

Philippines Australia Solidarity Group NEWSLETTER

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ACTION FOR WORLD DEVELOPMENT
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EXPO 88 AND THE

BICENTENNIAL IN

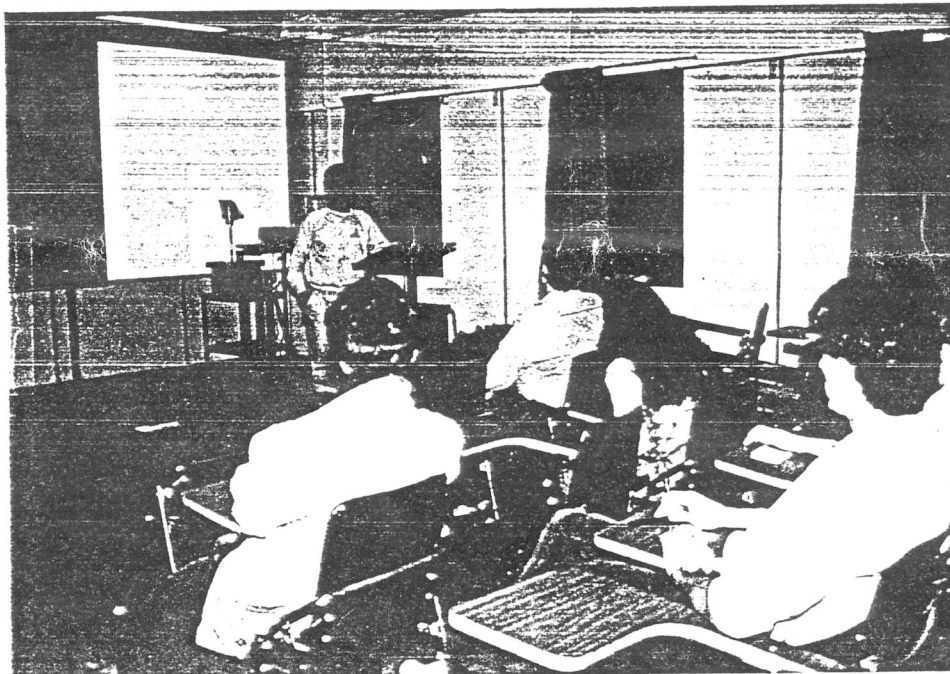
BRISBANE: AN

OPPORTUNITY FOR

UNITED INDIGENOUS

PEOPLES CULTURAL

SOLIDARITY



VIKTOR KAISIEPO, WEST PAPUAN LEADER ADDRESSING PASG

EXPO 88 as part of Australia's Bicentennial is unwelcomed by Aboriginal peoples who refuse to celebrate white peoples invading their country. Aboriginal peoples are inviting other indigenous peoples to unite with them in cultural solidarity and protest against EXPO 88.

As a lead up to the demonstrations against EXPO 88, PASG members had the opportunity to participate in a discussion with William Claver on Saturday evening the 19th of March. William was in Brisbane as a guest of the Australian Foreign Affairs Department. He won strong grass-roots support in the Cordillera and is now one of the few indigenous congressional representatives to the first sitting of the Philippine Congress since the toppling of the Marcos dictatorship. Present for the discussions concerning autonomy and self-determination for

Cordillera peoples in the Philippines were other leaders of indigenous peoples in the region. Viktor Kaisiepo is a West Papuan leader in their resistance movement against Indonesian invasion and he discussed his people's long struggle for self-determination and independence. Bob Wetherall, Chair of the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research and Action (FAIRA), also attended and discussed the importance of the united indigenous peoples cultural event which will mark the opening of EXPO 88 and requested solidarity from PASG members in supporting Aboriginal peoples in their struggle for recognition of sovereignty, autonomy and self-determination.

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Australia's bicentennial is an important year for Aboriginal peoples to assert their rights nationally and internationally and by networking with other indigenous peoples, the moral claim of all of their social movements for self-determination is better advanced. Because of the Bicentennial and EXPO in Brisbane, PASG members have the opportunity to join in 1988 as the year of indigenous peoples solidarity.

The Brisbane Aboriginal community is organising the United Indigenous Cultural Survival Gathering in Musgrave Park, South Brisbane from Wednesday 27 April to Thursday 5 May, 1988. The theme of the event is ONE MOB, ONE VOICE, ONE LAND - TOGETHER WE'LL SHOW THE WORLD. Highlights of the gathering are the following:

April 28th:

Cultural events at Musgrave Park featuring over 120 dancers from Aboriginal communities throughout Australia.

April 30th:

March against EXPO 88.

May 4th:

March against the anniversary of Governor Macquarie's proclamation preventing the free movement of Aboriginal peoples.

For further information contact Bob Wetherall, Chair, FAIRA, telephone number 8463622.

Justice 88, a non-Aboriginal coalition in support of sovereignty for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is also working with the Aboriginal community through FAIRA and enjoining non-Aboriginals to get involved. Justice 88 meets every Sunday at 11 am, 69 Thomas St., West End, Telephone number 8447268.

THE 'RED SCARE' IS THE BIGGEST PROBLEM FACING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN THE PHILIPPINES

Indigenous peoples in the Philippines are confronted with the same problems of land rights and the recognition of the right to self-determination that indigenous nations all over the world are struggling for, reports David Hyndman, PASG member and Senior Lecturer in Anthropology of the University of Queensland. David was one of the NGO observers who attended Session 5 of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations (UNWGIP) held in Geneva from 3-7 August 1987. Delegates from the Philippines were Eduardo Solang and Cesar Taguba representing the Cordillera and Datu Omas of Lumad Mindanao; all three are members and representatives of the National Coalition of Minority Peoples of the Philippines.

In their joint presentation to the UNWGIP, the Cordillera and Lumad delegates stated that the "issue is not democracy versus communism. The issues are food and freedom, jobs and justice, land to the tillers and the protection of our ancestral domain and the recognition of our right to self-determination". Eduardo Solang presented as examples the Oplan Pegasus military campaign in the lower Kalinga-Apayao which resulted in massacres, property destruction and displacement of Cordillera peoples, and the more than 15 officially sanctioned armed anti-communist vigilante groups operating in Mindanao which continue to force recruitment and suffering upon Lumad peoples as examples of the "red scare" being the biggest threat facing indigenous peoples in the Philippines. (The delegates' Statement appears in this issue.)

The fifth session of the UNWGIP had for its main agenda the following: a) review of the developments pertaining to the

promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous populations and b) standard-setting activities: evolution of standards concerning the rights of indigenous populations. The UN body is under the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities which is directly under the UN Commission on Human Rights.

STATEMENT OF THE DELEGATION OF THE
PHILIPPINES INDIGENOUS
ORGANISATIONS DURING THE FIFTH
SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS
POPULATIONS, GENEVA, 3-7 AUGUST
1987

Introduction

We represent the Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA) and the LUMAD-Mindanao. We are also members and representatives of the Consultative Assembly of Minority Peoples of the Philippines composed of more than 214 member organisations.

Through our people's organisations, we actively participated in the anti-dictatorship struggle which toppled Marcos dictatorship last February 1986. The 14 years of struggle against the dictator was paid with a high price in terms of lives lost due to summary executions and massacres, rape and torture. Hundreds of our communities were forcibly relocated. We are happy that the United Nations Commission for Human Rights (UNCHR) recognised the legitimacy of our complaints and placed the Marcos regime under investigation. We also strongly feel that our submissions to the Working Group since 1981 helped in the international isolation of the dictator.

We were one with the entire Filipino people in the 14 years of struggle and in celebrating our victory. We were therefore excited with the possibilities of the post-Marcos era where our right to self determination and right over our ancestral lands will be respected and recognised.

No doubt, many of you will conclude that we now have a popular democracy and a regime which promotes and respects justice, peace, and human rights. How we wish this was so.

But we came here to deliver a sad message - WE, THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE PHILIPPINES ARE IN NO BETTER SITUATION. IN FACT, OUR SUFFERINGS IS GETTING WORST.

*Continuing military operations
resulting in murders and displacement*

In January 1986, barely a month before the February "revolution", the Philippines military launched OPLAN PEGASUS, a military campaign to encircle and wipe out the insurgent forces in the north. In May 1986 the so called New Armed Forces of the Philippines under Pres. C. Aquino, resumed the punitive action on a larger scale than even under Marcos.

The new scheme has expanded military operations in many ways. More indigenous provinces and communities were included in the "war zones". War equipment with far greater destructive capacity were used by more than 8,500 troops.

This systematic counter insurgency operations resulted in more than 100 houses burned, 50 people massacred, 25 people summarily executed, one million pesos worth of properties destroyed and 25,000 people rendered homeless.

I wish to submit to this body for its information, a report of three fact finding missions to the lower Kalinga-Apayao area of the Cordillera region, which documents all these human rights abuses.

Meanwhile, in the southern island of Mindanao, more than 15 officially sanctioned armed anti communist vigilandist groups are causing much sufferings among the indigenous communities. We are being forced to join these vigilandists in their anti communist crusade.

We wish to reiterate that as it was during the Marcos dictatorship, the issue is not democracy versus communism. The issues are food and freedom, jobs and justice, land to the tillers and the protection of our ancestral domain and the recognition of our right to self determination.

(To be continued)

BE A MEMBER OF THE PEACE BRIGADE...

The US bases in the Philippines are due to expire in 1991, and renegotiation for their continued use has already started this year. The bases are both a local and regional concern because they constitute a vital link to overall US regional and global military strategy. They play an important role for projecting US military might in Asia-Pacific and the Indian-Persian Gulf region. Some 300-400 Asia-Pacific supporters are invited to join the Peace Brigades or Anti-US Bases Brigades (ABB) as part of the regional campaign against the 160 US bases in the Pacific. The first in a series of regional protest actions will be a trip to the Philippines in December-January to participate in a month-long activity which will include an international conference on the US bases, exposure trips to communities around the bases, an international concert and a protest march to Clark Air Base. Approximate cost for participation in this event is \$1600, inclusive of air fares, food and accomodation. Anyone interested to join will have to signify not later than end of July.

For further information,
contact PASG.

EDITOR'S NOTES

We apologise for the lag in the issues of our newsletter. 1988 saw a number of organisational changes within PASG. Terry Fisher, the PASG coordinator, had to move to Melbourne early this year. PASG-Brisbane will surely miss his dedication and we wish him and Lisa good luck and more power in their Melbourne involvement. With Terry gone, David Hyndman and Joan Shears will jointly carry on the coordination work. Also, the 2nd Tuesday of the month is not anymore viable for the majority of the members so we are still in the process of sorting out the best arrangement for the monthly meetings.

With the 1988 Bicentennial celebration, we are focusing on the issue of indigenous peoples in the Philippines. Like the Aboriginal peoples of Australia, indigenous peoples of the Philippines find their resources, societies and cultures under the control of others - the imperialists and their local counterparts. Although indigenous organisations are unique in many ways, they share similarities with other pressure groups seeking change in society - whether political parties, the women's movement, trade unions, anti-nuclear, environmental and human rights groups. PASG calls on all these groups to promote strong solidarity ties with indigenous peoples as they endeavor to gather the broadest support for their struggles.

WHAT IS 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 Philippines 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 objectives 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, Philippine Issues and Bulletin please send \$10.00 to

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