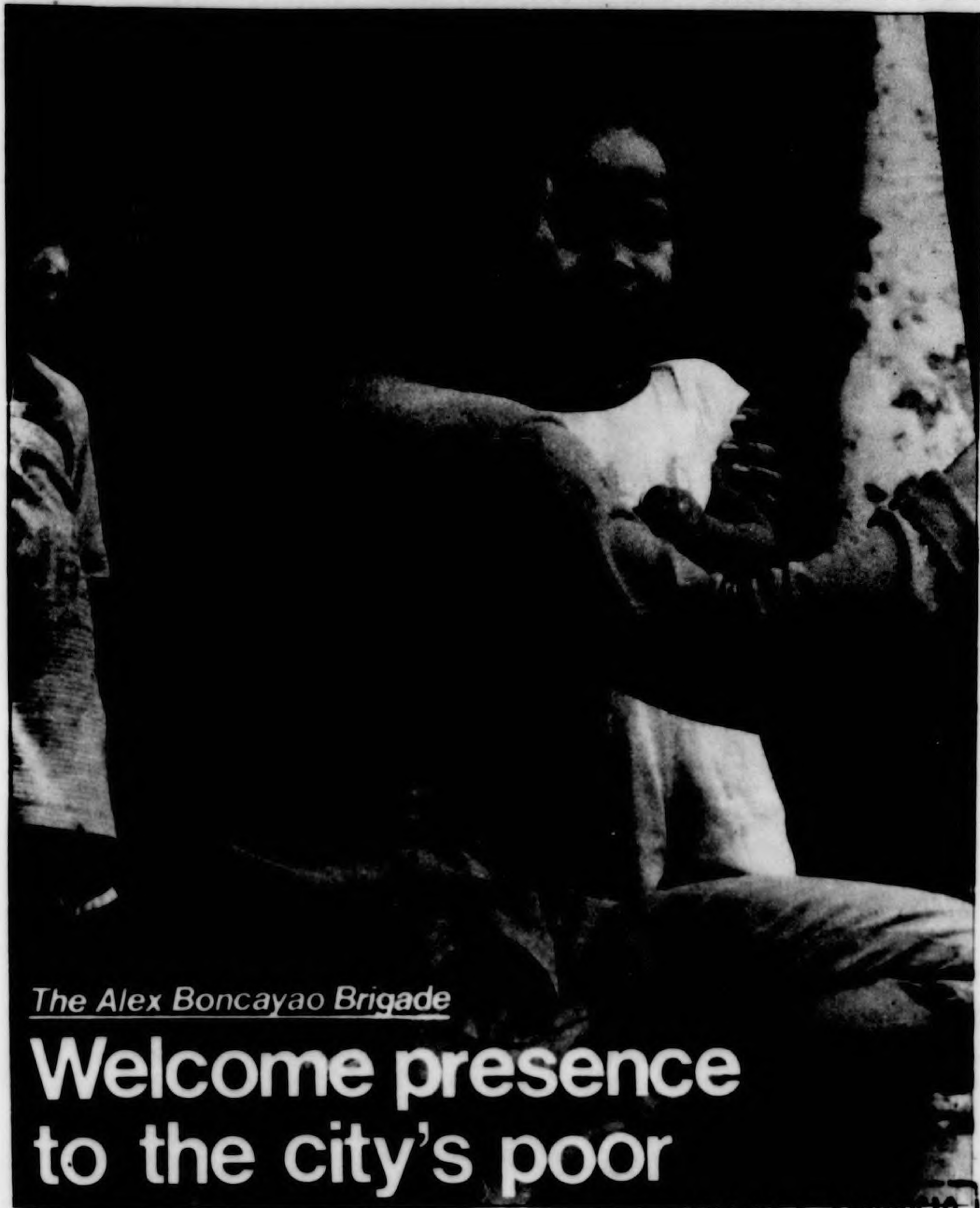


34/04.13

# LIBERATION

VOL. XV NO. 3 PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE PHILIPPINES JUNE-JULY 1987 P3.00



The Alex Boncayao Brigade

**Welcome presence  
to the city's poor**

**DANTE L. AMBRUSTO  
KOLEKSYON**

# Facing the facts

There is an old English adage which says: "Facts are stubborn things."

Indeed, our own experience with the US-Aquino regime shows they are. The most recent policies and actions of the government reveal its blanket adherence to the interests of US imperialism and those of the big comprador and big landlord classes. For the vast majority of the people, it leaves nothing more than crumbs. As one labor leader so aptly put it: "Barya-barya lang."

There is no more revealing contrast than in the regime's recent economic policies. Let us look at a few facts.

**Fact one.** When labor appealed to government to grant a P10 across-the-board wage increase this May 1, the "liberal" government turned them down flat. This, despite the fact that the rise in the cost of living since the last wage increase would have justified at least a P15 increase in the minimum daily wage.

**Fact two.** When the teachers, especially those in the public schools, launched a series of strikes demanding long-promised increases in pay and the government's compliance with benefits that had long been delayed, they were left with still more promises, accompanied by threats of dismissal and administrative sanctions.

**Fact three.** When the farmers marched to Malacanang to demand a comprehensive land reform program, they were mercilessly gunned down, resulting in the massacre of 18 peasants and activists, right at the doorstep of Malacanang. In order to appease the popular indignation that followed, the "liberal" regime promised to implement a genuine agrarian reform program that would cover all lands, regardless of crop and on terms favorable to the mainly peasant population of the Philippine countryside.

Let us review the other side of the balance sheet.

**Fact four.** Despite protests from a wide multi-sectoral section of the population, the Aquino government, at the prodding of US economic policy-makers and their employers in the World Bank, decided not only to continue Marcos' discredited policy of liberalizing imports, but even accelerated it - even if such a policy would result in the liquidation of hundreds of small- and medium-scale Filipino enterprises, with the concomitant increase in the number of workers laid off.

**Fact five.** The Aquino government has decided to pay the international usurer banks, like Citibank and Manufacturers' Hanover Bank, "every last cent" of the country's dubious \$28.2 billion foreign debt, even if a huge percentage of that debt was illegally contracted for by the Marcos regime in collusion with the country's foreign creditors. As a result of this

policy, the Filipino people, without benefit of any public hearing, will now have to continue shouldering interest and principal payments that will run to more than \$21 billion over the next five years, averaging some 60% of export earnings and 35%-40% of the yearly national budget.

In the same breath, the Aquino government tells the people it has *no funds* for land reform and for the expansion of education and health services; nor for subsidizing increased workers' wages and teachers' salaries.

**Fact six.** The Aquino government has just signed a new Investments Code whose attraction for foreign investors lies mainly in 1) increasing their capacity to build and expand their monopoly positions in strategic sectors of the economy such as energy, banking, natural resources, communications and the like; and 2) guaranteeing low labor cost and a forced climate of industrial peace through intensified worker repression.

As if these were not enough, the government grants foreign investors tax holidays and fringe benefits that not even the Marcos dictatorship provided, partly for fear of popular reaction. The Aquino regime has no such qualms, because it prides itself on being "popular."

**Fact seven.** Reneging on its grandiose promises in the wake of the Mendiola Massacre in January, the Aquino regime, at the prodding of big comprador and big landlord interests, is now ready to launch its land reform program, which, by its coverage, the length of time that landlords are allowed to comply, and the exorbitant cost to peasants - can only be the landlords' version of agrarian reform and necessarily, by its tokenism, becomes another of the regime's counter-insurgency weapons.

**Fact eight.** At the behest of the foreign oil companies, Mrs. Aquino signed Executive Order No. 137 in February of this year, authorizing the oil firms to collect against the Oil Price Stabilization Fund (OPSF) at the rate of P650 million a month, retroactive to January 26, 1986. It is this depletion of the OPSF that government now cites as one of the main reasons for a new round of oil price increases, again at the expense of the general public.

Facts are indeed stubborn things. Despite its pretensions to populism, the US-Aquino regime has, in fact, shown itself to be anti-national and anti-people.

But there is one more unalterable historical fact: That reactionary regimes which persist not only in perpetuating foreign and feudal interests at the people's expense, but do so in the most ruthless manner, are *overthrown* by relentless people's struggles. No amount of rationalization by opportunists can change this fact.

## IN THIS ISSUE

Cover: Urban poor children getting a portion

**Cover story:** The military's black propaganda has consistently maligned the Alex Boncayao Brigade (ABB), the NPA unit operating in Metro Manila. In this issue, *LIB* presents the ABB from the eyes of the masses in their partisan bases.

**EDITORIAL** ..... 2

**COVER STORY**  
"The sparrows have built their nest in the city" ..... 3

**MAINSTREAM**  
Uncovering a charade in the Cordillera ..... 6  
"We are committed to promote

Cordillera culture" ..... 8

People's protection ..... 8

Hitting the enemy ..... 10

**SPARKS** ..... 11

**VIEWPOINT**  
Proposals for failure ..... 12

**CULTURAL**  
Bladed Poems ..... 14

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDF) serves as the organizational framework and channel for the unity, cooperation, and coordination of all anti-imperialist and democratic forces in the Philippines and for progressive Filipinos and solidarity groups abroad. It traces its beginnings to the establishment of the Preparatory Commission for the National Democratic Front on April 24, 1972. *LIBERATION* is the official publication of the NDF.

# Building nests in the city

NPA's Alex Boncayao Brigade flourishes in partisan bases within Metro Manila

The way to the tiny, dilapidated shack had been a maze of narrow, winding alleys. Everywhere, the path was lined with people who momentarily stopped their business to meet our eyes with a knowing, friendly gaze. Others nodded to us, as if in recognition, despite our being strangers to each other.

It was a warm, June morning, and we were in the heart of an NPA partisan base in the metropolis. Located in an urban poor community north of Manila, it was where we met Dong, 38, a former construction worker; Noel, 26, a full-time community organizer; Sarah, 25, a member of the local MAKIBAKA (Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan) chapter, who was nursing her eight-month-old baby; Mike, 22, one of the leaders of the Kabataang Makabayan (KM) in the neighborhood; and Tessie, 33, a member of the partisans' Armed Organizing Team (AOT).

Outside the shack, a team made their rounds to ensure the security of the group that had gathered. People in the surrounding houses also kept a sharp eye for suspicious characters. "Papaano tayo matutuntun ng Eagles Squad (a special police team tasked to go after the partisans) dito, e hindi pa sinosona ang lugar, alam na natin," said Mike.

It was a comforting thought, because the newspapers that week had been littered with news of zoning raids against communities such as this, where scores of residents had been rounded up, mauled and jailed. Some, who were still missing, may have already been salvaged.

The raids were another one of the police and military's desperate hit or miss moves, which invariably failed to nail the real partisans. The raids only managed to terrorize innocent folk.

But it was clear from what we had seen that the raids had not diminished the community's warm support for the partisans and the revolutionary underground.

## Beginnings

"Before the first organizers from

the underground came to this community, you would often see drunken brawls. Men would gamble away their meager earnings, drink their heads off and then go home broke. *Kaya mada-las din ang away ng mag-asawa,*" said Dong, who joined the partisans this year.

"The youth were into many vices — drugs, drinking and that sort of thing."

organizers from the NDF, changes for the better slowly inched their way into the community.

Dong was among four men who were befriended in the early '80s by Ka Mark, a community organizer. Born in Samar, Dong and his family moved to the city when he was barely three years old. Here, they settled, along with other migrant families in an urban poor community that grew over the years.

By the time Dong was 17, he had dropped out of school and become a construction worker like his father and grandfather before him. Today, his sturdy limbs and bronzed skin are the marks of his long years of laboring under the hot sun in construction sites.

But even before Ka Mark had talked to him, Dong had already known something about the underground movement and its goals. His wife, also a Samarena, has two brothers in the NPA. He also knew that a cousin of his was a full-time organizer.

There were occasions during the First Quarter Storm when Dong would stop for a while to watch the rallies on his way home from work. "Tagahanga ako ng mga ispiker sa rally. May pag-unawa na rin ako sa mga sinasabi nila, kaya noong nagkaroon ng malaking transport strike bago ideklara ang martial law, hindi ako nagalit kahit napilitan akong maglakad mula Buendia hanggang Caloocan. Napagod ako pero naintindihan ko kung bakit nag-aklas ang mga drayber."

Dong and his three other companions formed the first Grupong Tagapag-ugnay (contact group) in their area. After

a series of study courses on the nature and goals of the revolution, they were transformed into an organizing group whose task was to study conditions in the area and recruit more community residents into the underground.

From their group of four, the number of underground activists increased severalfold. An organizing committee was set up to oversee the various tasks undertaken by the different mass activists in the area.



Scenes from a partisan base: MAKIBAKA member with tots (above); doing the laundry (left); ABB guerrillas (below)



added Mike, the KM organizer. "Mahirap na nga ang buhay, magulo pa. Kanya-kanya ring lakad ang mga tao. Walang direksyon. Walang pagkakaisa."

But it was the children who often bore the brunt of brutal poverty. Sarah, the MAKIBAKA activist, recalls malnourished babies being forced to swallow rice because there was no milk, and workers' children dying after a short bout with chills and fever.

With the entry of community or-

It was at this point that Ka Mark admitted to Dong and some members of the underground unit that he was a member of an Armed Organizing Team of the NPA whose job was to prepare the community to become a partisan base.

#### Helping the masses

"Nang naibukas na sa mga tao ang mga armado, naging napakainit ng pagtanggap sa kanila," recalls Tessie. "Ang daming nagpahayag ng kagustuhang lumipat sa Hukbo."

That the organized masses in the area would welcome the coming of the partisans to their community was not surprising. For it was they themselves who were witness to the changes that had taken place since.

"Nang mapaliwanagan namin ang mga tao tungkol sa ugat ng kanilang problema, at sa pangangailangan ng armadong pakikibaka, hindi naging mahirap para sa kanilang unawain ito. Buong buhay na silang dumaranas ng paghihirap. Ang sabi nila, 'lagi kaming agrabyado. Binabanatan ang aming mga piketlayn sa pabrika. Dine-demolis ang aming mga bahay. Pati mga mapayapang rali at petisyon ay sinasalakay ng pulis at militar. Papaano pa namin maipagtatanggol ang sarili namin?'"

Said Tessie: "Nakita rin nila ang halaga ng disiplina at pagkakaisa para maalpasan ang problema. Nabawasan na ang lasingan, at syempre, pati mga gulo na dulot nito. Sa halip na ipang-inom o ipansugal ng kalalakhian ang konti nilang kinikita, sa pamilya ito napupunta. Dahil dito, nabawasan din ang away ng mag-asawa."

One of the first projects of the residents, who by then, had also organized themselves into a legal association, was to build a dirt road in their community. Before this, people would set up shanties anywhere they wanted to, making an impossible maze of interconnecting alleys the only passageways in and through the community.

But with the people working as one, houses were relocated and rearranged to make way for a wider dirt road where vehicles could pass. "Imposibleng mangyari ito dati," said Dong. "Noon, kanya-kanya lang. Ngayon, nagkakaisa na."

Now the residents have petitioned the local government to pave their dirt road with asphalt and to demand better water services for the community.



Instant rapport: Partisan exchanges small talk with a young fan

“Nang naibukas sa mga tao ang mga armado, naging napakainit ng pagtanggap sa kanila. Ang daming nagpahayag ng kagustuhang lumipat sa Hukbo.”

The underground mass organization has also set up a small cooperative store with capital solicited from friends and from the people themselves. "Boluntaryong nagbigay ng kahit P5 ang mga myembro dahil alam nilang makakatulong ito sa kanila," said Mike. "Ang layunin ng kooperatiba ay upang mabili ng mga tao ang araw-araw na pangangailangan nila sa murang halaga lang, at upang mapabagsak ang mga lokal na propitaryong labis kung tumubo sa kanilang mga tindahan."

The local mass organizations are also studying ways of improving health and sanitation in the community. One other plan, said Sarah, is the establishment of a small daycare center where community residents could cooperate in taking care of the children so that women could be free to pursue their political involvement.

In other partisan bases near the outskirts of Manila, they hear, mass organizations have also initiated a hog-dispersal project to improve the livelihood of the people. "Bumibili ng ba-

boy ang organisasyon. Pag nanganak na ito, ipinamamahagi ang mga blik sa iba't ibang myembro, hanggang sa dumami nang dumami ang mga may alagang baboy."

#### Armed struggle

But all these activities had been undertaken under repressive conditions and were in danger of being terminated.

Sometime in the mid-'80s, an AFP sergeant started to cause trouble in the community by setting up a bogus homeowners' association and coercing residents into joining it and paying exorbitant dues. Those who refused to join the homeowners' association were forced to leave the area or to sell him their rights to the land at a very low price. He also operated a tong collection and gambling syndicate.

To ensure their passivity, he sent in a gang of goons to spy on the residents and to terrorize them. "Style-siga talaga. Tatambay sa tindahan, maglalasing. Tapos, pag nakursunadahan ka, bubugugin ka na lang nang walang tanung-tanong," said Dong.

Once, some 20 armed men in four jeeps swooped down on the community, looking for a youth organizer. Armed to the teeth, the men obviously came not only for the boy, but also to make a show of force before the residents. "Mabuti na lang at nakatakas ang hinahanap nila. Kung hindi, tiyak na nasalbeyds na iyon," said Mike.

For two years, the military sergeant and his men held sway over the community. "*Lahat ng tao rito noon, may sakit na nerbiyos,*" recalled Mike. "*Bi-hira ang gabi na walang putok ng Ar-malayt. Alas-seis pa lang ng gabi, nag-uumpisa na.*"

It thus became more and more difficult for the mass organizations and the local partisan unit to continue with their activities. Something had to be done.

Relief came when the partisans meted the death penalty on the sergeant and his right-hand man in 1986.

"*Sa laking tuwa ng masa, may mga naghanda. May nagkatay ng aso at nag-painom. May nagpamisa pa nga raw de-hil dininig daw ng Diyos ang kanilang panalangin,*" said Dong.

"*Sumigla ang kanilang kusang pag-kilos. Mas dumadalo sila sa mga pu-long, pag-aaral at maging sa mga mobi-lisasyon. Malakas ang 'sweeping effect' ng mga operasyong partisano,*" explained Dong.

#### From "Sparrows" to partisans

The rise of partisan bases in the city point out that the term "Sparrow Unit" is no longer appropriate in describing the NPA in Manila. Said Aris, an experienced partisan, the name "Sparrow" had been coined in Davao City to refer to the NPA's first armed city partisans. Like the birds who search for food and then return to their nests, the ACPs in Davao went into the city to launch operations, and retreated to a rear base area near the urban center. But "Sparrow Units" in Davao City and elsewhere have since reached a higher level of development. The "Sparrows" have built their nests in the city.

"What the military would like the public to believe is that the partisans of Metro Manila have no mass base in the city," pointed Aris. "Thus, they insist on using the term 'Sparrow' and say we are not from this place but 'imported' from the provinces. But they contradict themselves when they continue undertaking zoning operations in urban poor communities," he said.

The building of the ACP in Metro Manila was long overdue, said Aris. The people's mass movement can only go so far in order to push their basic demands. Partisan warfare, the military component of the struggle in the cities, should complete a comprehensive strategy.

Being an extension of the armed struggle in the countryside, partisan warfare also seeks to tie down enemy troops in Manila, weaken their capacity to attack the NPA in the countryside, and wreck the fighting morale of the AFP.

The main target of partisan operations are regular combatants of the AFP, except those engaged in purely administrative duties and those not directly involved in or supportive of combat operations, such as the medical corps or those on home leave. Other targets are unreformed criminals such as drug pushers, job recruiters who swindle the workers, and rapists; military and police informers, individuals, including capitalists or businessmen with blood debts, and politicians who abuse the people.

**66 Partisan operations are carried out to remove obstructions to the unhampered political work of mass activists and organizations in the communities. 99**

Finally, partisan operations are carried out to remove obstructions to the unhampered political work of mass activists and organizations in the communities.

Partisan operations fall into two broad categories: regular partisan operations (RPO) and special partisan operations (SPO). RPOs concentrate on small but numerous targets, such as regular AFP combatants, lower military and civilian officials, local informers and bad elements. The operation is swift and requires minimum planning and fighting skill.

The SPOs on the other hand, concentrate on highly placed military and civilian officials and other notorious counter-revolutionaries. Usually, the operations are planned in complicated detail. They aim to stop enemy operations or strategically weaken the enemy. Thus, the political impact of the SPO is immediate and significant.



ABB partisan captures baby's smile

Aris took pains to explain and reiterate that policemen in general are not targets, only those who are proven to have incurred blood debts, violated human rights or are actively involved in counter-insurgency operations, like the members and officers of the Eagle Squad.

The Alex Boncayao Brigade (ABB), the NPA unit based in Manila, is named after a unionist who ran in the 1978 elections and who later died as a guerrilla. Its first operation eliminated the abusive Quezon City police chief Gen. Tomas Karingal in 1984. The ABB has since become not only a specially trained team of Red fighters. It has also laid the groundwork for partisan warfare in Metro Manila by organizing the people, defending them and preparing them for a higher stage of struggle.

The ABB also has many combat-support organizations as well. The most important of these groups are the AOTs. Similar to the armed propaganda-organizing teams of the NPA in the early years of the revolutionary movement (Sandatahang Yunit Pampropaganda), these units go from house to house to educate the people in the communities, and to organize them. They also help in consolidating underground mass organizations and in transforming communities into partisan bases.

Other support groups are in charge of logistics and intelligence. The first is tasked with systematizing the gathering, safekeeping and distribution of operational funds and logistical support of the ACP units in the district. The intelligence units, on the other hand, systematize all data useful to the partisans. They draw the profiles of all targets, centralizing, processing and evaluating data gathered by every ACP squad's intelligence personnel, as well as information from mass organizations, and the people themselves.

Meanwhile, militia units are being organized and trained to boost the fighting and self-defense capacities of the masses themselves.

"In fact," said Aris, "when urban poor organizations launched 'Operation Tirik-Bahay' (occupation and setting up of houses on idle lands), many community residents who participated were organized into squads ready to defend themselves with the simple weapons they had."

Said Mike: "*Sumigla ang kilusang masa dahil lumalakas ang kakayanan ng mamamayan at alam nilang naririyang ang mga partisano sa likod nila, handang umagapay, handang tumulong, handang magtanggol.*"

Victoria Mendelo and Pon Guerrero

# Uncovering a charade in the Cordillera

CPDF revolutionary forces expose the charade of CPLA



Fit and ready: NPA Fighters in Ifugao doing their drills

Recently shown in downtown theaters was a movie that purported to portray the Cordillera people's struggle for autonomy. Told from the point of view of Conrado Balweg, who heads the Cordillera People's Liberation Army (CPLA), which split from the NPA in 1986, the film, if anything, projected the issue of Cordillera autonomy to a broader audience. Besides this, a series of dramatic events have also served to catapult the issue to national prominence.

On July 15, Aquino signed an Executive Order creating the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), which is supposed to pave the way for the establishment of full autonomy in the region. Covering the provinces of Abra, Ifugao, Benguet, Mountain Province and Kalinga-Apayao and the city of Baguio, the original draft of the EO was prepared by the CPLA and government negotiator Emmanuel Pelaez. Among others, the original draft called for the withdrawal of the military from the region and the designation of the CPLA as the sole "peace-keeping force" in the area.

But controversy hounded the proposed EO from the very start. Vigorous protests launched by various Cordillera-based cause-oriented groups as well as the AFP and congressmen from the region prompted Aquino to defer action until a compromise draft was worked out. The final draft no longer designates the CPLA as the sole peace-keeping force.

Earlier, on June 21, Balweg and other top leaders of the CPLA were ambushed by the NPA as their convoy passed through the lowland barangay of Singit in Likuan-Baay, Abra on the way to Bangued. Eight of Balweg's men died in the ambush.

Meanwhile, printed in bright red on the walls of Baguio City is the slogan "CPLA: Ang Bagong CHDF!"

This series of events point out one thing: that there is serious opposition from many sides to the CPLA and its version of autonomy. And yet, the other broad-based groups in the region, including the Cordillera People's Democratic Front (CPDF), an NDF member-organization, have not had much chance to air their views before the national media.

The following article is an attempt to clarify the various questions regarding Balweg, the CPLA and the Cordillera people's revolutionary struggle. It is based on interviews held on separate occasions with CPDF representatives Sumkad, Ka Andres Fernandez, Fr. Eddie Balicao, Lawig, Ka Yokan and Ka Rudy (Jovencio Balweg), Conrado's brother.

## Unmasking the CPLA

"A government talking to itself." CPDF spokesman Sumkad minced no words as he described last December the "peace negotiations" between the Aquino government and Balweg's troop. Citing that the CPLA has already become part of the military, Sumkad said: "We see the CPLA now as a paramilitary appendage of the AFP."

Quoting eyewitness reports, he also recounted various instances where the AFP armed the CPLA and the CPLA in turn, helped the military troops. On Dec. 8 last year, Balweg's group reinforced the military during a battle against the NPA in Tubo, Abra. On Sept. 7, AFP and Defense Department elements delivered four high-powered rifles (an M16, one Galil and two baby Armaletes) at Tinglayan, Kalinga-Apayao for the CPLA.

Last November, 12 carbines and an undetermined number of M16s were turned over to the CPLA at Sadanga, Mountain Province.

More recently, Kada Pinading, a member of the CPLA's military commission who died in the ambush, guided AFP troopers in their military operations against the NPA and the organized masses last summer in Kalinga-Apayao.

The military does not only arm the CPLA, however, but also gives it access to the AFP's facilities and communications network, said Sumkad. Balweg himself received a Land Cruiser jeep as his personal service vehicle. This was delivered to Baguio from the AFP headquarters in Manila by a certain Col. Eugene Martin. As it is, the CPLA can now freely use AFP helicopters, tanks, trucks and jeeps, radio transceivers, aside from logistics and finan-

cial doleouts, said Sumkad. For instance, in one of their meetings in Baguio, the CPLA members, who came packed in 17 Ford Fieras, reportedly received a P10,000 allotment for every vehicle. CPLA movements and trips are now usually escorted by companies of government troopers, according to CPDF intelligence reports.

Balweg has also received the P200,000 prize money which the government offered for his capture, dead or alive. In addition, CPLA teams tasked with infiltrating Ifugao province were reportedly given P5,000 by the military. With all the money coming his way, Balweg has also been able to build a big house in Bangued for himself.

Sumkad also pointed out that the CPLA even had its headquarters at the plush Mansion House in Baguio City.

They later moved to another nearby government-owned mansion which they have renamed the Cordillera House. Moreover, Balweg's army now holds joint detachments with the AFP in Bucloc, Daguioman, Boliney and Sallapadan in Abra; and in Tinglayan (Bugnay gate) and Lubuagan (Kagaloan gate) in Kalinga-Apayao.

"They are one and the same," Sumkad said of these two armies, the AFP and the CPLA. "They are helping each other out in fighting against the revolutionary forces and the people of the Cordillera."

#### The open split

Conrado Balweg, who was for a time a most publicized dissident priest in the Cordillera, broke away from the CPP-NPA in April last year. The open split and the formation of the CPLA capped some four years of Balweg's disagreement with the revolutionary forces' political line (see sidebar). Earlier, the CPDF stressed, several efforts had been made to resolve the factional strife — among them the continuous discussion of the CPDF political line, and the scheduling of a summing-up conference, aside from keeping the communication lines open between the two groups. Right after the media-hyped split, a special unit was likewise organized for the purpose of conducting dialogues with Balweg and other CPLA leaders.

At the outset, the CPDF pinpointed possible directions the CPLA might take: 1) it could reassess its position, rectify and reunite with the national democratic forces; 2) it could remain as an independent revolutionary group open to an alliance with the CPDF and NDF against a common enemy; 3) it could pursue its pseudo-revolutionary trend and its tendency to collaborate with the reactionaries; and 4) it could degenerate into an all-out counter-revolutionary armed group integrated with the enemy forces. Recent events would show that the CPLA has taken the fourth option.

"The counter-revolutionary character of the CPLA has been unmasked," said a CPDF spokesman. "And the deception comes as the CPLA ring-leaders continue to brandish themselves as revolutionaries by claiming that they represent the Cordillera people."

Fr. Eddie Balicao, a Roman Catholic priest and one of the official spokespersons of the CPDF, sized up the harm Balweg's group has inflicted upon the Cordillera struggle. "First and foremost, the CPLA divided the far-established unity of the Cordillera people. They are

trying to create a rift between the Kaigorotan and the rest of the Filipino people. They have become instruments of counter-revolution, and that proves to be the biggest harm they are doing to our struggle."

He further noted that the splinter group is tasked to do propaganda work against the CPDF, the CPP-NPA and the national democratic movement as a whole, by throwing false charges of "Party dictatorship" and "imposition of lowland rule on the Cordillera people." With its divisive moves, the CPLA is surrendering the gains of the revolutionary movement to the military, said Fr. Balicao. This would put to waste the long struggle of the Cordillera people to achieve these gains.

#### History of resistance

The birth of the Cordillera's revolutionary movement traces its roots to the long history of Igorot struggle. Throughout the centuries of Spanish rule, American colonization and impositions by the local ruling elite, the Kaigorotan resisted all faces of colonialism and cultural subjugation. There is a tradition of struggle that extends up to the present.

In the early '70s, the revolutionary forces had tried barrio and sectoral organizing work in the same way as the NPA and the NDF to mass work in other parts of the country. However, they saw a need for a more distinct type of organizing work responding to the particularities of the Cordillera people as national minorities. This led to the establishment of the CPDF in 1981 as a national democratic front for the Cordillera people.

The CPDF has since been leading the way to enjoin the whole of Kaigorotan towards the revolutionary struggle, and in the process, give particular attention to the situation of the various ethno-linguistic groups in the area. In particular, the vast front concretizes the Cordillera people's long struggle for regional autonomy and

self-determination. These efforts are linked up with the struggle of the rest of the Filipinos against national oppression, CPDF representative Andres Fernando explained.

Through the years, the CPDF has expanded to some 500 barrios and villages, covering more than 50% of the barrios in the five Cordillera provinces. The revolutionary front consists of forces — armed and unarmed — from different organizations, tribes and clans as well as patriotic individuals; these include Cordillerans in the cities and those who live outside the region (in Cagayan Valley, Ilocos region, Nueva Vizcaya and Metro Manila).

The CPDF also has an independent armed force of its own, the CPDF People's Guerrilla Force. "This guerrilla army, however, is not a national liberation army. It is independent but its activities are closely coordinated with the NPA. It coexists with the NPA in the Cordillera," explained Ka Andres. "The CPDF's People's Guerrilla Force, along with the NPA, wages the armed struggle to overthrow the enemies of the Cordillera people."

In effect, there are four armed forces operating in the Cordillera region: the AFP, the CPLA, the NPA and the CPDF Guerrilla Force.

The CPDF armed forces differs from the NPA in the sense that its members perform military work on a part-time basis. This is because they also have to attend to their daily family concerns and do production work as they wage their "fetad" (Cordillera term for people's war). In the past, these several hundreds of people's guerrilla forces had launched successful offensives such as the disbanding of the Civilian Home Defense Forces in Lamut, Villaverde, in the Nueva Vizcaya-Ifugao border.

#### The question of autonomy

Historically, oppression in the Cordillera has been institutionalized through the imposition of unjust laws,



Caucus in the Cordillera: Guerrillas discussing issues with a CPDF cadre

the onslaught of foreign multinationals and the local elite into ancestral lands, and the non-recognition of the Cordillera people's right to self-determination.

The Cordillera people's struggle is thus geared towards establishing a genuinely autonomous government. But, the CPDF noted, such a government can only be possible if it has a democratic character and if it is under a democratic and free Philippine government on the national level.

"In practice, the so-called autonomy being bruted about by the reactionaries is turning out to be a big swindle," said the CPDF. "The 1986 Constitution grants autonomy in name but gives very limited powers to the autonomous government. To promote this dubious autonomy, the CPLA and then government negotiator Agapito 'Butz' Aquino hastily formed a fake 'Cordillera Broad Coalition' while the broad Cordillera people's organizations, which have been the most determined advocates of autonomy even under the Marcos regime, were shoved out of the picture."

This has also been the case with the

drafting of Aquino's executive order on the Cordillera Administrative Region. Critics of the EO charge that 1) the composition of the proposed CAR is so undemocratic because only Balweg and his group, the Cordillera Bodong Administration and the CPLA, would have full sway over it; 2) it is biased not only in favor of Balweg but also of the bodong system as well, to the disregard of other social institutions in the Cordillera (see sidebar); 3) the people have not been consulted on the matter; and 4) it dilutes what is truly the autonomous concept that the people of the Cordillera originally planned it to be.

The CPDF stressed that it stands for genuine people's democracy as the main political content of a truly autonomous Cordillera. The Kaligorotan, however, also have an integral role in the fight to overthrow US domination and local reactionary rule.

"The Cordillera people unite with the rest of the Filipinos in the struggle against national oppression. Said Ka Andres: *"Hindi mapapalaya ang Cordilyera hangat hindi napapalaya ang buong sambayanan."* LIB Staff

# People's pr

NPAs in Quezon, Batangas launch offensives

Armed struggle in Southern Tagalog is fast-advancing with the people's support.

Last June 7, a company-size NPA force launched a simultaneous raid on the municipal building and the detachment of the 231st PC Company in Dolores, Quezon.

Seized from the municipal hall were seven M16s and one .45 pistol. During the brief firefight, one PC soldier was killed while another ran away. Meanwhile, troopers manning the PC detachment abandoned their post when the detachment caught fire at the height of the gunbattle. Those left behind, mostly policemen, surrendered to the NPA.

So abusive were the elements of the 231st PC Company that the NPA's armed actions were fully supported by the masses in the area. For years, the towns of Dolores and Tiaong, which

## "We are committed to promote Cordillera culture"

The following are excerpts from interviews with CPDF cadres Ka Yokan and Ka Rudy (Jovencio Balweg):

**Q: What is the CPLA's view of Cordillera society?**

**A:** The CPLA believes that Cordillera society is "semi-communal and semi-colonial," with semi-communalism as the main feature. They see Cordillera culture as well as ownership of resources in the region as still largely communal in character. They maintain, therefore, that there are no antagonistic class contradictions or class struggle in Cordillera society. In fact, they say that if the Cordillera were not penetrated by outsiders, its people would have remained in the communal stage. They speak of a Cordillera nation completely separate from mainstream Philippine society. Since they believe that there are no antagonistic class contradictions in the region, they also believe that their Cordillera Bodong Administration is sufficient to unite the people of the Cordillera into one nation, no matter what class or sector they belong to.

**Q: What is the CPDF's view?**

**A:** The CPDF believes that Cordillera society is semi-feudal and semi-colonial. Based on our social investigations, semi-feudalism, characterized by small commodity production, is the most widespread and dominant feature. During the Spanish colonial period, the greater portion of Philippine society underwent the transition towards feudalism, but there were very few changes in the Cordillera. We were broken up into as many as 96 independent tribal groups. But when the Americans came, they were able to fully penetrate the Cordillera. From then on, Cordillera society has largely followed the developments in mainstream Philippine society. Although still present in some areas, the old communal features of Cordillera society are no longer significant or dominant in the culture and economy of the region.

**Q: But aren't there differences between conditions in the plains and in the Cordillera?**

**A:** It is true that there are observable differences in the conditions that exist in the plains and in the Cordillera. In the plains, feudalism is manifested through landlord domination over the many who are landless. In the Cordillera, most peasants have small landholdings of less than one hectare each. But Cordillera society itself has spawned an exploitative ruling class composed of merchants who exploit the small commodity producers and landlords with large landholdings especially in the flatlands of Abra and Kalanga-Apayao. There are compradors who own or control the huge mining companies in the region, and who severely exploit their workers. We can cite the Almazans, Puzonis, Paradeses, Barberos and Dangwas as among the members of the ruling elite in the region. In fact, some of them are warlords. So, it cannot be true that there is no class struggle and no antagonistic class contradictions in the Cordillera. It is not realistic to consider the Cordillera as an entirely separate entity from the rest of the Filipino nation.

**Q: The CPLA has been criticized for being too biased in favor of the bodong as an institution. But didn't the revolutionary forces also play a major role in promoting the bodong as a way of uniting the different Cordillera ethnic?**

**A:** The bodong is essentially a



Long-standing issue: Cordillera's de



# Protectors

Insives to punish abusive AFP units

lie at the foot of Mt. Banahaw, have been highly militarized. Mass actions and other activities of legal organizations were subjected to harassment or broken up by the troopers. In 1980, four barriofolk, including a barangay captain, were salvaged by the military. The PC men also extorted money from the people, who eke out a living by gathering firewood and planting bananas, coffee and coconut.

Before the raids were launched in Dolores town, the people gave intelligence reports to the NPA and helped in planning the simultaneous raids. After the attack, they helped haul away the seized firearms. Some even shook the hands of the guerrillas and offered them softdrinks and other refreshments as the Red fighters returned to their mountain bases.

The military, led by Task Force Kalasag, reacted by peppering Mt. Bana-

haw with artillery fire from tanks and howitzers. For 10 days, more than a dozen shells were exploded, destroying the masses' coffee trees. As a result, more than 1,000 families from four barrios in Dolores have evacuated their homes and farmlands.

Meanwhile, that same month, undersized NPA platoons simultaneously raided CHDF detachments in Barangays Paktok, Palinawak and Catmon in the coastal town of San Juan, Batangas. The abusive CHDF units had been terrorizing the masses and served as the private army of the town's OIC mayor, who is a brother of AFP Deputy Chief of Staff Gen. Renato de Villa.

The NPAs first posed as elements of the Regional Action Force and asked the CHDFs to join them in a military operation. Caught unaware, the paramilitary men were easily disarmed. The no-shot raid yielded two M16s, one M1, one M2 and several pistols.

After disarming the CHDFs, the raiders introduced themselves: "Mga NPA kami. Hindi namin kayo papatayin. Armas ninyo lang ang kailangan namin. Kung isyuhan uli kayo ng ar-

mas ng mga militar, sana'y huwag ninyong gamitin ito uli laban sa mamamayan." Upon hearing this, some of the CHDFs thanked the Red fighters for sparing their lives.

Meanwhile, some of the masses wept for joy when they learned of the raid. Their morale had been low because their area had not been visited by the NPA for some time. As a result, the military and abusive local officials violated the people's human rights with impunity.

Embarrassed by the NPA raid, the military retaliated by harassing the fishermen in the coastal barrio and feeding a distorted version of the raid to the media. A radio report later said that the NPA stole the barriofolks' work animals during the attack.

But no amount of lies will cause the people of Southern Tagalog to stop their support for their true army. Said a resident of Dolores who witnessed the raid on the town's municipal hall: "Nasa panig kami ng matuwit. Nasa panig kami ng tunay na hukbo ng mamamayan." ■

peace pact or treaty entered into by two tribes to resolve a conflict. As a practice, it is indigenous to parts of Abra, about half of Mountain Province and Kalinga and portions of Apayao. When two tribes enter into a bodong, this is analogous to two sovereign governments entering into a bilateral peace treaty.

But when the revolutionary movement sought to unite the various Cordillera tribes, the concept of a multilateral bodong among all ethnic groups in the region was adopted as an innovation. Thus, a grand bodong was forged against the Chico River Dam project, because the latter was detrimental to the interest of the different tribes. A multilateral bodong has also been forged against the forces of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism, which are the common enemies of the Cordillera and the rest of the Filipino people.

What the CPLA is trying to do is to transform the bodong

into a governmental institution, which it is not. They would like to impose their Cordillera Bodong Administration as the governmental authority in the Cordillera. To do so would be to disregard the customs and institutions of other groups in the region. In fact, other tribes in the Cordillera with more highly evolved institutions which enter into treaties and perform governmental functions as well, have objected to the CPLA position.

The CPDF is committed to the promotion of the various Cordillera social institutions, and the bodong is just one of them.

Q: How much influence does the CPLA have in the region?  
A: At the time of the split, the CPLA was composed of 117 armed NPA regulars and scores of mass activists. It had a military commission composed of 15 members (some of whom died in the ambush). Of this, five made up the "high command." These are Balweg, Mailed Molina, Emmanuel Ambaleng, Bruno Ortega and Moises Lingayo. The CPLA also had with them a small faction of the Cordillera Bodong Association led by Mario Yagao. Since then, the number of CPLA fighters and members has remained static.

We do not expect the CPLA to expand much or survive on its own for long, since it has not engaged in any mass work and has had no sustained political work in the barrios. Thus, it has no solid mass base to speak of in any barrio. Ever since it was formed, the CPLA has been concentrating its efforts on its "peace talks" with the government. The CPLA's presence is mostly felt in the towns, where they are able to influence some members of the middle class. Some opportunistic politicians have also joined the CPLA.

The collapse of the CPLA is inevitable. It has no basis to go on as a group. Its members will either return to the people's revolutionary ranks, go low or directly join the AFP.

The CPLA may even collapse from internal causes. We have reports that a member of their high command, Mailed Molina, has changed Balweg with finance opportunities and disloyalty. Balweg has been leading the mass movements against Mailed. We even hear that Mailed has become very close to the military and is plotting to overthrow Balweg. ■



rans demand autonomy in 1986 rally

# Hitting the enemy

Red fighters chalk up series of victories in Panay

"Mang-ambus lang sila, i-teyp pa? Ano ang gusto nila paggwaon?" (Just an ambush and they put it on tape? What are they trying to prove?) bel- lowed an irate Col. Harque of the RUC 6 Panay Task Force. "They," of course, were the New People's Army guerrillas in Panay and Col. Harque, well, the colonel was just as confused as his temper was lost.

That was May 12, 1987. There was indeed an ambush and a tape recorded coverage of the event. But what caught the ire of the colonel was not so much the two elements killed from the 15th IB/PA and a CHDF seriously wounded as when the tape recording of the ambuscade was simultaneously broadcast over Iloilo's three provincial radio stations. The colonel must have been dreaming of the NPA surrendering en masse after the collapse of the cease-fire last February. Instead, he awoke to the nightmare of another two M16s added to the NPA's arsenal.

The nightmare of Col. Harque and his cohorts in the RUC 6 actually began when the ceasefire ended. According to correspondence reports from *Daba-Daba*, the revolutionary mass paper in Panay, the NPA launched 16 successful tactical offensives ranging from simple harassment actions to company-size ambushes and 23 armed city partisan operations. These tactical offensives launched from March to May, netted 32 HPRs (high-powered rifles), 10 short arms, ammunition, transportation and communications equipment and office supplies,



Rich harvest: Red fighters examining confiscated rifles

and inflicted 59 dead and 12 seriously wounded on the enemy. Three NPA fighters sacrificed their lives.

Most notable among these NPA operations are the following:

- An ambush at Barangay Naliluan, Malinao, Aklan on May 4, 1987. Nineteen enemy soldiers were confirmed dead and five seriously wounded when a truck bearing a platoon of soldiers from the 47th IB-PA was ambushed by the NPA. The troopers were on their way to reinforce a PA-CHDF detachment in Barangay Osman, Malinao which had been harassed by the NPA, when they were waylaid by the guerrillas.

Confiscated were 13 M16s, two M14s, three M203s, one M2C and ammunition. Before safely withdrawing, the Red fighters set fire to the enemy's six-wheeler truck.

- The March 1987 ambush at Barangay Manoling, Pilar, Capiz. Taken from 10 PC/INP killed were six M16s, four short arms, a handset and other military paraphernalia. Among those killed was a Sangguniang Bayan member, Oscar Dumali, whose counter-revolutionary activities included the killing of a full-time NDF organizer.

- The ambush last April of a composite force of PC-INP and army soldiers on patrol in Jamindan, Capiz, where eight enemy troopers were killed and several were wounded.

On May 12, the military reacted with a counter-offensive covering the towns of Leon, Alimodian and part of San Miguel. Using 105 mm howitzers, bazookas, helicopter gunships and ground troops, and taking with them media people from Iloilo's radio stations, they started their rampage.

As it turned out, the masses again bore the brunt of this counter-revolutionary violence. Four barriofolk of Malublob, Leon were arbitrarily arrested and the people were terrorized with numerous cannon volleys which, however, failed to hit their targets ("cannon fodder not US-made kasi," complained one military officer).

Employing active defense in securing its guerrilla zones and protecting the masses, the NPA staged an ambush in Barangay Isubo, Miag-ao, Iloilo on May 16, killing three enemy soldiers and wounding one 15th IB/PA element and a CHDF. Hearing of the incident, reporters accompanying the military immediately rushed to the ambush site and instead covered the NPA victory. This cut short the military's counter-offensive and frustrated their plan to deceive the people with media "victories" against the NPA. ■



Topography of battle: NPA offensives flare up in Panay

# SPARKS

Newsbriefs about people's struggles

## PKM-GL ASSAILS CARP

The Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon (PKM-GL) condemned the Aquino government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) as "pro-imperialist, pro-landlord and anti-people." In a statement released through the Central Luzon revolutionary mass paper *Himagsik* last June 30, the PKM-GL said: "(CARP) 1) aims to neutralize or obliterate the gains already achieved by thousands of peasants under the NDF's revolutionary agrarian reform program; 2) compels peasants to pay for the land they till, even if they have already paid more than enough for it through their labor; 3) gives landlords ample opportunity to maneuver for control over their lands and tenants because of the program's 10-year implementation period; 4) does not cover big, mostly foreign-owned, landholdings planted to export crops."



The PKM-GL stressed that only the NDF agrarian reform program has so far directly benefitted the peasantry through lowered land rent, elimination of usury and attainment of higher wages and better working conditions for farm workers.

## KGM HOLDS ACTIVIST TRAINING COURSE



Some 25 members of the Katipunan ng mga Gurong Makabayan (KGM) from all over the country attended a training seminar on teacher-organizing conducted last May by the organization's National Executive Committee. The training was held to

further improve and refine the participants' grasp of the principles of Organizing Guide-I, a basic KGM document. The Organizing Guide-II was also presented and discussed "to capsulize lessons from past revolutionary theory and practice specifically on the role of the KGM in the open teachers' mass movement." Before the end of the training, the KGM Code of Ethics was also discussed and adopted.

## NPA MILITARY MANUALS PUBLISHED



Standardizing the Basic NPA Military Training Course

The NPA General Staff published a three-volume military manual entitled "Batayang Kursong Militar ng BHB." The manual was written to enhance the NPA's fighting capability and prepare Red fighters for a more advanced phase of the revolutionary struggle.

Manual I deals with the principles of the NPA as an organization while Manuals II and III center primarily on military hardware and combat training.

## PRO-US POLICIES SCORED IN RALLY



Rallyists decree fiery end to US-Aquino regime

At least 3,000 demonstrators led by the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) in Central Luzon staged a four-hour rally at the gates of Clark Air Base in Angeles City last July 4 to protest the Aquino government's increasing subservience to US interests. Chanting "Yankee go home," the rallyists set fire to Aquino's portrait symbolically hanging from the mouth of an effigy of the American eagle. The eagle was shown clutching a missile.

The protesters cited among others, the Aquino regime's formation of vigilante groups and its increased dependence on US military and economic aid as indications of the new government's subservience to US interests. They demanded the immediate abrogation of the RP-US Military Bases Agreement and the implementation of the constitutional provision banning nuclear weapons in the country.

Participants of the protest action included members of cause-oriented groups from Manila and solidarity workers from Canada and Australia.

## CREATE SELF-DEFENSE UNITS - CEBU-NDF

NDF-Cebu spokesman Rafael Flores announced that "the people must arm themselves using indigenous weapons and prepare for indigenous warfare to counter threats of fascist attacks from anti-communist groups and regular military units of the AFP." Flores made the announcement in a press statement released by the NDF-Cebu last May 7. He said reports showed an alarming number of attacks made on unarmed civilians by anti-communist groups. It was disclosed that since the setting up of vigilante groups after the ceasefire, some 20 civilians have been killed and 1,400 families evacuated from their farmlands in Cebu.

Flores added that "while we know that military operations alone cannot resolve the basic problems of the people, there is still a need to combine both political and military actions to counter suppressive forces from the ruling class." At the same time, he encouraged the rank-and-file of anti-communist groups like the KADRE, SCS-Tadtad, BASCOM, CACA, Nakasaka and Alsa Masa to desist from being used by people who are only interested in protecting their own selfish interests. He urged them to surrender to the revolutionary movement to prevent more bloodshed.

## VIEWPOINT

Contributions from readers

# Prognosis for failure

### Why genuine land reform will not succeed under the Aquino government

*Is the implementation of genuine land reform likely under the Aquino regime? Will it really make a difference whether it is Aquino or the new Congress that shall decide on land reform? What should be the basic ingredients of a revolutionary land reform program?*

*In the following article, Delfin Castro, a revolutionary of long standing who has closely studied the theory and practice of land reform in the Philippines and other countries, gives his views on these matters.*

No government based on landlords' power, partly or wholly, will seriously embark on a "genuine land reform program" which, in effect, will be tantamount to political suicide through the destruction of its power base.

Governments do not betray the classes to which they owe their tenure of power. *Even when beleaguered by the restiveness of the peasantry and the rising tide of revolution, any government effectively controlled by the landlord class and its allies will introduce only reforms designed to appease the restive peasants and thereby deprive the revolutionary forces of their main source of strength.*

#### What CARP cannot achieve

Considering the power structure on which the Aquino presidency rests, it is illusory to hope that it will come up with a program which will satisfy the criteria for serious land reform, much less the expectations of the revolutionary peasantry and their allies in the struggle for a national democratic order.

And what the Aquino presidency cannot do by decree because of the constraints imposed on it by its class composition, Congress cannot do by legislative enactment for the same reasons.

A serious land reform program is inspired by political, economic and social objectives, regardless of the ideology of its proponents.

And in one important respect, the political objectives of any serious land reform program are revolutionary: land reform is supposed

to result in the overthrow of the landlord class and the consequent radical change in class and property relations.

This is not to happen under the Aquino presidency nor under the government after the organization of Congress. The "reformers" within the Aquino presidency are not that revolutionary in outlook, nor will Congress be when it tackles the land reform issue.

Many other logical results are not going to materialize either. *Democracy*, whose creation is an integral part of the political objectives of a serious land reform program, will not emerge in the countryside. This is because, despite the rhetoric of land distribution, independent family farmers will not arise as a class. Recipients of land will remain dependent on government agencies and private exploiters, and many present tenants and agricultural laborers will see no change in their social status.

Similarly, an Aquino land reform program will not promote the *diversification and modernization of agriculture*, largely because the economy cannot produce the financial re-

sources required for these developments. With the priorities in the allocation of the economy's surplus adopted by the Aquino government, these objectives of land reform earn no significant consideration.

Yet if land reform is to result in higher productivity and greater production, and in the formation of symbiotic relationships between agriculture and industry, the diversification and modernization of the former deserve high priority.

Science and technology will not be mobilized to play their rightful roles in agriculture. They will continue to serve the big agricultural producers that can afford them.

But the small beneficiaries of land reform under the present government, when the program gets underway, will take long to get organized into cooperatives which can pay for the services of scientists and technologists. The extension work of some government agencies and agricultural colleges cannot be expanded to a significant coverage because of limited resources. The beneficiaries of land reform themselves will have to shoulder the expenses, but as small producers, they cannot carry the burden. And the organization of these small beneficiaries into cooperatives won't be easy, nor their funding assured.

Poverty will not be eradicated, nor will gainful jobs be created in the countryside as a result of land reform under the present government. And since there is no serious industrialization program underway to absorb the unemployed in the

rural sector, land reform will not alleviate rural poverty. Nor will land reform succeed without the advance of industrialization, a lesson which the "reformers" of the Aquino government seem to overlook.

Peace in the countryside will not prevail for as long as the aspirations of the peasantry are not met.

And they cannot be met by the present government which, besides being an instrument partly of the landlord class, has chosen to be a tool of United States imperialism in its "low-intensity conflict" strategy against nationalist and progressive forces. The choice, of course, is a logical manifestation of its class character; and its land reform program's objectives are designed accordingly.

#### Counter-insurgency bias

In its consideration of land reform, the Aquino presidency seems to be motivated by the limited objective of defusing the mounting crisis in the countryside especially in those areas strongly influenced by the NDF and its member-organizations.



Peasants' plaint: No hope in Aquino's CARP

To achieve this, it is willing to adopt certain limited reforms which, it figures, will satisfy the peasantry without real danger to the power of landlords. It expects that the partially satisfied peasantry would be won over to the government, as a result of which the rural bases of the NDF-led forces will be denuded. Forthwith, the "unsheathing of the sword of war" and the more explicit declaration of war primarily against the NDF-led armed forces will result in the crushing of the revolutionary movement — in five years' time, as reported in the press. Thenceforth, peace and stability shall prevail, and the government, still controlled and led by imperialist-supported semi-feudal, semi-colonial classes, can take its sweet time playing with land reform as a "transformer toy" with which to meet any resurgence of the clamor for land reform.

This is not to say that the Aquino presidency is insincere on the matter of land reform. It merely expresses the habits of mind of the landlord class in grappling with an issue which impinges directly on its material interests. In fact, one might even say that the Aquino presidency reflects a more sober view, in comparison with the threatening attitude of some sectors of the landlord class that do not realize yet that the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program of the Aquino presidency is the most viable defense of the landlords' interests. *Give a little now in order not to lose much or all tomorrow, seems to be the basic premise of the CARP, and there is no insincerity in this.*

Of course, I am not saying that the Aquino presidency's "sincerity" in implementing land reform means that the program is correct. Hence the controversies and threats spawned by the leaked versions of CARP.

These controversies and threats are not to be bewailed, for they serve an enlightening purpose. They underscore the speciousness of the claim that class struggle is an obsolete concept. And they are pointed reminders to the cause-oriented groups, non-revolutionary and revolutionary alike, *that the struggle for land reform is part of the overall class struggle, whose conduct and resolution do not depend on the good graces of the government and the landlord class but on the relation of strength of the contending classes.*

#### The revolutionary alternative

This view suggests the main directions of the efforts of the proponents of genuine land reform: primarily toward the strengthening, subjectively and objectively, of revolutionary peasant groups and organizations in conjunction with parallel efforts among workers, youth and students, working professionals and businessmen of nationalist persuasion; and, secondarily, toward the weakening and erosion of landlords' power in the rural areas through various means, including negotiations with individual landlords for the tenants' greater share in the product of the land and a stronger voice in the decisions affecting them. Appealing to the government, in the developing stance of the Aquino presidency, is not likely to yield favorable results for the peasantry.

As to the objectives and content of a land reform program from a revolutionary viewpoint, they are premised on the very conditions which inspire land reform.

The political objectives seek the eradication of the vestiges of feudalism, the liberation of the peasantry, and its empowerment to create and play its role in a democratic society.

Toward these objectives, *land distribution is essential but is only an introductory phase.*

Unless the beneficiaries of this introductory phase are organized into adequately funded cooperatives that can bring science and technology to the rural areas, initially hire com-

petent managers and develop from among their members the future replacements, and conclude effective marketing arrangements, there is danger that retrogression will set in, as it did among not a few beneficiaries under P.D. 27 and as argued by the oppositors of land reform.

In terms of operational yields, genuine land reform is supposed to result in higher productivity and greater production, thus enabling land reform beneficiaries not only to earn more income but generate surpluses for capital formation.

These salutary results, however, could be imperilled by the relentless pressure of population on the land, which needs a complementary program of job creation, both in rural areas and urban centers, for relief. *Thus the crucial role of industrialization in a revolutionary land reform program.*

There is more to this than mere job creation. The progress of agriculture depends on a wide variety of industrial products, from chemicals to machinery and equipment. The importation of these industrial products cannot be sustained by the economy, they must be manufactured locally.

Without industrialization geared to agriculture, neither sector of the economy will grow and develop. And without the simultaneous growth and development of these major sectors of the economy, genuine land reform cannot make a headway to overcome the crisis in the rural areas.

#### Wherewithal for genuine land reform

When and how can genuine land reform be launched? And by whom? These are legitimate questions deserving realistic answers if the formulation of such a program is not to be an



Grassroots democracy: Members of an NDF peasant cooperative in a meeting

idealistic exercise.

This is not the occasion for an extended treatment of this aspect of land reform, but certain broad lines of thought will be helpful in conceptualizing the viability of genuine land reform.

To begin with, genuine land reform as outlined above cannot be launched by the government under the Aquino presidency. President Aquino is far too committed to her present position vis-a-vis the revolutionary movement to execute a turnaround and consider a reform program with revolutionary overtures.

I believe that unless and until the NDF gains sufficient strength to at least share government power, genuine land reform will never be part of the national agenda.

Logically the NDF would be the sponsors of a revolutionary land reform program in the hypothetical situation that it shares governmental power with whatever forces would share with it power and responsibility of steering the country towards a new order. How it will launch its program will be a situational problem which the actual array of forces in the country will recommend for solution. Having emerged from a difficult protracted struggle, the NDF will have a sixth sense in appraising situations and people and may thus be

# Bladed poems

*Kamao: Panitikan ng Protesta 1970-1986*, Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1987, 449 pp.

*Kamao: Panitikan ng Protesta 1970-1986* is the first volume of a series of anthologies aimed at putting together significant literary works by representative authors who protested against injustice and oppression during 16 years of Marcos rule.

The poetry volume, similar to the succeeding volumes containing works in fiction and drama, is divided into three sections: pre-martial law (1970-1972), martial law (1972-1983), and that following the Aquino assassination (1983-1986). The first section covers the time of dynamic resurgence and popularization of the radical tradition in Philippine writing marked by the events of the First Quarter Storm during which writers and artists responded to the call for a Second Propaganda Movement. (The First Propaganda Movement led by patriotic Filipinos in the late 19th century contributed directly to the formation of the Katipunan). The third section should properly be a subsection of the second which covers the era of resistance, protest and struggle under the fascist regime. The book reflects the continuity of development of protest and revolutionary poetry from the '70s to the present.

The sectioning of the book and the alphabetical arrangement of authors are at once helpful in making telling observations on the trend of writing influenced by political events. The extreme repression under martial rule silenced some writers who took up the themes and forms of protest during the First Quarter Storm, but the persistence of certain by-lines through all the periods covered by the book shows the courage of certain poets and the sustaining inspiration of the mass movement amid great difficulties. In a sense, the book is a fitting tribute to

the poets who persisted and endured or even died, keeping the flames of protest and revolutionary poetry alive. It is remarkable that most of those who refused to be cowed by the brutality of the enemy and who instead raised the level of creativity to wield a

in the anthology pictures not only unlimited possibilities of transforming traditional and folk poetic forms as well as experimentation but also the artistic and political achievements attainable in a united front of artists and cultural workers. The unity and coop-

eration of the cultural sector and other sectors of society, as suggested by the book, leads to further enrichment of experience and craftsmanship which in turn results in a holistic interweaving of social life and artistry. The poets' varying levels of consciousness reflected in the anthology suggest the need for closer interaction among sectors to which the writers belong — labor, peasantry, the academe, religious, the different professions. Further integration among them, as encouraged by the cultural movement changes the compartmentalized, specialized and elitist concepts of poet and artist to a progressive definition of poetry and artistry as residing in every human being. The struggle for perfection in art and po-

etry that reflect the deepest contradictions in society in the present stage of history is a struggle not only of the artist or poet but of the artist and poet in every man or woman; such an artistic or poetic sensibility can only be honed in a movement that struggles for the full recognition of the innate potentials of the human being to express himself in creative ways. *Kamao*, in attempting to gather a broad representation of protest works, affirms that the cultural movement has sown the seeds of a cultural revolution in the countryside and cities; but to make them grow into full fruition is as yet a task to be carried out in unity and with determination.

The sources of works that must be included in such an anthology are themselves testimonies of the way by



*Stream of protest consciousness capsulized*

weapon against foreign and feudal oppression were writers in the native languages. The entry of new by-lines, mostly of writers in English, in the third section signifies the widened influence of the open mass movement after the Aquino assassination which

“*Kamao* is a fitting tribute to the poets who persisted and endured or even died, keeping the flames of protest and revolutionary poetry alive.”

moved many middle class writers to the side of the anti-fascist struggle. *Kamao*, thus, offers a historical perspective through which the works and the poets included may be better appreciated.

The broad representation of works

trusted to elicit support for the program.

Finally, there is the problem of resources which stymie even some revolutionaries experienced in handling difficult situations when they visualize the enormous tasks of development.

No doubt the lack of financial resources with which to launch and carry out genuine land reform is very depressing and not a few knowledgeable and patriotic Filipinos are driven to depend on foreign loans and investments, even at the price of national independence and dignity, in order to offset

this deficiency.

But there are ways of resolving this problem, and means of generating financial resources sufficient to enable the NDF and its partners in the sharing of governmental responsibility to undertake genuine land reform. The mere “saving through austerity,” coupled with the judicious spending of both government and private sectors, will generate resources surpassing amounts of foreign aid and investments which do not do the country any real permanent good. **Delfin Castro**

which literary works are created in the protest and revolutionary movements. They also embody ideas of how a radical cultural movement proceeds historically to triumphant victory. Sources such as underground publications, institutional magazines and newsletters, small pamphlets, xeroxed and mimeographed collections, aside from clippings culled from legal media such as campus organs and the commercial press, indicate the necessity of creating new outlets of works and seizing opportunities in the establishment media. These tasks call for no less than resourcefulness and creativity not only in logistics and tactics but also in artistic versatility.

*Kamao* shows the wide range of possibilities in subverting and circumventing the restrictions imposed by an oppressive status quo. Ideas of revolution and protest penetrate establishment channels of enemy propaganda through for instance, an acrostic poem (see "Prometheus Unbound" by Ruben Cuevas), and challenge the hegemony of the regime through above-ground outlets such as institutional newsletters, magazines and campus organs (see *TFD Update, Philippine*

*Collegian, Liberation, Diliman Review*), and occasional pamphlets, journals and books by groups and individuals (see *Gellan, Pintig, Caracas, Filipina, and In Memoriam*).

Underground publications such as regional, sectoral and national newsletters, magazines and newspapers (see *Liberation, Ulos, Baringkuan, Silyab, Hulegpos, Larab, Asdang, Himagsik, Dangdang, Bangon, Pulang Silangan, Ranget, Daba-Daba, Balikwas, Ways-Waya, Tabak*), books (*Mga Tula ng Rebolusyong Pilipino, Magasaka: Ang Bayaning Di Kilala*), and typescripts (*War Poems from Panay* by Servando Magbanua, *Mga Tula ng Isang Pulang Mandirigma* by Wilfredo Gacosta) constitute the citadel of revolutionary creative writing. Surging forth with creative energies in the revolutionary movement and people's war, these outlets nurture an emergent people's literature. The revolutionary fire and consciousness shining forth in works from these sources embody experiences of supreme sacrifice and service to the people. Art being a transformative reflection of life and experience, these works of art challenge bourgeois aesthetic standards. The challenge springs

from a lived commitment of the poet-revolutionary to the cause of radical social and political change which involves a process that involves not only individuals but whole communities and collectives. And such a process requires that revolutionaries become teachers, organizers, researchers, or warriors and deal with the harsh realities of deprivation, poverty and ignorance of an oppressed people and the brutality of the regime. But out of their experiences is born a literature of a courageous, dignified, awakened and heroic people.

The next anthology of protest and revolutionary poetry will transcend the limitations of this volume. The forested path of research in this sphere has been partly cleared by *Kamao*. Future anthologies can enlarge the dimension of the collection to include poems that are sung and performed.

But the larger task is to win the day when people in any walk of life can write, perform, sing and publish songs freely, when poets need not hide behind pseudonyms, when the masses to whom anthologies like *Kamao* are dedicated can avail of a copy and read it.  
Juan Millaños

## THE BLADED POEM

Behold the bladed poem  
Tensile and razor-sharp  
Cold and glinting silver  
In the light or dark

See how the blackbird  
Of a hilt flies  
Bedecked with pearls  
On the firm mobile hand

Look at each face  
On the leaf of steel,  
The virile subtle flames,  
Edges of incised gold.

On the face are toll  
Varied with pike and ore  
Crucible, hammer and  
Water and wheat  
Plow and

The water in the sea,  
Catching and etching tools  
Bowl of acid on a table.

On the other face  
Are the same workmen massed  
Upright and poised to fight  
Behind the raincoat

The uprising completes  
The figures of labor  
And urges another surge  
With the well-versed weapon.

Grab all the bladed poem  
And let it sing in your hands.  
This kampilan is a talisman  
Of the people in red headbands.

JOSE MA. SISON



LIBRARY

LIBRARY

LIBRARY

LIBRARY

LIBRARY

LIBRARY

LIBRARY

LIBRARY

LIBRARY

LIBRARY

LIBRARY

LIBRARY

LIBRARY

LIBRARY

LIBRARY

Photo by Ana Escobar

Some months ago, Ruben, a LIB staffer, visited an NDF zone in Samar, where he immersed himself in the daily lives of peasants, NDF activists and guerrillas of the New People's Army. While there, Ruben was deeply touched not only by the warm camaraderie and ardent commitment of the people in the zone, but with the changes they have painstakingly wrought to secure their future.

---

**Visit the zones of the NDF  
and catch a glimpse of the new day dawning.**