



ANG

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Editorial

## Support the positive elements within the AFP and PNP

**T**he Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), New People's Army (NPA) and other revolutionary forces salute the progressive personnel of the AFP and PNP for their manifest determination to advance the struggle to oust the corrupt, puppet and antipeople Arroyo regime and pursue a new system that truly upholds the people's interests.

Such determination was proven with the escape of Capt. Nathaniel Rabonza and 1Lts. Lawrence San Juan, Sonny Sarmiento and Patricio Bumidang on the night of January 17 from their detention cell in Fort Bonifacio. Earlier, on December 14, Capt. Nicanor Faeldon escaped and called for civil disobedience against the Arroyo regime. These officers were among the leaders of the 2003 Oakwood mutiny.

The escaped officers and their comrades who uphold the people's democratic and patriotic aspirations can be counted among the progressive elements in the AFP and PNP.

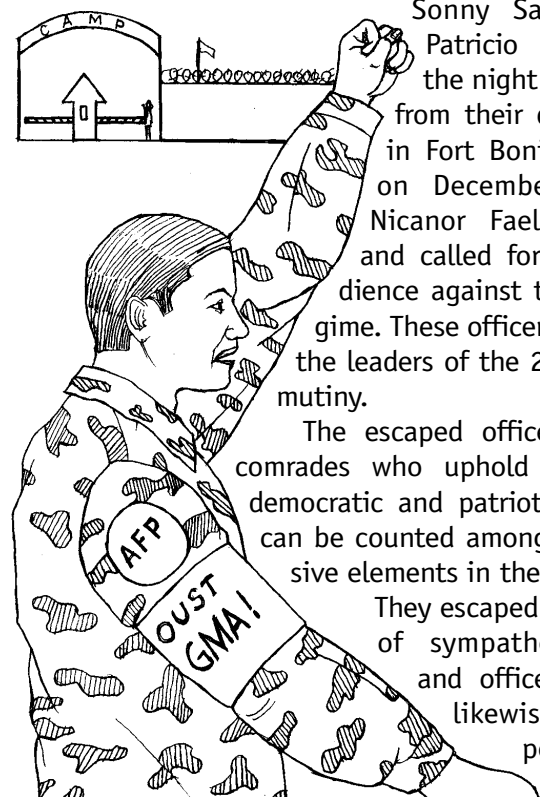
They escaped with the help of sympathetic soldiers and officers who have likewise been impelled to act by the

regime's corruption and are ready to fight it. Their actions reveal the existence of a growing number of AFP and PNP elements who are not only extremely disgruntled with the regime but are ready to withdraw support, overthrow it and resolutely struggle for changes in the social system. This renders hollow and vain Arroyo's claim that the chain of command is intact and that the military and police remain loyal to her. In reality, she trembles at the thought of the growing numbers of political forces determined to eject her from power.

The AFP and PNP have in fact gone on heightened alert, with Malacañang threatening to deal harshly with anyone defying the chain of command.

The CPP views as a welcome development calls from top AFP officers for soldiers not to allow themselves to be used by those in power to suppress the people. Instead, they should assist in forming a "new AFP responsive and loyal to the people's interests under a new government". These progressive officers have denounced the current regime for upholding the interests of the few. They point to the ruling classes as the real enemy of the people.

The revolutionary forces enjoin positive elements within the AFP and PNP to continuously and systematically expose and oppose the anomalies, corruption and viciousness of the highest-ranking leaders of the military, police and civilian bureaucracy and their puppetry to foreign and local ruling class interests. They can contribute invaluable to the people's cause by defying the regime's use of the AFP-PNP to protect vested interests and opposing the conduct of unjust wars to prop up reactionary rule, oppress the people and suppress their



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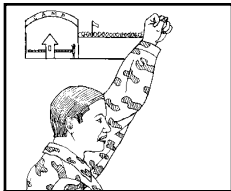
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struggles and those of the revolutionary forces. This is one means by which they could hasten the disintegration of the reactionary state's puppet, fascist and mercenary armed forces.

To counteract the fascist orientation of the military and police, progressive elements in the AFP and PNP can disseminate the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) and campaign for its implementation, just as the CPP-NPA does.

Positive elements among the military and police have also been persistently demanding substantial reforms within the AFP and PNP. The current regime's refusal to respond to their demands spurs them to fight for the establishment of a government that will uphold the people's interests.

It is our revolutionary task to



**The revolutionary forces are always ready to give them sanctuary within guerrilla zones.**

support anti-Arroyo and progressive soldiers in their quest to sow the seeds of patriotism and democracy within the military and police and to combat their pro-imperialist, fascist and mercenary tradition. The revolutionary forces are always ready to give them sanctuary within guerrilla zones.

The revolutionary movement offers to exchange views with them on the current crisis of the ruling system and towards achieving significant points of unity, alliance and cooperation, even up to the level of conducting joint or coordinated military actions against the common enemy.

The positive and progressive soldiers and police forces can be count-

ed among the growing ranks of people thoroughly revolted with Gloria Arroyo's bogus, lying, corrupt, puppet and brutal reign and are ready to resist it. They want to oust the Arroyo regime, end its antinational, antipeople and anti-democratic ways, and establish a new government that is truly nationalist and democratic.


Besides forming alliances with anti-Arroyo and progressive groups and elements within the AFP and PNP, the revolutionary forces must also redouble their efforts in directly relating with, arousing and organizing soldiers and police forces, their families, relatives and communities.

AB

# US refuses to yield four rapist soldiers

"There are times when national sovereignty must be set aside." This was how Department of Justice (DoJ) Secretary Raul Gonzales shamelessly justified his refusal to implement a January 17 order by the Olongapo City Regional Trial Court to arrest four Ameri-

can soldiers accused of rape. The court issued the arrest order after formal charges were filed against Staff Sgt. Chad Brian Carpentier and Lance Corporals Daniel Smith, Keith Silkwood and Dominic Duplantis who were accused of raping a 22-year-old Filipina in November 2005 at the Subic Bay Freeport Zone. The DoJ refused to implement the court order after the US embassy arrogantly insisted on maintaining custody over the four accused in accordance with provisions of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA). The move constituted a grave insult to the country's sovereignty and the Philippine government's judicial system. The US' refusal to cede custody over the four soldiers to Philippine authorities clearly demonstrates to the Filipino people that the VFA is

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nothing but an instrument for American troops to enter and leave the country as they please and ensure their exemption from Philippine jurisdiction and control.

This is in sharp contrast with German, Japanese and South Korean laws stipulating that local authorities should exercise immediate jurisdiction over American soldiers involved in criminal activity.

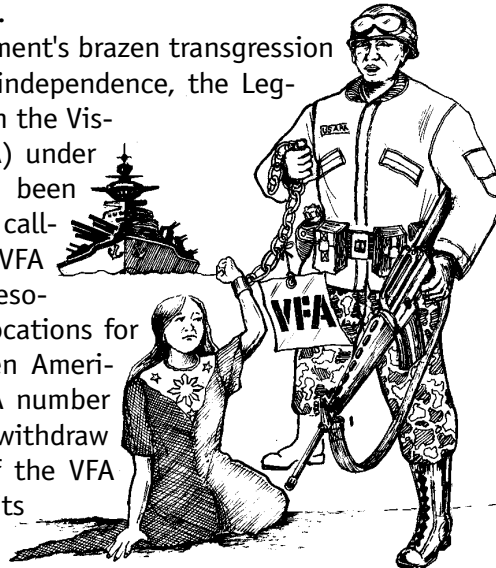
Various Philippine organizations and personalities have been outraged by the US government's refusal to hand over the four soldiers who have been accused of a heinous crime.

Militant groups have launched demonstrations in the US embassy in Manila since November to demand the arrest of the accused soldiers and denounce the Philippine government's impotence in asserting the Filipino people's rights and sovereignty.

Students also led in calling for the repeal of the VFA and burned a US flag on January 17 to symbolize their protest.

Under the VFA, several "joint exercises" involving American and AFP soldiers have been conducted yearly since 2001. The VFA has also facilitated the constant presence of American soldiers in overt or covert operations in the Philippines, in training fascist AFP soldiers, and in involving American troops in military operations, war mongering and espionage.

Incensed by the US government's brazen transgression of Philippine sovereignty and independence, the Legislative Oversight Committee on the Visiting Forces Agreement (LOVFA) under the Congress and Senate has been compelled to pass a resolution calling for the VFA's repeal. The LOVFA also passed on January 19 a resolution to eliminate budget allocations for joint military exercises between American soldiers and AFP troops. A number of senators also threatened to withdraw the Philippines' recognition of the VFA as a preliminary step towards its abrogation.



## VICTORIOUS NPA OFFENSIVES



### 4 soldiers killed, 8 wounded in Samar ambush

FOUR soldiers were killed and eight others wounded in an ambush by New People's Army (NPA) Red fighters in Barangay Caranas, Motiong, Samar on January 15. The soldiers had just ended their military operations under the 801st Brigade in the nearby town of San Jose de Buan when they were ambushed by the NPA's Serafin Patimos Command.

Meanwhile, contrary to earlier reports, 32 and not 30 firearms were seized in a raid on a police station in Albura, Leyte on January 6. The Red fighters carted away 20 M16 rifles, ten cal .38 pistols, a cal .40 pistol, and a cal .22 rifle. Also seized were six rifle grenades, 92 magazines for assorted firearms, 2,050 rounds of ammunition, eight ammunition vests, a telescope, a VHF radio, two cell-phones, two bags containing internal PNP documents and four handcuffs. The raid began 6:45 p.m. and lasted for only 25 minutes. Two policemen manning the station were captured but were immediately released, having committed no crimes against the people.

## People oppose Balance Piston 06-02

About 5,000 people rallied in front of a military camp in Carmen, North Cotabato where the joint military exercises between Philippine and American troops began on January 17. The rallyists denounced the exercises, dubbed as Balance Piston 06-02, as a form of US armed intervention in the country.

The military exercises which included target shooting, combat lifesaving and small-unit tactics were all aimed against the Filipino and Bangsamoro revolutionary movements, besides claiming to target Abu Sayyaf bandits. Among the trainees is an AFP unit deployed against the New People's Army in Davao. North Cotabato and Jolo were chosen as pri-

mary sites for the exercises, areas reputed as strongholds of the Moro people's struggle against the puppet regime and its US masters.

The current exercises in North Cotabato, which will last till February 8, merely comprise the first phase of Balance Piston 06-02. The next phase will be conducted in late February in various parts of the country.

About 5,500 American troopers and more than 2,000 Filipino soldiers will participate in the month-long exercises due to start February 24, which will be the biggest since in the Balikatan series commenced in 1981. Twenty joint exercises are slated for this year.

AB



## NPA frees comrades jailed in Batangas

NPA guerrillas of the Edgardo Dagle Command staged a successful rescue operation on January 14, freeing nine Red fighters detained at the Batangas Provincial Jail in Batangas City.

The guerrillas disguised themselves as elements of a SWAT team who were bringing a prisoner to jail. In just four minutes, the fighters were able to disarm the police and jail guards and free the detained comrades. They also seized six cal .38 pistols, a 9 mm and a shotgun from the police and jail guards.

## NPA sparrow unit in Mindanao seizes 4 firearms

THE NPA seized four rifles in a series of sparrow operations in North Cotabato and Bukidnon in January. Four enemy elements were killed and one wounded in these operations.

In North Cotabato, an NPA team seized two M16s and an M14 in a raid on a Philippine Army detachment in Barangay Binay, Magpet on January 20. Killed were Sgt. Fernando Mag-salang, commanding officer of the detachment and one of his CAFGU bodyguards. Another CAFGU element was wounded.

In Bukidnon, an M16 was seized in a sparrow operation in the town center of Don Carlos on January 14. Killed were SP01 Emilio Banaag and a CAFGU element.

## 4 soldiers killed, 1 wounded in Abra encounter

Five fascist soldiers were killed and one wounded when a squad under the NPA-Agustin Begnalen Command (ABC) encountered a 54-man unit of the 41st IB in Apao, Tineg, Abra on January 17. The firefight which occurred in a pastureland lasted for two hours.

In a statement, ABC spokesperson Ka Diego Wadagan said that the NPA squad was sent to the area to check on the presence of enemy soldiers and launch punitive actions against the notorious elements of the 41st IB should the opportunity present itself. The 41st IB is responsible for many human rights violations such as the forcible use of civilians as human shields, harassment and intimidation of the civilian population, cattle rustling and destruction of agricultural and private property, among others. The 41st IB also frequently conducts military operations in areas targeted by big mining companies to facilitate their entry and quell the people's protests.

### Erratum

CONTRARY to a report previously published in *AB's* January 7, 2006 issue, no civilians were killed in an NPA ambush in Claveria, Masbate on January 6. Killed during the ambush were three CAFGU elements and five policemen.

# Ka Nadia: NPA woman commander



"**A** mere woman? Hah! This is going to be a cinch."

Such is the enemy's usual scornful reaction whenever they hear a woman fighter's voice issuing commands in a gunbattle. Ka Nadia has encountered many such taunts in her twenty years in the New People's Army (NPA). But the fascist troop's jeers do not intimidate her one bit. In fact, Ka Nadia's prowess as a military commander has repeatedly served as a humiliating lesson to chauvinist enemy soldiers and officers who have suffered defeat or fled in frenzy.

Ka Nadia, 40, is a member of the regional military training staff in Cagayan Valley. She possesses the characteristics expected of a military cadre—courage, confidence, smartness, resoluteness. She also has a powerful voice that dominates the din of battle and guides Red fighters in their maneuvers.

As an instructor, Ka Nadia plays a major role in encouraging women fighters to give their all and do their best in training. Having a woman as their instructor is a great inspiration to them.

Ka Nadia has a special interest in discovering women fighters who have the potential to become military cadres. She is well aware that such potential is difficult to unearth given the various cultural and psychological restraints women face.

Despite the fact that women and men basically undergo the same training and that potential military cadres can be found both among male and female guerrillas, women usually lack the self-confidence to undergo training as future military commanders, Ka Nadia notes.

When a woman fighter shows

any sign of hesitation during such training, the instructors leave it at that and then focus instead on training the men who have more self-confidence, Ka Nadia explains.

This is where Ka Nadia differs as an instructor. When she is convinced of the potential of a woman fighter, she provides her with special attention, explains matters to

her and shares her experiences to boost her esteem and self-confidence. She glows with fulfillment for women who excel in military work as well as in other lines of work.

Ka Nadia's experience proves that in the New People's Army, women can be fine military officers just like the men. AB

## Forged and tempered by time and experience

**K**a Nadia has been tempered by more than two decades of struggle and sacrifice. She came from a family of middle peasants who became poor when they lost their livelihood due to the widespread evacuations spurred by intense militarization. Poverty forced her to drop out on her second year in high school.

After becoming an activist, she organized barriofolk as a member of a semilegal team, until she landed on the enemy's wanted list. She was deployed to Ilocos Norte a few months later to do expansion work and to ensure her security. It was there that she met her first husband.

Ka Nadia's first year as a guerrilla was no picnic. In a matter of months, she had been deployed to a faraway province, gotten married and given birth. For almost a year, she was separated from her husband who was later deployed to Cagayan province. She was also unable to visit her child who was in the care of relatives under close watch by the military.

To reunite her with her husband, she was deployed back to Cagayan where she became a staff member of *Nalabaga a Gerilya*, a now defunct NPA publication in Northern Luzon. Some years later, Ka Nadia was deployed to one of the NPA's full-time combat units. It was then the height of military adventurism, and every available person was deployed to the combat units, including those in staff work. Here, she rehoned her skills in mass work, especially in education. She became the political guide of a squad under Cagayan Valley's regional guerrilla unit (RGU) and later became political instructor of a platoon under the RGU.

Following the militarist orientation of that time, Ka Nadia's unit was thrust into intense and attritive battles, including a whole month of

close quarter positional warfare with the enemy in Marag Valley. The lessons of those days of error have been etched in Ka Nadia's mind and she was among those who embraced the Second Great Rectification Movement in the region. Despite the errors, however, her experiences have sharpened to a keen her military ability and skills and led her to discover a great interest in military work.

She first had to go through a grievous inner struggle, however. She agonized over the death of eight of eleven comrades who composed their squad in 1995. She could barely overcome her anguish over the tragedy, especially since she was a leading member of that unit. To regain her bearings, she volunteered for staff work in the confinement of headquarters.

Yet another tragedy struck which drove her to go back to mass work and armed struggle—the death of her husband from a serious illness. She volunteered for redeployment to mass work in the hope of swiftly recovering her sense of loss in the company of the masses.

In 1999, she was deployed to the Western Cagayan guerrilla front as a platoon political instructor, and later as platoon leader when both their commanding officer and vice commanding officer were captured. With the help of other cadres and comrades, they advanced revolutionary work in their area, until the two guerrilla fronts in the north and south of Cagayan province were merged to form the region's Northern Front.

From then on, Ka Nadia has concentrated on military work as instructor for the Basic Politico-Military Course. She fell in love again and married a fellow military cadre, five years after the death of her first husband. AB

## Armalite, pen and paintbrush

The following scene is commonplace wherever the different platoons of the New People's Army are encamped in Panay's guerrilla fronts: Every morning, after the Red fighters' regular exercises, the Platoon's Unit Command meets. Later, another meeting is held by the Political Section which comprises the squads' political guides and is led by the Platoon's Political Instructor.

During these meetings, these two levels of leadership usually discuss their particular roles in implementing their day-to-day ideological, political, organizational and military tasks as set by the Party Branch. The Unit Command sees to the platoon's military work and performs administrative as well as other tasks assigned by the Party. The Political Section, on the other hand, is responsible for the platoon's political, educational and cultural tasks. The leaders of the Unit Command and the Political Section constantly consult each other.

Whenever the platoon confronts a major or important issue and needs to unite on how to address it, the Unit Commander calls for a general meeting. It is here where democracy in the field of politics flourishes. Under the Political Section's assiduous supervision, every Red fighter and officer is able to participate in lively and fruitful discussions. The Unit Command and the Political Section coordinate in conducting politico-military trainings. Aside from the cadres who attend these trainings, other squad members who have shown ability and potential are assigned to compose the staff of instructors.

It is through such practices that the people's army becomes a training ground for revolutionary activists and politico-military cadres.

Propaganda-cultural work is particularly vibrant in platoons across Panay. Such work is a regular feature of the Red army's day-to-day tasks in Panay's guerrilla fronts. As ideas are constantly exchanged within platoon formations, NPA units are honed not only into a fighting army but an army rich in culture. Every Red officer and fighter firmly believes that "An army without culture is a dull-witted army, and a dull-witted army cannot defeat the enemy."

Proof of the vibrant cultural work within the Red army is the publication of *Pabalon kag iban pang Binalaybay (Keepsakes and Others Verses)*—a 68-page anthology of 50 poems compiled by the

Political Section of one of the platoons under the Jose Percival Estocada Jr. Command in Panay's Central Front. The poems were compiled amid near relentless attacks by Reengineered Special Operations Teams (RSOT) as well as strike and civil-military operations by the Philippine Army 3rd ID's Task Force Panay in the latter part of 2004. The collection was published in 2005.

The verses which were written mainly in Hiligaynon and Kinaraya were all composed by Red fighters and Party members and cadres from a platoon. The writers hailed from the working class, the Tuman-duk minority group, the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie. Only three members of this platoon had formal knowledge or training in cultural work before becoming Red fighters. Eight others were able to develop their poetry writing skills upon joining the people's army. Others learned how to write poems while undergoing literacy and numeracy training. *Pabalon* likewise included 45 drawings made also by Red fighters from the platoon.

Some months after this collection was published, Red fighters under the Napoleon Tumagtang Command of Panay's Southern Front were also able to come up with their own 70-page anthology of poems, songs, essays, short stories and illustrations. This collection was published in May 2005.

The members of these platoons are fighters and commanders of a powerful national-democratic cultural revolution with a socialist perspective. AB



# Railroading charter change: A pro-imperialist and pro-Arroyo maneuver

**T**he Arroyo regime's plans to railroad charter change have met with widespread opposition. Days after Arroyo and the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats (Lakas-CMD) party declared that they would use "superior force" to push for changes in the constitution, various organizations, sectors, personalities, politicians and even a number of Arroyo's partymates stood up to oppose plans for charter change.

Almost to a man, they averred that "chacha" was merely a Malacañang tool to derail and smother widespread calls to end the Arroyo regime and to ensure that Arroyo remains in power. Various sectors likewise criticized plans to cancel elections in 2007 and extend the terms of all elected government officials until 2010.

Gloria Arroyo ordered the Lakas-CMD National Directorate to meet last January 14 to support her scheme to push for charter change and ignore calls for her to step down in 2007. Opposition to earlier Arroyo-supported proposals to cancel the 2007 elections were drowned out in this meeting.

Arroyo loyalists, majority of whom are Lakas-CMD members are railroading proposals for charter change in Congress. Right after Lakas-CMD's declaration, the Congressional Committee on Constitutional Changes approved a draft by Rep. Constantino Jaraula outlining proposed amendments to the charter based mainly on a draft prepared by the Constitutional Consultative Commission set up by Arroyo the previous year.

The Jaraula draft calls for, among others, a change in the form of government that would entail the abolition of the Senate, the establishment of a unicameral parliament and the lifting of term limits for elected officials. Despite strong objections from oppositionist congressmen, pro-Arroyo congressmen want to include in the agenda the postponement of the 2007 elections, though this would be subjected to a referendum.

Of all the proposed amendments, it is those that seek to redefine civil liberties and remove restrictions on foreign investments that would inflict the heaviest blows on the people. The Arroyo regime has been pushing for such amendments in compliance with its imperialist master's twin dictates to enact laws in accordance with the Bush regime's "war

against terrorism" and open the Philippine economy completely to foreign investments in consonance with "free market" globalization to the detriment of the local economy.

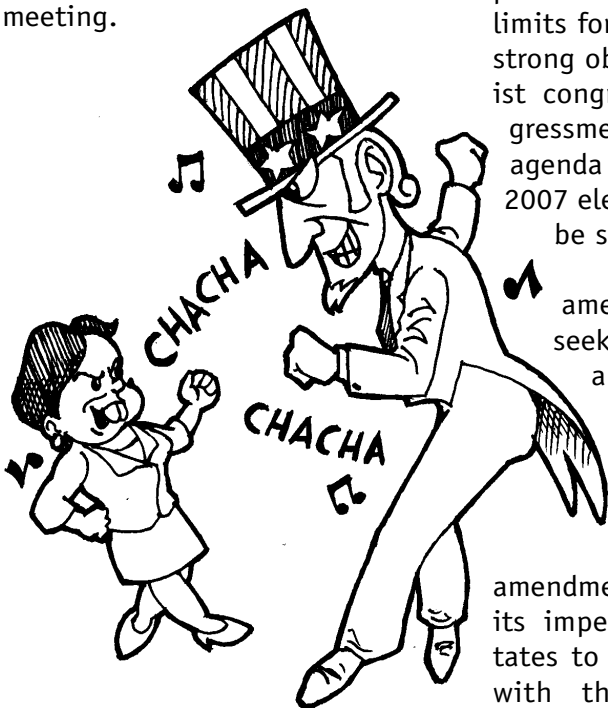
Despite its majority control over Congress, the regime is all too aware that charter change plans would have to go through the proverbial eye of a needle. Even a number of Arroyo's partymates and supporters in the Senate, among them Sens. Juan Flavio, Richard Gordon, Joker Arroyo and Miriam Defensor-Santiago are opposed to plans to railroad such changes.

The regime plans to overcome the Senate's objections by, among others, refusing to call a bicameral meeting of Congress. But aware of the possibility that such efforts may fail, Malacañang is now pushing for a so-called "people's initiative" through the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP) to create a scenario of people's support for charter change. This, despite a Supreme Court ruling on a similar case in 1997 stating that such a move would not be possible in the absence of an enabling law.

**Continued cracks within the Arroyo camp.** The Lakas-CMD National Directorate meeting on January 14 was called to iron out disagreements between Gloria Arroyo and former president Fidel V. Ramos who has directly called on Arroyo to cut short her term by 2007. Before the meeting, Malacañang rushed to convince Ramos to abandon his stance.

Malacañang claims that the Lakas-CMD meeting succeeded in consolidating support for Arroyo. But in fact, the deep fissures within Lakas-CMD remain. If ever, the

*Continued on "Railroading...", page 8*



## Rallyists commemorate Mendiola Massacre

MORE than 2,000 members of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), Pamalakaya, Anakpawis, Gabriela, Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) and other groups rallied in Mendiola on January 20 to commemorate the Mendiola Massacre which took place January 22, 1987.

The rallyists signed their blood on a manifesto of commitment to struggle for justice for the victims of violence in Mendiola, for the right to have land to till and for the ouster of the Arroyo regime.

The commemoration served as the opening salvo for plans to hold a hundred days of protest to push for the Arroyo regime's ouster.

## Senate inquiry reveals wiretapping of Arroyo rivals

A SENATE hearing on the "Hello Garci" tapes last January 19 revealed the prevalence of wiretapping activities by the Intelligence Service of the AFP (ISAFP) on Gloria Arroyo's rivals in the 2004 elections. A tape, which came from the same batch sold by ISAFP agent T/Sgt. Vidal Doble to Atty. Samuel Ong, revealed that the intelligence agency was used to wiretap Sen. Gregorio Honasan (then security chief of candidate Fernando Poe Jr.) and Sen. Panfilo Lacson (who also ran for president).

## Opposition gears for renewed impeachment proceedings vs. Arroyo

THIS early, oppositionists are already preparing a new impeachment case against Gloria Arroyo. It is, in effect, a repudiation of Arroyo's calls to fast-track charter change, a move the opposition views as a maneuver to squelch the clamor to oust Arroyo from Malacañang. The case is set to be filed on June 30, a year since the defeat of the last impeachment case filed against Arroyo. Congress likewise formally dismissed an impeachment case filed by Imelda Marcos' lawyer Atty. Oliver Lozano. Lozano was doing a reprise of his move last year when he sought to derail the filing by the opposition of a stronger case against Arroyo.

*"Railroading...", from page 7*

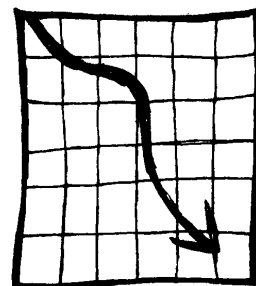
only consensus achieved was to postpone resolution of the issue on Arroyo's term.

The day after the meeting, Ramos still refused to declare outright support for Arroyo, saying he had to be "flexible" during the Lakas-CMD meeting. It was an indication that he lacked the numbers to overcome Arroyo's forces. As to how far Ramos will be able to assert his call for Arroyo to cut short her term will depend on his influence on, and capability to, muster enough forces especially from the military and police. **AB**

# Economic crisis worsened in 2005

It has been the Arroyo regime's wont to banner senseless or doctored, if not outrightly false statistics to cover up not only the economic crisis but its crisis-racked rule as well. Such was the case when Arroyo crowed about how the peso was allegedly gaining strength vis a vis the dollar in the last quarter of 2005, even if this was merely spurred by bigger remittances from overseas Filipino workers and by foreign investments that were mostly speculative and short-term in nature.

Arroyo has been living an illusion in her growing desperation to stay in power. During her party's convention last January 14, she invoked the so-called development of the Philippine economy as proof that her policies were correct and that she was the right person to lead the country. She claimed that the economy was on the right track, that its fundamentals were strong.



Arroyo's image of a "developing Philippines" is a far cry from the real situation confronting the Filipino people. Even the government's own statistics show that not only did Filipinos suffer from poverty last year, they were more impoverished in 2005 compared to previous years.

The Arroyo regime has been the most inutile in reducing unemployment in the country's entire history. Unemployment and underemployment statistics these past five years underscore this fact. Even the government's prettified statistics indicate that up to 4.1 million workers are without jobs and seven million are underemployed and do not earn enough for their needs. Worsening unemployment and the difficulty of finding jobs in the Philippines that could generate enough income have pushed most workers to look for jobs overseas. Their numbers are ever growing. A Pulse Asia survey in 2005 revealed that



33% of the country's remaining labor force had plans of going abroad—6% higher than the previous year's figure. This is on top of the more than nine million Filipino workers or more than 25% of the recorded labor force who are already outside the country.

Prices of goods and services registered the steepest hikes last year. Prices of petroleum products, which grew by more than 30% since the end of 2004 rose most frequently and the most number of times. Their prices were double that in 2001, the year Arroyo came to power. Electricity rates likewise rose by 24% and water rates by 52%. Prices rose even more after a series of taxes were slapped on goods and services. Most egregious of these was the expanded value-added tax (EVAT) where prices of

food, basic utilities and erstwhile exempted services such as medical care rose 10% in one fell swoop. Worse, the current 10% EVAT is set to be raised to 12% and will be imposed on most products by the first quarter of this year.

A family of six needs ₱666/day to live decently in Metro Manila and ₱535/day in other parts of the country. Arroyo has pegged the minimum wage at ₱250/day and actively blocks efforts by workers and employees to raise their wages and salaries. Measly wage increases and hikes in the Cost of Living Allowance ranging from ₱25 to ₱50 are far from adequate and are downright insulting. The biggest amount ever granted by the regime was a ₱25 increase for workers in the National Capital Region. Elsewhere in the country, government

granted workers a ₱5 increase in their daily wage, as if throwing alms to mendicants. Upwardly spiralling prices have eroded the real value of wages and salaries.

With so many glaring indicators of the people's impoverishment, the Arroyo regime's much-vaunted image of a developing country is a downright impossibility. More and more people are going hungry, more and more children are unable to go to school, more and more of the sick are forced to suffer in silence due to rising costs of medicines and medical care. The people cannot foresee any advantage accruing to them from Arroyo's cosmeticized statistics and empty promises. They detest her all the more as she desperately attempts to deodorize her puppet, corrupt and brutal regime. **AB**

## Widespread hunger

**M**ore and more Filipinos suffer from hunger and extreme poverty, as markedly shown by a series of recent surveys and even the government's own statistics. A Social Weather Station survey in December revealed the highest incidence of hunger since the survey began. Fourteen million Filipinos or 16.7% of the population said they went hungry at least once in the past three months.

On the other hand, the National Statistics Coordination Board's latest census conducted in 2003 revealed that four million families (24 million people or 37.5% of the population) do not earn enough to sustain even their most basic food needs.

But the actual number of people suffering from poverty and hunger is a lot bigger than what the SWS survey revealed if one is to use international standards stating that persons earning \$2 per day or less live in extreme poverty. The Department of Science and Technology's Food and Nutrition Research Institute has likewise reported as far back as 2004 that

80% of Filipino families are hungry.

IBON Foundation's studies show, however, that even such government statistics on hunger obscure the real picture as close to 90% of Filipinos are poor. IBON Foundation estimates that in July 2005, a family of six in the National Capital Region (NCR) already needed ₱635.81 a day to live decently. As early as May 2005, no less than the National Wages and Productivity Commission said that a living wage in the NCR amounts to ₱666 per day. Despite all this, the minimum daily wage remains pegged at ₱250—which is less than a third of the living wage. In fact, most workers are paid even



**NOODLES NI GLORIA**

less than the minimum wage.

Arroyo's response: drown the people in instant noodles! On January 2, Arroyo pledged ₱500 million for the establishment and operation of stores selling cheap foodstuff. The stores, dubbed *Tindahang Pinoy*, would allegedly sell basic food items like rice and instant noodles at government-subsidized prices to the poorest Filipinos. IDs would reportedly be is-

sued to persons certified as poverty-stricken. Each family would be allowed to buy only two kilos of rice per day.

That instant noodles comprise the most basic item that could be bought from Tindahan Pinoy is truly insulting. The poor's daily fare already consists of instant noodles and a little rice, yet it is these same items that the regime intends to sell to the people. It is as though fish, vegetables, chicken, meat and other nutritious food whose prices continue to rise are not for the poor. The people are angered no end by Arroyo's trickery: First, rice would be sold at Tindahan Pinoy at ₱18 per kilo—the same price NFA rice is sold in the marketplace. Second, instant noodles will be sold at ₱4.27 per pack when they are easily available in other stores for ₱4.30. Thanks indeed for the three-centavo discount!

The ₱500 million budget for this project will reportedly be sourced from a ₱35 billion fund earmarked for "pump priming". Actually, the sporadic and hypocritical doleouts or the sale of so-called cheap food that will characterize the project will merely serve as cover for government officials out to pocket public funds and for the regime out to continue providing grease money for Arroyo's supporters.

At the same time, Arroyo announced pointblank her government's fiscal reform program. In truth, Arroyo and her economists could think of only one way of raising fiscal revenue: increased taxation on an already poverty-stricken and hungry citizenry. An increase in the value-added tax from 10% to 12% is expected in February.

A day after she boasted of the ₱35 billion "anti-poverty" allocation, however, Sec. Romulo Neri of the Department of Budget and Management was forced to admit that there was no money available for the project. The government could only scrounge up to ₱10 billion from the current budget, he said. The rest of the funds have either already been allocated for projects under the previous budget or have otherwise been used for undisclosed purposes.

There is nothing novel about Arroyo's Tindahan Pinoy gimmick. Before this, there was the so-called "Tindahan ni Gloria." Her regime has also resorted to giving away free Philhealth cards and anomalously distributing agricultural funds which were either pocketed by government officials or used to bribe Arroyo's supporters. In the final analysis, all Arroyo has succeeded doing is to fool herself into believing that she has gained some credibility with her grandiose but empty gimmickry. AB

## Rising prices of goods and services

**P**rices of basic goods have greatly increased since Arroyo took power. IBON Foundation reported in August 2005 that the price of NFA rice increased 8% in June 2005 compared to that of 2000. The price of *pandesal* rose 29%; Lucky Me noodles, 32%; eggs, 16%; *galunggong* (scad), 19%; tomatoes, 33% and bananas, 22%. IBON also reported that the purchasing power of the peso declined by 77 centavos due to these increases. AB

## NPA punishes RPA leader in Iloilo

THE New People's Army meted out the death penalty on January 18 to Rufino Cadugo alias "Rocky," one of the leaders of the bandit group "Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPA-ABB)". The guerrillas, who belonged to a unit under the Napoleon Tumagtang Command also confiscated three semi-automatic pistols, two grenades and a cellphone.

Cadugo became one of the RPA-ABB's founders and leaders upon its establishment in 1995 and led many of the bandit group's criminal and anti-revolutionary activities. In accordance with a so-called peace settlement with the GRP, Cadugo became active in AFP operations against the revolutionary movement. He was a former NPA member who refused to abide by the Second Great Rectification Movement and turned traitor to the revolution in 1993.

Cadugo was guilty of many crimes against the people and revolutionary movement. The peasant masses, especially those from southwest Iloilo have long been demanding Cadungog's punishment. His crimes included murder, robbery and extortion. Cadugo and the bandit RPA-ABB also gained notoriety as mercenary security forces in the service of despotic local politicians.

## Norway refuses to recognize US and EU "terrorist listing"

THE Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the National Democratic Front (NDF) said it was pleased at the Norwegian government's refusal to recognize the "terrorist listing" drafted by the US and European Union. In a statement, CPP spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal said that Norway's role as an intermediary in peace negotiations between the GRP and the NDF and in advancing world peace and security has greatly been enhanced.

The Norwegian Royal Ministry of

Foreign Affairs said in a separate statement that if ever, it would only recognize a listing drafted by the United Nations. The UN has so far not prepared its own terror list.

Meanwhile, the NDFP condemned the Arroyo regime's continued refusal to implement its obligations as stipulated in an agreement signed in Oslo, Norway in April 2004. The agreement calls for the GRP to undertake political and diplomatic moves to have the CPP and NPA and the NDFP's chief political consultant Comrade Jose Maria Sison dropped from the terrorist listing. Formal peace talks have been suspended since 2004 due to the Aquino government's failure to fulfill these obligations.

### Death squads kill 3 activists

The year 2006 opened with no let-up in the killing of leaders and members of progressive organizations. Three activists have already been murdered by the Arroyo regime's military troops and death squads in as many weeks.

Two motorcycle-riding gunmen killed Ofelia "Nanay Perla" Rodriguez, 61, in her house in Mexico, Pampanga on January 16. Nanay Perla led the Divisoria Farmers Association, a sister organization of the Aguman dareng Maglalautang Capampangan (AMC) and the Alyansa ng Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon (AMGL). Witnesses said she was holding her year-old grandchild in her arms when she was shot pointblank.

Meanwhile, Bayan Muna member Armando Leabres was found dead on January 11. He had been abducted the day before in Peñaranda, Nueva Ecija. Noli Villalon, a peasant leader had also been killed January 7 in front of his house in San Miguel, Bulacan.

### NPA frees captive sergeant

THE NPA in Central Luzon released T/Sgt. Marlon Oronan of the 6th Marine Battalion on January 11 for humanitarian reasons. Oronan was taken prisoner of war by the NPA in Guagua, Pampanga November 23, 2005.

The Arroyo regime and the AFP's refusal to hold talks with the NPA prompted comrades in Central Luzon to seek the assistance of the church and other allies in facilitating Oronan's release. The NPA transferred custody of Oronan to sisters of the Mother of Good Counsel Seminary in San Fernando City, Pampanga on January 11. Accompanied by one of the sisters, Pampanga Archbishop Paciano Aniceto, former Floridablanca, Pampanga mayor Tito Mendiola and Oronan's wife Lilia, the former captive immediately went to the Guagua police station to report his release.

A PNP officer at the station advised Oronan to go home and await further orders from his unit. That same day, he received orders from his commander to directly report to Lanao del Norte where his unit is stationed. Oronan proceeded to the domestic airport in Manila the following day.

The AFP tried to steal the scene by concocting the story that Oronan was "rescued" by elements of the Philippine Marines at the airport on the morning of January 12. Based on the AFP's script, the military supposedly discovered that Oronan was to be transferred to Mindanao and waited for him to show up at the airport. His rescuers allegedly allowed the Red fighters guarding Oronan to escape to avoid an armed confrontation at the crowded airport.

The military likewise gave Oronan a script to follow to ensure that his statements were consistent with the AFP's ridiculous storyline. Soldiers guarded his wife Lilia at their home in Guagua to secure his cooperation. Oronan, however, did not adhere to the script and revealed just the same at a press conference that he had earlier been released by the NPA in Pampanga.

The NDF-Central Luzon strongly belied the AFP's concocted story. It also condemned the military's total disregard for the life and safety of its personnel as it never took a single positive step to secure Oronan's release all throughout his 48-day captivity.

### Iraqi guerrillas down 3 US helicopters

Iraqi guerrillas downed three helicopters in the first half of January, proof of the continued advance of their struggle against the American invaders. Iraqi guerrillas downed a helicopter used by Task Force Ironside January 16 to bomb Darmiya district north of Baghdad. On January 13, two pilots were killed when guerrillas fired on their helicopter in Mosul. Before this, eight American soldiers were killed when their helicopter exploded in Tal Afar, north of Baghdad on January 6.

Aside from foreign military troops, the Iraqi guerrillas have also targeted puppet troops of the US-installed Iraqi government. Eight local Iraqi security forces were killed in an ambush by guerrillas on January 16. Two policemen were likewise waylaid in Shaala district and another was meted the death penalty in Adhamiya in western Baghdad. Five members of the Iraqi National Guard were also killed in an ambush in Zaitum, west of Baghdad.