

Philippines Australia Solidarity Group NEWSLETTER

(Queensland Edition)

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HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS MORE SERIOUS UNDER AQUINO GOVERNMENT

Human rights abuses in the Philippines is even more alarming under the Aquino government, says Sister Mariani, Chairperson of Task Force Detainees (TFD) of the Philippines and the Philippine Alliance of Human rights Advocates (PAHRA). Sr. Mariani is on a two-week tour in Australia on invitation of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs. She is meeting with human rights and solidarity groups and hopes to liaise with them in exposing the human rights problems escalating in the Philippines. Among those she met in Brisbane was Senator George Georges who expressed interest in becoming a member of the International Fact-Finding mission on Armed Vigilante Groups, Militarisation and Australian Military Aid being proposed by PAHRA.

Sr. Mariani brought up to date the situation since the transfer of power to the Aquino government. About 400 political prisoners have been released, including such high profile people as Joma Sison, alleged founder of the Communist Party in the Philippines. What has largely gone unrecognized is that over 230 remain unreleased and have been reclassified as common criminals. There has not been any structural change under the Aquino government and not only are detention, salvagings and disappearances



Sr. Mariani addressing PASG members in Brisbane, June 15.

still widespread but outright massacres are now occurring. What is disturbing, according to her, is the increased violence being perpetuated by the so-called 'vigilantes' (death squads) as part of the CIA's promotion of a low intensity war against the people of the Philippines.

For 14 months, Sr. Mariani served as a member on the Presidential Committee on Human Rights tasked with bringing to justice those perpetuating human rights violations, especially those committed under the Marcos dictatorship. She resigned when the committee's compilation of over 800 indisputable cases of human rights abuses went unrecognized and unprosecuted.

An important issue discussed with Sister Mariani concerned the role of the church in the current social and political situation in the Philippines. She lamented the fact that death squads are actually condoned by sections of the church in the misplaced and simplistic notion that if you are not pro-Aquino you are a communist. She was particularly disappointed by the retreat into the social irresponsibility of charismatic Catholicism and fundamentalist Protestantism which is being actively infiltrated and promoted by the CIA. Sister Mariani observed these patterns are similar to Latin America, except that the Filipinos were able to replace a civilian dictator with Aquino instead of a military dictatorship. She stressed further that the Filipinos will remain dissatisfied until genuine reform is effected, especially in the areas of land redistribution, policy towards transnationals and the American bases. American Secretary of State George Shultz, who is currently in the Philippines, has stated that America would destabilize the Aquino government if they attempted to terminate the US bases.

Asked on what she thinks of Australian aid and how she faces up to her human rights work amidst the current situation, she says, "I am still hopeful. We appreciate the pro-people involvement of NGO's but military aid to the Philippines has to be stopped.

I am optimistic for the future liberation of the Philippines".

PASG monthly meetings - every second Tuesday of the month at Latin American Centre - 264 Barry Parade, Valley - next meeting - 14 July at 7 pm. Video featuring Fr. Brian Gore - 'I LOVED FERDIE' will be shown.

Editor's notes:

As an effort to increase awareness on what is happening in the Philippines, PASG comes out with this monthly publication.

The Queensland edition hopes to relate issues on the Philippines not just with the Australian concerns in that country but also with parallel state matters. Fittingly, this second issue focuses on the escalation of human rights abuses under the Aquino government. A staunch Filipino human rights advocate, Sister Mariani Dimaranan, was in Brisbane meeting and addressing PASG and other human rights groups shortly after the brutal attack by the Queensland police on the Greenpeace activists on the Brisbane River.

With this newsletter, PASG hopes to generate more public opinion and involvement in Queensland. Feedback from readers will definitely encourage improvement in this form of solidarity venture.

BUDGET TOUR TO THE PHILIPPINES.

A HOLIDAY EXPERIENCE THAT WILL UNRAKE YOU.....

(See page 4)

DEATH OF BABETTE PRUDENCIO

AND ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

ON BERNABE "DANTE" BUSCAYNO

Enclosed in this newsletter are accounts of the death of and assassination attempts on Filipinos working for social justice in different sectors.

Please voice your protest.

CORY SANCTIONS RISE OF VIGILANTE GROUPS

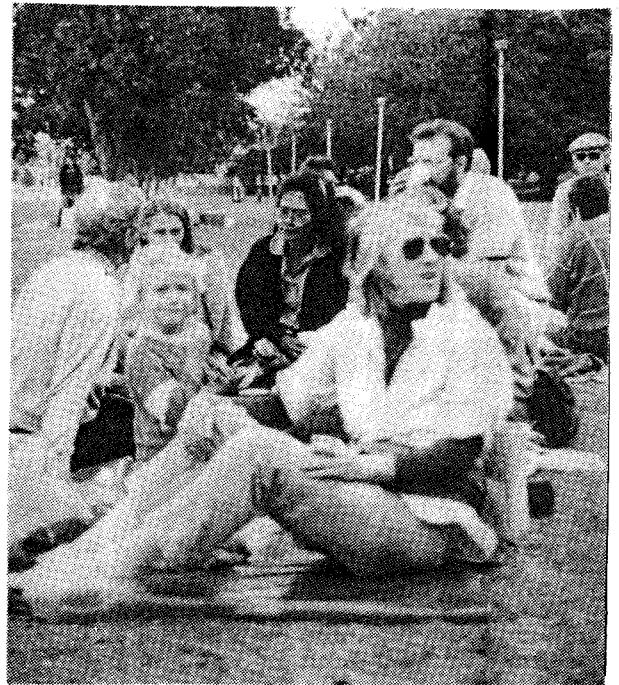
Joy Balazo told a meeting of the Philippines-Australia Solidarity Group on June 12 that there has been a large increase in the number of right-wing vigilante groups throughout the Philippines. These groups, based on anti-communist zeal and religious fanaticism, terrorize the civilian population. Carrying long blades and knives, they are pictured drinking blood of their victims and cutting up bodies into small pieces.

Vigilante groups, like Alsa Masa, have appeared not just in Mindanao but in Negros and other regions with different names such as El Tigre (the tiger) and Nakasaka. They are careful not to attack the New People's Army but concentrate on intimidating the local population in the villages and small towns. In cases where poor peasants have attempted to grow vegetables on land that is lying fallow, or try to organise protests over land grabbing by multinationals, the vigilante groups are used to harass the protestors.

The vigilante groups have the open support of the military and some local government officials. They have come to replace the Civilian Home Defence Forces (CHDF) the private armies previously employed by the landlords under the Marcos regime.

Now Cory Aquino has given her mantle of approval to the vigilante groups. She described Nakasaka which means United People for Peace as embodying a brand of "people's power". Cory Aquino is immensely popular and has been virtually placed on a pedestal, said Joy Balazo. But this supreme accolade of approval to the vigilante groups raises serious questions of the direction of her administration and its strategy.

It is clear the US government has used economic pressure to ensure Cory Aquino moves to the right. This means



Joy Balazo at the welcoming picnic for the Greenpeace vessel 'Vega', New Farm Park, June 7.

wiping out the Communists with all the military and political stratagems she can muster.

A new jargon has appeared in Washington. Called "low intensity conflict" it describes a method of fighting insurgencies by using an array of unconventional tactics and fighting forces. The Philippines with the compliance of Cory Aquino has become the laboratory for this experiment.

On May 25, a fact-finding mission led by former Attorney-General Ramsey Clark charged that CIA was behind the rise of vigilante groups in the Philippines and the increased military operations in the countryside. Ralph McGehee a former CIA agent now working with Clark said Manila's counter-insurgency operations were similar to CIA operations in Nicaragua and Vietnam.

Joy appealed to the Australians and the international community to put strong pressure on President Aquino to disband all vigilante groups, a demand that is incorporated in the country's constitution.

**JOIN THE 1988 3-WEEK
WHOLLY-DAY TOUR TO THE
PHILIPPINES !!!!**

Why a wholly-day and not a holiday:

Because food is not lavish
and accomodation is not
comfortable.

Because you will be in a mood
of disturbing reflection
during and after the trip.

Because what you will see is
the reality of life which
majority or a certain
group of people face
everyday.

their problems,
struggles,
aspirations.

Says:

Shirley Randell, 1986 tour
participant of her experiences.

"Filipinos challeged us to
work for solidarity by listening
carefully to them and
understanding their struggle, by
sharing that with other
Australians and participating
ourselves in human rights issues
to transform our own society:
especially with the poor,
Aborigines, people from
non-english speaking backgrounds
and women."

Leaving Jan. 1988. Approximate
cost (\$A1600). Limited number
only. For further details,
contact PASG.

EDUCATION MATERIALS AVAILABLE

Video

*** 'I LOVED FERDIE'**

Featuring Fr. Brian Gore,
length of 30 min; conscientisation
of an Australian by the Filipino
peasants.

*** 'NO CHOICE BUT CHANGE'**

Length of 55 min
documenting on the fall of the
Marcos dictatorship and the
background to the current
political climate.

Hire fee of \$5.00 per video plus
postage.

WHAT IS THE PASG?

The PASG (Qld) is part of a
national organisation which has
offices in all state capitals and
in Canberra. It brings together
people of diverse backgrounds and
includes both Australians and
Filipinos living in Australia. As
well, it has close links with
Filipino Community Organisations
in Australia and the Philippines.
Among its members there are people
with extensive Philippine
experience with information on
trade unions, women's
organisations, industrial working
conditions, peasant organisations,
rural working conditions, teachers
working conditions and schools,
the role of the churches
(christian and non-christian) and
the conditions of tribal
Filipinos. The PASG Brisbane
provides resource materials such
as videos and slides as well as
speakers.

The objective of the PASG
are to generate support in
Australia for all Filipino
organisations working for genuine
democracy, freedom and
sovereignty, to end Australian
Military aid to the Philippines
and to oppose all forms of foreign
intervention in the affairs of the
Filipino people.

For a one-year subscription to the
Qld newsletter, Philippines Issues
and Bulletin.

Please send the slip below with
\$10.00 to PASG:
P.O. BOX 187
WEST END Q 4101

NAME: _____

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TELEPHONE NO: _____

CABARET

an 8th anniversary celebration of
the Nicaraguan Revolution ...
with Mary Fletcher
and The Cutters

Ukranian Hall
70 Cordelia St., South Brisbane
FRIDAY, JULY 17 7:30 PM

ph 844 3852
\$7/4cons