



ANG

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

# Bayan

English Edition  
Vol. XLII No. 1  
January 7, 2011  
www.philippinerevolution.net

Editorial

## Stop destructive large-scale mining

**T**he people's democratic government prohibits the operations of all enterprises that are plunderous and destructive to the environment and contrary to the interests of the people and their revolutionary movement. The most striking of these are the big mining firms, almost all of which are 100% owned by foreign imperialist companies.

Almost all of these enterprises also operate in areas covered by bases of the armed revolutionary movement. The revolutionary movement has a clear policy regarding these baneful enterprises. They must be stopped and held accountable for the destruction they have wrought and they must be expelled from guerrilla fronts, zones and bases and the entire country.

This policy is being reiterated in the face of recent threats of withdrawal by big foreign mining companies allegedly because of heavier taxes being imposed on them by the revolutionary movement. They and their cohorts among high-ranking officials of the reactionary puppet government and army have even made a show of demanding that this issue should be discussed in the upcoming resumption of peace talks between the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP).

They falsely claim that their operations bring benefits to the national economy and the livelihoods of affected local communities. In fact, two of the most impoverished provinces nationwide are in the Caraga region which is now known as the "mining capital of the Philip-

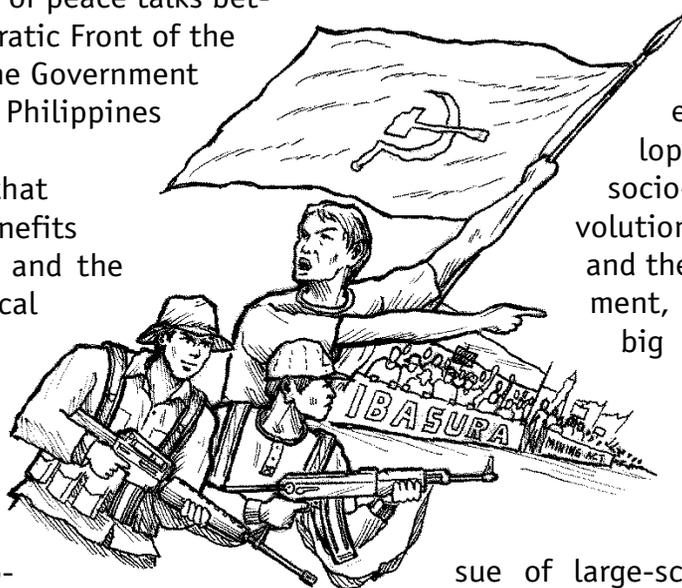
pires and Asia."

Mining operations cause incomprehensible destruction: They trample on the nation's sovereignty. They cause widespread land grabbing. They plunder the nation's natural resources and destroy the environment. They poison our waters, crops, fishing grounds, pasture lands and other natural sources of livelihood. They endanger people's lives. They violate the policies, laws and regulations of people's democratic governments.

The people are strongly opposed to large-scale foreign mining. Workers, minority peoples and even church people, local governments, environmental activists and human rights advocates and other sectors are waging stiff resistance against them. Such resistance is being met with severe repression. Big mining companies put up their own private armies to suppress the people. They actively collaborate with the reactionary state's fascist military, paramilitary and security forces.

The revolutionary movement does not allow their presence. They are beyond the pale of the revolutionary taxation being undertaken by democratic organs of people's governance for the economic welfare and development of the people and for socio-economic programs in revolutionary areas. For the Party and the entire revolutionary movement, it is best for these useless big foreign mining companies to be booted out not only from most of the revolutionary bases but from the whole country.

It will be good for the issue of large-scale foreign mining to be



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raised in the peace talks in the context of the next agenda of socio-economic reforms. Part of the agenda involves the assertion of national sovereignty and people's power. The revolutionary movement recognizes the benefits that can be derived by the people from responsible mining and other uses of natural resources. But they must be subject to strict supervision and regulation.

The NDFP will put forward the following proposal:

*"All resources of the public domain, including land, waters, minerals, coal, petroleum and other mineral oils, all forces of potential energy, fisheries, forests, wildlife, flora and fauna and other natural resources shall not be alienated. In this regard, the legitimate interests of set-*

*tlers and national and ethnic minorities shall be fully respected.*

*"All mining operations shall be strictly regulated with the objective of ensuring the domestic processing of mineral ores up to the secondary and tertiary stages of industrial production while at the same time guaranteeing environmental protection, social compensation for disturbance and damage caused as well as democratic consultation with, and the consent of, the people in the communities immediately and directly affected by such operations."*

Thus, there must be a detailed accounting of the large-scale destruction wrought on the people and the country by logging, mining and plantations run by big foreign plantations.

Big foreign mining compa-

nies and their cohorts among high-ranking state officials are aware that the revolutionary movement implements and will put forward these proposals in order to halt foreign mining and the irresponsible extraction of the country's resources, the trampling of the country and people's interests and welfare and the destruction of the environment, and replace this with responsible mining for the people's interests under the supervision of the people's democratic government.

This worries the big foreign mining interests and the puppet reactionaries. Thus, they are scrambling to put a stop to the forging of an agreement in accordance with the proposals put forward by the revolutionary movement. **AB**

## Foreign mining: A bane to the people

Since the US occupied the Philippines towards the end of the 19th century, the imperialists have shown a savage interest in the country's natural wealth and extracted minerals and other natural resources.

Even before the US seized the Philippines from Spanish colonial rule, it already knew of and strongly coveted the Philippines' rich gold reserves and its

other natural resources. Thus, when the US occupied the country, its first concern was to make sure that mines were set up to extract gold and other

precious metals. Throughout its entire rule, imperialist companies, mainly American, extracted billions upon billions of dollars worth of gold, other precious metals and natural resources from the country.

The greedy imperialists knew that in spite of all the wealth they had already extracted from the country, there was more to be taken. The Philippines is one of five countries in the world with the richest copper, nickel and iron ore deposits. Gold remains the most valuable of the minerals being mined and exported from the country.

According to the US State Department's latest findings, there are more than seven billion tons of mineral resources worth \$840 billion still untapped in the country. This includes more than 100,000 tons of gold and about five billion tons of copper deposits. There is also more than 50 billion tons of non-mineral stones, like marble, and a huge potential for mining oil deposits and natural gas from marshlands and

 Vol. XLII No. 1 January 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: <a href="http://www.philippinerevolution.net">www.philippinerevolution.net</a> 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: <a href="mailto:angbayan@yahoo.com">angbayan@yahoo.com</a>	
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Ang Bayan is published fortnightly by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines	

offshore areas.

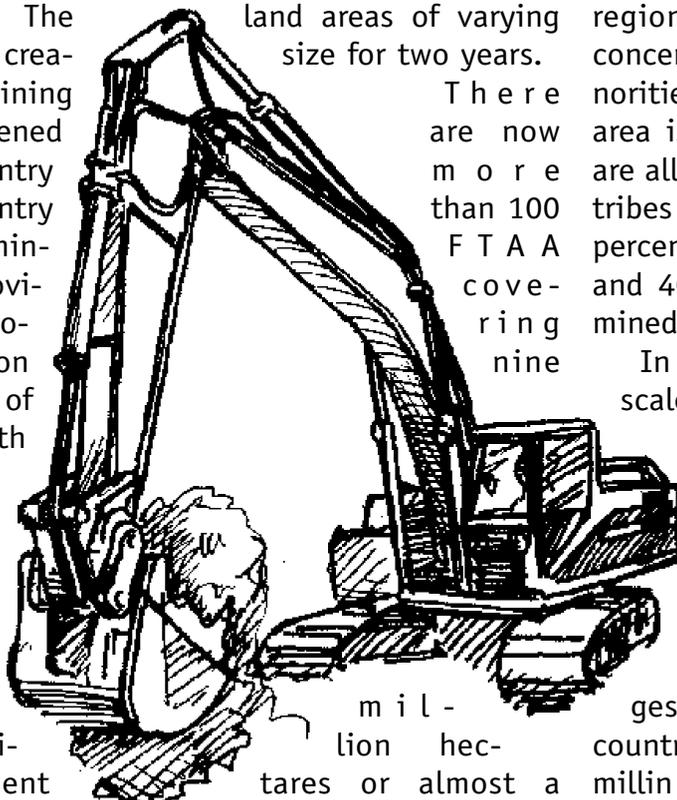
Based on their continuing surveys, imperialist mining companies have determined that a third of the country's territory is rich in mineral deposits, mainly gold, copper and nickel. The puppet regime expects foreign mining companies to bring in up to \$13 billion in new investments. Even areas like the Liguasan Marsh in Mindanao and the Palawan seas are being eyed as sources of oil and natural gas.

Various puppet regimes have bent over backwards in providing so many privileges to foreign mining companies. The height of servility was the creation of the Philippine Mining Act of 1995, which opened practically the entire country to mining. It allowed the entry of 100% foreign-owned mining companies, despite provisions in the reactionary government's own constitution reserving the exploitation of the country's mineral wealth for Philippine corporations or those that are at least 60% controlled by Filipinos.

This law provides for three kinds of authorities to mining companies. One is the Financial and Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA) which allows a company to conduct exploration activities in up to 81,000 hectares for 25

years per contract. With a minimum of \$50 million in required investments, it was the foreign companies that were able to corner almost all FTAA. They are even able to cover hundreds of thousands of hectares more by applying for several FTAA.

Other authorities provided for by the Mining Act are the Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) and the Exploration Permit (EP). The MPSA involves joint ventures between the company and the government, while the EP grants companies the authority to explore for minerals on land areas of varying size for two years.



There are now more than 100 FTAA covering nine

million hectares or almost a third of the country's entire land area of 30 million hectares. Almost all (99) are di-

rectly in the hands of foreign mining companies. This number excludes other vast land areas covered by MPSA and EP.

The majority of these areas are located within the ancestral lands of national minorities, who are thus the main victims of land grabbing and displacement. Their forests and other natural resources are likewise destroyed, and they go hungry with the devastation of their livelihoods. Their indigenous cultures and ways of life are violated and they suffer various forms of abuse and oppression.

In the Cordillera, one of the regions with the biggest concentrations of national minorities, up to 70% of the land area is covered by FTAA. These are all ancestral lands of various tribes in the region. Twenty-five percent (25%) of gold exports and 40% of copper exports are mined from the Cordillera.

In terms of land area, large-scale foreign mining companies have the biggest coverage in Lumad and Moro ancestral lands in Mindanao. The Caraga Region and Zamboanga Peninsula combined is host to some of the biggest mining areas in the country, where more than 2.3 million national minorities are severely affected by the oppressiveness of large-scale foreign mining operations. AB

## 42 years of advancing people's war in Mindanao

*Excerpts from National Democratic Front-Mindanao spokesperson Jorge "Ka Oris" Madlos' message delivered on December 26, 2010 before members of the Party, Red fighters, residents, friends and other guests in San Agustin, Surigao del Sur to celebrate the 42nd anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines.*

The revolutionary victories of the past 42 years could not have been achieved without the perseverance and

determination of the Filipino people to carry forward arduous struggles. Neither could these have been achieved without the

correct leadership of the CPP which has served as the beacon of the people's armed revolution and mass struggles.

From one Party group when the CPP first took root in Mindanao in 1971, there are now five Regional Committees covering the entire island. The total party membership in Mindanao numbering several thousand lead a few hundred thousands of organized masses. The Party leads scores of New People's Ar-

my (NPA) platoons and companies in the island. There are now 42 guerrilla fronts from 39 last year. The NPA in Mindanao launched more than 250 tactical offensives this year against military, paramilitary and police forces, seizing almost 200 high-powered rifles. Enemy forces lost an equivalent of a battalion of men.

The Party leads the people's struggle in Mindanao for land reform and other basic economic issues, human rights and other political rights, the right to self-determination of the Lumad people including that of our Moro brothers, the struggle against US political and military intervention as well as the protection and rehabilitation of our environment.

The Party has strengthened and broadened the revolutionary united front in the whole island. The revolutionary forces have weathered the violent sustained attacks of successive reactionary regimes from the imposition of martial law in 1972. From the early phase of the strategic defensive stage, the protracted people's war has advanced to the middle phase and has set sights on fulfilling the requirements for completing the last phase in the next five years and entering the stage of the strategic stalemate afterwards.



The objectives of the AFP's brutal military campaigns under Oplan Bantay Laya have been completely frustrated. Instead of being decimated by Oplan Bantay Laya 1 (2001-2005), the whole revolutionary movement has grown bigger and stronger. Oplan Bantay Laya 2 (2006-2010) failed not only in reducing the revolutionary forces to inconsequentiality, but in stopping as well the continued advance of the people's war. The current new democratic revolution has achieved far greater victories than all the previous revolutionary movements of the Filipino people.

This clearly shows the maturity and competence of the CPP to lead and advance the people's revolution. In contrast, the ruling social system is beset

with an ever worsening economic and political crisis. The world capitalist system is suffering from a prolonged depression. The Filipino people suffer ever worsening conditions as a result of US- and IMF-imposed policies of liberalization, privatization, deregulation and denationalization. The people have long lost hope that their national and democratic aspirations can be achieved under the current ruling system.

The US-Aquino regime's newly unveiled Oplan Bayanihan is basically a rehash of the Oplan Bantay Laya in terms of relying on a brutal military campaign of suppression. Patterned after the US Counterinsurgency Guide, Oplan Bayanihan seeks to camouflage the brutality of the fascist war with "human rights" rhetoric, psywar lies, doleout campaigns, so-called community organizing for peace and development and other political gimmicks. Just like the AFP's previous campaigns, Oplan Bayanihan will be counter-productive both economically and politically. It will only drain the resources of the government and further draw the people's ire. In Mindanao, this will only worsen the rage of the Lumad, Moro and non-Moro people and drive them to unite under the NDF's banner and the CPP's leadership. **AB**

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## A "fiesta" in San Agustin town

Thousands of people riding multicabs, jeeps, trucks and buses trooped to a village in San Agustin, Surigao del Sur to attend and join in the festivities for the 42nd anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines last December 26. They came from different parts of Mindanao, some of them traveling since midnight just to be able to make it to the venue.

Elements of the 4th ID tried to stop them an hour away from the site of the celebration. The soldiers set up checkpoints along the highway going to San

Agustin, blocking a convoy of up to 140 vehicles, not to mention the innumerable motorcycles. They took pictures and listed the names of the

people, scrutinized drivers' licenses and told passengers to turn back.

But the people stood their ground. To resist the military's veiled threats, they decided to mass up first in Lianga and walk the remaining distance. They bravely faced the soldiers who were armed with rifles. They reasoned out that the military should respect their right to go where they want that day, in accordance with the reciprocal ceasefire that guaranteed their

security in attending the CPP anniversary celebration. Especially with media persons in tow, the people were able to assert their right to join the celebration to which they were invited. The military was forced to let them through, but not before delaying their trip for several hours.

When they arrived, they were welcomed by their fellow peasants, women and youth—all members of revolutionary mass organizations under the democratic people's government. They were happily greeted by friends, acquaintances and relatives who were Red fighters. They were given ID cards, pins with the Communist Party logo to wear and souvenir calendars depicting the national-democratic revolution.

Hours before this, residents of San Agustin had already been preparing for the guests' arrival. The night before, they cleaned and prepared a meadow in the middle of a rice field which would serve as the site of the celebration. With the help of Red fighters from the Pulang Diwata Command, the residents constructed a vast stage and several huts where the guests could rest and food would be stored. They put up a huge piece of red cloth as backdrop and painted it with a giant image of the hammer and sickle. The residents and Red fighters

were up all night preparing food, banners and equipment, setting up the sound system and rehearsing their cultural presentations.

At around 10 a.m., the program began with a parade of colors and a march of up to a hundred Red fighters. Sporting green *camisa de chino* with red NPA badges on their left sleeves, they raised their rifles to salute the CPP flag while singing the Internationale.

After this, Ka Bill, a CPP official in the region warmly welcomed the guests, who made it despite the military's harassment. Ka Oris' speech came next, where he hailed the advance and the gains achieved by the Communist Party of the Philippines in the island (*see related article*). Between speeches, a group from the Kabataang Makabayan wearing red and their faces adorned with paint presented a play depicting the history of the Party from its establishment up to the current stage of preparing for the strategic stalemate in the next five years. Their movements, dances and songs described the reasons for the armed revolutionary movement's correctness and why it was gaining strength in the countryside.

After a short general program, Ka Oris was interviewed by the media, who asked a vari-

ety of questions ranging from the prospects of the peace talks, details of the revolution's advance in the island, the CPP's stand on mining and Ka Roger's condition. Everyone carefully listened to Ka Oris' responses. More than 40 journalists from local, national and international media outlets had accepted the revolutionary movement's invitation and joined the celebration.

After lunch, the guests presented their own performances. A member of a women's organization sang about the establishment of genuine cooperatives and advancing agrarian revolution. A seven-year old girl who came with her parents sang about the free and prosperous future she longed for. At this point, it was the Red fighters' turn to listen offstage and applaud.

Those who joined the celebration left the site together to avoid military harassment. They went home with a stronger fighting spirit, and with joyful memories of acting in concert and overcoming the repressiveness of the reactionary army, of the rare opportunity to loudly proclaim their political convictions and mingle with their people's army, of a simple feast to celebrate the anniversary of their Party, and of catching a glimpse of the revolution's victory. **AB**

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## Groups launch other activities on CPP's 42nd anniversary

Allied organizations of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) launched other activities to celebrate the 42nd anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Members of the Revolutionary Council of Trade Unions-Southern Tagalog (RCTU-ST) painted revolutionary slogans on walls near factories in Laguna and some parts of Batangas on December 12. On December 19, some 40 members of RCTU launched a light-

ning rally at the Biñan, Laguna town plaza. RCTU-ST spokesperson Fortunato Magtanggol said workers must participate in people's war by joining the New People's Army. RCTU-ST also called on the working class to fulfill its leading role in the revolution.

In Rizal, members of the Kabataang Makabayan also painted revolutionary slogans in several towns and cities in the province.

In Negros, the island's CPP spokesperson Ka Marco held a press conference on the expansion and consolidation of the armed revolution in the region (*See related article*).

Elsewhere in the country, the revolutionary forces launched programs, study sessions and other celebrations to mark the anniversary. **AB**

# The NPA is sure to expand in Negros

The expansion of the New People's Army (NPA) in Negros is a certainty. In the coming years, it is targeting the establishment of company-size guerrilla fronts in every congressional district in the island, in accordance with the call by the leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines to leap from the strategic defensive to the strategic stalemate.

This target was presented in a press conference held in the last week of December in a mountainous area in Negros as part of the celebrations of the 42nd anniversary of the CPP's founding. The declaration was a big slap in the face of the Philippine Army's 3rd Division whose mouthpieces have repeatedly claimed that the revolutionary movement in the island is a spent force.

CPP-Negros spokesperson Ka

Marco said their targets are achievable because they were able to expand their mass base despite a number of weaknesses and shortcomings. The AFP's identification of Negros as a priority target in its counter-insurgency campaign in the Visayas failed to stop the 30-40% expansion of the mass base. The AFP leadership had also moved its deadline for crushing the revolutionary movement in the island from

2009 to 2010 and has moved it again with the onset of the AFP's new oplan.

The Negros Operational Command, on the other hand, said that the NPA in the island has enough forces to achieve its targets. Part of the gains the NPA can build on is the more than 30 tactical offensives it was able to launch last year and its seizure of more than 20 high-powered firearms. More than 20 AFP troops were killed and 15 were wounded.

The CPP in Negros projects that it could establish around seven company-size guerrilla fronts in Negros Occidental and three company-size guerrilla fronts in Negros Oriental in the next five years in preparation for entering the stage of strategic stalemate. **AB**

## NPA seizes 5 firearms in Davao Oriental

Red fighters under the Antonio Nerio Antao Command of the New People's Army (ANAC-NPA) seized five firearms in a disarming operation against Romeo Antuling, the despotic barangay captain of Old Macopa, Manay, Davao Oriental on December 15, at 12:10 p.m.

Seized were two M16 rifles, two automatic shotguns and a cal .45 pistol.

ANAC spokesperson Dyomabuk Kadyawan said Antuling was a despotic village official who used his influence to amass high-powered firearms and establish his own private army. He is also guilty of several human rights violations in Manay. Kadyawan added that Antuling has been using his armed group to terrorize civilians living in the area.

Meanwhile, latest reports from Ka Amado Pesante, spokesperson of the NPA Rodal Urtal Command in Northern Samar said that the Red fighters were able to seize 11 firearms in their successful ambush against a 12-man unit of the 63rd IB Bravo Coy in Barangay Perez, Las Navas on December 14. The arms seizure consisted of ten M16s and a K3 light machine gun, aside from ammunition and military equipment. **AB**

## CPP demands immediate release of Ka Bart

The Communist Party of the Philippines demanded on January 5 the immediate release of Tirso "Ka Bart" Alcantara as part of the GRP's compliance with the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG). The AFP captured Ka Bart in Ibabang Iyam, Lucena, Quezon on January 4. Arrested with him was a man identified as Apolonio Cuarto.

After his capture, Ka Bart was immediately taken to the Southern Luzon Command headquarters in Camp Nakar, and later airlifted to the V. Luna Hospital in Quezon City for treatment of a bullet wound he sustained.

To keep custody of Ka Bart, the military immediately filed 23 criminal cases against him.

Ka Bart, a consultant in the peace talks, is covered by JASIG. His release would bode well for the upcoming talks. Pending his detention by the Philippine government, the CPP demanded humane treatment for him and respect for his rights, including the right to confer with his lawyers and see his doctors. **AB**

# AFP ceasefire violations

The AFP and PNP brazenly violated the NDFP and GRP's reciprocal ceasefire that started December 16 and ended January 3. They used the 19-day ceasefire to position their troops within and around guerrilla zones. They surveilled and harassed suspected activists and supporters of the armed revolutionary movement and arrested NPA forces. A civilian was killed as the AFP went on a rampage. Following are the incidents collated by *Ang Bayan*:

**Davao City.** The PNP Special Action Force raided a house on January 1 in Toril District where NPA cadre Ka Edwin Brigano was staying. Brigano was seeking medical treatment during the ceasefire for serious lung and liver ailments. The PNP-SAF detained and slapped him with trumped-up charges.

**Quezon.** Soldiers of the 74th IB detained ten students of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines who were in Barangay San Andres, San Narciso on December 28. The military accused them of being NPA members but they were released for lack of evidence. Since the ceasefire began on December 16 up to the days before Christmas, offensive military operations were conducted almost without letup by the 85th and 74th IB in the villages of White Cliff, Busuk-Busukan, San Juan, Sinagtala, Binay, San Vicente and Vigo Central in San Narciso. The troopers harassed and took pictures of residents in a number of areas. In Sitio Mageron,

Barangay Nasalaan in San Francisco town, a 24-man military platoon herded the menfolk and forced them to undress.

**Surigao del Sur.** In the runup towards December 26th, forces of the 4th ID set up checkpoints in a number of barangays in Surigao del Sur, including the province's main throughfares, to determine the exact venue of the CPP anniversary celebration. When the exact place was made known to the public, the police and military began setting up checkpoints around San Agustin town to block, terrorize and stop people from joining the festivities.

The military failed to stop them and the celebration was a success (*see related article*).

**Occidental Mindoro.** Soldiers from the 80th IB led by Lt. Col. Roger

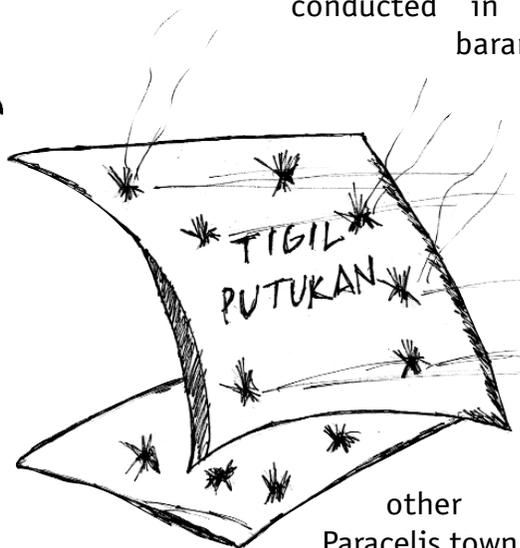
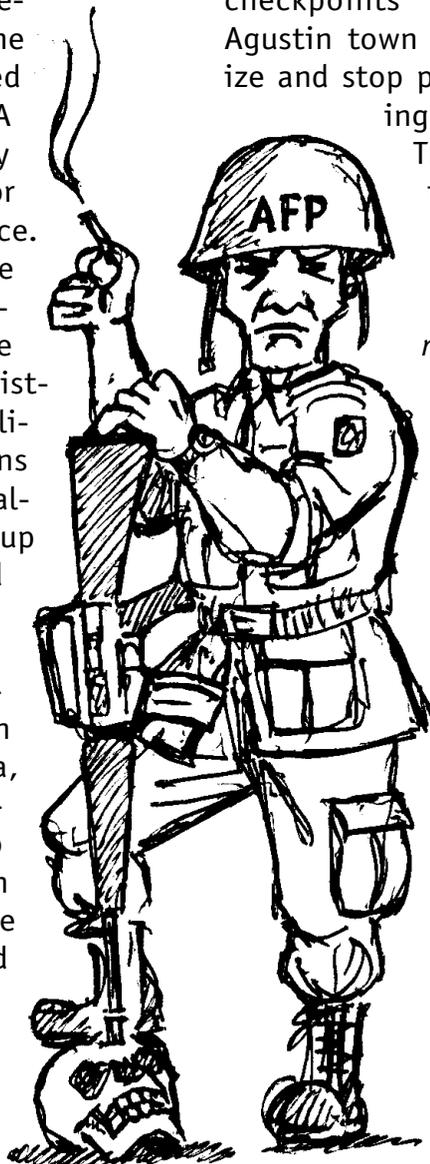
Percol strafed a house that was being visited by an NPA team in Sitio Uper Balading, Barangay Bayotbot, San Jose. The NPA unit was forced to retreat without firing a shot to avoid hitting civilians. The military killed civilian Stephen Lester Barrientos (*see related article*) and arrested Ka Christian Bascos, an NPA member who was then taking advantage of the ceasefire to visit his fiancée. Two other guerrillas were arrested by the military.

**Capiz and Iloilo.** Starting December 21, troops of the 61st IB conducted combat clearing operations in at least six barangays of Tapaz, Capiz and Calinog, Iloilo.

**Agusan del Sur.** Police operatives arrested NDF-North Central Mindanao official Ka Pedro Codaste and his companions at a checkpoint in Bayugan town.

**Ifugao and Mountain Province.** A commando unit of the 5th ID entered an area along the boundary of Aguinaldo town in Ifugao and Natonin town in Mountain Province on December 16. The following day, it positioned itself in Sitio Tappo, Barangay Banawel, Natonin where there were ongoing Civil-Military Operations that served as cover for offensive military operations of a Re-engineered Special Operations Team.

Military operations were also conducted in a number of barangays in Natonin, among them Alunugan, Balangaw, Banawel, Botac, Maducayan, Saliyok and Tonglayaon, and in Bananao, Botigue and other barangays in Paracelis town.





## Peasant leader, activist slain

**A** peasant leader from Nueva Ecija and an activist from Mindoro were killed by armed minions of the reactionary state in December and the first days of January.

**January 2.** Armed men aboard a motorcycle murdered Oyi Villarosa, an officer of Alyansa ng Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon (AMGL), the regional chapter of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP). Villarosa, who was killed in Santa Rosa, Nueva Ecija was shot to death on the way home after working all day in his farm. He sustained four fatal bullet wounds from a cal .45 pistol and is the first victim of extrajudicial killing in 2011.

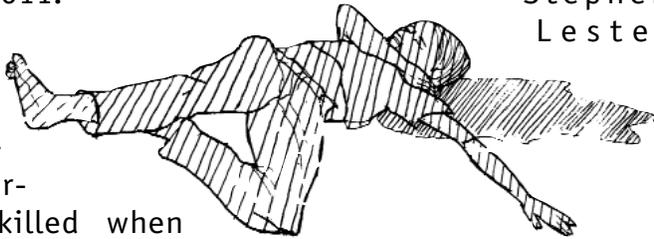
### December 23.

A youth activist and member of a Southern Tagalog-based cultural organization was killed when

troops from the Philippine Army 80th IB raided a house in San Jose town in Occidental Mindoro where a unit of the New People's Army was staying. In a statement, Ka Higom Maragang, spokesperson of the NPA Lucio de Guzman Command in Mindoro said the Red fighters opted to withdraw without firing a single shot in order to avoid hitting civilians.

Killed in the treacherous attack by fascist troops was

Stephen  
Lester



Barrientos, 19, a member of the Southern Tagalog Cultural Network (STCN), a youth cultural group in the region. Anakbayan-Southern Tagalog deputy secretary general John Macuha said Barrientos was in the area to visit his father who lives in Upper Balading, Barangay Bayotbot, San Jose. An active member of STCN, Barrientos' last performance was in Mendiola on December 10 during the commemoration of International Human Rights Day.

To avoid being held accountable, the military claimed that Barrientos was "killed in the crossfire" between the AFP and the NPA. Not satisfied with this lie, the military caused the Barrientos family even more anguish by not allowing them to claim the slain activist's body. After they were finally able to retrieve the body, the family suffered even more harassment in the hands of the military. **AB**

## 3 political detainees walk free

**T**hree political detainees were released before the end of 2010. Among them were two of the "Morong 43" and a detainee incarcerated in Tuguegarao City.

Two members of the "Morong 43" who were not part of the first batch released on December 17 were able to leave the Metro Manila District Jail (MMDJ) in Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig City on December 28. Aldrin Garcia and Antonio de Dios were proven to be mere namesakes of other persons accused of various crimes. Garcia, who is supposedly a drug user was freed after he tested negative for illegal drugs. De Dios, on the other hand, a poor man

who has never had any experience with checks was proven innocent of violating the anti-bouncing checks law.

Prior to this, Myrna Cruz-Abraham who was detained at the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology Center in Tuguegarao City was released. Abraham, a consultant for peasant organizations and a member of the Anakpawis Party in Cagayan walked free on December 23 after nine months in detention. She was arrested in March for

allegedly being involved in a crime dating back to 2009. She was held incommunicado and interrogated for a week before being presented in court. The court dismissed the case filed against Abraham for lack of evidence.

Meanwhile, Atty. Edre Olalia, lawyer for the "Morong 43" said that the continued detention of Rogelio Villaris, Edwin Dematera and Danny Pinero is a violation of their political rights since there are no arrest warrants or commitment orders issued against them.

Aside from them, there are five more activists belonging to the "Morong 43" who are still being detained at Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal and coerced to testify against their comrades. **AB**

# Leonardo Co and his team were not killed in the crossfire

The results of a fact-finding mission conducted by Agham-Advocates of Science and Technology for the People have belied claims by the military that renowned scientist Leonardo Co and two members of his team were killed in the crossfire during a firefight between the New People's Army and elements of the 19th IB.

Based on the accounts of the surviving victims, other personalities involved in the incident and an ocular inspection of the scene of the shooting, the 33-strong fact-finding team organized by Agham confirmed that the shots that snuffed out the lives of Co and his team members Sofronio Cortez and Julius Borrromeo came from only one direction.

Co and his group had already spent several hours in a forested area of Barangay Lim-ao, Kananga, Leyte in the morning of November 15 to collect tree seedlings for an Energy Development Corp. (EDC) reforestation project. Also with Co were Roniño Gibe, a forest guard and Policarpio Balute, a farmer. Before they proceeded, the EDC formally informed the military at around 8:30 a.m. of Co and his team's activity.

It was around 12:00 noon when Co and his group were suddenly fired upon. One by one, they dropped to the ground, shouting "Have pity, we are not your enemies!" "Please stop!" Said Balute, there was rapid fire and big explosions that shook the ground. The shooting lasted for 15-20 minutes.

Balute happened to be behind a huge tree when they were shot at. He decided to run to ask help from EDC. Gibe, on

the other hand, was able to crawl towards a big tree and hide behind it. The others were easier targets because they did not have much cover.

By 12:17 p.m., Balute had flagged down an EDC vehicle and asked the driver to bring him to the field office so he could report the shooting. At about the same time, Gibe was able to send a text message to the EDC asking for help. Based on this, the EDC lost no time in texting Co to leave the area immediately as there was reportedly an encounter going on. The EDC was then unaware that it was actually Co's group that was being fired upon, that Co and Cortez's blood-soaked bodies were already sprawled on the ground and that Borrromeo was fighting for his life.

After the shooting, the soldiers approached the victims. When the troopers saw Gibe, he was repeatedly interrogated on

where their firearms were, where his other companions had escaped to and who their con-

tacts were. Gibe also repeatedly answered that they were not armed and that they were EDC employees tasked to assist Co in his research. He gave them the

names of EDC officials who could verify his statements. He showed them his identification card and the sackful of seedlings they had gathered.

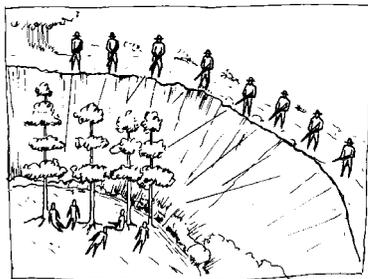
The soldiers did not believe Gibe. Instead, they ordered him to lie face down on the ground for close to two hours. They also ignored the dying Borrromeo, refusing to provide any medical treatment for close to two hours.

They gave him first aid only after the soldiers received orders from their superiors at around 2 p.m. It was already 3 p.m. when an ambulance came for Borrromeo. But he died before he could reach the hospital.

When the soldiers realized the huge blunder they had made, they tried to intimidate and confuse Gibe to destroy his credibility as a witness. To plant doubts in his mind, they asked him if he knew about the military operation in the area, and even told him that they had lost two soldiers. Gibe answered that their venture into the forest was coordinated with the military, which did not inform them about any ongoing AFP operations. They mocked Gibe again, saying, "It's impossible for you not to have seen the three armed men. We had been observing them walking for around for 30 minutes!"

Obviously, what the soldiers saw was Co's group, and they fired at them without bothering to verify their identities. In statements issued later by the military, there was no mention of any casualties on the AFP side, contrary to what the soldiers had told Gibe.

Agham decided to conduct its own probe, because even before the Kananga PNP could finish its official investigation, the police were already "corroborating" the 19th IB's lies. AB



# Land, not militarization

The successful land occupation campaign in Negros has breathed new life into agrarian struggles in the island (read "Campaign for land occupation in Negros" in *Ang Bayan's* December 7, 2010 issue). The peasantry's mighty strength which lay dormant for some time has been stirred, with the farmers demonstrating their collective, sustained and organized actions for land, food, work and social justice. Since they began their land occupation campaign in the last quarter of 2008, it has spread throughout the island and spurred various forms of antifeudal struggles.

Poor peasants and farm workers dared to act in response to calls for land occupation in the face of government's failure to fulfill its promise of land and social justice. It was a promise made by every president, from Quezon during the Commonwealth to the present puppet regime.

Genuine land reform is especially urgent in Negros. During "tiempos muertos" or



the so-called season of death, all of the island's 11 sugar centrals stop operating. The island's economy grinds to a halt—an economy where 85% of agriculture is geared to -

wards planting sugar cane and exporting sugar. Without sugar cane, there is no work. And without work, the majority of the population goes hungry. This, while affluent landlord families go on pleasure trips to European or American cities.

Under these circumstances, it is just for the peasantry to till idle lands and develop them so they can have food for their starving families. This would be more productive than to rely on

alms and other people's charity.

**Breaking the chains of feudal bondage and exploitation.** The landlords on the island fiercely oppose the land occupation campaign, as it is a direct affront to the feudal rule of Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco (who has 11 haciendas in the entire island); Jose Miguel Arroyo (husband of former Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo); Daniel "Bitay" Lacson (former Negros Occidental governor Presidential Adviser for the Visayas under both Cory Aquino and Benigno Aquino III); Negros Occidental Gov. Alfredo Marañon; Pulupandan, Negros Occidental mayor Magdaleno Peña; and the Teves and Limkaichong families.

In connivance with the landlords, the reactionary state mobilizes its coercive instruments to suppress the peasantry. Aside from the courts, the military, police and paramilitary forces, it also taps the mercenary Revolutionary Proletarian Army (RPA) bandit group.

**Criminalization of agrarian cases.** Landlord-dominated local governments consider as criminal acts the actions taken by the peasantry to assert their rights to land and livelihood and against hunger and militarization. Instead of addressing the peasantry's just demands, the landlords or their underlings file criminal cases against them.

According to a report last August, a total of 402 criminal cases have been filed against the peasants. One-hundred and fifty-two farmers (80 of them in Negros Occidental) with arrest warrants have been forced to leave their loved ones and go into hiding. Twenty-six peasant leaders and activists are detained in Bago and Cadiz. Two peasant youth were abducted by RPA bandits and have not been surfaced to date.

## Media condemns US soldiers' arrogance

JOURNALISTS strongly condemned the arrogance of American soldiers guarding the headquarters of the US Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSTOFP) in Zamboanga City and called on the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) Commission to investigate the incident,

In a statement, the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) said it was arrogant and totally illegal for the American soldiers to bar local media who were then covering the December 20 visit to the Western Mindanao Command headquarters of (ret) Gen. Edilberto Adan, a member of the VFA Commission. When the media asked the US soldiers why they were being barred, the soldiers threatened to confiscate the TV network's equipment if they continued taking footages.

The NUJP asked the VFA Commission to conduct an investigation into the foreign soldiers' arrogant behavior, saying that to let this incident pass would be to abrogate the nation's sovereignty.

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## DOLE grants PAL flight attendants' demands

THE Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) granted on December 24 the demands of members of the Flight Attendants' and Stewards' Association of the Philippines (FASAP), including raising the mandatory retirement age. The Philippine Air Lines Employees Association (PALEA) has thus called off a strike to oppose the mass termination of 2,600 PAL employees and other repressive policies.

The decision in favor of the PAL employees was issued after more than a week of mediation by the Aquino government on the conflicts between PAL's management and the union. An assumption of jurisdiction (AJ) order was issued by Malacañang on December 16. The power to issue AJ orders is vested in the president and the DOLE secretary to intervene in labor conflicts between management and workers' unions and prevent a strike.

PALEA and the Anakpawis Party-list branch at PAL had been strongly opposed to the PAL management's enforcement of the old col-

lective bargaining agreement (CBA) because it was no longer beneficial to them. It would trigger a mass layoff where those booted out would be replaced by non-unionized and contractual workers who would not enjoy any benefits or job security. This would also culmi-



nate in the busting of their union.

The PAL workers' struggle was supported by the majority of unions and workers' associations nationwide because of its strategic effect on the Philippine workers' movement against contractualization and other repressive policies of imperialist globalization.

Among the demands won by FASAP members was the raising of the mandatory retirement age for both men and women to 60 years. Under the old CBA, female flight attendants hired by the company after November 2000 would be forced to retire by their 40th birthday. FASAP also won a ₱200 million wage hike over the next three years—₱2,000 to ₱2,500 per month in the first year and ₱1,300 in the next two years.

Each member was also granted a rice allowance of ₱1,800 a month, aside from other benefits.

## PISTON opposes new NLEX, SLEX toll hikes

MEMBERS of the Pinag-isang Samahan ng Tsuper at Operators Nationwide (PISTON) held a protest rally on January 3 at the Alabang viaduct in Muntinlupa City after the toll fee hike at the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) and South Luzon Expressway (SLEX) took effect last January 1.

Toll fees were raised 300% at the SLEX while at the NLEX, Class 1 vehicles will be paying ₱41, up from ₱36 from Balintawak to the Bocaue Interchange.

Aside from the toll fee, fares

at the Metro Rail Transit (MRT) have doubled. Passengers will have to shell out an additional ₱10 for a trip from North Avenue in Quezon City to Taft Avenue in Manila.

The flagdown rate in taxis

has also been hiked from ₱30 to ₱40 after the Land Transportation and Franchising Regulatory Board approved their petition filed last year.

Widespread opposition has prompted Benigno Aquino III to propose a graduated toll fee hike at the NLEX and SLEX, a move that actually does nothing to reduce the excessive monopoly profits of big capitalists.