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Editorial

Corruption weighs down on the peasant masses and must be eliminated

The vast countryside is a picture of extreme oppression and abuse. It is where millions of peasants and farm workers suffer from intensifying feudal and semifeudal exploitation and where hunger and penury are the fruits of their efforts to enrich the land and produce food. It is where they are victimized by widespread landgrabbing, back-breaking debts, and incomes that are woefully inadequate to buy even food and other basic needs.

Thus, it is doubly enraging to know that the peasants' poverty and oppression have been invoked by corrupt bureaucrat capitalists in connivance with other exploiters as pretexts to amass ever larger sums of money for themselves.

The syndicate of Janet Lim-Napoles and high-ranking officials of the reactionary government has stolen mind-boggling amounts of public funds through the use of bogus non-governmental organizations purporting to serve the interests of the peasant masses. These racketeers have used the peasants' needs and demands to cause the release of billions of pesos for the purchase of seeds, fertilizer, pesticides and other

agricultural inputs.

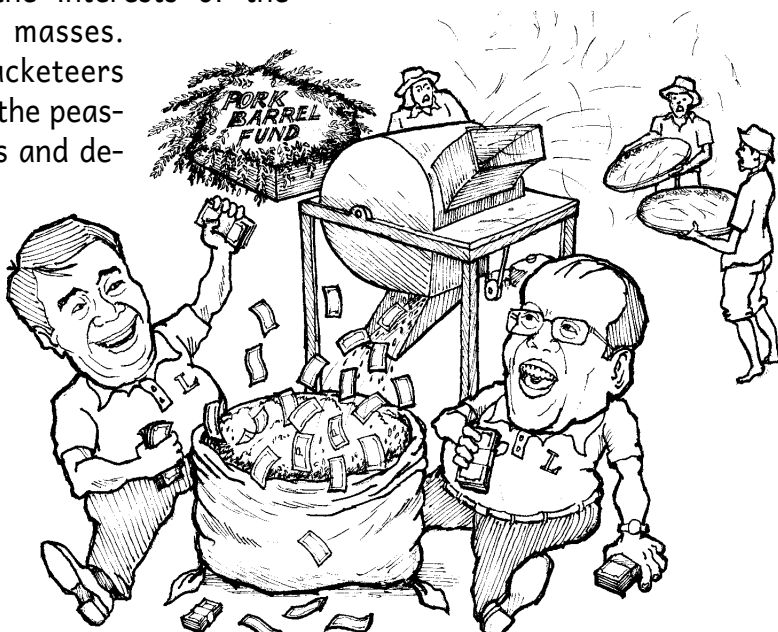
In truth, however, these so-called farmers' programs and fake NGOs have been mere conduits for the laundering of billions of pesos of public funds and served as smokescreens for corruption.

Instead of benefiting the peasant masses, these humongous amounts of public funds have merely ended up in the pockets of bureaucrat capitalists. This anomalous system of using NGOs became widespread

under the Arroyo regime. Under the Aquino regime, the practice persists, especially in the agricultural sector, but with the "righteous road" slogan as a cover. Aside from the funds flowing from Congress and the Senate, huge amounts have also been sourced directly from Malacañang through the DAP program.

Avaricious bureaucrats and their cohorts have also made bundles of money by feeding on the suffering of the rural poor who have been victimized by strong typhoons and massive floods and landslides.

But however startling these cases are of stealing from the public coffers, they are minuscule compared to the hundreds of billions of pesos plundered by various reactionary governments in implementing one of



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the grandest and most deceptive projects in the country's history—bogus land reform.

From the Marcos dictatorship's PD 27 to the CARP of the Corazon Aquino, Fidel Ramos and Joseph Estrada regimes to the CARPER under Gloria Arroyo and Benigno Aquino III, the reactionary state has spent ₱259.5 billion for land reform. But the face of feudal and semi-feudal exploitation has hardly changed even on the eve of CARPER's conclusion in 2014.

There is no other instance of land reform's failure more striking than the agonizingly slow process of land distribution in Hacienda Luisita, which is owned by the Aquino-Cojuangco clan. Aquino likes to boast of how "historic" CARP's implementation at the vast estate is. In fact, the only things that have been distributed at the hacienda are certificates requiring decades of amortization on the part of the farm workers.

Meanwhile, landgrabbing is rampant nationwide as haciendas and plantations expand anew and land is cleared to give

way to mining companies. Amortization papers held by CARP "beneficiaries" are being cancelled on a massive scale, with landlords and compradors never running out of means sanctioned by reactionary laws to continually expand their landholdings.

All reactionary land reform programs have resulted in the further entrenchment of land monopoly because like other farmer-oriented programs of the bourgeois state, they are nothing but money-making schemes. They are no different from the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program which purportedly aims to alleviate poverty, especially in the countryside. Greedy bureaucrats lost no time in seizing on the CCT as a means of raiding the public coffers.

The peasantry can never expect any change in their wretched conditions, especially under the Aquino regime. Aquino and his fellow corrupt bureaucrats will continue using rural poverty to plunder state funds unless the system that engenders corruption, exploitation and oppression is put to an end. **AB**

Peasant month marked

Farmers' organizations launched a series of mass actions and initiatives to commemorate Peasant Month this October. They called for the abolition of haciendas and free and immediate land distribution, as well as the repudiation of, and resistance to, the repressive and landlord US-Aquino regime.

On October 2, the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas charged Secretary Proceso Alcala and other officials of the Department of Agriculture with plunder in connection with their roles in stealing the pork barrel funds of senators and congressmen.

On October 14, peasants held a protest camp in front of the Department of Agrarian Reform office to condemn the continued inutility of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) and its successor, the CARP Extension with Reforms (CARPER). They called for a resolution of the widespread problem of landlessness nationwide.

On October 15, they celebrated International Peasant Women's Day. And on October 16, they commemorated the International Day of Hunger instead of International Food Day to protest the widespread poverty and backwardness of the agricultural sector in the Philippines.

Oust Alcala

Alcala is guilty of a myriad of sins against the peasantry. It was under his term that the use of the DA by high-ranking



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state officials to plunder billions of pesos worth of public funds was exposed. The thievery of supposed farmers' NGOs in cahoots with congressmen and senators that has been going on since the previous Arroyo regime up to the current administration forms but a small part. In a recent exposé, the US-Aquino regime reportedly released ₱7.9 billion in funds through the Disbursement Acceleration Program (DAP) purportedly for agrarian reform.

At the same time, the peasants assailed plans by the Aquino regime to deprive small farmers of the ₱70-billion coco levy fund (CLF), contrary to the Supreme Court's orders. Among the items that Aquino and Alcala want to fund through the CLF is the construction of an agricultural-industrial center that will benefit landlords controlling the coconut industry.

Alcala also conspired with the rice cartel to artificially push rice prices up. He spread the lie that there was a rice shortage to pave the way for anomalous rice importations. He likewise spread false reports that the National Food Authority's (NFA) supplies would last for 65 days (before a "shortage" would ensue) when the NFA in fact, only had 18 days worth of supplies. Rice supplies and prices would thereafter be completely under the cartel's control.

Alcala has also been promoting destructive genetically modified products. Contrary to calls by the peasantry, the DA has shrewdly permitted the planting of Golden Rice in the country, at the instance of agrochemical

giants.

CARPER's inutility

It is not only the DA that is involved in widespread corruption. In 2012, the Aquino regime provided the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) with ₱7.2 billion via the anomalous DAP allegedly to accelerate land distribution under the CARP. This is on top of the ₱10 billion allotted for "land acquisition and distribution" for the year. At that time, however, less than 10% of the targeted 10,000 hectares (out of a total of 115,000 hectares) had been distributed.

The use of CARP and CARPER as instruments of corruption is further proof of their inutility. These programs have long been assailed as anti-peasant, serving only the interests of the landlord class.

On CARPER's fourth year, only 30% (or 381,000) has been distributed out of the total target of 1.2 million hectares. Almost all of these lands (94%) is privately owned and most (75%) are plantations and haciendas. Meanwhile, the majority of landholdings that had supposedly been distributed are under litigation and have not been actu-

ally distributed.

A big portion (70%) of lands distributed through the Voluntary Land Transfer (VLT) scheme are fraud-ridden. No less than the DAR has reported that landlords have been using the VLT to transfer ownership of their lands to relatives and other fake beneficiaries.

Agriculture in the doldrums

In the face of all this, peasants have become even poorer due to decades of agricultural liberalization. The liberalization of the sector has meant the reduction of tariffs on imported agricultural products, the removal of protection, the weakening of local agriculture and the collapse of the country's ability to produce food for its own consumption.

Ever since the all-out liberalization of agriculture was begun in the 1990s, importations of basic foodstuff like rice, garlic, onions, coffee, pork, chicken and beef have risen severalfold.

With the local market flooded with foreign agricultural products, the deficit in food products has risen 21 times—from \$181 million in 1994 to \$3.6 billion in 2010. AB



Anti-corruption forces expand

The ranks of people opposed to all forms of pork barrel and corruption under the Aquino regime continue to expand with every passing day.

The bells pealed in 1,500 churches nationwide on October 11 in response to a call from the Church People's Alliance against Pork Barrel to show the solidarity of various religious groups with people's actions against the Aquino regime's corruption.

On October 14, some 5,000 people rallied in Bacolod City against the PDAF and DAP. Among the rally's organizers were the Catholic Church led by Bacolod Bishop Vicente Navarra. Manila Auxiliary Bishop Broderick Pabillo likewise spoke before the gathering, expressing the Catholic Church's stand against the pork barrel. He pointed out that ₱250 billion is lost annually through government corruption. He also assailed the loss of the ₱20-billion Malampaya fund because of the system of patronage politics, bribery and other forms of corruption.

On the same day, members of the Church People's Alliance against Pork Barrel picketed the Batasan Pambansa Complex in Quezon City. In a letter sent to Congress officials, they condemned the pork barrel as the root of grave corruption in the country. Among those who signed the letter were Caloocan Bishop Emeritus Deogracias Iñiguez, Rev. Fr. Ben Alforque, Rev. Jerome Baris of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines and Nardy Sabino of the Promotion of Church People's Response.

Mass actions were also held in Iloilo and Capiz on October 16. The Paghugpong sang mga Mangunguma sa Panay kag Guimaras (PAMANGGAS) led a

march of 400 farmers in Iloilo City where they held a program at every stop in the city's main thoroughfares. In Roxas City, a picket-rally was held in front of the city hall by some 150 members of the Kahublagaan sang Mangunguma sa Capiz (KAMACA) and fisherfolk.

On October 18, Benigno Aquino III and his cabinet members Florencio Abad of the Department of Budget and Executive Secretary Paquito Ochoa Jr. were charged with culpable violation of the constitution in relation to the release of public funds under the Disbursement Acceleration Program. This was the sixth case filed before the Supreme Court relating to the DAP.

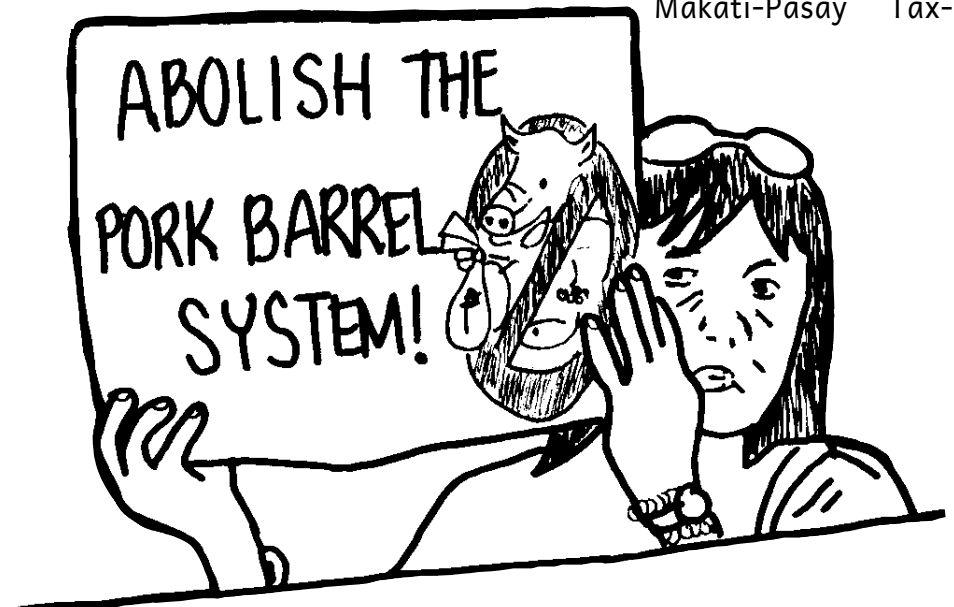
The case was filed by Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) chair Carol Araullo and congresspersons Luz Ilagan of Gabriela Women's Party, Terry Riddon of Kabataan Partylist and Carlos Isagani Zarate of Bayan Muna. Among the other plaintiffs were representatives of Anakbayan, Youth Act Now, PAGBABAGO, Concerned Citi-

zens Movement and Ang Kapatiran Party.

In their complaint, they charged that DAP was violative of the constitution which prohibits the release of any public funds and the realignment of allotted funds without Congress' approval. Earlier, lawyers' organizations such as the Philippine Constitutional Association (Philconsa), Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) and other personalities had also filed similar cases at the Supreme Court.

On October 17, the Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG), a newly formed alliance, expressed its collective disappointment and opposition to the use and abuse by legislators of their pork barrel and the fertilizer, Malampaya and DAP funds. The group demanded a stop to the Aquino government's practice of providing unnecessary benefits to foreign food conglomerates like Charoen Porphan of Thailand, which they said have crippled the country's agricultural industry.

The creation of another new coalition against the pork barrel was announced on October 14, comprising members of workers' unions in banks, hospitals, hotels and the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sector. Calling itself "TaxAPo," (short for Makati-Pasay Tax-





payers against Pork), among its members are the RCBC Employees Union, Maybank Employees Union, Citibank Employees Union and HS-BC Employees Union.

Also expressing its stand against the pork barrel system was the Chamber of Commerce of the Philippine Islands (CCPI), the oldest business organization in the Philippines. According to its president Jose Luis Yulo, Jr., they will support campaigns currently being spearheaded by former Chief Justice Reynato Puno for a "people's initiative" to pass a new law that will abolish the pork barrel.

Even retired generals have joined anti-pork barrel moves. According to (ret) Brig. Gen. Rosalino Alquiza, former president of the Association of Generals and Flag Officers (AGFO) of the AFP and (ret) Maj. Gen. Reynaldo Reyes who chairs the Philippine Military Academy Alumni Association (PMAAA), there is widespread sentiment among retired officers that Aquino should return funds from the Malampaya project, the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (PAGCOR) and the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) that have been squandered. Both PAGCOR and PCSO are directly under Malacañang's control. **AB**

Progressive workers assail big bonuses received by SSS officials

Members of the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) trooped to the Social Security System (SSS) office along East Avenue, Quezon City on October 10 to condemn the huge bonuses and other allowances received by SSS officials. The KMU demanded that the involved officials resign and return the money to the people.

The KMU charged that even as workers have been making do with their very low wages and are burdened by the high SSS contributions, SSS officials have been enjoying big bonuses sourced from the members.

The KMU added that SSS officials should not use the agency's allegedly excellent performance as a pretext for giving out more than ₱10 million in bonuses, because the SSS failed to collect billions of pesos in contributions from delinquent employers. It has also been processing disability, pension, retirement and other benefits at a snail's pace.

Each SSS board member received ₱1 million, on top of various other allowances in previous years. Among those who received the huge bonuses were SSS President and CEO Emilio de Quiros and SSS Chairman Juan Santos. Representatives of yellow unions within SSS such as the Alliance of Progressive Labor and the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines also received a million pesos each.

The CPP joined in condemning the big rewards given to SSS officials. "The granting of fat bonuses and

compensation to Aquino's appointees to the SSS clearly show the hypocrisy of the Aquino regime's so-called 'daang-matwid'," said the CPP. "While in power, the Aquino regime is bound to reveal itself more and more to be not much different from the previous Arroyo regime and other past regimes in terms of rottenness and corruption."

"The anomalous granting of ₱10 million in bonuses to Aquino's officers in the SSS further stirs up the Filipino people's indignation at the Aquino regime and its good governance publicity," said the CPP. "Aquino's unceasing styling of himself as an anti-corruption advocate is turning out to be nothing but a stunt to conceal the corruption of his rule."

Meanwhile, progressive representatives in Congress have called for an investigation of the anomalies at the SSS.

In a related development, 19 other Government-Owned and -Controlled Corporations have been allowed by government to issue bonuses. The Philippine Health Insurance has already provided ₱1.5 billion in bonuses to its officials and employees. **AB**

Bungkalan in Negros

Severe poverty, hunger and unrest stalk the masses of farm workers in sugarcane fields and workers in the sugar mills of Negros.

They receive extremely low wages and are bereft of all benefits due to the enforcement of contractualization and the system of gang labor (*pakyawan*) in the haciendas. They are mired in debt, with their next wage not enough to pay them off. Their children are obliged to work at an early age to augment the family's meager income. Their poverty pushes them to fight for their right to a small plot of land to till in order to feed their families. The widespread lack of land to till and the system of slave labor in the sugarcane fields are driving thousands of farmers in Negros to struggle and directly lay claim to the land.

The vacant lots collectively tilled by the peasants are called "land cultivation areas" in Negros and *bungkalan* (or collectively tilled areas) elsewhere in the country.

From a few organized assertions to till land in 2008, the movement has spread like a prairie fire. In fact, as early as the 1980s, there have already been sporadic moves to advance the right to till. Currently, there are more than 86 plots of land comprising more than 2,100 hectares being collectively tilled and administered by a farm workers' organization. The plots are planted to rice, corn and other food crops for more than 2,500 peasant families in Negros.

The LCAs are all "CARPable" lands. Instead of distribut-

ing the land, however, the landlords have slapped the farmers with criminal charges and fascist suppression for exercising their right under reactionary law.

Semifeudal mode

The sharpest class conflicts between the landlord class and the peasantry can be found in Negros, where the hacienda system of sugarcane plantations began as far back as the time of the Spanish colonialists.

Out of Negros' 1.3 million-hectare land area, 818,991 hectares or 63% are privately owned. Up to 80% of private lands (or 655,193 hectares) are in the hands of only 24% of people who own at least ten hectares. The remaining 163,798 hectares are divided among 76% of landowners owning ten hectares or lower. Meanwhile, the farm workers who create the wealth of the haciendas do not own any land. This persistent and deeply rooted land monopoly exacerbates landlessness among the peasantry.

On top of this, the monocrop system of planting sugarcane exclusively effectively shuts the door to any opportunity of finding alternative work, causing generations of farm workers to be bound by the system of slave labor in the sugarcane plantations.

The despotic landlords and the reactionary state that represents them are very apprehensive about the peasants' collective ac-

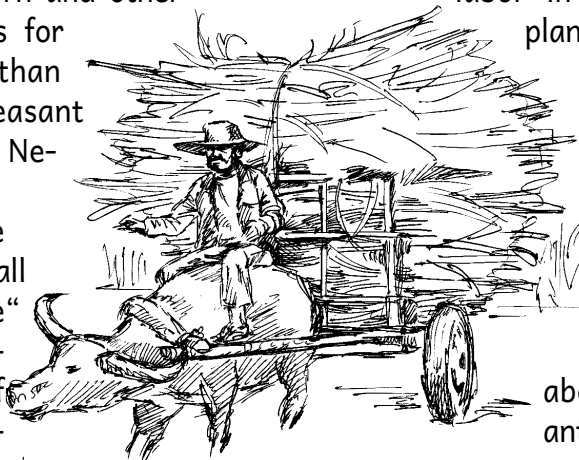
tion to acquire land to till. Aside from the landlords' armed goons, Negros has been declared a national priority under Oplan Bantay Laya 2 (2008) and the current Oplan Bayanihan. The courts and no less than the law on CARPER have been invoked to charge peasants with crimes such as trespassing whenever they begin tilling land; arson when they burn grass to prepare the land for planting; theft when they harvest their crops; and so many other trumped-up cases.

Advance genuine land reform

The revolutionary movement recognizes the justness and legitimacy of the farm workers' struggle for land to till. It is their basic right to be given livelihood opportunities and employment security. The revolutionary movement salutes their courage and initiative in taking action in the face of the criminalization of their struggle and their violent suppression by the military and the landlords' armed mercenaries.

The revolutionary movement supports their initiative and encourages them to intensify their struggle for genuine land reform. They must further focus their struggle on gradually smashing the economic and political power of the landlord class. They are encouraged to join the armed struggle as the only means of advancing their struggle and completely ending feudal and semi-feudal exploitation.

They must be vigilant about forces or groups that want to put a stop to their initiatives and keep them within the framework of bourgeois law which favors the big landlords. They must expand and deepen their consciousness regarding class conflict and oppose the legalism, economism and reformism of groups opposed to genuine land reform. **AB**



Aryendo system in Negros

The problem of land monopoly in the island of Negros has worsened due to the proliferation of the *aryendo* system. Under this system, new landlords have emerged and the landholdings of old landlords expanded.

The *aryendo* system in Negros involves peasants leasing out their small parcels of land to hacenderos or other people with capital. Each hectare of land is usually leased out for ₱1,000 per year on a three-year contract. Most of those who lease out their lands are CARP "beneficiaries" who find it difficult to raise capital for planting sugarcane.

Because of loss of income, they are obliged to borrow money repeatedly from their lessors

until they find themselves deep in debt. To pay back their debts, the small farmers are forced to sell the land they had leased out, usually to the lessors who they are indebted to. This system has led to the emergence of a new crop of landlords.

There are also big landlords who have been able to use this system to expand their landholdings. Hacenderos usually lease parcels of land that are adjacent to their estates. A striking case is

that of Mayo Cueva, a landlord who used the *aryendo* system to circumvent CARP. In connivance with DAR, Cueva came up with a list of fake beneficiaries who he claimed had leased their lands to big landlord Alfredo Marañon, Negros Occidental governor and Cueva's relative. This way, Marañon was able to expand his land while maintaining an arrangement granting Cueva actual ownership and control over the land.

The farmers who were actually on Cueva's land have exposed and thoroughly opposed this arrangement. At present, they have been able to occupy and till the land but face criminal cases filed against them by the hacenderos. AB

Ka Mely and Ka Dado: Portraits of life and struggle in Negros

The lives of husband and wife Ka Dado and Ka Mely reflect the feudal and semifeudal conditions in Negros and the bright future offered by the revolutionary movement.

Ka Dado hails from the poor peasantry. He and his family, from his grandfather in the 1950s were tenants on a hacienda. While still a child, he was already helping his father in the fields and was never able to go to school. The *tersyuhan* system was in force then, where the hacendero acquired one-third of the harvest without any contribution, whether in the form of labor or expenses. When the hacendero decided to shift to planting commercial bamboo in 1990, he took back the land from the tenants without even compensating them for their crops. From then on, Ka Dado's family became farm workers in the hacienda.

Ka Mely, on the other hand, grew up in a sugarcane plantation. At the tender age of ten years, she began working as a farm laborer in the sugarcane fields whenever school was out. Sometimes, as early as Friday, she would accompany her father and siblings working. She started out with a daily wage of ₱1.50 in 1973, which rose to ₱3.00 by the time she was 14.

Work in the sugarcane fields is back-breaking.

At 6 a.m., you had to report to the *enkargado* (labor gang foreman) so you could be given work. If you came late, there wouldn't be any work for you because there was a long line of farm workers looking for jobs. In clearing a field, you were assigned a *heras* or a strip 30 meters long and one meter wide that you had to finish in a day. You had to work from 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. If you couldn't finish the work, you would have to come back the day after and do it without pay," added Ka Mely.

Ka Mely went on describing how hard the work was. In applying fertilizer, they were paid one peso per bag. They could use up as many as 50 bags, but that was without taking any breaks. In cutting sugarcane and loading the cane aboard the trucks, the pay was 5 centavos per *hapnig* (a load of 20 pieces of cut cane) in the 1970s.

Nowadays, the pay is ₱200 to ₱300 per ton, with the wage given per gang of laborers. A group of cane cutters and loaders would fill a truck with cut cane and the cargo is weighed at the sugar mill. This is the heaviest work of all in the sugarcane fields. Women receive only half of what the men are paid because they are not strong enough to load cane onto the trucks.

The wage for *pagpamatdan* or cutting cane for

planting is ₱50 per thousand and ₱300 per thousand for planting sugarcane, although it is impossible to finish this number in a day.

"Our life as *sakada* (sugarcane farm worker) has been very hard, especially so when we were not yet organized and had not yet taken any action to demand higher wages and benefits. The work is back-breaking, but there are no benefits. If you got sick, you couldn't work, you had no food and couldn't seek medical attention. You had to report to work feeling weak. The pay is not enough, even for those without families to support. This is why even children are obliged to work," said the couple.

The group of farm workers that Ka Mely belonged to were organized in 1980. She became a mass leader of their association and actively fought for their democratic rights, such as higher wages for farm workers. While she fully valued the open mass movement, their experience has taught her its defensive character in the face of the violence of the reactionary state, which advances the interests of the landlord class.

At that time, she had a brother and a number of cousins who had already become contacts of the New People's Army (NPA) and were later convinced

to join it. Ka Mely had also joined the underground movement in the cities and later worked fulltime. In 1993, she answered the call to hie to the countryside, where she was able to use her skills as a mass leader in the urban areas.

Meanwhile, in 1985, the NPA began expanding towards Ka Dado's village. But the Red fighters still could not visit their barrio very often. Nonetheless, Ka Dado's elder brother assiduously helped in organizing the masses and eventually joined the NPA. Whenever he visited the family, Ka Dado and his brother would have long and serious discussions about his experiences in the people's army. In 1992, Ka Dado decided to become a Red fighter. His brother has since joined the ranks of revolutionary martyrs from Negros.

In the NPA, Ka Dado and Ka Mely became members of the same collective for years before they became sweethearts and eventually married in 2000. In their two decades within the people's army and working among the farmers and farm workers, they have come to grasp that the genuine liberation of the peasantry and the entire people relies on the advance of the revolutionary strength of the people and the people's army. AB

The sugar industry in Negros

Since the beginning, the sugar industry has been tied to foreign interests and has never served local needs and development. Like other export-oriented industries, it operates within the frame of unequal treaties entered into by the Philippine government, such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

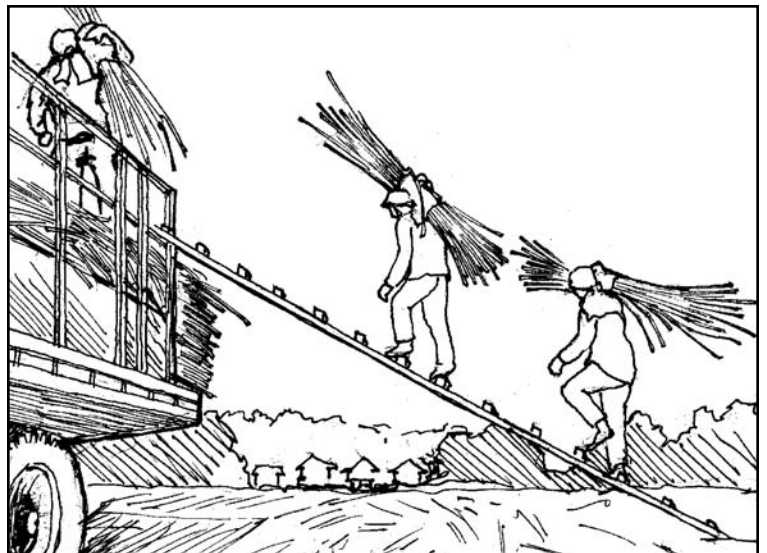
The biggest sugarcane plantations in the country owned by big landlords are found in Negros. At present, more than half or 360,000 hectares out of the island's 670,000 hectares of agricultural land is planted to sugarcane (up to 580,000 hectares were planted to the crop during the height of the sugar industry).

Negros' economy is dependent on sugar. Since 1775, the island has been the biggest sugar exporter in Asia. By 1880, it was the world's third biggest sugar producer. But as an economy tied to the vagaries of the international market, the sugar in-

dustry has been through booms and busts, such as its collapse in the 1980s. Up to now, the industry has failed to recover its former status. Nonetheless, it remains the Negrenses' main source of livelihood.

The industry's former landlords, however, remain economically and politically

powerful. Some of them have shifted to other agribusinesses, such as Danding Cojuangco who is now into planting cassava for biofuel, ylang-ylang, fruits and wood for export. But most have persisted in planting sugarcane. Whenever the industry is down, the bourgeois state comes to the rescue by allotting public funds to the hacenderos and big comprador bourgeoisie, but none for the farm workers who suffer the



most.

There are 13 sugar mills operating in Negros. The biggest, which are owned by big comprador bourgeoisie include Victorias Milling Co. controlled by Lucio Tan; Central Azucarera de la Carlota and Hawaiian-Phil. Co. which is owned by Roxas Holdings Inc.; Lopez Sugar Corp. of the Lopezes; Universal Robina Sugar Mills Co. and Southern Negros Dev. Corp. of the Gokongweis; and Central Azucarera de Bais and Binalbagan-Isabela Sugar which is owned by Jose Mari Chan.

Up to 350,000 farm workers in the haciendas receive a daily wage of ₱80-₱120, which is less than half of what the law stipulates for agricultural workers in the region. On the other hand, there are 20,000 workers in the sugar mills.

Labor flexibilization is likewise enforced in the plantations, through the system of gang labor and contractualization. Under these systems, regular farm workers have been displaced and hacenderos deal only with contractors or labor gang foremen.

The reactionary state's bogus land reform has never been able to touch the vast sugarcane haciendas. Under the Marcos dictatorship, Presidential Decree 27 was strictly confined to rice and corn lands only. Under CARP and CARPER, loopholes were deliberately included in the law to enable hacenderos to evade the breakup of their estates. Negros became the laboratory for the various schemes concocted to evade land distribution before they were tried elsewhere in the country. One example is the Stock Distribution Option (SDO). Out of the 14 haciendas under the SDO, ten are in Negros.

Meanwhile, the further plunder of the land and the more intensive exploitation of the island's cheap labor loom with the expansion in southwest Negros of mining companies, the entry of oil palm plantations and the expansion of Del Monte Corporation's pineapple plantations. AB

Peasant masses in ST are victims of Aquino's thievery

The Aquino regime has virtually been repeatedly stabbing the peasant masses of Southern Tagalog (ST) with the plunder and thievery being perpetrated by its officials and cronies. Under the regime, they continue to suffer worsening forms of feudal and semifeudal exploitation.

In one of the most striking issues now faced by the peasant masses in ST, they continue to be deprived of the Coco Levy Fund (CLF). Instead, the fund is being used for anti-peasant programs. The CLF is a fund extracted from the masses of peasants and farm workers in coconut lands in the form of a tax imposed by the Marcos dictatorship from 1973 up to the early 1980s.

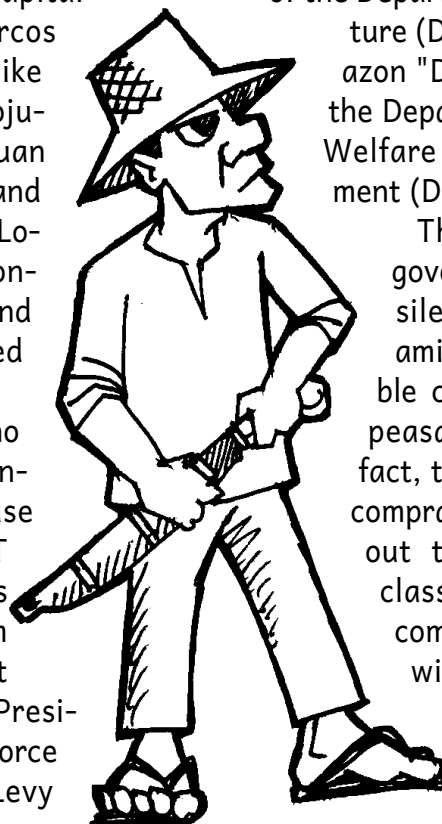
The CLF is now worth an estimated ₱120 billion. It should rightfully be owned by the masses of peasants and farm workers in coconut lands, but they have been deprived of it for more than two decades now. Instead, big bureaucrat capitalists and Marcos cronies like Danding Cojuangco, Juan Ponce Enrile and Maria Clara Lobregat controlled the fund and benefited from it.

The Aquino regime continues to refuse giving the CLT to the farmers and farm workers. It formed the Presidential Task Force on Coco Levy

which came up with the Poverty Reduction Road Map for the Coconut Industry which aims to use the CLF in implementing antipeople programs like the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), CARP and CARPER. The reactionary government has been brazenly stealing the CLF. It was used to bankroll the candidacy of Riza Hontiveros for the Senate and the Akbayan Party's campaign in the previous election.

Pork barrel funds allegedly for the peasantry have also been used for corruption. The brains behind squandering and stealing these public funds are Aquino and his cronies like Sec. Proceso Alcala of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and Sec. Corazon "Dinky" Soliman of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

The reactionary government remains silent and inutile amid the abominable conditions of the peasant masses. In fact, the landlords and comprador bourgeoisie out to protect their class interests are comfortably nestled within the reactionary government. It is the reactionary



government that serves as the mechanism for preserving feudal and semifeudal exploitation. Thus, there can never be any decisive action expected from the reactionary government on the raging issues faced by the peasantry.

In the Southern Tagalog region, 835 landlords and compradors control 496,469 hectares of productive agricultural land. The landlords and big compradors live off the sweat of the peasantry and use the fruits of their labor for their own benefit.

Feudal and semifeudal exploitation is worsening due to the feudal land monopoly and schemes by which land is reconcentrated in the hands of a few powerful interests. Land rent is exacted from the peasant masses through 80-20, 70-30 and 60-40 sharing schemes, all in favor of the landlord. The ruling classes maintain agriculture in its backward state and bind the peasants to a system of usury that imposes extremely high interest on debt. To augment their meager shares in the harvest, the farmers are compelled to work as seasonal or fulltime farm workers receiving very low wages.

In tandem with feudal and semifeudal exploitation is reactionary violence. The economic status of landlords and big comprador bourgeoisie enables them to exercise tight control over political power. Under Benigno Aquino III's regime, he has given his blessings to the mercenary AFP-PNP CAFGU to sow terror more viciously under Oplan Bayanihan. AB

Excerpted from a statement by NDFP-ST spokesperson Comrade Patnubay de Guia

Victorious tactical offensives launched in NCMR

Red fighters under the North Central Mindanao Region (NCMR) launched five tactical offensives in Bukidnon and Misamis Oriental from September 30 to October 6. The military suffered 33 killed and at least six wounded, while the Red guerrillas did not suffer any casualties.

In Bukidnon. Thirteen soldiers of the Philippine Army 8th IB were killed and several others wounded in an ambush by a unit under the NPA South Central Bukidnon Subregional Command (SCBSC) in Sitio Tubod, Barangay Cawayan, Quezon on October 6.

The Red fighters rained bullets and lobbed grenades on the lead team composed of the Lumad bandit group New Indigenous People's Army for Reform (NIPAR) led by Nonong Salusad. After this, they used command-detonated explosives (CDX) on the main body of soldiers from the 8th IB.

The NPA ambushed the 53 newly trained soldiers while the latter were on the way back to their camp in Quezon town from Sitio Kitanggol, Barangay Dao, San Fernando. The soldiers reinforced the NIPAR bandits after Red fighters raided their lair at Sitio Kitanggol on September 16.

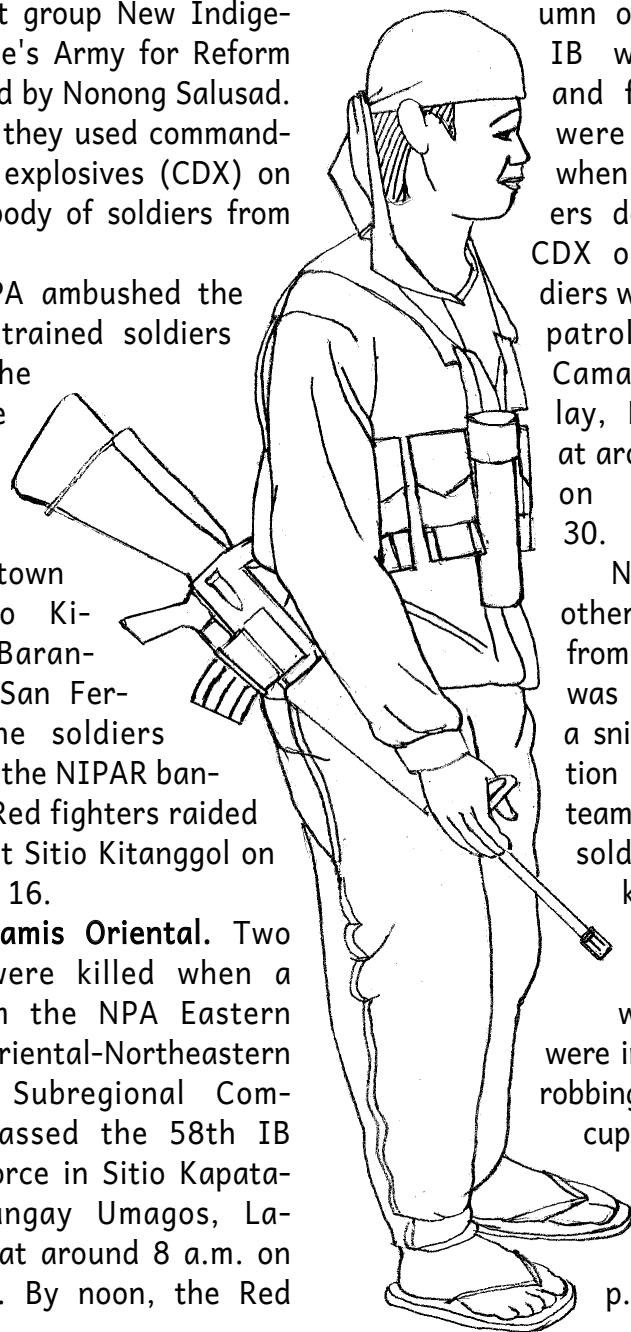
In Misamis Oriental. Two soldiers were killed when a team from the NPA Eastern Misamis Oriental-Northeastern Bukidnon Subregional Command harassed the 58th IB blocking force in Sitio Kapatagan, Barangay Umagos, Lagonglong, at around 8 a.m. on October 3. By noon, the Red

fighters had killed three more soldiers in the same area.

Meanwhile, two military helicopters were forced to make an emergency landing at the Balingasag Central Elementary School at 2:50 p.m. after an NPA unit fired at them as they neared the scene of the fighting.

Earlier, ten troops from a company-size column of the 58th IB were killed and five others were wounded when Red fighters detonated a CDX on the soldiers who were on patrol in Sitio Camansi, Bangalay, Lagonglong at around 2 p.m. on September 30.

Nearby, another soldier from the 58th IB was wounded in a sniping operation by an NPA team. Five more soldiers were killed by the NPA the day after while they were in the act of robbing an unoccupied house in Sitio Camansi at around 1 p.m. AB



Military suffers 19 casualties in ST

Ten soldiers were killed and nine others were wounded in various military actions launched by the New People's Army (NPA) in Southern Tagalog from July to September. An abusive company was likewise meted punishment in Occidental Mindoro. The reports were culled from *Kalatas*, the revolutionary mass paper in the region.

In Quezon. Red fighters under the Apolonio Mendoza Command (NPA-Quezon) thwarted an attempt by fascist troops of the 74th IB to encircle them in Sitio Matalahan, Barangay San Vicente Kanluran, Catanauan on September 16. Seven soldiers were reported killed while all members of the NPA were able to retreat unscathed.

The Red fighters were exercising when the 74th IB attacked at exactly 6:55 a.m. When the soldiers opened fire, the Red fighters were immediately able to maneuver. Each team was able to fight and seize the initiative in the battle.

In Mindoro. The Lucio de Guzman Command (NPA-Mindoro) punished on September 7 the Jomarias International Corporation (JIC), a construction company owned by former congressman and San Jose, Occidental Mindoro town mayor Jose Villarosa.

Residents of the area have been complaining about the company's operations which have been polluting the Caguray River and destroying the people's source of livelihood. The punitive operation was undertaken at the Paclolo-Purnaga area in Magsaysay, Occidental

Mindoro. The Red fighters burned two dumptrucks and a payloader and destroyed two mixers.

On August 26, the Lucio de Guzman Command likewise thwarted an attack by the 4th IB in Sitio Tinawagan, Barangay Panaytayan, Mansalay, Oriental Mindoro. A mercenary soldier was killed and two others wounded, while not a single Red fighter was killed or injured.

Meanwhile, another soldier was wounded in a sniping and harassment operation launched by an NPA team against the 4th IB in Sitio Gaang, Barangay Panaytayan.

In Palawan. Two elements of the Marine Battalion Landing Team 4

were wounded in a tactical offensive launched by the Bienvenido Valleber Command (NPA-Palawan) on August 26 in Sitio Ebangley, Barangay Abongan, Taytay.

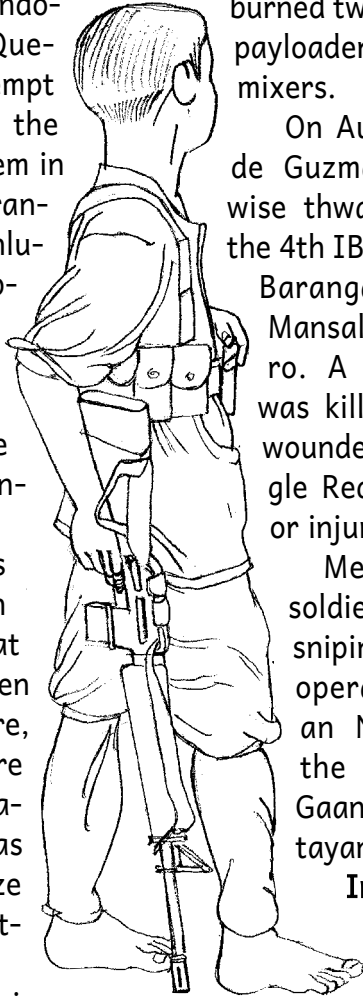
The Red fighters were able to make a safe retreat.

In Rizal. The NPA continues to mete blows on the fascist troops of the AFP in Rizal province. A three-man team under the Narciso Antazo Aramil Command (NPA-Rizal) launched a harassment operation on August 14 against a detachment manned by a composite force of the 16th and 59th IBs.

Before the harassment operation, an NPA unit spurned an attack by the 16th IB on July 28 in Barangay Tinucan, Tanay. A soldier was killed and another trooper was wounded in the 30-minute firefight which began at 6:30 a.m. Not a single Red fighter was killed or wounded in the gunbattle.

By 8 a.m. that day, the NPA unit which had retreated and regrouped returned to the scene of the fighting and harassed the 16th IB, wounding three other soldiers.

Meanwhile, the NPA-Rizal launched a sparrow operation against a sergeant from the 48th IB on July 20. AB



Ambush in Capiz

Three soldiers from the 61st IB Alpha Coy were killed and several others were wounded in an ambush by the New People's Army under the Jose Percival Estocada Jr. Command (JPEC) in Barangay Nayawan, Tapaz, Capiz on October 7.

Fascist troops under the 301st Infantry Brigade of the Philippine Army were then conducting operations in the mountainous barangays of Tacayan and Nayawan when they were ambushed by the Red fighters at around 6:45 a.m. It took more than six hours before three Huey helicopters arrived to collect the military casualties, said JPEC spokesperson Ka Jury Guerrero. AB

Military's onslaught against national minorities

In the guise of "peace and development teams," troops of the Armed Forces of the Philippines continued their rampage in the countryside this October, especially in Lumad communities in Agusan del Sur and Compostela Valley and in Tumanduk areas in Capiz.

In Agusan del Sur. Fifty-seven year old Lumad leader Gabriel Alindao, 57, was shot to death on October 10 in Barangay Kauswagan, Loreto town. He was a member of the Kahugpungan Alang sa Kalambuan (KASAKA).

Alindao was on his way home to Purok LBC (Lumad, Bol-anon, Cebuano) when he was gunned down by suspected elements of the 26th IB near the Kauswagan Elementary School.

Alindao had earlier been accused by the military of supporting the New People's Army (NPA). To bely the accusations, Alindao attended a military-sponsored activity that morning called "Bayanihan" held at the 26th IB camp.

The 26th IB has been encamped in the village since July 19, after the NPA allegedly killed Kauswagan's barangay chairman.

Prior to this, KASAKA treasurer Benjie Planos was brutally killed by suspected military elements on September 13 while he was on his way home in the same barangay at around 2 p.m. Planos was one of the leaders of the Manobo-Agusan Lumad who evacuated towards Davao City where they exposed military abuses in Loreto.

On August 22, Planos joined a dialogue on militarization held at a Davao hotel that was likewise attended by Loreto local officials, Davao City mayor Rodrigo Duterte, military officers and Lumad leaders.

In Compostela Valley. Two-hundred and twenty-seven Matigsalog Lumad from Sitio Side 4, Barangay Manggayon, Maco evacuated towards Compostela town on October 4 to protest the military's encampment in their barangay.

They urgently demanded from the local government the withdrawal of the 25th IB's troops from their barrio to allow them to recover economically after being devastated by typhoon Pablo.

Up to 120 soldiers arrived in Barangay Manggayon on October 2 armed with high-powered rifles and artillery.

The residents told the military to pull out from their village. When the soldiers said they would remain until the conclusion of the 25th IB's military operation, the residents decided to leave.

On October 6, four Matigsalog youth age 13-18 years were harassed and illegally detained by elements of the Military Special Forces in Sitio Bongkilaton, Compostela town. They were on the way to their village to bring four sacks of rice for their school when they were harassed by the sol-

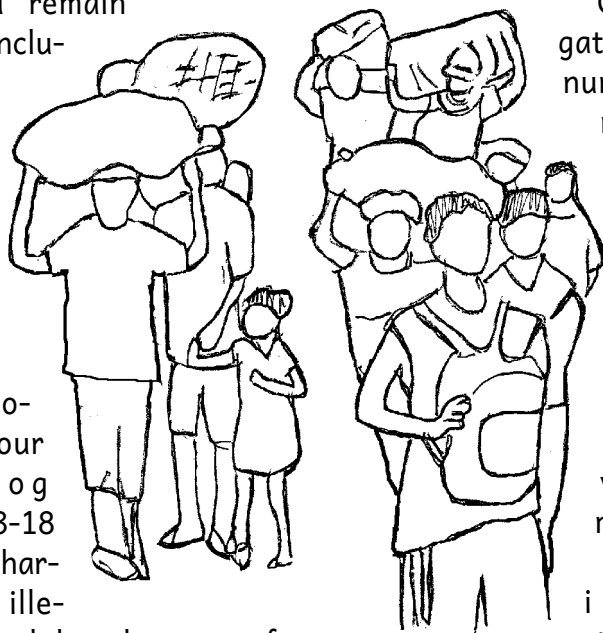
diers. The youth were hogtied and blindfolded while being maliciously accused of bringing rice supplies to the NPA. The soldiers also choked the victims, aimed a machete at them and threatened to kill them if they did not reveal the NPA's whereabouts. They were forcibly brought to the forest to serve as guides in the soldiers' operations against the NPA.

In Capiz. Pastor Laranja Mirasol Jr. was killed and Rolando Diaz Sr. was wounded when troops from the 61st IB Alpha Coy opened fire at the house of Abelardo Diaz Sr., a village councilor. The victims were all Tumanduk farmers. The strafing incident occurred at 9:30 a.m. in Barangay Nayawan, Tapaz while the victims were gathered in Diaz's house.

The residents, including Barangay Chairman Garson Catamin were further terrorized when the soldiers trained their guns at them and subjected them to investigation. The military also warned them against leaving the area.

Catamin had gathered a number of nearby residents at Diaz's house to discuss their course of action after an NPA ambush in their village that morning.

Three helicopters strafed the thickets, forests and farms in nearby Tacayan village in Tapaz town later that day at around 12:30 p.m. to collect their casualties, without considering the safety of civilians. AB



NDFP condemns arrest of 18 HERRIRA members

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) strongly condemned the arrest of 18 members of HERRIRA in Spain on September 30. HERRIRA is an organization defending the rights of 600 Basque political prisoners detained in Spain and France. These prisoners were fighters struggling for the liberation and independence of the Basque country. HERRIRA is known for openly and peacefully working to defend the human rights of political prisoners and refugees.

The arrest of the 18 members of HERRIRA violated the most basic democratic rights and freedoms of the organization's members. The NDFP, along with many other democratic organizations of the Basque people and their friends in the international community demanded the immediate release of the 18 HERRIRA members.

Anti-austerity assembly launched in Detroit City

AN international assembly was held in Detroit City, USA on October 5-6 to assail the depredations of the banks and the government's austerity program and to put forward just demands for upholding, defending and promoting the rights and wellbeing of the working class families and entire people of Detroit.

The gathering was led by the Coalition for an International People's Assembly Against the Banks and Against Austerity. The International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS) expressed solidarity with the activity.

The coalition called for the cancellation of debt to the banks. It demanded that workers' jobs, pensions and services for the community be guaranteed. It likewise called for a stop to union busting and an end to the undemocratic racist management of the cities and schools.

It also demanded that the government undertake a jobs program funded by the banks to reemploy the unemployed, and adopt a moratorium on all foreclosures and foreclosure-related evictions.

It called for increased funding for public education and a stop to racism and attacks on immigrants, women, the LGTB community and people with disabilities.

Detroit City symbolizes the intense crisis in the US. On July 18, the city declared bankruptcy because of its inability to pay back billions of dollars in debt. Families from the toiling masses and the lower petty bourgeoisie are suffering the most from the bankruptcy. (See *AB's August 7 issue*)

Fisherfolk assail construction of naval base in Oyster Bay

FISHERFOLK assailed plans to expand a Philippine Navy base in Oyster Bay, Palawan to enable it to service the growing number of US warships docking in the area.

The Philippine Navy Western Command recently announced plans to expand its naval base in Oyster Bay in central-western Palawan, which is more than a hundred kilometers from the Spratly Islands.

The base is currently comprised of an old wooden seaport. The target is to build a huge base capable of accommodating up to four big warships.

The Department of Public Works and Highways has released P500 million to begin construction. Included in the plans is the construction of a 12-kilometer long road connecting Palawan island to Oyster Bay.

The fisherfolk group Pamalakaya slammed the Oyster Bay expansion project as part of the growing US military presence in the Philippines. Plans to use the area as a US base is a violation of Philippine sovereignty.

Fisherfolk in the area also fear being further displaced when the plans push through. In the past, they were banned from fishing at the bay during joint operations launched by the AFP and US military in the area. Pollution caused by docking warships has also driven fish away. The fisherfolk also fear that a naval base would serve as a magnet for prostitution.

The naval base expansion project in Oyster Bay forms part of the US' overall plans to strengthen its military presence in the Philippines and the South China Sea. Palawan is currently dotted with a network of strong radar operated by the US to monitor the seas.