



# KASAMA

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## Issues and Controversies: Manila Conference on East Timor

Interview with Renato Constantino, Jr.  
Asia-Pacific Coalition on East Timor

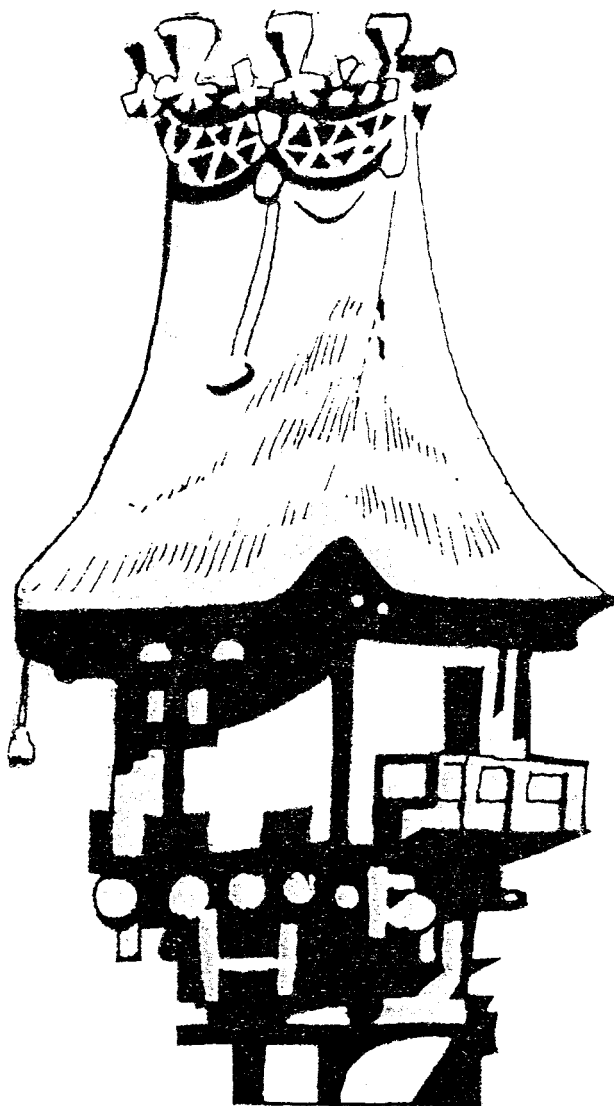
RENATO CONSTANTINO, Jr., chairman of the Philippine Host Convenors Group of the Asia-Pacific Conference on East Timor held at the University of the Philippines, Diliman from May 31—June 4 this year, was interviewed by EMERE DISTOR in Manila a month after the conference. He is also a board member of the Freedom from Debt Coalition.

*Not too long ago there was this big issue that hit the headlines internationally and nationally about the Asia-Pacific Conference on East Timor. Could you tell us about it and what were the objectives outlined?*

**RC:** The idea of the conference was first hatched and agreed upon in principle in late 1992. The objectives of the conference were: number one - to bring to a conference internationally recognised experts on such issues as the right to self-determination, experts [that] would be able to share with the conference participants the implications of the various United Nations resolutions. The second objective was to bring to the conference site Timorese people and Timorese groups residing in different countries in the world, belonging to different groups with different persuasions, different political perspectives, so that they could discuss among themselves and hopefully arrive at a common vision, or a common starting point for their own future. Third, was to raise the level of awareness about the Timorese issue in the Philippines, in the region, and hopefully internationally.

The Philippines was chosen as the site for the conference for a number of reasons. First there is a shared similarity in our colonial histories. The Philippines and East Timor are the only two peoples in the region that were colonised by the two competing Iberian powers, Spain and Portugal. We share similarities in our people's religion - 90% of the Timorese are Catholic, and 80% of Filipinos, I think, are also Catholic. The other reasons are the Philippines has a very vibrant mass media, the NGO [non-governmental organization] and PO [people's organisation] movements in the Philippines are very active, and the Timorese readily identified.

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Graphic: Detail from cover of *East Timor: Keeping the Flame of Freedom Alive*, Australian Council For Overseas Aid.

## THE BETRAYAL OF EAST TIMOR

ABOUT 200,000 people in East Timor have been massacred since 1975. In the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili, the capital, as many as 528 young demonstrators were massacred and "disappeared" on November 12, 1991. The Indonesian government claims only 50 died.

Incidents like these and other evidence of genocide of the East Timorese people are what human rights advocates have been trying to bring to the attention of an uncaring world community.

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## Betrayal Of East Timor

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Last week, demonstrations protesting repression and proselytizing of Catholics were again held in East Timor. The Catholic bishop appealed to the world community for justice and freedom of religion.

Another international conference on human rights violations in East Timor has been scheduled in Thailand, and again, as in the Philippines, foreign participants have been banned. It's another attempt to silence those who want to speak about the horrors and the sufferings of the people of East Timor.

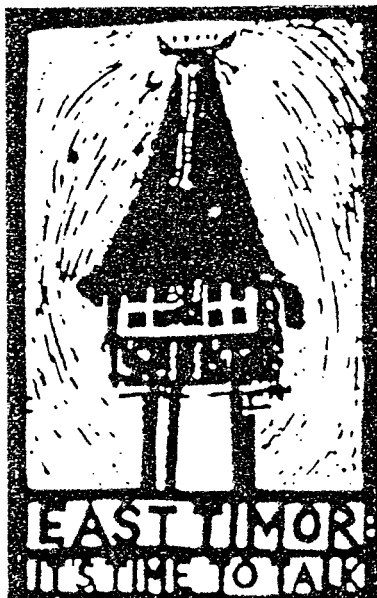
If you can find Darwin, on the northern tip of Australia, then you can find East Timor just 500 kilometers across the Timor Sea.

In 1977, according to John Pilger, two nuns in Lisbon received a letter from a Catholic priest who was hiding in East Timor. "The invaders have intensified their attacks," the priest wrote. "The bombers do not stop all day. Hundreds die every day. The bodies of the victims become the food of the carnivorous birds. Villages have been completely destroyed ... genocide will soon come ..."

And it did. One third of the population was liquidated from 1975 to 1979. There should have been 754,000 people on East Timor in 1980, following the normal growth pattern of 1.7 percent per year, but in fact there were only 555,000. Today there are about 800,000 East Timorese but 150,000 of these are Indonesian immigrants.

Eighty percent of East Timorese are Catholic. The church is the only institution openly functioning in East Timor, and it has stood solidly behind the struggle of its people and suffered with them. Many priests, religious and lay people have been killed and few in the world know or care about it. It's time to change that.

Extracts from *Reflections*, by Fr. Shay Cullen, SSC in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* 24.7.94



the ASEAN countries, have been participants to this wall of silence, this conspiracy of silence that has kept the Timorese under the thumb of the Indonesians.

***When and how did the government of Mr. Ramos approach you on the possible problems that might arise out of this conference?***

**RC:** This was a very openly planned conference which started in 1992, and really started in earnest in January of 1993. But it was only sometime in late October of 1993 when the Foreign Minister of Indonesia, Ali Alatas, informed representatives of the Philippine government in Jakarta that there was an international conference on East Timor that would be held in Manila headed by Renato Constantino. Because of this report, the Philippine government became aware of the planned conference. The report went all the way up to President Ramos who then assigned the director-general of the National Security Council, his national security adviser, General Jose T. Almonte, to handle this matter discretely. That is when Almonte got in touch with me, early November of 1993.

***And what did Almonte tell you about the fears of Mr. Ramos?***

**RC:** Almonte made it very clear that they were disturbed about this conference, that they were afraid of the negative reactions of the Indonesian government. But he was also made very much aware, he very quickly realised, that this conference was a purely private initiative which the Philippine government, because of the provisions in our constitution, could not stop. It would be counter-productive for the Philippine government to attempt to stop this conference. And I believe that when he conferred personally with Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, both of them, I think, adopted the framework that they should simply distance themselves or ignore this conference. Unfortunately, other quarters in the Philippine hierarchy as well as the Indonesian hierarchy, had other ideas about how to handle this conference. And that is the source actually of all this scandal.

***What was your initial reaction when you were approached by Almonte?***

**RC:** My reaction was a very polite but firm "No, we could not stop the conference, we would not stop the conference, the conference would push through as planned." The conference, as I said, was a purely private initiative and did not reflect in any way the official position of the Philippine government. ➤

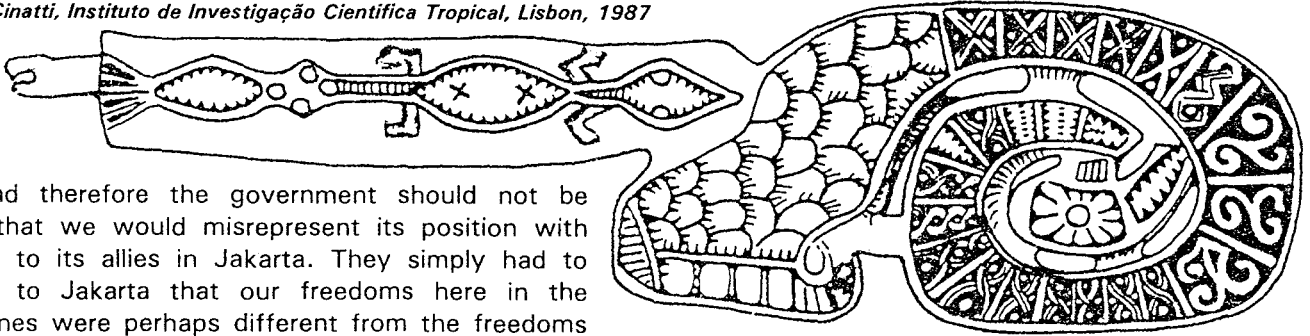
## Manila: E. Timor Conference

◀ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The democratic space in this country was acknowledged by those interested in the conference. And Filipinos themselves were interested in the conference because through the experience, through the story of East Timor, perhaps Filipinos who normally look at the world through blue eyes, would be able to see more clearly local conditions and our own history – our own repressive history. The Philippines was also selected as the site because it is a member of the ASEAN. This is the region, the only region in the world, which has collectively been most silent about the issue of East Timor.

Compared to the rest of the world, the AsiaPacific region, and in particular

Graphics this page: *Motivos Artísticos Timorenses e a sua Integração*  
by Ruy Cinatti, Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, Lisbon, 1987



And therefore the government should not be afraid that we would misrepresent its position with respect to its allies in Jakarta. They simply had to explain to Jakarta that our freedoms here in the Philippines were perhaps different from the freedoms enjoyed in Indonesia.

**And what was the reaction of the delegates when you told them there might be some possibility of banning and blacklisting?**

**RC:** No more than two or three communicated to us that they would not push through in spite of the fact they had already confirmed that they would come.

Bishop Deakin wrote a very short note which said, "the truth will be known, the truth will be told. Unfortunately," he wrote, "not yet in the Philippines." That was in itself a very short but succinct indictment of his perception of the freedoms in the Philippines. Contrary to his fears, we actually were able to tell the truth.

The other participants, on the other hand, having full knowledge of the possibilities, the liabilities, the implications of the ban, declared very clearly that in spite of all of this, they would be coming. They felt they were not covered by the ban because the ban referred to conspiratorial elements out to overthrow the Suharto regime.

They were referred to obliquely, and some perhaps directly, as international terrorists. People, for example, like Nobel laureate, Mairead Maguire. She said she would be coming, she would proceed to the Philippines. She would not lie as to the reasons for her coming, and if she would be sent back, so be it. That was her statement. That was going to be her contribution to the East Timorese cause. If by being turned back, it would help raise the issue in the international media, so be it. That was a very long trip. Eighteen hours to the Philippines just to be sent back after a couple of hours for another 18 hour trip.

Other people, for example, like Bishop Soma – after having read his name in the ban-list, he said, "What should I do? If the conference participants, both foreign and local, want me to come in spite of my being placed on the ban, I will come." He is already 80 years old. But his name was eventually taken off from the ban-list. He actually tried to board a Pakistan Airlines plane, but he was turned back because the efficiency of government showed very embarrassingly.

In addition to the ban-list, the government issued a circular to all airlines that they would be held liable if they allowed persons on the ban-list to board their

airlines. So while the name of Bishop Soma was stricken off the ban-list, they had failed to prepare a circular taking out his name. So he was turned away from Pakistan Airlines, from Northwest, and he finally managed to get to the Philippines via Cathay. So, Bishop Soma really wanted to come. He came and he lambasted Indonesia for its human rights violations and made other comments about the Philippine government as well.

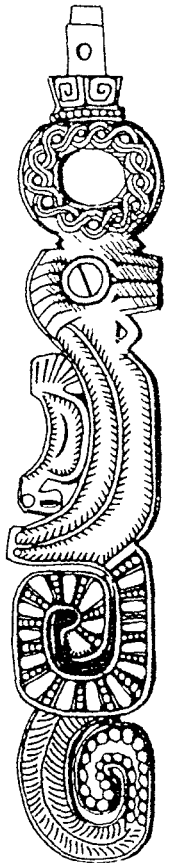
**How did the Timorese community take this initiative of Mr. Ramos' government?**

**RC:** Well of course the Timorese communities, from whatever party or organization they belong to, looked at this with extreme sadness, extreme disappointment, and their image of the Philippines was severely blemished to say the least. They had looked to the Philippines as a model worth emulating.

As a matter of fact, a personal message from Xanana Gusmao which was obviously written some time way before the conference, even thanked Mrs. Aquino and President Ramos for having allowed the conference to proceed. They felt that while they knew the government had no official part in the conference, they still acknowledged that the government would allow and would not hamper the activity from pushing through.

The Timorese of course were very much aware of the importance of the conference. And this could be gleaned from a very short letter... [which came] from, I think, twelve political detainees in East Timor – detainees from the time of the Dili massacre... they relayed to the conference the importance that they placed on such an event.

Also during the conference, some reports came to us, a clipping from *Jakarta Post*... [citing] a military report that there were three hundred "rebels", actually they were demonstrators, they were not "rebels" – that there were 300 troublemakers in Dili and about a dozen were arrested.



*Continued on Page 13 >*

# they are marrying our women and killing them, too

they are marrying our women  
and killing them, too.

- 1980. teresita andalis. drowned. life sentence for the husband.
- 1987. rowena sokol. gunshot wounds. husband released on parole  
after three years.
- 1988. bella elmore. pushed into the water by sailor husband,  
who is now in jail.
- 1989. generosa bongcodin. strangled by her estranged husband.  
the court ruled manslaughter, not murder.  
the sentence: only 5½ years in jail.

they are marrying our women  
and killing them, too.  
and they're getting away with it.

- 1989. mila dark. found dead near her home. husband acquitted  
after the only witness changed her testimony.
- 1989. teresita and normita garrett. convinced or perhaps forced by  
their husbands to join them in a quartet suicide.  
the husbands were brothers, and one of them had a severe illness.
- 1991. rosalina keir. strangled and burned. husband acquitted due to  
lack of evidence. his first wife, also a filipina,  
disappeared in 1988 and is still missing.

they are marrying our women  
and killing them, too.  
and they're getting away with it.

- 1993. mila wills. she is both deaf and mute.  
bashed on the head with a piece of wood.  
husband sentenced to life imprisonment.
- 1993. elizabeth mary haynes and yohana rodriguez,  
5 and 12 years old. daughters of sorosita.  
strangled and suffocated by their father.  
court ruled manslaughter instead of murder.
- 1994. elma rebecca young. found dead near her home.  
the accused husband is a senior police constable.
- nanette villani. found dead in her flat. unsolved.
- eve roweth. found dead at her workplace. unsolved.
- pia navida. found dead in a park. unsolved.

lusanta de groot. both she and her baby were bashed on the  
head with a hammer. the baby died. lusanta lives.  
the husband committed suicide.

- 16 women and 3 children dead.
- 3 men in prison for life.
- 3 men in prison for less than 10 years.
- 2 men acquitted.

they are marrying our women  
and killing them, too.  
and they're getting away with it.  
and they're getting away with it  
because we are women  
and because we are not white.

## Probe plea on killings



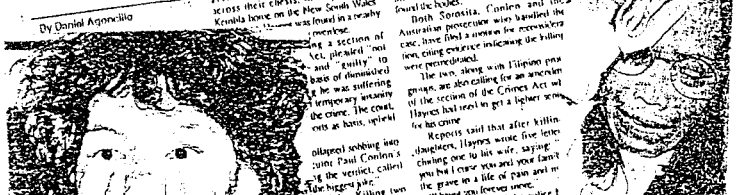
**Pinoy killings in Australia protested**

By Daniel Agoncillo  
Staffmember

FILIPINO groups in Australia are again up in arms over the murder of another compatriot, 42-year-old Elma Rebecca Young, who was reportedly...

## Push for an inquiry into Filipino deaths

### Killer of 2 Pinoy kids gets 6 years



By Daniel Agoncillo

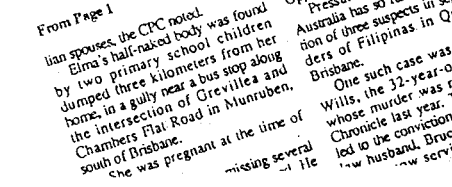
A 42-year-old man with a long history of mental illness was sentenced to six years in prison for the murder of two young Filipino children. The man, who was found guilty of the crime, had a long history of mental illness and was found guilty of the crime...

### Filipino brides call for more details of sponsors



Filipino brides and their families are demanding more information from their sponsors regarding the conditions of their migration to Australia. The brides are concerned about the safety and well-being of their families and the future of their lives in Australia...

### Filipino group protests killings of compatriots in Australia



From Page 1

lin spouses, the CPC noted. Elma's half-naked body was found by two primary school children dumped three kilometers from her home, in a gully near a bus stop along the intersection of Greiville and Chambers Flat Road in Murrumbidgee, south of Brisbane. She was pregnant at the time of her death and was missing several months of life.

26 july 1994

richie valencia-buenaventura

# ACTION

AFTER months of investigation and preliminary research on the need for a report into the circumstances surrounding the domestic homicide of Filipino women in Australia, the Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) has responded positively to the lobbying efforts of friends and relatives of the victims, community activists, and service providers.

The Commission's Research Officer would like to hear from you if you have any information at all that may inform this study whether you are from the welfare services, a community group, the church sector, a relative or friend. The deadline for submissions is Friday, 30th September 1994.

The Centre for Philippine Concerns–Australia (CPCA) has mobilised nationally for community input into this report. In May, CPCA's national coordinator, Melba Marginson, met with community groups and service providers in Brisbane and Mt. Isa who have direct contact with Filipinas in crisis situations. (See *Silent Screams* in KASAMA V8N3). The CPCA National Workshop *Stopping Violence Against Filipino Women in Australia: A Community and Government Responsibility*, to be held in Melbourne on Oct. 6&7 this year, is now a joint collaboration of the CPCA and the HREOC. Please quickly spread the request for information in the Commission's letter.

## HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS TO REPORT ON FILIPINO WOMEN IN AUSTRALIA

8th August 1994

*As you may be aware, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission is conducting research for a report which will examine the circumstances surrounding the domestic homicide of a number of Filipino women in Australia since 1980. The report will take into account a wide range of social, economic and cultural factors that impact on Filipino women in Australia. It is anticipated that the Report's findings will be released in January 1995.*

*The Report will focus on a number of issues including:*

- *the existence and use of services by Filipino women in domestic violence situations;*
- *the adequacy of legal provisions for protecting Filipino women against domestic violence;*
- *Filipino women and access and equal treatment before the law;*
- *resettlement issues for Filipino women and social, economic and cultural factors that impact on resettlement experiences;*
- *immigration issues impacting on Filipino women (including sponsorship).*

*Submissions or comments are due by Friday, 30th September 1994 and should be presented in the form of a written submission or brief statement.*

*If you have any queries please contact Jacqueline Bessa, Policy/Research Officer on (02) 229 7600.*

*Submissions can be faxed to the Commission on (02) 229 7611 or posted to: Race Discrimination Unit, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, GPO Box 5218, Sydney 2001*

## **National Conference — Thurs/Fri. 6&7, October 1994**

### **Stopping Violence Against Filipino Women in Australia: A Community and Government Responsibility** **Federated Teachers Union of Australia (FTUV) Building, 112 Trenerry Crescent, Abbotsford, Vic.**

A number of practices are associated with violence against Filipino women in Australia, including the so-called 'mail-order bride' industry and Australian sex tours to the Philippines. There are also related issues which need to be assessed if we are going to address the issue of violence against Filipino women. In particular, we need to look at the adequacy of community services, the role of the media in shaping images about Filipino women, how Filipino women are treated by the criminal justice system, immigration policies, and community attitudes to Filipino women. These issues need the attention of the community, government organisations and non-government service providers. It is hoped that this joint forum will help facilitate discussion and develop strategies to improve Filipino women's welfare in Australia.

#### **The Conference aims to:**

1. Draw up a comprehensive set of recommendations for both Government and Community to implement;
2. Identify major and secondary causes of violence, forms of violence, and agencies that need to work together to prevent violence;
3. Provide a venue for Filipino women to raise their concerns and suggest better ways of handling their issues;
4. Provide a venue for Australian women and men who have been supporting Filipino women through their work (paid or unpaid) to relate their strategies — what worked, didn't work and needed improvement;
5. Give Government representatives the experience of dialoguing with Filipino women, and working closely with them to finally address the issues of violence against Filipino women in a comprehensive way;
6. Form a national Filipina network that will monitor implementation of the strategies arrived at in the workshops, link with mainstream agencies and organisations and act as a national lobby group for Filipino women.

For further information, contact the project coordinator, Melba Marginson by phone (03) 329 9042, or by fax (03) 326 7140. Registration forms will be available in early September.

**A National Conference funded by the Office of the Status of Women under the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet jointly convened by the Centre for Philippine Concerns-Australia and the Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission**

# Trends News & Tidbits



## NEWSPEAK WITH CONFESSOR

ON January 24, 1994 members of MIGRANTE-APME Philippine Committee met for a dialogue with Philippine DOLE (Department of Labor & Employment) Sec. Nieves Confessor and her labor attaches for different countries. The discussion was an exchange of information on the situation of Filipino OCWs (overseas contract workers) viz-a-viz government services.

Sec. Confessor reiterated the need for GO-NGO partnership in view of the increasing problems of overseas employment. MIGRANTE members, however, argued against the idea. They remarked their inability to enter into a partnership with GOs since the latter has a recruitment arm which is the POEA (Philippines Overseas Employment Agency). On the other hand, NGOs are more concerned with arresting the problems caused by the government's overseas employment program (OEP).

One method boasted by Sec. Confessor is the raising of the age requirement of Filipinas planning to travel or work abroad. In addition, the DOLE will also ensure that Filipino women applying for jobs abroad will be fluent in English. Sec. Confessor said the incapacity of Filipino women to speak English makes them vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse. MIGRANTE-

APME countered that these actions are directed against the victims and not the recruitment agencies. They urged the DOLE to control the recruiters more rather than the Filipino OCWs.

The group, joined in by Kanlungan staff, also questioned the efficiency of government offices on job-sites in protecting and promoting the welfare and interest of FOCWs. Sec. Confessor asked the group to given her another three months to facilitate action on the cases brought to her attention. (adel)

Sec. Confessor stressed the difference between *stop gap* and *temporary measure* in relation to the government's OEP. She said that the government committed a mistake in viewing the program as a stop-gap approach to economic recovery. As indeed the country is still in the throes of economic crisis. But they hope to avoid the mistakes of the past, as they have now recognized the overseas employment program as a temporary measure.

*Stop-Gap. Temporary.* What's the difference? The words can be used interchangeably according to Roget's Thesaurus. More so, the OEP has been a fixture among the non-traditional exports for some 20 years now. (gina)

## JUSTICE FOR VICTORIA SULLER!

AN estimated 200 people massed up at Plaza Miranda and marched to Don Chino Roces (formerly Mendiola) Bridge last March 4, 1994 and demanded government's attention to give justice to the case of its civil servant, Ma. Victoria Suller.

Ma. Victoria Suller, 34, went to India to undergo on-the-job training on radiation and pharmaceutical products under the sponsorship of the International Atomic Energy Agency. She was found dead on a grassy lot on 19 Nov 1993. Indian authorities declared Suller was suffering from schizophrenia and jumped to her death from the 12th floor of her apartment.

Her family, whose members come from the medical and legal professions and are prominent in their respective fields of expertise, highly doubts these findings. Victoria Suller's brother, Dr. Hilarion "Jun" Suller Jr, a dentist, insists his sister had been robbed and raped before being thrown off the lodging house.

During the rally, Jun Suller lambasted the Ramos government for its inability to protect Filipino workers abroad. The DFA (Dept of Foreign Affairs), meanwhile, has been cautious in straining relationships with India.

The rally, spearheaded by the Concerned Citizens Against Violence and GABRIELA, dispersed after holding a short program. (dennis)

Cartoon by A. Umali and articles on this page are reprinted from the Jan-Mar 1994 issue of *TNT* the newsletter of Kanlungan Center Foundation Inc. (Center for Migrant Workers), 77 K-10th cor. K-J Sts., Kamias, Quezon City, Philippines. Tel. 921-7849.



Photo: TABAK - From the cover of *Tibalyaw* Dec. 1993  
*A continuing struggle. Lumad Elders celebrate the D'yandi April 14, 1992 at the peak of Mt. Apo.*



## THE WORLD, FINALLY, OUR STAGE

**Yul Caringas, Secretary General, Kalipunan ng mga Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas (KAMP)**

THE past decade marked significant developments concerning the indigenous peoples worldwide. In 1982 the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations (UNWGIP), a subsidiary organ of the Sub-Commission on the Prevention and Discrimination and Protection of Minority Rights was established by the United Nations. The UNWGIP is mandated to review national developments pertaining to the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples, and to develop international standards concerning Indigenous Peoples.

In June 1989, the International Labor Organization (ILO) adopted ILO Convention No. 169 concerning the rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (if passed as a resolution of the General Assembly) will be two international legal instruments complementing each other. The Declaration constitutes a recommendation to member states (read: non-binding) while the ILO Convention creates international legal commitments binding states formally ratifying the text.

KAMP, in its commitment to contribute in the drafting of the draft Declaration of Indigenous Peoples Rights, regularly sent delegates to the past annual sessions of the Working Group.

At the UNWGIP's 11th Session in July this year, the Working Group concluded the drafting of the Declaration pursuant to the call of the UN World Conference on Human Rights (June 1993) otherwise known as the Vienna Declaration, to complete the draft declaration. However, the debate was grossly stunted by disagreements between government representatives and indigenous delegates over the inclusion of clauses pertaining to the Indigenous Peoples Right to Self-Determination, and the provision to prohibit the use of indigenous territories for military purposes. For now we can only wait and see what will transpire once deliberations reach the General Assembly.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 15 ➤**

## LEO DE CASTRO: Workers-Churchpeoples Conference

WARMEST greetings to all of you.

This is a wonderful opportunity being here to share with you the story our peoples' struggle in the Philippines. Being a first timer in Australia makes me feel very excited despite the culture shock I had to contend with during my early days in the city of Brisbane.

I arrived on July 20 for a four-week lecture tour organised by Brother Paul Wilson, CFC of the Centre for Justice and Spirituality (CJS). On the 18th of August I am bound for Sydney to spend a couple of days before I return to Manila.

Bro. Paul and I met in August of last year during the International Forum of Religious for Global Solidarity held in the Philippines. This forum was an international gathering of church-based people representing the continents of Asia, Africa, Europe, areas in the Pacific, North and Latin America. As an objective, particular attention was given to the global trends and challenges to religious in the justice ministry. And to concretise this objective is one of the reasons why I am here in Australia – to meet and share with those who are involved in the promotion of justice and peace issues.

Back in my home country, I am both a student and a worker. As a student working towards a degree in Sociology, I am currently preparing a thesis on working class consciousness in relation to social transformation. As a worker, I am presently the executive secretary of the WCC (Workers-Churchpeoples Conference), a national body which convenes the different labor centres, organisations and church institutes and associations involved in social justice-labor apostolate.

The WCC compared to other church groups, is a relatively recent initiative. It was only in 1992 when the AMRSP (Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines) together with its mission partner, the Urban Missionaries, gathered organisational strength

and set-up the WCC. Though only two years in existence, WCC has become a credible body that can speak on behalf of the Filipino workers. It has confronted many issues affecting the general public and has challenged government authorities to lean towards pro-people and pro-labor policies.

The WCC has been involved with the recent controversial issue of the Expanded Value Added Tax (EVAT) passed by the Philippine Senate without consultation with the people. The EVAT like many other economic schemes before it, was designed by the IMF-WB duo and was right away accepted by our government in exchange for a new loan package amounting to US\$684 million. With P49.8 billion budgetary deficit, the government resumed to ram EVAT down to our throats despite the unconstitutionality of this tax measure and the tremendous effect it could bring to the already suffering poor, of which our country has many.

Eighty per cent of the total population of the Philippines is living in downright poverty. And as if adding insult to injury, the government is not doing anything about the workers' low income that can hardly sustain their families. An average worker in Metro Manila receives a daily minimum wage of P135 while his counterpart outside Metro Manila receives even less. The disparity in income between workers themselves is infuriating. Are not the stomachs of Metro Manila workers no different from those who work outside the city?

Multi-national corporations operating in our country earn huge profits by taking advantage of the cheap labor trend in the Philippines. To further encourage the increase of foreign investors, our government continues to establish industrial zones that promise investors a strike and union-free policy. Such insensi-

tivity to the plight of the workers, such inhumanity to the dislocated families who used to live in those areas! What we see in my country is the wobbly-knee stance of those in authority against the exploitation of its own people by those who have the capital. It is for this reason that a great amount of work has to be done in the name of solidarity, genuine development and peoples' empowerment.

Through the Centre for Justice and Spirituality, I have been introduced to various Christian Brothers' schools around Brisbane to conduct lectures. I have been sharing with the young people my story, the story of the Philippines, and the situation of the poor in our country. Like many over-exploited Third World countries, poverty is not our own choice. I am encouraging young people, as well as the old ones, to develop a critical attitude to what is happening around us in this global village in which we live.

On the Philippines debt problem – our government has allotted 40 percent of the 1994 national budget to service our foreign debt at the insistence of the creditors and, of course, with the blessing of Mr. Fidel Ramos.

Frustrating as it already is, the military still eats up a big portion of the budget leaving little to basic

Graphic: IBON Facts & Figures  
Vol.17 No.9, 15 May 1994.





**THANK YOU** to the SPAN (Solidarity Philippines-Australia Network) groups and individuals for your facilitation and input to Leo De Castro's speaking tour in S.E. Queensland. This text is from his dialogue on August 9 with staff of St. Edmund's College, Ipswich. The UM strike report is from the material Leo has left for us. **THANK YOU LEO.**

social services, health, housing and education. Indeed, this betrays the interests and aspirations of the Filipino people. So long as the economy remains under the control and guidance of powerful international finance institutions, no genuine development can ever occur in the Philippines. With the exception of the few very rich individuals and families, the rest of the Filipino people will sink deeper into poverty.

The Bretton Woods Conference which gave birth to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank marked its 50th anniversary last July 7. In the Philippines, a campaign called BAKLAS IMF has been launched to further expose the evils of the IMF's structural adjustment programs laid on the shoulders of the people of poor and exploited countries.

The people of the Third World are crying out: **ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!** The torments are unbearable and we do not deserve it. Our struggle continues and we hope you are on our side.

A pleasant day to all of you and thank you very much!

Mabuhay kayo!

**Leo P. De Castro,**  
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214 N. Domingo  
St., 1111 Quezon  
City, Philippines.



## ORIENTAL TIN CAN STRIKE DISPERSAL

### 3 WORKERS MERCILESSLY SHOT

ON June 23 this year at around 6:45 in the evening amidst heavy rains brought by typhoon "Gading", three striking workers were shot while one unidentified by-stander was also wounded. Eyewitnesses point to Ramon Chua, the owner of the Oriental Tin Can factory located at Gen. Luis, Novaliches, as the gunman. The factory owner allegedly fired his .45 caliber gun while the factory's security guards were conducting dispersals of the picketing workers. The victims are: Robert Estrada, 25 yrs. old, who is in a critical condition with gunshot wounds to his spinal cord; Ronilo Berenguel, 30 yrs., married with two children; and Hipolito Apolinar, also 30, married with two children.

The incident of violence started when the group of strikers picketing at the factory gate tried to stop the company's van so they could see who was inside. Suddenly, the owner with ten guards got out and lobbed tear gas at the striking workers while dispersing them. When the struggling workers tried to hold their ground, the factory owner fired at the workers hitting three in their backs. They fell in the midst of heavy rains. "Para kaming mga ibon at mga baboy na pinagbabaril ng may-ari, mistulang mga hayup ang turing sa amin," (We are like birds and pigs being shot by the owner, worst of all we are considered as animals,) expressed one worker who witnessed the entire incident.

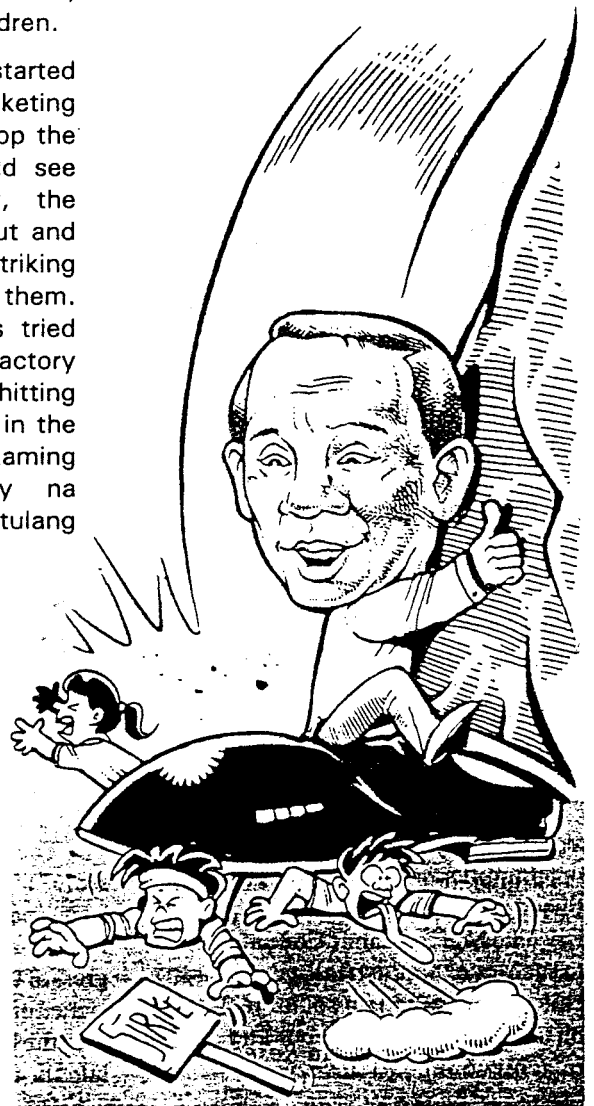
The Oriental Tin Can Workers Union-FFW, a newly affiliated local union of the Federation of Free Workers (FFW), went on strike last June 19, 1994 due to unfair labor practices committed by the management. The factory

has a 1,020 working force including some 200 contractuels. The majority of the regular workers joined the union and supported the strike thereby paralyzing factory operations.

Union officers fighting for justice for the three victims said they are determined to file a criminal case against the owner. The union, as in most cases, is severely limited by lack of funds. They are seeking any form of support to pursue their case.

**From: Urban Missionaries Trade Union Repression Factsheet, June 28, 1994.**

**Contact: Urban Missionaries Foundation Inc., 70 Main Horseshoe Drive, Quezon City 1112, Philippines.**



# MANANG BETTY, UREA & Malaysia

"KUNNAK no pagsayaatan ti ipappan ko idia, sabali met gayam!" (*I thought I went there for the better, it was different!*)

Manang Betty takes a spoonful of her own cooking after rendering a faraway look. It was a cold December night and we were sitting around the CWERC dining table. This was the second time she tells us about her Malaysian experience... a story of the quest for greener pastures, backdoor adventures and what UREA can do to a hardworking body.

Malaysia is one of the top five exporters of palm oil. To meet foreign demand, some areas of Malaysia are designated as oil palm plantations. Labor is lacking so plantation managers look to the Philippines and other nearby countries for sources.

"Kaasi ya nga agpaypayso iti inosente!" (*The innocent are really pitiful!*) Manang Betty looks at us dolefully while narrating how she reached Malaysia. She met a certain Jose de Guzman who talked of big money in Malaysia. After paying P10,000 manang Betty, along with other companions were then brought to Zamboanga by ship and then reached Tawi-Tawi, they were ferried to Sabah, Malaysia via a speedboat. During the trip, the waves were gigantic on a cold night, manang Betty remembers.

Before they embarked on their journey, they proudly held onto their passports. These were never inspected, however. It was during this first trip that manang Betty heard about arriving in Sabah through the backdoor (illegal entry). Because it was her first time to go out of the country, she didn't know what it meant.

After a month, her employer requested her to return to the Philippines to recruit more of her companions. Liking the conditions in the plantation, manang Betty arrived a month later with eight companions, all her relatives.

For fifteen days, they were brought to oil palm plantations to apply UREA. They were paid by the number of UREA bags they applied. (Ten ringgits per UREA bag applied. This is equivalent to P100/bag or about US\$4.) All day they toiled, carrying the sack of UREA on their shoulders. A hole was drilled on the sack's end, enabling UREA to flow downwards when they ran from one end of the field to the other.

After a hard day, manang Betty would feel clammy all over. She would salivate and itch. It would hurt to remove her pants and jacket. It was relieving therefore when the fifteen days of hard work were over. For the next 15 days, they were allowed to rest.

But they cannot get out of the plantation's premises. Three of her companions went out once to dance the night away in a nearby city. Authorities caught them and sent them to jail. It was upon hearing the incident that manang Betty realized what "backdoor" meant.

For the next ten months, manang Betty to-and-froed the palmfields. If the 1990 earthquake did not happen, perhaps she's still in Malaysia with a bag of UREA on her shoulder.

They were transferred from one palm oil plantation to another as plantations were inspected regularly. While in another plantation, manang Betty and her companions heard about the earthquake. With concern written all over their faces and fear in their hearts, they were allowed to go home.

It was with great relief to find her family alive and well. But they welcomed her with pity, as she looked emaciated and gaunt. "Agruprupa ka nga skeleton!" (*You look like a skeleton*), her husband chided.



For the next seven months, she had chills. She developed rashes especially in her upper and lower extremities. These were extremely itchy and at times she couldn't help crying. She lost her appetite and there was a time when she looked and felt like a "singkamas" (a Filipino lowland turnip whose skin peels off when ripe). Most parts of her body peeled-off, turned white, and most of her hair fell out.

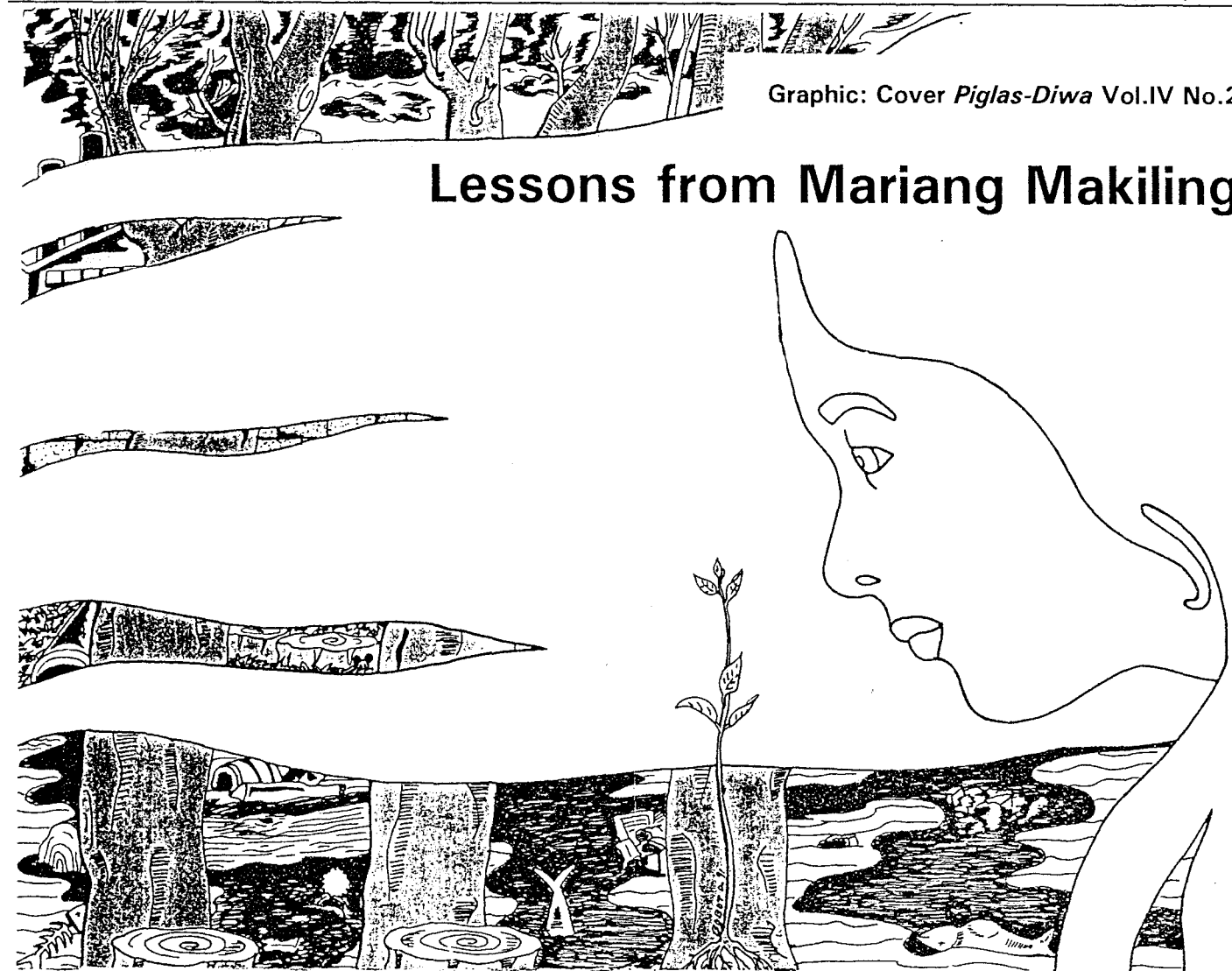
She had to see an eye doctor because she developed a blurry vision. "Tatta napigpigs pay iti panagkita ni nanang ko no siyak. Isuna ag-abel nga awan iti anchokos na, siyak na-anchokosanen!"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12 ➤

Photo: Manang Betty (CWERC)

Graphic: Cover *Piglas-Diwa* Vol.IV No.2

## Lessons from Mariang Makiling



THERE is an old, familiar story about the value of regenerating nature. A *diwata* (female spirit), Mariang Makiling, was supposed to inhabit and guard Mt. Makiling in Los Baños, Laguna. The story runs this way:

There once dwelt in a mountain cave a spirit who was a source of all gifts for the people. In spiritual celebrations when they needed food, jewels, clothes - all they had to do was go to the mountain and petition the spirit for help, and without fail, they were provided with (or loaned) what they needed. The time came, however, when people became heedless and ungrateful: they did not return the things they borrowed, desecrated the spirit's abode or violated certain interdictions (such as cutting down the trees on the mountain, not returning things borrowed, reneging on a promise). As this came to pass, the spirit disappeared from the mountain, leaving man to his own puny devices. (Resil B. Mojares. *Waiting for Mariang Makiling: History and Folklore*, *Kultura* Vol.2 No.4, 1989).

Mariang Makiling is Mother Nature, the source of life and the embodiment of the feminine principle. She possessed the power of regeneration, and was regarded as sacred by the people.

Her generosity was boundless - one variant of the tale associates her with peace, calm and order in society: "Her favourite time for appearing, it is said, was after a storm. Then she would be seen scurrying over the fields, and wherever she passed, life, order, calm were renewed, the trees again straightened up, then overthrown trunks and all traces of the unchained elements were wiped away." (*ibid.*)

The pre-Hispanic Filipinos, as do the existing tribes, believed in animism. All of nature had spirits, and had the capacity to influence persons or events. *Bibios*, *tributos*, and other spirits inhabited trees, rocks, boulders, cliffs, and streams; they caused fortune or sickness, or stole person's souls.

Nature was seen as source of all nurturance. Her gifts were valued and used with care. The development of tribes was measured in terms of their capacity to merge with nature's rhythms and patterns in all aspects of life.

There was therefore, an ecological civilization which harmonized with nature in the most fundamental way. But now, with the forests destroyed and the animals gone, the people are in want. Mariang

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## Lessons From Mariang Makiling

◀Continued from Page 11

Makiling has abandoned the mountains and the people, because they would not heed her.

The lesson of Mariang Makiling is the lesson of the feminine principle. Patriarchy has resulted to the loss of interconnectedness between people and nature. Its emphasis on domination and subjugation, on using nature and women as resources has led to maldevelopment.

The disastrous consequences of "development" urges us to re-think its structures and assumptions. Gender-blind development has led to disastrous effects on the lives of the majority, despite circumstances on the part of women. The loss of access to natural resources has increased the marginalization of women, and the displacement of traditional agricultural knowledge which is ecologically sound.

It is clear that survival is directly dependent on an ecologically-balanced environment. Women's agricultural methods, practiced over the centuries, adapt to the environment and sustain human survival. They are not "unproductive", as modern, yet destructive agriculture, claims. Women's traditional knowledge of ecologically-sound agriculture can be gleaned from indigenous practice.

Therefore, if development is to be sustained, the starting point for actions must be women's needs and desires, as well as the responsibilities they face. In national environment management, women must be given back their rightful place: as managers, not as users.

**By Elizabeth Angosta-Cruzada**

(Edited extract from *Women and Environment*, *Piglas-Diwa* Vol.IV No.2, Center for Women's Resources, Quezon City.)

## MANANG BETTY, UREA & MALAYSIA

◀Continued from Page 10

*(Now, my mother has better eyesight than I do. She doesn't use eyeglasses while I do when weaving!)*

Elders said she had to butcher this number and kind of animals to bring back her spirit from Malaysia. They opined that the reason why she felt ill was because she left her spirit there. Rituals were then necessary. Her P10,000 savings from Malaysia was thus spent on medical check-ups, medicines, and rituals.

Today, manang Betty takes care of CWERC staff through good cooking. During certain cold nights, when CWERC people huddle to keep warm, we get to see, hear and feel Malaysia oil palm plantations.

The Malaysia economy is reaping millions of dollars from these plantations. To manang Betty and a

number of plantation laborers, it is a UREA experience where money becomes comparatively insignificant.

Reprinted from *CHANEG* Jul-Dec 93, published by CWERC, 16 Loro St., Dizon Subd., 2600 Baguio City, Philippines.



# CONCERN

## DISASTER APPEAL

FIVE successive strong typhoons have undermined rehabilitation efforts in disaster-torn Central Luzon.

This July, 504 villages in 41 towns in Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Tarlac, and Zambales were inundated by 2-6 feet floodwaters. Strong rains and winds spawned by these weather disturbances triggered a new series of ash explosions and lahar avalanches in nine major river channels that claimed low-lying communities and wrecked P11.4 million worth of substandard flood-control facilities and other infrastructures.

In this swath of destruction, a mild tornado swept Plaridel in Bulacan and an earthquake shook areas around Mt. Pinatubo. Under scepters of fear, several thousands of families sought refuge in schools. As 246 homes were buried in volcanic materials, the death toll reached 13. The effect upon agriculture has yet to be established.

Your assistance, in whatever form and degree, can go a long way to relieve suffering. CONCERN's mechanisms for appropriate disaster response are established through the Central Luzon Disaster Response Network and grassroots disaster response machineries in high-risk communities.

**PLEASE RESPOND TO: CONCERN, Diamond St., Gemsville Subd., San Fernando, Pampanga 2000, Philippines. Tel: (045) 961-46-63. US\$ A/c No. 69-92-116, Metrobank, San Fernando, Pampanga Branch.**



Graphic: Citizens Disaster Response Center

## Manila Conference: Interview

◀Continued from Page 3

We gathered from other reports faxed to us that this was actually a demonstration by the Timorese people in Dili to precede by one or two days, the conference. This was their way of showing their acknowledgment and their solidarity with the conference, by putting themselves at risk - they demonstrated in Dili. If the military said there were three hundred of them, there must have been more. Unfortunately the report that came to us also indicated that at least one demonstrator was killed, bayoneted in the head.

There was also a youth leader, Antonio Nieves, I think, who was captured in Jakarta for trying to fax to us a message from the Timorese. It may have been the same message from Xanana. But he was arrested. I think he was meted five years for trying to fax a message of solidarity. The Timorese—it's very clear to them that this conference was very important.

One of the other objectives of the conference was to bring back East Timor to where it belongs - to south-east Asia. East Timor is closer to Portugal, the Philippines is closer to the United States, and Indonesia is closer to Holland, than we are to each other. But because of this conference, we have placed East Timor back on the map, not only regionally but internationally. We have also placed on the map both Jakarta and Manila in regard to, not only the East Timorese issue but also, our own democratic processes as well.

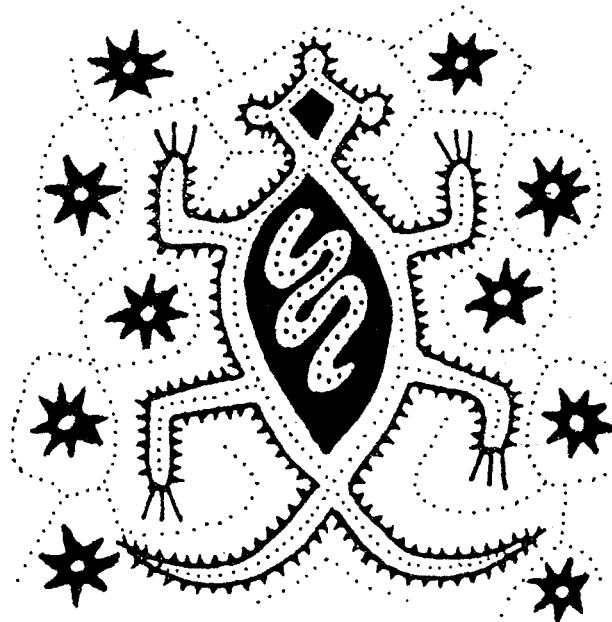
And so, from simply trying to hold an Asia-Pacific conference on East Timor - the very same people, the very same objectives of President Suharto and his governor-general in Manila, General Ramos, their objectives of stopping the conference and continuing this conspiracy of silence - they have in effect achieved the very opposite. East Timor is back on the map, the issue is back in the minds and the hearts of people, not only in the Philippines but all over the world as well.

***After the attempt of Ramos and Suharto's government to stop the conference, how many foreign participants actually went to the Philippines?***

**RC:** We had expected about a hundred foreign participants. Before the conference actually started, before the whole ban scandal erupted in the media, there were 76 foreign participants who had already sent in their registration forms from at least 26 countries. By the time the ban order was issued about 20 of them were already in the country.

In the final tally there were roughly about 51 or 52 foreign participants who were either turned back at the airport or were placed on the ban-list. However, in spite of that, there were about 54 foreign participants in the conference.

Graphic: *Motivos Artísticos Timorenses e a sua Integração* by Ruy Cinatti, Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, Lisbon, 1987



***So, how do you assess the conference with all the attempts to stop it?***

**RC:** The conference was held successfully. The participation was very well attended. Our halls were always jam-packed, we had more observers than we expected. We of course were not able to attain fully some conference objectives, such as bringing in the Timorese of various persuasions, because there were actually only three Timorese who arrived, only two of which were invited.

The third one was actually not on the invitation list but he registered before hand because he received a copy of a registration form and he sent it to us. In spite of the fact that he was not on the invitation list, we allowed him to participate. He was also on a fax message sent to me by General Almonte.

General Almonte, on May 9, faxed to me a copy of a fax he'd received from Under Secretary Rodolfo Severino of the DFA [Dept. of Foreign Affairs] which indicated that he had received from a high Indonesian official, through third parties and rather circuitous channels, a list of names from "the other side", meaning the Indonesians, for possible invitation to the conference. They listed four names: the names of Paulino Gama, Zafiro Rodiamaral, Jose Martins, and Abilio Araujo. I declared immediately to Almonte that this message from him without addresses confirmed the openness... that I would invite any Indonesian official, or any Indonesian NGO, or any Indonesian individual, or any Timorese that the Indonesians would suggest, or the Philippine government would suggest for invitation. I said, "I know the fellow [Abilio Araujo], I even know his address. We have communicated with him. He has in fact communicated back to us, he even

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## Manila Conference: Interview

◀Continued from Page 13

suggested some change in the format of the program which we acceded to and he has already registered with the conference." The first name, that of Paulino Gama, I had not recognised but, when I went back to my office I found out that he had already registered. So this confirms the idea or the intention of the conference to invite all Timorese of all persuasions. This gives the lie to the accusation that we would only be inviting persons with one perspective which would be against Indonesia.

*You had a meeting with an Indonesian diplomat. How was your meeting with him?*

**RC:** It was an extended lunch meeting, it lasted more than three hours. The meeting was, I would say, cordial, friendly, but of course we did not manage to convince each other of our respective positions. But I think it was very clear what Indonesia wanted, which was to stop the conference. But it was also made very clear to them that we would not stop the conference. The Indonesian official of course was naturally saddened that they could not put a stop to the conference. As a parting shot, I even indicated to this Indonesian Embassy official to please relay to their boss, Minister Ali Alatas that their friends in high government positions in the Philippines tried to accommodate Indonesian wishes. Unfortunately, I am not a member of government, and government has no control over private activities, and therefore the conference would push through as planned. And that was how we parted.

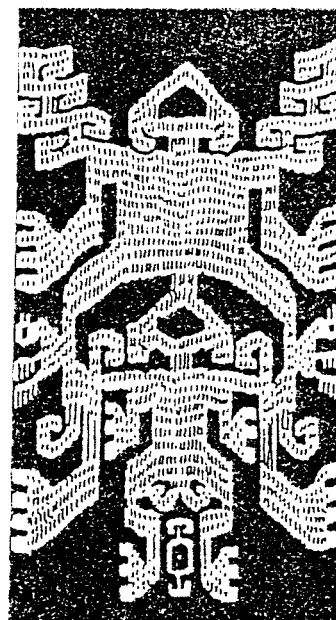
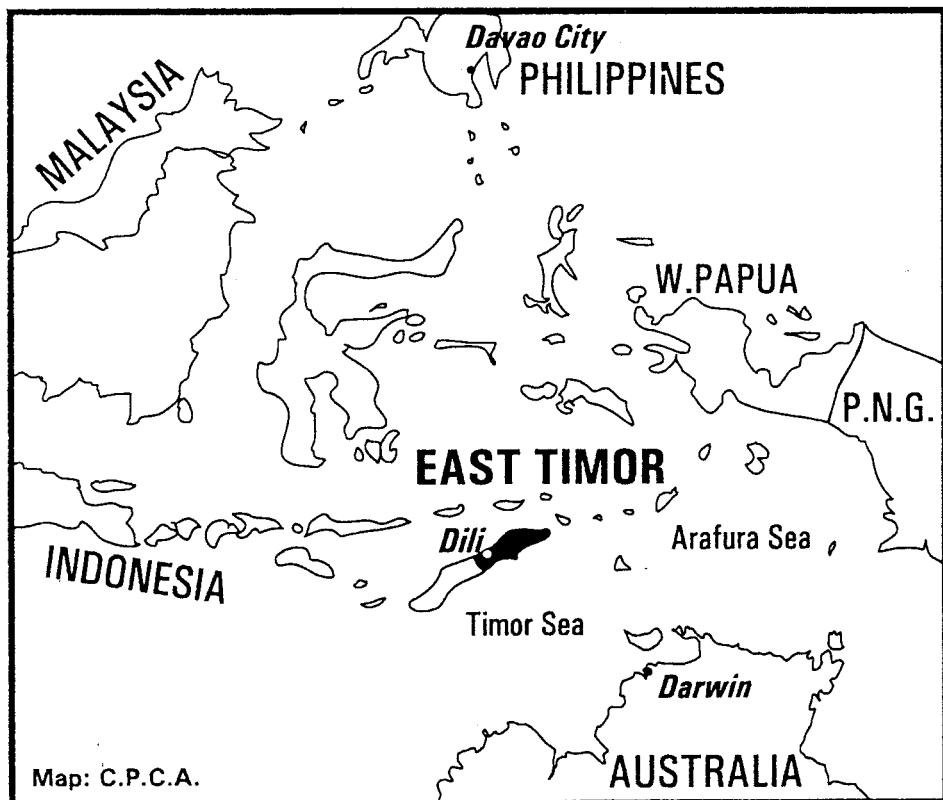
*What were the resolutions after the conference?*

**RC:** The major resolution of the conference was to transform APCET, the Asia Pacific Conference on East Timor, into APCET, the Asia Pacific Coalition for East Timor. We set up an ad hoc group that is supposed to meet after six months, the main job of which is to inventory the respective Timorese solidarity groups in our different countries in the region, to disseminate the conference papers which are still being finalized right now.

We transformed ourselves into a coalition, so APCET now is a regional coordinative body. We expect to be able to coordinate activities within the region concerning matters about the issue surrounding East Timor. I am sure, and the other conference participants were also certain, that in addition to the already existing Timorese solidarity groups, there would either be an expansion of existing groups or the formation of new groups... all over the world, not only in the region. In the Philippines alone, we set up a national solidarity group, Philippine Solidarity for East Timor and Indonesia - so, two in one.

I've been receiving a number of invitations to meet with different groups, both academic as well as civic, to discuss, explain and share matters concerning the conference and East Timor in particular. I am sure that after we have shared matters, these groups will contribute, either formally or informally, officially or unofficially, by becoming members or contributors to the cause of the East Timorese for self-determination. I have already received a number of offers from some civic groups for us to simply let them know how they can help either in reproducing materials or contributing materially to set up solidarity groups.

*Thank you R. C. Constantino for your time.*



Graphic: *New Internationalist*, March 1994  
The crocodile as portrayed in a traditional Timorese design



## The world, finally, our stage

◀ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Government representatives see the provision on the Indigenous Peoples Right to Self-Determination as a threat to national sovereignty in the same vein that the states' military activities in indigenous territories are vital for national security and the protection of its citizenry. Indigenous representatives view these provisions as prerequisites for their full development and its recognition will contribute to the building of truly democratic and "pluralist states". Instead of viewing this negatively as a threat that will lead to the breaking of the states into fragmented self-governing territories, this should be taken positively as a means to strengthen national solidarity amidst cultural diversity.

The ILO Convention No. 169 is also clouded by the reservations of indigenous peoples. It is our general feeling that the instrument is biased in favor of the current ruling governments and does not recognize our right to self-determination. At present, there are only five State signatories to this Convention. The Philippine Senate has already filed a Bill to ratify this Convention. Indigenous Peoples also feel strongly against the document because we were excluded in the process of debate and adoption.

The 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development also saw the integration of indigenous peoples rights (see Chapter 26 of Agenda 21) to be allowed to actively participate in the shaping of national laws and policies on the management of resources or other development processes that affect us. The Summit called on governments to recognize that indigenous lands need to be protected from environmentally unsound activities, and from activities the indigenous peoples consider to be socially and culturally inappropriate.

It is also important to note that the Vienna Declaration during the UN World Conference on Human Rights adopted a recommendation for the proclamation of an International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (note: it is in the singular form rather than peoples, in the plural form) and the establishment of a permanent forum for Indigenous Peoples within the United Nations' system. The United Nations officially declared the start of the International Decade of Indigenous People last Dec. 10, 1993.

The preambular paragraph of the draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples also states: *"Welcoming the fact that indigenous peoples are organizing themselves in order to bring an end to all forms of discrimination and oppression wherever they occur."*

Yes. All of the above signify that indigenous peoples have slowly gained international recognition in their struggle for justice and equality. A recognition of their right to life, dignity, and to retain their identity as distinct peoples.

Yet, the Philippine indigenous peoples are now facing a monstrous foe and a tragic future should the present government pursue its present economic and development policies and programs.

The Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP) which envisions the Philippines to join the ranks of newly-industrialized countries in the Year 2000 is entirely contradictory to the principles set forth in the aforementioned international declarations and legal instruments. For what does the MTDP provide? It is a sell-out of the Philippines' natural resources to greater control and exploitation of multinational and trans-national corporations.

The government is also pursuing its "total war" policy to protect the interests of those corporations.

The government is bent on the reintegration of the indigenous peoples into the mainstream society as part of the MTDP. This is ignorance of the important role of the indigenous peoples in their own development. It has been generally admitted that assimilationist and integrationist policies aimed at bringing the indigenous peoples into the mainstream of the population is counter-productive.

KAMP and its member organizations hold fora, conferences, study tours and other awareness building programs as part of its regular programs. We therefore ask you to write us if you feel interested to know more about the situation of the indigenous peoples and be part of our struggle.

**KAMP, Rm. 701  
Web-jet Bldg.,  
64 Quezon Ave.  
cor. BMA St.,  
Quezon City,  
Philippines.**

**phone: 712-09-51  
local extn.14**

**telefax: (632) 922-00-33**

Reprinted from  
*Tibalyaw*,  
December 1993.



To convince the people in the Philippines to march along towards a state of Newly Industrializing Country (NIC), the government launched PHILIPPINES 2000, a dream of plenty (for the planners) and the MTPDP (Medium Term Development Plan of the Philippines) is the road towards it. To realise this dream, sacrifices have to be made. Paying more taxes is one, so the government would have more money to pay its debts. It is one of the same family as the SAP (Structural Adjustment Program) which the IMF imposes before approving a loan.

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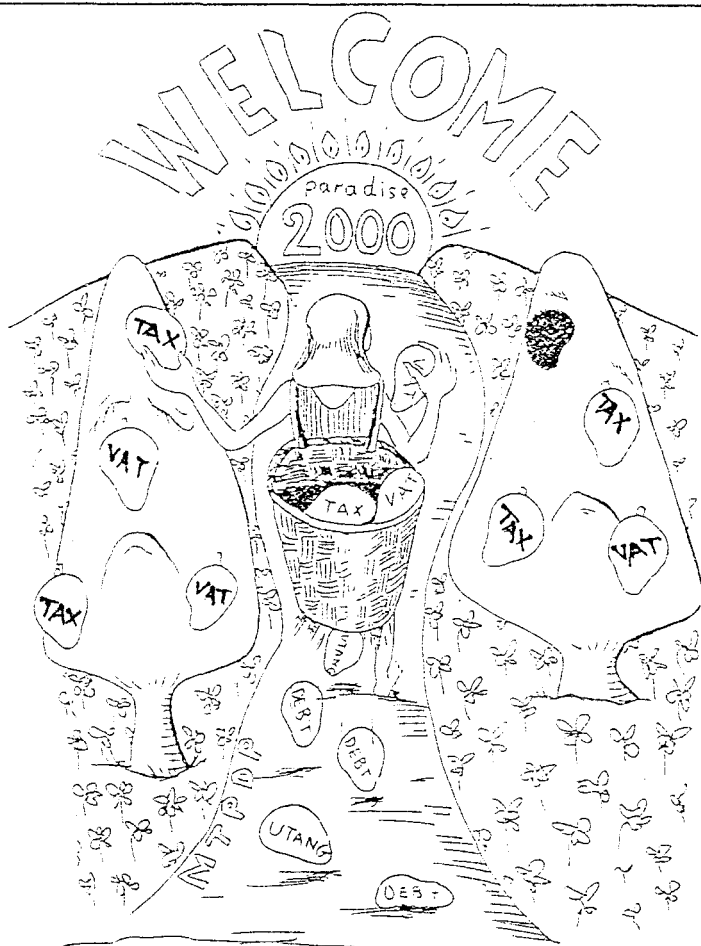
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We hold regular monthly meetings in Brisbane
- ☒ Cash donations for solidarity work are always greatly appreciated. Please let us know if you wish to contribute to a specific project.
- ☒ Contact us if you would like to know about organised exposures with non-government peoples' organisations in the Philippines.
- ☒ Would you just like to know more about P.A.S.G. QLD.? Please let us send you a copy of our Aims and Constitution.

### WRITE TO:

The P.A.S.G. Co-ordinator, PO Box 174, St. Lucia Qld. 4067  
or PHONE: (07) 891 5877 or FAX 24 hrs: (07) 891 6944

**Philippines Australia Solidarity Group Queensland** welcomes membership of individuals who support the struggle of the Filipino peoples for independence, freedom and democracy. Members/subscribers are of diverse background including Filipinos and non-Filipinos. PASG QLD. has close links with Filipino community organisations in Australia, the Philippines, and the Asia-Pacific region. We receive information from a wide range of Philippine NGOs and can provide resource material, slides and videos as well as speakers.

PASG QLD. aims 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 peoples.



Text and Graphic above: Jeff Demyttenaere

## KASAMA ...means friend, companion, comrade

You will notice that this is a double issue of the newsletter. The National Workshop on Oct. 6&7 (see page 5) and preparations for the CPCA/SPAN national conference on Oct. 8&9 have kept us very busy. We also in this quarter co-organised a very successful tour with Leo De Castro of WCC (see page 8). Please contact us if you would like copies of the material Leo brought. You will receive in this mailing a copy of the CPCA Victoria newsletter. The next issue of KASAMA, Vol.8 No.6 the last for 1994, will cover Oct/Nov/Dec.

If undelivered please return to:

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