



ANG

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Editorial

## Oppose the US-Arroyo regime's fascist measures

The Arroyo regime has found a new excuse to revive measures that would curtail civil liberties. A series of bombings in the cities of General Santos, Davao and Makati on February 14 that killed at least 10 people and injured scores of others are now being invoked as basis for the alleged necessity to carry out more draconian measures against terrorism.



The Arroyo regime is now pushing fascist schemes like the National ID System, warrantless arrests, detention without charges for up to 30 days, wire-tapping and other means of electronic surveillance and the registration of subscriber identification modules (SIM) for pre-paid subscribers of cellphone services. On the whole, these are the same measures that the Ramos and Estrada regimes advanced but failed to enact.

Malacañang has certified these bills urgent in the face of supposedly worsening threats of terrorism.

The Arroyo regime wants to use these fascist measures to give it free rein to suppress any attempt to wage resistance to its rule. It is itching for the all-out use of a mailed fist policy against anyone opposed to the regime's antipeople policies

such as the imposition of additional taxes and the total surrender of the national patrimony to foreign interests through the Mining Act of 1995.

The worker masses face further violence in asserting their right to a living wage and humane working conditions, to organize and strike and to other just benefits. The peasant masses face similar violence in their struggle for genuine land reform. And professionals and other middle forces face the same in their struggle for just salaries, job security and other rights.

The Arroyo regime's imperialist masters applaud the curtailment of the people's civil liberties because it dovetails the Bush government's international "anti-terrorist" campaign. In support, Bush has promised the puppet government more military aid.

Coinciding with the regime's trampling of democratic rights is intensified US military intervention. For now, the US uses joint military exercises and so-called humanitarian missions to steadily increase the number of American troops operating within the Philippines. Espionage, both by local and US intelligence agencies is bound to in-

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tensify.

All this is intended to raise the level of the counterrevolutionary war, crush any opposition to further repression by the state's fascist forces and suppress any opposition to the added burdens imposed by the Arroyo regime, its imperialist masters, giant monopoly corporations, the comprador big bourgeoisie and big landlords.

In the countryside where martial law has long ruled, cases of salvaging, arbitrary arrest, ransacking of homes and indefinite detention are bound to grow.

In the face of these massive threats to their most basic rights, the people must unite to expose and oppose, thwart or put a stop altogether to the Arroyo regime's plan to unleash state terrorism nationwide. Under Arroyo's fascist scheme, there will be no distinctions between those engaged in legal or illegal, open or underground, armed or unarmed actions. Only the people's unified strength can put an end to the regime's plan to brazenly violate their rights. **AB**



# 33 soldiers killed in offensives in Compostela Valley and Isabela

Up to 33 soldiers of the Philippine Army were killed in two separate tactical offensives by Red fighters in Compostela Valley and Isabela in January and February. Forty-three government troops were likewise wounded.

**In Compostela Valley.** Claims by Maj. Gen. Samuel Bagasin, Philippine Army 4th ID chief, that 14 NPA members were killed by his men in a firefight in Mt. Diwalwal, Compostela Valley on February 5 are an outright lie. Thus stated Merardo Arce Command (MAC) spokesperson Rigoberto Sanchez. The MAC is Southern Mindanao's regional NPA command. In a statement, the MAC charged the military with telling the exact opposite of what actually happened to cover up its losses in the battlefield.

No Red fighter was killed or



wounded in the gunbattle that took place that day, according to the MAC. At around 9 a.m. of February 5, fighters under the Ruperto Tuyac Command (RTC) ambushed a 48-man platoon of the 36th IB in Sitio Pulang Lupa, Barangay Ngan, Mt. Diwalwal, killing five Philippine Army troops and wounding over 40 soldiers.

The Red fighters seized an M60 machine gun, 2,500 bullets, an M16, several backpacks and a map showing the scope of the military operation.

Before the ambush, a team under the RTC launched a military action, killing a soldier from the 36th IB.

The MAC said that the 36th IB and all military units deployed before it served as protectors of foreign mining interests in Mt. Diwalwal.

The NPA attacks prompted Arroyo to cancel her scheduled visit

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to a miners' community in Mt. Diwalwal. The 36th IB has likewise been pulled out and replaced with another unit.

**In Isabela.** Up to 27 troops belonging to the 45th IB Charlie Company were killed in an ambush by Red fighters on January 24 in Sitio Kayangading, Dicamay Uno, Jones, Isabela. This is contrary to a statement by Brig. Gen. Napoleon Malana, 502nd Infantry Brigade chief, that "three to ten NPA members" were killed while the reactionary military sustained no casualties.

In a report, Victor Servidores, spokesperson of the Fortunato Camus Command (FCC) of the NPA-Northeastern Luzon said that the 45th IB has been launching large-scale military operations in the towns of Jones, Echague and San Guillermo since mid-January. The military detected the presence of a platoon under the NPA Benito Tesorio Command launching a mass campaign against large-scale logging in Isabela's Forest Region. On the morning of January 24, a Philippine Army platoon detached from two other platoons conducting house to house searches in Barangay Dicamay Uno.

## Tactical offensives in Southern Luzon

**Southern Tagalog.** Red fighters in the region launched three separate tactical offensives almost simultaneously on February 18. In Occidental Mindoro, Red fighters successfully ambushed troops of the 16th IB in Barangay Ligang, Mamburao, killing two soldiers and wounding five troopers. The PNP immediately came to the rescue but the guerrillas had already made a safe retreat. Meanwhile, Red fighters threw a grenade on Camp Guillermo Nakar, headquarters of the Southern Luzon Command in Lucena City. In Barangay Kahil, Calaca, Batangas, Red fighters assaulted a military detachment.

**Catanduanes.** Four policemen were killed and seven wounded in two separate tactical offensives on February 14 in Virac, Catanduanes. The offensive was carried out by fighters under the NPA Nerissa San Juan Command.

It was around 7 a.m. when the NPA attacked a PNP Aviation Security Command (AVSECOM) checkpoint at the Virac Airport in Barangay San Isidro, Virac, Catanduanes. The guerrillas seized an M16 and a 9 mm pistol from the two dead policemen.

Two other policemen were killed and seven wounded in two separate firefights that took place at around 7:30 a.m. in Barangay Pumiton. The NPA ambushed the policemen who came to reinforce the AVSECOM troops. Catanduanes PNP chief Sr. Supt. Gorgonio Rosero, who led the reinforcement, was seriously wounded. **AB**

Because of the timely and continuous stream of information from the barriofolk on the enemy's movements, the Red fighters were able to prepare quickly and assume ambush positions. Using binoculars, they spotted the AFP platoon

approaching the position they had taken in a forested area at around 7 a.m. Several minutes later, the fighting began. Twelve soldiers were instantly killed in the first

*Continued on "33 soldiers..." page 4*

## Former NPA fighter kills three military troops

Three troops of the Philippine Army 80th IB were shot and killed by former Red fighter Armando de la Cruz on January 28 in Sitio Angelo, Barangay Lumutan, Tanay, Rizal. The incident took place while the soldiers were in the midst of a military operation. The three casualties were identified as Cpl. Lacambra, PFC Morales and PFC Jobelado.

De la Cruz was living a peaceful life in his village when the AFP forced him to surrender in 2003 and made him guide their military operations against the NPA. In a statement, Armando "Ka Ruben" Guevarra, spokesperson of the Narciso Antazo Aramil Command (NAAC) of the NPA-Rizal said that this was against De la Cruz's wishes because the military operations

only wrought harm to the lives and livelihood of peasants and national minorities.

De la Cruz likewise suffered grave abuse in the hands of the military, especially from his handler Cpl. Lacambra. He thus decided to escape. After shooting the three soldiers who brought him along during their military operation, he immediately contacted the NPA and surrendered the three troopers' firearms. De la Cruz is currently in the custody of the NPA within the territory of the people's democratic government, and safe from the military operation.

According to the NAAC, the fact that de la Cruz killed the three soldiers proves the AFP's utter failure to win the people's hearts and minds. **AB**

NAHRA, RPA-ABB

## Fascist regime's mouthpieces

The Negros Alliance of Human Rights Advocates has outdone the AFP in spreading the lie that the NPA recruits child combatants. According to NAHRA, 13-18% of Red fighters are children, which includes minors as young as eight-years-old.

NAHRA released the results of an alleged research on child combatants of the New People's Army in February, in collaboration with the inutile Commission on Human Rights, the Philippine Human Rights Information Center, the Philippine Army, the Philippine National Police and other fascist agencies of the reactionary government.

An astounding 20-25% of the NPA's total recruits are supposed to be minors!

These people who pose as human rights advocates so desperately want to malign the revolutionary movement. But they are bedfellows with the number one violator of human rights, thoroughly despised by the revolutionary and militant people, including children who have long been subjected to violence and suppressed by the reactionary state.

The bandit RPA-ABB quickly chimed in chorus over the NAHRA's "revelations". According to RPA-ABB commander Carapali Lualhati, only the NPA uses child soldiers. Since when did criminal bandits become the authority on the issue of human rights? Since when have they become spokespersons of the victims of their extortion and robbery?

This grouplet has long exposed itself as a cheap henchman of the reactionary government. It lives off crumbs thrown by the regime and the criminal and counterrevolutionary activities it conducts in the name of a "peace agreement."

The two impostor groups are living proof of the Arroyo regime's stepped-up psywar campaign against the revolutionary movement. It is but fitting to expose their lies.

AB

Arroyo-Marcos-Akbayan collusion

## Congress obstructs justice for martial law victims



Justice is sure to elude the thousands of victims of martial law if no opposition is posed to the schemes of the Arroyo regime and the Marcos-Akbayan collusion in Congress.

The Samahan ng mga ex-Detainee Laban sa Detensyon at para sa Amnestiya (SELDA), an organization of former political prisoners, has all the right to strongly assail Loretta Ann Rosales of the Akbayan party and the Congressional Committee on Civil, Political and Human Rights that she leads for pushing House Bill 3315.

Through this bill, Rosales changed the definition of "martial law victim" to purposely disqualify the majority of persons on the list of those who deserve to be compensated.

*Continued on "Congress obstructs..." on page 5*

*"33 soldiers..." from page 3*

volley of gunfire.

The fighting lasted for one and a half hours. The two other platoons came to the rescue and rained rifle and mortar fire on the NPA position. Two OV-10 airplanes, an MG-520 helicopter, a Huey helicopter and two armored personnel carriers also arrived at the scene. But it was too

late for them because the Red fighters had already retreated without suffering any casualties.

The military reported that it had killed many guerrillas. Nevertheless, it could not hide from the people the 27 dead soldiers picked up by the helicopters, aside from the wounded.

**Military violence.** Angered over the losses they sustained in

the hands of the NPA, the military planted self-detonating land mines around the area of the encounter.

The military manhandled and threatened a number of residents of Barangay San Isidro, Jones for allegedly harboring women NPA fighters.

The FCC also charged the military with forcing a child to guide their operations.

AB

Rosales' proposition is anti-human rights and does not represent the interests of martial law victims, said SELDA secretary general Marie Hilao-Enriquez.

If Rosales had her way, only those who were victimized while "peacefully upholding their civil and political rights" should be compensated. This would exclude outright any victim who joined the armed struggle or waged any other form of resistance that could be construed as "not peaceful" during the dictatorship.

Rosales also wants to form an "independent board" to determine compensation to the victims. Her bill definitely disregards close to 10,000 martial law victims led by SELDA who won a class action suit in a US Federal Court in Hawaii in 1993 that awarded \$1.2 billion to victims of torture, murder and arrest for which the dictator Ferdinand Marcos was responsible.

Rosales ignores and violates the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), particularly, Section III, Article 5 which states that, "the two parties respect and support the rights of victims of human rights violations during the Marcos regime with consideration to the final judgment of the US Federal Court System in the case against Marcos..."

Rosales' scheme will again subject the victims to the long and tedious process of providing affidavits and documents to prove the violations that they had suffered under martial law.

Worse, Rosales wants Malacañang to appoint three of the five members of her "independent board." A retired justice of the Supreme Court would lead it, with the head of the Commission on Hu-

## Jockeying by thieves

**A**long with Akbayan's maneuvers in Congress, the regime is trying to pit the interests of the peasantry—supposed beneficiaries of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP)—against the martial law victims' just demands. At present, reactionary law provides that all of the Marcos family's ill-gotten wealth should be used for the sham and pro-landlord CARP.

In a statement, the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas and PAMALAKAYA condemned the Arroyo regime's antipeasant and anti-human rights scheme. The KMP said that the Marcoses and their cronies like Danding Cojuangco are using the pro-landlord CARP to return to power. Any support for this law directly rides roughshod over the livelihood and rights of millions of peasants. SELDA, meanwhile, asserted that the entire amount be immediately dispensed to the victims.

With the reactionary state's various maneuvers to delay if not obstruct altogether the process of indemnification, many victims fear that the \$683 million has already been spent or squandered. Arroyo has admitted that a portion of the amount has already been spent on "land reform." Others say that Arroyo has also appropriated some of the funds to spend in the last election.

On top of all this, Imelda Marcos has expressed elation over a US court decision on February 4. The 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals declared that US courts cannot reverse a decision by the Philippine Supreme Court in 2003 granting the government control over the \$683 million of the Marcoses' ill-gotten wealth. [The 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals issued its decision in response to an appeal filed by the martial law victims (who had filed and won a case in Hawaii) in a lower court in the US to reverse the Supreme Court decision.] This gave Imelda Marcos the impetus to come to an agreement with Arroyo regarding the division of the ill-gotten wealth.

It may be recalled that in 1993, the Ramos regime entered into an agreement with the Marcoses through the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) to divide the Marcoses' ill-gotten wealth 75-25 in favor of the regime. In exchange, however, no criminal or civil cases could be filed against the Marcoses for their crimes against the Filipino people. The Supreme Court subsequently nullified this agreement.

AB

man Rights and the Secretary of Justice as automatic appointees. This is adding insult to injury, as the Arroyo regime has already been jockeying to put its hands on the Marcos' ill-gotten wealth instead of compensating the victims.

The martial law victims are angered no end over Rosales' proposal. The Marcoses, however, are elated because this would likely reduce several times the amount they would have to pay. Hopes

grow dim that justice will be dispensed and indemnification given to the victims of torture, murder, disappearance and other human rights violations during martial law. With the way things are and the steps already taken by government on the victims' cases, the struggle being waged by the victims and their relatives is a complex one that would have to hurdle many obstacles before justice can be realized.

AB

# The situation of farm workers nationwide

There are an estimated 13 million agricultural workers nationwide. They are peasants who are completely dependent on selling their labor-power in the countryside to survive.

The absence of land to till is the main reason for the burgeoning number of agricultural workers. Landlessness is the plight of 75% of the peasantry. Thus, they are forced to sell their labor-power or engage in various kinds of occupations.

There are two kinds of agricultural workers: the traditional, composed of poor and lower-middle peasants who do not earn enough from farming and sell their labor-power to landlords or rich peasants. They can be found in rice fields, corn fields, coconut plantations, vegetable fields, tobacco fields and even in haciendas and plantations of export crops (sugar cane, pineapple and bananas, among others) that utilize some modern equipment.

Traditional farm workers comprise 95% of agricultural workers nationwide because agricultural implements remain backward. Big compradors and landlords do not invest in modern equipment like harvester combines because there is after all a huge number of farm workers they could hire for very low wages.

A small number (5% of the total) may be regarded as modern farm workers. They are concentrated in big haciendas and capitalist

farms such as pineapple and banana plantations wholly owned by foreign agricultural corporations or in partnership with comprador-big bourgeoisie and landlords.

They use modern equipment like tractors and trucks for hauling. They also become regular workers in sugar mills and warehouses stocked with agricultural products.

The worsening social crisis continues to exacerbate the unemployment problem in the countryside. Those who do get employed receive extremely low wages. The regional wage boards already set low daily wages for agricultural workers (ranging from ₱135 [US\$2.45] in Western Visayas to ₱222 [US\$4.04] in Northern Mindanao). But landlords and the comprador-bourgeoisie further depress these wages. For example, the Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura or UMA reports that in the rice fields and coconut plantations of Occidental Mindoro and other areas in Southern Tagalog, the daily wage comes to a mere

₱70 [US\$1.27] to ₱80 [US\$1.45]. In Cagayan Valley, the usual daily wage comes to ₱70 [US\$1.27] and in Samar, it is a mere ₱50 [US\$0.90].

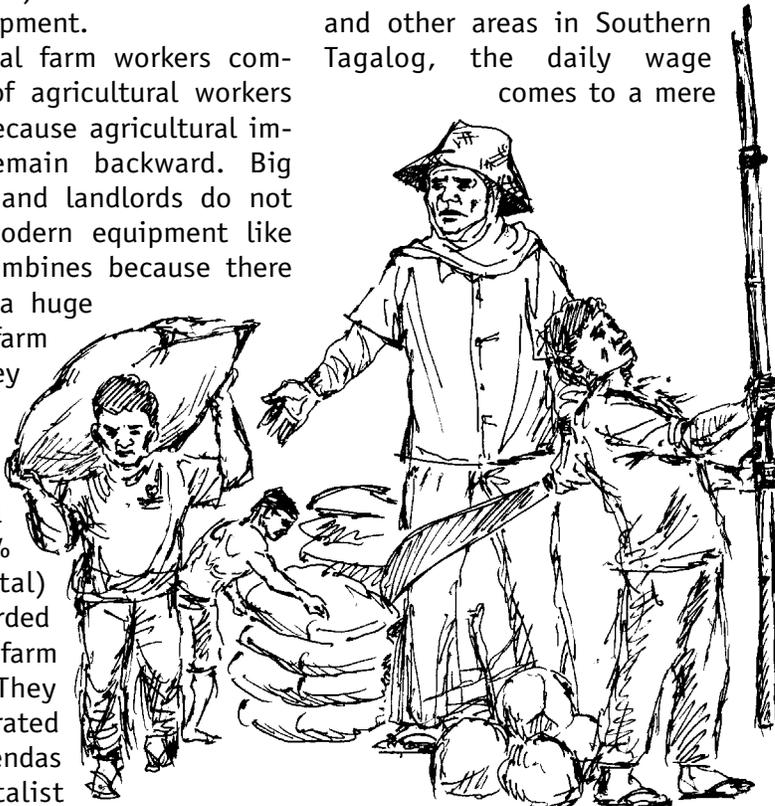
In the sugar cane fields of Eastern Visayas, a family is paid ₱80 [US\$1.45] for a day's work. In Hacienda Luisita where the daily wage is supposedly pegged at ₱190 [US\$3.45], there are instances when workers' takehome pay comes to a measly ₱9.50 [US\$0.17] for a week's work after numerous deductions by the company.

Hacienda owners and the comprador-bourgeoisie also employ various means to deceive farm workers to further squeeze them dry and deny them their rights.

As far back as the Marcos dictatorship, land was overassessed to make it difficult for "land reform beneficiaries" to make their amortization payments. It turned out that a mere 2% were able to complete their payments. The rest remained landless and neck-deep in debt.

The succeeding Aquino regime laid out many more ways to deceive the peasant masses. One is the sham Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law with its Stock Distribution Option (SDO) where landlords and comprador-bourgeoisie distribute worthless stock to farm workers to make it appear that they were co-owners of the hacienda, thus evading land reform. CARP also allowed lease-back agreements where large tracts of land supposedly owned by the state and planted to bananas and pineapple, among others are rented out to and controlled by foreign agro-corporations for up to 75 years.

In sugar cane fields and sugar centrals in particular, hacienda owners contribute ₱5 per picul



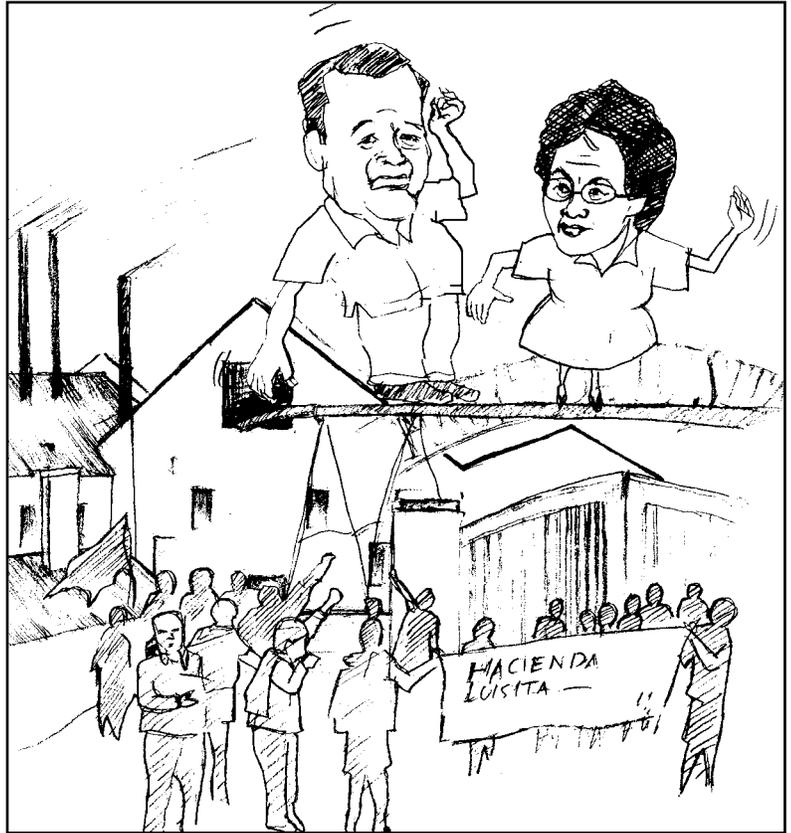
(weight measure equivalent to 60 kilos) to the Sugar Development Fund, in addition to the initial capital of P20 million, to defray expenses for the recruitment of CAFGU and establish detachments in the haciendas to suppress the farm workers' resistance. The Sugar Amelioration Act of 1991 (RA 6982) and the accompanying Sugar Amelioration Fund junks the issue of land reform altogether, and instead obligates hacienda owners to allocate funds to alleviate the poverty of farm workers and poor peasants in haciendas. Aside from denying them their right to land, RA 6982 allocates such a tiny amount for peasants and farm workers—loose change compared to the billions of pesos in gross earnings of hacienda and sugar central owners—and is hardly even implemented!

The Ramos regime and subsequent administrations did not bother to implement even a showcase land reform program. Instead, massive land-use conversion became the norm. Land previously distributed to peasants reverted to the hands of landlords. Also under Ramos, "free market globalization" gained ground with the help of policies legislated by then senator Gloria Arroyo. Since then, there has been large-scale dumping of imported agricultural products in the domestic market. Bankruptcies plagued the agricultural sector at an unprecedented scale. Among those that suffered most was the production of traditional export crops like sugar cane.

In the face of all of this, it is the poor peasants and farm workers who bear the heaviest burden. They suffer mass layoffs, their unions crushed and they are further subjected to violence. Those who retain their jobs have their wages severely depressed. Benefits won through decades of struggle by the toiling masses are revoked.

It is but just for organized farm workers to fight for their immediate interests such as decent wages, humane working conditions, job security and the right to unionize and to strike. It is likewise correct for them to relentlessly fight for land reform as the long-term solution to their land problem. The clamor for genuine land reform goes hand in hand with the call for national industrialization—the solution to the chronic crisis of the semicolonial and semifeudal system. **AB**

## Class struggle in Hacienda Luisita



**T**he last three months saw one of the fiercest class struggles between landlords and farm workers. Despite the Cojuangco family's employment of outright violence, barefaced deception and threats, the farm workers of Hacienda Luisita were never once fazed.

After several months of steadfast struggle, the victory of the Hacienda Luisita strike is now within sight. It will be recorded in history as one of the biggest victories of farm workers in their struggle not only for higher wages but also for genuine land reform.

**Cacique.** The Cojuangcos who own Hacienda Luisita are despotic landlords. The hacienda is a lifeline for five branches of the family. Their wealth primarily comes from Hacienda Luisita Incorporated (HLI) which was established to evade land distribution, and the Central Azucarera de Tarlac (CAT) sugar mill. Income from the two companies has sustained the luxurious lifestyles and unproductive activities of several generations of Cojuangcos that now live in the hacienda. Except for a few pieces of farming equipment, the family has never invested in the development of the land.

Like the caciques or local chiefs of the Spanish colonial regime, they have long lorded over the hacienda. They op-

erate the hacienda through feudal patronage. So-called company supervisors are in fact no different from the *kabo* or feudal overseers of the old system who served as the landlords' henchmen. They determine who, where and for how long farm workers can work. The third-generation Cojuangcos who run the hacienda, graduates as they are of prestigious universities abroad, are no different from their forebears in their feudal attitude and treatment of the farm workers.

The Cojuangcos secure their rule through the use of reactionary laws, deception and violence. Aside from the Northern Luzon Command headquarters in Tarlac, the 69th IB, CAFGU units and even the paramilitary Yellow Army infest the barrios of the hacienda. This unholy connection has led to the dastardly massacre of farm workers.

To continue to reap benefits from the hacienda in the face of the sugar industry's collapse, the Cojuangcos have resorted to large-scale land-use conversion. But they have not taken any steps to invest in industry. Land-use conversion by the Cojuangcos has been limited to leasing and selling land to local and foreign companies. The family has not made any significant investments even in the Luisita Industrial Park. Neither does the family plan to place any direct investments in other industries in the next round of land-use conversion.

***Land question at the core of the strike.*** Majority of the farm workers in the hacienda are of the traditional type. They are the poor peasants who are the real owners of the land seized by the Cojuangcos. Their ownership of the land has basis even in reactionary law.

Their tools are no different from those of the cane cutters of

old. Their livelihood depends on the planting cycle. Even the modern farm workers inside the sugar mill are mere adjuncts in the backward process of sugar cane production.

The principal enemies of the hacienda's farm workers are the despotic Cojuangco family, the reactionary state and military, and the Cojuangco henchmen within and outside the hacienda. They are struggling for a wage increase at the minimum and for their right to the land at the maximum. They have at the same time issued a call for national industrialization. The HLI farm workers' union (United Luisita Workers' Union or ULWU) and the CAT sugar mill union (CAT Labor Union or CATLU) are partners in this fight.

There is solid basis for the farm workers' claim to the the land. Thus, the Cojuangco family has left nothing undone to drive them out of the hacienda. As early as 1957, the Cojuangco family and Tabacalera, the hacienda's former owner, already had an agreement to distribute the land to the farm workers in the area. The agreement also stipulated that the Cojuangcos were not actually being awarded the title to the hacienda but only acquired the right to lease out the land. The agreement likewise covered only portions planted to sugar cane and did not include other areas now occupied by HLI. The land was already supposed to be covered by land reform as early as 1947. Even the land that Luisita Mall stands on in Tarlac City is not owned by the Cojuangcos but is public land that was used by the then US military base as a pasture!

The Cojuangcos cannot deny the legal basis for the farm workers' claim to the hacienda. In a way, the deceptive Stock Distribution Option serves to recognize

such right. The SDO scheme provides that 33% of the company's stocks be owned by the farm workers. Although the SDO is extremely favorable to the Cojuangcos in their desire to avoid land reform, they have nonetheless persistently been looking for ways to circumvent it.

In August 2003, the farm workers were secretly and illegally made to sign a document stating that if a farm worker loses his job, he likewise loses his standing as an HLI stock owner. In fact, the reactionary law itself states that a farm worker remains a stockholder regardless of his employment status. Under the "buy-back option," HLI offers a terminated farm worker ₱30,000-40,000 for the return of the stock certificates issued by the Cojuangco family. Over 300 farm workers have been terminated and others deceived if not coerced into having their names stricken from the list of HLI stockholders.

In the face of the Cojuangcos' relentlessly deceptive and exploitative schemes, the farm workers' strike was justified and timely. The cooperation between CATLU and ULWU, which has effected the hacienda's total paralysis, has proven to be a major factor in the strike's success.

The farm workers have firmly demanded the immediate reinstatement of all those terminated by the Cojuangcos. Aside from the 76 workers laid off last August, 35 CATLU members were also kicked out this January through an order from the Department of Labor and Employment. They have clearly issued demands for an increase in the daily wage and other benefits. They have also demanded that the Cojuangcos recognize all of the listed HLI stockholders, whether currently employed by the hacienda or not. AB

Pakikiramay: Poets' tribute to the peasants of Hacienda Luisita

## Sympathy, solidarity, resistance

In times of extreme exploitation and oppression by the ruling classes, there is no stopping the outburst of creative art and literature portraying the people's resistance. Thus the surge of songs, poetry, videos and stories of witnesses to the river of blood that flowed and the outpouring of sympathy for the victims of the massacre in Hacienda Luisita.

*Pakikiramay...* (Condolences) is a joint publication of the Congress of Teachers and Educators for Nationalism and Democracy (CONTEND)-Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) and the Amado V. Hernandez Resource Center (AVHRC). Edited by Joi Barrios, it contains poems from 25 of the most distinguished Filipino poets.

The booklet *Pakikiramay: Alay ng mga makata sa mga magsasaka ng Hacienda Luisita* (Condolences: Poets' tribute to the peasants of Hacienda Luisita) was released promptly to condemn the murder of peasants in the hacienda in November 2004, and express the poets' solidarity with the life and struggle of the toiling masses.

The poems are divided into categories. In the collection's introduction are "Serenata" (Concert) by Fidel Rillo and "Sa Hacienda Luisita" (In Hacienda Luisita) by Romulo P. Baquiran, Jr., which illustrate the justness of the peasants' struggle for land. In the section *Poems of the funeral vigil* are Rio Alma's "Paglalamay" (Keeping Vigil) and Bienvenido Lumbera's "Agunyas sa Hacienda Luisita" (An Ode to Hacienda Luisita): "Walang benditang tumigmak sa amoy-lupang bihis/ Ng mga welgistang humingi ng dagdag/ Sa 9.50 ling-

guhang kita./ Dugong pumulandit sa dagsa ng bala./ Laway na tumal-sik nang hatawin ng truncheon./ Plemang idinahak ng panginoong maylupa." (There was no holy water to drench the soil-stenched clothes/ of strikers asking for a raise/ to their ₱9.50 weekly wage./ It was blood that spurted with the hail of bullets/ Spittle that spattered with the blow of truncheons/ Phlegm that was hawked out by the landlords).

*Mga tula ng tunggalian* (Poems of conflict) feature V. E. Carmelo D. Nadera's "Kantang Kasamak" in Pilipino and Capampangan, Mila D. Aguilar's "Celebrasyon sa Masaker sa Hacienda Luisita" (Celebrating the Massacre in Hacienda Luisita), Duke Bagulaya's "Maanyag Kaupay an Gabi Dinhe Ha Nayon" (The Nights are Lovely Here in the Countryside) in Waray, Lilia Quindoza-Santiago's "Luisita, Luisita!", Rolando B. Tolentino's "Luha" (Tears), and others that bare the conflicting interests of the hacienda owners and the peasant masses.

The powerful are mocked in *Mga tula ng pamumusong* (Poems of contempt): Reuel Molina Aguila's "Sagrada Pamilya" (The Holy Family), John Iremil Teodoro's "Matam-is Nga Yuhum Kag Harkhak" (Sweet Smiles and Laughter) in Kinaray-a, Mila D. Aguilar's "Para kay Cory, Tanda ng Masaker sa Hacienda Luisita" (To Cory, A Reminder of the Massacre in Hacienda Luisita): "Para ka namang si Bush/ Na sa ngalan ng Ama'y/ Nambo-bomba ng kapwa..." (You are so like Bush/ Who in the name of the Father/ Bombs his fellow men...)

*Mga tula sa suliraning agraryo* (Poems on the agrarian problem)



illustrate the peasantry's centuries-old bondage. From Domingo G. Landicho's "Dugo sa Isinumpang Paraiso" (Blood in the Cursed Paradise), "Magsasaka: Tayo'y kay laong/ Iginapos ng lupain/ Ng panginoong maylupa/ Na bathala't batas natin/ Di ba't tayo'y nagpun-la/ Tayo rin ang nagtanim/ Ano't nitong magapak na'y/ Asendero ang nagpiging?" (Peasants: For so long have we been/ Shackled to the land/ By the landlords/ Who are our gods and law/ Aren't we the ones who did the plowing/ Aren't we the ones who did the planting/ Why is it that after harvest/ It is the *haciendero* who feasts at the banquet?)

The collection ends with *Mga tula ng pagsusuri at pagsulong* (Poems of analysis and advance). In this section are Jose Wendell Capili's "After Luisita on Aussie TV," Joi Barrios' "Diskurso ng Estado" (The State's Speech), Herminio S. Beltran's "Ibain Ko (Ikinahihiya Ko)" (It Shames Me) in Iloko and Danton Remoto's "Ang Magbubukid, Muli" (The Peasantry,

*Continued on "Pakikiramay..." page 11*



*Imperialist aggression in the Middle East*

# Is Iran next?

An article last month in *The New Yorker* magazine disclosed the presence of US Special Forces troops operating clandestinely inside Iran. According to the author Seymour Hersh, the information was supplied by no less than US intelligence officials.

Despite current US denials, the information is not hard to believe. The US has never concealed its intention to effect "regime change" in Iran as it has done in Iraq. It may be recalled that George W. Bush included Iran in what he called the "axis of evil." Just recently, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice included the country in what she termed as the "outposts of tyranny."

Iran has long been the object of US imperialism's ire because of its assertion of independence and sovereignty. The present Islamic state of Iran was established by a revolution in 1979 that toppled the former US puppet government.



Bush accused Iran outright as the world's primary state sponsor of terror in his State of the Union Address on February 3.

Laying the ground for its sinister design, the US claims that Iran is running a secret nuclear weapons program. The assertion is no different from Bush's claim that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, using it as the pretext

to attack the country.

The US is forcing Iran to stop its nuclear program. This, despite findings of UN inspectors that all declared nuclear materials in Iran are not being used in any activity prohibited under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of which it is a signatory.

There is nothing new about the US' stance. It disregarded the UN in its invasion of Iraq. It is not about to allow anything to stop it once it decides to invade any country.

It is also standard operating procedure for the US to deploy secret troops in countries it wants to occupy even before the actual invasion. In any case, Iran has declared its preparedness to defend itself the moment imperialist forces attack.

On February 17, Iran and Syria announced their cooperative efforts and the formation of a united front in confronting US threats dangling over both countries. In such an event, the US will find itself mired in an ever deeper and wider quagmire in the Middle East. AB

## "Outposts of tyranny" and other figments of Bush's imagination

The Bush regime comes up with all sorts of labels for states that refuse to yield to US imperialist dictates. "Outposts of tyranny" is its latest invention, gathering Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Belarus, Burma and Zimbabwe under the category.

North Korea has recently withdrawn from negotiations on its nuclear program because of the US' arrogant stance. It has also openly admitted to possessing nuclear weapons that it may use in the event of a US invasion.

The US is also stepping up its pressure on Syria. Albeit implicitly, the US blames Syria for the February 15 assassination of former Lebanese prime

minister Rafik Hariri. It has since recalled its ambassador to Syria.

The US is also bullying Venezuela over the country's pending purchase of 100,000 automatic rifles and 40 military helicopters from Russia, claiming that Venezuela intends to use them to support revolution in neighboring Colombia.

Meanwhile, the US has also been picking on China for its military buildup, calling it a threat to US interests in Asia.

The US will never run out of excuses in its bid to eliminate all possible barriers to its domination of the world. When it comes to pretexts, Bush has a prolific imagination. AB



# Various forces oppose martial law declaration in Nepal

The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) has called for a general strike against the martial law declaration and coup d'état launched by the country's King Gyanendra. Gyanendra seized direct control of the state on February 1, ordering the arrest of his opponents, especially those suspected of supporting the CPN(M).

Gyanendra imposed martial rule in the face of an ever stronger armed revolution led by the CPN(M). Since the collapse of peace negotiations in 2003, the revolutionary armed struggle has intensified, compelling the monarchy to intervene.

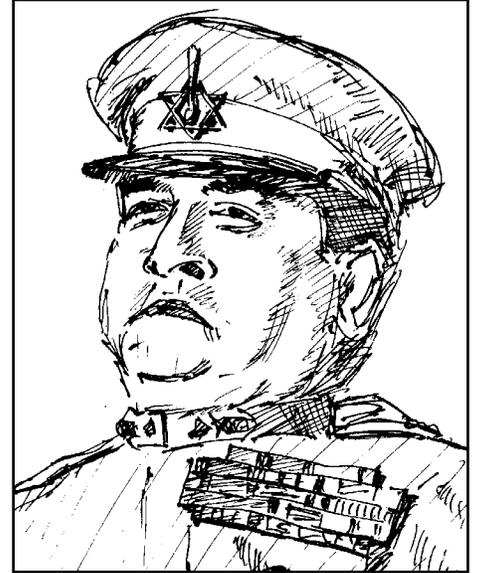
Gyanendra jailed opponents of the monarchy, including ousted prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. On the first day of martial law, communications were cut, the press shut down, and all satellite phones of embassies in the capital

Kathmandu were confiscated. Four days later, the media were allowed to reopen, but were strictly forbidden to report about the arrests and the violence, and the victories of the CPN(M).

The strike has been successful and a blockade has been in force in Kathmandu. Amidst the media repression, oppositionist have managed to air the call to free those arrested and respect the rights of the people. The People's Liberation Army also launched a successful raid on a prison in Dhangadi, near Kathmandu on February 10, freeing some 150 mostly Maoist prisoners.

Human rights organizations within and outside Nepal have expressed concern over the mass arrests, the ransacking of homes and saturation drives especially in suspected Maoist strongholds.

They have also called on other



King Gyanendra

countries, especially the US, to stop providing military aid to the reactionary Nepali government.

Meanwhile, Prachanda, leader of the CPN(M), issued a statement calling on "all parties and groups to unite to create a storm of rebellion in the countryside." He also stressed that the CPN(M) is willing to join a broad united front with all those opposed to the feudal monarchy. AB

## "Pakikiramay...", from page 9

Once More), among others.

The cover design (Cesar Hernando and Jesse Allegre) completes *Pakikiramay*.... In front, the peasants are portrayed behind sugar cane stalks resembling the bars of a prison cell. At the back, the imagined cell is gone, symbolizing the peasantry's liberation.

*Pakikiramay*... not just effectively illustrates the struggle at Hacienda Luisita, it also features the just struggle not only of the peasantry but of the entire people. AB

## Armed struggle intensifies in Colombia

The armed struggle waged by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) continues to intensify against the puppet and fascist regime of Alvaro Uribe. Over 40 soldiers were killed in FARC offensives in February.

Seventeen soldiers, including an officer, were killed in ambushes launched by FARC fighters on February 9 near the town of Mutata in the northern province of Urabia. Eight soldiers were also reported missing. On February 1, up to 16 Marines were killed in a barrage of rockets on their headquarters. Eight others were killed after a bomb detonated on a patrolling military jeep. The government sustained at least five casualties in subsequent battles.

FARC is one of the main revolutionary forces that has been fighting the Colombian government since 1964. The Uribe government launched a large-scale offensive against FARC in August 2002. Despite aid from US imperialism in the guise of an anti-drugs campaign, FARC has steadily grown. AB