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Editorial

CARP extension is even more pointless

The Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) is a bogus program. In its 20 years of implementation, vast tracts of land remained in the hands of a few. CARP paved the way, not for the emancipation of the peasant masses, but for greater reconcentration of land ownership in the hands of big landlords of the old and new type. It has condemned the peasants to greater misery and oppression, and aggravated their suffering through its parallel implementation of pro-imperialist agricultural liberalization. Malacañang officials have further profited from the bogus program by appropriating CARP funds.

The peasant masses gained nothing throughout the course of its implementation. Thus, the six-month extension of this sham land reform program will be of even less use to them. Congress' only reason for calling for its extension is to further raid its remaining funds purportedly allocated for "agricultural services."

The Congress resolution calling for CARP to cover only those lands voluntarily ceded by landowners is downright ridiculous. It completely exempts lands by big landlords who refuse to be covered by CARP.

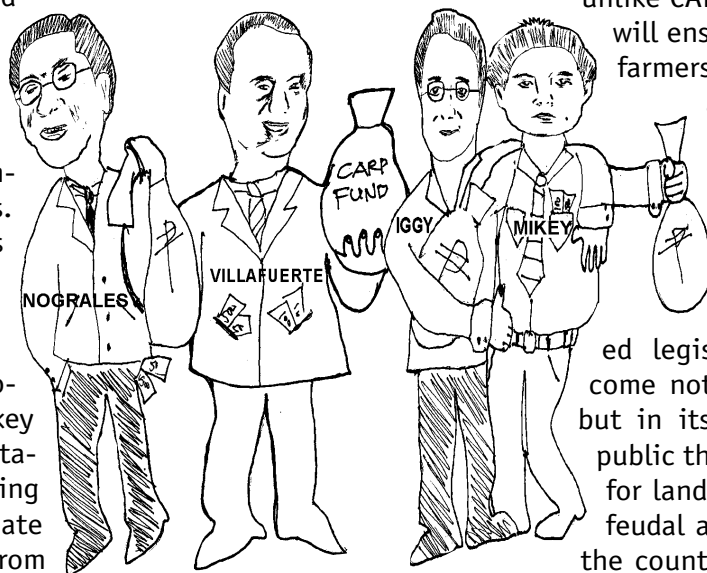
No less than Gloria Arroyo's congressman son Mikey led the House of Representatives in further emasculating CARP. Malacañang's ultimate objective is to exempt from

CARP the Arroyos' vast sugarcane plantations in Negros which they intend to use for bio-ethanol production. As a consequence, the Department of Agrarian Reform will also be swamped with countless applications for land-use conversion and other pretexts to exempt lands from CARP coverage.

The reformists peddle illusions when they push for "CARP extension with reforms." They give false hopes to the peasant masses that there is profit to be gained from CARP, that the farmers' salvation lies in what has been proven to be a bogus and pro-landlord program, and that their emancipation will emanate from a Congress dominated by big hacienda owners.

The progressive lawmakers who have been pushing for the Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill (GARB) have a better grasp of such reality. GARB, which is decidedly different, pushes for free land distribution. And unlike CARP, GARB has provisions that will ensure that lands distributed to farmers could no longer be taken away from them by big landlords.

If reforming the sham CARP is hopeless, however, it will be even more difficult for GARB to be ratified by a landlord-dominated legislature. GARB's victory will come not so much from its passage, but in its raising before the greater public the peasantry's urgent demand for land to till, its condemnation of feudal and semifeudal oppression in the countryside and its exposé of the



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antipeasant and antipeople legislature and the rotten reactionary ruling state and system in the country.

Addressing the peasantry's land problem is the main content of the people's democratic revolution. In the countryside where the seeds of the new democratic revolutionary movement have been planted and continue to grow, agrarian revolution is advanced step by step alongside waging armed struggle and establishing revolutionary power. The reactionary power of the landlord class and its allies is demolished piece by piece, thus paving the way for building people's democratic power.

The minimum program of agrarian revolution is implemented in the initial stages. Among its components are the reduction of land rent, elimination of usury, raising of farm workers' wages, effecting reasonable increases in farm gate prices, implementing simple forms of cooperation and raising the peasants'

productivity. In areas where the revolutionary movement is more advanced and the reactionary armed forces have been weakened over an extensive area, the revolutionary forces implement components of the maximum program of agrarian revolution that it is capable of effecting. These include confiscating the lands of despotic landlords as well as lands abandoned by big landlords, nationalizing these lands and granting peasants who are landless or who do not have enough land the right to till these lands.

In areas where agrarian revolution and the new democratic revolution have gained ground, the eradication of feudalism and semifeudalism is not a pipe dream but a concrete victory of the revolutionary struggle waged by the peasant masses. The feudal and semifeudal oppression suffered by the peasantry will only be thoroughly eradicated upon the absolute victory of the new democratic revolution. **AB**

Land reconcentration in Cagayan Valley

Land reconcentration in the hands of landlords of the new type is intensifying in Cagayan Valley. Peasant lands are being foreclosed and farmers forced to sell their lands for failing to pay their debts.

Big merchant-usurers compete with each other in seizing farmers' lands, including small lenders who


are largely guarantors in the barrios. The merchant-usurers themselves promote crop varieties that are heavily dependent on expensive fertilizers and pesticides, exact exorbitant land rent and sell expensive farm inputs while pressing down the prices of the farmers' products.

Small usurers as represented by guarantors in the barrios (usually

rich peasants and some upper middle peasants) aggravate the farmers' indebtedness by imposing a 5 to 15% compounded interest per harvest. The heavily indebted farmers are then obliged to have their products threshed and transported by the guarantors and to work on the latter's lands.

As a result, lands of both middle and poor peasants are being confiscated alongside that of farmers covered by PD 27, CARP and the reactionary government's stewardship program. In Isabela, the government continues to revoke CLOAs held by farmer beneficiaries from the 13,085-hectare Hacienda San Antonio-Santa Isabel in a process that began in 2007 to give way to San Miguel Corporation's cassava plantation project.

Government projects and those of conniving land grabbers and the exploitative elite are fertile ground for peasant struggles. The peasant masses in Cagayan Valley persist in their struggle to assert their right to the land from which they derive their livelihood. **AB**

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Land grabbing

The seizure of peasant lands in Cagayan Valley continues to worsen as a result of the latest anti-people projects of the reactionary government and foreign corporations.

Agribusiness and mining projects. In Isabela province, cassava planting has been temporarily suspended due to the people's strong opposition. However, there are new projects that will likewise involve widespread landgrabbing.

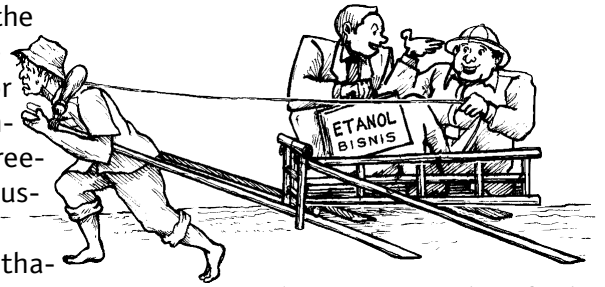
In San Mariano, Green Future Innovations, Inc., which is owned by a Japanese-Filipino company that manufactures ethanol plans to plant sugarcane on 6,000 to 35,000 hectares of land in the barangays of Panninan, Binatug, Alibadabad, Dipusu and Libertad. These so-called idle lands as defined by the reactionary government have actually been tilled by farmers for decades. Some barangays in the towns of Ilagan and Benito Soliven are also set to be planted with sugarcane. Green Future Innovations, Inc. likewise plans to set up its own distillery plant in Barangay Alibadabad.

In Cagayan province, the towns of Gattaran and Alacapan are being eyed for sugarcane plantations under contract-farming agreements with Pampanga Industrial Park Inc. The sugarcane will be used for ethanol production.

Meanwhile, in southern Isabela and Quirino province, the local governments are pushing for the cultivation of cassava in smaller parcels of lands under the auspices of so-called farmers' cooperatives. Such cooperatives have already been set up by Rep. Faustino "Bojje" Dy III and Mayor Edgar Guyud in San Guillermo town. Mayor Virgilio Padilla of San Agustin has been campaigning for cassava cultivation in some barrios of his town, as has Gov. Dakila "Dax" Cua of Quirino.

Mining companies have also seized about a hundred thousand hectares of land. In Isabela alone, mining applications cover as much as 45,151 hectares and this is sure to displace thousands of Isabelinos and affect their livelihood.

Mining operations are likewise going on in the whole of northern Cagayan (from Sta. Ana to Claveria



town). As a result of the construction of a pier in Sta. Ana under the Enrile family's Cagayan Export Zone Authority, quarrying operations have further expanded, destroying the land where farmers eke their livelihood. Likewise, peasants are being forced to sell their lands for ₱11,000 per hectare to give way to an airport being constructed in the same town.

Government "development projects". Also currently being pushed for implementation in the region are livelihood projects that are destructive to the environment and a bane to thousands of people.

In Isabela, an entire Agta community is being threatened with eviction due to the impending construction of a dam in San Mariano. Several families will also be evicted when a hydroelectric plant in Pared River, Baggao, Cagayan is built. AB

Anti-"cha-cha" campaign advances

Almost 15,000 people from various sectors joined a broad anti-cha-cha rally in Makati City on December 12. Over 70 organizations, political parties and personalities expressed the collective sentiment of the nation: "*Tama na, pigilan na si Gloria, tapusin na ang chacha*" (We've had enough, stop Gloria, end cha-cha)

Joining the rally were representatives of the Catholic church and other religious organizations like El Shaddai and Jesus is Lord Movement, big businessmen, political parties, democratic and progressive sectors. Even archbishops Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales of Manila and Ricardo Cardinal Vidal of Cebu who are known to be conservative have expressed their opposition to Arroyo's cha-cha scheme.

The latest protest action in Makati was but the ini-

tial salvo in the people's burst of outrage. The protests are expected to grow bigger, broader and intensify in the coming weeks as a result of the Arroyo family and its cabal's desperate attempts to amend the constitution to enable Arroyo to perpetuate herself in power.

Fearing the people's protests immensely, Malacañang called together in the national capital thousands of security forces from Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Southern Luzon and Bicol. The Palace was put under very close watch on the eve of the Makati protest. The following day, at 8:00 a.m., 4,700 police troops were deployed in Metro Manila, excluding the additional 3,000 military and police forces on standby from the NCR Command and regions outside of it.

Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) com-

plained of police harassment designed to delay if not stop altogether the people from joining the protest demonstration in Makati. The police arrested activists belonging to the Muslim-Christian Alliance in Cubao, Quezon City as they tried to march towards Makati. A bus from Bataan was also stopped at the North Luzon Expressway. Among those aboard

were a contingent under Bishop Socrates Villegas. Earlier, the PNP Special Action Force attempted to stop the entry to Manila of a delegation sent by Fr. Joe Dizon of Solidarity Philippines that came all the way from Cavite.

Malacañang has also resorted to psywar tricks warning activists to police their ranks because of rumors that some elements were out to sabotage the demonstration. Rumors of assassination attempts on presidential candidates who would attend the rally were also circulated.

Meanwhile, personalities from the ruling camp appeared to vacillate on "con-ass," fearful of the people's gathering strength against all of Arroyo's stratagems

to prolong her hold on power.

A day after the rally in Makati City, Majority Floor Leader Arthur Defensor, one of the ruling Lakas-CMD coalition's chief henchmen said that they would allegedly drop "con-ass." The Senate, on the other hand, passed a resolution signed by 23 senators against "con-ass". Among those who signed was Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile, a close Arroyo ally.

Congress hearings on cha-cha were suspended but Arroyo's cohorts are determined to resume them in January when the people's wrath is expected to have abated.

The Arroyo camp is dead wrong, however. Its schemes to extend Arroyo's hold on power will surely be met with heightened protests. **AB**



Regional protests

Numerous protest actions launched in Metro Manila and in the provinces formed part of the broad campaign against cha-cha in the second week of December:

December 12. Prior to the huge rally in Makati City, Manila mayor Alfredo Lim led another anti-cha-cha rally at the Andres Bonifacio monument in Liwasang Bonifacio in the morning. Hundreds of teachers as well as employees of the Manila City Hall and students from various Manila universities joined the protest rally.

In Southern Tagalog (ST), a coordinated noise barrage was launched along with other mass actions initiated by BAYAN-ST. Simultaneous protests were also conducted in Los Baños, Calamba City, Lucena City and Batangas City. In Cavite, the police blocked some 200 members of anti-cha-cha organizations.

In Panay, members of the Pinag-isang Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (PISTON) led other motorists in blowing their horns for three minutes, signalling the start of the protest march by the "Stop Gloria's Cha-cha Now" coalition in Iloilo City. The march was attended by about 1,500 people, among them Archbishop Angel Lagdameo of Jaro who is also president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

In Negros, El Shaddai leader Mike Velarde spoke with a number of congressmen and other local gov-

ernment officials to convince them not to support moves to change the constitution.

December 10. The Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) and other progressive organizations expressed their strong opposition to cha-cha during the commemoration of the International Day of Human Rights in Metro Manila, Baguio, Central Luzon, Southern Tagalog, Bicol, Panay, Cebu, Davao and Cagayan de Oro.

In Negros Occidental, over 1,000 workers and peasants marched together for five days since December 5 from Escalante City to Bacolod City. According to the National Federation of Sugar Workers-Food and General Trades, their 95.6-kilometer peoples' march was an expression of their life-and-death struggle for land, wages and human rights and their objection to cha-cha. They arrived at the Bacolod Public Plaza in the evening of December 9 and joined thousands of protesters at the interfaith rally that was also attended by Bishop Vicente Navarra of the Diocese of Bacolod.

In Negros Oriental, the Kapunongan Alang sa Ugma sa Gagmay nga Mag-uuma sa Oriental Negros has opposed schemes to extend the US-Arroyo regime's rule. They also pushed for the passage of the Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill and strongly condemned military abuses in the province.

December 9. GABRIELA spearheaded a march of mothers who came with their children in tow towards the Batasang Pambansa complex in Quezon City to air their opposition to cha-cha. **AB**

OBL2 is a failure in Quezon

The AFP's claims at the end of 2007 that Oplan Bantay Laya 2 (OBL2) had destroyed all guerrilla fronts in Quezon is a big lie. The truth is that it is OBL2 that has been defeated in Quezon. The revolutionary forces in the province quickly adjusted to the intensified enemy aggression that came with OBL2. In the main, the New People's Army (NPA) not only succeeded in preserving itself, but in advancing its revolutionary tasks.

Rectifying mistakes and dealing with OBL2. The Party and the leadership of the NPA first had to rectify tendencies towards military conservatism in facing OBL2. In some guerrilla fronts, Red fighters at first hesitated to launch tactical offensives, fearing that the enemy would exact revenge on the masses. This notion was later proven wrong as the enemy nonetheless savaged the masses despite the absence of tactical offensives.

The reality is that without the people's army to launch tactical offensives and drive the soldiers out, the enemy was free to inflict unrelenting cruelty on the masses. It was this realization that invigorated the Red guerrillas into intensifying tactical offensives aimed at defending civilians, weakening and meting punishment on the enemy

for their brutal abuse of the people, and defeating OBL2 altogether.

In launching the struggle against OBL2, the revolutionary movement in Quezon likewise overcame a tendency towards "guerrillaism" where the struggle against OBL2 was left to the initiative of individual NPA squads. To correct this, coordination and planning from the regional level down to the platoon level were effected to cope with the fact that OBL2 in Quezon was an operation involving planning at the division level and the mobilization of a division-strong enemy force. Close coordination with other guerrilla fronts and the entire region resulted in more systematic and effective attacks against the enemy.

Effective NPA offensives. The main method employed by the peo-

ple's army in facing OBL2 was to shift to other areas as well as to focus on other aspects of revolutionary work. Pursuant to the win-hold-win strategy and the focus-and-contain style of the enemy, government troops could only occupy up to 12 barangays in every guerrilla front for three to six months. The people's fighters took note of this vulnerability and exploited it. The NPA conducted and developed revolutionary work in areas where there was no enemy presence and launched tactical offensives against weak and isolated units of the AFP.

Meanwhile, the NPA used creativity and flexibility in continuing other aspects of revolutionary work even in areas of enemy concentration. With the help of the masses, the enemy remained blind and deaf to the presence of the people's army. NPA units could still hold base in barrios where there were enemy detachments and that were covered by enemy operations. In fact, it was in these villages where Red fighters could closely monitor enemy movements.

People's courageous resistance. The mass organizations' intense revolutionary resolve and fighting spirit served as the key to nurturing the people's army and ensuring its security. In the face of torture, enemy repression and other atrocities, the masses took good care of their army and ardently supported it. Whenever there was enemy presence, the masses protected and shielded the comrades. They eagerly looked forward to the Red fighters' presence, their protection and good counsel amid the enemy's onslaughts.

The masses were not taken in by the enemy's deceptive schemes. They would pretend to cooperate in the establishment of bogus cooperatives, sports and community festivals. But as soon as the enemy



left the area, the masses simply resumed the authentic programs of their revolutionary movement.

Recruitment to the NPA continued amid enemy threats. The mass organizations never ran out of recommendees to their army. It was in fact OBL2's brutality that pushed the people to join the Red army. The people's militia was active, with some of its members joining NPA tactical offensives. Villagers who were on the enemy's hit list were given sanctuary by the people's army.

The cruelties suffered by the masses during the reactionary government's military operations have driven them to ask the NPA to mete punishment on the fascists soldiers by carrying out tactical offensives against them. These offensives triumphed with the strong support of the masses.

Meanwhile, the revolutionary movement immediately and effectively addressed the evils left behind by the AFP in areas where they maintained a relatively long presence. Among these problems were antisocial practices and crimes such as carabao rustling, theft and drug pushing that the revolutionary movement had long eradicated through revolutionary education among the people. Revolutionary education was once again undertaken to weed out these bad practices and encourage those who have taken to vice and crime to participate in revolutionary programs. Individuals identified as part of the enemy's intelligence network were immediately neutralized.

The swiftness with which such problems have been resolved is a testament to the depth to which the revolutionary movement has taken root in Quezon and the extent of its advance in the province. AB

UNHRC rebukes Arroyo regime

The United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) has rebuked the Arroyo regime for the deaths of Eden Marcellana and Eddie Gumanoy in 2003. The UNHRC, the United Nations agency tasked with monitoring compliance of signatory countries to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) likewise assailed the Arroyo regime for failing to provide remedies to the victims.

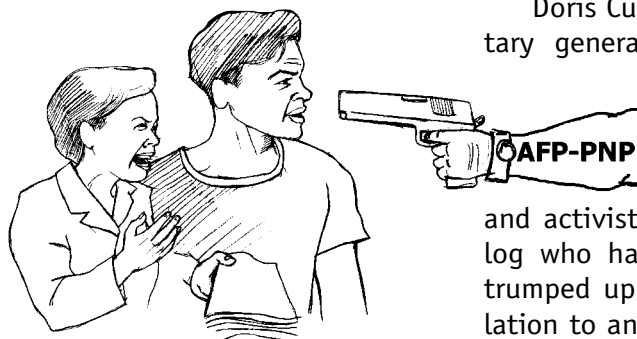
Relatives of Marcellana and Gumanoy filed the case before the UN in March 2006. Marcellana was the secretary general of Karapatan in Southern Tagalog while Eddie Gumanoy chaired the Katipunan ng mga Samahang Magbubukid sa Timog Katagalugan (KASAMA-TK) when they and three other companions were abducted by men under then Maj. Jovito Palparan of the 204th Bde in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro on April 21, 2003. The victims were in Mindoro as members of a fact-finding team that was looking into human rights abuses committed during large-scale military operations in Gloria and Pinamalayan towns. The bodies of Marcellana and Gumanoy were found the following day in Bansud town while their three other companions were tortured and left with their hands tied behind their backs in Bongabon town.

The UNHRC said that in the case of Marcellana and Gumanoy, the Arroyo government violated three articles of the ICCPR—the right to live, the right to liberty and security and the right of violated persons to effective remedies.

The UN issued its decision during the commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on November 25. According to KARAPATAN, of 28 human rights advocates murdered under the Arroyo regime, six were women, including Marcellana. There are also 107 women victims of extrajudicial killings and 31 women victims of forcible disappearance from January 2001 to September 2008.

Meanwhile, records show that Southern Tagalog is one of the areas that have borne the brunt of human rights abuses under Arroyo. Karapatan reported that majority of the total 927 victims of extrajudicial killings from 2001 to 2007 and 977 enforced disappearances from 2001 up to the present come from Southern Tagalog. The Cavite Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace, on the other hand, has listed 298 cases of violations of political, economic and civil rights in Southern Tagalog in the first six months of 2008 alone, involving 29,352 victims. Twenty of these cases involved extrajudicial killings and forcible disappearances.

Doris Cuario, the current secretary general of Karapatan-ST, is likewise being persecuted by the Arroyo regime. Cuario is one of 72 mass leaders and activists from Southern Tagalog who have been slapped with trumped up murder charges in relation to an NPA tactical offensive



in March 2006 in Puerto Galera, Mindoro Oriental where two policemen were killed. Also among the 72 accused is Orly Marcellana, widower of Eden and presently the KASAMATK chair and secretary general of BAYAN-Southern Tagalog. Since November, six of the accused have already been arrested and detained.

Abuses in other regions. In Eastern Visayas, Atty. Kathrina Castillo, secretary general of Katungod-Sinirangan Bisayas has assailed the reactionary military for being the number one violator of human rights in the region. She identified the AFP as the perpetrator of all 123 human rights violations in Eastern Visayas from January to October 2008. The violations include five cases of extrajudicial killings.

In Bicol, there were 171 victims of extrajudicial killings from 2001 to November 2008, according to Bayan Muna regional spokesperson Ricardo Responde.

In Western Mindanao, the Union of People's Lawyers in Mindanao (UPLM) has denounced the military for issuing death threats to Atty. Emiliano Deleverio, UPLM vice chair and ardent human rights advocate. Deleverio has been receiving text messages warning him to be careful with his activities because he was getting too well liked by the people in the mountains—implying that his activities favored the New People's Army.

Deleverio was one of the lawyers who filed the first successful petition for a writ of amparo to secure the release of church activist and Bayan Muna organizer Ruel Muñasque who was abducted in Dumalinao, Zamboanga del Sur in October 2007. Deleverio also serves as the lawyer of Angelina Bisuña-Ipong, a prominent political detainee in Western Mindanao. AB

Protect human rights defenders!

Six progressive congressmen have filed a bill defining the rights and responsibilities of human rights defenders and setting punishment for state agents who violate these rights.

House Bill 5600 (HB 5600), which was filed on December 10, is sponsored by Rep. Satur Ocampo and Teodoro Casiño of Bayan Muna, Rafael Mariano of Anakpawis, Liza Maza and Luzviminda Ilagan of Gabriela Women's Party and Lorenzo Tañada III of the Liberal Party.

The authors argued that such a law was of utmost importance due to the many abuses of the rights of human rights defenders. The progressive solons cited the cases of Eden Marcellana, Eddie Gumanoy, Leima Fortu and Benjaline Hernandez who were all brutally murdered. Three human rights defenders have also been abducted and remain missing; seven have received death threats, nine were illegally arrested and eight were illegally detained. Scores have been physically assaulted, tortured, treated inhumanely, cruelly and degradingly, and threatened, harassed, and intimidated. These violations are being committed with impunity by government security forces.

The bill prohibits the act of black labeling or name calling a human rights defender, subjecting them to surveillance, threats and intimidation. Any government personnel who issues declarations and statements favorable to suspected human rights violators but adverse to the victim is presumed to have personally issued instructions to the suspects. Any denial of any document or refusal to produce or present said document when required to be presented by any competent authority shall establish the allegation to which the said document is offered to prove.

"National security" and "executive privilege" may not be invoked as defenses in violating the rights of human rights defenders. Anyone found to have violated these provisions will be meted 10-17 years imprisonment and/or a fine of ₱100,000. AB

"Protests..." from page 12

hundred youths have since been arrested.

There is more to the series of protests than a simple reaction to the killing of a teenage boy by the police. The Greek people have long been angered by successive corruption scandals involving high-ranking government officials, a severe economic crisis, widespread unemployment and grave criminality.

The protests eventually expanded to a series of strikes and protest actions by students, teachers and workers who expressed their anger at the severe economic crisis and a number of government policies. Opposition leaders have also taken advantage of the broad protests by renewing their call for early elections to replace the conservative government of Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis. Demonstrations have also been launched in various European countries in support of the struggles of the Greek people.



AFP imposes food blockade in Surigao del Sur

THE 401st Bde of the Philippine Army has been enforcing a food blockade on civilians in the mountainous barrios of Lianga and San Agustin towns in Surigao del Sur. The entry and exit of civilians are also being controlled in these areas. Several civilians have reportedly been arrested and interrogated by the military in relation to a series of victorious tactical offensives by the NPA in Lianga. Many farmers have been forced to flee due to threats by the AFP.

Policemen breach Nestlé picket

POLICEMEN brutally demolished the picket line of protesting workers of Nestlé Philippines factory in Cabuyao, Laguna in the morning of December 11.

The Union of Filipino Employees (UFE) of Nestlé Philippines denounced in an indignation rally the brutal assault of about a hundred elements of the Calabarzon Regional Mobile Group and Cabuyao PNP and the arrest of Noel Alemania, 43, UFE-Nestlé Philippines vice president and secretary general of Pagkakaisa ng mga Manggagawa sa Timog Katagalugan (PAMANTIK).

The union leader was charged with alarm and scandal and other cases before the Biñan Regional Trial Court.

The workers staged their strike to demand the implementation of the Department of Labor ruling on November 28 calling on both the union and management to resume negotiations for their collective bargaining agreement.

Soldier guns down civilian

A civilian was killed and two others were wounded after a soldier indiscriminately fired his weapon in Antique. The fatality was Francisco Tacorda, a resident of Barangay Cabladan, Sibalom, Antique while the wounded were Apolonio Prado and Barangay councilor Elmer Batiles of Tubudan, San Remigio, Antique. The civilians were hit when Pfc Jerry Davila arbitrarily fired his M16 rifle during the fiesta celebration in Barangay Aningalan, San Remigio on December 6.

The Napoleon Tumagtang Command of the New People's Army in Southern Panay strongly condemned officers of the 31st Division Reconnaissance Company and the Philippine Army for turning a blind eye to the criminal act.

The 31st DRC was also responsible for indiscriminately firing on civilians in May 2006 in Barangay Panpanan II, San Remigio that killed Epifania Cabaya, 65 and wounded 13 of her relatives, including two children.

Military violates children's rights in Samar

The Efren Martires Command (NPA-Eastern Visayas) denounced the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process for a deceptive report claiming that the NPA uses child soldiers and puts them in perilous situations during armed clashes. The Command said that the NPA respects the physical and moral integrity of children pursuant to revolutionary principles, provisions of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law and other international laws and standards.

It is the Arroyo regime and its military that are the worst violators of children's rights in armed conflicts, it added. The children and the youth in the countryside are usually harassed and tortured by government troops and forcibly used as guides in military operations. It cited as examples Jino, 13 and Lino de la Cruz, 11 who were maltreated, intimidated and forced by 63rd IB troops to act as guides in their military operations in Barangay Carolina, Matuguinao, Samar on July 7. On September 13, 46th IB troops fired at cousins JR, 12, Barton, 13, and Ronie, 21 in Barangay Bayang, San Jorge, Samar. This led to the death of JR's brother Ronie. The soldiers then burned his body and used the smoke to guide a helicopter's landing.

Hundreds of children have also suffered from artillery attacks by the military on their communities and the mass evacuation of civilians in the three provinces of Samar island due to intensified military operations under Oplan Bantay Laya 2.

Arroyo has no interest in peace talks

The US-Arroyo regime has shown no interest at all in achieving lasting peace through negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). It has violated past agreements and destroyed conditions for the continuation of the peace process.

The Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) only uses the peace talks to ensnare the NDFP into declaring a longterm ceasefire of indefinite duration.

The NDFP conducted informal talks with GRP representatives in the last week of November with the aim of reviving the suspended GRP-NDFP formal negotiations. The talks failed, however, as the GRP insisted that the NDFP enter into a long-term ceasefire of indefinite duration as a precondition for the formal talks' resumption.

The NDFP has refused to comply with the GRP's demands. Going into a long-term ceasefire without clearly resolving the issues that lie at the roots of the armed conflict would be tantamount to the surrender and pacification of the revolutionary forces. It would set aside all previous agreements and derail whatever significant talks have been held on the substantive agenda of socio-economic and political reforms.

NDFP Human Rights chair and negotiating panel spokesperson Ka Fidel Agcaoili said that the Arroyo-Ermita-Gonzales clique's real objective is to kill the peace talks and transform it into mere negotiations

for ceasefire and for the surrender of the NDFP and the Filipino people who are badly in need of, and urgently demanding, basic reforms.

The US-Arroyo regime has long been trampling on the peace talks. As far back as 2004, Malacañang has refused to comply with its obligation to demand from the US the removal of the CPP, NPA and Comrade Jose Ma. "Joema" Sison from that country's list of foreign terrorists. In 2007, the GRP in connivance with US security agencies even sought to bring the NDFP to its knees by filing trumped-up charges against Ka Joema in The Netherlands that resulted in his arrest and detention for 17 days in a Dutch prison.

In imposing preconditions, the GRP is in violation of The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992 that sets the principles and conduct of the talks. In its widespread violation of human rights and in targeting particular NDFP consultants, the GRP has likewise violated the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (that ensures protection for consultants and staff of both parties) and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (that obliges both parties to respect the Filipino people's human rights).

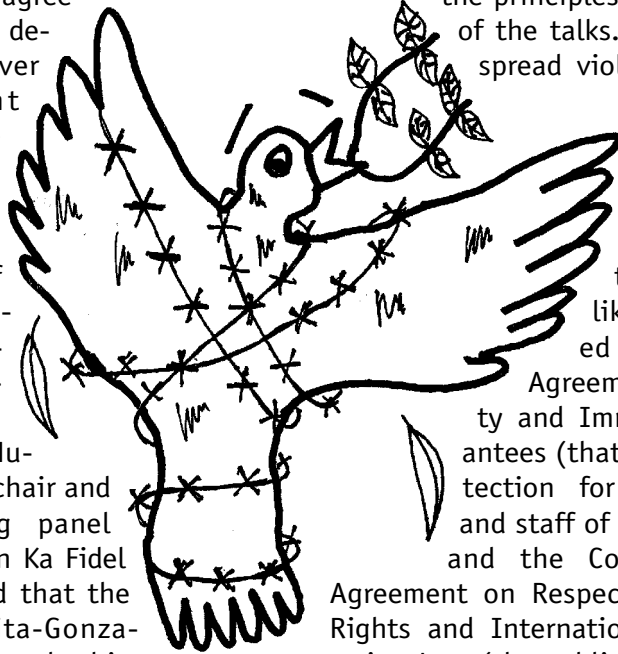
The GRP's insistence on its fascist agenda for the peace talks has caused the NDFP National Council to approve two recommendations from the NDFP Negotiating Peace Panel:

a) That the NDFP revoke its former offer of a temporary ceasefire whenever the two negotiating panels conduct formal meetings as the GRP has misrepresented this as a sign of the NDFP's readiness to enter into a longterm ceasefire of indefinite duration without having resolved social, economic and political issues which are the subject of the peace talks' substantive agenda.

b) That the NDFP refuse to enter into any talks with the GRP in the absence of a clear agenda and sequence of discussions. This is meant to prevent the GRP from violating The Hague Joint Declaration and the Agreement on Reciprocal Working Committees which set the agenda and sequence of the talks to wit: social and economic reforms; political and constitutional reforms; and cessation of hostilities and disposition of forces.

The GRP has long wanted to put an end to its peace talks with the NDFP at the urging of the US and fascist officials. But it wants to pin the blame on the NDFP for the scuttling of the talks. The GRP has failed in this because of the NDFP's allout efforts to pursue the talks on the basis of previously signed agreements and its earnest efforts to explain its just stance and expose the GRP's lies and malicious schemes.

As the US-Arroyo regime further reveals its utter lack of interest in pursuing the peace talks, the NDFP stands ready to wait for the next GRP administration. AB



CPP declares holiday ceasefire

The Information Bureau of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) announced a five-day unilateral ceasefire by all units of the New People's Army (NPA) from December 24 to 26 and December 31 to January 1, 2009. In a directive issued on December 19, the Party Central Committee said that the observance of a ceasefire is in keeping with the Filipino people's Christmas traditions. The ceasefire will also pave the way for people's gatherings in over 100 guerrilla fronts from north to south in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the CPP's reestablishment on December 26, 2008.

The Party Central Committee nonetheless reminded the NPA to remain vigilant in the face of expected treachery by the US-Arroyo regime and its armed fascist troops. An earlier declaration of a "suspension of offensive military operations" (SOMO) by the AFP only serves to camouflage military surveillance on the activities of the masses and the revolutionary forces in areas where celebrations of the Party anniversary will be held, said the CPP Central Committee. **AB**

AFP endangers prisoners of war

The New People's Army-Southern Mindanao Region (BHB-SMR) assailed Malacañang Press Secretary Jesus Dureza for announcing that the military would continue with its operations in Davao Oriental instead of negotiating for the safe release of two prisoners of war (POW) currently being held by the NPA in the region. Dureza issued the statement on December 11.

Pursuant to orders from Malacañang and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), over 4,000 military troops or the equivalent of eight military battalions are scouring the whole of Southern Mindanao in a futile attempt to rescue the two prisoners. This, despite the prisoners' urgent appeal to stop military operations to hasten their release.

The refusal to negotiate for the release of the two prisoners betrays the Arroyo regime's lack of interest in the welfare of its officers, said the NDF-SMR. It considers it more important to cover up the AFP and PNP's series of humiliating defeats in the hands of the NPA in the region.

Prior to this, the NPA-SMR released a video clip on December 8 showing PO3 Eduardo Tumol appealing to PNP and AFP officers to suspend military operations in Davao Oriental to pave the way for his and his fellow POW 1Lt. Vicente Cammayo's safe and orderly release.

The National Democratic Front-SMR had also written to the wives of Tumol and Cammayo assuring them that their husbands were safe and their rights duly respected. The NDF further explained the processes that their husbands are currently undergoing as officers of AFP and PNP special units.

Due to their status as commanding officers, said the NDF-SMR, the prisoners are directly accountable for military operations that resulted in various violations of human rights of many civilians in their areas of assignment. These abuses are thoroughly being investigated and studied by a revolutionary court. The results of the investigation will be made known to the public. **AB**



NPA military actions

Following are partial reports of military actions launched by the New People's Army (NPA) in Mindanao, Bicol, Panay and Mindoro as the year came to an end.

December 18. A CAFGU element was killed and two others were wounded when Red fighters assaulted a CAFGU detachment in Paquibato District, Davao City at about 10:30 a.m.

Dawn of December 15. Elements of the 58th IB and Special Civilian Armed Auxiliary (SCAA) watched helplessly as NPA guerrillas set fire to heavy equipment owned by Surigao Development Corp. (Sudecor). It was a punitive measure on Sudecor for its destruction of forests in Surigao del Sur, its unjust treatment of its workers and the abuses of the 58th IB-SCAA on the Lumad and farmers in the area.

December 14. A soldier belonging to the 23rd Military Intelligence Company (MICO) was killed in an ambush by the NPA in Mindoro island. The soldier was ambushed at around 2:30 p.m. as he was conducting military surveillance in Barangay Santa Teresita, Mansalay, Mindoro Oriental.

An officer of the Philippine National Police (PNP) in Mansalay tried to come to his rescue but he was prevented from doing so and disarmed by Red fighters.

In Agusan del Sur, a CAFGU element was wounded when NPA fighters from Front 14 sniped a detachment of the 23rd IB-CAA in Sitio Basabong, Barangay Bayugan 3, Bunawan.

December 13. A soldier was killed and another one wounded when Red fighters ambushed a military convoy in Barangay San Isidro, Bulan, Sorsogon. The soldiers were headed back to their camp when they were attacked at around 3:30 p.m.

December 11. Five soldiers of the



36th IB were killed and many other government troopers wounded when the NPA ambushed a column of the AFP unit conducting military operations in the logging areas of Diatagon in Lianga, Surigao del Sur. The NPA seized an M16 rifle and five backpacks.

The 36th IB is one of the military units responsible for the killing of several innocent civilians in Bislig City, Bunawan and Rosario in Agusan del Sur. The 36th IB also connives with a number of local government and DENR officials as well as illegal loggers responsible for denuding the dipterocarp forests in areas covered by the Forest Research Institute as well as watershed areas in the adjacent towns of Bislig, Tagbina and Hinatuan in Agusan del Sur.

December 9. The NPA seized a shotgun when they disarmed an abusive guard at a fishpond owned by the Dy Ty Ban and Libarios families in Barangay Can-aga, Malimono, Surigao del Norte.

December 8. Two soldiers belonging to the 31st DRC (Division Reconnaissance Company) of the Philippine Army were wounded in an encounter with Red fighters of the Napoleon Tumagtang Command of NPA-Southern Iloilo. The Red fighters suffered no casualties and safely withdrew from the scene after a five-minute firefight. The three columns, touted as the "elite force" of the 3rd Infantry Division and even two sections of the 47th IB that were near the scene of the fighting could do nothing to help the DRC. The military purposely brought their two casualties to the hospital in the evening to avoid detection but they were nonetheless spotted by the villagers.

December 7. Two soldiers were wounded in a harassment operation by NPA Red fighters on a military detachment in Monkayo, Compostela Valley. AB

MILF-BIAF inflicts mounting casualties on AFP

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) suffered mounting casualties in successive encounters with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front-Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (MILF-BIAF) in the first half of December. The latest reports revealed that 56 AFP troops died in gunbattles with BIAF mujahideen.

Eight soldiers were killed when the AFP raided the headquarters of the MILF-BIAF in Piagapo, Lanao del Sur on December 16. Two mujahideen were killed in over nine hours of fighting.

The MILF reported that the BIAF was forced to defend itself when the AFP attacked one of its units under Abdullah Macapaar (Kumander Bravo) in Piagapo.

Meanwhile, two government soldiers were killed while the BIAF suffered three casualties in another gunbattle in Barangay Bansayan, Piagapo.

On December 11 at around 11 a.m., mujahideen from the BIAF 102nd Base Command attacked AFP elements in Barangay Pantaon, Munai, Lanao del Norte killing five soldiers and wounding an undetermined number of troopers. The military retaliated by firing mortar shells.

In the morning of December 9, the AFP sustained its biggest casualties in this period when close to 43 soldiers of the 8th Marine Landing Battalion Team (8th MLBT) were killed in a clash with fighters of the First Brigade under the MILF-BIAF 114th Base Command in Barangay Kailih, Al Barka, Basilan. The Marines used helicopter gunships to support their ground operations and only stopped the aerial bombings shortly before nightfall. The AFP dropped four bombs that narrowly missed an evacuation center. A number of houses were also torched by 8th MLBT elements in Sitio Bakisung in the same area.

AFP is responsible for Iligan bombing—MILF

Military agents of the Arroyo government were behind the two bombings in Iligan City on December 18 that killed two civilians and wounded 48 people, according to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

In a statement posted December 20 on its website *Luwaran*, the MILF said it had received an "A-1 intelligence report" from Camp Aguinaldo itself that the bombings would be blamed on Commander Bravo, Commander Umbra Kato and other MILF commanders. The scheme is aimed at justifying bigger and more sustained AFP attacks against the MILF in 2009. The plan was said to have been finalized after the AFP received a bigger budget and after public anger against the MILF had been fuelled through a series of bombings in Mindanao that have all been blamed on the Jemaah Islamiyah and the so-called "special operations group" of the MILF.

Recession to linger for years

Official US economic data confirmed in the first week of December that the economy had plunged into recession as early as December 2007. After the 0.5% dip in the economy from June to August, the economic is expected to register a 4% decline in the last quarter of 2008. The prolonged recession or depression will be marked by continued drops in production and worsening unemployment.

Almost 533,000 workers in the US were re-trenched in November after manufacturing plunged to its lowest levels since 1982. Unemployment rose to 6.7% from 6.5% in October. Almost 1.9 million workers lost their jobs this year. Manufacturing is not expected to recover until the second quarter of 2010. Unemployment is even expected to worsen to between 8.7% and 9.5% in the next two years.

The world capitalist system is reeling from the recession. The German economy is expected to contract by 3% in 2009, the worst since the end of the Second World War. The Japanese economy also shrunk by 1.8% in the third quarter of 2008. For the first time in the last seven years, Chinese exports nosedived by 2.2% in November as a result of reduced demand from the US. Manufacturing will continue to plummet as a consequence, resulting in the loss of millions of jobs.

Ecuador defaults on debt payments

THE Ecuadorian government decided on December 15 not to pay \$31 million in interests on the country's \$3.9 billion debt from foreign banks. The government considers the debts "immoral" as they are mired in numerous cases of corruption.

An audit ordered by the Ecuadorian government of the country's financial transactions with foreign banks from 1976 to 2006 has revealed that past governments were guilty of criminal violations for having sold the country's debt to pension funds, hedge funds and other foreign investors.

The government said Ecuador's decision to default on its debt payments had no relation to its financial problems. The country earns enough income from its oil exports and is capable of paying its debts.

Ecuador has launched the slogan "life before debt," which has received the Ecuadorean people's widespread support. The country is prepared to face any investigation or litigation for its decision.

This is the second time in a decade that Ecuador has defaulted on its foreign debts.

Irate Iraqi journalist throws shoes at Bush

AN Iraqi journalist did not pass up the chance to give US Pres. George W. Bush the gravest of insults—by hurling his shoes at him. The incident occurred on December 14 at a press conference in Baghdad where Bush and his puppet Iraqi prime minister Nuri al-Maliki were to speak.

Even before the two rulers could speak, television reporter Mundathar al-Zaidi, 28, had thrown both his shoes at Bush, shouting "Here's your goodbye kiss, you dog. This is from the widows, the orphans and those who were killed in Iraq because of your war." In Arab culture, the gravest insult is to call a person a dog and to throw a shoe at a person or beat him with it.

Al-Zaidi was immediately arrested and detained by the police. He could be sentenced to four to seven years in prison for disrespecting a person in authority. According to his brother and lawyer, al-Zaidi was tortured after the incident and had bruises all over his body.

The Arabs now consider al-Zaidi a hero for what he did. Protesters have been launching daily street demonstrations to demand his release from prison. Pres. Hugo Chavez of Venezuela has also offered sanctuary to him should he be released from jail.

Protesters throw shoes at Gloria. Meanwhile, protesters threw shoes and slippers at a portrait of Gloria Arroyo in front of the Department of Foreign Affairs on December 18 in a reprise of the shoe-throwing protest against her master Bush. The shoe- and slipper-throwing was part of a bigger protest by members of Migrante International who condemned the regime's continued neglect of migrant workers' interests.

Protests blaze through Greece

PROTESTS have flared in various cities in Greece since the second week of December. The protests were triggered by the killing of a 16-year old youth by the police in Athens on December 6.

The demonstrations first erupted in the Athenian district of Exarchia, the frequent site of clashes between the police and militant groups, as hundreds of youth threw molotov bombs at police stations, shops and banks. The protest actions quickly spread across 12 more cities across Greece. Two

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