

## SIXTH COUP ATTEMPT

### AQUINO DECLARES STATE OF EMERGENCY

During the night of Thursday, 30th November 1989 the Philippines suffered the start of its sixth, most serious, coup attempt since Cory Aquino came to power. Led by Colonel Gregorio Honasan, this destructive action involved the RAM/SFP (Reform the Armed Forces Movement/Soldiers of the Filipino People) elite factions of the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines). The result: further economic disruption, the wounding and deaths of hundreds of civilians, an estimated 10,000 people in Manila fled their homes to avoid getting caught in the bombing and crossfire and President Aquino's declaration of a state of emergency.

Press reports reaching Manila from the US indicated that the US was first to offer military support. At around noon on Friday, December 1, the government received military assistance from the US in the form of F-4 Phantoms deployed from Clark Air Base. It is generally believed this turned the battle in favour of the government at a very crucial point. Aquino's authorization of Defence Secretary Fidel Ramos and armed forces chief General Renato de Villa's recommendation for US involvement got a mixed response from Filipinos. Some members of Congress welcomed the American 'air cover' thinking that otherwise the government would have fallen. Nationalists voiced humiliation and anger at the blatant reliance on a superpower to resolve an internal conflict.

A press release dated 1:00 pm, December 5, from the Institute for Popular Democracy Inc. stated, "An estimated 300 to 900 mutineers hold between 17 and 22 hotels and businesses in this area (Makati, Manila's business district)... Information from military insiders, the rebels and government, indicate 6,800 soldiers originally joined the rebellion, 3,000 of whom were based in Manila. Half of the rebel forces have now surrendered leaving a crack fighting force of at least 1,000 men. Elite Scout Rangers and Marines

are still armed with bazookas, anti-tank/aircraft ammunition, M-205 mortars and dynamite. (They) hold some 2,000 foreign tourists and business persons, as well as the diplomatic and Philippine business community, hostage."

The coup attempt struck just as the people's organisations were set to hold a Welgang Bayan (People's Strike) over the government's announcement of yet another rise in the price of oil. Almost all teachers and civil servants are already on strike and the movement to oust the US bases is growing.

Referring to the US bases negotiations due to commence in December, Senator Joseph Estrada said neither the rebels nor the government benefit from the coup attempt. "It's the Americans (who benefit); it's a no-win situation for us."

Casualties mounted as the battle raged on and the need for humanitarian help to victims of the conflict became more urgent. Priests appeared on television negotiating the surrender of rebel soldiers and civilians sought refuge in churches.

While Aquino uses her emergency powers to go after the coup plotters, they will also be used to suppress

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the legitimate people's organisations and movements working for fundamental change. The army have already started to set up new checkpoints, take over radio and TV stations, censor media and move against private commercial enterprises to impose government control over prices. Unchecked, this trend will lead to a further expansion of military power and a form of military rule reminiscent of the Marcos dictatorship.

**"The People's Stand on the Current National Crisis**

The Aquino government, by inviting direct US military intervention, has consigned whatever was left of our country's sovereignty to oblivion... By this act, President Aquino has practically sealed the pact for the US Bases extension... This coup and the resulting insane war has been consequently used as justification for the enforcement of emergency rule... Government officials' explanation of what the state of emergency will mean includes curtailing the rights of the people to wage their struggles for economic upliftment and political change. Clearly the state of emergency will involve further restrictions on our basic civil and political rights..."

- From a public statement signed by 150 prominent individuals representing a wide range of sectors.

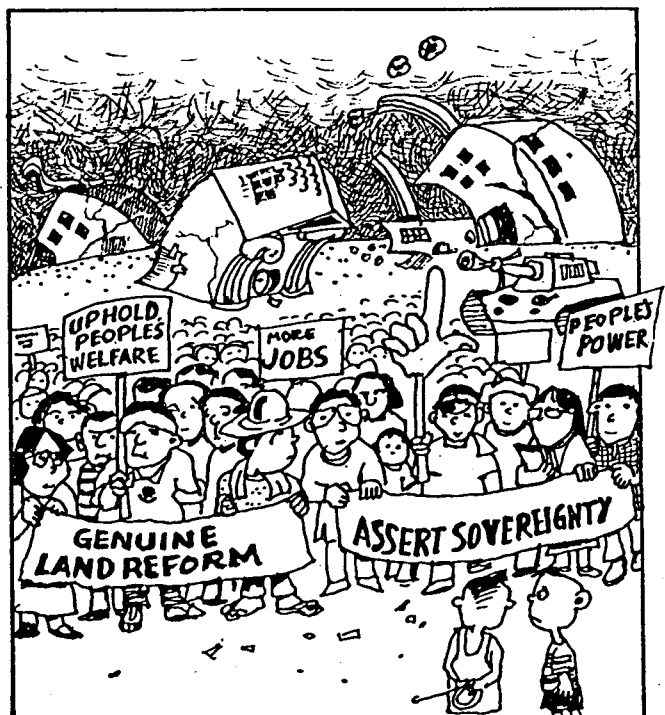
The Church Data Center (CDC) on December 5, reported that while rebel planes and helicopters were flying over the Presidential Palace, Cardinal Jaime Sin publicly appealed to his followers, "to rally behind our legitimate government leaders", gather into churches to pray for an end to the fighting and begged, "all our soldiers to stop this threat to our freedom." The President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), Archbishop Legaspi, endorsed the call to prayer and declared that the CBCP expressed full support for President Aquino.

CDC commented, "While the Bishops' perception of the situation was that of a simple choice between good and evil, other church groups were more hesitant... church people involved in human rights advocacy work who had witnessed and often been the victims of a government who had shown no improvement on the record of the previous

dictatorship which it had replaced. In fact the 'side of good' which the Bishops referred to, had already over 100 documented cases of massacres of defenseless civilians against it. Not that any church group had any sympathy with the coup plotters. The victory of the plotters would mean a return of a Marcos-style dictatorship."

"BAYAN cannot respond to the call for support by the Aquino government, a government which has repeatedly denied the people their basic needs and aspirations... We cannot believe that the declaration of the state of emergency was simply intended to address economic problems (it) could have addressed given its normal powers, but has consistently refused to do so. The President will be granted awesome powers, tantamount to Marcos' martial law, not only in relation to the crisis created by the coup attempt... (The) emergency powers can and will be used to further suppress even legitimate and popular dissent. When this happens, the coup would have succeeded in its objective of achieving a more militarized order... We should not be blackmailed to take sides in the factions of the ruling elite..."

- BAYAN (Bagong Alyansang Makabayan) statement dated December 10



Two groups, formed while the coup was in progress, grappled with the dilemma of giving unconditional support to a government with a dubious moral record: KILOS (Kilusan Laban sa Coup - Movement Against the Coup), a broad centre-left coalition, condemned, "in the strongest possible terms the ongoing attempts... to seize political and state power and install direct military rule..." and TFCR (Task Force on Church Response), a revived church group formed during a previous coup, said this latest attempt, instigated by a few from the rightist ruling elite, "stems from the conflict of views in the manner of governing and wielding state power...this power struggle will not and cannot resolve the fundamental problems of our society." Both groups condemned the US intervention.

"We cannot give the Aquino government unequivocal support because of its refusal to heed the lessons of coups and the factions that have led to this crisis. While it is true that lust for power causes a coup whether government is corrupt or not, it is also true that the success of that coup will depend greatly on whether that government is corrupt or not... (The answer is not) a revamp of the Cabinet... (it) has been revamped as often as there have been coups and brought only fresh plunder upon the treasury. The answer is a recasting of the very essence of government itself to recapture the spirit of the struggle against the dictatorship... (it is not) calling upon Providence to do our work for us, or running to the almighty United States to bail us out of trouble. Assuredly we believe in prayer as we do in solidarity among nations as equals. But we also believe that God helps those who help themselves and that foreign aid given with strings attached fosters not development but dependence... (We also) believe that people power should be mustered in all its seriousness to turn the wheels of government in everyday life - not merely conjured to lie down before tanks as the need arises or to give public thanksgiving while issues remain unresolved."

- PAHRA (Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates - a nationwide alliance of over 100 non-governmental organizations and advocates)

## PASG 1990 NATIONAL MEETING

The PASG national meeting was held in Adelaide on Jan 26-28. The political and economic situations of Australia and the Philippines were highlighted as an aid to discussing the basis of PASG's 1990 program of activities. Coordination problems arose in 1989 as sectoral groups moved towards establishing independent relationships with partner sectors in the Philippines. The question of PASG's role in this regard was raised and discussed in workshops.

### COORDINATION

To improve coordination the meeting decided: on creating a National Coordinating Committee (NCC); to organise bi-monthly hookups (or more frequently as decided by the NCC); hookup costs to be shared equitably among states. The need for 6-monthly NCC meetings is subject to financial considerations.

### INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

Information and communication between states will continue through the hookups and state minutes should be shared. With a view to expanding the role of the Philippines Resource Centre (PRC), PRC & PASG will cooperate on enhancing PRC's finance sources. PASG VIC will investigate establishing a news service. All states should promote the distribution of Philippine Issues and contribute newsworthy items. PASG WA will list all state resources. Each state should identify its media spokesperson and discuss the need for a national spokesperson.

### RECRUITMENT

The PASG QLD mass-based approach to recruitment was seen as viable and many states are inclined to adopt such a method but each state decides its own appropriate recruitment methods. Positive steps are to be taken to recruit Filipinos to PASG.

### RELATIONSHIPS

It will be a task of the NCC to link with other solidarity groups (sectoral and organisational) and formalise our relationship with Bayan.

We will distribute a copy of the minutes of the national meeting to all PASG QLD members as soon as possible.

# SIXTH ATTEMPTED COUP AGAINST AQUINO:

## OBSERVATIONS FROM A P.A.S.G. HOSTAGE

As we approached Manila on PAL (Philippine Airlines) flight 103 early on the morning of 1st December 1989, the pilot informed us we were being diverted to Cebu because a coup against Aquino had just started and there was fighting at the airport. Within an hour PAL flight 104 was also diverted to Cebu and by mid-morning there was over eight hundred passengers crammed into the Mactan Airport terminal.

Listening to the radio we learned that under invitation from Aquino, the United States (US) had used their jet aircraft to strafe rebel soldiers. By relying on US intervention, Aquino appeared to be surviving the sixth military coup attempted against her government. PAL officials decided to accommodate us in various Mactan Island hotels. The presumption was that we would be returning to Manila the next day, so our luggage was left on the aircraft.

Supposedly, some 2,500 AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) troops were stationed in Cebu, but I counted only six of them on the tarmac at Mactan as we disembarked. Obviously, the AFP troops continued to remain on the Cebu side of the bridge from the island because, during the night, 400 rebel soldiers under General Commendador arrived in two boats from Mindanao and took over Mactan without having to fire a single shot. AFP failure to adequately secure their second largest airport and airforce base gave the rebel soldiers access to 800 PAL passengers as hostages. Then the rebel soldiers proceeded to place bombs on the PAL and military aircraft and on the Mactan side of the bridge, and they threatened to detonate them if they were attacked by the AFP troops from Cebu. During the standoff, all 800 passengers were detained on Mactan Island for four days.

Detention on the island was not without its hardships as well as humour. There was no telephone or newspapers and I was only able to get one radioed message to friends in Manila. There were only eight white people on PAL 103, all the rest were Filipino balikbayan (resident overseas) passengers. In order to accommodate us all, we were crowded three and four to a room and the hotel staff placed me with three young American men. One was from the merchant marines and the other two were in the Navy Reserve after active duty at Subic Bay. I quickly discovered I had nothing in common with my roommates. They were disappointed with the level of

America's military intervention and wanted a full invasion, "like in Grenada". They were on sex holidays to the Philippines and were angry with Aquino's attempt to clean up Manila's image because, after all, "the girls really like their work". The Navy Reservists rated the prostitutes on Mactan as better than the ones from Olongapo because they were literate. "Shirley," they told me, "could even write her name with a felt pen placed up her vagina!" Meanwhile, without a change of clothes, it was not long before PAL passengers could be seen walking the hotel beaches in polished dress shoes, underwear and a T-shirt as their pants were drying back at their rooms.

After four days of boredom, the rebel soldiers, who had never personally intimidated their hostages, permitted PAL to transfer us off the island in 15 buses to the Cebu Plaza Hotel. Two days later, about a third of us accepted tickets from PAL for the first available boat to Manila. After enduring a 20 hour boat trip with over 4,000 passengers, I finally arrived in Manila six days behind schedule as the rebel soldiers were making their march from Makati back to their barracks. The next day I returned safely on PAL 213 to Brisbane. However, back in Cebu rebel General Commendador continued to hold out until Monday, December 11. Afterwards, my luggage was reclaimed by PAL and returned intact.

Reflecting back on the events of the first week of December 1989 in the Philippines, there are several important lessons for those concerned with the struggle for genuine democracy in the Philippines to learn from the sixth attempted military coup. The rebel soldiers and their political leaders should be condemned. They deserve the severest punishment for directly causing the loss of more than 100 lives and wounding more than 700 others, mostly civilians. The disruption will further worsen the already faltering economy and will have deep and long-lasting effects.

Aquino's inability to solve the country's economic problems and her obsession with 'total war' to wipe out the national liberation movement, encouraged the anti-Aquino forces to launch their coup attempt. By calling for US military intervention, she has completely exposed her dependence on the US government. This has effectively undermined any semblance of a bargaining position in the coming bases talks. The US has long been manipulating both sides of the conflict, and it was not surprising when they jumped at the opportunity to intervene militarily to 'save' Aquino and consolidate a position enabling it to impose a settlement that will ensure long-term protection of its interests, especially retention of its military bases beyond 1991.

PASG supports the Philippine people's opposition to all forms of intervention by the US and the attempts by both the Aquino regime and the Anti-Aquino right-wing groups to militarise the state. We condemn US intervention in the Philippines and oppose the retention of its bases, helped by an increasingly militarised government using death squads and emergency powers to suppress legitimate dissent and violate human rights. We support the Filipino people's resistance to this assault on their basic rights and civil liberties.



## NEWS FROM NORTHERN DISPATCH

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Northern Information Network

Sept. 22, 1989 -- LA TRINIDAD, Benguet -- The Department of Health's (DOH) malaria control program in the Cordillera hinterlands is now a cause of alarm among Cordillera natives.

The DOH uses DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethene), to spray households in Kalinga-Apayao to control malaria, say farmers and vegetable gardeners who attended a recent Pesticide Forum at the Benguet State University.

DDT, an odorless and colorless insecticide in crystalline form, is a banned pesticide due to its devastating effect. Once in the environment, it becomes present in virtually all foods and living things and its chronic toxicity increases by accumulation in body fats at each level of the food chain. Uncontrolled use of DDT has helped breed pesticide-resistant mosquitoes, causing a dramatic resurgence of malaria.

One of the "Dirty Dozen", DDT has been banned in 50 countries including its main producer but dumped in the Third World with less restrictive policies on pesticides. It becomes more hazardous given Third World conditions.

Except for DDT, minimal pesticide in the human body could be detoxified by the liver, disclosed Dr Charles Cheng, a medical specialist of the Baguio-Chinese General Hospital. One among the speakers in the forum, he endorsed a total ban on the use of DDT.

Together with health workers from non-governemnt agencies, the Cordillera farmers in a resolution called on concerned government authorities to come up with an alternative approach to control malaria.

The Pesticide Forum, organized by the Baguio-based Cordillera Environmental Concerns Committee also passed resolutions urging the government to undertake a massive educational and information campaign on the proper use and disposal of pesticides.

Matthew Bagano/Northern Dispatch

# KMU REPRESENTATIVE VISITS BRISBANE

CONTINUED FROM OUR NOVEMBER/DECEMBER ISSUE



In October the National Treasurer of the Drug, Food and Allied Industries Workers Federation visited Queensland as part of a national speaking tour. His union is affiliated to Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU). Part one of this interview with P.A.S.G. Qld. appeared in the previous issue of our Newsletter.

**PASG:** What sort of wage does a trade union official like yourself receive?

**KMU:** I am supposed to have an allowance of 1,500 pesos a month which is equivalent to A\$95 but as our union dues are low because our workers have low wages, we do not have enough to maintain our staff and office. Most often I don't get this allowance and I am lucky because my wife is working. When we lack funds, which is most often the case, we prioritize in giving allowances to those organizers on whom the family depends for their means of livelihood. There are many organizers who are given only a third or half the allowance and sometimes for several months, maybe 6 months, they don't get any at all and have to fend for themselves. Lack of funds is only one of the problems of organizers. Aside from the security problems - harassments and constant fear of being killed or arrested - they have to worry about their financial problems: how they can support their family and meet rising costs.

**PASG:** This job places you at great personal risk - economically and physically - why do you do it?

**KMU:** I have been in this job for quite some time and I believe we have to do it, otherwise other people will not do it. In the Philippines arrests and killings of union workers happen almost every week and it is taken as something which happens, it's a kind of occupational hazard or a calculated risk. I'm very surprised why, when I relate about the arrests and frequent killings of our leaders, Australian trade unionists are usually shocked, but for us it's something which is common. Sometimes they are reported in the papers, sometimes they are not. And if somebody is killed, people are not surprised any more, much less shocked.

**PASG:** Has this Australian speaking tour increased the risk for you?

**KMU:** Well, when a trade unionist, especially a known trade union leader, goes out of the country, suspicion arises amongst government officials that he goes there to say things against the government, and it often happens that when he goes back, a surveillance is put on him and in certain instances he is harassed and maybe reports about his activities in the foreign country are monitored. To a certain extent even this interview increases this risk. In several interviews in other states I visited I've asked them not to write my full name.

**PASG:** Do Australian trade unionists place themselves at risk when they travel to the Philippines in a union capacity?

**KMU:** The government is very particular about its image abroad and I don't think they will make moves to endanger the lives of foreign visitors. Trade unionists who visit the Philippines for exposure programs don't have a high risk of being arrested or killed. The risk I think is more on Filipinos.

However, it's a common occurrence that in May Day celebrations the policemen hurl tear gas on the rallies - they call it preventive - to prevent them from getting out of order. But in most cases they just create more trouble and more restlessness. International delegates attending May Day celebrations can suffer from this attack and for them I think it's an experience to see how repressive the police are in the Philippines and how government usually deals with demonstrations, rallies or mobilizations of workers. They should be advised to bring along a wet handkerchief in case they are tear gassed.

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**PASG:** Is the AAWL (Australia Asia Worker Links) campaign to sponsor a Philippine trade union organizer a good way of providing funds so that unionists like yourself do not have to exist on below subsistence allowances?

**KMU:** It will, I think, go a long way in trying to alleviate the conditions of our organizers and it will free them to some extent from other activities which they are forced to go into and of course they could use this time for more organizing and being with their members.

**PASG:** In what other ways can we help financially?

**KMU:** One of our greatest needs is equipment like typewriters, mimeographing machines, copying machines, and computers to make our job more efficient, faster and deliver more effective services to our members. The International Department of the KMU has several project proposals which maybe PASG and the unions in Australia can consider helping to fund.

**PASG:** Your trade union involvement has spanned two eras, the Marcos era and now Aquino. Is there any appreciable difference between these two periods, has it become easier or harder to organize?

**KMU:** I don't see any major differences. When Cory Aquino came to power, many trade unionists had great hopes that she would give a better deal to our workers, that she would repeal the anti-labor anti-strike laws set up by Marcos. And at first, she seemed to start fulfilling these election promises. She appointed as the Secretary of Labor a sympathetic human rights lawyer but after only seven to eight months, because of the pressure of giant multi-nationals and big business, she sacked him and appointed a pro-management, pro-capital Secretary of Labor, Franklyn Drilon, former vice-president of the Employers Confederation. Before he was appointed Secretary, he was the lawyer of Nestle's management and the lawyer of Baxter Travenol, a company which busted the union and it was him, I think, who planned the busting of the union. That

case is still going on. He's sitting there now on the case. Three hundred workers of Baxter Travenol were sacked, apparently upon the advice of Secretary Drilon who was then handling the case for management. It is still not resolved and these workers are out of job until now.

One of the reasons why workers in the Philippines and our organizers have very many problems is that we have laws which try to restrict the workers right to unionize, to organize, to strike so that they can have a strong bargaining leverage to ask for higher wages and better living conditions. These laws are just a consequence of the cheap and docile labor policy of the government which is dictated by the giant multi-national corporations and big local businessmen whose interest is to maximize their profits and squeeze as much from the workers and keep wages and benefits as low as possible.

To contact the KMU write to:  
Kilusang Mayo Uno,  
3rd Floor, Jopson Building,  
510 M. Earnshaw St, Sampaloc,  
Metro Manila, Philippines.

## KMU REQUESTS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The KMU have asked that friends and trade unions in Queensland give consideration to a project proposal to raise funds for the purchase of a computer for its International Department. The total cost is about \$3600. PASG Qld fully supports this project but cannot raise this amount on its own. We would appreciate any assistance you can offer in raising funds and/or introducing us to your trade union contacts. Please write to: PASG Qld, P.O. Box 174, St Lucia Qld. 4067 if you would like a copy of the KMU proposal.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE ALWAYS WELCOMED**

The Philippines Australia Solidarity Group (PASG) Queensland 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, the role of the church (Christian and Non-Christian), women's organisations, industrial working conditions, peasant organisations, rural working conditions, teachers working conditions and the conditions of indigenous peoples in the Philippines. PASG in Queensland provides resource material such as slides and videos as well as speakers.

The objectives of 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.

PASG holds regular meetings on the second Tuesday of each month in the Albion Peace Centre, 102 Macdonald Road, Windsor. For further information contact David Hyndman, Ph.377 4029 or Terry Fisher, Ph.221 1066.

ATTENTION: PASG Co-ordinator  
P.O. Box 174  
St. Lucia 4067  
Queensland

I would like to:

- join PASG and receive a one year subscription to the PASG Newsletter and Philippines Issues. I enclose payment of \$15 or \$12 (concession).
- receive other Philippine information materials.
- make a donation of \$..... for solidarity work.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

TEL. NO. ....(H) .....(W)

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# ***STOP PRESS***

**PUBLIC MEETING:** 7.30 p.m. WEDNESDAY, 28TH FEBRUARY 1990

Speaker from the Philippines: Reynaldo M. Natividad, Coordinator, Committee on Development Projects, National Council of Churches - Philippines  
Sponsored by Queensland Ecumenical Council of Churches

Venue: House of Justice & Mercy, 25 Hooker Street, Windsor

**P.A.S.G. MARCH MONTHLY MEETING:** The March general meeting of Qld. PASG is CANCELLED. We will instead be holding our annual sunning up meeting on March 17-18. The April meeting takes place as usual (see back of Newsletter)

ACTION FOR WORLD PEACE  
G.P.O. BOX 174  
BRISBANE QLD. P.H. (07) 221 9393  
(STREET ADDRESS: 1st FL, 57 EDWARD ST.)

# Philippines Australia Solidarity Group

P.O. Box 174  
St Lucia Q 4067

## STOP AUSTRALIAN AID TO THE PHILIPPINES MILITARY



The administration of President Corazon Aquino is undoubtedly the most oppressive regime the Filipino people have suffered in the 400 years since the Spanish invasion.

The Aquino government is either unwilling or unable to control and discipline the military and as a result civilian supremacy over the military is far from established. The top echelon of the military is trained in the U.S. and 20% of the Filipino national budget is directed towards the military.

The human rights record of the Aquino government is far worse than that of her predecessor Marcos. Since coming to power with the backing of the U.S. government Aquino has not redistributed one acre of land to the peasant farmers and has not brought to justice one perpetrator of human rights violations.

Aquino will remain in power as long as she accedes to U.S. economic and military demands otherwise she will be unceremoniously dumped in rigged elections or by a military coup. Under pressure from the World Bank Aquino has committed a staggering 40% of the annual national budget to pay of the foreign debt.

Aquino will come under increased U.S. pressure as the agreements for Subic naval base and the Clark airbase are up for renewal in 1991. These bases are the two largest outside of continental USA. they are vital to the U.S. for their economic and military dominance in the Indian and Western Pacific.

Aquino under U.S. guidance has opted for a military solution of 'Low Intensity Conflict' (LIC) to resolve the economic and social problems of the Philippines. LIC has been extensively used as tactic in Central and South America whereby means of a total war policy directed towards the civilian population the U.S. supplies

the equipment and the anti communist propaganda techniques and materials to destabilise any moves towards economic and political self determination.

As a consequence of the LIC strategy individuals and groups working for social justice are branded as communists thus giving the green light of their elimination by the military but more often by right wing death squads which have proliferated under

this strategy with the blessing of Aquino. Peasants have been removed from their land to stop any possible support to the armed forces of national liberation movement and has created and internal refugee problem. Workers, students, peasants human rights lawyers and church workers have been harassed, murdered and tortured.

We Australians are complicit in the suffering of the Filipino people. Our transnational companies exploit Filipino workers in the same manner as others. Australia supplies aid to the Philippines. At the Land Warfare Centre at Canungra (Qld) we train Filipino military officers in 'Battlefield Interrogation

Techniques' or less euphemistically 'Torture Techniques'. The rationale of the Australian government in training Filipino troops is that it will engender in them respect for democratic principles however this rationale has taken a beating as military officers trained in Australia took part in the latest coup attempt in December 1989.

Philippines Australia Solidarity Group

