



ANG

Bayan

Pahayagan ng Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas
Pinapatnubayan ng Marxismo-Leninismo-Maoismo

English Edition
Vol. XLI No. 16
August 21, 2010
www.philippinerevolution.net

Editorial

The struggle in Hacienda Luisita is the struggle of the entire Filipino peasantry

Hacienda Luisita symbolizes the semicolonial and semifeudal system that shackles the country to underdevelopment and perennial crisis. Its long and continuing history is a history of unspeakable exploitation and oppression, intense class struggle and the age-old fight for social justice.

The Cojuangco clan is relentlessly maneuvering and devising schemes to retain its monopoly over the hacienda and prevent its distribution to the farmers and farmworkers. The clan is even more audacious now that it has regained control of Malacañang.

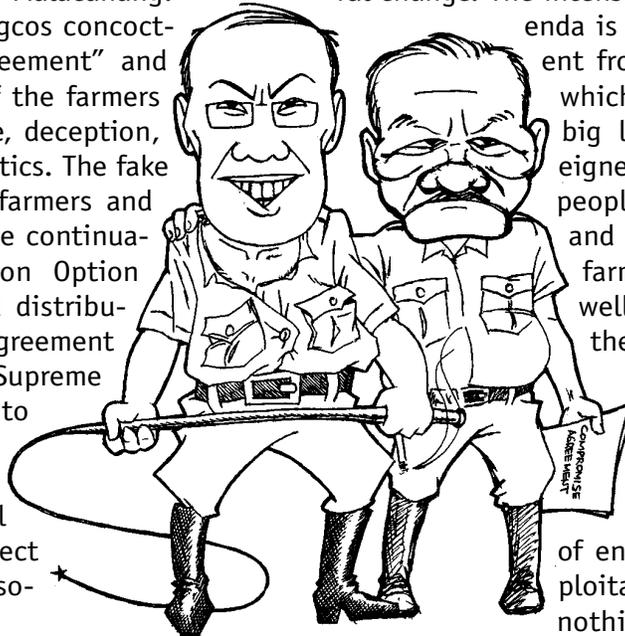
Just last week, the Cojuangcos concocted a bogus "compromise agreement" and shoved it down the throats of the farmers and farmworkers through force, deception, bribery and divide and rule tactics. The fake agreement purports that the farmers and farmworkers have opted for the continuation of the Stock Distribution Option (SDO) scheme instead of land distribution. There is no doubt the agreement was intended to preempt the Supreme Court's hearing of the petition to revoke the temporary restraining order on the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC)'s order in 2005 to subject the hacienda lands to compulsory distribution.

President Benigno Cojuangco-Aquino III quickly applauded the agreement even as he denied any knowledge about it, claiming that the HLI issue is an internal corporate dispute.

The Cojuangcos' return to power once again highlights the struggle for genuine land reform in the hacienda and the use of power to suppress the struggle.

The Cojuangcos' refusal to distribute Hacienda Luisita is the single biggest issue that threatens to shatter Aquino's façade as the champion of meaningful change. The intensifying class conflict in the hacienda is proof that his rule is no different from that of all previous regimes which served only the interests of big landlords, compradors and foreigners. It once again focuses the people's attention on the oppression and poverty of the farmers and farmworkers in Hacienda Luisita as well as in many more haciendas in the country.

Since the establishment of the puppet republic, land reform programs adopted by ruling regimes have been invariably false and deceptive. Instead of ending feudal and semifeudal exploitation and oppression, they did nothing to alleviate the farmers'



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plight which even worsened through the decades. Land has become more concentrated in the hands of old and new landlords and foreign imperialist corporations, thus raising the number of landless farmers.

Faced with worsening poverty and hunger, the peasantry is resorting to every possible avenue in its continuing struggle for genuine land reform. Whatever measure the reactionary regime undertakes to deceive, silence and suppress them, the farmers will tirelessly oppose the bogus CARP, its deceptive continuation in the form of CARPER, the SDO scheme and other similar tricks.

The masses of farmers and farmworkers know full well that the Cojuangco family will never give up the estate. Since the Cojuangcos inherited the hacienda from the Spanish colonizers and its further expansion in the decades that followed, the clan has lived off the sweat and blood of farmers and farmworkers. They are even more bent at holding on to the hacienda now that its commercial and semi-industrial operations are generating billions of pesos in revenues. Meanwhile,

social justice is still denied the tillers of the land who created the wealth of the Cojuangcos.

The struggle in Hacienda Luisita has become the symbol of the nationwide struggle for genuine land reform. It has also become the focal point in the fight against the reactionary Aquino regime. Aquino's defense of the Cojuangcos in their vehement opposition to land reform has made clear his stand against the masses of farmers and farmworkers.

The struggle in Hacienda Luisita must be steadfastly pursued and held high as a rallying banner in all parts of the country. Let it spark other major struggles of the peasant masses and let it fan the flames of the peasantry's nationwide struggle for genuine land reform in the face of all obstacles.

At the same time, agrarian revolution is proceeding nationwide. It is bound to make great strides alongside the advancement of the armed struggle and the establishment of revolutionary bases in the countryside. AB

The Hacienda Luisita agreement is worthless

The compromise agreement devised by Hacienda Luisita Incorporated (HLI) to prevent the distribution of land to farmers and retain the Cojuangcos' control over the estate is bogus and worthless. The peasants' alleged acquiescence was secured through bribes, deception, threats and maneuvers.

The farmers were made to choose whether they would hold on to their shares under the Stock Dis-

tribution Option (SDO) scheme or receive a very small piece of land. The HLI allotted only 1,366 hec-

tares for distribution from the 4,915 hectares of agricultural land covered in the original SDO.

The Cojuangcos claim that the "agreement" was ratified by 7,300 farmers (out of the total 10,500 listed) and that only a little more than 1% (139 individuals) chose to get land. If the agreement were implemented, less than 200 hectares would be distributed.

United Luisita Workers Union (ULWU) chair Lito Bais and other leaders of the hacienda farmers and farmworkers questioned the voting process that led to the agreement. Bais claims that the Cojuangcos utilized barangay officials as well as turncoats and farmer leaders on the landlord clan's payroll to herd the farmers from their homes. The farmers were promised an initial payment of ₱20 million and ₱130 million more once the Supreme Court approves the "agreement." But most of the farmers received measly amounts and now regret their vote for the SDO.

 <p>Vol. XLI No. 16 August 21, 2010</p> <p>Ang Bayan is published in Pilipino, Bisaya, Iloko, Hiligaynon, Waray and English editions.</p> <p>It is available for downloading at the Philippine Revolution Web Central located at:</p> <p>www.philippinerevolution.net</p> <p>Ang Bayan welcomes contributions in the form of articles and news. Readers are likewise enjoined to send in their comments and suggestions for the betterment of our publication. You can reach us by email at:</p> <p>angbayan@yahoo.com</p>	<h3>Contents</h3> <hr/> <p>Editorial</p> <p>Struggle in Hacienda Luisita 1</p> <p>Hda. Luisita compromise deal is worthless 2</p> <p>Fraud-ridden SDO 3</p> <p>Luisita struggle gains support 4</p> <p>Peace talks fail to take off 5</p> <p>MILF assails stumbling blocks to talks 5</p> <p>Victorious NPA offensives</p> <p>NPA seizes 10 firearms 6</p> <p>Kakasa ka ba? 7</p> <p>Fascist state on a rampage</p> <p>Inhumane treatment of Morong 43 mom, child 8</p> <p>Policy of torture 8</p> <p>ACT raps 2 years added to basic education 11</p> <p>News 10</p>
<p>Ang Bayan is published fortnightly by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines</p>	

The agreement was railroaded to preempt the scheduled Supreme Court hearing of the HLI petition to nullify the 2005 directive of the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC) and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) which cancelled the SDO and ordered the distribution of 4,915 hectares of hacienda land. In the first hearing on August 18, HLI lawyers had a hard time answering the many questions asked by the justices about irregularities surrounding the implementation of the SDO.

Meanwhile, a large portion of the land that should be distributed to the farmers have either been converted, sold or used for commercial and semi-industrial projects. As early as the 1990s, the HLI had already secured approval for the conversion of some 3,800 hectares of agricultural land to "commercial, industrial and residential use." Some 2,000 hectares have been converted, sold or leased for non-agricultural

use, giving the Cojuangcos billions of pesos in revenues. The biggest among these was the sale of the right of way covering 83 hectares for the use of the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEx) at ₱1 million per hectare which Benigno Aquino III personally pushed for when he was still senator.

Tadeco, Central Azucarera de Tarlac, HLI and Jose Cojuangco & Sons, Inc. chief operating officer Fernando Cojuangco has also announced the planned conversion of the remaining agricultural lands of the hacienda. They are even planning to shift most of the hacienda's sugar plantation to bio-ethanol production. The rest will be shifted to the production of export crops.

It is clear that the clan does not intend to give up the hacienda and distribute it to the farmers. If the Cojuangcos get their way, the thousands of hacienda tillers will be ejected from the estate and completely

The fraud-ridden SDO

The Cojuangcos exhausted every possible trick in the implementation of the Stock Distribution Option (SDO) to retain their monopoly over Hacienda Luisita.

The Cojuangcos themselves inserted the SDO scheme into Pres. Corazon Cojuangco-Aquino's Executive Order 229 even before the CARP was enacted. The insertion aimed to exempt the Cojuangco hacienda and other similar estates from the actual distribution of land.

The Cojuangcos established Hacienda Luisita, Inc. in 1989 as a front corporation for the SDO scheme and the continued control of their Tar-

lac Development Corporation (Tadeco) over the wealth of the land. The land that was slated for distribution to the peasants was deemed as the farmers and farmworkers' assets, representing 33% of HLI's overall shares of stock.

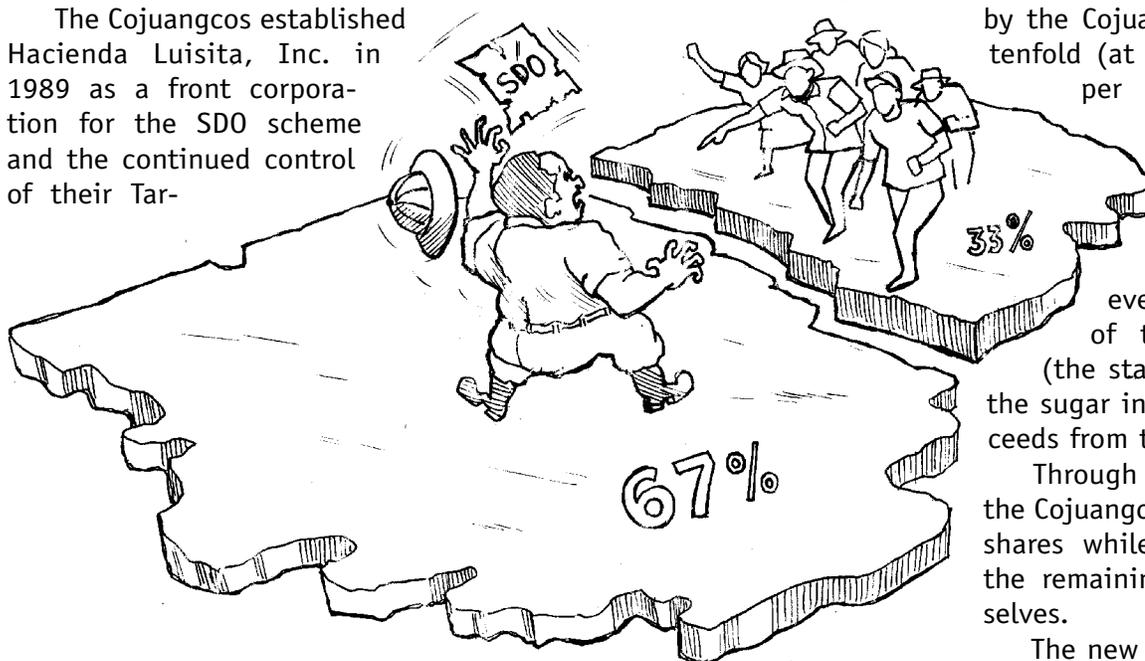
The land reform law provides that landowners can only retain

five hectares. Yet the Cojuangcos continued to own 1,500 hectares. Most of this covers the residential areas of the farmers and farmworkers and "land development" such as roads. Only 4,915 hectares out of the total 6,500 hectares was supposed to be distributed to the 6,300 farmers then working in the hacienda.

Land that should have been given to the farmers was undervalued (at ₱40,000 per hectare) to reduce its equivalent in HLI shares. On the other hand, the land held by the Cojuangcos was overvalued tenfold (at more than ₱1 million per hectare). The equipment, funds and other assets of the hacienda were also retained by the Cojuangcos. Worse, they even claimed ownership of the farmers' produce (the standing sugarcane crop, the sugar inventory and even proceeds from the sale of sugar).

Through this sleight of hand, the Cojuangcos claimed 67% of HLI shares while the farmers divided the remaining 33% among themselves.

The new "agreement" is another



er trick which further reduces the land allotted for distribution. From 4,915 hectares, the farmers' 33% share in HLI is now only 1,366 hectares.

The CARP law provides that the transfer of stocks should be completed within two years after the approval of the law or after the approval by PARC of the stock distribution plan. Should the corporation fail to fulfill this requirement, the land shall be subjected to compulsory distribution. The HLI started distributing shares of stock only in 2004 although the SDO in the hacienda had been approved as early as 1989.

The distribution of stocks was to take place over a period of up to 30 years, with the farmers receiving them in the form of wages based on corresponding hours of work. Every year, only 1% of their share value is actually given to the farmers and farmworkers. Each individual farmer is paid depending on the total hours he worked in the hacienda. They even stand to lose their stocks if they stop working.

To further reduce the values of the farmers' shares of stock, their work hours are deliberately reduced. The Cojuangcos also devise ways to compel the original farmworkers to leave the hacienda. They even hired 4,000 more casual farmworkers and gave them a minimum of one share each to dilute the value of shares owned by the original farmworkers.

Hence, the shares of the Cojuangcos grew even bigger compared to that of the farmers. Aside from violent and dirty tactics, the Cojuangcos have been resorting to increasing the number of farmers and forming fake organizations to dilute and weaken the capacity of the original farmers and farmworkers to fight and demand genuine land reform and other rights in the hacienda. AB

Luisita struggle earning support

Support is mounting for the struggle of the Hacienda Luisita farmers for the distribution of the more than 4,000-hectare estate of the Cojuangco-Aquino family. This was demonstrated by the 2,000 people who attended the August 18 multisectoral rally before the Supreme Court in Taft Avenue, Manila where the hearing of the agrarian dispute was being held.

The United Luisita Workers Union (ULWU), Alyansa ng mga Manggagawang Bukid sa Luisita (AMBALA), Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA) and Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas were joined by the Alyansa ng mga Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon (AMGL) and the peasant women alliance AMIHAN. There was also a delegation from the Katipunan ng mga Samahang Magbubukid sa Timog Katagalugan (KASAMA-TK) which included farmers from Hacienda Yulo in Canlubang, Calamba, Laguna; Hacienda Roxas in Nasugbu, Hacienda Zobel in Calatagan and Hacienda Agoncillo in Laurel, all in Batangas. They joined their fellow peasants in Hacienda Luisita in crying out that they cannot wait for another 53 years to own the land in Luisita.

University of the Philippines-Diliman students belonging to the UP Kilos Na also joined the march-rally. From an upper floor of a building at the University of the Philippines-Manila Campus fronting the Supreme Court, the students rolled down a 10-foot long banner criticizing the Cojuangcos' refusal to implement land reform in Hacienda Luisita. They joined church people, human rights advocates, people's artists, workers, migrants and other sectors in expressing sympathy for the farmers' plight. Anakpawis representative and KMP chairman Rafael Mariano said that all eyes were at the Supreme Court on the historic day of August 18 because it was the first time that the oppressed and their oppressors had a face-off in court.

The HLI lawyers took five hours presenting their arguments so another hearing was set for August 24 for the aggrieved farmers to present their side.



On the eve of the August 18 hearing, a solidarity mass was held at the Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon City officiated by Bishop Teodoro Bacani. The official statement of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines-National Secretariat on Social Action (CBCP-NASSA) and the National Clergy Discernment Group criticizing the injustice and warlordism in Hacienda Luisita since 1957 was read during the mass.

Outside Manila, progressive organizations of farmers and fishermen held protest actions in Legazpi, Cebu, Bacolod, Tacloban, Davao, Butuan and other major cities. AB

Peace talks fail to take off

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) has expressed concern over the course of its peace negotiations with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP). Since Benigno Aquino III delivered his State of the Nation Address on July 26, there have been no positive indications that the peace talks would be resumed.

NDFP peace panel chair Ka Luis Jalandoni made this assessment in his letter to the Friends of Ecumenical Bishops Forum on August 11.

Jalandoni criticized Aquino and his defense secretary's insistence on a widespread and long-term ceasefire as a precondition for the peace talks. Reiterating such a precondition as well as alleged plans to conduct negotiations at local levels are violations of The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992, he said.

Jalandoni pointed out that Cory Aquino, the current president's mother had the same stand. The elder Aquino had objected to the conduct of negotiations on social, economic and political reforms. After the 60-day ceasefire and peace talks collapsed as a re-

sult of the massacre of peasants in Mendiola in January 1987, Aquino brandished the "sword of war."

On the other hand, NDF-Mindanao spokesperson Jorge "Ka Oris" Madlos said that Benigno Aquino III is seemingly poised to outdo his predecessor Gloria Arroyo in implementing the US-dictated counterrevolutionary war. Four AFP divisions are currently besieging suspected guerrilla zones and bases of the revolutionary forces on the island.

Up to 30 of the AFP's more than 40 battalions in Mindanao, including paramilitary forces are conducting largescale military operations against forces of the New People's Army (NPA), using 105 mm cannons as well as reconnaissance and bomber planes. The bombs have so far been



hitting Lumad and peasant settler communities.

Ka Oris said that the Filipino people must not allow themselves to be hoodwinked by Aquino. Behind his mild-mannered facade is his fascist character.

In Eastern Visayas, regional NDF spokesperson Fr. Santiago Salas said that local peace negotiations being planned by the Philippine Army 8th ID will not succeed. He said this will be strongly objected to by the revolutionary forces who are aware that talks on the people's basic problems must be conducted in a comprehensive manner and on the national level.

NDF-Panay spokesperson Ka Concha Araneta, on the other hand, said that a ceasefire can be declared but only after the main agreements on social, economic and political reforms have been forged.

Jalandoni stressed in his letter to the bishops, however, that although the NDFP is dismayed with the negative signals Aquino has been sending, it continues to await the emissaries of the Aquino government. In any case, the revolutionary forces are ready to face the AFP's attacks head-on. AB

MILF assails stumbling blocks to talks

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) strongly assailed the major stumbling blocks to its peace talks with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP). MILF chair Al Haj Murad Ebrahim voiced his disappointment over Pres. Benigno Aquino III's earlier declarations that the peace talks will be starting from scratch.

Murad asserted that the talks should resume where they left off—and this includes the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MoA-AD) signed in 2008 and all of the 87 agreements forged in the years the peace talks were conducted. The MILF will never retreat from this stand.

The MoA-AD calls for the estab-

lishment of the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE) which will serve as the autonomous government of the Moro people and cover the contiguous ancestral domain of the Bangsamoro. The BJE is definitely superior to the present Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao in terms of the political, military, economic, educational and cultural authority

it will wield. But it was roundly rejected by Congress and disapproved by the Supreme Court in 2008. The MILF and the GRP's peace panel then last agreed to "reframe the consensus points with the objective of advancing a comprehensive agreement that would result in a politically negotiated settlement."

MILF negotiating panel chair Mohagher Iqbal was thus elated when Atty. Marvic Leonen, head of the GRP negotiating panel recently said that the government was open

to amending the constitution to accommodate the agreement that would be forged with the MILF. But Leonen had hardly said this when Aquino brushed him off, saying that charter change is not among his government's priorities and that it was not the right time to talk about it.

The MILF also assailed as the biggest "external obstacle" and source of complications for the peace talks the presence of US military forces in Mindanao. Murad had requested the Aquino regime to come up with a way of getting rid of the US military presence before peace talks resume between the MILF and GRP. In the MILF's view, Aquino's reply that his regime could not do away with the US military forces in Mindanao could serve as a major stumbling block to the peace talks.

Aquino has also announced that the talks will be localized, contrary to previous practice. In addition, Aquino has also expressed his desire to replace Malaysia as the third party facilitator. Murad said that should that be the case, the talks will surely be delayed and placed in danger.

Murad moreover said that AFP chief Gen. Ricardo David Jr.'s provocative statement that the government will crush the New People's Army and the MILF by 2013 was not helpful. He said that the MILF remains unfazed in the face of such threats from the government, especially since it continues to train its army and has acquired 60,000 new firearms. Murad said the MILF possesses the technological capability to manufacture its own firearms and has munitions factories producing high-quality weaponry. He added that they were ready to continue fighting for their right to self-determination, even until the next generation. AB

NPA seizes 10 firearms

Red fighters of the New People's Army (NPA) seized ten firearms in various armed actions from June to July. Eight enemy soldiers were also killed and another eight were wounded in these military actions.

July 30. Two elements of the Philippine National Police (PNP) in Capiz were wounded in two NPA tactical offensives that also netted four firearms for the people's army.

The policemen were ambushed while on their way to Barangay Banate, Pontevedra, Capiz. They were responding to reports of an NPA disarming operation against the Banate village chief but were waylaid while their vehicle was still in Sitio San Jose in Barangay Hipona. The Red fighters seized three pistols and a shotgun from the barangay captain of Banate.

Previous to this, the NPA conducted a harassment operation on July 26 against a detachment of the 82nd IB in Barangay Osorio I, San Remigio, Antique. The NPA traded shots with military troops and CAFGU and CVO elements for several minutes.

July 8. The Eking Balacuit Command of the NPA in Misamis Oriental successfully conducted a disarming operation on two bodyguards of Gingoog City mayor Ruth Guingona. The NPA confiscated a 9 mm pistol and a cal .38 revolver from them when they went to visit their employer's landholdings in Barangay San Luis in Medina town at around 8 a.m. The NPA also seized two VHF radios from the bodyguards.

At around 9:30 a.m., the Red fighters raided the house of a former village chief of Barangay San Vicente in the same town, using a vehicle commandeered from Guingona's bodyguards. They seized

another 9 mm pistol from this operation.

The Red fighters then proceeded to Barangay Bangbang at 10:25 a.m. to disarm another abusive element of his shotgun. The village toughie had been using his shotgun to terrorize civilians.

The previous day, Red fighters of the NPA Jabbar Salipudan Command had disarmed a CAFGU element in Barangay Malinwag, Esperanza, Surigao del Sur, seizing a Garand and a 9 mm pistol.

June 28-29. At least eight soldiers were killed in two back to back firefights between the 75th IB and Red fighters of the NPA Boyboy Roa Command in Sitio Sto. Domingo, Lumintao, Quezon, Bukidnon. Five soldiers were killed on the spot in the first gunbattle. The day after, three more soldiers from the same military unit were killed after the NPA detonated an explosive along their path. No casualties were suffered by the NPA. In retaliation for their casualties, the soldiers fired seven mortar rounds without concern for the safety of civilians in the area.

June 4 and 8. Six soldiers were wounded in harassment operations by NPA units against military troops in Surigao del Sur.

Five soldiers from the Philippine Army 30th IB and Scout Rangers were wounded in the first harassment operation in Sitio Uma, Barangay Camam-oman in Gigaquit town.

Four days later, a soldier was killed in an NPA sniping operation in the same village. AB

Kakasa ka ba?

"For 34 years, we served Triumph. We offered our strength, our whole lives," said Lita de la Cruz, union president of Bagong Pagkakaisa ng mga Manggagawa sa Triumph International. She uttered these words at a picket line put up in front of the Triumph factory in Taguig City to protest the company's plans to lay off its predominantly female workforce. Choking back tears, she said, "They raked in billions upon billions in profit...."

This is just one of the more prominent scenes from *Kakasa ka ba? Hamon sa panahon ng krisis* (Are you ready to fight? Challenge in a time of crisis), a 23-minute 30-second video-documentary produced and presented by Mayday Productions in cooperation with Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU). The video-documentary was among the short films chosen for exhibition at the Ikalawang Pandayang Lino Brocka held at the University of the Philippines Film Institute on August 11. It was also shown in several urban poor communities.

The video is timely and remarkable for presenting the plight of workers in the Philippines, especially in terms of massive unemployment and low wages.

The video showed various workers forced to take odd jobs in order to eke out a living and save their loved ones from going hungry. There is the case of a former construction worker who fails to find another job after the end of his contract; the wife of a former tin can factory contractual worker who also fails to find work after; workers who go back to repacking noodles and snack foods; a charcoal maker who also maintains a small backyard piggery to earn a little more; and scavengers who scour mountains of garbage. A scavenger despondently says that the meager ₱200-220 they earn per day is barely enough to sustain them until the next meal.

They live in communities where residents used to depend on small

businesses for work. The businesses are gone, wiped out by foreign corporate giants like Nestlé, Nissan and Toyota.

The video likewise portrays the struggle of 106 workers arbitrarily terminated by Daiho Philippines, as well as the struggle of the women workers of Triumph International. The companies' usual pretext for the layoffs is bankruptcy. The video showed the tragic statistics on unemployment in the Philippines, which affects an estimated 11 out of every 100 workers.

Worker-leaders and researchers interviewed in the film pointed out that the Philippines suffers from a chronic unemployment crisis due to its backward economy and underdeveloped agriculture and in-



dustry. They also asserted the need for workers to fight for the regularization of huge numbers of contractuales by organizing unions that would struggle to better the lot of oppressed workers.

Said KMU chair Ka Elmer Labog, "The only solution to the current crisis of overproduction and to the crisis besetting capitalism itself is to advance the socialist system."

The video's last scenes show workers putting up picket lines and militant groups waging protest actions calling for an end to job layoffs, for higher wages and national industrialization. Above the throng echoed the slogan "*Hukbong mapagpalaya! Uring manggagawa!*" (The army of liberation is the working class). AB

Greedy GOCC officials

Top executives of Government-Owned and -Controlled Corporations (GOCC) receive huge salaries and benefits but those of rank-and-file employees are pegged at very low levels. These salary discrepancies were exposed in a Senate hearing conducted last August 17.

Armand Arreza, Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) administrator, was found to have been earning ₱26.865 per year. Arreza also admitted that he has been receiving intelligence funds amounting to ₱5 million. Benigno Ricafort, Clark Development Corporations (CDC) director, has also been receiving ₱14.506 million a year. Development Bank of the Philippines Deputy Chief Executive Officer Edgardo Garcia has been earning ₱12.718 million while Central Bank governor Armando Tetangco has been getting ₱10.772 million.

According to Sen. Franklin Drilon, up to ₱47 billion has been added to the country's deficit due to these huge salaries. Bayan Muna Rep. Neri Colmenares also challenged Malacañang to abolish SBMA and CDC'S intelligence fund. GOCC directors should also not be the allowed to determine their salaries, Colmenares added. AB

Torture in the Philippines rears its ugly head anew

Recently revealed video footage showing a police officer torturing a suspected criminal is vivid proof that torture is a policy of the military and police in the Philippines. Thus said Melissa Roxas, a Filipino-American activist arrested in Tarlac in May 2009 on allegations that she was a member of the New People's Army.

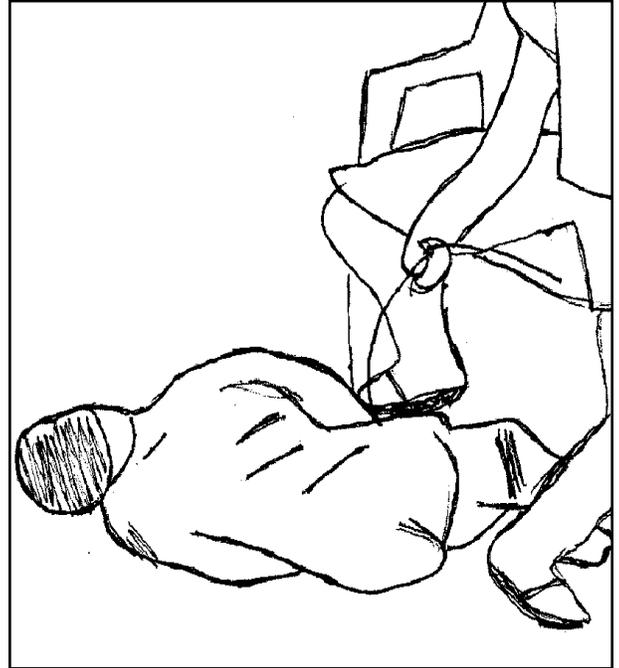
Roxas was tortured for six days by elements of the 7th IB before she was released. In an interview in the US, Roxas said that torture has been part of the interrogation process of the military and police in the Philippines. She added that there are many more cases of torture which have not, however, been documented through video.

BAYAN secretary general Renato Reyes said that torture cases abound but are being given attention only now by the government. Aside from Roxas' case, BAYAN also cited the case of the "Morong 43," the cases of brothers Raymond and Reynaldo Manalo and students Karen Empeño and Sherly Cadapan, all of them victims of abduction and torture. Bayan called on the Aquino regime to invite UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Manfred Nowak to investigate serious cases of torture under the present and past administrations. Reyes said that despite repeated pronouncements by Pres. Benigno Aquino III that torture is not a policy of his government, torturers will continue so long as nobody has been charged and convicted.

The video footage shows a naked man being interrogated while lying on the floor of an office. He is beaten on the face by a police official using a piece of wood, with his genitals being pulled by a string whenever he failed to answer

questions. He is seen writhing in pain due to the torture.

The perpetrator has been identified as Sr. Insp. Joselito Binayug, chief of the Asuncion Police Community Precinct in Tondo, Manila, with the crime perpetrated in no less than his office. Ten of his subordinates have also been tagged as party to the crime.



According to informants, the victim has been summarily executed by Binayug's men. Two families have claimed the victim as their relative. AB

Inhumane transfer of Oliveros and baby denounced

The Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) strongly denounced the inhumane treatment of Carina "Judilyn" Oliveros and her three-week old child when they were brought last August 20 to Camp Bagong Diwa, Bicutan in Taguig City from the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) in Manila. Oliveros is one of the "Morong 43," health workers who were illegally arrested in Morong, Rizal last February while conducting a medical training.

Upon orders of the Morong Regional Trial Court, Oliveros was taken from the hospital after giving birth via caesarian section, put on a wheelchair and handcuffed. The RTC's order ran counter to an earlier order by Justice Sec. Leila de Lima to government fiscals to withdraw their objections to Oliveros' stay in the PGH.

Meanwhile, Murray Horton, secretary of the Philippine Solidarity Network of Aeotearea (PSNA) sent a letter to Aquino asking that justice prevail and that Oliveros and her child, along with the "Morong 43" and other political detainees in the country be released. He said detention cells are not the right place for the innocent health workers and other victims of unjust detention under the Arroyo regime. AB

ACT opposes 2 more years in basic education

Strong and widespread opposition to the proposed addition of two more years to basic education is mounting.

The Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) said that big imperialist and comprador corporations, banks and their local partners such as financial technocrats are pushing that this proposal be incorporated in the education program of the new regime.

ACT said this is in line with their interests that students be trained earlier to deliver at the soonest possible time simple practical and technical expertise needed by multinational and comprador companies.

Besides sacrificing the moulding of students for them to obtain more relevant, wider and deeper knowledge, the proposal will not resolve the problem of a rotten semicolonial and semifeudal system that characterizes a backward economy sans genuine industrialization and land reform. Such an economy has resulted in widespread unemployment, poverty, rotten social services, and other related problems.

The proposal also turns a blind eye to the rottenness and corruption of the government's whole education program and services and to widespread poverty that deprives families of the right to send their children to school.

ACT Teachers Party Rep. Antonio said that the proposed additional two years will just result in increasing numbers of youth who can no longer go to school or continue their studies with the ever increasing cost of basic education which is supposed to be provided free of charge.

Terry Ridon, president of the

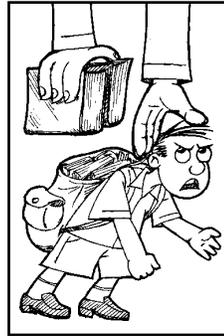
League of Filipino Students (LFS) also said that the proposal is not the solution to upgrading the quality of education.

The additional two years are just an additional expense. In a country where majority of families do not have enough income, the cost of an additional two years will only be an added burden to them. Secondly, the bankrupt government will not be allotting funds for this project. The Philippines is one of the countries will the smallest budgets for education as compared to other items in its national budget. Third, this does not solve the problem of unemployment. Proponents are bragging that if the 12-year basic and secondary education is pushed through, students would no longer need a college diploma in order for

them to land a job. But even at the present, college graduates are not able to find employment. Last year, there were 300,000 students who finished college but majority of them have joined the ranks of the jobless. Worse, this proposal is but a scheme to provide an army of future workers for industries overseas or foreign companies operating in the country.

The LFS said that the perennial problems of the educational system such as the lack of classrooms, books, and teachers should be addressed first. The education budget must be increased because the quality of education has deteriorated compared to those of other countries, Ridon stressed. The LFS will launch a protest action and signature campaign to oppose the plan.

DepEd Sec. Bro. Armin Luistro plans to make elementary education last seven years and high school education five years. Not surprisingly, private schools who expect to gain huge profits due to the proposed additional years are in favor of the plan. **AB**



Protest actions against Operation Green Hunt

Protest actions were launched near the Indian consulates in New York and San Francisco in the US and in London in the United Kingdom by Sanhati, a solidarity group supporting the Indian people's struggle. Protest actions in the US were launched on August 13 while those in London were staged on August 15, India's independence day.

After a three-hour protest where participants chanted slogans, distributed leaflets, delivered speeches in support of the people's struggle in India and sang revolutionary songs, rallyists submitted to the consulates a petition against Operation Green Hunt, a widespread military offensive being conducted by some 200,000 Indian soldiers in national minority areas in eastern and central India. **AB**

AFP officers air grievances

CONFLICT within the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has become much more conspicuous after the spread of a manifesto denouncing favoritism in the military institution.

Issued by "concerned AFP officers", the three-page manifesto has denounced the system of promotion in the military, adding that the AFP Board of Generals which has the power to appoint officers has become useless due to the intervention of Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin. The "concerned officers" said that the Board has not been conducting deliberations and has done nothing but approve Gazmin's decisions.

They also questioned Gazmin's prioritization of his classmates at the Philippine Military Academy and some subordinates. One exam-

ple is the appointment of AFP Chief of Staff Ricardo David who was once his subordinate in the Presidential Security Group during Corazon Aquino's regime. Other officers who were appointed to their positions due to their closeness to Gazmin are Maj. General Gaudencio Pangilinan, the new Northern Luzon Command chief; Brig. Gen. Romulo Bambao, the new chief of the Intelligence Service of the AFP; and Maj. Gen. Arturo Ortiz, the new Philippine Army chief.

Meanwhile, Adm. Feliciano Angue, former chief of the AFP's National Capital Regional Command, was recently demoted, put under investigation and on floating status after divulging that certain high-ranking AFP officers who were involved in politicking in the last elections and have now been rewarded by Aquino.

Unjust firing of PAGASA director

PRES. Benigno Aquino III and his subordinates have received a lot of flak for unjustly firing PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration) director Dr. Prisco Nilo.

Aquino suddenly booted out Nilo last August 6 due to PAGASA's alleged failure to monitor the path of typhoon Basyang that hit the country in mid-July. Nilo explained that some of their weather predictions have not been accurate due to PAG-ASA's outdated equipment and lack of personnel. They have thus been resorting to manual methods of calculation and working even up to wee hours. But despite Nilo's explanation, Aquino only listened to and

sided with new science and technology secretary Mario Montejo, brother-in-law of his Executive Secretary Paquito Ochoa. PAGASA has been proposing the acquisition of new equipment and the hiring of additional personnel, but this has never been acted upon.

According to the Advocates of Science and Technology for the People (Agham), Nilo's firing is a bad sign for scientists who have been laboring hard in the government despite low salaries and antiquated facilities. Agham said that patriotic scientists, who opt to stay in the country despite the lack of funds and local opportunities will be driven away instead of contributing to national development.

Toll fee hikes suspended

THE Supreme Court issued two Temporary Restraining Orders (TROs) last August 13 to suspend increases in South Luzon Expressway (SLEX) toll fees and set aside the imposition of the EVAT (Expanded Value Added Tax) on all expressways in Luzon.

The Supreme Court has given the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and Dept. of Finance ten days to respond to the petition against an additional toll tax. The SC also said that deliberations on the petition for SLEX toll fee hikes are still underway so a TRO was imperative.

The Pinagkaisang Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Operators Nationwide (PISTON) also said that the SC's issuance of the TRO is a big blow to the Aquino regime. According to PISTON, Aquino's refusal to exercise his executive power to stop the increases shows his insensitivity to the demands of drivers and the public. PISTON is ready to launch protest actions should the hikes proceed once the TRO expires.

Bayan Muna also called for an investigation of the illegal SLEX toll fee increases. Bayan Muna Rep. Teddy Casiño said the Toll Regulatory Board (TRB) abused its power when it allowed the Southern Luzon Tollway Corp. (SLTC) to increase its fees without prior notice and public hearing.

The TRB has plans to impose a 250% increase in SLEX toll fees, aside from the 12% tax to be imposed on the North Luzon Expressway, Star Tollway (Sto. Tomas to Lipa, Batangas), Subic-Clark Tarlac Expressway, Skyway and Coastal Tollway. Malacañang insists that the EVAT should also be imposed on expressways.

Afghan war more expensive than Iraq war

THE US has been spending up to \$6.7 billion for its war in Afghanistan, much more than that the \$5.5 billion monthly cost of its war in Iraq.

The Pentagon said that the increase in war expenditures is due to the huge size of the military contingents and the big volume of logistics being sent to Afghanistan. Up to 102,000 troops have been sent to the Afghanistan as against the 43,000 operating in Iraq. An estimated \$105 billion has been expended this year by the Obama regime, an amount which is expected to soar to around \$117 billion by 2011.

The US has already spent up to \$1 trillion for its wars of aggression in these two countries.

This year, the US Department of Defense has asked for \$549 billion in basic military expenditures. This is

aside from the \$159 billion it has requested for its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Part of this fund will go to thousands of private contractors involved in such wars of aggression. Up to 1.2 million contractors have been hired by US. A big chunk of the fund will also go to companies manufacturing expensive weapons such as drones which are now being used by the US in almost all of its operations.

According also to the United Nations (UN), from January to June this year, there were 1,271 civilians killed and 1,997 civilians wounded in the Afghan war (an average of six killed and eight wounded daily). The number reflects a 31% increase over 2009 figures. Meanwhile, the number of child casualties has increased by 55% as compared to that of last year.