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Bleak Christmas for millions of wage-earners

The overwhelming majority of Filipinos face a dreary Christmas not only because of the prohibitive prices of goods and the low wages but because the Marcos dictatorship has allowed big capitalists to reduce or scrap Christmas bonuses and other benefits won over the years across the bargaining table and at the picket line.

Following the recent steep increases in the prices of gasoline and other oil products, the prices of food and other essential commodities soared beyond the means of ordinary wage-earners.

In the face of this formidable problem, no relief was available to the workers, having been deprived of their right to strike. On the other hand, their incomes have been reduced by the removal of even meager benefits embodied in collective bargaining agreements. (Also see page 3)

700,000 WORKERS FIRED

That the dictatorship works against the interests of the country's workingmen can be gleaned from the admission of Labor Secretary Blas Ople that as many as 700,000 had been deprived of their livelihood since the imposition of martial law.

Ople made the admission in a meeting in Malacañang with the dictator Marcos and a select group of trade union leaders.

Further evidence of the martial law regime's perfidy towards the workers is the fact that corruption, inefficiency and plain indifference have combined to make of the National Labor Relations Commission an instrument not for the workers' upliftment but for their oppression.

There is, for instance, the case of the
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Militant Christians hold 2nd congress

Under the theme "Christians, unite to win still greater victories against the US-Marcos dictatorship", the Kilusang Kristiyano ng Kabataang Pilipino, a mass organization of militant Christian youth, held its second national congress recently.

The congress, held "somewhere in the periphery of the Greater Manila area", was described in the KKKP's press communique as a gathering of "unity and militant defiance of the US-Marcos dictatorship".

The communique added that the KKKP, "after almost a year since the imposition of formal white terror, had successfully woven past the fascist net and militantly parried blows from the dictatorship, thereby reaping tactical victories".

The KKKP congress approved a political report and adopted a revised constitution and a new program of action. It also elected a national council to lead the organization in the months ahead.

Greetings and messages from fraternal organizations and individuals were read on
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BLEAK...

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workers of the defunct Manila Times publications who had won from their management ₱13 million in accumulated leave credits, separation pay, and retirement and other benefits. They ended up with only ₱9 million, however.

The NLRC commissioners who had a hand in the settlement had no explanation where the remaining ₱4 million had gone.

Meanwhile, one of the commissioners acquired a new house at Fairview on Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City. Another purchased a brand-new Mercedes Benz and a veritable mansion in an exclusive village in Makati, Rizal.

NLRC AGAINST WORKERS

Insiders at the Department of Labor say that in most cases, folders containing the complaints of workers against abusive managements "conveniently get lost", if the NLRC does not rule outright against the aggrieved workers.

Those cases that the workers do win in arbitration often get reversed upon the management's appeals or motions for reconsideration. And even if the final decision goes in the workers' favor, the NLRC is usually impotent to enforce its own orders.

There was, for instance, the case of some 1,000 workers of the Yupangco Textiles in Rizal province who, on NLRC arbitration, were each awarded more than ₱1,000 in underpay differentials, overtime pay, holiday pay and other benefits.

Management refused to comply with the decision, and unable to go on strike or get the NLRC to enforce compliance, the workers were forced to settle for ₱55 each, or less than five per cent of what was due them.

MORE SHUT-DOWNS, DISMISSALS

In the Oct. 24, 1973, issue of Bulletin Today, the NLRC boasted that during its first year of existence, it ordered the reinstatement of 2,115 workers unjustly dismissed by their employers.

The figure is open to question, but even granting it to be correct, the NLRC, during the same period, issued a minimum of 7,264 clearances to employers to shut down or dismiss workers.

Another "achievement" that the NLRC has been crowing about is that it received, according to its propagandists, 6,275 complaints from workers. This, they said, indicated that the country's workingmen feel free under the martial law regime to seek redress for their grievances.

Union leaders pointed out, however, that

this was eloquent proof that because of the dictatorship's ban on strikes and other democratic rights of the workers, "capitalists have been emboldened to intensify the exploitation of the workers and suppression of trade unions". ●

CHRISTIANS...

(From page 1)

the first day of the two-day congress. Among these were messages from the Christians for National Liberation, a mass organization of priests, nuns and active church people, and from the Christian Revolutionary Movement, an organization of militant Protestants.

The congress also received a message from Jose Ma. Sison, founding chairman of Kabataang Makabayan. His message read in part:

"It is certain that in this congress you will firm up your commitment to the national democratic revolution against the evil triad of US imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism; that you will assess the present situation from a scientific and historical viewpoint; and that you will draw up your fighting tasks with greater confidence to win with the broad masses of the people.

"The Kilusang Kristiyano ng Kabataang Pilipino, like the Christians for National Liberation and the Christians for Civil Liberties, is a progressive organization under the banner of the national democratic revolution and, more specifically, under the banner of the National Democratic Front. You have responded correctly to the call for Christians and non-Christians to unite for an armed revolution against the armed counterrevolution unleashed by the fascist puppet dictatorship."

The KM founding chairman added that as the KKKP members persevere in revolutionary struggle, "you will increasingly discover the genuine virtue of serving the people -- basically the toiling masses of workers and peasants who are oppressed and exploited by social demons".

"You find spiritual fulfillment in the struggle for national liberation and people's democracy rather than in the vain solipsist 'revolution of the heart' babbled by the benighted," he said.

Foreseeing "a bright tomorrow" for both Christians and non-Christians in the Philippines, Sison added:

"A regime of true brotherhood and justice awaits them. The imperialists, US and otherwise, are fast sinking in the quagmire of their iniquities and crises. So are their puppets." ●

LIFE UNDER MARTIAL LAW

--A Survey by Church Leaders

"There is no equal protection of law.... The law is enforced only on and against labor. Management flagrantly violates the law....The military, the courts and the Department of Labor connive with management in violating the law."

Thus went the national survey, conducted by the Association of Major Religious Superiors of Men and Women, in its chapter on labor, unemployment and working conditions.

Before martial law was imposed, the right to strike was the most important weapon of the workers in protecting themselves from the abusive practices of their employers. But even then, the labor laws were designed in such a way as to perpetuate the exploitative conditions imposed on the working class. And the police, the courts and other government agencies had always connived with abusive capitalists in further oppressing the workers.

Under martial law, and with the consequent prohibition of strikes, the workers have been placed completely under the mercy of their employers. They can be dismissed at will. Their wages can be reduced arbitrarily and the benefits they have won before martial law through militant strikes can be disregarded unilaterally by the management.

All these are being done with the consent and encouragement of the Marcos regime.

Under Presidential Decree No. 21, employers have to acquire a clearance before dismissing employes who had been serving for at least one year. "To date," the survey said, "no request for clearance has been rejected by the Secretary of Labor and no worker has been reinstated."

"Collective bargaining agreements are no longer binding," the survey added. In a national communications firm, last year's Christmas bonus and wage increases worth a total of ₱1 million provided for in the CBA were not implemented. More than one thousand members of a militant public utility union were dismissed because the military refused to recognize the union. The Court of Industrial Relations was ordered to dismiss all cases filed by this union before martial law.

"The military protects loggers in Mindanao; pressures workers to sign unjust compromise agreements in Cebu; arrests union leaders in Negros and Antique," the survey

continued. "In Northern Luzon the military have either curtailed or stopped union activities in some mining companies."

Labor leaders are either harassed or detained by the military on false charges. This was done, the survey said, in a sugar central in Central Luzon, a phone company in Manila, a fishing empire in Navotas, Rizal, a first-class luxury hotel in Manila and a cigar factory in Parañaque, Rizal.

The survey also reported that in almost every region of the country, mass lay-offs of government personnel were made.

"In the private sector, the mass media, steel and metals, textiles, footwear and utility firms are the hardest hit," the survey said.

In Misamis alone, about 1,000 workers in coconut processing plants were dismissed. In Negros Occidental, more than 300 hacienda workers have been dismissed or locked out for union activities.

In Davao City, two-thirds of the teachers who graduated this year were not able to find teaching positions. Numerous tenants were deprived of their source of income when lands were converted to other uses.

To avoid payment of the minimum wage, employers have resorted to replacing regular workers with casuals and a quota system is being imposed.

At a conference presided over by Labor Secretary Blas Ople in Bacolod, the conferees decided to enforce the "pakyaw" quota system for sacadas (migratory farm workers).

"To reach the legal minimum wage of ₱7 a day," the survey said, "a sacada would have to cut three tons of sugarcane which is almost impossible." The survey staff found out that, after getting back 2,000 of the questionnaires distributed to sacadas in Negros, after six months' work, their take-home pay ranged from ₱300 to ₱600.

Male sugar workers in Negros receive as low as ₱1.50 a day, women ₱1 and children, ₱0.75. The minimum wage of ₱7-₱8 a day is not implemented in seventy to eighty per cent of the haciendas in Negros.

Tobacco workers in Isabela and La Union receive ₱2 to ₱3 a day. In the cottage industries in Albay, wages range from ₱0.90 to ₱2.80 a day. ●

KDP-new militant organization in US

A heightened political consciousness has united many Filipinos and Filipino-Americans into a new mass organization called the Katipunan ng mga Demokratikong Pilipino (KDP), it was announced recently.

Over a hundred delegates from 13 key cities, including New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco Bay Area, San Diego, Seattle and Los Angeles, attended the founding congress of the KDP last July.

Most of the delegates were Filipinos and Fil-Americans who have been active in the struggle in the US against the Marcos martial law regime.

In a published statement, the KDP said that it derived inspiration from the 1896 revolution led by the Katipunan, and pledged to be "in the forefront in building the support movement in America for the Filipino people's struggle for genuine independence and democracy".

In its political program, the KDP defined its two principal tasks as: 1) to mobilize militant support for the national democratic revolution in the Philippines, and 2) to participate in building the US working class struggle for socialism.

To advance the people's struggle in the Philippines, the KDP plans to "conduct intensive propaganda in order to expose US imperialism in the Philippines...and assist in building the broadest anti-Marcos, anti-martial law movement among the overseas Filipino communities".

In San Francisco, some 300 demonstrators staged an anti-martial law protest march last September.

In New York, at the St. Paul the Apostle church, Filipinos held a solemn vigil dedicated to the memory of Lilioss Hilao, the activist and scholar tortured to death by the PC.

In Chicago, a seminar and cultural presentation were held in a community center in Evanston, protesting one year of martial law. Four position papers describing the sad plight of the Filipinos under martial law were read and discussed.

In Philadelphia, a protest rally called "Let Freedom Ring in the Philippines" was held in front of Independence Hall National Shrine. Dr. Richard Deats, author of two books on the Philippines, warned of another Vietnam-type intervention by the US in the

Philippines, while an effigy of Marcos with a rope tied around the neck of a peasant child symbolized the death of civil liberties under martial law.

In a related development, 85 Americans representing 10 cities in the East Coast banded themselves into an organization called "Friends of the Filipino People".

In a meeting last October in the Tabernacle church in Philadelphia, the American friends defined their four goals as follows:

"We seek an end to US support of the Marcos dictatorship;

"We seek an end to all US military and political intervention in the Philippines;

"We condemn the long-standing domination of the Philippine economy by US corporations which has been a major cause of the poverty and underdevelopment of the nation; and

"We support the Filipino people in their efforts to secure full independence and freedom in their country and social and economic justice in the US." ●

AFP's ammo from Taiwan

The reactionary AFP, its combat units tied down throughout the country in frantic efforts to contain the people's revolutionary armed struggle, has run short of ammunition and is now getting its supply from Taiwan.

This was disclosed by a reliable source in the AFP who said two Philippine Navy vessels regularly pick up the ammunition purchased from the Chiang Kai-shek military clique.

The AFP used to get its ammunition from the Joint United States Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG) under the RP-US military assistance pact (MAP).

Having exceeded its quota from the JUSMAG, the AFP has had to find other sources. Before resorting to buying from Taiwan, the AFP had to get additional ammunition from the JUSMAG by paying for it in cash. Under the MAP, the AFP is allocated arms and ammunition as part of US "aid".

Because of the critical shortage of ammunition, AFP officers and men not assigned to combat duty are restricted from drawing ammo for their arms.

However, certain officers and men having access to the ammunition depots have been selling government ammo in the blackmarket, the AFP source revealed. (BMP) ●

Detainees tortured in regime's jails

"Abominable hygienic conditions, torture, inadequate food, corrupt and brutal guards, all these exist, but they are carefully hidden from the public view."

This is revealed in a first-hand account on the treatment of political prisoners, by a former political detainee writing under the pseudonym Celso Banaag. The lengthy report was printed in full in the Chicago-based Philippine Times in its issue of last Nov. 30.

In his account, Banaag disputed claims of the Marcos dictatorship that political prisoners receive "humane treatment" under the "new society".

"It is as if having wounded somebody, one then brags about one's magnanimity because at least he didn't kill him," he added.

According to Banaag, prison camp conditions are generally better in Greater Manila than in the provinces, the metropolitan area being a showcase for foreign news correspondents.

But in Manila as in the provinces, he went on, members of mass organizations have received the most brutal treatment.

"Often," he said, "young men and women are killed at the time of their capture by ambitious military men anxious to report battle 'victories'. Others who are lucky enough not to get murdered are taken to secret apartments and at times to military camps where they are squeezed for information through the use of a wide range of crude to sophisticated torture techniques."

While many of these cases go unreported, Banaag added, "the truth will out: Tommy Urog, broken arm; John Quimco, water forced up his genitals; Rick Dantes, two weeks in (the) hospital for injuries after several days of torture; and...Liliosa Hilao, a young woman of 23 who was tortured to death, then muristic acid was poured down her throat to make it appear that she had committed suicide".

Banaag pointed out, however, that despite the terror tactics employed by the dictatorship to silence the people, resistance continues to mount.

"...If the high morale, camaraderie, continuing political education and heightened dedication to revolutionary ideals among political prisoners is any measure," he said, "Marcos has not succeeded in his efforts to terrorize us. He has, instead, simply brought the day of his downfall closer." ●

★ EDITORIAL

MARCOS SCHEMES TO STAY ON

No one now doubts that the dictator Marcos will perpetuate himself in power beyond Dec. 30. In doing so, he will violate the 1935 Constitution and prolong the people's suffering.

Marcos has brought intense suffering to the people by selling the country to the US imperialists and other big monopoly capitalists. Under his regime, prices have soared way beyond the reach of the broad masses of the people, while their democratic rights have all been suppressed.

Marcos is certainly determined to stay in power beyond his constitutional tenure. To fabricate a semblance of legality for monopolizing power and to give himself a "new mandate", he rigged the January and July "referendums". His ongoing campaign for a "new society" of progress and prosperity is just as fraudulent.

Like all dictators before him, Marcos is like a bandit trying to promulgate laws to make banditry legal. But since his deception is transparent and totally unacceptable to the people, he clings on to power by means of brute force. The more discredited he becomes, the more people he seeks to imprison and silence. His increasing use of fascist terror -- like the recent wave of mass arrests -- is a sign of growing weakness and isolation.

The days of the Marcos dictatorship are numbered. Where in history were dictators able to rule for long? Even Hitler was toppled by the peoples of Europe. More recently, the dictator Thanom Kittikachorn and his martial law regime were swept away by the people of Thailand.

The broad masses of the Filipino people have never remained passive before the tyrannical suppression of their basic rights and the betrayal of their interests. Thus, we rose up and victoriously fought against the tyranny of Spanish colonialism and Japanese militarism. And now we are again rising up and gathering strength for the decisive reckoning with the dictator Marcos and his imperialist masters.

We can be certain of two things: Marcos will cling on to his dictatorial power even after Dec. 30, intensifying the oppression and exploitation of the people and again trampling underfoot the Constitution and all legality; but in due time the Filipino people will destroy the tyrannical Marcos regime and build a democratic and prosperous society.



Generals in 'watch list'

More cracks are developing in the rickety armor of the Marcos martial law regime. At last report, Malacañang has placed four more generals under close watch as potential trouble-makers.

Among the new additions to the dictator's ever-growing "watch list" are the names of the PC chief himself, Brig. Gen. Fidel Ramos, and the erstwhile commanding general of the PC Metrocom, Brig. Gen. Alfredo Montoya.

The APPwe is abuzz with reports that Ramos and Montoya had carefully laid a trap for BIR Commissioner Misael Vera on a case of direct bribery. Just as they were about to close the trap, an urgent call from the dictator ordered them to scuttle the operation.

Ramos has since been sulking and threatening a revolt. As for the similarly morose Montoya, he has been thrown out of the Metrocom and exiled to the Second PC Zone.

* * *

Even now, Pangasinenses cannot suppress a guffaw whenever they recall what happened to the "summer house" (actually a mansion) of Gregorio Cendaña, director of Marcos' National Media Production Center.

Cendaña's mansion, a building in the rolling terrain of Villaverde Trail in his hometown, San Nicolas, Pangasinan, was just a few days away from housewarming when the earth underneath gave out a terrible rumble, opened up, and swallowed the entire structure.

According to his fellow Pangasinenses, the mansion had grown so heavy with supplies and equipment "borrowed" by Cendaña from the NMPC that of its weight, it precipitated a cave-in.

* * *

At the approach of Dec. 30, the day the 1935 Constitution commands him to pack up and leave Malacañang forever, the dictator is growing more confused and panicky.

Anticipating a nationwide "Alis d'yan!" clamor, he and his advisers have been in a dither thinking up ways of giving a semblance of checks and balance to his one-man rule.

At first he thought of finally setting up the so-called Ad-Interim National Assembly. But not wanting any voices of dissent in such a body, he next thought of a semi-

official Consultative Assembly with the more pliable opposition leaders serving in it.

That plan, too, has been scrapped and he is thinking of a small group to which he would accord the fancy name of Legislative Advisory Council or some such.

His problem is that he cannot get anyone, outside of his own kennel of "tutas", to participate in the charade.

* * *

One other thing that has concerned the dictator as Dec. 30 nears is the direction of his propaganda campaign, which was bound to fail from the very start because, to borrow a phrase from the late Mayor Arsenio H. Lacson, it is "not on speaking terms with the truth".

The dictator, so the report goes, has ordered that a new study be undertaken of new propaganda gimmicks to be adopted and implemented in early 1974.

He apparently has come to realize that his vast propaganda network cannot forever be peddling such prattle as "kaunlaran" (progress) when the economy is in extremis, and hunger, oppression and other forms of rapid deterioration are the order of the day.

* * *

Meanwhile, the dictator befouls the air once more with shrill cries of "Sabotage!" and "Assassination!" The idea is to create an atmosphere of crisis, such as that produced by his own bombing spree in Greater Manila just before martial law, to "justify" his continued usurpation of power.

Sabotage is being alleged by the dictatorship in the disastrous fire at Meralco's Rockwell station in Makati, Rizal. Before then, the coffee shops were alive with talk that "something" was about to happen.

And then there is the reincarnated bugaboo about a supposed Rightist plot to assassinate him.

Knowing the dictator's propensity for gimmickry and fabrication, we continue to be skeptical about the existence of such a plot.

What we do know is that there are almost 40,000,000 long-suffering Filipinos who will, in due time, administer him appropriate punishment for his treason and many other gross crimes against them. ●