure the wanton deforestation done by the big logging, plantation and mining firms and put the blame on the peasants and indigenous people who in the first place have been deprived of the land by the exploiters and have been driven to swidden agriculture. They also obscure the destructive role of the big foreign fishing fleets that raid Philippine waters and they put the blame on the poor municipal fisherfolk for the dynamite and chemical fishing done by unscrupulous elements that connive with local bureaucrats and military and police officials.

In the Philippines in recent years, there are latecomers who have used the issue of ecology to get money from foreign funding agencies and who specialize in falsely claiming that they represent the environmental movement and that the forces of the national democratic movement have had nothing to say or do about the issue of ecology. They pose as advocates of classless civic consciousness, social voluntarism and reformism within the trisectoral framework of neocolonialism.

These are anticommunist petty-bourgeois hustlers cashing in on the issue of ecology. They pretend to criticize governments and big business up to a certain point and at the same time toady up to them directly and to their conduit private funding agencies and beg for money for their imaginary or token ecology projects. These hustlers have become notorious as "NGO" racketeers and are concentrated in the so-called Green Forum. Variably they call themselves popdems, socdems, BISIG, Siglaya, Sanlakas and the like. They collaborate in spreading the anticommunist line of hostility towards the national democratic movement, empowering themselves through NGO bureaucratism and enriching themselves on money from foreign funding agencies. They also collaborate with Haribon Foundation, which is composed of bureaucrats, academics and dilettantes in ecology.

The funding sources of the Green Forum and Haribon Foundation are not limited to foreign private funding agencies of varied ideological, religious and political persuasions, which are in fact conduits of the imperialist states and big business. Conspicuously, they get increasingly large amounts of funds from the World Bank, the "development" agencies of the imperialist states and the Philippine reactionary government, as in the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) project. They celebrate the announcement of the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) to channel more money to the "NGOs".

The third sector of neocolonialism, consisting of "NGOs" and "POs", is an instrument of psychological warfare under the U.S.-Ramos regime. Its propaganda work to slander and discredit the revolutionary forces is in support of imperialism and the local reactionaries and is an active part of the low-intensity conflict scheme of the U.S.-Ramos regime.

Performance Record of the Revolutionary Movement

The performance record of the revolutionary movement led by the CPP on the question of ecology is clear. It has resolutely and militantly carried out the line of the new-democratic revolution through protracted people's war against the imperialists and the reactionaries. It has carried out the most vigorous struggles against all policies and actions which mean the exploitation, plunder and destruction of the human and natural resources of the country.

It has fiercely fought the enemy military campaigns to force the evacuation of the people from hinterlands and to clear the way for the agrocorporations, bureaucrats, landlords and loggers to grab their homesteads, the ancestral lands, the forest and other natural resources. It has been outstanding in struggling for the dismantling of the U.S. military bases and against the positioning of nuclear and chemical weapons of genocide in the Philippines. It carried out militant struggles against the World Bank-financed Chico River dam project, the Cellophil project, the Kawasaki sintering plant and the Bataan nuclear power plant project in the '70s and '80s.

The armed revolutionary movement has encouraged legal democratic mass organizations and sectoral and multisectoral alliances and organizations dedicated specifically to the protection of the environment to participate in the mobilization of the broad masses of the people against the destroyers, plunderers and polluters of the environment. Some of the organizations taking up the

issue of ecology were initiated by CPP cadres but were eventually corrupted by "NGO" bureaucratism and foreign funding by imperialist and imperialist-related agencies.

There have been so many campaigns undertaken by the revolutionary movement against programs and projects launched by the imperialists and local reactionaries to despoil the natural environment and grab the land and natural resources from the people. To make as complete a list as possible from 1968 to the present, every regional committee of the CPP has to make its own listing. In areas and roads under their control, the revolutionary forces have enforced the law of the people's democratic government. They require mining companies to adopt antipollution measures and pay social compensation for damage they have caused or else close down. They have combated the landgrabbing operations of agrocorporations and real estate speculators and have scuttled several hydroelectric and other power generation projects which deprive the peasants and indigenous people of land without sufficient compensation and without provision for alternative sources of livelihood.

In recent times, the most outstanding policy adopted by the CPP is to impose a 25-year complete ban on logging for export. At the same time, this policy allows in certain areas limited logging, provided the logs are for domestic housing, other local end uses and local processing (including furniture making, plywood manufacturing, pulp and paper manufacturing). A campaign is now being undertaken to confiscate and prevent the use of logging equipment and facilities by the log exporting firms. At the same time, the revolutionary forces promote reforestation and the development of livelihood projects to improve the social conditions of the people and provide alternative sources of livelihood for the logging workers displaced by the log ban.

The revolutionary forces do not merely talk about the issue of ecology. They take decisive actions against the imperialists and the local reactionaries who rape the natural environment. These actions must extend to the banning of the programs and projects undertaken by seemingly voluntaristic but imperialist-funded "NGOs" and "POs" ostensibly to promote environmentalism but in fact to scout for natural resources for grabbing and exploitation by foreign monopoly firms at the expense of the peasants and indigenous people and to use the line of pro-imperialist environmentalism -- within the context of the U.S.-sponsored low-intensity conflict -- to attack the national democratic revolution.

Among the most absurd propositions made by these imperialist-funded "NGOs" are that peasants and indigenous people must be kept out of extensive areas of the country to be preserved as national parks under the pretext of maintaining biodiversity (as if humans are not part of the biosphere) and that extensive areas of the country must be classified and agreed upon by the NDFP and the GRP as "zones of peace and life" for the purpose of preventing the armed revolutionary movement from availing of these in the people's war.

The counterrevolutionaries fall silent on bombardments, arson, massacres, torture and other barbarities unleashed by the U.S.-Ramos regime upon the peasants and indigenous people in order to force them to evacuate and allow the foreign monopolies, bureaucrats and military officers to grab the land and natural resources for themselves. At the same time, they falsely claim that the regime has achieved "democratization" and "reduction of human rights violations"

and that there is now "peace and stability" for the imperialists and the local reactionaries to freely exploit and ravage the country.

The issue of ecology is well taken up and covered by the Program of the People's Democratic Revolution. The broad masses of the people led by the CPP resolutely and militantly fight for the conservation and wise utilization of natural resources for the purpose of self-reliant development against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism.

The revolutionary line of the CPP is diametrically opposed to the dominant imperialist line running through the conferences on environment sponsored by the United Nations and by any of the three sectors of neocolonialism. These U.N. conferences on the environment try to obscure and cosmeticize the imperialist plunder of human and natural resources and attempt to harmonize the interests of the imperialists and the neocolonial client states in the first sector, the foreign monopoly firms and the local comprador big bourgeoisie in the second sector and the "NGOs" and "POs" of paid hacks in the "third sector".#

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