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Editorial

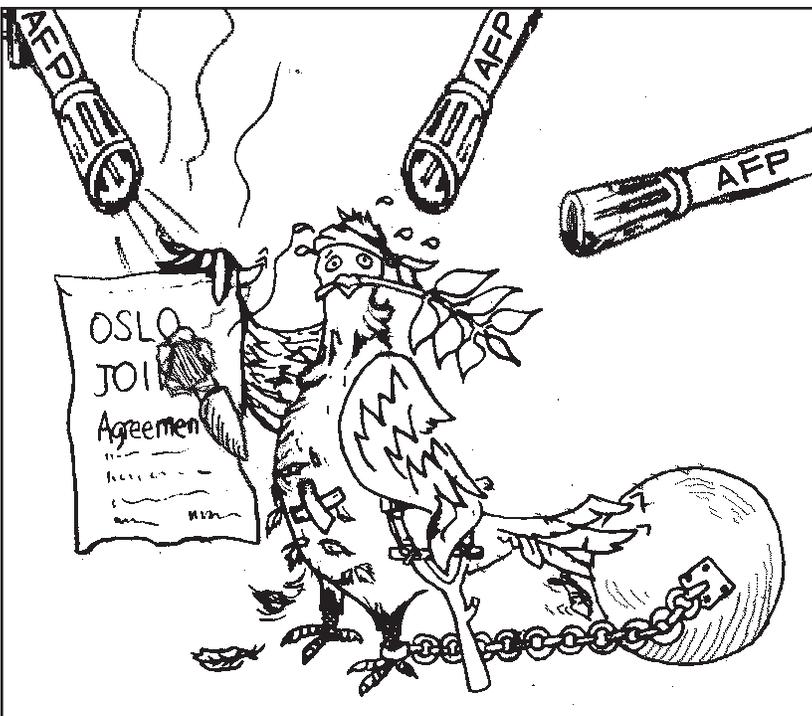
Peace talks to go through many more twists and turns

Malicious, deceptive, treacherous. These were the harsh words imparted by National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) peace panel chairman Luis Jalandoni on the Arroyo regime's attempt to violate the agreement in Oslo, Norway that the NDFP and the GRP had just signed on February 14.

The accord, considered the 11th important agreement signed by both panels since the start of the NDFP-GRP peace negotiations in 1986, was signed after four days of negotiations, the first of a series of formal talks after their suspension by the Arroyo regime in 2001.

The agreement stated the determination of both sides to advance the peace process and to address the roots of the armed conflict. In particular, both sides agreed to resolve the issue on the "terrorist" tag on the CPP, NPA and NDFP peace panel chief consultant Jose Maria Sison. The talks would also be conducted in accordance with the provisions of The Hague Joint Declaration, the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) and other previous bilateral agreements.

Before the talks proceeded, there was a major controversy and fierce contention over the listing that lasted almost two days. The NDFP panel asserted before the GRP panel that the Arroyo regime's



active campaign with regard to the terrorist listing violated the country's national sovereignty and was contrary to the spirit and letter of all previously signed agreements between the NDFP and the GRP.

In the joint statement it signed only in mid-January, the GRP agreed to undertake legal, political and diplomatic initiatives to have the CPP, NPA and Jose Maria Sison removed from the terrorist listings.

However, when this point came up for discussion, the GRP panel dissociated itself, saying it had no jurisdiction over the US and other countries maintaining such listings. The GRP feigned innocence regarding the campaign it launched in the US and Europe to have the CPP, NPA and Jose Maria Sison

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included in the list of "foreign terrorists" to pressure the revolutionary movement in the Philippines, pave the way for direct US intervention against the revolutionary movement in the country, and force the CPP and NPA to give up their firearms and surrender to the GRP.

Even worse, Malacañang directed the GRP peace panel to derail the discussion on this point and divert it towards calling for a halt to the revolutionary movement's policy on the Permit to Campaign (PTC) and the tactical offensives of the NPA and the surrender of the people's army's forces and weapons.

In its attempt to gain the upper hand, evade its responsibility to withdraw the labeling and shift responsibility to the CPP, the GRP insisted on the ludicrous condition that the Party, NPA and Jose Maria Sison must provide "legal and moral basis" why they no longer should be regarded as terrorists. The Party and the people's army need not prove that the listing is contrary to revolutionary principles and the CPP and NPA's propeople character and practice.

Despite all these attempts by the GRP to turn the tables on, and force the NDFP to its knees, it was the NDFP's principled stand that prevailed. The GRP agreed to take diplomatic steps, including requesting the government of Norway to convince its allies to remove the CPP, NPA and Jose Maria Sison from the "terrorist listings."

Nevertheless, no sooner had the GRP panel arrived in Manila when Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Teresita Quintos-Deles immediately declared that the GRP would not carry out its obligation.

Jalandoni strongly denounced the GRP for continuing to justify the US' violation of Philippine national sovereignty by usurping jurisdiction over revolutionary entities and developments in the Philippines and intervening in and violating the negotiations and agreements between the GRP and the revolutionary forces.

Within the GRP, the US militarist puppets in Malacañang and the AFP like Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita and the counter-revolutionary type of social-

democrats like Deles are the main actors meddling in and obstructing the peace process. While Deles insists that the US has the right to maintain a list of "terrorists," Ermita and AFP spokesperson Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero say that removing the CPP-NPA from the listing would hamper the AFP campaign to obliterate the operations and influence of the CPP-NPA in the countryside.

If the GRP simply renders meaningless and defiles the Oslo agreement as well as other agreements, especially provisions regarding the removal of the CPP-NPA and Jose Maria Sison from the list of "terrorists," there would be no basis for continuing the peace negotiations.

Just as what happened at the end of this series, we must expect many more twist and turns and complications in the process of peace negotiations as well as intense contention with the reactionary government in this field of struggle, alongside the continuous advance of protracted people's war until we achieve total victory.

We continue to firmly hold on to armed struggle as the principal and most reliable means of revolutionary struggle and the open mass struggles and parliamentary struggle as also very important but secondary means of struggle. At the same time, we persevere in and remain open to peace negotiations as an added arena of struggle as long as the other side also has the openness and determination to negotiate and come to agreement. In the absence of such determination on the part of the Arroyo regime, the NDFP is prepared to wait for a successor regime that would have greater interest to advance the peace process. AB

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People's gains from the Oslo agreement

Despite the twists and turns in the recently concluded stage of the peace process, the CPP, NDFP and the revolutionary movement achieved tactical victories in this series that may be of benefit to the people, barring the GRP's barefaced violation of the Oslo agreement.

At the minimum, the people stand to benefit from the Oslo agreement through the anticipated release of over 300 political prisoners, the indemnification of 10,000 victims of martial law (based on the list previously submitted by

the NDFP) and the establishment of the Joint Monitoring Committee which would serve as the conduit for complaints by millions of people who have been victimized by militarization, military abuses and the violation of their human rights.

The Oslo agreement called for the formation of the Reciprocal Working Committees on Social and Economic Reforms, which will prepare drafts for the second item in the substantive agenda of the peace negotiations.

It likewise reaffirmed The Hague

Joint Declaration of 1992 as the framework of the talks instead of the proposed Final Peace Agreement unilaterally framed by Malacañang as an agreement of surrender. The Norwegian government as the third party in the talks has likewise been given an enhanced role and has become more active—a recognition of the NDFP's belligerency status.

The people and the revolutionary movement may still be able to achieve more victories based on the course of the next round of talks. AB

JMC representatives selected

Both the NDFP and GRP have completed their respective lists of representatives for the soon-to-be established Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC). The Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) provides for the formation of the JMC as the monitoring body for the agreement's implementation and as a conduit for complaints on human rights violations.

The NDFP has appointed Comrades Fidel Agcaoili, Coni Ledesma and Danilo Borjal as its representatives while the GRP chose Rene Sarmiento, Jose Luis Martin Gascon and Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel.

The NDFP also named Iglesia Filipina Independiente Supreme Bishop Tomas Millamena and Marie Hilao-Enriquez of KARAPATAN and SELDA (Samahan ng mga Ex-Detainees Laban sa Detensyon at para sa Amnestiya) as observers, while the GRP named Mercy Contreras and Aileen Bacalzo.

The JMC is set to be formally constituted during its first meeting scheduled within 90 days. Nonetheless, it remains to be seen just how effective it will be and how far it could operate, especially since the reactionary government is utterly unprepared for it and the AFP has no interest to see it function.

Human rights activists murdered by military

THE fascist military has become more ruthless and more wanton in carrying out its counterrevolutionary war. This February, three human rights activists and anti-militarization advocates in Mindoro were brutally slain.

Vice Mayor Juvy Magsino of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro who chaired the Provincial Justice and Peace Council, and Leima Fortu, Secretary-General of KARAPATAN-Oriental Mindoro were killed on February 13. Men believed to be elements of the Philippine Army 204th Brigade blocked and peppered their vehicle with bullets in Pinasabangan-2, Naujan before shooting them at close range. The killings took place half a kilometer from the 204th Brigade camp.

On February 18, seven suspected military men abducted Adrian Alegria of Sta. Cruz, Mindoro Occidental from his house in Barangay Lumang Bayan, Sta. Cruz at around 2:30 in the morning. Alegria was an activist campaigning against militarization in Mindoro. The following day, his body was found floating in Amnay River in Sablayan town. His body bore marks of torture that he had to endure before being killed. He sustained a bullet wound in the chest and another in the nape which pierced through his face. He was stabbed seven times.

Magsino, Fortu and Alegria are merely the latest in an ever-growing list of victims of military violence not only in Mindoro but in the entire country as well.

The Communist Party and the entire revolutionary movement



Juvy Magsino

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Violence against progressive candidates and parties

Fascists are stopping progressive candidates and parties from running in the election in various parts of the country, as demonstrated once more by the merciless killing of Magsino, Fortu and Alegria. They were known not only as human rights advocates but as members of progressive parties that have now joined the fray of reactionary politics.

Magsino and Fortu were the 36th and 37th members of Bayan Muna slain by fascist forces since the party participated in reactionary elections in 2001.

As secretary-general of KARAPATAN and coordinator of Bayan Muna-Calapan City, Fortu faced many threats to her life.

Magsino, on the other hand, was running for mayor in Naujan. The fascists were deathly afraid of Magsino becoming mayor especially since she would easily win the forthcoming election as she stood for the people's progressive and nationalist interests. That she also enjoyed the support of politicians from the Lakas-CMD was an indication of how strong her candidacy was.

Alegria was a peasant youth leader and coordinator of Anakpawis in Sta. Cruz, Mindoro. Like Bayan Muna, its sister party Anakpawis has likewise been targetted for harassment by the military. Its organizers and members are closely watched and hounded.

On February 2, elements of the 61st IB arbitrarily arrested, interrogated and detained three Bayan Muna and Anak ng Bayan organizers in Barangay Molobolo, Cauayan, Negros. The military planted bullets and documents on Isabel Necessario, Anak ng Bayan member; Julie Tabat, Bayan Muna member; and Medardo Sayosa, also a member of Bayan Muna, and arbitrarily accused them of being NPA members. AB

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strongly condemn the murders of Magsino, Fortu and Alegria. They once again bring to the fore the mounting number of cases of killings of human rights activists. Last year, men believed to be elements of the 204th Brigade abducted and killed KARAPATAN-Southern Tagalog Secretary-General Eden Marcellana and KASAMA-TK chair Eddie Gumanoy, also in Naujan town.

These developments show that military violence has become more

brutal and more indiscriminate in a desperate attempt to contain the advance of the armed revolutionary movement. The Armed Forces of the Philippines is furious with activists who expose military abuses and violations of the people's human rights and uphold progressive and propeople interests.

It is Arroyo herself who encourages the military's unbridled rampage in Mindoro. Despite so many complaints against the military, Arroyo rewarded Col. Jovito

NPA seizes 27 firearms

THE NPA confiscated at least 27 firearms from the enemy in the last three weeks.

Masbate, February 16. Red fighters under the Romulo Jallores Command ambushed troops of the 506th PNP Provincial Mobile Group in Barangay Bagtas, Milagros, Masbate. It was around 2:30 in the afternoon when a convoy of combined PNP and Scout Ranger troops was hit by a command-detonated land mine, killing nine policemen including Sr. Insp. Santiago Tacordo Jr. Three other PNP elements were seriously wounded among the 12-strong PNP force.

Ilocos Sur, February 16. The NPA attacked a Special Operations Team (SOT) of the 50th IB that had stationed itself at the barangay hall of Qubit-Qubit, Sinit. Its team leader, a sergeant, was killed while three corporals were wounded.

Negros Occidental, February 15. Members of the Boy Gaitmaitan Command of the NPA in Negros attacked the CAFGU detachment in Barangay Mahalang, Himamaylan City. The NPA guerrillas seized three M14 and three Garand rifles before retreating. Two Red fighters, Ka Ricky Agrava and Ronnie Chavez, were killed in the fighting. Eight AFP soldiers were wounded.

Compostela Valley, February 14. An eight-member unit of the NPA attacked the "Linda" Detachment of the 1102nd Police Provincial Mobile Group in Barangay Fatima, Nabunturan. One policeman was killed in the first volley of

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fire. Another CAFGU element died while on the way to the hospital. One more policeman and a woman who was inside the detachment were also wounded. An NPA guerrilla offered his life in this tactical offensive.

The Red fighters confiscated three M16s, two M14s and a .45 pistol.

Quezon, February 9. The NPA ambushed the deputy chief of the Mauban PNP on February 9 at the town center. In a statement, the Apolonio Mendoza Command (NPA-Quezon) said SP03 Paulino Mancenido was a protector of the illegal drugs trade, illegal fishing, illegal logging and extortion activities.

Kalinga, February 8. Elements of the CAFGU under the 77th IB surrendered after being taken by surprise in an attack by an NPA platoon on their camp in Barangay Limos, Pinukpuk February 8. At the first volley of fire, the startled elements of the Philippine Army and CAFGU ran in retreat while two paramilitary forces were wounded. The Red fighters seized 13 M14 rifles with 1,319 bullets, a Garand with 81 bullets and a Motorola VHF radio. The NPA burned down the enemy camp before retreating.

Cagayan, February 1. Members of the Danilo Ben Command in western Cagayan ambushed elements of the 17th IB, killing five troopers and wounding a CAFGU element in the first volley of fire. An M16 rifles was also confiscated in the ambush launched in Barangay Illuru Sur, Rizal.

The troops were on patrol in the barrios of Rizal, Piat, Sto. Niño and Lasam when they were ambushed by the NPA.

Oriental Mindoro, January 25. An NPA platoon victoriously engaged troops of the 19th Special Forces Company in a firefight in Sitio Gumatos, Barangay Hagan, Bongabong. The soldiers were cornered into the ambush site after giving chase to a comrade who lured them into the trap. Three elements of the SFC were killed while several others were wounded. AB

Expanding the revolutionary instructors' pool in Camarines Sur



With tens of millions of peasants in the country's vast semi-feudal countryside to draw into the revolution, the New People's Army (NPA) and local revolutionary mass organizations' (RMO) ability to develop instructors is undeniably important. A platoon in one of the guerrilla fronts of Camarines Sur in Bicol took extra efforts last year to strengthen the educational machinery in its area with excellent results.

During the platoon's assessment last June, Ka Nell, political officer and tasked with taking the lead in educational work, asked "What else can we do?" The unit's area of responsibility covered mountainous, lowland and coastal barangays of some tens of thousands of people. Expansion and consolidation were fruitful, resulting in over a hundred organizing groups, organizing committees and full-fledged mass organizations. But because the platoon's nine instructors and local mass organizations' few dozen were stretched thin, many targets for basic mass courses weren't being met.

"Yet," stressed Ka Nell, "the mass courses are so important for firing initiative and more active involvement in revolutionary work and struggles." Ka Mel, platoon leader and grizzled veteran from the 1980s, added: "One of the lessons we drew from the errors in the past is that the political awareness of our mass organizations is critical for them to truly think and act revolutionary. Our education work is vital." A long-time local Party leader and famously patient and diligent instructor, Ka Mark, also shared that their local Party branch could have even more education sessions if only they had more texts.

Then and there, the territory's current education machinery was identified, its weaknesses assessed and then a plan to strengthen the area's all-important National Democratic School drawn up.

A Mass Course Instructor's Training (MCIT) was held as soon as possible after the assessment for instructors from the ranks of the



full-time Red fighters and from the local mass organizations. The organizers were swamped with requests to attend because it was initially announced as open not only to novice instructors but also to those who wanted to become instructors for the first time. As with many such activities, not everyone could be accommodated and the eagerness of the comrades and the masses had to be tempered by security and logistical concerns.

The two-week training successfully pushed through with participants from the platoon, neighboring guerilla units and local organizations. Ka Sammy, one of the trainers, noted laughingly: "Comrades were still a little shy at the start but by the practicum at the end of the training, you virtually had to restrain everyone because they didn't want to stop at giving just short sections of the courses as practice!" The training was extended to give extra practicum time because, he smiles, "that kind of enthusiasm you just have to seize and build on."

It was also decided that novice instructors be tasked to give trainings through a buddy-system with two or three of them dividing a course between themselves. A more experienced instructor would discreetly monitor them as they taught and a criticism-self criticism session would quickly follow to see strengths and weaknesses. The MCIT earlier made these "on-the-job-trainings" easier by increasing the novices' confidence and by equipping them with an initial set of lesson plans, visual aids and cultural numbers.

The shift to the platoon from the armed propaganda units as the basic formation was an important facilitating factor. Now, the more advanced cadres could more easily

train the newer instructors even if just by helping them overcome their anxieties. Ka Paulo who only finished the third grade but was bold in giving the Short Course in Philippine Society and Revolution (SCPSR) recalls how he used to freeze in front of the class and just feel like hiding behind the reference text in his hand. At those times, he now grins when remembering, "an encouraging nod and a smile from a comrade in the back may have been the only thing that boosted my confidence."

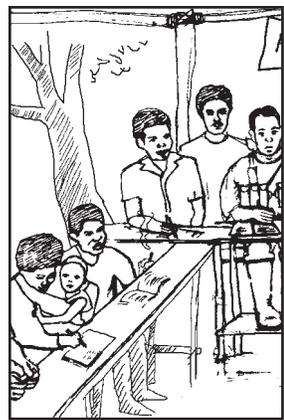
Outside of actual sessions, discussions of basic revolutionary theory and principles were encouraged to sharpen everyone's grasp of them. The vice platoon leader and sometimes too serious Ka Charlie admits, "actually it's when comrades start making spontaneous jokes taking off from revolutionary theory that you confirm how deep their understanding of it already is." He also smilingly notes the advantage of camps sometimes being quieter with some of the naughtier comrades settling down instead to read. "Oh, and we have yet to really get our internal literacy program going but hopefully we'll get around to it soon," he adds.

The platoon also took pains to come up with more texts and visual aids. With the help of allies in the city, they were able to come up with some 50 books compiling the basic courses. Half were in full 8-1/2"x11" size pages and printed in large letters to be given to local instructors; the rest were in handy quarter-size volumes easily stored in Red fighters' backpacks. Visuals for the courses were drawn with

pentel pens on cartolina and old calendars, made sturdier against tearing by taping their edges, or silk-screened on cloth. Maps, pictures and even an inflatable globe were collected.

By the end of the year, half of the platoon were able to confidently give at least some basic mass courses apart from the solid core that could give even the more advanced Party courses. The lack of instructors is no longer a problem even when the platoon breaks up into squads for mass work over an extended area. Education committees of local RMOs, the backbone of the territory's education machinery, are stronger than ever.

The unit's greater confidence in propaganda work is also noticeable.



Ka Ren dropped out before finishing the sixth grade to give way to his youngest brothers who were just starting grade school. Yet he says, still surprised at himself, "sometimes I find myself discussing at length national issues with schoolteachers and businessmen or land reform with farmers old enough to be my grandfather."

At first glance, it might seem that the teachers of the NPA and RMOs are hobbled by low levels of formal education. Overwhelmingly drawn from the impoverished peasant masses, many of the comrades had to stop schooling at an early age to help work on their fields or simply because their families couldn't afford it. But sheer determination borne of revolutionary spirit goes a long way. For many all it took was building up the confidence to at least try first for them to realize that, indeed, they could be good revolutionary instructors. AB



Ka Basil, a great revolutionary

"Ka Basil's own history in the revolution may also be said to be the history of the entire Southern Tagalog region. He partook of all of the revolution's twists and turns and leaps in this region. It was here that he went through all the bitter phases of conducting revolutionary work, of loving and raising a family. And it was also here that he had a taste of the joyous moments and sweet victories in the revolution's advance." - Ka Higom Maragang

On February 6, Mabini Permalu Fabon, 52, also known as Ka Basil, Ka Romy, Ka Andoy, Ka Benny, Ka Albert, Ka Bitoy and recently, Ka Apolinario, died while being transported to Batangas to receive treatment due to a sudden grave illness. Ka Basil was one of the revolutionaries who had served in Southern Tagalog the longest. His life mirrors the history of the revolutionary movement in the region.

Ka Basil was a member of the Kabataang Makabayan (KM) when martial law was imposed in 1972. He was one of 15 activists who voluntarily headed for the Cavite countryside to organize the masses and seek out the New People's Army. In 1974, through the national leadership of the KM with whom he maintained links, he was sworn in as a candidate member of the Party. He lived in the mountainous areas of Cavite and deeply rooted himself among the peasants until 1976. He used Party documents to guide him in his organizing work as he awaited contact with the NPA. He was able to join the people's army in the Quezon-Bicol Zone (QBZ) by December 1976.

Assigned to Tagkawayan, Quezon in 1977, it was there that he fully grasped how to conduct expansion and consolidation work in a guerrilla front in accordance with the strategy of protracted people's war. At this time, the NPA's operations covered the expanse of the QBZ and for the first time

reached the towns of Ragay and Lupi in Camarines Sur. Ka Basil contributed immensely to the development of education work, especially through the use of visual aids that helped peasants comprehend courses more quickly. It was also at this time that Ka Basil became a full-fledged member of the Party.

He was briefly assigned to propaganda work in 1980 where he oversaw the publication of *Kalatas*, the region's revolutionary newspaper. But in the same year, he was transferred to an organizing unit at the border of Batangas-Laguna-Quezon to expand the scope of NPA operations in the area. The NPA successfully began revolutionary work in Lipa, Padre Garcia, Rosario, Taysan, San Juan and Lobo in eastern Batangas despite the AFP's intense operations.

But the unit to which Ka Basil belonged endured harsh blows. In 1982, his unit was encircled and virtually wiped out in Lipa, where only Ka Basil and one other comrade survived. Nevertheless, Ka Basil's persistence and determination did not diminish.

It was then that he seriously entertained thoughts of marriage and family within the framework of his revolutionary work in the countryside. He married his sweetheart on March 29, 1985 in a cave in Mt. Banoy in Batangas in the midst of an intense enemy military operation in the area.

By 1985, he participated in the



second regional conference and was elected a regular member of the Party Regional Committee in ST.

In 1988, he was victimized by Operation Missing Link (OPML), the anti-infiltration hysteria carried out in ST. He was among those released when the Party leadership conducted a review of the campaign and put a stop to it. With the help of comrades, he summed up his experience as an OPML victim and strove to overcome its physical and psychological effects on him. He immediately subsumed himself to the framework of setting right the organization, maintained links with comrades and performed revolutionary tasks that he was capable of doing as he recovered. While recuperating, he did what he could to help alleviate his wife and only child's economic problems.

All the while, he continued to read the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao, upheld the basic principles and outlook of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and held fast to his determination as a revolutionary. Not long after, he decided to work once more for the revolution on a full-time basis.

When the Second Great Rectification Movement (SGRM) was launched in 1992, he immediately embraced its lessons and faced its challenges. Forthwith, he responded to the Party's call to reaffirm



basic principles, which included firmly upholding armed struggle. Even as he remained determined to work anew in a guerrilla front, he was first assigned to carry out revolutionary work in the city.

In 1998, he rejoined the NPA. He was entrusted the responsibility of overseeing a district-size guerrilla front in Quezon.

Comrades admired his unfaltering dedication to the revolution despite the pain and hardships that he endured in rejoining the NPA and leading a guerrilla front. Battle wounds, the occasional pangs of hunger and other sacrifices in waging revolution were of no consequence to him.

He quickly overcame these trials and remained steadfast in the midst of militarization that ravaged the guerrilla front that he had been assigned to. Not long afterwards, he was deployed to Mindoro.

His over three-year stint in Eastern Mindoro gave him renewed vigor and hope in advancing the revolution. He recollected the many experiences he had accumulated in his revolutionary work in Cavite, the Quezon-Bicol Zone, Batangas and Laguna. Comrades recognized the value of his wealth of knowledge and experience.

Even as he thoroughly valued the lessons of the SGRM, he further saw and grasped its finer points, especially in rectifying previous weaknesses in mass work and in the NPA's other tasks. He did not falter, but rather was challenged even more to further rectify and better himself in his new disposition.

All of the comrades who came to know him salute his outstanding positive qualities. He was a great example to comrades who fell victim to OPML, strove to overcome it and embrace and uphold the SGRM. He was resolute amid hardship and sacrifice, had no vices, was disciplined with respect to his actions and his health, and never craved for comfort, special food or ostentation. AB

(Drawn from "A Red Salute to Comrade Basil, Great Martyr of the Philippine Revolution"—a statement by Ka Higom Maragang, spokesperson of the Lucio de Guzman Command, Mindoro Island, February 8, 2004.)

The bitter taste of sugar in Negros

A crisis is brewing in the sugar sector. There is a huge possibility that a famine like that which occurred in the first half of the 1980s will once again hit Negros, especially since the island's economy depends solely on sugar production. Fifty-six percent of the total 2.2 million metric ton (MT) sugar production for Crop Year (CY) 2002-2003 came from Negros.



Plummeting price of sugar. Sugar prices have been on a free fall in the world and local markets. From P880 per 50-kilo bag, the mill gate price fell to P660 in December 2003. It plunged even further to P638 in the last week of January 2004.

The five largest sugar importers and traders (Lucky Two Trading, La Perla, Vision Marketing, Victorias Marketing and Makati Agro Marketing) are responsible for the continued decline in the price of local sugar. They monopolize the importation and exportation, milling, pricing, marketing, financing, supply and storage of sugar nationwide and are in close collusion with government agencies. They have as their accomplices the brothers Jose Miguel (Mike) and Ignacio (Iggy) Arroyo, who give the go-signal to and are themselves involved in large-scale sugar smuggling. San Miguel Corporation chair Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco also benefits from large-scale sugar importation and in the decline of local sugar prices.

High production costs. Local sugar producers saddled by high production costs are at a great disadvantage competition-wise as sugar prices collapse due to the dumping of imported sugar in the local market. Production costs rose in CY 2003 by an average P715 for every 50-kilo bag due to the rising cost of fertilizer and other inputs. But the price of a bag of sugar was only over P600.

In addition, "technical smuggling" or the sale in the local consumer market of cheap imported sugar (from Thailand, Vietnam, China and Australia) intended for industrial use, has already become the norm. An estimated 120,000 to 150,000 metric tons of local sugar is displaced from the local market with the entry of pre-mixed sugar concentrates (used in fruit juices by food and food processing companies).

Because of all of this, big and medium sugar planters have had to do with reduced earnings, vices and luxuries. Many of those in debt have foreclosed on their bank mortgages.

But the most seriously affected are the approximately 14,000 sugar planters who own five hectares or less of cane fields. They have little or no capital to increase production and are forced to



sell their sugar at extremely low prices.

Further immiseration. As a result, 581,000 workers in the sugar centrals and refineries as well as farm workers and peasants, not to mention the five million people nationwide (3.2 million of them in Negros) who depend on the sugar sector for their livelihood face intensifying hardships.

Their wages remain low, far from insufficient, and they hardly receive any benefits. According to the National Federation of Sugar Workers, the actual minimum daily wage in the haciendas ranges from P30 to P100. The so-called P140 to P169 minimum daily wage exists only on paper. With imperialist globalization, sugar sector workers also remain as contractuales and casuals. Moreover, as a result of the "flexible labor" policy, many of them are being laid off, joining the ranks of the growing army of the unemployed. In 2001, DOLE reported that over 70% of the total 210,000 unemployed in Western Visayas were found in Negros.

The particular crisis in the sugar sector can be traced to the decadent semifeudal and semicolonial system and the total subservience of puppet governments like the Arroyo regime to imperialist globalization. As long as the rotten and oppressive ruling system is not changed completely, so long as there is no genuine land reform program and the attendant national industrialization, the wretchedness of the sugar sector will persist. ■

Against imperialist globalization and wars of aggression

Mumbai Resistance 2004, a success

Mumbai Resistance 2004 Against Imperialist Globalization and War (MR 2004) was launched successfully from January 17 to 20 in India. The four-day gathering was part of persistent efforts to advance a strong global anti-imperialist movement.

Over 1,000 representatives from 310 organizations, parties and movements from various countries attended the meeting to unite on the need to tread the path of militant struggle against imperialism and reaction. On the last day of the meeting, several tens of thousands of members and supporters of the organizations and movements under MR 2004 held a huge rally and marched to the US embassy in Mumbai. They were one on the need to thoroughly oppose imperialist globalization and wars of aggression.

MR 2004 is a contribution to the effort to unite the ranks of peoples oppressed by imperialism and strengthen their opposition and struggle. Within those four days, the voices of opposition reverberated in Mumbai against plunder and aggression perpetrated by US imperialism and other imperialists and their agents against the peoples and many of the world's countries.

MR 2004 comprehensively covered major issues in relation to imperialist globalization, war and class struggle, and the various methods and conduits of struggle towards the realization of national and social lib-



eration. After two days set aside for discussion, the participants of MR 2004 united, pledged and signed the Mumbai Declaration. MR 2004 was held simultaneously with the World Social Forum (WSF) which was also being conducted in Mumbai, to expose the WSF leadership's reformism and compromise with the imperialists. (A news item released in AB's previous issue failed to point out the WSF's true character and the holding of MR 2004 as its counterpoint.)

Many forces in the WSF truly want to resist imperialism. But they fail to realize their objective because the WSF is constantly mired in endless discussions and debates. Their initiatives are stifled because of the absence of internal democracy.

The WSF is dominated by Trotskyites, social-democratic reformists and NGO bureaucrats. They cooperate with operatives of the US CIA and are funded by the Ford Foundation to gloss over the fundamental issues of imperialist plunder and exploitation and obstruct the path of people's militant struggle.

The formation of the WSF was supported and funded by the imperialists as a reaction to the militant anti-imperialist protest actions against the World Trade Organization in Seattle in 1999 and the formation

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Drivers and operators strike

DRIVERS and operators waged public transport strikes, paralyzing Metro Cebu on February 10 and Bulacan province on February 16.

The strike in the cities of Cebu, Lapu-Lapu and Mandaue which was led by NADSU (Naghiusang Drayber sa Sugbo) paralyzed 98% of all transportation.

PISTON-Bulacan and the Bulacan Transportation Alliance (BATAS), meanwhile, led the transportation strike in Bulacan that almost completely paralyzed public transportation in the province. The striking drivers and operators demanded a fare increase. Almost all schools province-wide, from the primary to the college level, were forced to suspend classes. The strike extended all the way to Pampanga and Nueva Ecija.

The price of crude oil has gone up from P13.75 per liter in October 2000 to P18.41 per liter this February, without corresponding fare hikes. At the same time, the daily earnings of the average driver fell from P186.25 in 2000 to P119.75 the following year. The drivers demanded an additional P1.50 to P2.00 increase in the fares of public vehicles for the first five kilometers and beyond this, an additional 37 centavos in Metro Manila and 18 centavos in the provinces.

Silence on rape case assailed

MIGRANTE International assailed the silence, if not the complicity, of the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO) with the employer of a Filipino domestic helper in Taiwan accused of raping her. "Rose," a domestic helper, filed a case of rape against her employer Elmer Fung, a former Taiwanese legislator. Instead of aiding in the prosecution, MECO quietly supported the move to send Rose home immediately. There are suspicions that MECO was also aware of Fung's attempts to buy Rose's silence. The Philippine government has not even filed a diplomatic protest on the grounds that no diplomatic relations exist between the two countries.

Trade deficit swells

THE country's trade deficit has grown six-fold since 2002, swelling from \$218 million to \$1.697 billion. This is principally due to the increase in the country's imports. One of the items posting the largest increase was the importation of electronic parts used for the assembly of semi-manufactured exports.

CPA demands halt to Mining Act

THE Cordillera Peoples' Alliance (CPA) has challenged the Arroyo regime to immediately implement the Supreme Court decision on January 29 declaring major provisions of the Mining Act of 1995 unconstitutional. The Mining Act allows foreigners 100% ownership of mines. In this regard, the CPA demanded that all contracts entered into by the government with foreign mining corporations be nullified.

The court's decision runs counter to Executive Order 270 which the regime enacted to remove all impediments to the implementation of the Mining Act.

Bombo Radyo closure in Isabela strongly condemned

THE National Democratic Front-Northeastern Luzon (NDF-NEL) strongly condemned the Dy dynasty's closure of Radyo Bombo dzNC-Cauayan on February 17. In a statement, NDF-NEL spokesperson Salvador del Pueblo called the closure a travesty of the people's freedom and their right to free expression.

Hundreds of Isabela residents led by the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN-Isabela) marched to the city hall of Cauayan City on February 20 to show their strong opposition to the Dy family's suppression. BAYAN announced that other multisectoral groups will be carrying out a series of rallies to demand the reopening of the radio station.

Cauayan mayor Ceasar Dy claimed that he refused to grant an operating permit and gave orders for Bombo Radyo's closure for its failure to pay taxes and for violating certain ordinances. This is the second time that the mayor has ordered dzNC closed because of its intense attacks on the corruption, warlordism and authoritarianism of the Dy dynasty, which has long controlled reactionary politics in Isabela.

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of the militant and anti-imperialist International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS) that same year.

In exposing the true character of the WSF, MR 2004 invites forces

seeking genuine and meaningful ways of waging resistance to imperialism and reaction to unite in militant action.

MR 2004 identified imperialism as the root cause of the pover-

ty and oppression suffered by the world's peoples and backward countries. MR 2004 believes that it is but fitting for peoples of the world to completely overthrow imperialism. AB