



ANG

Bayan

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

English Edition
Vol. XLI No. 17
September 7, 2010
www.philippinerevolution.net

Editorial

The US-Aquino regime's rottenness is rapidly unfolding

Benigno Aquino III is rapidly shedding his mask as an agent of "change" and "clean government." This early, there already are striking indications of his regime's corrupt, puppet and reactionary character, as his fast disappearing popularity increasingly fails to blind and deceive.

Hardly had he taken the reins of power when Aquino showed proof of his puppetry to US imperialism. Like a mendicant begging for alms and crumbs from his master's table, he sent a groveling letter to US Pres. Barack Obama, asking him to provide his bankrupt regime with an MCC Millennium Challenge Account. The US acceded, granting the puppet regime \$434 million in exchange for more economic, military and political concessions that will further trample on Philippine sovereignty.

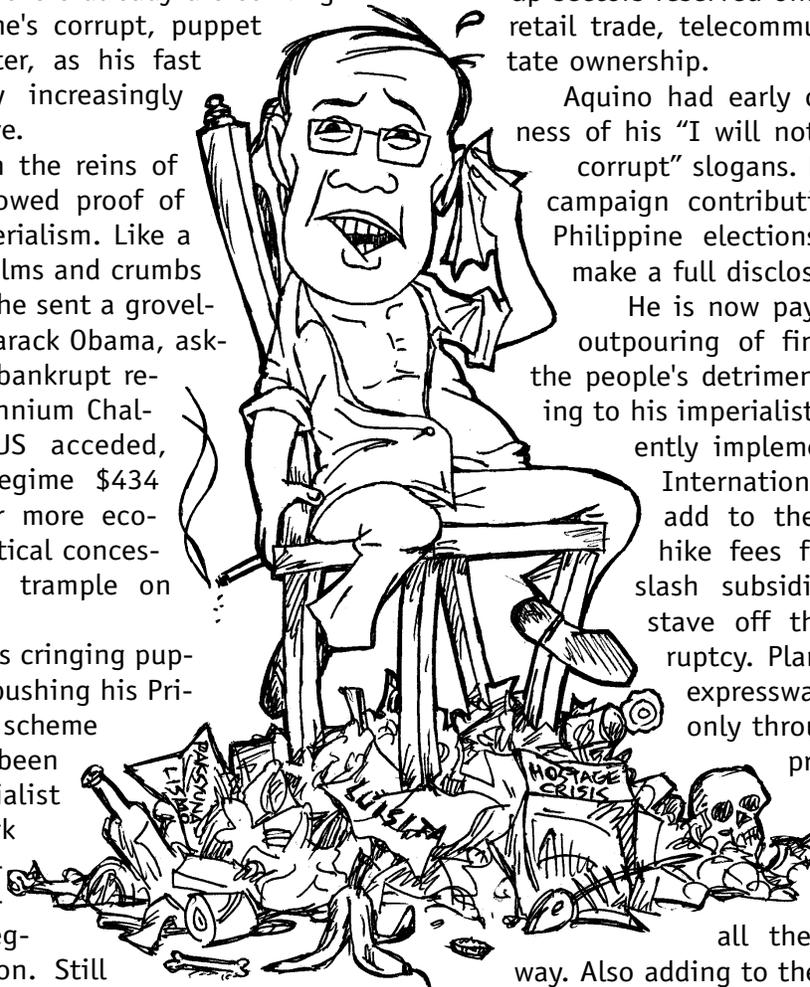
In another sign of his cringing puppetry, Aquino has been pushing his Private-Public Partnership scheme which has obviously been molded in the imperialist globalization framework and its attendant policies of denationalization, privatization, deregulation and liberalization. Still not satisfied, the American Chamber

of Commerce has been prodding the puppet regime to further liberalize the Philippine economy by opening up sectors reserved only for Filipinos, like the retail trade, telecommunications and real estate ownership.

Aquino had early on showed the hollowness of his "I will not steal" and "I am not corrupt" slogans. He received the biggest campaign contributions in the history of Philippine elections, but he has yet to make a full disclosure.

He is now paying back such massive outpouring of financial support, all to the people's detriment. Obsequiously acceding to his imperialist overlords, he is obediently implementing orders from the International Monetary Fund to add to the people's tax burden, hike fees for public services and slash subsidies in an attempt to stave off the government's bankruptcy. Plans to raise toll fees on expressways were put on reprieve only through the people's strong protests and timely actions.

But the regime remains deadset on raising fares at the LRT and MRT despite all the brickbats thrown its way. Also adding to the people's suffering is a policy to greatly reduce the NFA's palay subsidies



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to farmers and subsequently pass on the burden of higher prices to consumers.

Aquino's appointment to powerful positions of representatives of imperialists and of fellow big compradors and big landlords who supported his candidacy is likewise payback for huge debts of gratitude. With many of these appointees already having blemished records, it did not take long for the stench to reek. Past anomalies were soon bared and new acts of corruption exposed in a number of his key officials. Also becoming evident are the factional conflicts within the regime due to infighting to advance various economic, factional and selfish interests. The new regime's ranking officials have likewise been selling highly placed national and regional positions for up to millions of pesos.

Aquino was unable to conceal his class standpoint as a big landlord in the issue of Hacienda Luisita. He feigned a hands-off policy on what he claimed to be an internal matter among shareholders. In fact, his presidency is an instrument of his landlord-comprador clan to prevent the implementation

of genuine land reform in the hacienda, tighten its monopoly control over the estate and continue earning billions through land-use conversion. He is likewise an instrument of the entire landlord class to maintain their land monopoly. He is therefore an instrument in maintaining the backwardness of the countryside and keeping the peasantry oppressed and exploited.

Aquino's hypocritical stance of advocating reforms and good governance as a means of stamping out the people's revolutionary struggles has all but vanished. He relies mainly on military might to suppress the growing revolutionary movement and people's struggles. His regime has extended Oplan Bantay Laya (OBL) up to January 31, 2011 while in the process of framing a new operational plan patterned after the US Counterinsurgency Guide. With OBL's extension automatically comes the extended campaign of targeting open mass leaders and activists and suspected supporters of the armed revolution. Aquino had just taken his seat in Malacañang when seven activists became victims of extrajudicial killing. The use of torture as

a policy of government has been bared anew. Military abuses go on unabated, especially in the countryside. The Morong 43 are still in detention, and not a single political prisoner has been released.

The Aquino regime is no different from its predecessor in its low regard for peace negotiations. It has merely reprised the deceptive and divisive localized peace talks. Worse, it has been insisting on an immediate ceasefire as a precondition for the talks, which constitutes another violation of previous agreements and protocols.

Long before the end of his first 100 days in office, the shallow and symbolic changes Aquino has enforced, such as his "no sirens" policy have lost steam in the face of the new government's gargantuan problems and anti-people tendencies. To boot, the Aquino regime has demonstrated an unprecedented level of incompetence in its handling of the August 23 Luneta hostage crisis.

In the face of all this, Aquino has taken an even more dependent and supplicating stance with respect to the US on which he relies for deliverance and continued support for his rule. In his US trip this September, Aquino hopes to arrange for bigger military and economic aid in exchange for more basing rights for US military troops, intensified intervention and bigger concessions to enable US enterprises in the country to rake in even more superprofits. By then, the Aquino regime will have been caught completely in the snares of its imperialist master.

The rottenness, puppetry and reactionary character now being manifested by the Aquino regime are relentlessly bringing it to ruin and causing its isolation from the people. They pave the way for the further advance of revolution and people's struggles. **AB**



Vol XLI No. 17 September 7, 2010

Ang Bayan is published in Pilipino, Bisaya, Iloko, Hiligaynon, Waray and English editions.

It is available for *downloading* at the Philippine Revolution Web Central located at:

www.philippinerevolution.org.

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Ang Bayan is published fortnightly by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines

Hostage crisis paints picture of rottenness and incompetence

The bloody aftermath of the August 23 Manila hostage crisis presented a revolting picture of the ruling system and the Aquino regime's rottenness and incompetence. Nine people were killed—eight Chinese tourists from Hong Kong and the hostage-taker Sr. Insp. Roland Mendoza. Twelve other tourists were wounded.

Mendoza was a former police officer removed from his post after an extortion case was filed against him. He took the victims hostage to demand his reinstatement after the case had dragged on for years.

The hostage-taking incident brought to the fore the rottenness and incompetence of various branches of government, including the Ombudsman, the Philippine National Police, the Manila city government, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Aquino regime's Communications Group and even Benigno Aquino III himself.

For all of 11 hours, the PNP and the Aquino government committed one fiasco after another in dealing with the crisis. The crisis, which could have been resolved sooner (either through effecting the hostage-taker's surrender or overpowering him) stretched on for hours and culminated with the police indiscriminately firing their weapons without thought of securing the safety of the hostages.

The policemen displayed their utter lack of preparedness and compe-

tence to save the hostages for the entire country and the whole world to see (and may even have hit or caused the death of some of the victims).

The whole world witnessed how chaotic and incompetent Aquino's entire government was in confronting the crisis and how such bungling and incompetence exacerbated the crisis. Aquino was a no-show and had no role to play until the crisis ended. His point man during the crisis—DILG Secretary Rico Puno—admitted that he had no experience in handling hostage situations or in leading the police. Puno, a close friend of Aquino's and a gun dealer was assigned to supervise the PNP, a function wrested from DILG Secretary Jesse Robredo.

The fact that the tourists taken hostage were from Hong Kong cre-

ated a diplomatic row between the Philippines and China. And the fact that Malacañang failed to put Aquino in touch with Hong Kong chief administrator Donald Tsang after the latter had waited for hours did not help any.

There was deep and widespread anger among Hong Kong residents as they saw how such incompetence led to the deaths of their countrymen. Tourism has been badly hit after the Chinese government issued an advisory against traveling to the Philippines. The Chinese government has also refused to receive a delegation sent by the Aquino regime for talks pending the Philippine government's release of its report and the measures it would be taking with regard to the hostage crisis.

After the incident, officials of the Aquino regime took to finger-pointing, inadvertently underscoring the existence of various factions within the Aquino government. The lack of coordination between the top two officials of the DILG—Robredo (who is from the "Balay" group which is controlled by the Liberal Party) and Puno (who is from the "Samar" group which is controlled by Kamag-anak, Inc.)—as well as in other agencies resulted in the government's chaotic response to the crisis.

The crisis has bared the rotten system of appointments and official accountability and the lack of responsibility and monitoring by supervisors, which resulted in the tumultuous handling of the crisis. All the fancy imagery carefully cultivated for Aquino during his electoral

campaign is now rapidly fading, leaving many of those who hoped that he could be an agent of change, profoundly disappointed. **AB**





NPA seizes 37 firearms, kills 42 enemy soldiers in tactical offensives

The New People's Army (NPA) seized at least 37 firearms, including a K3 light machine gun in a series of victorious tactical offensives against the US-Aquino regime's armed minions from the last half of August to the first day of September.

The enemy also suffered 42 dead and 16 wounded, including three high-ranking military and police officers (a Philippine Army lieutenant

and two police chiefs). On the other hand, a woman Red fighter valiantly sacrificed her life.

Contrary to the claims made by enemy propagandists, these fire-fights show the rising capabilities of NPA units.

In Negros. The NPA carted away 23 high-powered firearms after raiding a detachment of the 12th IB CADRE Battalion's Delta Coy in Barangay Bunga, Toboso town in Negros Occidental in the afternoon of August 28. The arms

Debt service above all else

Providing social services is not among the Aquino regime's priorities, contrary to what it may claim. In Benigno Aquino III's proposed budget for 2011, he allots the biggest chunk to debt service, just as what previous regimes did.

The proposed P1.645 trillion national budget sets aside P357.1 billion or 22% for interest payments alone. This is higher by P80.9 billion (or almost 30%) compared to last year's allotment.

There is also a proposal to raise the AFP budget by 18% and hike the Priority Development Assistance Fund, otherwise known as the pork barrel, from P10.9 billion this year to P24.8 billion in 2011.

Not content with the previous P800 billion "contingency fund," Aquino has raised it to a whopping P1 billion. The fund, which is under his direct control now constitutes the biggest pork barrel. He has also maintained the questionable P500 million "intelligence fund" of the Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Task Force (PAOCTF) even if this agency is no longer under Malacañang's direct supervision.

On the other hand, the budget for health services will be reduced by 3.5% (from P40 billion this year

to P38.6 billion). To obscure this fact, Aquino has been bragging about raising the budget for the vaccination program and facilities for neonates.

Aquino has likewise been boasting that his regime will be allotting P1.5 billion for potable water systems in impoverished communities. In fact, the regime has reduced the budget for water resources development and flood control by P4 billion or 22%. Aquino's mendacity and deceit show through the way he has been issuing press releases that focus only on selected details.

The Aquino regime obviously tends to rely on the private sector to build infrastructure badly needed by the people. It has reduced the budget for agriculture and agrarian reform by P23.1 billion or 26%. It has likewise slashed the budget for electricity and energy by P3.4 billion or 65% and for roads and transportation by P7.9 billion or 5%. Aquino has inserted

P21.7 billion for financial support for programs under the private-public partnership scheme. But without any itemizations, this fund is vulnerable to corruption.

The education budget has been boosted, mainly to finance the construction of long-needed new classrooms and hiring new teachers. Basic education will receive P206.3 billion compared to P172.9 billion this year. But this still falls short by almost P100 billion to address all the problems currently being faced by the education system. Worse, this comes at the cost of a budget slash for public colleges and universities. For instance, the University of the Philippines will only be receiving P5.5 billion compared to this year's P6.9 billion, a reduction of 26%.

Next year's national budget is said to be only slightly bigger than that of this year. The Department of Budget and Management has announced a freeze in the construction of new infrastructure and the hiring of new employees. Government employees cannot hope for any upward adjustment in their wages and salaries. Neither can casual and contractual employees in the various government agencies hope to attain permanent status. ■

seizure consisted of at least 11 Garand rifles, eight M14s and two M16s, aside from ammunition, uniforms and combat boots.

The detachment troops had just finished conducting operations when Red fighters under the Roselyn "Ka Jean" Pelle Command of the NPA in the Northern Negros Guerrilla Front attacked. Prior to this, the guerrillas had arrested the detachment commander Sgt. Efraim Bagonoc in a cockpit in Sitio Pulangyan, Barangay Bunga.

Command spokesperson Ka Cecil Estrella said that when the Red fighters brought the military officer to the detachment, he tried to grab the firearm of one of the guerrillas as they reached the gates of the camp. It was at this point that a skirmish took place, resulting in the sergeant's death and the wounding of two CAFGU elements. The NPA reinforcements quickly arrived aboard a truck, leading to the surrender of the surprised paramilitary forces.

The tactical offensive took place just days after 3rd ID chief Maj. Gen. Vicente Porto boasted that the NPA in Negros and Panay had been severely weakened.

Sa Davao Oriental. Eighteen soldiers were killed and ten others were seriously wounded in back-to-back ambushes by Red fighters of the NPA Conrado Heredia Command-Front 20 on August 27 and 28.

The ambushed soldiers formed part of military troops from the 25th IB, 67th IB of the 1001st Infantry Brigade and elements of a Scout Ranger Company who have been conducting a brigade-size operation covering the mountainous areas of Cateel and Boston up to the Mt. Diwata Range n Diwalwal, Monkayo, Compostela Valley since late August. The large-scale operation aims to clear the area to pave the way for the operations of big

logging and mining companies.

A platoon under the 28th IB scoured the interior areas of Boston but were dealt blows by the NPA. Red fighters ambushed the enemy troops in Barangay Sumilao at around 3 a.m. on August 27. The AFP suffered ten killed and five wounded.

The following day, August 28, a composite force of 67th IB and SRC troops combed through an NPA area. But upon reaching Sitio Buko-Buko, Abijod, Cateel, they were waylaid by NPA forces who had been waiting in ambush. The fighting began at 3 p.m. and lasted for 45 minutes. Eight enemy soldiers were confirmed dead while five others were seriously wounded.

Contrary to the AFP's claims before the media, the NPA did not suffer any casualties. The Red fighters were able to retreat safely before the arrival of enemy reinforcements, said Ka Roel Agustin II, Conrado Heredia Command-Front 20 spokesperson.

In Davao City. The NPA 1st Pulang Bagani Company in Southern Mindanao Region conducted two successive military actions against 69th and 60th IB troops in Paquibato District. On August 31, a demolition team from the 1st PBC detonated explosives targeting troops of the 69th IB led by Lt. Ryan Belis in Sitio Nursery, Barangay Malabog. The following day, another demolition team from the 1st PBC mounted a harassment operation against a column of the AFP 1003rd Brigade composed of troops from the 69th IB and elements of the Bahani Long-Range Platoon-Alamara in Sitio Quiambao, Barangay Lower Mapula. In retaliation, two helicopters strafed the entire area as two other helicopters evacuated the dead and wounded. The dead soldiers were brought to a funeral home in Panabo City.

The enemy could not conceal its casualties and admitted to suffering two dead (a Philippine Army soldier and a CAFGU element) and two wounded who were being treated in a hospital.

Military operations have been pummeling Paquibato for two months now. Aside from the 60th and 69th IB, troops from the 84th IB and elements from the Alamara vigilante group have been brought in all the way from Talaingod, Davao del Norte by the 1003rd Brigade to wreak havoc in Lumad and settler communities in Paquibato and nearby areas.

In Bukidnon. Three elements of the 4th ID were killed in an ambush by Red fighters under the Boyboy Roa Command in Sitio Gamit, Barangay Sta. Filomena in Quezon town on August 26.

In Northern Samar. Five M16 rifles and three pistols were seized by Red fighters under the NPA Rodante Urtal Command (RUC) when they wiped out an eight-man police team in an ambush in Barangay Imelda, Catarman on August 21.

The guerrillas detonated a bomb that targeted the PNP vehicle carrying the policemen who had arrived in response to reports of a barangay official who had been killed. Among the casualties was Sr. Insp. Nicasio San Antonio, vice police chief of Catarman.

In a statement, RUC spokesperson Ka Amado Pesante said that before the ambush, the NPA had meted the death penalty on T/Sgt. Rolando de Guia of the 63rd IB for espionage. De Guia used his position in the village council as a cover for organizing an intelligence network in Catarman. He was previously a brutal CAFGU trainor under the 19th IB. Seized from him was a .45 cal pistol.

In Agusan del Sur. A K3 light machine gun and two M16 rifles

were seized by Red fighters under the NPA Alejandro Lanaja Command in a 15-minute raid on the headquarters of the 26th IB in Barangay La Fortuna, Veruela on August 24. Aside from the firearms, the guerrillas also carted away 1,800 rounds of ammunition, including ammunition for an M203. Five soldiers were killed and one was wounded in this firefight. The raid serves as punishment for this military unit's grave violations of human rights. The day after, two other soldiers from this same unit and a CAFGU element were killed in an ambush by Red fighters who waylaid them while they were on patrol.

In Sorsogon. A soldier from the 49th IB's Special Operations Team (SOT) was killed and another one wounded in an NPA ambush in Barangay Sangat, Gubat on August 22. This military unit is notorious for its serious human rights abuses. A .45 cal pistol plus ammunition were seized in this gunbattle.

In Surigao del Sur. A sniper from the NPA Front 19 hit Insp. Christopher Mazo, police chief of Lianga town, while he was aboard a vehicle in the evening of August 21. Mazo's vehicle was part of a convoy carrying a composite force of more than 50 Philippine Army soldiers and PNP troops that passed through Kolambogan Spar, Diatagon in Lianga town.

In Misamis Oriental. A notorious operative of the Military Intelligence Battalion of the 4th ID was killed by an NPA partisan team in Napaliran, Balingasag on August 15. Seized from S/Sgt. Elmo Penar was a .45 cal pistol. Also meted punishment was his bodyguard and asset. Penar was the brains behind the arrest of two NPA members in 2006. **AB**

NPA to intensify tactical offensives in response to OBL extension—*Ka Oris*

The New People's Army (NPA) will meet head-on the extension of Oplan Bantay Laya (OBL) until January 31, 2010 with intensified and widespread tactical offensives, said National Democratic Front-Mindanao spokesperson Jorge "Ka Oris" Madlos.

These tactical offensives will escalate all the more as the NPA and the revolutionary masses defend their victories, said Ka Oris. In fact, in Mindanao alone, NPA units were able to launch 50 tactical offensives from July until August—20 in Southern Mindanao Region (SMR), 27 in Northeastern Mindanao Region (NEMR) and three in Far South Mindanao Region and North Central Mindanao Region.

Most notable among the attritive and annihilative attacks by the NPA in SMR was a raid last August 24 in Barangay La Fortuna, Veruela, Agusan del Sur where the reactionary government lost a lieutenant and four soldiers from the 26th IB. The Red fighters were able to seize a K3 light machine gun, two M16 rifles and rounds of ammunition. Also last August, two soldiers from the Division Reconnaissance Company, including a die-hard leader of the paramilitary Bagani Force were killed in an ambush. Two M16 rifles were seized from them.

There was almost no letup in battles fought in the mountainous areas of Davao City; in the towns of Maragusan, New Bataan and Monkayo in Compostela Valley; in the towns of Mati, Baganga and Cateel in Davao Oriental; in New Corella, Davao del Norte; in Davao del Sur; and in North Cotabato.

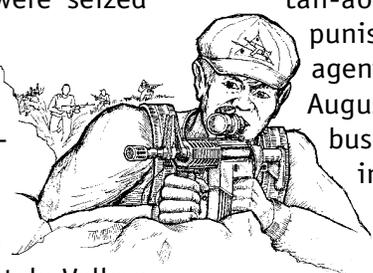
The NPA in NEMR also chalked up 27 tactical offensives even as almost all towns in its four provinces are under attack by fascist

troops. The NPA launched two successive ambushes on August 13. The first was against the Scout Ranger Company (SRC) in Purok 5, Barangay Pianing, Butuan City. After this, the NPA also ambushed elements of the 30th IB in Lusong, Barangay Puting Bato, Cabadbaran City. Four enemy soldiers were killed and six others were wounded.

Last August 28, three NPA teams attacked a composite force of the 14th SRC, 75th IB and SWAG (Special Warfare Group), killing five soldiers and wounding three others. The enemy force that was almost the size of a brigade forcibly occupied the neighboring communities of Palonpon and Boringon in Barangay Mahaba, Marihatag, Surigao del Sur.

In August alone, Red fighters in Far South Mindanao Region launched three military actions. Last August 3, they harassed 39th IB troops in Dungan Pekong, Matan-ao, Davao del Sur, punishing an intelligence agent the day after. On August 8, the NPA ambushed 27th IB forces in Datal Blao, Columbio, Sultan Kudarat.

The people's army in North Central Mindanao also harassed the operating battalion under the 1st Tabak Division of Western Mindanao Command. Up to 24 soldiers were killed in different tactical offensives and encounters in the region from April up to August.



AB

Writing, guerrilla style

The creation of revolutionary art and the practice of revolutionary journalism are both thriving in the midst of guerrilla warfare. In the following article, a Red fighter and writer shares personal accounts of his passionate involvement in both armed struggle and revolutionary culture.

While withdrawing from a military action and while readying an ambush against possible enemy reinforcements, Ka Agos stealthily takes his ballpen and Grade Four pad paper from his back pack. Creative words form and flow from his mind as swiftly as the guerrillas disarmed the guards of a banana plantation, enabling him to write a children's story.

A day more of retreating towards a safe place and Ka Agos was able to finish "*Ang Nasaag nga Aninipot*" (The Lost Firefly) which was included in a literary folio celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Such incidents show how creative writing blooms in the bosom of people's war. Ka Agos is used to writing even without a table or a quiet environment (although their withdrawal was quietly done) and even in the midst of various activities. He exemplifies how a revolu-

tionary writer copes with the fluidity of an intensifying guerrilla war where mobility defines the life of Red fighters like himself. Moments of rest are a rarity, he said.

"Wherever, whenever, and in whatever situation," Ka Agos exclaimed. "I write wherever possible." He once wrote while sitting on a sack of rice in the makeshift kitchen of a camp erected for a Basic Party Course, unmindful of the noise created by comrades and masses who were chopping firewood and cooking mungbeans. He was able to write two short stories which were submitted for a literary workshop conducted by some *Ulos* staff some years back. In other situations (oftentimes during post-trek rest times or after conducting mass work), he was able to churn out a few more related stories, resulting in a short novel just waiting to be published.

In fact, writing can be done even when not in a fixed place. It

can be done guerrilla style or in a mobile manner even in urban areas, said Comrade Zel, a women organizer invited to a presswork of *Asdang*, the mass paper of Far South Mindanao Region.

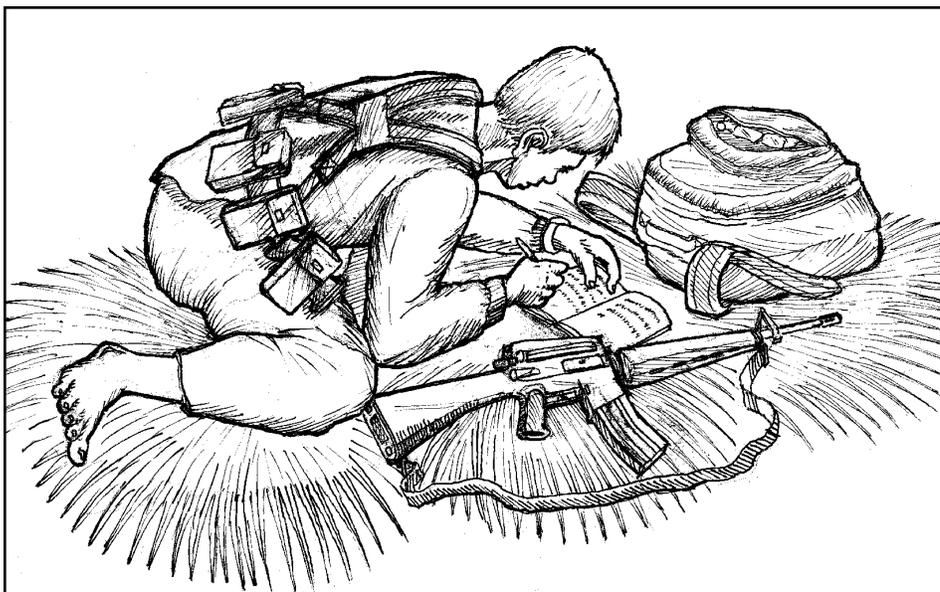
They had experienced transferring from one house to another and wading through flooded streets during a raging thunderstorm. This, after they received information that an organizer had been arrested by the enemy. As the situation was not yet clear, they were not able to continue their writing. Instead, they spent the time engaging in light banter with their host who offered them hot coffee. But after learning that the reported arrest was after all, not true, they immediately took out their laptops, ballpens and sheets of paper. One comrade didn't mind writing using the ironing board as a makeshift table, saying happily that she had once written an article while sitting on the floor.

But Comrade El, one of the editors of *Asdang* said that even if writing is done guerrilla style, it is still imperative for them to adhere to the principle of collective writing and editing to ensure not just quality writing style but the correct political line. The staff first discusses content during collective issue planning and the finished products are tabled for collective editing.

Further, even if *Asdang* is presently understaffed, its publication is not at all encumbered as writers from different sectors like the women and youth are grouped together to serve as the paper's tactical pool of writers.

With their writing skills honed through collective writing, they are able to share what they learn within their respective sectors. It is one way of developing more writers to serve the revolutionary movement.

AB





Bayan Muna Activist shot dead

A Bayan Muna (BM) member in Eastern Samar was summarily killed. Meanwhile, two youths in Samar were forced to act as guides in a military operation and were presented by the military as rebel surrenderees. In Misamis Oriental, soldiers who were conducting operations destroyed a water system in a remote barrio.

August 25. A suspected military death squad element shot and killed Casiano Abing, 56, a Bayan Muna (BM) member in Eastern Visayas, in his house in Barangay 5, Poblacion, Balangiga, Eastern Samar.

Abing sustained five gunshot wounds. He was first rushed to a hospital in Balangiga and later, to St. Paul's Hospital in Tacloban City, Leyte which is one and a half hours away. He was declared dead on arrival. He was the sixth activist killed since Benigno Aquino III began his term as the country's new president and the 121st victim of extrajudicial killing in Eastern Visayas since 2001.

According to Atty. Katrina Castillo, head of documentation and legal services of Katungod-Sinirangan Bisayas, a local chapter of Karapatan, Abing actively campaigned for BM and senatorial candidates Satur Ocampo and Liza Maza in the last elections. Castillo added that before the victim was killed, he observed that he was being surveilled by military operatives.

August 13. Troops of the 8th ID and the Division Reconnaissance Company of the 4th ID destroyed a local water system in Sitio Salahon, Misamis Oriental on suspicion that it was a project of the New People's Army.

National Democratic Front-North Central Mindanao Region spokesperson Cesar Renerio said residents of Sitio Salahon who painstakingly put up the project

after the local reactionary government consistently ignored their long-standing demand for good water supply were very angry. The water source was two kilometers away and the residents patiently constructed a pipe made of connected bamboo poles so that every house could have access to water.

The residents are now demanding payment from the Philippine Army for the damaged water system and punishment for the military officers responsible for its destruction.

July. Troops of the 34th IB who were conducting military operations tortured and forced brothers Cesar and Juanito Gabac to serve as guides. They are ordinary peas-

ant youth from Barangay Anagasi, Paranas, Samar, said National Democratic Front-Eastern Visayas spokesperson Fr. Santiago Salas.

The two youths were presented to the media by the 8th ID on August 16 as alleged NPA members returning to the fold of law. In fact, Fr. Salas said, the two along with their mother Lucia were arrested on July 25 by 34th IB elements under Lt. Col. William Peña-fiel.

The military alleged that the two surrendered their firearms because they had grown "tired" of the armed struggle and "are now cooperating" with the government. Fr. Salas said it was a lie as the firearms were not found in the Gabac brothers' possession but were taken from a temporary hiding place of the NPA. The military forced the victims to admit that the firearms were theirs.

The Gabac brothers were not given any chance to defend themselves or avail of the services of an attorney, said Fr. Salas. **AB**

Oliveros mother and child brought back to PGH

Carina Judilyn Oliveros and her newborn child were brought back to the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) from Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan, Taguig City last August 30 on orders of the Morong Regional Trial Court (MRTC).

The MRTC decision came after the so-called Morong 43 and their supporters expressed strong opposition to the inhumane and unjust decision of the lower court ordering the return of Oliveros and her child to jail. The detained health workers have been waging a hunger strike since August 21 to denounce the continuing violations of their human rights and the non-implementation of laws on their case.

After giving birth last July 22 at the PGH, Oliveros along with her newborn child were forcibly taken back to Camp Bagong Diwa.

The court ordered their return to the PGH after Oliveros' lawyers filed an appeal. The order, however, was not implemented for an-

other five days due to the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology's dilatory tactics.

Oliveros and her child will be staying at the PGH for three months.

Meanwhile, Sen. Pia Cayetano, head of the Senate Committee on Youth, Women and Family Relations said that Oliveros and her child should be allowed to stay at the PGH for three more months so she can breastfeed her child for six months. The senator said that the World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding for all newborn children for at least six months.

NDF condemns ambush of civilians in Masbate

NATIONAL Democratic Front-Bicol spokesperson Comrade Gregorio Bañares condemned the ambush of five civilians in Sitio Landing, Barangay Bolod, San Pascual, Masbate on August 28. In a press statement dated August 30, Bañares said that based on initial investigations of the Jose Rapsing Command of the New People's Army (NPA) in Masbate, the motive of the ambush was connected to the dirty wars of politicians and the NPA had no involvement whatsoever in the incident.

Bañares denounced as malicious and unfounded the allegations of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) that the NPA was in cahoots with private armies of politicians in Masbate. This propaganda attack by the military and police was done to cover up their inutile and useless campaign to disband private armies in Masbate, Bañares said.

Sectors denounce OBL extension

Various sectors strongly denounced Oplan Bantay Laya's (OBL) extension up to January 31, 2011.

OBL was to end on July 30 after shamelessly failing to achieve the AFP's goal of crushing the New People's Army (NPA). During its course, the human rights watchdog Karapatan documented 1,206 cases of extrajudicial killings, 205 cases of abduction perpetrated by the military and other state armed forces, and many more cases of torture and repression.

Despite widespread denunciations of OBL1 and 2, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Ricardo David nevertheless announced on August 15 the extension of the plan for another six months. To ensure its effectiveness, the military said it would be focusing on teaching the importance of human rights.

Karapatan chair Marie Hilao-Enriquez assailed the military's statement as a gross distortion, as those who have been pinpointed as the violators of human rights

would be the ones teaching the people their importance. Benigno Aquino III wants his regime's counterinsurgency program to be readily accepted by the people even if the military is tainted with the blood of its victims, she said. Instead of punishing the perpetrators, Aquino is even coddling them, Enriquez added.

OBL's extension will mean the continuation of massive military operations and onslaughts in the countryside, said Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) secretary-general Renato Reyes.

Military, police, paramilitary and private armies of warlord politicians and foreign as well as big comprador businesses have been sowing terror in the Davao provinces, Compostela Valley, Samar provinces, Negros island, Bicol provinces and in Aurora in Central Luzon.

Activists mark International Day of the Disappeared

PROGRESSIVE organizations and families of persons involuntarily disappeared by armed operatives of the state launched a protest action last August 30 to commemorate the International Day of the Disappeared.

Marching from the University of Sto. Tomas to Mendiola Bridge in Manila, they called on Benigno Aquino III to give justice to victims of abduction and summary killing under the past Arroyo regime.

They will continue pressing for their demands, said the Families of the Disappeared for Justice (DESAPARECIDOS) and Victims of Arroyo United for Justice (Hustisya). They also demanded that Arroyo and her henchmen be punished for grave human rights violations.

The Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) also expressed dismay over the Aquino regime's non-action on the issue of abduction. It also denounced the appointment of Loretta Ann Rosales as head of the Commission on Human Rights.

Last August 20, they launched a protest action in Quezon City where they displayed a giant yellow ribbon painted red and bearing the pictures of victims of abduction to symbolize their quest for justice.

Meanwhile, activists in the US led by BAYAN-USA in San Francisco, California also launched a similar protest action, pressing Aquino to free the Morong 43 and put a stop to Oplan Bantay Laya.

Driver leader Ka Roda passes away

A pillar of the transportation sector has passed away. Medardo "Ka Roda" Roda died of a heart attack on September 5. He first suffered a stroke in 2002.

Ka Roda was born on October 27, 1934 in Libmanan, Camarines Sur to a peasant family. He continued his college studies in Manila and worked as a taxi driver in 1960 and later as a jeepney driver plying the Cubao-V. Luna route in Quezon City in 1978.

Ka Roda became the head of a local drivers' organization. He also became one of the leaders of the Pinagkaisang Samahan ng mga Tsu-

per at Operators Nationwide (PISTON) when it was founded in 1981. He was elected 3rd vice president and became its president after a few months. He has been PISTON's honorary chairperson since he fell ill in 2002 until his death.

Ka Roda led PISTON in various struggles, one of them against PD 1605 which called for the cancellation of a driver's license after being cited for traffic law violations three

times. He also led protest actions in the offices of oil companies and transport strikes in Metro Manila. He was labelled by the Marcos regime as "the most rebellious driver the Philippines has ever had" and was arrested in 1983. He was again detained in 1998 and 1990 under the Corazon Aquino regime.

Many have expressed their condolences over his passing. His life will serve as an inspiration to the democratic movement of drivers and the toiling masses as he selflessly devoted it to serving the people.

Alex Remollino, nationalist poet, dies

KNOWN as a progressive writer, activist and poet, Alexander Martin Remollino, 33, passed away last September 3 due to a lung infection.

Remollino was one of the founders of the poets' group Kilometer 64. He became a member of the League of Filipino Students when he was in college and later worked at the Ibon

Foundation. He was also a writer of various progressive internet publications such as the *Philippine Online Chronicles*, *Tinig.com* and *Bulatlat*. He was also a member of National Union of Journalists in the Philippines and researcher of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) and Kontra-Daya.

His poem "Tuparin Natin ang

Banta ng Ating Panahon" (Let Us Heed the Challenge of Our Times) was among the highlights in the multi-media production Arrest Gloria during the struggle against the Arroyo regime.

He was born on August 6, 1977 in Mandaluyong City. He grew up in San Pedro, Laguna and took up AB Legal Management at the University of Sto. Tomas.

Activists form alliance vs LRT-MRT fare hikes

THE Kilusang Mayong Uno and Anakpawis formed a broad alliance to fight looming fare increases in the Light Rail Transit (LRT) and Metro Rail Transit (MRT) in Metro Manila. Tasked to focus on stopping the impending fares hikes, the Riles Laan sa Sambayanan Network (RILES) has already started a petition-signing campaign among MRT passengers at the Cubao Station on September 1. The petition-signing campaign was first done by

the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) and League of Filipino Students (LFS) in August. Several passengers have signed the petition to oppose the fare increases.

RILES spokesperson Sammy Malunes said passengers should not be made to shoulder the debts and losses incurred by the company. He said services should be provided to the people in the form of affordable LRT and MRT fares. RILES also opposed plans to priva-

tize the MRT and LRT, saying that private companies are only interested in exacting profits instead of delivering affordable services, which should be the goal of public transportation.

Fares at the LRT will be raised by ₱25 this September. The MRT fare, on the other hand, may also be raised by as much as ₱44. The KMU said a worker will be spending up to ₱50 a day for MRT and LRT fares alone.

DOLE recognizes ABS-CBN union

WORKERS of the ABS-CBN Internal Job Market Workers Union achieved an initial victory when the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) issued a decision on August 18 recognizing their union.

Saying that employees under the IJM must be recognized because they have been working for the welfare of the company, the DOLE also requested the conduct of a certification election to secure

the union's recognition.

The IJM Workers Union denounced management's repression of its members who picketed in front of the ABS-CBN company on August 20. Lending them support at the picket were members of Kilusang Mayo Uno, Philippine Airlines and Kowloon House workers, students and the National Union of Journalists in the Philippines.

The ABS-CBN management had

earlier made its workers sign a contract stating that they were merely contractual workers or talents of the company. The union opposed the move, saying the downgraded contracts undermined the status of employees who had been working for the company for several years. The company has resorted to various maneuvers to bust the union, one of which was the retrenchment of 110 workers.

US combat mission in Iraq ends

"OPERATION Iraqi Freedom" is over, said US President Barack Obama on September 1, officially ending the US soldiers' combat mission in Iraq.

The official withdrawal of combat soldiers had been slated for 2011 but Obama ordered it done earlier due to mounting antiwar sentiment in the US and other countries. While the US continued to pour in huge amounts of funds and resources in Iraq, its government was becoming increasingly

burdened with financial problems.

In the last seven and a half years, 4,427 US soldiers were reported killed while 34,268 were wounded. The war has also caused 100,000 casualties among the Iraqi population.

Meanwhile, 50,000 American troops will remain in Iraq until the end of 2011 to serve as "advisers and assistants" to Iraqi troops.

Despite the US withdrawal, there will be continued military intervention camouflaged by replac-

ing uniformed troops with mercenaries. More than 130,000 mercenary troops have been deployed to Iraq in the past two years, bigger than the number of uniformed troops. These mercenaries are supplied by private contractors engaged in military and security undertakings. There are plans to further raise the number of these private military contractors.

The Iraqi government has expressed growing concern amid escalating attacks by Iraqi guerrillas.