



ANG

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Editorial

## The New People's Army will intensify its armed offensives

**T**he New People's Army (NPA) is set to launch more numerous armed offensives against the US-Arroyo regime in response to the Central Committee's call to intensify the armed revolution in the face of the unparalleled crisis besetting the country. It is also

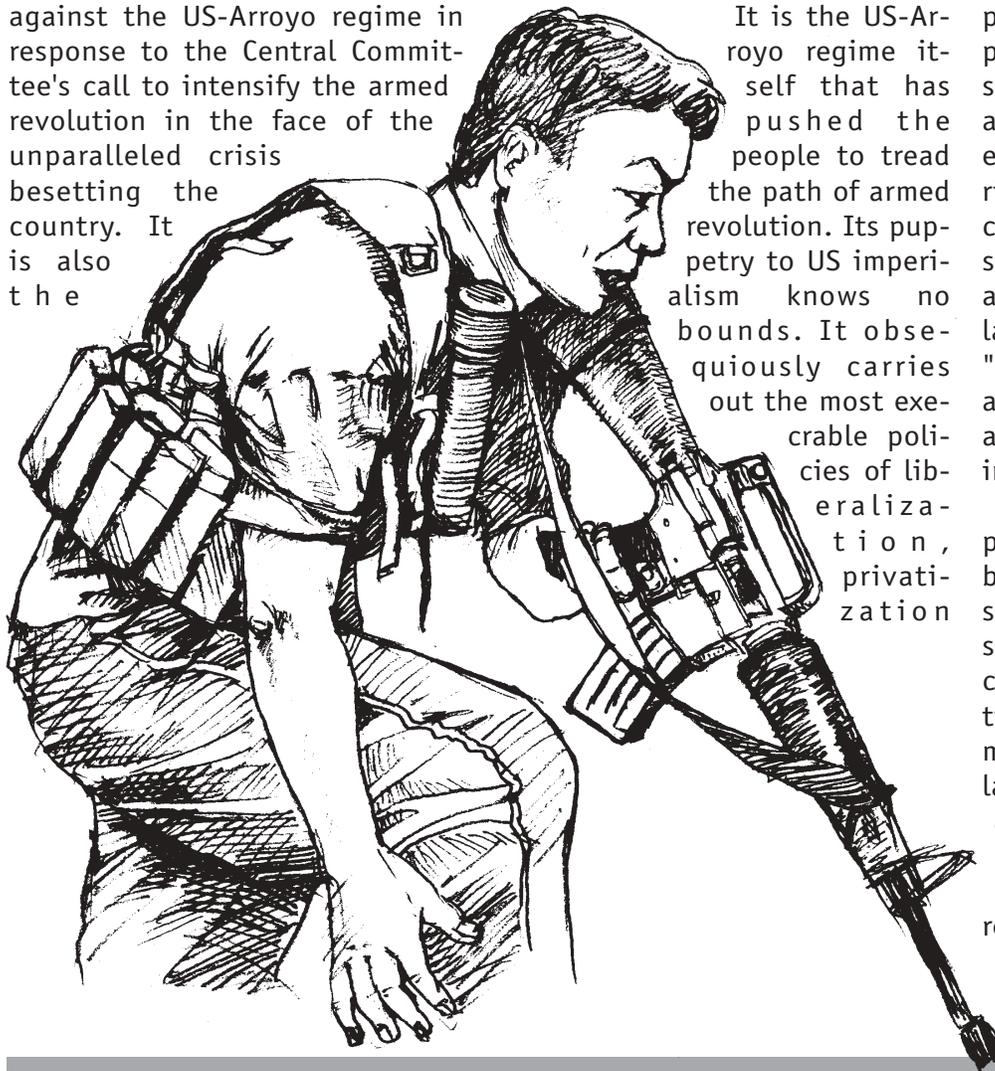
NPA's response to the people's urgent demand to punish the Arroyo regime.

It is the US-Arroyo regime itself that has pushed the people to tread the path of armed revolution. Its puppetry to US imperialism knows no bounds. It obsequiously carries out the most execrable policies of liberalization, privatization

and deregulation. It colludes with foreign corporate giants that relentlessly extract super-profits from the impoverished people. It is unable to hide the stench of its own rotteness emanating from the incessant jockeying among its ranks and the series of anomalies and corruption cases that have been exposed. It stupidly supports the US' imperialist aggression and parrots the latter's tiresome litany of waging "counter-terrorist war" to rationalize its own fascist aggression against the people and invite US intervention in the country.

The mass movement of a people who have no other recourse but to take action and wage resistance is bound to grow stronger. It will rock to the very core the already shaky foundations of the US-Arroyo regime. Simultaneously, the NPA will launch bigger, more numerous, and more frequent tactical offensives to support efforts to isolate and overthrow the regime.

It will expand and intensify guerrilla warfare to reach more



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districts and municipalities and compel the enemy's armed forces to overextend itself over more areas of the country and weaken its hold on strategic guerrilla fronts where the AFP is now concentrated.

The combination of massive demonstrations and intensified armed offensives has repeatedly proven to be effective in hastening the downfall of a regime in power. It will not be able to overthrow the entire system, but it will be able to expand and consolidate the democratic and revolutionary movement that will persist in taking action and waging resistance against the ruling system until victory is achieved.

Launching people's war within the framework of the new-democratic revolution is the most reliable and most effective means of resolving the crisis. Only with its victory can it be possible to implement the basic policies that will put an end to the rule of US imperialism and local big bureaucrat capitalists and landlords over the country. AB

### NPA in Cagayan punishes abusive AFP unit

THE New People's Army (NPA) Henry Abraham Command in Cagayan meted out severe punishment on the abusive 17th IB on September 30. In a statement, National Democratic Front-Northeastern Luzon spokesperson Salvador del Pueblo said seven enemy troops were killed and six wounded in an ambush launched by Red fighters in Sitio Ladac, Caruppian, Baggao. The NPA confiscated two M14s, two M16s, communications equipment and other war matériel and documents with high intelligence value.

The ambushed troops were part of the brigade-size Operation Phantom which has been launching strike operations in the towns of Baggao, Gattaran and Alcala for the past three months.

The masses have long demanded the punishment of the 17th IB because of its involvement in summary killings, repression and intimidation of peasants, the forcible use of minors as guides in their military operations, the destruction of crops and stealing peasants' farm animals.

After the fighting, the NPA administered first aid to wounded enemy troops who had surrendered or had been rendered hors de combat.

### NPA ambushes Philippine Army soldiers in Zamboanga Sibuguey

THREE elements of the Philippine Army 38th Special Forces Company were killed in an ambush on September 29 by a unit of the Wilson Feliciano Command of the New People's Army (NPA) in Western Mindanao. The ambush was launched in Barangay Peñaranda, Kabasalan, Zamboanga Sibuguey.

The soldiers were part of a 13-man squad that was on patrol at

around 8 a.m. An undetermined number of enemy soldiers were also wounded, while the NPA did not sustain a single casualty.

In a statement, Ismael Marte, the CPP-NPA's spokesperson in the region said the fighting that took place near an AFP detachment lasted until 9:15 in the morning. The ambushed troops were part of the 102nd Infantry Brigade's maneuver force.

The 102nd Brigade admitted to sustaining only one dead and one wounded. But it rained howitzer shells on civilian communities in mountainous areas of Barangay Diampak, which they believe to be an NPA bastion.



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Marte strongly condemned the shelling as a flagrant violation of the CARHRIHL and international conventions of war.

## NPA rescues detained guerrilla

THE Ka Paking Guimbaolibot Red Partisan Brigade of the New People's Army in Southern Mindanao rescued Jordan Donillo (Ka Jovan) in a 10-minute operation on September 30, at around 8:30 a.m. in Km. 74, Mawab, Compostela Valley.

Ka Jovan and four other detainees were riding a vehicle owned by the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) and were on their way to Nabunturan town guarded by four PNP/BJMP personnel when the rescue operation was launched.

The Red partisans flagged down the vehicle but were forced to open fire when its driver refused to stop. Seized from the wounded guards were three 9 mm pistols, a .45, a shotgun and a VHF radio.

It is the NPA's policy and practice to look for and seize opportunities to rescue any comrade from military torturers and murderers and from the reactionaries' corrupt justice system. This is a far cry from the AFP and PNP's policy that gives importance only to the welfare of captured officers and neglects that of the others.

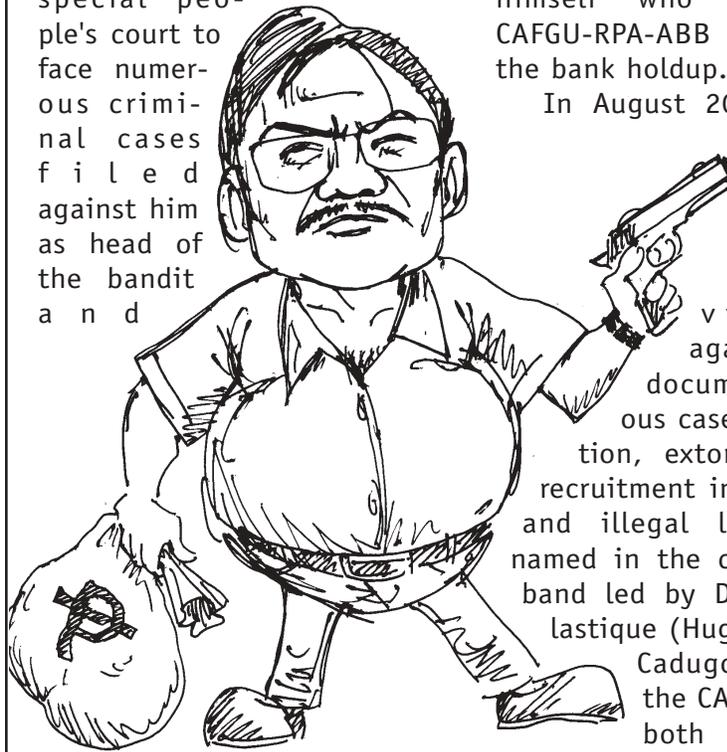
To hide their shame, the PNP spun the yarn that Ka Jovan was seized by the NPA to make him face trial for allegedly giving valuable information to the enemy.

Meanwhile, in a related development, an NPA platoon attacked the Magdum Wood Corp. in San Isidro, Davao Oriental on September 19, seizing several high-powered firearms. An NPA unit likewise raided a PNP detachment in Pantukan, Compostela Valley that same day, killing a policeman.

# Arturo Tabara, hardened criminal and rabid counterrevolutionary

Arturo Tabara, a hardened criminal and rabid counterrevolutionary, was being arrested by a special unit of the New People's Army (NPA) on September 26 in Quezon City in compliance with the order of a special people's court. But because he was armed and resisted arrest, the NPA unit that was to take him into custody was forced to defend itself, killing Tabara in the encounter. His companion, Stephen Ong, who was also armed and who had attempted to defend Tabara, was likewise killed.

Tabara was being arrested by order of a recently formed special people's court to face numerous criminal cases filed against him as head of the bandit and



paramilitary group, the CAFGU-RPA-ABB.

Tabara's list of crimes against the people and the revolutionary movement has grown long, especially since he bolted the Party in 1992. He was accused of, among others, ordering a bank holdup in Manihon, Bayawan, Negros Oriental on May 8, 2002 that led to the death of four bank

employees. According to the charge sheet, it was Tabara himself who ordered the CAFGU-RPA-ABB to carry out the bank holdup.

In August 2003, residents of Panay island also filed complaints of human rights violations against Tabara, documenting various cases of intimidation, extortion, forcible recruitment into the CAFGU and illegal logging. Also named in the complaint is a band led by Demetrio Capiastique (Hugo) and Rufino Cadugo (Rocky) of the CAFGU-RPA-ABB, both of them also assets of the Military Intelligence Group.

Tabara's name was likewise included in a complaint of coercion perpetrated by elements of the CAFGU-RPA-ABB manning checkpoints and launching joint military operations with the Philippine Army detrimental to the people in many areas in Panay. The people charged that Tabara directly authorized these operations as

part of the settlement between the Arroyo government and the CAFGU-RPA-ABB.

Cases of armed extortion had likewise been filed before the special people's court against Tabara, among them a case wherein Tabara gave a direct order to the CAFGU-RPA-ABB to collect at least ₱1,200 monthly from every barangay within their area of operations in Panay and to extort money from trucks transporting logs in these areas.

Tabara was also charged with allowing the CAFGU-RPA-ABB to be used as paid goons in demolitions of poor residents of Boracay Island in Malay, Aklan. He is likewise charged with allowing his armed minions to serve as hired killers and goons of big politicians and businessmen in Negros and Panay, like Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco; Gov. George Arnaiz of Negros Oriental; former Don Salvador Benedicto, Negros Occidental mayor Nene de la Cruz; Mayor Santiago Barcelon of Escalante, Negros Occidental; and

Congressman Ignacio Arroyo, Gloria Arroyo's brother-in-law.

Documents in the possession of the special people's court also reveal that Tabara allowed the CAFGU-RPA-ABB to be used by Cojuangco in unleashing terrorism and repression against peasants in his extensive mango, cassava and corn plantations in Negros.

Tabara is charged with authorizing his troops to murder 70-year-old Pedro Trabajador (Tay Pedring) on March 1, 2002 as he was on his way home to Sitio Tanquito, Barangay Mabini, Escalante City. Trabajador was a member of the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW), which actively opposed the Cojuangco camp's large-scale seizure of peasants' lands in the area to expand its cassava and corn plantations.

Aside from Negros and Panay, there were ongoing investigations of reports that Tabara was providing armed protection to the Red Vigilantes Group, a

syndicate involved in illegal drugs, kidnapping-for-ransom and other gangster activities in Nueva Ecija.

Also brought before the special people's court were numerous complaints against Tabara's criminal and gangster activities while he was still with the revolutionary movement. The most prominent among them involved Tabara's embezzlement of over ₱15 million in Communist Party funds. The investigation revealed that the money has been given for safekeeping to a friend of Tabara's—a lieutenant-colonel in the AFP—and is presently deposited in the US.

Also filed before the special people's court is a case involving the 1989 kidnapping of Bombo Radyo-Philippines owner and president Roger Florete in Iloilo City. Florete's kidnapping was carried out in collusion with then NPA General Command chief Romulo Kintanar. Florete reportedly paid them a ₱15 million ransom before he was freed. **AB**

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## Collaboration between Tabara and the reactionary regime

**T**abara chaired the anti-communist RPMP-RPA, founding it after he was expelled from the Party in 1992 because of his criminal accountabilities to the Party and the revolutionary movement.

In 1997, he merged his forces with the ABB led by Nilo de la Cruz (alias Sergio Romero) with the aim of continuing their criminal activities and fighting the NPA.

The RPA-ABB is directly supported and funded by the Arroyo regime, with the AFP supplying it with arms. It serves as the private army of Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco and other big landlords in

Negros. It forged an agreement with the Estrada regime in December 2000, and with the Arroyo regime in February 2001.

It was the Tabara-de la Cruz cabal, supported by the criminal syndicate headed by former Philippine National Police chief Panfilo Lacson, that was behind the killing of Filemon "Popoy" Lagman in February 2001. They had fought over the ₱400 million bribe given to Lagman by the Public Estates Authority (PEA)-Amari for the eviction of thousands of poor families from Freedom Island in Parañaque.

In the "clarification document" signed by Tabara and the

Arroyo regime in February 2001, the RPA-ABB was designated as a "special militia" that would coordinate with the AFP in operations against the NPA. For this purpose, the Arroyo regime agreed to issue high-powered firearms to the RPA-ABB, which later came to be known as the "CAFGU-RPA" under the AFP's 3rd Infantry Division.

As a result of such collusion, the RPA-ABB has played an active role in the murder of cadres and members of the Party and the NPA, and in the massive dislocation and suffering of the peasant masses due to military operations launched by combined forces of the RPA-ABB and the AFP. **AB**

# Fascist violence and deception go hand in hand with imperialist mining in Samar

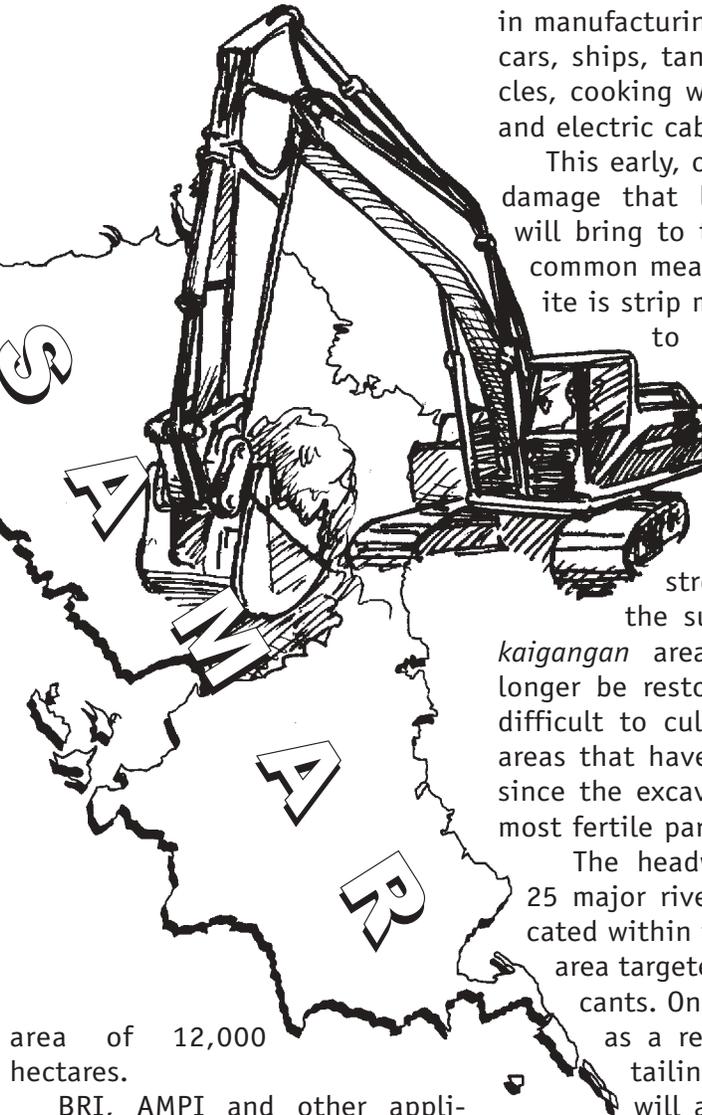
**M**ilitarization has intensified in the towns of San Jose de Buan, San Jorge, Matuguinao, Oras, Paranas, Canavid, Motiong, Jiabong, Dolores and Maslog in Samar island, with peasants in the last four towns suffering the largest number of human rights violations. This is also where planned mining operations in the island are to be concentrated.

No less than the Armed Forces of the Philippines has admitted that the intense military operations are actually clearing operations for planned "development projects" which are none other than large-scale mining operations in the island to be led by imperialist corporations.

Bauxite Resources, Inc. (BRI) and Alumina Mining of the Philippines, Inc. (AMPI) have already begun active mining exploration. Meanwhile, 16 other companies are just waiting for their applications to be approved before embarking on exploration activities. Once given the go-signal, their operations will cover 86,700 hectares.

There were likewise 30 companies that filed applications in 2003 to launch mining operations in 97,256 hectares of Leyte.

BRI's operations cover San Jose de Buan, Matuguinao, San Jorge and Gandara towns, while those of AMPI cover the municipalities of Motiong, Hinabangan and Paranas, all in Western Samar. Their concessions cover an overall



area of 12,000 hectares.

BRI, AMPI and other applicants are extremely interested in Samar's bauxite deposits. Bauxite is the chief source of aluminum. At 242 million tons, Samar has the richest bauxite deposits not only in the Philippines but in the whole of Asia. The deposits are concentrated in the forested and *kaigangan* areas (where sharp limestone rocks abound) in the heart of Samar. In 2002, the overall value of these deposits was placed at \$21 billion, according to conservative estimates by *World Metal Statistics*. Aluminum is used

in manufacturing airplanes, trains, cars, ships, tanks and other vehicles, cooking ware, machine parts and electric cables, among others.

This early, one can foresee the damage that large-scale mining will bring to the island. First, a common means of mining bauxite is strip mining (as opposed to digging tunnels) where soil is excavated to reach mineral deposits near the surface of the earth. Strip mining will destroy everything on the surface such as the *kaigangan* areas, which can no longer be restored. It is likewise difficult to cultivate anything in areas that have been strip mined since the excavation removes the most fertile part of the soil.

The headwaters for Samar's 25 major rivers are likewise located within the 86,700-hectare area targeted by mining applicants. Once pollution strikes as a result of toxic mine tailings thrown in, it will affect not only the rivers but also the coastal waters where these rivers empty—the Pacific Ocean in the eastern part of the island, the Samar Sea in the northeast and Maqueda Bay in the southeast—all of them major fishing grounds in the Philippines and Asia.

Aside from the violence of militarization, the imperialists and the reactionary state also utilize groups and programs that claim to have concern for, and defend, the environment such as the Samar Is-

land Biodiversity Project (SIBP), in order to divert the people's attention from the more important issues related to imperialist mining.

The SIBP is a program established in July 2001 by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) with grants from various foreign agencies such as USAID and the Rockefeller Group of Companies. The SIBP's avowed objective is to preserve 470,000 hectares of forestland at the heart of Samar, an area it has dubbed the Samar Island National Park (SINP). The SINP's implementation will entail the expulsion of the people who live in and eke out a living from the area, which covers parts of 28 municipalities in Samar's three provinces. The SIBP has neither the programs nor the funds to provide livelihood alternatives to the hundreds of thousands of people who will be displaced by this project. However, when the BRI and the AMPI filed applications for Mineral Production Sharing Agreements (MPSA) in May 2002, the DENR approved them that same year, and in the same breath exempted from its planned forest preserve, areas with the richest bauxite deposits, including the BRI and AMPI concessions.

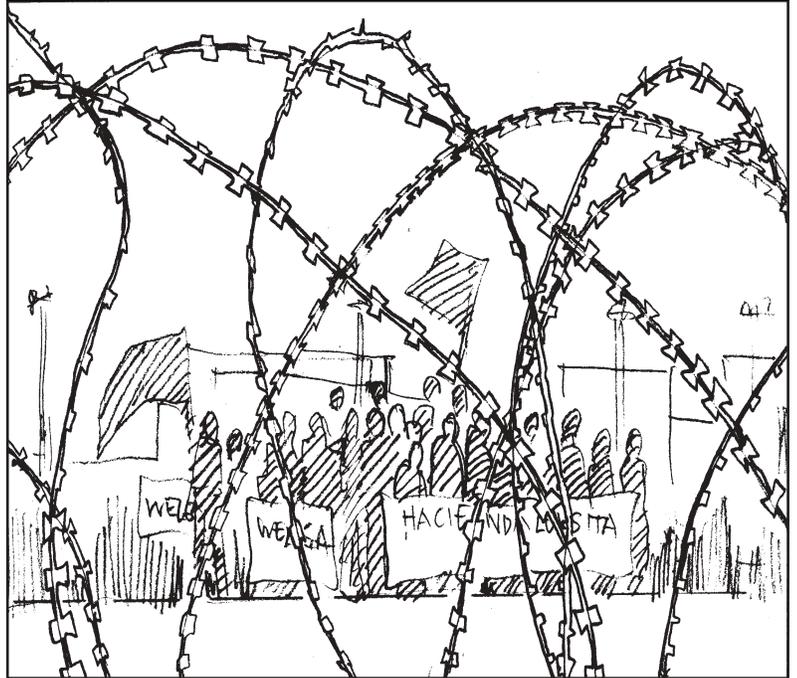
The SIBP does not have the wherewithal to oppose the planned mining operations and has in fact been ordered by the reactionary government not to interfere with these plans.

The Arroyo regime is determined to intensify mining operations by foreign corporations in the Philippines to acquire an additional source of funds. In exchange, these companies will be enjoying various incentives such as tax holidays where they pay only minimal taxes for up to 10 years; 100% capital and profit repatriation; the right to any water and timber found within their concessions; and the right to evict anyone living in these areas.

Violence and deception are the Arroyo regime's twin weapons against the people in its sordid scheme to auction off the national patrimony to foreigners. In Samar and other parts of the country presently being ravaged, or under threat of being devastated by, imperialist mining companies, the people have no other recourse but to unite firmly and wage all-out struggle.

AB

## Workers resist layoffs in Hacienda Luisita



**F**arm workers greeted the unjust mass layoffs in Hacienda Luisita, Inc. (HLI) with a series of protest actions. According to the Alyansa ng mga Manggagawang Bukid sa Hacienda Luisita (AMBALA) and the local union, 327 farm workers were laid off from their jobs on August 26. HLI justified the layoffs, claiming that the company lost money in 2002 and 2003.

Nine union leaders had earlier been terminated from their jobs. The layoff of the union leaders was done a month before the scheduled CBA negotiations in order to weaken the union at the negotiating table.

The police and military unleashed violence during the series of mass actions staged by the farm workers to protest the layoffs. Police tear gassed the rallyists on August 27. Meanwhile, the Central Azucarera de Tarlac, another Cojuangco-owned company filed charges of disturbance of public order, alarm and scandal, malicious mischief and trespass to property against 22 union members when protest actions were launched within company premises on August 30. The filing of a trespassing case against the farm workers is hilarious in view of the fact that they were supposedly stockholders of HLI according to the devious Stock Distribution Option scheme (SDO), and therefore co-owners of the company.

The farm workers are doubly harassed with the deployment within the hacienda of the Yellow Army, which consists of HLI guards who serve as the Cojuangcos' pri-

vate army. They harass and threaten farm workers and their families, and violate their human rights. Aside from the Yellow Army, four of the hacienda's ten barangays have police, military and CAFGU detachments, which are also involved in violating the human rights of farm workers in the hacienda.

Up to 1,009 farm workers have already been fired from their jobs in Hacienda Luisita since 1989. Aside from mass layoffs, farm workers in the 6,453-hectare Hacienda Luisita also suffer from extremely low wages, union-busting and militarization. In a privilege speech on September 6, Rep. Rafael Mariano of the Anakpawis party-list group said that the farm workers received slave-wages of only P9 per day—a far cry from the already dismal P280 minimum daily wage in Central Luzon.

The Cojuangcos' use of the SDO intensifies the suffering of Hacienda Luisita's farm workers. The SDO provides for the distribution of stocks instead of land to farm workers. Under this scheme, the farm workers are stockholders of a mere 33% of HLI. Big landlords like the Cojuangcos continue to control the farmlands.

The Cojuangco family also enforces the "no work, no stocks, no dividends" policy. And the farm workers are allowed to work only 80 days a year.

Representatives of the progressive parties Anakpawis and Gabriela are now pushing for a congressional inquiry into the SDO scheme in Hacienda Luisita.

On September 15 and 16, thousands of farm workers marched from Hacienda Luisita and staged an overnight vigil at the Ninoy Aquino Plazuela. They headed for the Tarlac city hall and the provincial capitol the following day. The Tarlac provincial board has issued a resolution supporting the investigation being pushed by progressive parties in Congress. The board also called for a dialogue between the farm workers and the hacienda management, but HLI and DAR representatives failed to arrive even though the DAR office was very close to the capitol. AB

## Widespread hunger and poverty in the country

The reality of widespread hunger and poverty nationwide has long been a glaring one. Thus, the results of a Social Weather Station (SWS) survey stating that 15.1% or one in seven Filipino families went hungry at least once in the last three months (from June to August) are not surprising. The number of respondents that said so rose threefold compared to the previous year.



The survey moreover indicated that Mindanao has the largest number of poor and hungry families (23%), rising fourfold since September 2003. Metro Manila comes next, where the number of poor and hungry families more than doubled from 7.3% in the previous year. Meanwhile, the figure for the whole of Luzon stands at 11.3% (from 4.7% in 2003). The Visayas registered 13.3%, from 4.3% last year.

The real figures are actually even higher. Other statistics state that up to 70% of the Philippine population does not earn enough to meet its most basic subsistence needs.

The survey results came out at a time of incessant price increases not only for food but for other basic expenses such as payments for electricity, water, LPG, kerosene and transportation fare.

Ignoring the reality that it is its pro-imperialist and antipeople policies that have resulted in the destruction of productive forces, the collapse in production, the deficit and debt quagmire, widespread bankruptcy, and massive unemployment, poverty and hunger, the Macapagal-Arroyo regime heaps blame on the armed revolutionary movements of the NPA and the Moro people and external factors such as typhoons and other calamities.

The regime plans to carry out palliative responses such as doling out food coupons to the poor. The measure, which is merely for show, will at best provide only temporary relief and is grossly inadequate to meet the needs of a severely deprived people.

Hunger and poverty will continue to worsen in the country until the establishment of a system that is genuinely free and progressive and truly attends to the people's welfare. AB

GSIS employees' cry:

# Oust Winston Garcia!

**G**overnment Service Insurance System (GSIS) employees are demanding the ouster of company president and general manager Winston Garcia for grave corruption and malversation of GSIS funds.

Garcia clings like a leech to his position despite the successive picket-rallies in front of the GSIS national office in Manila staged since the last week of September by employees led by the Kapisanan ng mga Manggagawa ng GSIS (KMG). On September 28, police, on Garcia's orders, tear gassed and bombarded the protesters with water cannons, injuring 20 workers, seven seriously.

GSIS employees are incensed because despite Garcia's claim that the GSIS earned P40 billion from the contributions of its 1.5 million members, ordinary government employees find it very hard to apply for loans or draw benefits. Worse, Garcia ordered an increase in compulsory salary deductions of government employees from 9% to 12% without a raise in their salaries.

Public school teachers, who comprise the biggest number of GSIS members, have protested in particular. The contributions of 500,000 teachers and other public school employees come to P12 billion. The GSIS, however, has been barring teachers and non-teaching personnel from

getting loans, using botched records of their contributions and loan payments as an excuse.

In contrast, in November 2003, Garcia was able to acquire a P11 million housing

one, Garcia approved a P700 million project to computerize GSIS' operations, even as the same project could have been implemented for only P40 million.

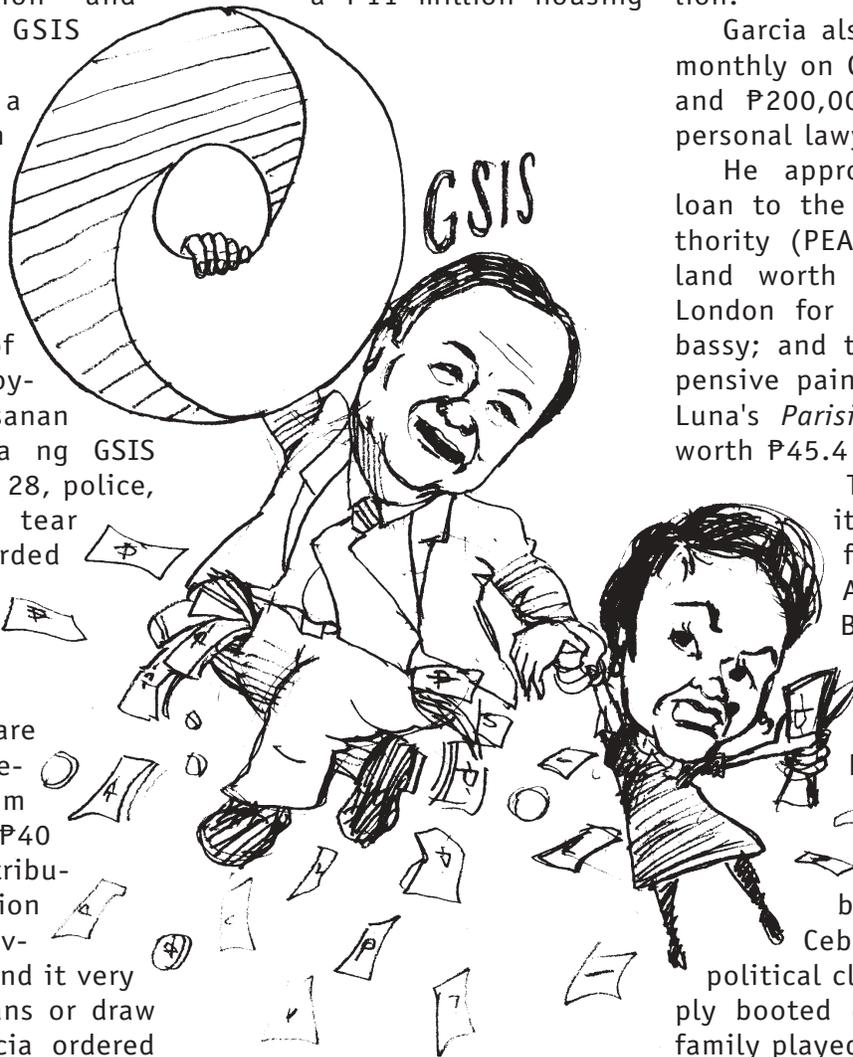
Garcia also spends P300,000 monthly on GSIS advertisements and P200,000 monthly for his personal lawyers.

He approved a P1 billion loan to the Public Estates Authority (PEA); the purchase of land worth P611.8 million in London for the Philippine Embassy; and the purchase of expensive paintings such as Juan Luna's *Parisian Life* which was worth P45.4 million.

The latest irregularity involved Garcia's favoring of the Ayala-owned Union Bank as the depository of the GSIS' billions of funds. The Ayalas are known supporters of the ruling Arroyo faction.

Garcia, who belongs to one of Cebu's most powerful political clans, cannot be simply booted out by Arroyo. His family played a major role in securing a million Cebuano votes that proved decisive in clinching a dubious electoral victory for Arroyo. By maintaining Garcia in power, Arroyo is paying a debt of gratitude to the Garcias.

Arroyo likewise fears that should Garcia be ousted, he would expose the involvement of Arroyo and people close to her in questionable and anomalous transactions involving Garcia and the GSIS. **AB**



loan in merely two days.

Garcia has chalked up P5.25 million in unliquidated cash advances in his first ten months with the GSIS. From September 2003 to July 2004, he also disbursed P6.9 million for "miscellaneous expenses."

There have been recent exposés of Garcia's questionable use of the funds drawn from the toil of ordinary employees. For

# The Bush regime will pay dearly for its invasion and occupation of Iraq

The US imperialist invasion and occupation of Iraq is baseless, illegal, and wrong. This has been stressed anew with belated but nonetheless unequivocal declarations by the United Nations and by persons and countries that had previously been reticent about, if not supportive of, the US invasion of Iraq.

In the face of all this, the puppet Arroyo regime has neither admitted its error nor has it sought an apology for its support of a war that has killed and wrought havoc on millions of civilians and ruined the lives and economy of a sovereign nation.

It has been over a year since the US attacked Iraq. Even before the first bomb was dropped, there has been marked opposition from many countries and people to the war. On September 6, the US weapons inspection team arrived at the definitive conclusion that Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction in 2003 and that technicians made mistakes in appreciating the evidence and drew erroneous conclusions. Earlier, the UN had declared that the invasion undertaken against Iraq was illegal and unilateral. Even Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, Bush's staunchest supporter in his invasion of Iraq, has admitted that there was insufficient basis for the invasion.

Within the US, it is the greed of monopoly corporations, oil companies and Bush cronies that has steadily been drawing flak as the main reason for the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Bush's

time, the methods and tactics resorted to by besieged American forces in Iraq have become more brutal and further inflame the Iraqi people's anger and hatred for them.



The only thing that prevents the American people from junking the Bush regime and its ultra-Right policies is the fear that has been created over the supposedly constant threat of terrorist attacks on the US. If a greater number of Americans wage resistance against the Bush regime, it may lose in the forthcoming election. The people may manifest their opposition to, and condemnation of, the imperialist occupation of Iraq in the polls, comparable to the way the Spanish people dealt a resounding defeat to the Jose Maria Aznar regime in Spain in

elections held last year. A day before the election, the al-Qaeda bombed a number of trains in Madrid to show its opposition to Aznar's support for Bush's war.

pathetic excuses—that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, that it harbored Osama bin Laden and other al-Qaeda operatives and that Saddam Hussein was the devil incarnate, among others—have repeatedly been put to the lie.

As the election draws nearer, there will be exposés of more of the Bush regime's lies. The Bush regime will be put to the test, and its continued rule plagued with uncertainty. With their master's future uncertain, already shaky puppet regimes like that of Arroyo that have been depending on the Bush regime for support will likewise be in danger of collapse.

The American people are increasingly appalled by the growing number of soldiers killed and wounded, the patent failure of their intelligence system, and the Bush regime's multiple lies. The regime is also hard put concealing the ferocity and violence of its occupation of Iraq. Over

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## Mounting US casualties in Iraq

**T**here have been 1,055 American soldiers killed in Iraq since the start of the war in March 2003 up to October 4 this year, according to the Pentagon. There have also been 7,245 wounded as of September 15.

The figures do not include up to 16,765 soldiers who have been evacuated due to various illnesses. The Pentagon does not report these cases as casualties, claiming that their ailments were not directly combat-related. They include 5,375 soldiers suffering from psychological disorders. A military study published by the *New England Journal of Medicine* in July revealed that up to 16% of soldiers returning from Iraq may suffer from major depression, generalized anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychological illnesses.

By August, the average number of attacks on US forces daily had grown to 87—the highest figure since US President George W. Bush announced the end of the war in Iraq in May 2003. Since July, these attacks have been occurring over a wider territory.

In September, Iraqi guerrillas launched a series of bombings and ambushes, including a suicide bombing in the middle of that month that targeted two vehicles carrying American soldiers. Seven American troops were killed.

As an indication of their desperation, American soldiers have been launching ferocious attacks in the cities of Fallujah, Ar Ramadi, Baqubah and Samarra, which are widely regarded as bastions of Iraqi guerrillas.

In Fallujah, at least 11 people were killed in two air strikes by American troops on October 4. The first strike killed nine people, including three women and four children, and wounded 12 people, including six women and three children. Two other people were killed in the second strike.

In Samarra, 70 people have already died since intense fighting broke out on October 3. Many of those killed were ordinary civilians. Twenty-three of them were children and 18 were women. AB

## Ka Bel assails Arroyo's unliquidated cash advances

REP. Crispin Beltran of the Anakpawis party-list group assailed the scandalously large and hitherto unliquidated cash advances made by Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. A report by the Commission on Audit (COA) shows that the Office of the President had ₱626 million worth of unliquidated cash advances from 2001 to 2003. This exceeds the record of any president from Ferdinand Marcos to Joseph Estrada, and is far greater than the combined unliquidated cash advances of all former presidents since 1965.

According to the COA report, the total unliquidated cash advances of former presidents come to only ₱159 million: Marcos, ₱41 million; Corazon Aquino, ₱11 million; Fidel Ramos, ₱55 million; and Joseph Estrada, ₱50 million.

## Davao City officials oppose new Balikatan exercise

ONE-HUNDRED and thirty-three (133) out of 180 barangay captains in Davao City's three districts collectively expressed their opposition on September 22 to a new round of military exercises under the Balikatan series. They filed their manifesto of opposition with the Davao City Council.

US Troops Out Now and Junk VFA convenor Ret. Capt. (PN) Danilo Vizmanos, witnessed the first ever expression of opposition to the Balikatan by local officials.

The barangay officials said that the presence of American troops will only sow disorder and provoke protests and terrorist attacks. They moreover said that the joint US-Philippine military exercise is of no use to the people.

The Balikatan is slated to be launched in the mountainous Marilog district of Davao City. Four thousand American and Philippine troops will be participating in the exercise that will last three to four weeks.