



ANG

Bayan

Pahayagan ng Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas
Pinapatnubayan ng Marxismo-Leninismo-Maoismo

English Edition
Vol. XXXVIII No. 19
October 7, 2006
www.philippinerevolution.org

Editorial

The Arroyo regime's many nefarious schemes

Malacañang is simultaneously pushing "Plan A" and "Plan B" to change the reactionary constitution before the 2007 election. While Arroyo's lackeys in the Supreme Court assert the legality of the "people's initiative" approach to charter change, her henchmen are going all-out to transform Congress into a Constituent Assembly (Con-Ass). But both plans face many legal and political obstacles and can only succeed by bulldozing through these barriers.

Last September 26, Solicitor General Eduardo Nachura, the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP) and Sigaw ng Bayan were hard-pressed explaining before the Supreme Court the legal basis for their petition to change the constitution through a "people's initiative" that would require the signature of 3% of voters in each district. Despite the large number of judges appointed by Arroyo, the Supreme Court cannot favor the petition without provoking intense public reaction.

Thus, Arroyo and her henchmen are pushing for "Plan B" to transform Congress into a Constituent Assembly. They are determined to push through with the Con-Ass even without the Senate's approval as required by law. Being a priority Congressional agenda, it is expected to be in place in a month or two. If Arroyo's henchmen were to decide, they would do away with local and national elections in 2007 and 2010. Members of Congress, local leaders and of course, Arroyo, will remain in their positions for the next five years or more.

Arroyo is wasting no time in maneuvering to preempt and suppress the protest movement of the enraged masses. Her clique will bribe any official in any government agency to pave the way for her continuing stay in pow-

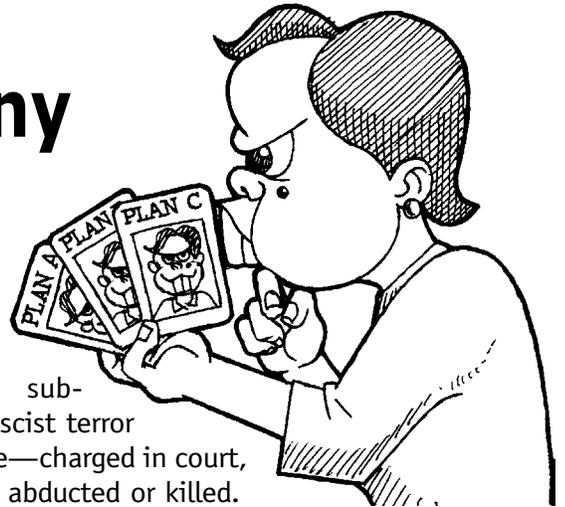
er. Those who refuse to be bribed are subjected to fascist terror and violence—charged in court, imprisoned, abducted or killed.

Ironically, by pushing for Cha-cha, Arroyo exacerbates the crisis besetting her regime's hold on power. She is provoking the senators to take a firmer stand against Cha-cha and Con-Ass. She is pushing the people to launch broader and more intense protests to prevent her despicable plan to hold on to power. She is sparking the intensification of revolutionary struggle against her regime.

Even if its "Plan A" and "Plan B" were to be derailed, the Arroyo regime is determined to implement Cha-cha next year. Arroyo and her henchmen are putting in place plans to ensure the victory of their candidates in the May 2007 election to secure a majority that would smooth the way for Cha-cha and the regime's many other nefarious schemes.

Arroyo has been able to hold on to power only through the support of her US imperialist master, paid lackeys in Congress, local leaders and fascist generals. By pushing for Cha-cha, Gloria Arroyo has again become the best motivation for the Filipino masses to act and end her puppet, rotten and fascist regime. Arroyo's pursuit of Cha-cha raises the level of the people's unity and their determination to end her regime as they did with the Marcos dictatorship in 1986 and the Estrada regime in 2001.

AB



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Oppose the Cha-cha scheme

Following are excerpts from the statement against Cha-cha issued by the Executive Committee of the CPP Central Committee.

It is the Party's duty to exert all effort to resist and frustrate the puppet and fascist Arroyo regime's Cha-cha scheme and simultaneously intensify armed and unarmed, illegal and legal, underground and open struggles to relentlessly isolate and weaken and eventually overthrow the despised ruling regime. Following are our urgent tasks on this matter:

1. Thoroughly expose the anti-democratic, antinational and antimasses Cha-cha and go all out in exposing and isolating the puppet and fascist regime

that masterminds and promotes it.

2. Link the anti-Cha-cha struggle with the all-sided advance and intensification of antifascist, antifeudal and anti-imperialist struggles.

3. Daringly expand the antifascist, anti-imperialist and antifeudal united front.

4. Be daring in further expanding and intensifying guerrilla warfare. Go all-out in resisting and frustrating the puppet and fascist regime and its US imperialist master's all-out war.

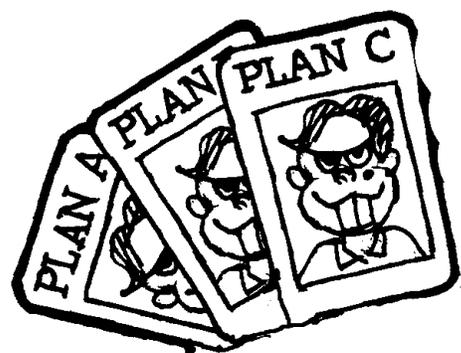
The fight against Cha-cha and the overall situation give us an exceedingly favorable opportunity to further expand and strengthen the revolutionary forces and all-sidedly advance the revolution. We must daringly seize this rare opportunity and lead the struggle of the broad masses of the people. AB

Malacañang's putrid plans

Aside from its self-proclaimed "Plan A" and "Plan B," the Arroyo regime has many other coercive, dirty and bloody schemes to circumvent the legal and political obstacles to its plan to hold on to power. The Arroyo gang will do anything, no matter how dirty, crooked or bloody to get what it wants.

The Supreme Court hearing last September 26 filed by Solicitor General Eduardo Nachura, ULAP

and Sigaw ng Bayan for a "people's initiative" or "Plan A," revealed the massive deception being foisted on the people and the extent to which existing laws are being distorted. The petitioners admitted that they did not know the signatories nor were they able to verify the 6.3 million signatures they solicited. Oppositors to the petition presented reports and evidence proving widespread fraud in the solicitation of signatures, which in-



cluded those of the dead and those opposed to the petition.

The hearing also showed that "Sigaw ng Bayan" failed to gather the signatures of 3% of voters in three districts in Davao City, one in General Santos City and another in Makati City. It was also pointed out that the signed documents made no mention of the proposal to change the constitution, and were all written in English which is not the language of the majority of the people.

The petition calls for major changes in the constitution, including a shift from a presidential to a parliamentary form of government which contravene current laws that state that only minor changes to the constitution may be effected through a "people's initiative."

In 1997, the Supreme Court ruled against a petition for a "peo-

 <p>ANG Bayan</p> <p>Vol. XXXVIII No. 19 October 7, 2006</p> <p>Ang Bayan is published in Pilipino, Bisaya, Iloko, Hiligaynon, Waray and English editions.</p> <p>It is available for downloading at the Philippine Revolution Web Central located at:</p> <p>www.philippinerevolution.org</p> <p>Ang Bayan welcomes contributions in the form of articles and news. Readers are likewise enjoined to send in their comments and suggestions for the betterment of our publication. You can reach us by email at:</p> <p>angbayan@yahoo.com</p>	<h3>Contents</h3> <p>Editorial</p> <p>The Arroyo regime's many nefarious schemes 1</p> <p>Oppose the Cha-cha scheme 2</p> <p>Malacañang's putrid plans 2</p> <p>Ombudsman whitewashes anomalous COMELEC transactions 3</p> <p>Graft in Piatco and NAIA 4</p> <p>Millions in bribes 5</p> <p>Fascist State on a Rampage</p> <p>CPP honors slain bishop 6</p> <p>International Day of Protest 7</p> <p>Correspondence Reports</p> <p>Far South Quezon Front holds conference on agrarian revolution 8</p> <p>Developments Overseas</p> <p>Coup d'etat in Thailand 8</p> <p>News 11</p>
<p>Ang Bayan is published fortnightly by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines</p>	

ple's initiative" submitted by the group PIRMA due to the lack of a specific enabling law. Sigaw ng Bayan was questioned on why it failed to lobby Congress to pass a law to support a "people's initiative" and why it was petitioning the Supreme Court to revise its decision when nothing has changed since the 1997 ruling.

These were just some of the issues raised before the Supreme Court that Nachura and his fellow petitioners failed to answer convincingly.

Meanwhile, to push for a Con-Ass or "Plan B," Congress plans to deliberate on Resolution 1235 which calls for a unicameral meeting of Congress and the Senate that

would jointly vote on the formation of a constituent assembly. This resolution revises and supplants Resolution 1230 which grants the Senate separate voting privileges regarding Con-Ass. Resolution 1235 provides that the votes of 194 congressmen are enough to override all objections by the Senate.

As soon as any of these resolutions or combination of both resolutions is approved, Arroyo henchmen will fast-track their desired changes to the constitution by immediately calling for a referendum in January 2007 and transforming Congress into an interim parliament. Should this plan push through, regular parliamentary elections will be held between May

and November 2007. Meanwhile, all local officials will remain in their positions—their reward for being loyal Malacañang lackeys.

In case these plans fail, the regime is preparing to manipulate the May 2007 elections. Preparation involve the inclusion in the national budget of billions of pesos for Arroyo's pork barrel that will be used for electoral bribes. Executive Order 558 also allots billions of pesos to be released to pro-Arroyo congressmen and local leaders ostensibly for micro-financing schemes under various government agencies. Arroyo is also pushing for the automation of elections by putting defective counting machines under her control. **AB**

Ombudsman whitewashes anomalous COMELEC transactions

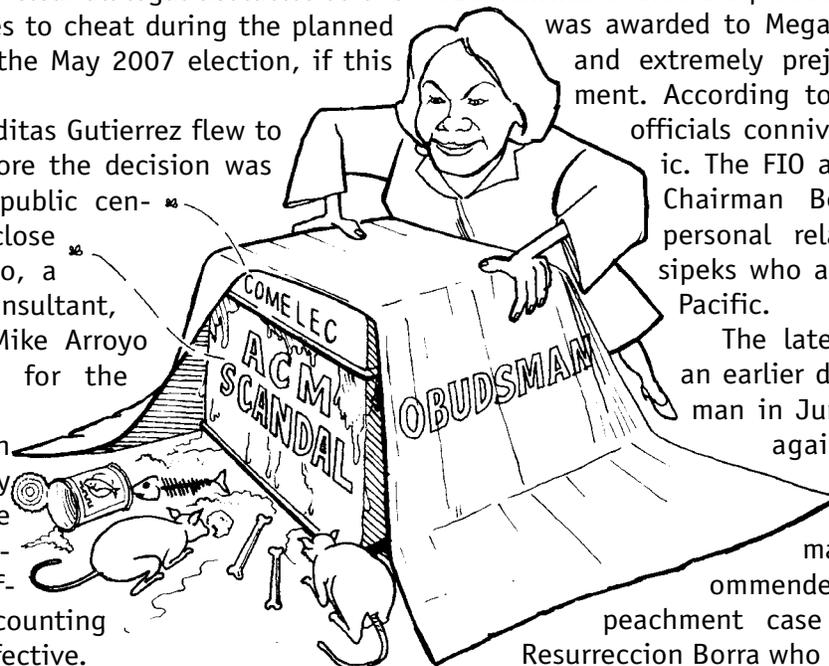
The Office of the Ombudsman was widely condemned for its October 2 decision absolving COMELEC officials and their accomplices from corruption charges related to the anomalous purchase of defective automated counting machines (ACM) in 2003. Arroyo ordered the Ombudsman to come up with such a decision to clear all legal obstacles so she could use the machines to cheat during the planned Cha-cha plebiscite or the May 2007 election, if this pushes through.

Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez flew to Switzerland a day before the decision was announced to evade public censure. Gutierrez is a close friend of Gloria Arroyo, a former presidential consultant, former classmate of Mike Arroyo and known operator for the regime.

The Ombudsman said it saw no anomaly in COMELEC's purchase of the counting machines from Mega Pacific and added that the counting machines were not defective.

The Ombudsman's decision goes against the September 4 recommendation of its own Field Investigation Office (FIO) to file criminal, administrative and civil charges against all COMELEC officials, an official of the Department of Science and Technology and six officials of Mega Pacific involved in the anomaly. The FIO confirmed that the process by which the contract was awarded to Mega Pacific was anomalous and extremely prejudicial to the government. According to the FIO, the COMELEC officials connived to favor Mega Pacific. The FIO also uncovered COMELEC Chairman Benjamin Abalos' close personal relationship to the Tansipeks who are key officials of Mega Pacific.

The latest decision contradicts an earlier decision by the Ombudsman in June 2006 to file charges against COMELEC officials and eight Mega Pacific officials. The Ombudsman had also earlier recommended the filing of an impeachment case against Commissioner Resurreccion Borra who supervised the contract.



The latest Ombudsman decision also contravenes an earlier Supreme Court decision that prohibited the use of the automated counting machines and nullified the contract between the COMELEC and Mega Pacific Consortium involving the purchase of more than 1,991 ACM for the 2004 election. The Supreme Court ruled that the contract violated the requirements of public bidding. Mega Pacific Consortium got the contract even without participating in the bidding process. Mega Pacific eSolutions, a Mega Pacific Consortium subsidiary participated in the bidding but was rejected. The machines supplied by Mega Pacific were also more expensive by P62 million over those offered by other bidders. The Mega Pacific contract was worth P1.3 billion. The Supreme Court issued its final decision last October 4 nullifying the contract between the COMELEC and Mega Pacific.

Many sectors oppose the use of the machines not only because of the anomalies attendant to their purchase but because they are defective and can easily be manipulated. Arroyo is expected to use the machines to ensure victory for her lackeys in the coming election. The Supreme Court also pointed out that the machines supplied by Mega Pacific failed seven of the 15 verification tests administered by the DOST.

In accordance with its earlier decision, the Supreme Court ordered the Office of the Ombudsman to conduct an investigation, identify those involved in the anomaly and file the appropriate charges against them. But after a two-year investigation, the Ombudsman now says that there was nothing anomalous in the contract and absolved COMELEC and Mega Pacific officials from corruption charges. AB

Graft in Piatco and NAIA 3

The people pay for Arroyo's corruption

Last September 12, the Arroyo government paid P3 billion to the Philippine International Air Terminals Co. Inc. (Piatco), a Filipino-German firm awarded a government contract to build the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 (NAIA 3). This supposedly represents the first installment to Piatco in exchange for its allowing government to control and operate NAIA 3. The payment was made despite a May 2003 Supreme Court decision that nullified the contract between the government and Piatco.

The contract stipulated that NAIA 3 should have been opened in the latter part of 2002. Construction started during the Ramos regime through the initiative of Asia's Emerging Dragons Co. (AEDC), a group of big Filipino-Chinese comprador capitalists led by Lucio Tan. Due to numerous controversies and anomalies under three successive regimes, NAIA 3 remains nothing more than a tarmac and empty buildings. Under the Estrada regime, government secretly connived with the German firm Fraport AG that used Piatco and a Filipino-Chinese dummy, Cheng Yong, to steal the contract earlier awarded to AEDC.

Upon assuming power, Gloria Arroyo and her husband immediately and systematically extorted funds from Piatco. (*See related article*) When the extortion was revealed to the public, Arroyo made the motions of ordering an investigation of Piatco and asked the Supreme Court to nullify the con-

tract so that government could finally assume control of NAIA 3. But these were merely steps to force Piatco to negotiate with Arroyo. Meanwhile, the regime still failed to operate NAIA 3, neglecting its facilities which eventually fell into disrepair.

The Supreme Court cited as reasons for nullifying the contract Cheng Yong's lack of financial capability; the many cases of irregularities in the provisions and implementation of the contract; overcharging for construction expenses; and Piatco's failure to meet the terms of the contract. It also revealed that Fraport AG owned 65% equity in Piatco and not 35% as reported. This violates a constitutional provision stating that foreigners can only own up to 40% equity in strategic and utility companies.

In February 2003, Piatco filed a case against the government at the International Chamber of Commerce Arbitration Tribunal (ICCAT). ICCAT is an international court that has the power to me-



ciate conflicts between governments and private investors. In its complaint, Piatco claimed that it still owned NAIA 3 and that the government should pay an appropriate amount for the right to operate the facility. Fraport AG filed another case against the Arroyo government at the International Court for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID), an international court funded by the World Bank to resolve cases filed by foreigners investing in other countries. Fraport AG demanded \$465 million (P23.25 billion) in damages from the Arroyo government.

Piatco's maneuvers contradict the earlier Supreme Court decision nullifying its contract with the government. Philippine law clearly states that government is the rightful owner of the land upon which NAIA 3 is built, and that Pi-

atco was merely a contractor for the construction and operation of the facility. But the Arroyo regime did not assert its ownership over NAIA 3. Instead, it dreamed up a complicated—and clumsy—strategy. It filed a case with the Supreme Court to seek the expropriation of NAIA 3 in exchange for an amount to be agreed upon by the government and Piatco. Many were flabbergasted by the regime's move. Arroyo's objective in seeking expropriation was for the court to obligate government to purchase NAIA 3 at a price to be set by Piatco to give her the opportunity to extort a huge share from the deal.

Meanwhile, the ICC-AT ruled in favor of Piatco even if the Philippine Supreme Court already nullified the contract. According to the ICC-AT, Piatco is the rightful owner of the NAIA 3 facilities. It or-

dered the return of NAIA 3 to Piatco and further ruled that the government must pay Piatco before it could assume control of NAIA 3.

The ICC-AT affirmed a December 19, 2005 Supreme Court decision that ratified a December 21, 2004 decision by the Pasay City Regional Trial Court (RTC) stating that the government can only assume control of NAIA 3 if it paid Piatco P3 billion. The Supreme Court ordered the Pasay City RTC to determine how much more the government would have to pay Piatco, aside from the P3 billion initial payment. Piatco is asking for a minimum of \$565-900 million (P28.25-45 billion) in payment.

Due to Piatco and Arroyo's avarice, Piatco will be paid more than double the actual cost of NAIA 3.

The national treasury and the Filipino masses will pay for the cost unilaterally demanded by Piatco, from which Arroyo will undoubtedly extort her share.

The contract for the construction of NAIA 3 is worth \$323 million, but actual construction costs were lower because Piatco failed to build some facilities stipulated in the contract (such as a tunnel linking NAIA 2 and NAIA 3). Piatco's actual construction costs for NAIA 3 amounted to \$175 million (P8.75 billion). Should government take over NAIA 3, it will have to spend another \$150 million to build additional facilities.

Instead of being punished, companies that have cheated the government are being given the opportunity to rake in much more money than that stipulated in their contracts. Arroyo ignores widespread criticisms that the deal is grossly disadvantageous to government. What is important for her is

Millions in bribes

Gloria Arroyo received \$2.1 million (P105 million) in bribes from Piatco from June-December 2001. The Arroyo couple failed to collect the full amount of \$4.4 million (P220 million) agreed upon with Piatco because their extortion racket was disclosed to the public in 2002.

After failing to receive the full amount, Arroyo ordered presidential adviser on strategic projects Gloria Tan-Climaco to investigate the contract between the government and Piatco. Climaco later announced that Piatco was a dummy for Fraport AG to justify the contract's nullification and pave the way for Arroyo's elaborate scheme to make more money from the NAIA 3 project.

The scheme involved overpricing Piatco's construction cost with the connivance of Climaco, Executive Sec. Alberto Romulo and former Department of Transportation and Communication secretary Pantaleon Alvarez. The overpricing was necessary to increase the compensation government would eventually pay to Piatco for the right to control NAIA 3, and to increase Arroyo's kickback from the settlement deal.

Meanwhile, in September 2003, Fraport complained that Gloria Arroyo's personal lawyer Atty. F. Arthur Villaraza and her husband Miguel Arroyo asked for \$70 million in exchange for booting out Cheng Yong's group from the NAIA 3 project and replacing it with Lucio Tan's group which Fraport preferred. **AB**

Continued on "Graft..." on page 6



CPP honors slain bishop

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) paid tribute to slain Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) Bishop Alberto Ramento, whom it called a true and close friend of the national democratic revolutionary movement. The CPP said that the Party, the NDFP and the entire revolutionary movement have the highest regard for Bishop Ramento and consider him a martyr of the Filipino people in their struggle for national freedom, democracy and social justice.

Bishop Ramento was found stabbed to death in his convent in Tarlac City during the early hours of October 3. The CPP blamed the Arroyo regime for the bishop's brutal and heinous murder.

Despite denials by the police, Bishop Ramento's murder had everything to do with politics. He chaired the Ecumenical Bishops Forum; was chairman of the Promotion of Church People's Response-Central Luzon; headed Karapatan-Tarlac and was a board member of the Philippine Peace Center; headed the Ecumenical Bishops Forum investigation regarding the slaying of Rev. Edison Lapuz; was a convenor for the multi-sectoral groups Pilgrims for Peace, Movement of Citizens for Civil Liberties-Central Luzon, Peace Forum, Interfaith-Central Luzon and Church-Peasant Conference. He was an ardent supporter of the striking workers of Hacienda Luisita (HLI) and a staunch oppositionist to Malacañang's Cha-cha scheme.

According to the CPP, Bishop Ramento was long under military surveillance and was included in

the list of IFI priests targeted for assassination or neutralization. In mid-2005, a military contact informed Bishop Ramento and the IFI about the hit list. Aside from the slain bishop, the list also includes Fr. Mario Quince, parish priest of Paniqui, Tarlac; Fr. Gregorio Lacanaria, parish priest of Victoria, Tarlac; Fr. Marshal Bautista, parish priest of Pura, Tarlac; and Fr. William Tadena, parish priest of La Paz, Tarlac—all ardent supporters of the striking HLI workers. Fr. Tadena was slain by a military death squad on March 13, 2005. Fr. Allan Caparro and his wife Ailyn Cana-Caparro of the IFI in Biliran, Leyte and the Diocese of Samar were ambushed earlier that year.

The CPP condemned the PNP's dismissive claim that Bishop Ramento was the victim of robbery with homicide, adding that his slaying shows the Arroyo regime's two-faced character in investigating political killings. According to the CPP, "The murder of Bishop Ramento proves that the Arroyo regime has no intention of stopping political killings and is in-



stead determined to heighten the campaign of killing activists, journalists, church people and critics and terrorizing the people."

Statements honoring the slain bishop and condemning his brutal killing poured in from various personalities and organizations. Ka Luis Jalandoni, chief negotiator for the NDFP said it was clear that the Arroyo regime was now using the cowardly tactic of killing its staunchest critics and making it appear that robbery was the motive. He added that the tactic was intended to deprive of significance the life of an outstanding and progressive church leader.

Earlier on, Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo said that Bishop Ramento's death proves that the creation of the Melo Commission is nothing more than a travesty. He added that the bishop's murder was meant to end his comforting support for many causes including human rights, civil liberties and good governance.

The Ecumenical Bishops Forum and leaders of the Catholic Church such as Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines president Archbishop Angel Lagdameo issued their own statements condemning the killing.

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to extort the largest possible share from the government contract with Piatco.

Apparently, Arroyo is still unsated by the fortune she raked in from NAIA 3. Malacañang has announced plans to privatize NAIA 3 even before it could open. This would mean new agreements and kickbacks from other investor groups.

The pack of thieves will once again be awash in loot.

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International Day of Protest

International condemnation continues to rise against the Arroyo regime's flagrant violations of human rights. Last September 21, protest actions were staged in front of Philippine embassies and consulates in North America, Europe and the Asia-Pacific when the Filipino people commemorated the 34th anniversary of Ferdinand Marcos' imposition of martial law. The International Day of Protest against Repression in the Philippines also became an occasion to organize all democratic groups and individuals opposed to the tyrannical government in the country. The International League for People's Struggle (ILPS) organized the activity.

In North America. Protest actions were launched in eight US cities:

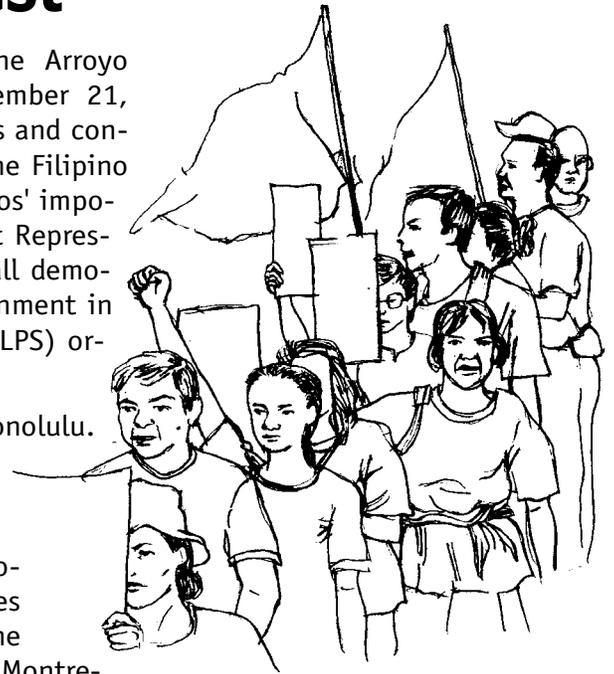
A street theater in Los Angeles, California portrayed the human rights situation in the Philippines. After the show, other allied organizations joined the rally and arrayed mock coffins on Wilshire Boulevard towards the Philippine Consulate to symbolize the Arroyo regime's victims. Marchers in San Francisco, California read aloud the names of those slain since 2001. In Seattle, Washington the Northwest Alliance for Human Rights and the Filipino Community Center of Seattle were established. They are supported by labor leaders, clergy and other community leaders.

A candlelight procession from St. Patrick's Cathedral towards the Philippine Consulate was held in Manhattan, New York. Similar activities were held in Chelsea, Massachusetts; North Carolina; and Honolulu, Hawaii. A forum and film-showing on the worsening human rights situation in the Philip-

pines were staged in Honolulu. The activity culminated in a candlelight vigil at the University of Hawaii.

In Canada, Filipino-Canadians organized rallies in front of the Philippine consulates in Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto.

In Europe. Dutch, Turkish and Filipino activists held a picket in front of the Philippine Embassy in The Hague and a rally in Dam Square, Amsterdam. In Geneva, Switzerland, Filipinos and Swiss spoke to the Philippine Mission attending the second session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. Filipinos and Norwegians lighted candles in Oslo for the victims of human rights abuses in the Philippines. In the United Kingdom, members of the ILPS held a picket in front of the Philippine Embassy on Palace Green Road, London. In Rome, Italy, Filipinos attended mass at the Chiesa Di Sant Alfonso for the victims of martial law and the killings perpetrated by the Arroyo regime.



In the Asia-Pacific. Filipino migrants held a picket in front of the Philippine Consulate in Sydney, Australia and lighted candles at the Town Hall. A protest action was also staged in Melbourne. In Jakarta, Indonesia, three Indonesian organizations staged a protest action in front of the Philippine Embassy. In Seoul, South Korea, Filipino migrants staged a rally. They were supported by Koreans, Bangladeshi and Nepalese and a group of lawyers based in the city. Chinese workers, students and other sectors staged a demonstration in front of the Manila Economic and Cultural Office in Taiwan. Protest actions were also staged in Lahore City, Pakistan, in Hongkong and in Tokyo and Nagasaki in Japan. AE

PARTIAL LIST OF PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS: *In the US:* Bayan-USA • Anakbayan-Los Angeles • Habi Arts • National Alliance for Filipino Concerns • POWER • League of Filipino Students • Babae • Anakbayan-Seattle • Pinay • Philippine-US Solidarity • Anakbayan NJ/NY • New York Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines • Katarungan • Philippine Forum Committee Action • Movement for a Free Philippines • International Action Center • CAAAV: Organizing Asian Committees • Nodutdol • Committee Organizing Coalition of Philadelphia • Anakbayan-Honolulu. *In Europe:* Filipino Resource Center • Changemaker • Kalayaan • Amnesty International • AKP (Norwegian Left Party). *In the Asia-Pacific:* Front Mahasiswa Nasional • Gerakan Rakyat Indonesia • Aliansi Mahasiswa Papua (Indonesia) • KASAMMA (South Korea) • MINBYUN • All Pakistan Trade Union • Labor Rights Association • Human Rights Program • Students of Soochow University in Taiwan.

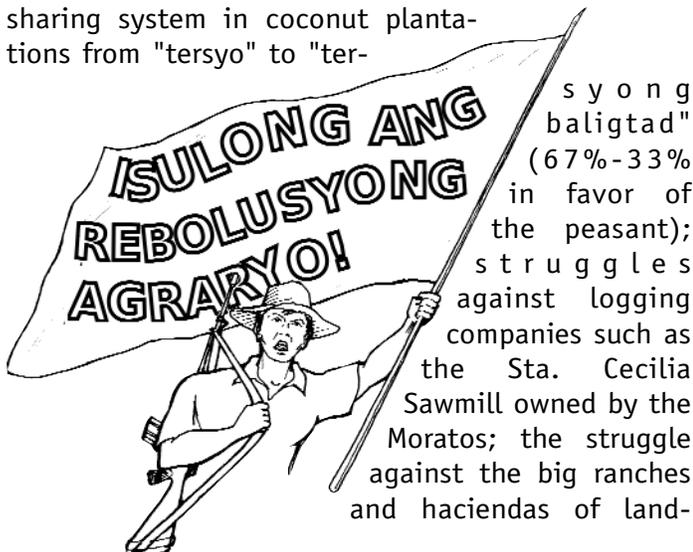


Far South Quezon Front holds conference on agrarian revolution

The First Conference on Agrarian Revolution in the guerrilla front of Far South Quezon was held on August 16-22. It was attended by 109 delegates including local chapter leaders of the Pam-bansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid and mass organizations, as well as local Party branch members from towns in Far South Quezon. Observers from other guerrilla fronts in Quezon and other Southern Tagalog provinces also attended. Such a composition ensured a significant level of depth, breadth and substance in the conference proceedings. The delegates completed the conference undisturbed by the AFP's ongoing massive military operations in the front.

The conference theme was fight to defend the life and livelihood of the peasant masses, advance agrarian revolution to a higher level and frustrate the Arroyo regime's all-out war.

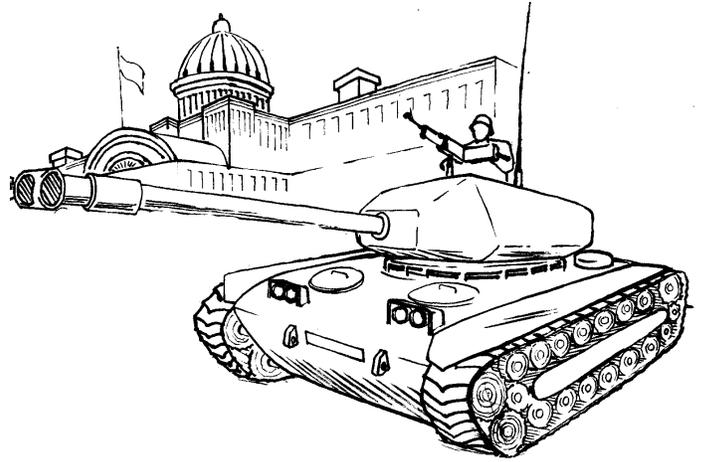
The conference became a productive and democratic school on how agrarian revolution has been advanced from the 1970s to the present. Victories achieved by the revolutionary peasant organizations were identified such as the reversal of the sharing system in coconut plantations from "tersyo" to "ter-



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Coup d'etat in Thailand



Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra of Thailand was ousted in a coup d'etat on September 19. Thaksin is a billionaire businessman who became a politician and abused his powers to engage in even more corruption and amass more wealth. The coup was led by Thai army chief Gen. Sonthi Boonyarataglin on the pretext of putting a halt to the Thaksin regime's rampant corruption, electoral cheating and abuse of authority.

The plotters also justified the coup by citing the Thaksin regime's fascist repression of the Muslim insurgency in Thailand that has led to many human rights violations, including more than 1,700 cases of extrajudicial killings of oppositionists and rebels.

Two days before the coup, Thaksin flew to New York allegedly to attend a meeting of the United Nations General Assembly. He had ulterior plans, however. He had already anticipated his ouster by a massive rally set for the day after he left. Thus, he absconded with billions of dollars worth of assets loaded aboard two planes.

Earlier in January, he had sold his telecommunications company for \$1.9 billion without paying any taxes to the government. This exposed the extent and gravity of the Thaksin regime's corruption and triggered a tsunami of mass protests to oust his corrupt rule. There are now more than 10,000 cases of corruption charges against Thaksin and his gang.

Military suppression. The latest coup d'etat in Thailand resolved the Thaksin ruling clique's corruption and suppression. The clique that took over, however, is the same if not worse. The Sonthi clique

did not waste time in setting up a military junta and implementing its fascist policies.

The violent seizure of power by the Sonthi clique from the Thaksin clique is a result of Thaksin and his gang's refusal to amicably share with the rest of the reactionary classes the limited spoils that could be plundered. In Thailand's history, the military has served as the usual instrument of rival reactionary cliques to overthrow the ruling regime and seize power. There have been 18 coups d'etat launched in Thailand since 1932.

Despite the Sonthi clique's anti-corruption and reformist posturing and rhetoric, the coup's anti-people motive is apparent—to derail the momentum of the burgeoning mass movement that was on the verge of successfully overthrowing Thaksin, a reality that he was in fact running away from. Like other reactionaries, General Sonthi will never allow the people to victoriously overthrow a ruling regime and usher in democratic changes in society.

Upon seizing power, General Sonthi immediately set up a "Council

for Democratic Reform under Constitutional Monarchy" that declared control and imposed martial law throughout the land. Sonthi and his cohorts lead the council in the name of the Thai king to conceal the fact that it is a military junta. It is composed of the officers of the armed forces and chief of the Royal Thai Police Office who led the coup. It has abolished the constitution and dissolved the two houses of parliament, the entire government and the Constitutional Court, which decides on the constitutionality of laws, policies and processes in question.

Intense pressure from the international community has driven the council to promise to hold elections in Thailand to restore civilian governance, but not till October 2007. It has appointed as transitional prime minister Surayudh Chulanont, a retired general.

Under the new military regime, assemblies of more than five people are banned. Meetings and other activities of all political parties and the establishment of new political parties are also prohibited.

Any statement opposing the military junta is forbidden.

A few hours after the coup, the military junta imposed a news blackout on local and international news agencies. It prohibited the airing of Thaksin's statements from abroad. More than 350 local radio stations have been shut down nationwide, with only those under the council's control allowed to operate. The council has ordered the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology to "control, block and remove" all statements and news in print, radio and television that are critical of their alleged "democratic reforms" and disturb the "peace."

Even news coming through the internet and websites that express opposition have been blocked. Television stations are banned from showing cellphone text messages and radio programs expressing political opinions.

Press freedom advocates have firmly condemned the coup d'etat and its ringleaders. They call for the lifting of martial law and the restoration of constitutional and civilian rule. AB

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lords in the guerrilla front; the gradual elimination of usury; and wage increases for farm workers. Lessons were drawn from positive and negative experiences in organizing and managing mutual aid teams and cooperatives and also in defending the gains achieved by the peasants against enemy attacks and sabotage.

One of the conference's major achievements was to arrive at a firm unity in identifying the primary problem, the main enemy, and the particular practices and correct standpoint that must be upheld and fought for by the guerrilla front's revolutionary peasant movement. The conference thus served as ideological grounding towards bringing the front's anti-feudal campaign and revolutionary peasant movement to a new and higher level. This will serve as a firm foundation in setting up the organizational machinery from the front level down to the sections and

particular villages or haciendas where agrarian revolution will be launched and advanced towards completion.

The major struggles to be launched include altering the sharing system in the haciendas and coconut plantations and campaigns against landlord-merchant exploitation in copra; struggling against mortgage and usury; against CARP-CLOA; raising the prices of copra and other farm products; developing cooperatives and abandoned, donated and seized lands; and struggling against the RSOT and human rights violations.

The conference came up with two resolutions on raising the level of mass organizations and stepping up the recruitment of the finest sons and daughters of the peasantry for the New People's Army. The conference closed with the formation of a Preparatory Committee that will set up PKM-Far South Quezon. AB

NPA launches offensives in ComVal, Cagayan and Rizal

FOUR soldiers were killed and several high-powered firearms were seized in separate tactical offensives of the New People's Army in Compostela Valley, Cagayan and Rizal in September and October.

In Rizal, two soldiers were killed and one wounded when NPA Red fighters raided the 16th IB detachment in Barangay Puray, Rodriguez on the morning of October 5.

In Compostela Valley, the NPA's Pulang Bagani Command raided the Tortuga Ventures Plantation, Inc. (TVPI) Packing Plant No. 7 in Barangay Tagnanan, Mabini on September 26. Caught by surprise, the ACD Security Agency elements guarding the banana plantation surrendered without a fight. The raiders seized their firearms and other military matériel.

In Cagayan, two soldiers of the 18th IB were killed in an ambush by NPA guerrillas in Barangay Bunugan, Baggao on September 18.

Oppose the resumption of San Jose Timber's operations!—NDF-EV

THE people and the revolutionary movement in Eastern Visayas vehemently oppose the Arroyo regime's renewed approval of San Jose Timber Corporation's (SJTC) logging operations in Samar these past months. The National Democratic Front-Eastern Visayas (NDF-EV) said in a statement that the Arroyo regime reopened the forests of Samar to SJTC despite the fact that these have been declared as a protected area called Samar Island Natural Park (SINP). The approval is Arroyo's way of getting the support of SJTC owner Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, especially since majority of the senators oppose the ruling regime.

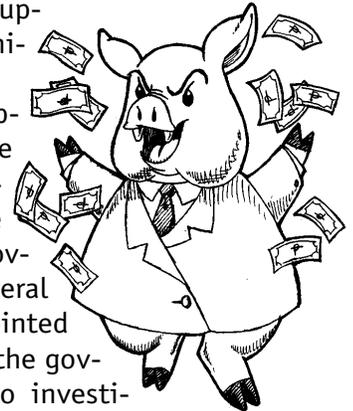
SJTC's concession covers 95,000 hectares in Samar island.

The NDF-EV vowed that the revolutionary movement will not allow SJTC or any other logging company to destroy Samar's forests. It said that the NPA will exert all efforts to block logging operations in accordance with the revolutionary movement's policy of protecting the environment and the people's welfare. NDF-EV reiterated the revolutionary movement's policy of allowing the cutting of trees only for the people's local consumption.

The NDF-EV also called on Samareños to unite against commercial logging so as to avert environmental disasters such as the tragedies in Ormoc City and Guinsaugon, Leyte where thousands of lives were lost due to flash floods and landslides as a result of forest denudation.

Corruption in the Philcomsat and PCGG

RAMPANT graft and corruption in Philippine Communications Satellite (Philcomsat) were bared in September when the Senate investigated five commissioners of the Philippine Commission on Good Government (PCGG) and several Philcomsat officials appointed by the PCGG. The PCGG is the government agency tasked to investigate and recover the Marcoses' loot.



Investigations revealed that PCGG has long been siphoning the funds of Philcomsat and its sister companies. Several Marcos cronies continue to enjoy positions in Philcomsat, and continue to strike deals and collaborate with PCGG officials.

Foremost of the anomalies was PCGG Commissioner Ricardo Abcede's use of Philcomsat funds to buy an expensive car for himself, Philcomsat officials charging their many privileges and expenses to the company and many other personal luxuries that are made to appear as official company expenditures. Also, Abcede took possession of a huge chunk of the company's stocks.

PCGG officials sitting in Philcomsat refused to appear before the Senate inquiry, using as pretext Executive Order #1 (EO #1) issue by the Aquino government in 1986 which states that PCGG officials are not obliged to appear before Congress and Senate hearings. However, former Pres. Corazon Aquino herself refuted their excuse, saying that they were misinterpreting EO #1 and that they were still obliged to appear before the investigations. In fact, EO #1 has been nullified by the ratification of the 1987 constitution.

The Senate ordered the arrest of the PCGG culprits, prompting five of them to go into hiding. The Senate was able to corner PCGG chairman Camilo Sabio but he refused to answer any questions.

Philcomsat is a telecommunications company sequestered by the Aquino government in 1986 when the Marcos dictatorship was ousted. Philcomsat is believed to be owned by the Marcoses through dummies such as Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, former secretary of defense during the dictatorship. It is now run by the PCGG under Commissioner Abcede and four other commissioners.

NPA-Negros denounces military smear propaganda

THE New People's Army (NPA) in Negros strongly denounced the military's smear campaign of blaming the NPA for the killing of three former Red fighters. It is not the NPA but the AFP that is to blame for the series of killings of Bonifacio Galagate, Emilio Opinio and Jaroy Martinez, said Ka Bayani Obrero, spokesperson of the NPA Boy Gatmaitan Command in Negros.

Galagate was attacked by 12 armed men in his home in Sitio Gusnit, Barangay Pinggot, Ilog, Negros

Occidental on September 25. He was brought out of the house before he was shot. The shooting also hit and wounded Galagate's son, Benjie, 17. Galagate's house is near the 303rd Brigade headquarters. Benjie himself asserted that it was the military that killed his father.

More than 12 activists have been killed in Negros since Arroyo came to power. This is aside from the many other victims of abductions and involuntary disappearances.

DOJ throws Subic rape case

THAT the Department of Justice (DOJ) has thrown the case of four American soldiers accused of raping a 22-year-old Filipina in Subic, Zambales in November 2005 became more apparent when the panel of government prosecutors refused to present rebuttal evidence against the defense's statements. Instead, they rested their case and announced that they would wait for the judge's verdict on November 27. Earlier, the victim "Nicole" and her mother had denounced the prosecution for "toying around" with the case.

The DOJ has not only betrayed the victim. No less than a member of the prosecution panel, Atty. Hazel Valdez, bared that the prosecution decided not to present rebuttal evidence without consulting her. She was in fact sent to liaise with Nicole's private counsel, Atty. Evalyn Ursua to coordinate the preparation of rebuttal evidence, but unknown to Valdez, Senior State Prosecutor Emily Fe de los Santos had already decided to forego the rebuttal.

The DOJ has thrown the case in exchange for a favorable US decision on former Agriculture Undersecretary Jocelyn "Joc-joc" Bolante's petition for political asylum in the US. Malacañang is desperately trying to have Bolante remain in the US to avert his possible disclosure of how Gloria Arroyo stole billions of pesos of fertilizer funds for her electoral campaign in May 2004.

The Subic rape case also has a huge bearing on the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) that allows the presence of US troops in the Philippines and has provisions on how to deal with US troops' violation of local laws. Attorney Ursua had earlier filed a petition to review and abrogate VFA provisions which she said were biased in favor of accused American soldiers and violative of the interests of Filipino victims.

RSBS abolition proves largescale corruption in the AFP

THE pending abolition of the Retirement and Separation Benefits System (RSBS) by the end of the year again provides undeniable proof of rampant corruption in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

The RSBS, established in 1973 to provide retirement pensions and benefits to soldiers has not benefited a single soldier because of grave corruption by the retired military officers who manage it. An average of ₱764 million yearly is deducted from soldiers' salaries for the RSBS, and yet it has not paid the pensions of retired soldiers amounting to ₱16 billion up to now.

One of the worst anomalies in the management of RSBS funds is the diversion of ₱2 billion by former AFP Chief of Staff Lisandro Abadia to fund his Antipolo Properties Inc. and Marilaque Land Inc. and Abadia's reported request to use RSBS funds for his electoral campaign when he ran for the Senate and lost in 1998. The case is now pending before the Office of the Ombudsman.

Public denounces snail-paced response to typhoon Milenyo

THE public has roundly denounced the Arroyo regime for its usual snail-paced response and lack of preparedness to assist victims of disasters.

More than 200 people were killed and at least P2 billion worth of properties and infrastructure were damaged by typhoon "Milenyo" in the Philippines. Tens of thousands of hectares of ricelands and almost 400 schools were also destroyed during the typhoon in the last week of September. It also caused

widespread power outages, flash floods and landslides affecting 43 million people. Many people were exasperated with the long delay in the restoration of electricity, and thousands continue to have no water services up to now. Hundreds of thousands were forced to evacuate their homes during the height of the storm.

Most gravely hit was the province of Sorsogon where the restoration of power services is estimated to take two months more.

New US recession looms

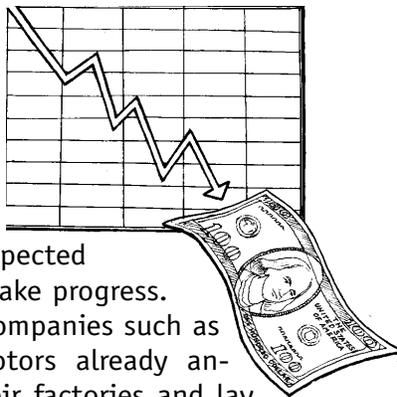
US economists have officially declared that the US economy will be in recession by 2007 because of the continuous decline of economic activity. Economists issued this prognosis when the US registered a growth rate of less than 2% this year. Even the manufacturing and housing sectors that were expected to tide over the US economy did not make progress.

As early as the start of 2006, big companies such as Ford, DaimlerChrysler and General Motors already announced their plans to close down their factories and lay off their workers. Ford will be terminating the biggest number of workers (30,000). An estimated 2.5 million workers in the US are expected to lose their jobs this year.

The US is also being buffeted by a huge trade deficit, estimated to have reached \$820 billion, from \$725 billion in 2005. This is the fifth straight year that the US has failed to check its trade imbalance.

Workers' unions have denounced the Bush regime for neglecting them and for the continuing lack of job opportunities. Bush would rather fatten the coffers of his wealthy cronies by transferring companies and jobs to other countries where imperialists could exploit slave wages and cheap raw materials in exchange for superprofits. The Bush regime has also been granting huge tax cuts to imperialist companies and cutting workers' wages and benefits such as health, retirement and job security. They said that more and more American workers are neck deep in debt and bankruptcy and are being forced to take on low-paying service sector jobs.

Another major problem facing the Bush regime is its enormous public debt bloated by the "war against terrorism" and the budget deficit. The US budget has been in the red for six straight years already.



US "war against terror" raises threat of terrorism

US intelligence agencies admitted that the Bush regime's "war against terrorism" has only brought greater anxiety to the American people and has increased the threat of terrorism. They also censured the absence of a US exit strategy in Iraq and the continuing abuse of prisoners suspected as terrorists.

Five years after the 9-11 terrorist attack in the US, the threat of terrorism against the US and its allies has not abated. Instead, there is widespread fear of another attack coming. In the past months, air travel has slackened especially to the US and UK due to fears of another al Qaeda attack. Arab-looking persons are arrested on mere suspicion that they are members of terrorist cells, despite their US or UK citizenship. The police have also frozen their bank deposits.

Besides occupying Afghanistan and Iraq, the Bush regime is also inciting anti-US sentiments in the territories of the Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine. US intelligence experts say that the US continues to wage war despite the glaring fact that it has no evidence to accuse Lebanon and Palestine of harboring al Qaeda elements. Because of US suppression, public support for al Qaeda, Hamas and Hezbollah has increased. This support is said to have given rise to a "new generation of mujahedin ready to fight the US."

Terrorism experts say that the US is embroiling itself in destructive wars, wasting more resources and destroying the lives of more American soldiers and citizens of occupied countries.