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Editorial

Junk EPIRA and end the regime that is a bane to the people

The unremitting power rate hikes are adding to the burdens of the long-suffering majority of the Filipino people. Since December, power companies have been demanding hefty increases in electricity bills, courting the people's rage.

Although the enormous power rate hikes have been temporarily put on hold through a Supreme Court order, such major price surges remain a threat to the people economically, not just now, but in the long term. For as long as the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA) exists, the people will always be at the mercy of the big comprador bourgeois conspiracy that controls the production, transmission and distribution of electricity.

The toiling masses are one in demanding the junking of EPIRA. In more than a decade of privatization under EPIRA, the Filipino people have been suffering from incessant power rate hikes. The upward spiral in the price of electricity is the result of the liberalization policy advanced by EPIRA.

Ever since EPIRA was implemented, power rates have risen without letup. In 2001, Meralco charged ₱4.87 per kilowatt hour (Kwh). By 2011, this had more than doubled to ₱10.30/Kwh. If Meralco's latest plans push through, its ₱4.15/Kwh power rate hike last December would result in an additional ₱900 per

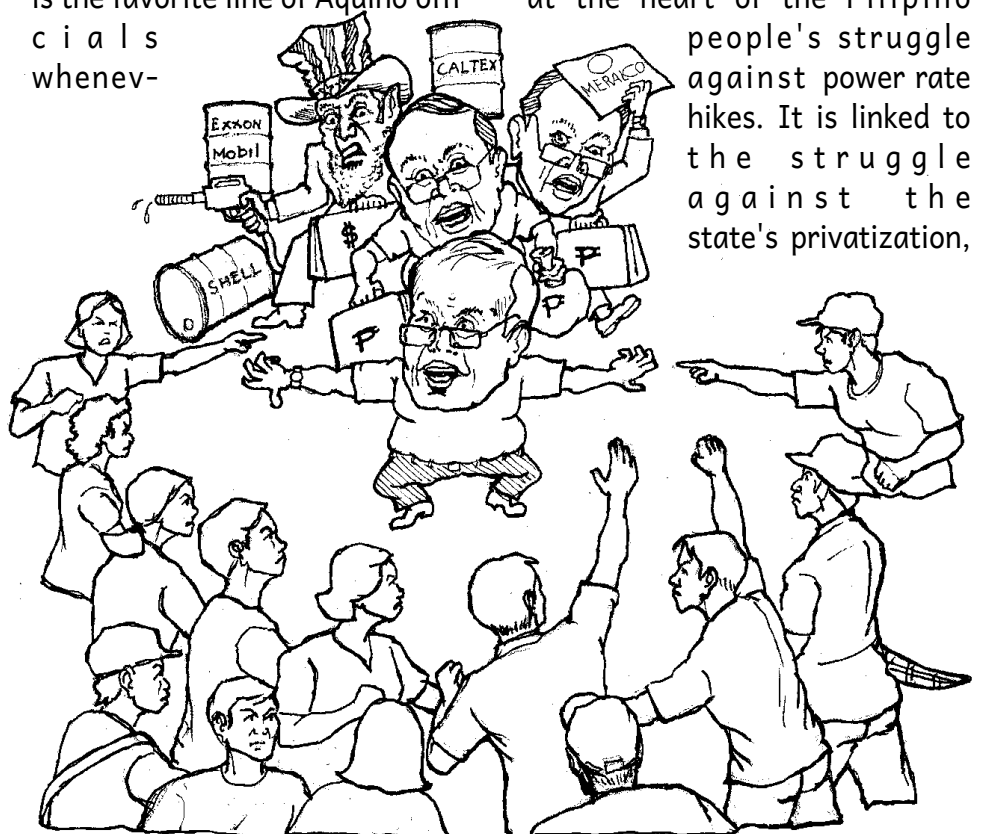
month in the bills of electric power consumers in the lowest rung. Power rates in the Philippines are among the ten highest in the world.

Nowadays, EPIRA is being invoked by the reactionary government to feign helplessness and to justify its refusal to undertake any steps to defend the people's interests against Meralco and other profit-hungry power companies. "We cannot do anything" is the favorite line of Aquino officials whenever

the public complains against Meralco's petitions to raise its fees.

Under EPIRA, the government is prohibited from investing in power generation. The price of electricity is completely in the hands of the big companies that lord it over the market. The Department of Energy and the Energy Regulatory Commission are useless when it comes to defending the interests and welfare of the Filipino people. In fact, these government agencies are merely being used by power companies to defend their rate hikes.

The struggle to junk EPIRA is at the heart of the Filipino people's struggle against power rate hikes. It is linked to the struggle against the state's privatization,



deregulation, liberalization and denationalization policies dictated by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

It is these policies that are behind the relentless hikes in the prices of oil, water, rice and other basic commodities. These policies have been bleeding the toiling masses. They kill local agriculture and industry, resulting in widespread unemployment and low workers' wages.

The US-Aquino regime must be held accountable for persistently foisting such onerous policies on the Filipino people. It must be taken to task for feigning helplessness in the face of the Filipino people's grave oppression in the hands of the profit-greedy big comprador bourgeoisie and their foreign big capitalist cohorts.

In the face of such grave hardships, it is just for the Filipino people to oust Aquino from power and put an end to his corruption-ridden, antipeople, pro-imperialist and brutal regime. AB

The big compradors who lord it over the power industry

Big comprador Henry Sy controls the business of power transmission or the process of transferring power from the power-generating plants to the distribution companies. The Sy family owns majority of the stocks of the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP). Meanwhile, 40% of the NGCP is held by State Grid Industry Development Ltd, a state-owned Chinese company. Since 2008, the NGCP has held a 50-year franchise on power transmission, earning ₱44.5 billion in November 2013. It had also earned ₱42.9 billion in 2012, all in accordance with ERC guidelines.

The five top power producers are Aboitiz Power Corp. with a generating capacity of 3,426 megawatts (Mw); the Lopez-owned First Philippine Holdings (2,150 Mw); Global Power Corporation owned by George Ty of Metrobank; and the Consunji-owned DMCI Power Corp. These five biggest power producers control almost 78% of the Philippines' entire power production.

Their effective control over power supplies and prices in the country runs counter to the claims made by EPIRA apologists that the law would encourage competition in the power gen-


eration business and drive electricity prices down. The handful of big capitalists who control power generation effectively control the price of electricity. Under EPIRA, the state has been stripped of any power or capability to effectively control or influence electricity prices.

Big capitalists likewise hold sway over power distribution. The biggest of these companies is Meralco, with its monopoly over power distribution in the entire National Capital Region and in Bulacan, Rizal, Cavite, parts of Pampanga and other areas. Meralco controls almost 60% of the power distribution market.

The majority of Meralco (42.6%) is owned by Manuel V. Pangilinan through Beacon Electric Asset Holdings, a company under Metro Pacific Investments Corp. which is in turn owned by First Pacific Company Ltd of the big comprador group Salim of Indonesia. The next biggest Meralco shares (27.1%) are controlled by the Gokongweis through JG Summit Holdings Inc.

Meralco's income increased 56.3% annually in the last six years. From ₱2.6 billion in 2008, its profits jumped to ₱16.3 billion in 2012 and is estimated to have grown further to ₱17.5 billion in 2013.

Power distribution in other

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areas is usually controlled by so-called electric cooperatives. There are about 120 cooperatives with a market share of 20%. These cooperatives are held by the balls by the big power producers controlling electricity prices. Many of these coopera-

tives are deep in debt. They are usually controlled by local politicians and often plagued by anomalies. One of the biggest, the Albay Electric Cooperative, is in the thick of a takeover by San Miguel Global Power (*see related article*). **AB**

Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco's reign over the power industry

Ever since Benigno Aquino III took power, his Uncle Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco's business empire has grown by leaps and bounds. Cojuangco is currently one of the biggest compradors dominating the power industry.

The Cojuangco-owned San Miguel Global Power, a subsidiary of San Miguel Corporation (SMC) is currently the biggest power producer in Luzon, and is close to overtaking the Aboitizes as the biggest in the Philippines. San Miguel Global supplied 28.1% of Luzon's electricity and 21.4% of the nation's electric power in 2013.

San Miguel owns the 1,000-megawatt power plant in Sual, Pangasinan, the 345-Mw multipurpose hydro plant in San Roque of the same province and the 1,200-Mw Ilijan Combined Cycle Power Plant in Batangas City. Cojuangco continues to pour in more investments into the power industry. He has begun building a coal-fired power plant (CFFP) in Sitio Colaman, Barangay Poblacion, Malita, Davao Occidental with a capacity of 600 Mw.

In a related development, Cojuangco has also invested in coal mining at the Daguma Range, where the biggest coal deposits in the Philippines are found (*see separate article*). He has three coal mines at the Daguma Range with deposits of 426 million metric tons capable of running a 2,000-Mw coal-fired power plant for 25 years.

Aside from power generation, Cojuangco has likewise invested in power distribution. His recent acquisition of the

ALECO cooperative in Albay is feared to be the first of many such takeovers.



Consumers oppose Cojuangco takeover of ALECO

More than a hundred consumer-members of the Albay Electric Cooperative (ALECO) rallied in front of its office on January 6 to oppose their cooperative's takeover by the San Miguel Energy Corporation (SMEC). Policemen attempted to drive them away with truncheons, causing injuries to several rallyists. It was the second protest action against the takeover.

The protest was launched to block the formal turnover of ALECO's management to SMEC on January 7. The consumers demanded that ALECO's public ownership be maintained. They likewise assailed the ₱2/Kwh hike in electricity rates last December that was made without duly informing and consulting the cooperative's consumers.

The consumers also assailed the secrecy that accompanied ALECO's concession agreement with SMEC. San Miguel has signed a 25- to 50-year concession agreement with ALECO. The protesters also opposed the dismissal of employees of good repute and the retention of corrupt employees.

Despite the hardships in store for Albayanos and the anomalous process, ALECO's privatization was supported by the governor, most politicians and the church. The privatization was accomplished in accordance with EPIRA. Talk is rife that other cooperatives in Bicol are set to be acquired by Cojuangco following an agreement with other big compradors.

Under these circumstances, the Albayanos have no other recourse but to rely on their own strength to put a stop to San Miguel Corporation's sinister plans. The protesting consumers said they were taking back ALECO because they are its rightful owners and it is up to them to decide how the cooperative should be rehabilitated. **AB**

Daguma mining project is baleful to the people

The Daguma Coal Project (DCP) is a bane to the people. Located at the Daguma Range which links the provinces of Sarangani, South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and part of Maguindanao, it is destructive to the reserve watershed and source of irrigation water of Allah Valley in South Cotabato.

Aside from the deleterious effects of coal mining on the environment and the farmers' health and livelihoods, it is sure to cause the dislocation of thousands of Lumad and peasant families in the affected areas.

Daguma Agro-Minerals Inc. (DAMI), which began its operations in November 2002 covers seven coal blocks of up to 7,000 hectares each. San Miguel Energy Corp. (SMEC) bought DAMI and Bonanza Energy Resources Inc. for \$25 million. SMEC intensified its control over coal mining when it later bought Sultan Energy Philippines Corp. (SEPC) for \$14.5 million. SEPC covers coal mines in Sultan Kudarat and South Cotabato.

SMEC currently controls 100% of the entire DCP which

has an estimated 426 million metric tons of coal deposits. The DCP covers a land area of 17,000 hectares which includes the ancestral lands of the T'boli, settlers' farms and 19,000 hectares of forest land of the Tasaday.

The Department of Energy supports the destructive project through Presidential Decree 972 as amended by PD 1174 or the Coal Development Act of 1976. The Marcos dictatorship era law has been further strengthened under the US-Aquino regime, which has opened the country's resources to plundering local and foreign investors.

Aside from its coal mining interests, SMEC plans to buy copper, gold and silver mines like the Tribal Mining Corp. (TMC) of Canada; Kiamba

Mining Corp (KMC); Hirsch Mining and Development Corp.; and the Tao Mohin Resources Corp.

Ever since the coal mining operations were begun two years ago, the 27th IB has been conducting military operations without letup to defend the mines and violently suppress the struggle of the T'boli and the farmer-settlers. Antimining groups and farmers' associations are accused of supporting the New People's Army and are constantly being intimidated by mining company guards and soldiers on patrol. The 27th IB likewise serves as mercenary guards of Glencore-Xstrata-SMI, another company engaged in destructive mining in South Cotabato.

The 27th IB's peace and development teams (PDT) have forcefully built a detachment near the civilian community of Sitio Tasaday Blit. They have restricted the volume of food that residents could buy and prohibited them from conducting assemblies. The Lumad have also been forbidden to hunt, which is one of their sources of livelihood. The military has been recruiting Lumad to join the CAFGU and other paramilitary groups, with no other objective than to destroy the people's unity against large-scale mining.

One example is Task Force 73, an elite fascist group whose task is to defend the big mining companies by attacking antimining forces and suppressing the people's struggle, especially at Lake Sebu and T'boli. AB



Big compradors cash in on Mindanao "power crisis"

Since 2012, the people of Mindanao have had to suffer frequent two- to four-hour brownouts which have caused major disruptions in their lives and in the island's economy. In connivance with the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP) owned by Henry Sy, the Aquino regime has been claiming that a shortfall in power production has necessitated these brownouts.

Aquino and the NGCP's claims have been roundly condemned by the people and have been met with protests even from local politicians. Mindanaoans refuse to believe such excuses, since some of the biggest power plants can be found in the island, including the Agus-Pulangi hydropower complex and the various geothermal plants at Mt. Apo. Some of these plants even have reserve power but are not being operated at full capacity.

Aquino's justifications are hard to accept, since his regime has not given priority to ensuring that power facilities are cheaply and efficiently operated. Instead of seeing to their rehabilitation, the regime has allowed state-owned power plants to rot and diminish in capacity. For instance, the Agus-Pulangi plant now only has a capacity of 570 Mw from the original 1,000 Mw.

In fact, the Aquino regime and the big compradors have merely been using this so-called crisis to justify coal mining and the construction of polluting coal-fired power plants (CFPP). In this regard, Aquino had even speciously declared that hydroelectric power was no longer reliable because rainfall patterns had changed in the area.

The Department of Energy's Power Development Program has targeted the generation of an additional 850 Mw of capacity from Mindanao power plants by 2014.

There are four major pending coal-fired power plant projects in the island. The two biggest, costing US\$450 million, will be built by the Alcantara-owned Conal Holdings Corp. and will have a capacity of 200 Mw. Both will be built in Far South Mindanao. A third will be built by the San Miguel Energy Corp. Since 2006, a CFPP has been op-

erating in Villanueva, Misamis Oriental with a generating capacity of 232 Mw. Last October, construction began on what is currently the biggest CFPP in Mindanao, the 300-Mw Therma South Inc. plant in Toril District, Davao City.

The construction of more CFPPs is being done not to service the 600 barangays who either lack electricity or have not yet been supplied with electric power, but to supply energy to big foreign mining companies and plantations.

There is widespread opposition to CFPPs due to their environmentally deleterious effects. Aside from the destruction wrought on vast portions of the uplands due to mining for coal to fuel the plants, they also cause massive air pollution. CFPPs have been shut down in the US and Europe due to the pollution caused by the old and outmoded technology they utilize.^{AB}

Much of the data in this and the three previous articles were sourced from research conducted by the staff of Asdang, the revolutionary mass paper of Far South Mindanao Region.

Production in the uplands

The *ekonomiyang sarang sa kaugalingon ug panggubat* (ESKP) or self-reliant war economy forms part of the New People's Army's (NPA) economic work in the upland areas of North-eastern Mindanao Region (NEMR). As the name suggests, ESKP aims to develop the livelihood of the masses in the uplands both for their welfare and the advance of people's war. As of now, ESKP is widespread in NEMR's highlands, where more than 4,000 families have been given land to till for

free.

ESKP is being implemented amid the severe poverty of the Lumad and settler masses after the onslaught of decades of large-scale logging in the upland forests. The masses either became exploited workers in logging companies or engaged in small-scale logging. Farming became minimal or was abandoned altogether, leading to widespread hunger and disease.

Lingkawas, the revolutionary mass paper in

NEMR published a case study of how ESKP was developed in an upland community.

The process began in April 2012, when Red fighters found a small clan of farmers comprising two households with seven individuals. They planted rice on two parcels of land, aside from a few other crops. But their produce was hardly sufficient for their food and other needs.

The comrades organized them into a *banwa* or small sub-village and helped them develop their farms.

By October, their *banwa* became part of a broader campaign to build the ESKP in the locality. The head of the clan convinced his children to live and farm in the area. Thus, from only two households, the *banwa* grew to seven households where 11 families consisting of 27 individuals lived.

In accordance with the ESKP orientation, the members of the *banwa* pooled their labor to open new farms. From two small parcels of riceland, they opened nine parcels comprising nine hectares. Aside from rice, they added root crops and some vegetables. At that time, the comrades assisted them by

giving them some cash to buy rice, so they could have something to eat while building their farms.

The people met with some trials while building the ESKP. They had just finished planting rice in November 2012 when the rain poured in torrents and typhoon Pablo struck. This rotted their root crops, which should have served as their staple while they waited for their rice and corn harvests. It was the corn that they had already harvested that tided them over during the rainy season until January 2013. With this experience, they decided to always plant corn so they could have food on stock during the rainy months.

Meanwhile, the ESKP had slowly transformed the scenery at the *banwa*. In the middle of the forest were expansive farms full of the green and newly sprouted leaves of the masses' crops.

It was not only in the farms where the seeds the revolution had planted were bearing fruit. Advanced leaders and activists

peasants with only six hours to work. Second, their harvests were still small. Third, the farmers still relied on the old practice of clearing patches of forest land every planting season in order to open new farms. This rapidly denudes the forest. Fourth, the broadcast method was still being used to plant rice, which wasted too many seeds. This was explained to the farmers, and appropriate measures were taken.

The result, the next harvest yielded 100 sacks of palay, from five sacks of seeds planted in November 2012.

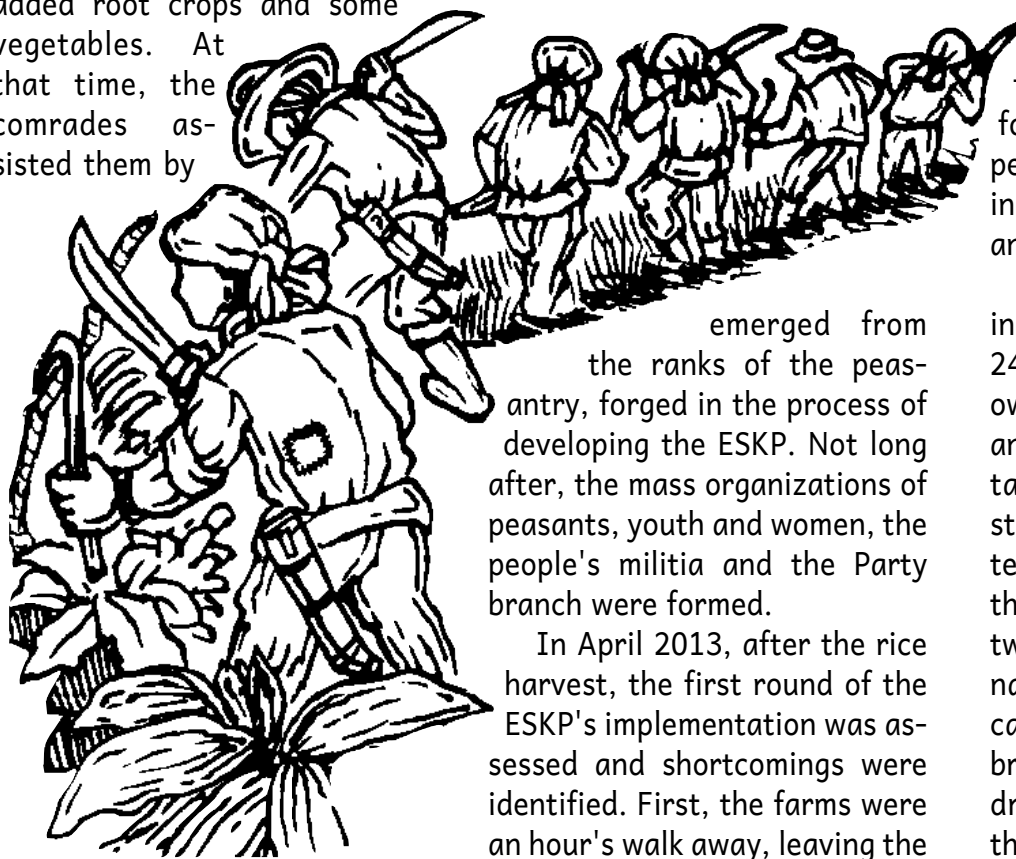
Nonetheless, the harvest was still too low and sufficient only for 30 days' consumption. This was because their farms were too small. They decided to expand their farms to 30-40 hectares and plant them not only to rice and corn, but to sweet potato, other root crops, fruits and vegetables. They reckoned that in the next harvest, they would have a surplus.

They also determined that the keys to a bountiful harvest were effective leadership, planned agriculture and exchange of labor. Thus, when they planted corn, they formed two work groups of 12 persons each. They cooperated in opening both their communal and individual farms.

And when they planted rice in October 2013, they opened 24 parcels. The youth had their own communal farm. The peasants expanded their sweet potato patch, planting 9,100 stems. They paid particular attention to sweet potato because the crop could survive for up to two years without much maintenance. This is important because of the possibility that brutal military operations could drive them temporarily from their communities. In any case,

emerged from the ranks of the peasantry, forged in the process of developing the ESKP. Not long after, the mass organizations of peasants, youth and women, the people's militia and the Party branch were formed.

In April 2013, after the rice harvest, the first round of the ESKP's implementation was assessed and shortcomings were identified. First, the farms were an hour's walk away, leaving the



the could still eat sweet potato even if their other crops become casualties of militarization.

Along with launching the second round of ESKP, they also launched a cultural campaign. The youth were given the Basic Orientation on Art and Literature. After the course, they staged a cultural presentation, with the ESKP as theme. Their parents fully enjoyed their children's vibrance and newly found skills.

There has been a noticeable improvement in the lives of the masses in the *banwa* since the ESKP was built. With a sure source of food, they have grown healthy and gotten sick less often.

Their cooperation has enabled them to finish land preparation more quickly, leaving them with more time to pursue their political tasks. They are able to hold weekly meetings and cultural activities. When there are enemy movements, the people's militia automatically patrols the *banwa's* surroundings. They now have time to haul supplies for the NPA.

This experience has shown that the ESKP is an effective way of rapidly building and consolidating revolutionary bases in the uplands. The ESKP serves as a means not only of improving the masses' livelihood, but their political consciousness as well. From a state of backwardness, the ESKP has comprehensively transformed upland communities into relatively advanced revolutionary bases. It has given the masses a serious reason to take political action to defend both their welfare and the revolution. AB

Production platoon: Partner in building guerrilla bases

In one of Southern Mindanao's subregions, the production platoon serves as one of the machineries being used to build and invigorate guerrilla bases. It is a special platoon of the New People's Army (NPA) whose particular role is to ensure that the production programs of barrio revolutionary committees (BRC) and full-fledged mass organizations are implemented.

The production platoon is composed of fulltime NPA members, most of whom come from the people's militia and local Party branch. Aside from their rifles, the platoon members always carry as their secondary weapon their *lagaraw*—long single-edged machetes with bent tips usually used to clear fields and underbrush. They help build communal farms and advance the practice of mutual exchange of labor. They are also active in encouraging communities to maintain vegetable patches in every yard.

Since the platoon was formed six months ago, it has built a six-hectare demonstration farm in order to teach the masses progressive farming techniques such as multi-cropping and organic farming. It has also planted up to 20 hectares of land to banana, pineapple, corn, sweet potato, cassava and fruit trees like durian, mangosteen and marang.

Up to 130 farmers helped in building the first demonstration farm. Animal dispersal is also practiced in the communal farms.

After tilling and planting the demonstration farm, the platoon transferred its management to the Pambansang Katipunan ng Magbubukid (PKM).

The revolutionary government also utilizes the production platoon to provide services to the masses, such as building schools. Its members have also

played a major role in revitalizing mass organizations through sustained production activities, which is a key factor in advancing other campaigns and in building and operating organs of political power.

Nonetheless, this doesn't mean that it is only the production platoon that engages in production. It has been a practice in the entire region for other NPA platoons to purposely allot time for production and to open farms in every place they base themselves in. Whenever there are activities such as big gatherings for consolidation, they allot 30 minutes a day for production. The only difference is that the production platoon's task puts particular stress on sustained production work.

On the other hand, the production platoon is not limited to production work. From time to time, it also launches tactical offensives and conducts propaganda work, especially on the importance of building a self-reliant economy and developing economic work for people's war as the framework of the democratic people's government's current economic work.

It also engages in education work. Ideological, political and organizational work is alive within the platoon, with the Party branch exercising dynamic leadership. Wherever its work takes it, the production platoon always leaves behind the seeds it has sown. AB

Vitality, the youth's contribution to the revolution

Twenty-five members of a Kabataang Makabayan cultural group staged a performance during the CPP's 45th anniversary celebration in a subregion of Southern Mindanao. Demonstrating their enthusiasm, agility and cleverness, they clearly delivered the message of revolution through acting, song and dance. Their movements provided a glimpse of the revolution's vibrant future.

The group, composed of youth ranging in age from 15 to 22, was formed in mid-2013. They are currently busy performing in various places. Their membership is voluntary and has the blessings of their parents who are usually members of revolutionary mass organizations themselves.

Aside from performing in schools, plazas and evacuation centers, they also teach topics under the Pambansang Demokratikong Paaralan or PADEPA.

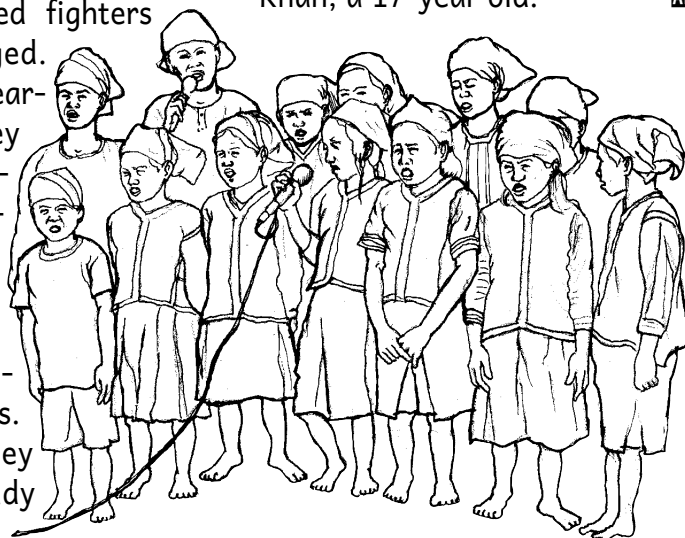
They not only teach by lecturing. They stage plays, recite poetry and present songs to help the students grasp the topics being discussed. This is a highly effective method, especially for peasants who do not know how to read and write or find it difficult to do so.

Courses also run more quickly. Topics that become long-drawn when taught through lectures are shortened when lectures are augmented by plays, songs and poems. This method is also a big help especially to the Lumad masses because the language gap is bridged through a simple play or presentation. Some examples are plays depicting the history of the Philippine revolution, and human rights abuses perpetrated by the military and big foreign plantations and mining companies.

From the time they become politically conscious to the time

they provide education and engage in cultural work, the young cultural workers' capabilities and talents will have been honed for the revolution. Leaders and potential cadres, instructors and Red fighters will have emerged.

Because of such early training, they are able to perform revolutionary tasks even before they reach the minimum age of 18 years to become Red fighters. By that age, they will have already



learned a lot and added to their capabilities. They will have become ready to enrich their abilities further, this time in the theater of war.

Their usual problems are those that come naturally with youth. "Of course, we sometimes miss our parents and siblings. This is a normal part of the struggle. Sometimes, decadent culture beckons, but we are able to overcome this for the masses," explains Ron, a 15-year old leader. "When I turn 18, I will join my elder sister in the Red army," adds Khan, a 17-year old. **AB**

6 soldiers killed, 12 wounded in Agusan del Sur

Six 26th IB troopers were killed and 12 wounded in back to back tactical offensives launched in San Luis, Agusan del Sur by Red fighters under the Western Agusan del Norte-Agusan del Sur Subregional Command of the New People's Army (NPA) on January 8 and 9. There were no casualties on the NPA side.

The 26th IB suffered five wounded in a harassment operation conducted by NPA guerrillas while the soldiers were climbing a cliff beside the Mahaba River at Km. 27, Side 2, Barangay Mahayahay at exactly 11:35 a.m. of January 8. The day after, six other soldiers from the same battalion were killed and four others wounded when an NPA team rained bullets on the rear of a six-by-six truck the troopers were riding as the vehicle navigated a pothole-riddled road around 2 a.m. at Km. 5, Barangay Balit.

The 26th IB troops scoured the town's hinterland barangays

right after the revolutionary movement launched in San Luis the biggest celebration in Mindanao of the 45th anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines' reestablishment. This, despite the fact that the suspension of offensive military operations (SOMO) declared by the AFP on December 21 was not supposed to end till January 15. The 26th IB also set up a checkpoint near its camp at the neighboring town of Talacogon, where they disrupted the residents' preparations to celebrate the coming New Year and violated the people's right to free movement.

The soldiers targeted by the guerrillas' harassment operations had already been conducting military operations for a week and were tired and on the way back to their camp. Up to 110 soldiers divided into two columns had entered villages in San Luis as early as January 2. Sixty-eight soldiers entered Barangay San Pedro and the 42 others entered through Km. 21 in Barangay Don Alejandro.

Despite the AFP's much-vaunted SOMO, the military has been relentlessly conducting combat operations in San Luis; in San Fernando and Impasug-ong, Bukidnon; and in Gingoog, Claveria and Binuangan, Misamis Oriental. **AB**

Amid the devastation, the AFP's repressive operations continue in Samar

The AFP has been launching repressive campaigns and offensive operations without letup against the people and their army conducting relief operations in the island's most affected barangays. On December 11 and 12, 8th ID forces attacked Red fighters in Oras, Eastern Samar, forcing the NPA to mount an active defense. Five were killed and four were wounded on the military side.

On November 25, the 87th IB attacked an NPA camp in Barangay Calundan, San Jorge, Samar. The soldiers captured and filed trumped-up charges against a married couple, Renato Baleros and Vangie Colinayo, who were coordinating relief and rehabilitation operations in the area. Earlier, on November 21, military agents likewise arrested Romulo Grabillo, a 40-year old Red fighter, in Barangay Tag-alang, Marabut, Samar and filed false charges against him in court. Grabillo was then visiting his family who were among those most severely affected by typhoon Yolanda.

Meanwhile, the AFP has also been conducting psywar operations in Leyte to portray the NPA as terrorists amid the widespread devastation. Troops under the 19th IB staged a mock encounter along the border of Barangays Mahayag and Libertad in Ormoc City on December 27, and later claimed it to be an NPA attack within the ceasefire period declared by the revolutionary forces in Eastern Visayas.

The CPP-EV announced on January 15 the lifting of the NPA's two-month unilateral ceasefire in the region. **AB**

For typhoon Yolanda victims:

Enough is enough!

The hundreds of thousands of super-typhoon Yolanda victims are completely fed up after two months of suffering the Aquino government's snail-paced, chaotic and anomaly-ridden relief and rehabilitation program.

Yolanda victims demanded in a January 14 petition to the Aquino government the immediate grant of ₱40,000 in financial assistance to each affected family. They said that since they were in great need, the government should release the funds even before February 14. The petition was signed by more than 10,000 victims who had organized themselves into the "Alyansa han mga Biktima han Bagyo Yolanda ha Tacloban" (ABBAT) or Alliance of Typhoon Yolanda's Victims in Tacloban.

Days before, members of the Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (KADAMAY) launched protest actions on January 8 in Quezon City, Roxas City and Kalibo, Aklan to demand that the Aquino regime make good on its promised assistance to Yolanda victims.

According to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council's official tally, there were at least 6,201 dead, 1,785 missing and 28,628 injured as of January 7. Some 16 million people have been affected in 591 towns and 57 cities in 44 provinces, with half of the more than 8,000 feared dead coming from Leyte.

The victims complained that they have been suffering severely since typhoon Yolanda struck the country on November 8. They lost their homes and jobs, they have gone hungry and fall-

en victim to diseases. Their children have yet to resume their schooling.

Although they know that there are funds intended for the victims, they have no idea what direction the government's rehabilitation program is taking.

Said Patrick Escalona, one of ABBAT's leaders, the financial assistance they are demanding is barely enough for two months' expenses of a family of six on clothes, housing, transportation, medical needs and education, among others. But because the government has failed to control the prices of basic commodities (which have risen 50-100% in Tacloban), an immediate grant of ₱40,000 will barely last a month.

The victims condemned the slow and un-systematic delivery of food and "shelter relief kits." Thousands of families still do not have decent shelter because they lack funds to buy materials to rebuild their ruined houses.

They likewise opposed the Aquino government's policy of prohibiting residents from returning to their houses near the coastal areas.

On January 8, KADAMAY also rallied in front of the Aquino family's house at Times Street, Quezon City.

In Iloilo City, KADAMAY-Panay-Guimaras chapter chair Maura Abellon said whatever aid was coming in for fisherfolk and the hundreds of thousands who had been rendered homeless in Panay had all been sourced from private and foreign organizations. The victims have yet to receive the ₱10,000 to ₱30,000 housing assistance promised for every affected family.

Meanwhile, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) supported the Filipino people's appeal to foreign governments and international relief and finance agencies willing to help the millions of victims of super typhoon Yolanda and other calamities not to course their assistance through the Aquino government. Instead, they should directly coordinate with organizations conducting rehabilitation operations on the ground.

International agencies had recently discovered that the bunkhouses constructed by the Aquino regime to serve as temporary shelters for the victims were substandard and overpriced. AB

Peasant killed in Pampanga shooting

A farmer was killed in a new round of violence at Hacienda Dolores, Porac, Pampanga. In Valenzuela City, a fisherfolk organizer undergoing medical treatment for a serious ailment was illegally arrested with his wife.

Pampanga. Farmer Arman Padino, 33, died a day after he and two others were shot by guards and armed goons of Leonardo-Lachenal Holdings Inc. (LHI) in Barangay Hacienda Dolores in Porac town. The bloody incident took place on the morning of January 12 while Padino, Noel Tumali and his son Reynold were on the way to their farms. Padino was shot in the head with a cal .45 pistol. The Tumalis, both members of the Aniban ng Nagkakaisang Mamanayan sa Hacienda Dolores (Aniban) were seriously wounded.

Meanwhile, the police arrested Antonio Tolentino, village chair of Barangay Hacienda Dolores. He is currently detained at the Porac police headquarters.

Close to a hundred families are fighting plans to evict them from the estate which their forebears had been tilling as far back as 1835.

This has led to a pattern of shootings and harassment at the hacienda that has already victimized three other farmers. On January 8, policemen arrested Ener Tolentino as he was going to his farm. On December 6, Jessel Orgas was wounded after a grenade was lobbed at his house. Modesto Posadas escaped an attempt on his life by armed men.

Several entities have been laying claim to Hacienda Dolores. During the Marcos dictatorship, it was claimed by the Puyat family; in 1999 by the Dayrit family; by LHI in 2005 (298 hectares); by FL Property Management Corp. (456 hectares); and Ayala Land (1,000 hectares).

Valenzuela City. Joel Almonte, 56 and his wife Gloria Pritargue Almonte, 52 were illegally arrested on the night of January 9 by elements of the PNP-Intelligence Group who took them by force from their apartment.

The Almontes are activists and organizers of fisherfolk in Laguna. They had been living temporarily in Valenzuela because Joel Almonte was undergoing treatment for diabetes complications which have made it difficult for him to walk. The couple are currently detained at Camp Vicente Lim in Canlubang, Laguna.

Progressives oppose hike in SSS, Philhealth contributions

The Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) petitioned the Supreme Court on January 10 to issue a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) on the Social Security System's (SSS) implementation of higher contributions from its members starting this year. KMU-Southern Mindanao also protested in front of the SSS office in Davao City on January 8.

The KMU wants to stop the 0.6% hike in SSS contributions, which will mean a deduction of at least ₱25 in the monthly pay of minimum wage earners. To be affected by the order are 30 million SSS members and 871,642 employers. The KMU said this was an added burden on the workers from the Aquino regime which wants to fleece them and line the pockets of capitalists and bureaucrats. The KMU added that the SSS does not need to raise its members' contributions because it already has a very huge fund, and its executives had even benefited from fat bonuses last year.

The KMU also assailed the regime for allowing

the SSS hike despite people's protests against rising prices of goods and services.

Meanwhile, migrant workers protested at the Philippine consulate in Hongkong on January 5 to oppose plans by the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (Philhealth) to hike contributions. MIGRANTE-Hongkong charged that the 100% hike in Philhealth premium contributions was illegal in the absence of an order from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration to collect contributions from overseas Filipino workers (OFW). They said that instead of imposing the hike, the government should raise its budgetary allocations for health and other basic services.

Philhealth raised the premiums of OFWs from ₱1,200 to ₱2,400 this year. It had earlier raised it from ₱900 to ₱1,200 in 2012. Migrants in the United Arab Emirates have also announced that they would be launching a similar mass action against the hike. AB