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Editorial

Intensify the workers' and people's anti-imperialist struggles

In the face of the relentless and prolonged crisis of the international capitalist system, the imperialist countries have stepped up the exploitation and oppression of the workers and the people, especially in neocolonial countries like the Philippines.

The ruling reactionary regime has become even more subservient to the dictates of US imperialism, the International Monetary Fund and foreign monopoly corporations as the crisis of the ruling system worsens.

The Aquino regime avidly implements the policies of neoliberalism, with liberalization, deregulation, privatization and denationalization intensifying under Aquino's rule despite the deleterious effects and the sufferings these have wrought on

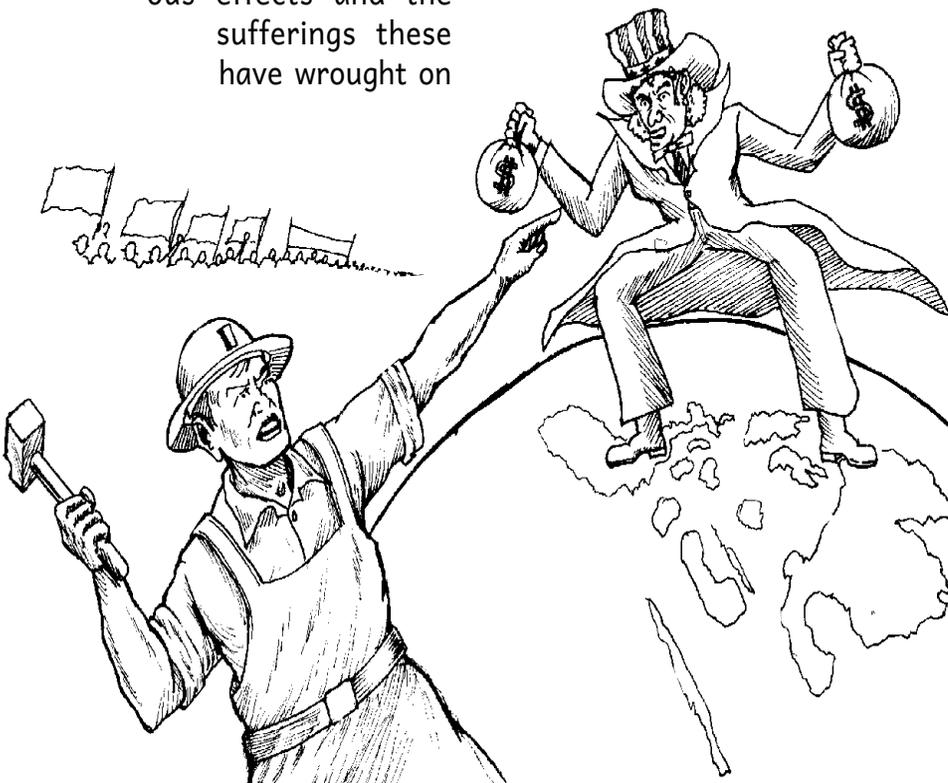
the masses of workers and the Filipino people for the past three decades.

The three decades of neoliberal rule saw the unprecedented worsening of the exploitation of the Filipino working class. The flexibilization of labor, or the "relaxation" of labor standards, employment policies and systems was implemented first in the centers of capitalism in the 1980s. Contractualization and other employment systems were

later enforced on a wider scale, giving capitalists the power to squeeze from the workers every last drop of surplus value.

The reactionary state and big capitalists have been relentlessly attacking the basic rights of workers to organize unions, to strike and to negotiate. These rights which the Filipino working class won through decades of struggle have slowly been eroded in the past 30 years. Through flexible employment arrangements, workers have been deprived of the ability to use their fundamental rights to advance and defend their interests.

Under the imperialist policy of flexible labor, the number of unions and unionized workers declined. There has also been a reduction in the number of strikes, which is not proof of in-



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dustrial peace, as the reactionary state would have the public believe, but of the workers' further suppression. The steep decline in the number of workers' strikes has meant graver oppression and exploitation by the capitalists.

The workers' minimum wage is woefully inadequate to enable them to live decent lives. In the last three decades, the workers' minimum wage has been practically frozen. Wage hikes lag too much behind the upward spiral of prices of oil and the costs of other basic commodities and services. The reactionary state and big capitalists have taken advantage of the existence of a huge army of unemployed workers to maintain wages at extremely low levels.

The puppet Aquino regime is antiworker and anti-toiling masses. It advances the policy of cheap labor in order to at-

tract investments from foreign big capitalists. It has no plans of changing the existing oppressive and exploitative system of pro-

duction in the Philippines. Aquino himself has taken a stand against any significant hike in workers' wages. He has done nothing to

solve the huge problem of unemployment except to continue the policy of exporting labor, despite the sluggish demand for migrant workers due to the international capitalist crisis. He has been imposing new and higher taxes even as he cuts back on social expenditures.

The toiling masses cry out for social justice. Millions of workers, the hungry and those without regular employment demand regular jobs and living wages, affordable prices of food, water and electricity, decent housing, free health and educational serv-

ices and other basic needs in order to live decently.

Under the US-Aquino regime, the masses of workers and the toiling masses must struggle to attain the social justice they desire. They must hail and wave high the banner of anti-imperialism and intensify their struggles against the anti-people and antiworker policies of the puppet Aquino regime.

A widespread education movement must be launched among the toiling masses. We must rouse and fire up the patriotism and raise the level of scientific thought among the workers and toiling masses. We must establish thousands of patriotic schools among the youth, students, workers and toiling masses in factories and urban poor communities. We must raise the consciousness of the toiling masses against neoliberalism and how the policies of liberalization, deregulation, privatization and denationalization have destroyed the livelihoods and eroded the rights of the people. We must show how the burning issues and problems of the toiling masses relate to close to a century of colonial and neocolonial rule by US imperialism in the Philippines.

The workers and the toiling masses must unite to resist the policy of cheap labor as a means of attracting foreign investments. They must fight for the abrogation of laws and orders that uphold the current oppressive and exploitative system such as the Herrera Law and the Wage Regionalization Act. They must tirelessly let the cry for a significant wage increase resound nationwide. They must persevere in demanding the abrogation of labor flexibilization and advance the right to regular employment and the right to unionize and to strike.



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The workers and the toiling masses must unite to resist the policies dictated by the IMF and US imperialism rabidly being implemented by the Aquino regime. They must resist and oppose plans to impose more taxes and fees. They must expose lopsided policies that prioritize budgetary allocations for the military, foreign banks and investors. They must expose the mendicant conditional cash transfer program framed by the World Bank to deceive the people and pave the way for budget cuts on needed services.

The workers and the entire people must unite in struggle for national independence especially in

the face of intensifying US imperialist intervention in the country's economic, political and military affairs. They must unite to resist attempts by the US to include the Philippines in the Trans-Pacific Partnership it is establishing. They must resist US schemes to change the reactionary 1987 constitution to pave the way for the absolute rule of foreign capital in the Philippines and the unrestricted plunder of the country's natural resources and national patrimony. They must resist growing US military presence in the country that is directly linked to its objective of controlling and dominating the economy of the Philippines and other countries in

the Asia-Pacific.

AB

23rd year of the Herrera Law

Contractualization's impact on the working class



Capitalists have intensified their oppression of the workers in the last several decades. Aside from paying them slave wages, they have subjected the workers to various forms of “legal” exploitation through repressive laws like Republic Act 6715, better known as the Herrera Law. These laws have worsened the workers and their

families' miserable state and darkened their futures.

On March 2, 1989, under the regime of Corazon Aquino, the Labor Code of 1974 was amended by the Herrera Law. The law was named after its proponent, former Sen. Ernesto Herrera, also the erstwhile leader of the yellow Trade Union Congress of the Philippines. The law expanded the system of contractualization. Previously confined to the economic zones, it has spread to other factories, resulting in the widespread massacre of jobs and massive layoffs of workers at the start of the 1990s.

The Herrera Law allowed various forms of contractual employment, including the currently widespread system of employing workers through layers upon layers of agencies. More than 90% of currently available

jobs in the Philippines are contractual in nature.

As a result of contractualization, workers have been deprived of their right to job security and have become vulnerable on a daily basis to more intense exploitation by the capitalists.

Among the first to be hit by this law were the workers of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company. From 16,000 regular employees in 1995, PLDT now has only about 3,000.

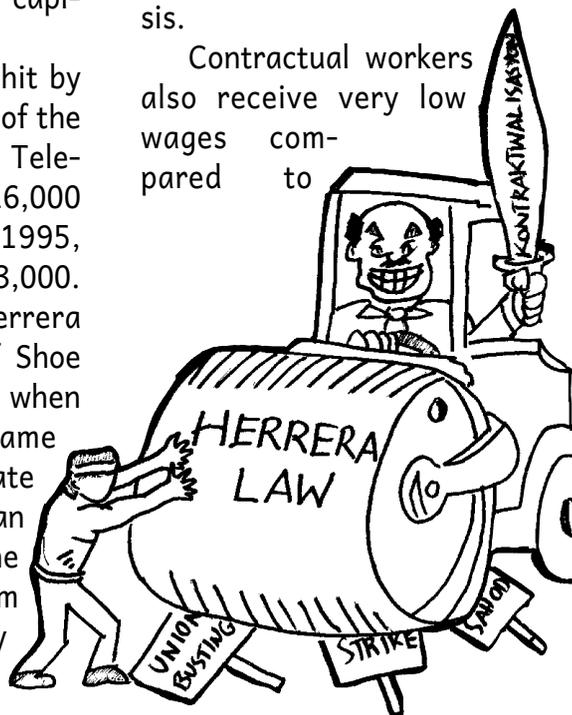
Worst hit by the Herrera Law were the workers of Shoe Mart (SM) in the 1990s when 92% of its workers became contractuales. The same fate befell the workers of San Miguel Corporation in the first half of the 2000s. From 26,000, SMC now has only a little more than 1,000

regular workers.

The latest case was Philippine Air Lines where the remaining 2,600 regular employees were fired in December 2011. They were rehired as contractual workers by agencies owned by PAL president Lucio Tan and made to work in various departments within PAL.

Just weeks after the passage of the Herrera Law, the Corazon Aquino regime likewise approved RA 6727 or the Wage Rationalization Act, which granted “regional wage boards” the power to determine minimum wages. Its objective was to divide the workers' national unity and undermine their ability to demand minimum wage hikes on a nationwide basis.

Contractual workers also receive very low wages compared to



regulars. Most of them are not covered by collective bargaining agreements (CBA) for higher wages and other benefits. Neither are they given overtime and vacation pay.

According to a study by Ibon Foundation, in April 2011, the country had a 41-million strong labor force with up to 10.9% or 4.5 million of them unemployed. This was almost double the official government estimate of 7.2% or 2.9 million jobless workers.

Union and strike busting

Aside from institutionalizing low wages and the lack of job security, the Herrera Law also undermines unions. When it was enacted in 1989, there were 2.79 million unionized workers. After 23 years, the number is down to only 1.79 million. There are now only more than 200 registered unions from the previous 627.

The law also weakens the strike movement. From 197 strikes in 1989, there were only two recorded in 2008.

The law has further suppressed existing unions due to DOLE Department Order 10 issued during the Ramos regime which forbids contractual workers from joining unions or other groups. The order also calls for hiring to be coursed through agencies or subcontractors, relieving companies of responsibility for providing benefits and services to workers. The decline in the number of regular workers and their replacement by contractals slowly weakened existing unions or led to their eventual demise.

The Herrera Law prevents workers from exercising their right to strike. It gives powers to the DOLE secretary to assume jurisdiction over existing

conflicts between unions and companies in the event of a strike. The Herrera Law also strengthens DOLE's powers to rescind the results of any CBA negotiation that do not favor management.

In fact, some of the most significant cases of union and strike busting have been recorded since the Herrera Law was implemented. Some examples include the destruction of the unions at Shoemart, Light Rail Transit, PLDT, Meralco, ABS-CBN Internal Job Marketers, Triumph International (Philippines) and the Ever Gotesco Mall. Picket lines were dismantled at Nestle, San Miguel, Lepanto Consolidated Mining, Toyota Nissan, Honda, Yokohama, Phil. Jeon and Hacienda Luisita, among others.

Violence against workers and trade union leaders

Sixty-seven workers have been killed and 16 forcibly disappeared in the past 11 years. The most notorious cases involve the murders of Nestle Philippines leader Diosdado "Ka Fort" Fortuna in September 2005; Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union chair Ricardo Ramos in October 2005; National Federation of Sugar Workers leader Armando Dolosa in Negros Occidental in June 2008; and seven workers of Hacienda Luisita on November 16, 2004 in Tarlac.

On the other hand, despite the Herrera Law's continued onslaught, workers continue to resist it. They have not relented in asserting their rights to regular employment, decent wages and job security, and their right to unionize and to strike. Their resistance enables them to assert their crucial role in production and

raise their class consciousness and awareness of their duty to society. AB

Latest cases of union busting



with the reactionary government have been systematically and violently busting unions in the country. Using reactionary laws, they have resorted to various schemes and projects that run roughshod on the rights of workers to collective representation and negotiation.

Last April, the Hongkong Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) management arbitrarily dismissed Hongkong Bank Independent Labor Union (HBILU) chair Raymund Acena on the flimsy excuse that he allowed the union secretary to use his corporate email address. The union had long been using its chair's email address as a channel of communication between the leaders and members.

The union said that the real reason behind Acena's termination was his leadership over the union's fight against Project Green, a contractualization scheme at the HSBC. Under Project Green, the company is set to outsource 450 jobs to a third party provider, resulting in the termination of 300 workers or 45% of the bank's entire work force. Up to 90 employees have already resigned and 169 have transferred to HSBC Data Processing Philippines, a company set up by HSBC as third party provider.

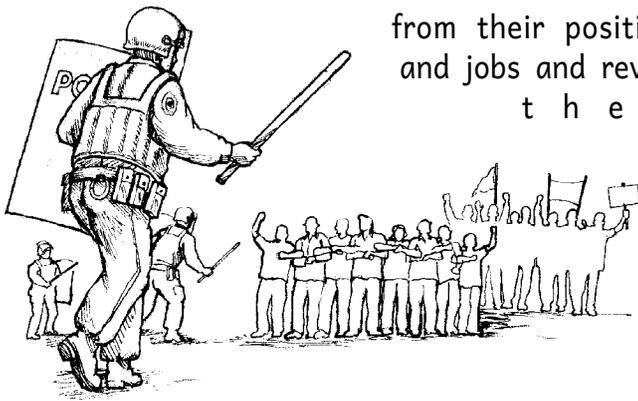
Acena's termination was

timed to coincide with preparations for a new round of negotiations for a collective bargaining agreement between the union and management.

On the other hand, workers at Coca Cola Philippines Inc. face a huge battle against a new company scheme to render the union inutile and eventually abolish it. (See related article in Ang Bayan's April 7, 2012 issue) The company refuses to course negotiations for higher wages through a collective bargaining agreement with the workers. Instead, it shrewdly wants any hike in wages and benefits to be based on an individual evaluation of the workers. Anyone who fails the evaluation will be automatically terminated. This scheme not only attacks the workers' right to collective negotiation, it also paves the way for widespread layoffs and the suppression of regular workers' wages.

At Dole-Philippines, management organized a yellow union to rival the workers' genuine, militant union. Management has been using the yellow union to divide the workers' ranks, remove legitimate union leaders and members

from their positions and jobs and revoke t h e



gains achieved by the union. The Dole workers have been harassed by the military which is encamped near the plantation. In 2008, the union president was slapped with trumped-up charges in court.

At RC Cola Philippines, union members at its Antipolo, Rizal plant were illegally dismissed. The Samahan ng mga Manggagawa sa RC Cola had filed a petition at the Department of Labor and Employment for accreditation as the workers' legitimate bargaining unit. Management proceeded to terminate the union members while the petition was pending at the DOLE.

Meanwhile, the members of the Philippine Air Lines Employees Association (PALEA) continue to fight the contractualization and other schemes being implemented by the Philippine Air Lines management to obscure the massive layoffs and union busting being undertaken against one of the oldest and biggest unions in the Philippines.

Workers in state universities have likewise not been spared. On February 16, the management of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines dismissed 180 janitors, most of whom have worked for the university for decades.

These are just some of the victims of union busting under the US-Aquino regime. In the past several years, the workers of Bleustar Manufacturing and Marketing Corp., Triumph International (Philippines), Toyota Motors Philippines and ABS-CBN, among others have suffered the same

harassment and repressiveness.

AB

Frozen wages



Malacañang has once again rejected a bill in Congress calling for a P125 increase in the daily minimum wage, claiming that it would be detrimental to businessmen and the economy.

Even a wage hike before May 1 through the Regional Wage Board in the National Capital Region has been deemed out of the question by the Department of Labor and Employment

(DOLE) due to the alleged absence of supervening factors.

In 2011, the only increase allowed was an additional P22 in the Cost of Living Allowance. Its effect, according to a study by the Ecumenical Institute for Labor Education and Research (EILER) was gone in a matter of four months because of the rapid rise in the cost of goods and services. In fact, the real value of workers' wages and benefits

remains at the 1995 level despite all the increases granted by regional wage boards across the Philippines.

The regime is obviously invoking one pretext after another just to favor its allies among the comprador bourgeoisie.

To mesmerize the public, Communications Undersecretary Abigail Valte claimed that a P125 wage hike would cost P1.6 trillion, a staggering amount considering that the entire Philippine economy is worth only P9 trillion.

These dizzying statistics, however, are based on the false premise that the country has 38 million workers. In fact, only 46% of the country's entire la-

bor force is composed of private sector wage workers, who are the target beneficiaries of the proposed ₱125 wage increase. The rest are employed by government, own-account workers or unpaid family workers.

But if one is to use figures as a basis, a study by Ibon Foundation would offer far more realistic conclusions on how a ₱125 wage increase would impact on the economy.

According to Ibon, in 2009, the entire business sector employing 3.94 million workers had a combined income of ₱1.83 billion. A ₱125 across-the-board increase in the daily wage would redound to an additional income of ₱3,802 per month or ₱40,427 per year per worker. The ₱125 increase would therefore cost the capitalists a total of ₱194 million, equivalent to a 12% profit reduction, leaving them still with a

hefty ₱1.435 billion in profits.

For the Philippines' top 1,000 corporations, this reduction in profit is just a drop in the bucket. From 2001 to 2010, their combined net income swelled from ₱116.4 billion to ₱804.1 billion. Their total combined income during this period amounted to ₱4,593 billion.

This means that they could well afford to grant the ₱125 wage increase being demanded.

In contrast, workers' wages rose by only 45% from 2001 to 2011 while the prices of goods grew by 62% during the same pe-

ri-
od.



wage increases granted by the Arroyo regime from 2001 to 2010. This

wage erosion is now definitely happening at a faster pace, with oil prices rising nine times in the first three months of 2012 alone.

AB

Protests greet Balikatan

Protest actions confronted the latest US-RP Balikatan Military Exercises that began in various parts of the country on April 17 and will end on April 27. This is the biggest of the Balikatan series under the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), with up to 4,500 American soldiers and 2,300 elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) participating.

On April 19, up to 2,000

demonstrators launched a protest rally near Camp Navarro in Zamboanga City, the headquarters of the AFP Western Mindanao Command (WESTMINCOM). Within this camp is the headquarters of the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTFP), a 600-strong interventionist troop of American soldiers that has been stationed and operating in the Philippines since 2002.

Despite efforts by security

This eroded the real value of workers' wages by almost 11%.

A wage increase would definitely help provide at least temporary relief to the economic difficulties of workers' families.

But the Aquino regime turns a blind eye and is starkly insensitive to the impoverishment of the masses of workers. In the regime's first eight months alone, the real value of the daily minimum wage in Metro Manila was eroded by ₱7.00, wiping out the ₱5.00 real value of all the

forces of the Aquino government to block the demonstrators, participants in a protest caravan and Lakbayan against US Militarism and Plunder were able to stage a program some 800 meters from the entrance to the JSOTFP headquarters. The Lakbayan was led by the PATRIYOTIKO Mindanao coalition. Among those who joined the protest caravan was former Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo. The protest rally ended with the burning of the US flag.

The protest caravan and lakbayan began in Davao City with some 5,000 participants from the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN)-Southern Mindanao Region and other allied organizations from North Cota-

bato, Socksargen and Cotabato City. On April 17, a cultural presentation was launched in Cotabato City. The day after, GABRIELA-SMR held a rally in Davao City to condemn the continued oppression of Filipino women by foreign forces.

A striking feature of the anti-Balikatan protest action was a lightning rally launched by youth activists at the US Embassy in Manila at dawn of April 16. At first, the policemen and security guards at the embassy thought that some 100 youth who arrived at the premises were joggers. The youth activists quickly made their way inside the US Embassy compound to throw paint bombs and deface the embassy seal. They were able to paint over the entire seal and destroy all the letters on it. Some effort was made to block the youth activists, but the three policemen and two security guards at the embassy were helpless. The activists timed their "invasion" of the US Embassy with the changing of the police detail guarding the premises.

After the lightning rally, the youth activists from the League of Filipino Students (LFS) and Anakbayan went to

Quezon City where various groups like BAYAN, Kilusang Mayo Uno, GABRIELA, Bayan Muna, Anak-pawis, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas and Kalikasan Partylist gathered for the Anti-Balikatan Protest Caravan to Pampanga and Tarlac.

Some 1,000 demonstrators from Central Luzon had earlier launched a two-day protest caravan starting April 15 led by BAYAN-CL and Alyansa ng mga Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon (AMGL). In the afternoon of April 16, they trooped to the former US Air Force Base at Clark Freeport in Barangay Balibago, Angeles City. They were accompanied by a delegation from Metro Manila that had also launched a protest action at the Philippine Air Force Basa Air Base in Florida-blanca, Pampanga.

The AMGL said that hundreds of farmers, fisherfolk and minorities would be losing their livelihood after being barred from Clark and Basa in Pampanga; Subic in Zambales; Crow Valley in Camp O'Donnell in Capas, Tarlac; and Fort Magsaysay in

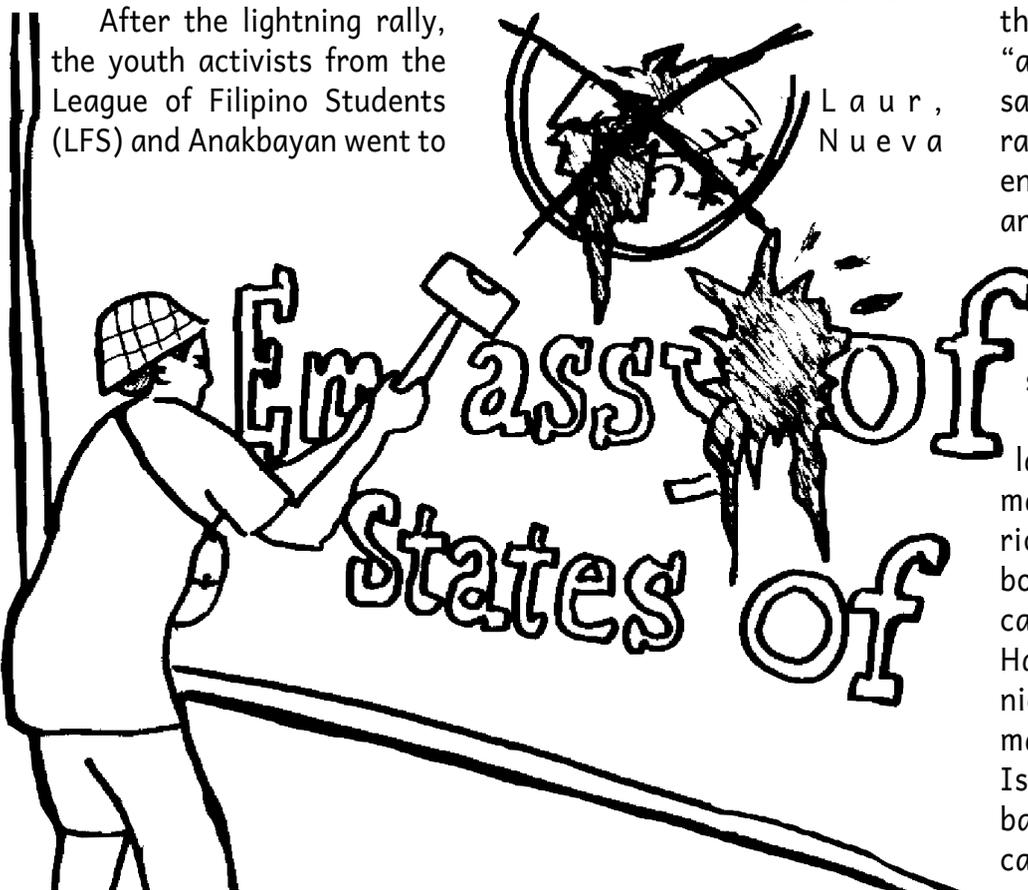
Ecija--areas where the Balikatan Exercises were being held in the region.

A protest action was also held in Southern Tagalog on April 17. Activists in the region are likewise set to rally at the US Embassy on April 20 and 22, with the protests peaking through an anti-imperialist caravan on April 27.

Anti-Balikatan mass actions were likewise launched overseas in Hongkong and Macau and in San Francisco, USA. The latter protest was led by student activists and other Filipino-Americans. They were joined by residents of Guam currently living in the US. The latter assailed the use of Guam by the US as a military outpost for its war of aggression and intervention in the Asia-Pacific region. A mass action was also held in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Meanwhile, five activists who were caught putting up anti-Balikatan posters in Angeles City on the night of April 14 were manhandled by the police. They were detained at the PNP Station 4 where they were told that they were arrested for "added mischief." The victims said they were repeatedly harangued, insulted and threatened that they would be charged and detained at the regional PNP headquarters in Camp Olivias. They were kept for up to ten hours at the police station before being released.

In the latest Balikatan-related report, a Moro fisherman was killed and his son seriously injured when their boat was hit by a speedboat carrying American soldiers in Hadji Muhamad, Basilan on the night of April 18. The fisherman and his son had come from Isabela and were on the way back to their town with their catch when they were hit. The



fatality, Abham Juhum died from head injuries. The US Embassy claimed that the soldiers on the speedboat were part of Balikpapan and were therefore not criminally liable, according to the vile provisions of the VFA. Two officials from the WESTMINCOM, however, claim that the American troops involved in the killing were not part of the military exercises.

AB

CPP praises DPRK for defying US

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) directly defied US imperialism when it launched its Unha-3 rocket to release a satellite into space on April 12. Although the satellite failed to leave the earth's atmosphere, the DPRK nonetheless showed its determination to assert its national prerogative and undertake the necessary measures to develop its country.

The launching of Unha-3 was part of celebrations to mark the 100th birth anniversary on April 16 of Kim Il-Sung, the country's anti-imperialist revolutionary leader who served as its first president. The satellite was to have been used to monitor the weather. It was part of its science and technology development program to address the needs of its people.

Weeks before the launching, the US government had led a campaign to stop it, claiming that the DPRK was actually planning to launch a banned ballistic missile. The DPRK denied this and even invited the foreign media to inspect its rocket.

This is the DPRK's second rocket launch (the first was in 2009), demonstrating the country's advances in space technology. It was a big slap in the face of US imperialism which has been trying for decades to destroy the DPRK. In the Philippines, the Aquino regime laughably played its sycophant role to the hilt. It even came to the point where Benigno Aquino III declared a five-day no-fly zone in certain areas of Luzon, depriving fisherfolk of their livelihood.

A week after the DPRK's satellite launch, the Indian government launched its own long-range intercontinental ballistic missile called Agni-V on April 19. The US and its al-

lies were all praises for what they termed as India's entry into the elite group of countries possessing nuclear capability. This was in stark contrast to their concerted attack on the independent democratic republic of Korea. The US and the various puppets of imperialist countries manifested sheer hypocrisy in hailing India while going all out in condemning the DPRK for its refusal to kowtow to the dictates of the imperialists. AB

NPA raids PNP headquarters in Zamboanga del Sur

Red fighters of the New People's Army (NPA) in Western Mindanao Region successfully raided the police headquarters in the town of Tigbao, Zamboanga del Sur on April 9, at around 7 p.m. Seized from the headquarters were eleven firearms consisting of seven M16 rifles, an M14 rifle, two 9 mm pistols and a cal .38 revolver. Also confiscated were vests, rounds of ammunition and a laptop computer.

The NPA operation lasted 30 minutes. It was easy for the guerrillas to overrun the station since all four policemen then at the headquarters were drunk.

The NPA took as prisoner of war PO2 Faizahl M. Juhaili, 50. The guerrillas did not arrest the others for humanitarian reasons because they all had health issues.

NDF-Mindanao spokesperson Jorge "Ka Oris" Madlos hailed the NPA and all the revolutionary forces in Western Mindanao Region for their daringness and the resurgence and reinvigoration of their Red army.

Ka Oris explained that the NPA attack on the Tigbao municipal hall was conducted because the town mayor and his officials were violating the people's human rights by allowing large-scale mining operations in the area. The big mining firms have been grabbing the peasants' lands and barring them from cutting



trees

even

for building and repairing their houses. On the other hand, the policemen in Tigbao have been actively fighting the revolutionary movement.

Earlier, 15 enemy forces were killed and ten others were wounded in an NPA ambush on February 22 on combined elements of the 53rd IB and the Philippine National Police in Barangay Ariosa, Molave, Zamboanga del Sur. There were no casualties on the NPA side.

These two successive tactical offensives show that revolutionary armed struggle is resurgent in the Western Mindanao Region. This is contrary to statements by the 1st "Tabak" Division that the revolutionary forces have been wiped out in the region.

In Bukidnon, a team from the Julito Tiro Command of the New People's Army (JTC-NPA) ambushed and killed Melody de la Mance alias Datu Manlagingkit in Poblacion Cabanglasan in the morning of April 14. De la Mance, like his father Doro led the hated counterrevolutionary bandit De

La Mance Group that is engaged in robbery, holdups, carabao rustling, landgrabbing, extortion and killings of civilians.

In 1995, under the direction of a Major Dumalahay, the De la Mance Group surrendered seven high-powered firearms and were misrepresented as NPA surrenderees. Instead of holding them accountable for their crimes, they were rearmed by the military in 1997 to pursue the NPA and sow terror among the poor peasants in the mountainous areas of Cabanglasan and Malaybalay. The De la Mance group only slowed down their criminal activities when they realized that the revolutionary movement in Bukidnon was gaining strength.

Two Red fighters were martyred when the comrades were forced into a defensive situation after ambushing De la Mance.

Meanwhile, Red fighters of the Danilo Ben Command (NPA-West Cagayan) disarmed elements of the Philippine National Police Regional Mobile Group (PNP-RMG) manning a checkpoint

along the National Highway in Barangay Labben, Allacapan town on March 2.

At 12 noon, a van carrying a section of Red fighters who posed as AFP soldiers quickly raided the PNP-RMG checkpoint. The four policemen who were then at the checkpoint were having lunch and caught unawares. They helplessly watched as the Red fighters confiscated three M16 rifles, an M203 grenade launcher and a cal .45 pistol.

A policeman who tried to fight it out with the NPA was wounded.

AB

5 activists arrested in Nueva Ecija

Five activists were arrested by a combined force of 56th IB troops and elements from the Nueva Ecija Provincial Police Office in Barangay Sto. Niño, Sta. Rosa, Nueva Ecija on March 8. Arrested were Efren Delalamon, Andres Ely, Carla Bautista, Ambrosio Iletto and Jan Michael Iletto.

KARAPATAN belied statements by 56th IB chief Col. Hilario Vicente C. Lagdana that the five victims were New Peo-

ple's Army guerrillas who were captured after a ten-minute firefight.

Delalamon is a former political detainee who was released on February 1, 2011 after murder and frustrated murder charges filed against him were dismissed. Bautista is assistant program coordinator of the Nueva Ecija Community-Based Health Program (NECBHP) while Ely is a peasant organizer. Jan Michael Iletto, 17, is a minor.

On March 7, at around 4 p.m., two teams from the 56th IB went to Partido Anakpawis member

Ambrosio Iletto's house and to the nearby house of his brother Elpidio. Aside from the police, there were up to a hundred 56th IB troops involved in the raid.

At Ambrosio Iletto's house was his 20-year old daughter Rachele Ann and her year-old sibling. Some 20 soldiers entered the house and positioned themselves at the front, sides and rear. Rachele heard three shots fired by the soldiers behind the house, prompting her to run to their neighbor's house. After five minutes, she saw soldiers leaving their house, after which she heard successive gunshots from afar.

Ambrosio who was then at his farm near Elpidio's house was arrested by the military. Also arrested was Elpidio's son Jan Michael.

Another team from the 56th IB fired their weapons as they approached Elpidio's house where Delalamon,



Ely and Bautista were. Delalamon tried to make a run for it but was wounded in his right hand and left torso, aside from sustaining several shrapnel wounds. Delalamon and Ely's hands were tied behind their backs. Bautista was surrounded as she was bathing and ordered to stay in the bathroom until she was dressed.

Four of the activists were brought to the Nueva Ecija Police Office (NEPPO) while Delalamon was rushed to the hospital to have his wounds treated.

Delalamon and Ambrosio were charged with illegal possession of firearms while the others were charged with rebellion and violating the Human Security Act of 2007.

According to the political detainees' lawyers and relatives, the military and police seized a total of P239,000 as well as personal belongings from the victims and have not returned these items to date.

BAYAN-Central Luzon and other groups launched a protest action in front of the Justice Hall in Nueva Ecija to demand their release. They also staged a rally at the provincial jail.

several motorcycles.

Residents of Barangay Tuy Baanan said soldiers have been looking for the peasant leader since they put up a detachment in the village last March.

Arias' abduction shows the Aquino government's continuing attack on peasants asserting their right to the land they are tilling, said KMP deputy secretary general Randall Echanis.

Arias is currently detained at the Quezon Provincial Jail.

AB

Anti-SM protests

launched

Members of the Kalipunan Ng Damayang Mahihirap (KADAMAY) and Anakpawis protested at SM City North Edsa in the second week of April to oppose the SM group of companies' contractualization policy. SM is owned by big bourgeois

comprador Henry Sy and his family. Nine out of ten SM employees are contractuels and receive very low wages.

The protesters threw rotten tomatoes in front of the mall. They have also been angered no end at the SM management because of its expansion project in Baguio City that would entail cutting down 182 pine trees to give way to a parking area. The plan is being strongly opposed in Baguio where some 3,000 residents staged a protest on April 9. The SM management has temporarily shelved the project because of the pressure and the filing of a writ of kalikasan against the company.

The Sy family also plans to demolish the homes of 25,000-28,000 families living at the Silverio Compound in Parañaque City to give way to the construction of a new condominium by

KARAPATAN has also reported that Elpidio Iletto's five- and three-year old daughters have been running fevers since the violent incident. Their father has since gone into hiding because he is reportedly being hunted by the soldiers and has been charged with rebellion. The family is likewise puzzled why Jan Michael, although a minor, is being treated as an adult and detained in a regular jail cell. He has already begun to show signs of trauma and depression.

Meanwhile, suspected elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines abducted Alex Arias, 56, chairman of the Pagkakaisa't Ugnayan ng mga Magsasaka sa Laguna-Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (PUMALAG-KMP) on March 7. He is also a member of the regional council of the Samahang Magbubukid sa Timog Katagalugan (KASAMA-TK) and the KMP council.

Arias was driving his motorcycle on the way home to Barangay Tuy Baanan, Liliw, Laguna when he was blocked by armed men in Barangay Bubukal in Sta. Cruz town. The armed men, believed to be elements of the 1st Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army were aboard a van escorted by



the SM Development Corporation. SM also plans to build a floating casino on Freedom Island in the same city and is set to demolish houses in the area.

KADAMAY said this is but the start of its protest actions.

Meanwhile, Anakbayan-National Capital Region strongly condemned the violent dispersal of rallyists and media personnel during a protest action on April 18 at the SM Mall of Asia.

In a statement, Anakbayan said more than a hundred secu-

rity guards violently dispersed a lightning rally launched by more than 40 youth led by Anak-bayan-NCR.

The media covering the protest were shoved around and their cameras seized. The women protesters were also groped as they were being sent away.

The dispersal at the SM Mall of Asia was the most violent action taken against the youth activists who launched the “mall trooping.” The activity was also held at SM North Edsa in Quezon City and SM Megamall in Mandaluyong City. **AB**

NDFP condemns Gamara arrest, detention

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) Negotiating Panel strongly condemned the illegal arrest and detention of NDFP consultant Renante Gamara by armed men in civilian clothes on April 3 in Las Piñas City.

NDFP Negotiating Panel chair Ka Luis Jalandoni said no warrant of arrest was presented to Gamara. He and his companion Santiago Ballea were immediately handcuffed and brought to the PNP Custodial Center in Camp Crame.

Elements of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group