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# Bayan

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

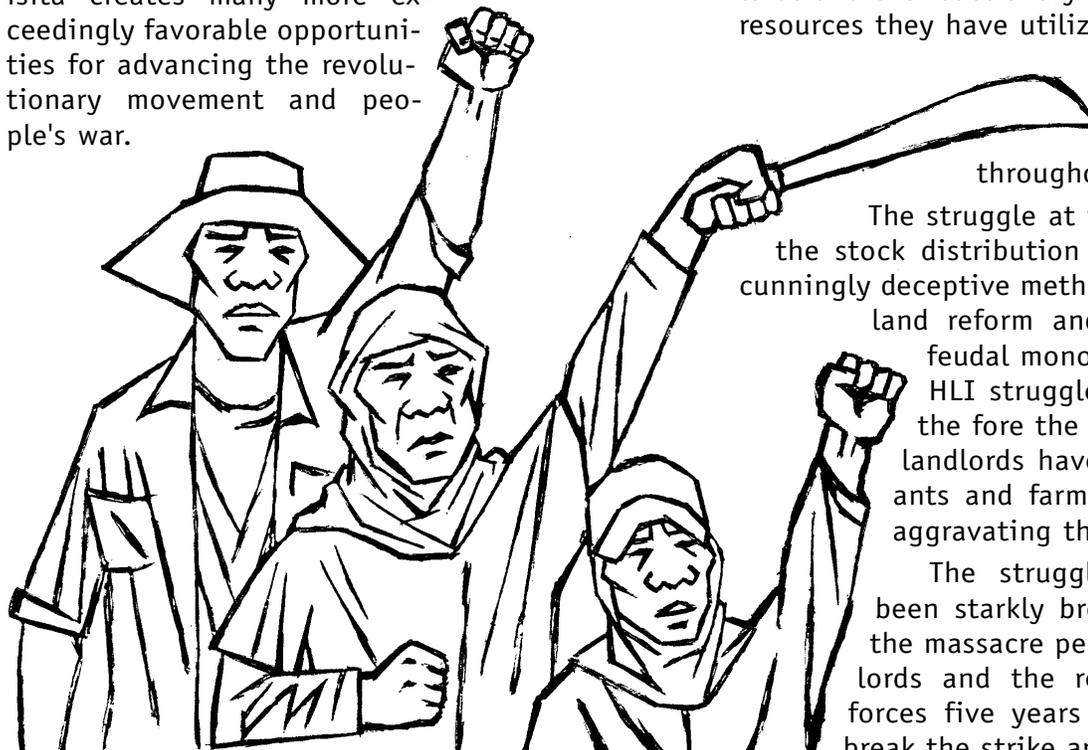
English Edition  
Volume XL Number 22  
November 21, 2009  
www.philippinerevolution.net

Editorial

## The Hacienda Luisita struggle inspires the entire nation

The struggle at Hacienda Luisita Inc. (HLI) serves as a symbol of the fight against feudalism and for genuine agrarian reform under more than a century of rule by big landlords of the old and new type. It greatly inspires the people in their efforts to advance their interests and struggle for the new democratic revolution's main content: land for the landless. The situation at Hacienda Luisita creates many more exceedingly favorable opportunities for advancing the revolutionary movement and people's war.

The peasants and farm workers' firm unity and all-out struggle to advance genuine agrarian reform and smash the feudal land monopoly reverberate not only within the hacienda but nationwide. Their hacienda residents have shown admirable courage, strength and perseverance despite tremendous disadvantages and in the face of the deception, repression and brutality perpetrated by the big landlords and the reactionary state forces, agencies and resources they have utilized.



The HLI struggle has great political and socio-historical implications throughout the country.

The struggle at the hacienda has exposed the stock distribution option for what it is—a cunningly deceptive method of implementing bogus land reform and a way of perpetuating feudal monopoly at the hacienda. The HLI struggle has likewise brought to the fore the other means by which big landlords have been pushing the peasants and farm workers to the wall and aggravating their suffering.

The struggle at the hacienda has been starkly brought to center stage by the massacre perpetrated by the big landlords and the reactionary state's fascist forces five years ago in their attempt to break the strike and crush the residents' in-

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domitable fighting spirit. It is but right for the people to hold accountable the US-Arroyo regime, the big landlord Cojuangco and Aquino families and the fascist forces they utilized to suppress and massacre striking peasants and farm workers at the hacienda on November 16, 2004. It is also correct to assail the Cojuangco and Aquino families for their decades-long exploitation and oppression of the workers and peasants at Hacienda Luisita.

The hacienda residents' relentless struggle continues to inspire peasants and other impoverished, exploited and oppressed people to fight. The strike at Hacienda Luisita is unprecedented in the depth and breadth of unity, perseverance, sacrifice and victories attained.

The farm workers as well as workers at the sugar central were able to build and develop the broadest unity and collective struggle, mobilize their families and communities and win over the broad support of the democratic forces and the Filipino people. This served as a powerful

weapon in the political arousal of the broad oppressed and exploited masses.

Their struggle was transformed into a fullblown people's strike that was able to sustain a big picket line as well as protest and mass actions of various forms and sizes such as street rallies, barricades and confrontations. Through this, they were able to paralyze the hacienda and sugar central for a year and effectively thwart the maneuvers and attacks of the big landlords and their minions—the massacres, the many killings and the deployment of armed fascist troops in the picket line and the villages within the hacienda.

Beyond the strike, residents of the hacienda were able to expand the scope of their initiatives, methods and flexibility in their struggle and try various ways of directly asserting their right to land and livelihood. The most striking example is the peasants and farm workers' collective cultivation of hacienda lands as a means of continuously asserting their right to land and

livelihood. They accomplished this at the height of fighting the avaricious and brutal big landlord.

The peasants and farm workers at the hacienda know that the broader, more protracted, more complicated and more challenging struggle is that for genuine land reform. This has further been proven by the big landlord Cojuangco family which, from the beginning, has never entertained plans to let go of the hacienda. The Cojuangcos have been hoping that the economic dislocation of the farm workers due to various tactics of deception, division and repression will disorganize and eventually crush the strength of the united residents of the hacienda and the support they have been enjoying.

There remains an urgent need to strengthen political and organizational work, improve on the tactics of struggle and win the broad support of the people in order to maintain their readiness for the long and difficult fight ahead. The task of propagating a deeper and broader grasp of the issues surrounding the hacienda and the struggle of the farm and hacienda workers must be strengthened and become more sustained, along with the task of attaining broader support for them.

This struggle is not just a struggle of the peasants and farm workers in the hacienda, but of all landless peasants and farm workers and the entire Filipino people.

The schemes and maneuvers of the Cojuangco family and its instrumentalities among the reactionary state's fascist forces must likewise be closely monitored, and the tactics against them improved. **AB**

 <p>Vol. XL No. 22 November 21, 2009</p> <p><i>Ang Bayan</i> 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: <a href="http://www.philippinerevolution.net">www.philippinerevolution.net</a>.</p> <p><i>Ang Bayan</i> 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: <a href="mailto:angbayan@yahoo.com">angbayan@yahoo.com</a></p>	<h2 style="text-decoration: underline;">Contents</h2> <p><b>Editorial:</b></p> <p>Hacienda Luisita struggle <b>1</b></p> <p>Cooperative farming <b>3</b></p> <p>5th anniversary of massacre <b>4</b></p> <p>History of Hacienda Luisita <b>5</b></p> <p>Bicol peasant leader slain <b>7</b></p> <p>Violations in EV <b>7</b></p> <p>Gonzales appointment <b>10</b></p> <p>LAKAS-KAMPI, a sinking ship <b>10</b></p> <p>NPA seizes 18 firearms <b>11</b></p> <p>NPA frees POW <b>11</b></p> <p>Struggle vs Laiban Dam <b>12</b></p> <p><b>News</b> <b>13</b></p>
<p><i>Ang Bayan</i> is published fortnightly by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines</p>	

# Thwarting the Cojuangcos' attempt to stop cooperative farming at Hacienda Luisita

The Cojuangco family failed in its plans to expel the residents of Hacienda Luisita after the peasants and farm workers acted in concert and succeeded in asserting their right to remain on the hacienda and continue tilling the land that should have long been distributed to them. According to the Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA), it is the cooperative farming currently being undertaken by the peasants and farm workers that has sustained 1,676 residents of ten barangays within the hacienda: Malapacsiao (244.5 hectares), Asturias (209.93 hectares), Bantog (258 hectares), Cut-cut (275.9 hectares), Balite (153.4 hectares), Mutrico (248 hectares), Pando (163 hectares), Texas (140 hectares), Pasajes (60 hectares) and Parang (51.5 hectares).

Hacienda Luisita Inc. (HLI) issued a memorandum on December 18, 2008 stopping residents from further tilling the hacienda lands and evicting them from the area. The memorandum was issued a day after the Upper and Lower Houses of Congress passed a resolution extending CARP with amended provisions stating that the landlords' participation in agrarian reform has become voluntary (thus putting a stop to the government's mandatory purchase of land for distribution).

Through the HLI memorandum, the peasants were told that they had until October 30, 2009 to uproot their crops in designated parts of the hacienda and evacuate the area. Only those who register first with the HLI as "legitimate beneficiaries" will be allowed to continue tilling the hacienda lands, but on condition that they declare their agreement with the stock distribution option (SDO)



scheme. Practically everyone ignored the memorandum and the few who registered were outsiders that the Cojuangcos brought in to the hacienda to cause trouble among the ranks of the peasants. HLI was thus forced to move the deadline to November 15. The peasants remained firmly united and still refused to comply with the new deadline. Meanwhile, their long-term struggle for genuine land reform continues.

The peasants and farm workers' collective cultivation of the land that was formerly planted to sugarcane constitutes direct action by the masses to assert their right to land and livelihood. Through this, they were able to support their fami-

lies and t h e picket line at the height of the strike. This is what continues to sustain them in the face of the Cojuangcos' ruthless and bloody methods to harass and drive them out.

This struggle is directly related to the issue of land and underscores the issue of genuine land reform. Thus, the masses have been able to directly assert their right to land and livelihood beyond the narrow confines of bo-

gus land reform, relying on the extraordinary strength of their unity and struggle and the widespread support they have been enjoying.

This has further solidified their unity and struggle. Their unified struggle and organized initiative to assert their democratic right to land and livelihood instead of relying on the mercy and doleouts of the landlords and reactionary state have been deeply etched in the masses' consciousness and cannot easily be erased.

The complicated tactical relationship between persevering in the legal struggle while at the same time refusing to be caught within the narrow confines of the law on bogus land reform has become even more delicate. This is because the adversary is one of the most influential landlord families in the country, and the SDO and the application of land reform on commercial crop plantations is a very critical issue for the new type of landlords, who comprise the most powerful landlord bloc.

Even so, it is clear to the peasants and farm workers that their fight does not stop with cooperative farming, which is only a part of their struggle. The object of struggling for their right to farm the land is for them to have an immediate means of assuaging their hunger and strengthening their ranks. At the same time, they are aware that it is secondary to their union-led and political struggle and helps in sustaining and further advancing the mass campaign against the SDO and in continuing their principal struggle for genuine land reform.

# Progressives commemorate 5th anniversary of Hacienda Luisita massacre

Workers and peasants of Hacienda Luisita and their supporters launched a series of protest actions to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the massacre at the hacienda that took place on November 16, 2004. The United Luisita Workers Union (ULWU) and Alyansa ng Manggagawang Bukid sa Asyenda Luisita (AMBALA) led the protests.

Along with the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) and other supporters, members of ULWU and AMBALA picketed on October 30 the Jose Cojuangco and Sons Building in Makati, the main headquarters of the Cojuangco family. This day was the first deadline imposed on the hacienda's peasants and farm workers by Hacienda Luisita Inc. (HLI) for them to stop tilling the land and leave the hacienda. Severe criticism prompted the Cojuangcos to move the deadline to November 15.

Another rally took place in Mendiola on November 6 where the protesters called for the junking of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program with Extension and Reform (CARPER). The new program not only extended the bogus CARP but worsened it because it made the implementation of agrarian reform voluntary for the landlords. The rallyists also lambasted Gloria Arroyo for her inaction on the Hacienda Luisita massacre.

A caravan was also led by the Anakpawis party along with other progressive organizations on November 12-16. Up to 100 vehicles participated in the last leg of the caravan from the offices of the Department of Agriculture along Elliptical Road in Quezon City towards Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac on November

16 where they commemorated the massacre. The protest was also part of a world-wide day of protest against the suppression of workers' unionism.

Upon arriving at Hacienda Luisita, the caravan was welcomed by the peasants and farm workers of the hacienda. The 2,000 protestors marched to Gate 1 of the Central Azucarera de Tarlac where the massacre took place and pounded on the gate. They later launched cultural performances that night and called for justice and land for the peasants.

According to Renato Reyes, Jr., secretary-general of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN), "The Arroyo regime, through the Department of Labor under then Patricia Sto. Tomas, and the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police,

together with the Luisita management,

remain responsible for the tragic events of November 16. We cannot and must not forget their continuing liability."

"Luisita is the symbol of the failure of government, from the Aquino regime to the present, to resolve the agrarian issue that is festering throughout the country. Luisita is just one of the many estates still under big landlord control and where feudal exploitation remains," said Reyes.

The struggle at the hacienda has a key role especially since one of its heirs, Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" C. Aquino III, is among those aspiring to become president of the nation. It is not enough for him to say that his and his family's share in the hacienda are insignificant, amounting to only 4%. This obscures Aquino's ongoing support for his entire family's continuing interest in maintaining a tight hold over the hacienda.

Noynoy Aquino claims that there are too many peasants and farm workers while only a small amount of land from the hacienda remains. Thus, he said, it is no longer possible to distribute the hacienda land to the tillers. Instead, they plan to just sell the land and keep the sugar mill.

The truth is that a large part of the hacienda's lands can still be distributed but the Cojuangco family has been purposely reducing this portion. The family's main preoccupation these past couple of years is the sale, rent and conversion of the productive parts of the hacienda from agricultural to commercial, industrial and residential use. **AB**



# Hacienda Luisita: A history of heroic struggle

Even before the big landlord Cojuangco family acquired ownership of Hacienda Luisita, the peasants living here had long been victims of land grabbing and feudal exploitation and oppression.

It was in the year 1882, during the time of Spanish colonialism, when the king of Spain awarded to the Compañía General de Tabacos de Filipinas (Tabacalera) the ownership of what now encompasses Hacienda Luisita. For almost half a century, the hacienda was planted to tobacco. However, since 1920, a few years after US colonialism took over, it was converted into sugarcane fields after the US undertook the large-scale importation of sugar from its colonies. Sugarcane plantations and mills spread to vast parts of the country. The Central Azucarera de Tarlac was built in 1927 on Tabacalera land.

In the latter part of the 1940s until most of the 1950s, political work among the ranks of the peasants and farm workers in Central Luzon heightened, including those at the Central Azucarera de Tarlac. There was a strong demand for the distribution of the hacienda lands to the tillers. The newly formed United Luisita Workers' Union (ULWU) which was composed of sugarcane field workers launched a strike in 1957 against the Spanish hacienda owners' refusal to recognize the union and to realize the farm workers' demand for land. At the same time, within and outside the hacienda, the armed revolutionary movement which upheld the right of

the farm workers to acquire land and organize themselves gained strength.

The struggle of the farm workers in the fields and the workers at the sugar central was a big headache to the Spanish owners of the hacienda. Thus, in 1957, they gave up the hacienda and left the country. But before they left, the Magsaysay regime intervened to enable its close ally Jose "Peping" Cojuangco Sr. to purchase the hacienda and sugar central. Even back then, the Cojuangco family was one of the richest families in the country. Since acquiring their first small sugar mill in Paniqui, Tarlac, they had a growing interest in planting sugarcane and exporting sugar. But in order for them to buy the larger hacienda and sugar central of Hacienda Luisita, the

family needed a substantial loan from a big US bank, aside from the Government Service Insurance System. The Cojuangcos established the Tarlac Development Corporation (Tadeco) for this purpose. The government agreed to guarantee the Cojuangcos' debts, which cleared the way for Tadeco's acquisition of Hacienda Luisita and the Central Azucarera de Tarlac in 1957. But it was given on the condition that the family distribute the agricultural lands to the hacienda's farm workers after ten years.

However, after 1967 passed and a ten-year extension went by without any land distribution being implemented by the Cojuangcos, there was widespread unrest among the farm workers over the landlords' failure to fulfill their obligation. In 1980, the farm workers sued the Cojuangcos over this failure. In December 1985, the court decided that the land should be distributed to the farm workers, but the Cojuangco family launched an appeal.

When the fascist Marcos dictatorship fell in February 1986



and "Peping" Cojuangco Sr.'s sixth child—Corazon Cojuangco Aquino—took her seat in Malacañang, the peasantry's centuries-old demand for land to till exploded and became a thunderous call not only in Hacienda Luisita but across the nation. But just like Marcos, Aquino did not really intend to implement genuine land reform.

The Mendiola Massacre took place on January 22, 1987 when Palace guards and military and police forces opened fire on peasants and other rallyists who marched from the provinces to bring to the gates of Malacañang their demand for genuine land reform. This heinous massacre further brought to the fore the peasants' demand for land to till.

The Aquino regime tried to deceive the peasants through the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), which became a law in June 1988.

Despite the fact that CARP was bogus and pro-landlord, the Cojuangco family still created a scheme to avoid it. Malacañang and the Cojuangco family circumvented the implementation of CARP in Hacienda Luisita by plotting the stock distribution option (SDO) scheme that was made part of CARP. In truth, the Cojuangco family and Aquino regime concocted the SDO way before CARP was made into law, and craftily inserted this scheme into Executive Order 229, a year before CARP was even passed. Thus, two months before CARP was passed into law, EO

229 served as the basis for the dismissal of the case filed by the farm workers against the Cojuangcos for their violation of the agreement to distribute Hacienda Luisita's lands.

Using the SDO, the Cojuangcos gave out shares of a new corporation they purposely formed just for the implementation of this scheme—Hacienda Luisita Inc. (HLI)—instead of distributing the hacienda lands to the tillers. However, the sugar central, the machinery and non-agricultural, commercial, industrial and residential lands as well as other big interests of the Cojuangcos at the hacienda remained under the ownership of Tadeco and Central Azucarera de Tarlac and was not included in the HLI to preserve the Cojuangcos' monopoly ownership of these properties.

In exchange for the land that should have been distributed to the peasants and farm workers on the hacienda, they were "given" 33% of HLI stocks to be divided among more than 5,700 peasants and farm workers.

The shares of stock assigned to the peasants and farm workers were tied to the total number of hours they worked for the sugar central. Those who stopped working at the central for one reason or another lost their shares.

Little by little, the Cojuangcos have been

able to retrieve the shares of stock assigned to those who had been fired from their work at the hacienda. The total shares of stock allotted to the peasants and farm workers have thus grown smaller. The HLI has been concocting different ways of reducing the number of workers, ranging from outright termination to the intentional reduction of working hours and the implementation of huge wage deductions (thus bringing the workers' average take-home pay to a mere ₱9.50 for a day's labor). The Cojuangcos employed the AFP, PNP and CAFGU forces to continuously harass union leaders and members.

A huge part of the hacienda's 6,453 hectares of agricultural land has already been converted to non-agricultural use. As of 1995, more than 3,500 hectares were already earmarked for conversion into commercial, industrial and residential uses. Besides this, up to 2,000 hectares of the hacienda had already been sold or rented out by the Cojuangcos to foreigners and favored local businessmen and politicians.

The Cojuangcos' objective is to turn Hacienda Luisita into the province's leading commercial center so that they could profit from the further escalation of land prices. They thus conspired with the ruling regimes to have the ₱170 million Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEx) built right smack in the middle of the hacienda and made millions of pesos in profits when the government bought 83 hectares of the hacienda's land for more than ten times its actual worth.

The management's greed and chicanery and its oppression of the peasants and farm workers



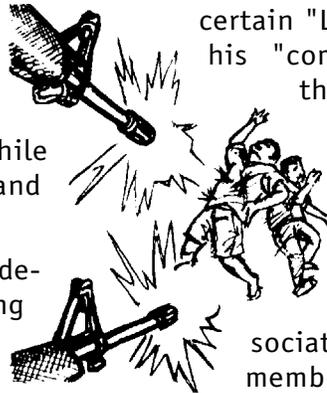
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# Death squad mows down Bicol peasant leader

Most notorious among the fascist crimes committed by the US-Arroyo regime this November is the merciless killing of a peasant leader and Anakpawis party member in Camarines Sur. Two peasants were also summarily executed by soldiers in Sorsogon, while two other farmers were abducted in the same province and have not been surfaced.

**November 19.** The military illegally used the email account of the Human Rights and Information Center (HRIC) and Panay Alliance-Karapatan to deceive the public. Using the two organizations' email account,



the AFP sent a statement to the media praising the military for its work in the hinterland villages of Capiz and Iloilo. The email message was signed by a certain "Leeboy" who called on his "comrades" to surrender their weapons and return to the fold of the government.

**November 10.** Rodrigo Torres, leader of the Bicol Coconut Planters Association Inc. (BCPAI) and member of Anakpawis-Ca-

## *"History..." from page 6*

pushed the peasants into launching a series of struggles and filing a case against HLI and the Cojuangcos.

In September 2003, the peasants and farm workers boycotted the election for the HLI board of directors because their four directors could not stand a chance against the Cojuangcos' seven. In October 2003, ULWU members and even HLI supervisors appealed to the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) to revoke the SDO because the HLI was not distributing the stock dividends that were due them as supposed shareholders. Neither did they receive their 1% share from the sale of HLI and their 33% share from the sale of land. In December 2003, the more than 5,000-strong Alyansa ng Manggagawang Bukid sa Asyenda Luisita (AMBALA) filed a petition at DAR to have the SDO revoked and instead have the hacienda lands directly distributed to them.

Because of the HLI management's obstinacy, the farm workers heightened their resistance to the various methods employed by the Cojuangcos to terminate their leaders, destroy the unions at the hacienda—both the 5,000-strong United Luisita Workers Union and the 700-strong Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union—and deny their members just wages and benefits. The unions had no choice but to wage a strike in November 2004.

On November 6, they picketed and blocked Gates 1 and 2 of the sugar central. On November 10,

the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) issued an Assumption of Jurisdiction (AJ) order, thus providing the military and police justification to forcefully break the strike. Due to the urging of the Cojuangcos, including Benigno "Noy" Aquino III who was then congressman of the district, the AFP Northern Luzon Command redoubled its efforts to stop the strikers and made the hacienda the focus of its military campaigns on the pretext that the communists were inciting the people at the hacienda.

On November 16, 2004, the strike was violently dispersed. A bloody massacre took place, where seven workers were killed instantly and seven others who were critically wounded died after a few days.

The Arroyo regime, the military and police forces and the Cojuangcos were not content with the massacre. They hunted down and killed off leaders and supporters of the struggling peasants and farm workers at the hacienda. Among those slain were Marcelino Beltran, chair of the Alyansa ng Magbubukid sa Tarlac (December 8, 2004); Councilor Abelardo Ladera (March 3, 2005); Fr. William Tadena (March 13, 2005); Ricardo Ramos, CATLU president (October 25, 2005); and Bishop Alfredo Ramento of the Philippine Independent Church (October 3, 2006). Ronald Intal, a youth leader, was abducted on April 3, 2006 and remains missing.

Up to now, not one of the soldiers and policemen involved in the massacre has been punished. Certainly not one of those who ordered the massacre has been held accountable. **AB**

marines Sur was slain by unidentified henchmen of the Arroyo regime near his home in Barangay San Pablo, Del Gallego, Camarines Sur.

According to Felix Paz of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), Torres was killed because he was fighting for the rights of peasants to have their own land. As a leader of BCPAI, Torres vehemently fought for land for the peasants and for the return of the coconut levy fund to coconut farmers.

Torres is the 51st victim of extrajudicial killings in Camarines Sur and the 196th victim in the Bicol region.

**November 5.** Suspected military elements raided the office of the Makabayang Koalisyon Para sa Mamamayan (Makabayan) in Iligan City. Makabayan reported that the raiders took away pictures of several members of the League of Filipino Students. They also took several important documents and computer files.

**November 4.** Elements of the 49th IB abducted barangay councilor Jerry Doctor, 39, and Jose Lustistica, 36, both peasants and residents of Barangay Maalo, Juban, Sorsogon. The victims were headed for their farm at around 7 a.m. when they came upon soldiers conducting a military operation. They remain missing.

**November 3.** The bodies of Hernani Requiño Jr., 34 and Jesus Reonico who were abducted by 2nd IB elements on October 28 were found at around 4 p.m. in Barangay Mabayawa, Libon, Albay.

The bodies of the victims bore signs of severe torture. One of

the victims was stabbed and had his neck slashed and his fingernails removed.

Hernani's wife Vivian Requiño and three other civilians witnessed the soldiers forcefully taking the two victims. It took several days before they reported the abduction to the police because the military ordered them not to tell anyone about the incident.

**October up to the present.** An anti-communist group, the Krusada Kontra Komunista (KKK) has been handing out pictures depicting Bayan Muna Reps. Sa-

tur Ocampo and Teddy Casiño and GABRIELA Rep. Liza Maza as devils. Since October, the KKK has also been distributing vandalized pictures of union leaders of banana plantations.

According to Romualdo Basilio, Anakpawis spokesperson in Compostela Valley, the defamation campaign against progressive groups and the use of anti-communist propaganda will not succeed. The people of Compostela Valley know that it is the military who are the people's enemy and not those who are fighting for their welfare, he said. **AB**

## Military abuses in Eastern Visayas

The following are the latest reports on military abuses in different areas of Eastern Visayas where the brutal Oplan Bantay Laya 2 has been on a rampage:

**October 23.** Elements of the 63rd IB conducting a military operation strafed and tore down the nipa hut of Walde Mañozo, a farmer from Barangay Capotoan, Las Navas, Northern Samar. The military even spilled and scattered the unhusked rice that the family had just harvested, and slaughtered their pig.

The government soldiers also beat up three village councilors who went to Mañozo's house the following day to check on his condition. The troopers also forced them to act as guides in scouring the forest. Even the barangay captain who checked on the plight of his councilors also received a beating from the soldiers.

**August 27.** Elements of the 63rd IB under 1Lieutenant Cadil cold-bloodedly murdered Sherwin Malina, a farmer, and Melvin Basilo, a councilor of Barangay Sumuroy, Lope de Vega, Northern Samar. Malino was repeatedly stabbed while Basilo died from multiple gunshot wounds. The victims were working on their farm when they were chanced upon by the soldiers who were conducting a military operation.

**August 7.** The military beat up and tortured Joy Elizalde, 22, a member of a farmers' organization in Sitio Cadaragan, Barangay Canaponte, San Jose de Buan, Samar. Elizalde was weeding his farm at around 8:00 a.m. when operating soldiers of the 34th IB under Lt. Ramil Palisoc told him to come to them. He was brought behind some

thickets and ordered to sit down. At this point, the soldiers covered his head with plastic and gagged him with a handkerchief, tied his hands and blindfolded him. Still not content, the soldiers ordered him to drop to the ground, stomped on his back and whacked his sole with a bamboo stick several times. He was accused of being an NPA member and ordered to guide them to an NPA camp that he knew nothing about.



He managed to untie his hands, remove his blindfold and take off his gag, and ran to his house to seek help. When his mother asked the soldiers what happened to her son, they said that they only asked him a few questions. After this, Elizalde was made to sign a document stating that he was not beaten up. The soldiers even threatened to kill him if he told his wife that he was tortured.

**July 12.** Operating elements of the 34th IB under Lt. Joey Rey C. Serviñas tortured Eric Gacuma, 29, a member of a farmers' organization in Barangay Fernandez, San Jose de Buan, Samar.

The torture incident happened in the victim's farm in Barangay Cataydungan, San Jose de Buan. The victim was alerted when his dogs began barking at a thicket in his farm. When he went to check, he saw soldiers hiding behind the bushes. He was immediately tagged as an NPA member. The soldiers covered his head with plastic and blindfolded him. They gave him a bolo and ordered him to fight with a soldier. When he refused, he was told to run while his hands were tied. He refused for fear of being shot. Afterwards, the

soldiers brought him behind some thick shrubbery and stripped him of his clothes. They started burning his penis with a lighted cigarette and beat him up several times.

They slammed his head against the ground and held his neck in a stranglehold.

The soldiers then tied his feet and hung him upside down. Two soldiers later took turns in stomping on his back after he was brought down. The soldiers also forced their fingers into his throat and even hit him four times in the head. They likewise hit his torso with the butt of an M16 rifle six times when he said he knew nothing about the whereabouts of the NPA. Every time he denied any knowledge about the guerrillas, the fascist elements would also repeatedly hit his neck with the butt of an M14 rifle. He was also told to lie down after which a soldier pointed a bayonet at his stomach. He was again ordered to run but he refused for fear of being shot. It was only after this ordeal that the soldiers asked him what his name was and if he knew any soldiers. After answering their questions, the soldiers released him and threatened to finish him off if he reported to his wife the torment he suffered in the hands of the military.

**July 30 to the present.** Seven families of the Manobo tribe consisting of 45 people have been hamletted by the 19th IB in Barangay Hilapnitan, Baybay, Leyte since July 30.

The AFP wanted to force the Manobo families to surrender even though they were innocent of any wrongdoing. The soldiers had been spreading lies that the Manobo were armed and had joined the

NPA. Thus, if they refused to surrender, the enemy soldiers would kill them on the spot.

Fearing for their lives, the families were forced to surrender. In exchange, the reactionary state promised to provide them land, housing and employment. But none of these promises was fulfilled.

Instead of allowing the seven Manobo families to return to their homes in Barangay Cagbana, Burauen, they were transferred to Barangay Hilapnitan, Baybay where they are cramped into one house and treated like prisoners receiving a daily rice ration of only four kilos. Because the soldiers do not provide money for their needs, the Manobo have no choice but to cut wood, sell this and use their meager earnings to buy their daily needs.

They are also banned from going beyond 300 meters from their house. This poses a big problem to the Manobo who are used to gathering rattan, hunting wild boar, cultivating abaca and farming for a living. They have no choice but to follow the military's orders because a squad from the 19th IB has been stationed right in front of their house.

**July 2-6.** Twenty residents of Barangay Cagbana, Burauen, Leyte were ordered three times to go to Barangay Cansiboy. The military insisted that they were high-ranking NPA officials while the others were forced to admit they were NPA supporters. Every time they arrived, the state forces would take their pictures with the victims holding up tags with their names and their alleged ranks in the revolutionary movement. They were promised livelihood but did not receive any benefits from the DSWD because they were not, after all, really NPA.

# CPP denounces Gonzales appointment to DND

The Communist Party of the Philippines denounced the recent appointment of Norberto Gonzales as the new secretary of the Department of National Defense (DND). Gonzales, former National Security Adviser, was sworn in as the new DND chief on November 16, the same time Gilbert Teodoro Jr. relinquished this post. Teodoro is running for president in the upcoming 2010 elections under the Arroyo administration ticket.

The appointment of the clerico-fascist Gonzales to the new post is part of Malacañang's scheme to prolong Gloria Arroyo's hold on power beyond the end of her term in June 2010. He was appointed to this sensitive position to ensure the US-Arroyo regime's continued rule since there is no assurance that the ad-

ministration candidate will win in the upcoming presidential elections.

Teodoro and the other administration candidates have been consistently trailing opposition candidates in all surveys. The Arroyo regime's candidates thus have very low chances of winning even if they resort to massive

electoral fraud.

There is now a growing possibility that the "transition government" being pushed by Gonzales as a means to extend Arroyo's term will push through.

Gonzales' proposal involves the setting up of a "council-led transition government" that would govern the country and draft a new constitution before the national elections in May 2010.

Gonzales' concept has Arroyo leading the council as its chairperson. **AB**

# LAKAS-Kampi-CMD is a sinking ship

LAKAS-Kampi-CMD held its national convention on November 19 amid the unstoppable exodus of its members.

Gloria Arroyo looked every inch the captain of a sinking ship when she dejectedly gave the opening remarks at her political party's convention. That same day, a LAKAS-Kampi-CMD official admitted that 30-40% of the party's membership had already bolted. The latest fallouts were Ralph Recto and Vilma Santos. Recto used to be the regime's Economic Planning Secretary while Santos, a popular actress, is currently the governor of Batangas. More are expected to leave as the December 1 deadline for filing certificates of candidacy nears.

LAKAS-Kampi-CMD candidates have been lagging miserably behind in the surveys while opposition candidates have been taking the lead. It is a reflection of Arroyo's intense isolation from the people due to their deep hatred of her regime.

With the victory of the ruling regime's candidates uncertain

even with massive cheating, DILG Secretary Ronaldo Puno has backed out from the vice presidential race.

The ruling party attempted to recruit as replacement candidates the likes of Loren

Legarda and Vilma Santos. Arroyo's party also tried to convince Sens. Richard Gordon, Juan Miguel Zubiri, Ramon "Bong" Revilla, Jr. and many others, but they all refused. The ruling regime even tried to convince Tourism Secretary Joseph Durano but he later announced that he was planning to run for the Senate under another political party.

In the end, LAKAS-Kampi-CMD

was left with no other choice but to pick another actor, Edu Manzano as its vice presidential candidate. Arroyo's party is also having a hard time looking for people to fill its senatorial slate.

Gloria Arroyo's growing desperation amid the lack of winnable candidates under her ticket is perilous to the nation. Only through her presidential candidate's victory can her rule be prolonged. If this plan fails, the people will definitely hold her accountable for plunder and human rights violations.

There is therefore a growing possibility that the Arroyo clique will create scenarios such as a failure of elections that would "compel" Arroyo to take over as transition president while preparations are underway for new elections.

Norberto Gonzales' appointment as the new defense chief is by no means an accident following his long experience with concocting scenarios of this type. **AB**





## NPA seizes 18 firearms in tactical offensives

The New People's Army (NPA) confiscated 18 firearms in tactical offensives launched in Surigao del Sur, Sorsogon, Davao del Norte and Samar in the first half of November.

On the other hand, preliminary reports revealed that 20 military, police and paramilitary forces were killed and 18 others were wounded, while a Red fighter was martyred.

**Raid on SUDECOR.** The NPA Front 30 seized 13 automatic rifles consisting of two M14s, five Garands and six carbines on November 11 in a raid on the office of the Surigao Development Corporation (SUDECOR) in Barangay Pakwan, Lanuza, Surigao del Sur. The guerrillas conducted the disarming operation without firing a single shot.

After disarming the Special Civilian Armed Auxiliary (SCAA) and SUDECOR guards, the Red fighters confiscated seven chainsaws from the company. The people's guerrillas also destroyed four bulldozers, two log yarders, a timber jack, a crane, two dumptrucks and a welding machine.

The objective of this punitive action was to put a stop to SUDECOR's logging operations, said Ka Maria Malaya, National Democratic Front-Northeastern Mindanao Region (NDF-NEMR) spokesperson. She added that it was about time they ended the company's plunder and relentless destruction of the environment and people's livelihood.

The company uses bulldozer dragging, a method where bulldozers drag felled logs and destroy small trees in their path. The method likewise erodes the

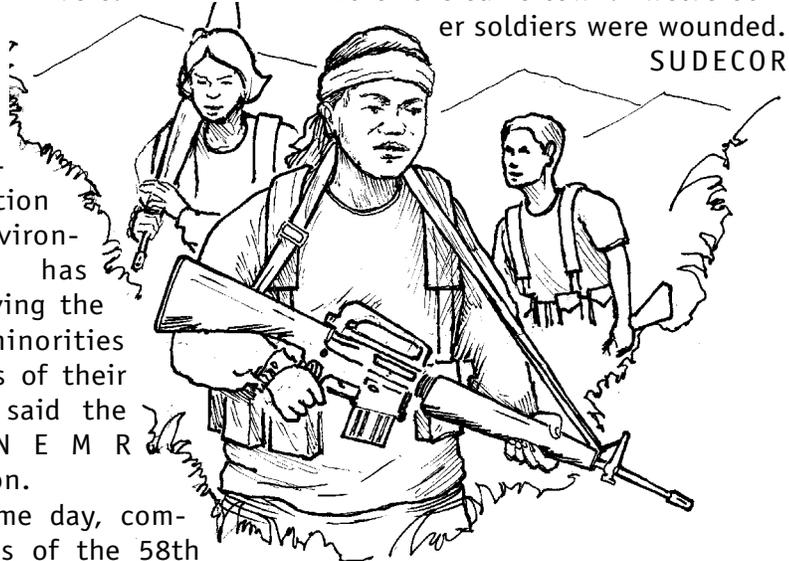
soil and contributes to the siltation of rivers.

SUDECOR has thus been responsible for the rapid destruction of the environment and has been depriving the national minorities and settlers of their livelihood, said the NDF-NEMR spokesperson.

That same day, combined forces of the 58th

IB Philippine Army, 1405th PNP Provincial Mobile Group (PMG) and SCAA attempted to defend the company and were ambushed. This resulted in the death of nine 58th IB elements, a policeman and two SCAA elements after they were hit by command-detonated explosives (CDX) along Kilometer 10 of the same town. Twelve other soldiers were wounded.

SUDECOR



## NPA frees prisoner of war

The New People's Army (NPA) effected the safe and orderly release of its prisoner of war (POW) Cpl. Dominador Alegre at noon of November 16. Later that afternoon, the NPA transferred custody over the prisoner to Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte.

Corporal Alegre was arrested by Red fighters of the 4th Pulang Bagan Company (PBC) on November 2 in Monkayo, Compostela Valley during a disarming operation against CAFGU elements under his command. The NPA seized 18 high-powered firearms in the raid without firing a single shot.

Alegre would have been released earlier after it was determined in an investigation that he had no blood debts against the people, said Ka Nadem of the 4th PBC. His release was delayed because of attempts by soldiers of the 10th ID to rescue him from the NPA.

The release of the prisoner of war prompted Mayor Duterte to call for the resumption of peace negotiations between the National Democratic Front of the Philippines and the Arroyo government. He said that Corporal Alegre's release is a positive step towards the possible resumption of the peace talks.

AB



is owned by the big comprador bourgeois Puyat family. It has wrought havoc for more than four decades in Surigao's forested areas. As a result, Surigao now has only 3,000 hectares of virgin forests, down from the previous 69,000 hectares.

**Clashes in Samar, Davao City and Davao del Norte.** Two CAFGU elements were killed in an ambush staged by the NPA in Purok Uno, Barangay Barakatan, Toril District in Davao City on November 17. Right after this, another NPA unit conducted a harassment operation against a CAFGU detachment in Purok San Roque in the same barrio.

Earlier, two CAFGU members were killed and a Philippine Army sergeant was wounded in an NPA ambush in Barangay Bayo, Oquendo District, Calbayog City, Samar on November 16.

On November 15, Red fighters of Guerrilla Front 33 clashed with elements of the 103rd Division Reconnaissance Company of the Philippine Army in Barangay Salvacion, Mawab, Davao del Norte, resulting in the death of a soldier and the wounding of two other troopers.

On November 4, NPA fighters staged a harassment operation at a CAFGU detachment under the Philippine Army 11th IB in Barangay Macagabay,

Moises Padilla, Negros Occidental. The enemy forces did not conduct pursuit operations despite the safe withdrawal of the Red fighters.

**Ambush in Sorsogon.** Four police elements were killed and five firearms were seized by guerrilla fighters of the Celso Minguez Command (NPA-Sorsogon) in an ambush in Sitio Pinaradan, Barangay Calomagon, Bulan, Sorsogon on November 9 at around 11 a.m. The guerrillas used a command-detonated explosive and immediately hit the patrol car of the PNP 509th Provincial Mobile Group.

Among the four policemen killed were P/Insp. Jerson de Leon and the rabid counterrevolutionary SPO1 Johnson Gerola. Gerola had a long list of blood debts to the people. Three more police forces were wounded while one policeman ran away from the scene of the fighting.

The NPA seized three M16 armalite rifles, two .45 pistols and other military equipment.

On the other hand, a Red fighter of the Celso Minguez Command was martyred.

The ambush was launched in the face of intense military operations of the 903rd Brigade in the area, said NDF-Bicol spokesperson Ka Greg Bañares in a statement. AB

## Growing resistance to Laiban Dam project

**T**here is growing resistance by the people of Quezon and Rizal to the Laiban Dam project. On November 4, two hundred Dumagat tribespeople and other affected residents marched for 148 kilometers to protest the Laiban Dam project. The protest march began in the town of General Nakar, Quezon and culminated in Manila on November 12.

Earlier, Dumagat tribespeople led by Bigkis at Lakas ng Katutubo sa Timog Katagalugan (BALATIK) also staged a protest rally on October 19 in Tanay, Rizal and General Nakar. They were supported by farmers, fisherfolk and other sectors from Southern Tagalog.

The Laiban Dam project began in 1985 under the US-Marcos dictatorship. It covers 28,000 hectares of the the Sierra Madre

watershed area. The project was halted due to intense protests by the people.

Several regimes from Ramos to Arroyo relentlessly tried to revive the mothballed project in order to amass huge profits. In 2005, Arroyo negotiated with Japanese firms for this project. Recently, the Laiban Dam project was revived as a joint undertaking of the San Miguel Corporation

and Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System. The dam's avowed purpose is to provide an additional supply of potable water for Metro Manila, aside from generating electricity.

The homes and livelihoods of about 8,000 families from barangays Sta. Ynes, Mamuyao, Tinucan, Cayabu, San Andres, Sto. Niño, Laiban and Daraitan in Tanay, Rizal and Lumutan in General Nakar, Quezon are in danger of being wiped out once the dam project pushes through. Worse, Dumagat from seven barangays in Tanay will be forcibly evacuated from their homes once their areas are submerged in water. Most of northern Quezon's population is likewise in peril should an earthquake cause the dam to collapse and release water that would lead

to massive flooding. The dam is to be built along an active earthquake fault line.

In order to suppress the people's collective action against what has been packaged as a development project, the Arroyo regime has deployed units from the Philippine Army 18th IB in the area.

The Narciso Antazo Aramil Command (NPA-Rizal) has vowed to launch military offensives against the Laiban Dam in support of the people's struggles.

### Hunger strike vs mining

TWENTY-FIVE persons are currently staging a hunger strike in front of the office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Quezon City to oppose the latter's grant of a permit to a mining company to operate in Oriental Mindoro. Among the strikers are two priests and 16 Mangyan tribespeople.



The protesters led by Alyansa Laban sa Mina (ALAMIN) are demanding that the DENR revoke the environmental compliance certificate it granted to Intex Resources, a Norwegian firm, to mine nickel in the province.

Intex's 11,216-hectare concession area includes the Mag-asawang Tubig and Bucayao river system which provides irrigation to some 40,000 hectares of ricefields in Calapan City and the towns of Naujan, Baco and Victoria. Intex intends to use strip mining, the most environmentally destructive method of extracting minerals from the earth.

ALAMIN also pointed out that the grant of a mining permit to Intex is in clear violation of the 25-year moratorium on mining in Oriental Mindoro. Worse, the DENR did not conduct consultations with the residents and local government units in the area.

### Ocampo, Maza to run for Senate in 2010

THE Makabayan coalition party formally announced on November 12 the senatorial candidacy of Rep. Satur Ocampo of Bayan Muna (BM) and Rep. Liza Maza of GABRIELA Women's Party (GWP) in the 2010 elections. Ocampo and Maza's candidacy was announced after their endorsements in the recently concluded national conventions of BM and GWP that were held separately.

Ocampo has served as BM representative in Congress since 2001. Maza, on the other hand, first served as BM representative from 2001 to 2004 and GWP representative since 2004.

The BM convention also decided to keep Reps. Teodoro Casiño and Neri Colmenares as Bayan Muna nominees in the House of Representatives.

Meanwhile, Randall Echanis was elected as third nominee of the Anakpawis party in its convention. Should the Anakpawis party win three seats in the upcoming elections, he will be joining Reps. Rafael Mariano and Joel Maglunsod in Congress.

### Disqualification of progressive parties, a scheme of the regime

VARIOUS progressive parties strongly denounced the decision of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to disqualify them in the coming 2010 elections.

The Migrante Sectoral Party was the first to be removed from the list of accredited parties. Migrante is a political party representing overseas Filipino workers (OFW). The decision is politically motivated, said Connie Bragas-Regalado, the party's chairperson. Migrante is a progressive party that has a big potential of acquiring seats in Congress.

On November 20, the COMELEC also announced the disqualification of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), a political party of teachers and employees in the education sector, and COURAGE, a political party of government employees. The decision was based on these parties' alleged lack of constituency. ACT chair Antonio Tinio strongly denounced the decision, saying that ACT has a membership of about 15,000 nationwide.

The exclusion of Ang Ladlad, a sectoral organization of gays and lesbians, and Samahang Magdalo, a party-list group of soldiers who rebelled against the Arroyo regime was also politically motivated.

Majority of the parties that were denied accreditation by the COMELEC are critical of the Arroyo regime. The COMELEC decision was intended to pave the way for the Arroyo regime to bring bogus party-list groups into Congress in a bid to have the ruling clique maintain control of the Lower House.

## EO 839, a zarzuela of Malacañang and the oil companies

THE implementation of EO 839 was obviously staged by Malacañang and the monopoly oil companies. Malacañang issued the freeze order on oil prices to purportedly alleviate the people's suffering at a time when the Arroyo regime was getting a lot of brickbats for its inutility in assisting the victims of typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng. Even then, the order came in so late as it was issued three weeks after the typhoons struck.

In reality, Malacañang had no intention of regulating oil prices. The move was intended to deodorize the rotten image of the US-Arroyo regime before the Filipino people.

The order was insincere as it did not scrap the Oil Deregulation Law, which was responsible for lifting controls on oil prices. EO 839 was only used to deflect criticisms on why there were price ceilings on food and other basic necessities but not on oil, which was also a basic need and one that impacts immensely on other prices.

The monopoly oil companies knew too well that EO 839 was only a scheme of the Arroyo regime and that it had no real intention of implementing and extending it. But they played along with this scheme and concocted some of their own.

The oil giants petitioned for a Temporary Restraining Order purportedly to oppose the EO's implementation. The oil companies claimed that they had already lost millions of pesos in the few days that they were prohibited from raising oil prices. They threatened to stop oil importa-

tion, a move that immediately gained the support of Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes who said that EO 839 might indeed result in an oil shortage. The oil firms even warned that EO 839 would lead to a reduction of foreign investments in the country.

Malacañang pretended to act firm in its decision but later revoked the EO, thereby resulting in the swift oil price increases of November 16. The so-called "Big 3"—Pilipinas Shell, Chevron Philippines (formerly Caltex) and Petron Corporation—raised their prices by an average of ₱2.00 per liter. Price increases in diesel amounted to ₱2.00 per liter; gasoline, ₱1.25 to ₱1.50; and kerosene, ₱1.50. Shell and Petron, on the other hand, will raise the price of liquefied petroleum gas by ₱2.00 per kilo.

## Worsening unemployment, hunger in the US

CONTRARY to the claims of US imperialism's drumbeaters that the longest-running and worst recession in their country in 70 years is coming to an end, unemployment and hunger in the US are in fact worsening.

Since the current US recession began at the close of 2007, the number of jobless people stood at a staggering 7.3 million. The US government was hoping that after a peak of 9.8% in September, unemployment rates would decline. Instead, unemployment rates rose to 10.2% for the whole quarter—a record high in almost three decades. Many experts estimate that the real unemployment rate is even higher.

Government statisticians have excluded from the labor force those who have been discouraged from, and eventually stopped looking for work. If they were to be included, the real unemployment rate could be as high as 17.5%.

Economic experts and statisticians have also pointed out that rectifying other problems in the government's system of counting would mean adding up to 824,000 workers to the number of the unemployed. The figure represents the number of workers who lost their jobs in the last 12 months.

Hunger in the US has also worsened. In its latest report, the US Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service said that in 2008, almost 49 million people, 17 million of which were children, did not have sufficient food. This represented a 36% rise compared to the 36.2 million people who went hungry in the past year.

The 14.6% hunger rate was a record high in the US since hunger incidence surveys began in 1995. The hunger incidence is expected to rise as a result of ever worsening unemployment in the US at present.