After Kintanar, the killings continue

THE POST-1992 CPP ASSASSINATION POLICY IN THE PHILIPPINES

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New murders against Left and popular organizations’ cadres have been committed these recent months by the CPP-NPA, the Communist Party of the Philippines and its guerrilla force, the New People’s Army. As we feared, after Kintanar’s death last January, new killings occurred. It is then necessary to analyze the political fabric of the post-1992 CPP's assassination policy. This is what I aim at here. I do not intend and I am not in a capacity to give a complete picture of the murders committed the last ten years. Through various examples, I simply wish to illustrate the gravity and the "logic" of what is presently going on.

Organizations and individuals abroad share a very important responsibility in today’s situation. The condemnation of the CPP's killing of Left activists is widespread in the Philippines, among other revolutionary and progressive movements. They all feel threatened. But many of them hesitate to confront too openly and strongly the CPP, because they fear to put in danger their own members in the localities: being most of the time unarmed, they cannot protect them from the well-armed NPA. We, abroad, can move more safely. It is then, for us, an elementary duty of solidarity toward the Philippine Left, toward the various revolutionary and progressive movements, to mobilize, act and force the CPP to change its policy, for it to stop killing its former comrades and the members of other progressive organizations.

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January 23, 2003: Romulo Kintanar, former member of the CPP Politburo and head of the NPA, was killed in a Manila restaurant. Abroad, the CPP tried to justify this assassination by accusing Kintanar of having become a military agent. But in the Philippines, the official statements issued by the party leadership and the interviews given to the media by its spokesperson, Gregorio Rosal, showed that much more was at stake. Not only had Kintanar been first condemned to death as early as 1993, but also other former leaders of the CPP were again denounced as "traitors" and "counter-revolutionaries".

Kintanar’s killing was clearly used as a way to threaten former members of the party and Left organizations not belonging to the CPP "bloc" (the "Reaffirms"). All progressive movements in the Philippines understood it as such. Unfortunately, we did not have to wait long for the reality of this threat to be confirmed. Three more Left activists have been murdered by the NPA in recent months, in different provinces:

- Raymundo Tejeno, killed February 4, 2003 in the Bondoc Peninsula. He was a peasant leader from Unorka.
- Florente Ocmen, killed May 28, 2003 in Agusan del Norte. He was a municipal officer from Akbayan! Citizen Party.
- Donie Valencia, killed mid-June, 2003, in Bataan. He was an unarmed organizer of the Marxist-Leninist Party of the Philippines (MLPP) and its guerilla (RHB).
The killing of Raymundo Tejeno has been officially claimed by the CPP-NPA. The two others
not, but local eyewitnesses, the families and the concerned organizations have no doubt that they
did it. We speak here of cold blooded murders. All of them were abducted and detained at least
for hours if not days before being physically eliminated.

These recent killings confirm what we have said all along: Romulo Kintanar’s murder is part of
a general trend and has to be understood in that framework. It represents a new and grave step in
the post-1992 assassination policy of the CPP. With Kintanar, it was the first time that a 'legal',
very well known figure was killed right in Manila-Quezon City, the capital of the country. With
Florente Ocmen, it was the first time that an officer of Akbayan has been murdered. Until now,
various underground revolutionary organizations were targeted by the NPA assassination teams,
but not Akbayan, a broad Left, “above ground”, legal party and electoral front.

All components of the Left in the Philippines feel now under threat, including political parties
and various mass movements which are “above ground” and find it very difficult to protect
themselves from a well armed group as the CPP-NPA.

Ten years after 1992, the CPP leadership's policy of assassination is escalating instead of fading
away.

BEFORE 1992

As far as I know (there may be cases I am not aware of), before the 1992 crisis, political
elimination of former members, even turned “traitors”, was not a policy of the CPP.

Corpus. Victor Corpus, for example, was not killed. He joined the NPA in 1970 while he was a
young Army lieutenant. He left the movement in 1976 and, ten years later, was reinstated in the
military where he now heads the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces (ISAFP).

Corpus seems to work for the enemy. Maybe the only reason for him not to be physically
eliminated by the CPP was that he was too well protected by his bodyguards. And there are
some early dark sides in the CPP history and in the policies of part of its leadership (to begin
with Sison’s, before his arrest in 1977). But I do not recall that in the past, the CPP leadership
projected a general policy of "death penalty and threat" as presently.

Purges. During the 1980s, widespread internal purges cost the life of many CPP members
(estimates of victims’ numbers range from hundreds to two thousands). In no way should the
gravity of these purges be minimized. The circumstances which made them possible (the use of
torture against “suspects” and many other factors) should be well understood and all lessons
should be drawn from that terrible side of the CPP’s history.

But the 1980s purges were not the outcome of a faction fight. They did not constitute political
elimination of dissident cadres under the cover of “anti-infiltration” campaigns. They were
paranoid purges, a process of self-destruction, which played a major role in the political decline
of the CPP.

One can of course focus on the "dark side" of the CPP's history and conclude that what we are
today faced with is nothing more than the continuation of past sectarism, lack of internal
democracy, Maoist-Stalinist conceptions, militarism, etc. To do so would nevertheless be to
miss the point.
From the 1970s to the 1980s. In 1968, the CPP was a very small group. In spite of this, it proved to be the only party able successfully to build on the national scale popular resistance to the Marcos dictatorship. It had to pay a very heavy price for that success and many of its members were killed or jailed and tortured, including many of its Politburo members (among them Sison). But the results were impressive: at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, the bulk of a whole generation of activists joined the CPP, the mass organizations it led and the NPA. Other Left political groups did not survive the Martial Law period, or remained local, weak. The bright side of the CPP's history was then much more decisive in the development of the overall popular movement than the dark side.

The CPP appeared then ideologically monolithic. But behind this facade, a certain political pluralism grew from within, various regions exploring new ways of struggle. To put it simply: when a party and its "bloc" (then called the National-Democrats, or NDs), embodies a whole generation of activists, its future "opens". It can evolve in more than one direction. Now that the Filipino Left is plural, it is significant that the majority of its present components are coming from the CPP and the National Democrats, beside some other original trends (coming from independent Marxists, Christian socialists or left Social Democrat sources).

From the 1980s to the 1990s. During the 1980s, a growing number of issues began to be raised within and around the CPP, questioning the validity of the traditional line of the party leadership on nearly all matters: theory (e.g. on the "mode of production", supposed to be "semi-colonial, semi-feudal" in the Philippines in spite of its integration in the capitalist world market), strategy (e.g. more concrete conceptions of how various forms of struggles can combine, opposed to the idea that armed struggle is always the main form, the countryside surrounding the towns), alliance (e.g. the project to make of the National Democratic Front -the NDF- a real front, able to integrate other political and military forces than the CPP-NPA), politics (e.g. the emergence of a concept of "popular democracy"), mass work (e.g. the scope and dynamics of peasant work), and the CPP's very fabric (e.g. the hierarchical relationships between the underground and the aboveground structures).

One could say that in 1984, the future of the CPP was "opened". There is no point in writing a CPP history here. But I feel that it is impossible to understand the nature of the post-1992 CPP assassination policy without picturing briefly the 1980s background - what I would call the lost opportunity. The 1980s represent a major turning point in the national and international situation. No party can just continue to do "more of the same", because the general framework changes too much. It can formally maintain, "reaffirm", its "line" unchanged to the comma. But even then, it will be deeply altered in content. This is precisely what happened to the CPP. At least, such is my understanding.

Let's just here say that at least three elements combined then, to freeze and reverse the emerging process of evolution of the party: first, the consequences of some political choices. The leadership took the wrong sectarian turn (from 1984 Bayan Congress to the 1985-1986 "hard boycott" line) at a very wrong time (the crisis and fall of the Marcos dictatorship). It lost its political momentum and authority. Second, the paranoid internal purges of the 1980s had a deeply demoralizing, shock wave effect in the party. It lost the "moral high ground" it gained in the anti-dictatorial struggle. Because of these two factors, many cadres and members began to leave the party from mid-1980 on. Third, the top leadership eventually closed all venues for debate inside the CPP. It used the purges issue as a factional tool against the oppositions, which is one of the worst things that could be done because it made impossible a true collective
assessment of what happened and why. It refused to call for a Congress in a party which had never, twenty years after the founding one, attended by a handful of militants, had another. Instead, it begun to take disciplinary measures, which lead to the 1992-1993 crisis and splits.

From the mid-1980s to 1993, the CPP probably lost half of its members, including many trained cadres. But the main question is not quantitative. It proved able to recruit again, so deep is the social crisis in the country. The main change is qualitative. There is a sharp turn in the political dynamics of the NPA, the political fabric of the CPP and its role in society.

THE POLICY OF “DEATH CONDEMNATIONS”

The very synthetic elements of analysis presented here are of course debatable. The CPP history is much more complex than it first appears, and I know only part of it. But never in the past have we been confronted by such a generalized policy of condemnations to death, of threats and killings in the Left. It confirms that the 1992 crisis led to a qualitative change in this party, and for the worse. Today’s CPP is no longer the same as the one we knew in the 1970-1980s.

The 1993 “traitors”. The first “death condemnations” came in 1993, soon after the 1992 expulsion-splits of various territorial structures and national bodies of the CPP. The first “four principal traitors” (I quote) to be named and condemned were leadership members from Mindanao (Ricardo Reyes, Romulo Kintanar, Benjie de Vera), the Visayas (Arturo Tabara) and Manila-Rizal, the Capital Region (Felimon “Popoy” Lagman). (Note: I realize that the “four principal traitors” are here five).

Strangely enough, Joel Rocamora, from the Transnational Institute (Amsterdam), was also named and threatened, while he never was, contrary to the others, a key cadre of the CPP (living in the US and later in the Netherlands before going back to the Philippines).

The guess is that Joel provoked Joma's ire because of his action in the Netherlands (where he wrote a paper in 1991 critical of what became the "Reaffirm" standpoint and which circulated at the time of the 1992 debate), and back in the Philippines where he joined the "PopDem" crowd (the "Popular Democrats"), consolidating their international links. Joma Sison, chair of the CPP-NPA, himself living in Utrecht (The Netherlands), had to find scapegoats after losing face: in 1993, most of the European-based members of the CPP-NDF rejected his line in spite of (or due to) his physical presence here.

Whatever, naming Joel Rocamora had a clear meaning: one did not need to be a former high ranking official of the CPP, and an underground cadre, to be threatened.

Policy of threat. Death penalty does not mean immediate assassination. The threat of execution is used as a very efficient way to silence opponents. The message from the CPP is: “either you keep silent and you do not engage in the building of another organization, and we shall not implement the death penalty; or, you prove 'unrepentant' and one day, sooner or later, you’ll be killed”.

Since the start of the post-1992 assassination policy, cadres of other communist underground organizations have been targeted. Former CPP members felt reasonably safe when joining Akbayan, because this political movements was initiated by various trends, including non-communist (Bisig, for example), and is totally “above ground”, not seen as a direct challenge to
the CPP. Akbayan still does not present enough of a political threat to the CPP to be seen as a direct challenge. But this is no longer sufficient for Akbayan members to be safe.

**THE CHICKEN AND THE MONKEY**

If the death penalty does not necessarily mean execution, the threat must be real. Which implies that some must die for those who live to know that they are actually in danger of being killed. The ones not officially named can often be in more immediate danger than those openly mentioned in CPP statements.

**Mabilangan.** The case of Leopoldo “Ka Hector” Mabilangan seems here relevant. He was shot dead on April 3, 1994 in Sto. Thomas, Batangas. He was the former head and spokesperson of the Quezon-based NPA Banahaw Command and left in 1993, taking advantage of an amnesty proclamation. In 1997, his right hand man, Eduardo Borromeo was also killed.

Carlo Butalid was in 1993 an NDF official in Utrecht, The Netherlands. He was a friend of Mabilangan. He thought (and still thinks) that the accusations against him are unfounded. He asked Jose Maria Sison why Mabilangan had to be killed. He recalled Sison’s answer, after Kintanar’s assassination: “When I asked for the reason for this killing, Joma replied that sometimes it was necessary to ‘kill the chicken to scare the monkey’. I didn’t understand what this meant at first, but later I found out that this was one the tactics used by Mao during his various inner party struggles – kill a lower official as a warning to the higher official that he was fighting against. Ka Hector’s death was a warning to Rolly Kintanar and the others” (Carlo Butalid, 16 February 2003).

**Kintanar.** Joma’s dictum can have a reverse use: "Kill the Monkey to Scare the Chickens". This reverse use applies to Kintanar's murder, a sign of an escalating policy of threat. Many activists from various organizations were told, after his death, by NPA and party operatives: "You have seen what happened to Rolly. Think of it". Such a nationally publicized "kill" sends a signal not just to other "renegades" but also, beyond the Left, to recalcitrant tax sources, on which the CPP is more and more relying for collecting funds, as well as on costly "permits to campaign" (PTC), as shown during the 2001 elections.

Kintanar's assassination was clearly a political stand, a message to the Nation. It shows that the CPP leadership feels that it has recovered from the 1992 crisis, including in Manila-Rizal, the Capital region. It is getting more and more confident against the government and has increased the number of tactical operations against the Army. Not only has the CPP-NPA been recruiting again, but also it have not been under strong military pressure, partly because of the attempts at peace talks and, probably more important, because the military have been preoccupied with Mindanao before anything else. The problem is that to be more confident means now, for the CPP leadership, to become more violent, including against the Left forces and sectors of civil society, and not just against the government soldiers.

**LONG MEMORY**

**Conrado Balweg.** In 1987, a split occurred in the CPP-NPA in the Cordillera, led by former rebel priest Conrado Balweg who established the CPLA. At that time, I discussed this matter in Manila, during one of my visits to the Philippines, with a number of activists from the CPP and other groups. It is impossible to come back here to what may have been at stake in this local crisis, but for sure some substantial political issues laid in the background (the CPP policy
towards the mountain tribes; must the right of self-determination be concretely recognized in the present or is it only an issue of the future – meaning after victory? did the CPLA find itself willingly or unwillingly integrated into the governmental paramilitary framework?...

Eventually, Conrado Balweg was killed - on December 31, 1999 in Abra. His younger brother, Jovencio, “Ka Rudy”, was in the NPA’s Agustin Begnalen Command based in the Cordillera and declared on GMA TV Channel 7 that the decision to kill his elder brother was made collectively by the NPA. He said it took them 13 years before they could finally kill Conrado Balweg “because (we) never had the chance”. (Inquirer News Service, Jan 24, 2003).

Was the decision to kill Conrado Balweg taken already in the 1980s or later, in the 1990? Whatever, the decision was implemented in the framework of the post-1992 assassinations, and 13 years after the split. While Kintanar was killed one full decade after he left the movement. And many other former cadres of the CPP are today still under threat, ten years after the 1992 crisis.

ORGANIZATIONS TARGETED

The first targets of CPP-NPA assassination teams have been underground or mass cadres of other revolutionary organizations.

**MLPP.** The CPP organization in Central Luzon sided with Jose Maria Sison at the time of the 1992 debate (it was part of the “reaffirm” wing). But a new debate erupted within the CPP ranks in 1994-1997. Cadres critical of the Tiamzon’s leadership were suspended in 1997 and did not receive the expected political support from Chairman Jose Maria Sison. In 1998, these cadres initiated the process of building a new party: the Marxist-Leninist Party of the Philippines (MLPP).

According to their records, as early of November 1997, suspended cadres were primed for armed attacks by the NPA (the threat). Starting in August 1999, the NPA launched arrest and dismantling operations against the MLPP. Beginning in February 2000, the NPA ambushed one of their military units. This was followed by subsequent killings. For a while, the MLPP refused to retaliate and released unharmed captured NPAs after talking to them.

But in December 2000, after eleven casualties (four wounded and seven dead), the MLPP decided to launch “defensive counter-operations”. This was not an easy decision to take, but at that time the military pressure of the NPA was gravely increasing. A member of the Executive Committee of the MLPP National Provisional Committee was assassinated in front of his family December 2, 2000: Bartolome Quizon a veteran activist and leading cadre of the CPP for 30 years.

In a document I received, the MLPP lists 19 armed operations launched by the NPA against its organizations and members from August 1999 to August 30, 2002 (a dozen MLPP members being killed and about fifteen wounded; some eight NPAs were probably also killed during the 2002 encounters).

The last killing is the one mentioned in this paper's introduction. Here is the MLPP account: “Three unarmed organizers of RHB were abducted by CPP-NPA elements last June 11. Donie Valencia, 22 years old, Edwin Igay, 21 and Dindo Diaz, 23 were taken at gunpoint around 7:30-8PM that date in Sitio Calaylayan, Brgy. Kabukiran, Abucay, Bataan. The abductors left a
cellphone number, apparently for negotiations. However, calls from the families were not being entertained. Of the three unarmed RHB organizers abducted by the CPP-NPA last June 11 in Abucay, Bataan, they have released Dindo Diaz and Edwin Igay early in the evening of June 17. But Donie Valencia was killed! He was the most senior of the three in organizing work. According to the two comrades who were released alive, from the hilly portion of Abucay, where they were kept, all three of them were led towards the highway passing through the town. Before reaching the road, Donie was separated from them and afterwards gunshot was heard. They assumed he was killed. They would learn about this later in the evening. CPP-NPA operatives called the family of Donie and told them to get the body somewhere near the highway passing through Mabatang, Abucay, Bataan. Dindo and Edwin, who are still recovering from the trauma, related that they were all warned by their abductors to desist from political organizing work and to leave the RHB.» (16 and 19 June 2003 e-mails).

The MLPP wrote in one of its messages: “the MLPP wishes this armed conflict to end. We would certainly welcome even just a truce, if the CPP cadres and members cannot take it upon themselves to cooperate with other revolutionaries”.

RPM-M. In 1992, the Central Mindanao Region of the CPP sided with the “reject” wing in the debate, asking for a change in orientation. It later formed a new organization, today named Revolutionary Workers Party-Mindanao (RPM-M). These last years, two of its cadres have been assassinated directly or indirectly by the NPA.

I happened to arrive in Mindanao a few days after the first one was killed, April 8, 2001. The assassination team of the NPA had been posted near the house of one of the RPM-M cadres, who was not home (the family suspected danger). Unfortunately, another cadre came at that time to visit him, and he is the one who fell into the trap and was killed. Here is an RPM-M account of what happened:

"The one murdered was a member of the Executive Committee and Regional Military Cadre of the Revolutionary Peoples Army of the RPM-M. Actually he could have avoided the trap by the NPA operatives because he was able to see them at distance. Since he knew the NPA operatives (he was responsible in recruiting them before the split), he decided that he could persuade them to have a talk. And so he went near the NPAs. Before he could give them greetings he was shot immediately at close range. Wounded he still tried to reason out and convince the NPAs to talk to him. Burst of gunfire was the answer to his request. He did not even draw his 45-caliber pistol. The NPA unit in Mindanao had a big celebration for this cowardly act of murder."

May 9, 2001 another regional cadre of the RPM-M fell in an encounter with the governmental army (AFP) after a unit of NPA called the frequency of the reactionary AFP and pinpointed the position of the RPA.

"But these traitorous and unrevolutionary actions of the CPP-NPA did not make the RPM-M-RPA to answer them in kind. At the beginning of the 2002, two NPA cadres and organizers of the CPP were captured by the RPM-M and RPA. Three days later, after talking with them, they were released unharmed."

Popoy Lagman and PMP. "Popoy" Lagman was head of the Manila-Rizal Region of the CPP, which sided with the “reject” wing in the 1992 debate. He later led the Workers’ Party of the Philippines (PMP), an above ground legal party who recently merged with two other organizations (SPP and PDP).
Popoy Lagman was killed two years ago and it is not sure who did it, unlike the other cases mentioned here.

In its post-Kintanar’s assassination statements, the CPP-NPA openly accuses another organization of this murder, but in such a way that it can only aim at increasing tensions between the PMP and this organization (see the February 8, 2003, statement of the CPP Information Bureau). To the point that the “PMP merger” has denounced the attempt of the CPP-NPA to provoke an intra-Left fight.

In the February 9, 2003 statement signed by its spokesperson, Patricio Ramirez, the “PMP merger” wrote: “The CPP cold-blooded murder of Romulo Kintanar and Ka. Roger’s purposive intrigue about Ka Popoy has opened the Left to a fratricidal war that the military will incite and inflame in order to crush to whole revolutionary movement. We call on well-meaning individuals and groups to intervene and put political pressure on the CPP to stay its bloody Stalinist hands and hypocritical lips”.

Akbayan. Akbayan local cadres have been increasingly harassed by the CPP-NPA in times of elections, but not murdered. In the past campaign and election of 2001, harassment meant for example that Akbayan was stopped from campaigning in villages claimed by the NPA as “theirs”, or that Akbayan’s officers running for local elective posts were pressured to pay for “permits” to campaign. There was even a death threat against one Akbayan leader in Nueva Ecija.

Akbayan issued an official statement, April 9, 2001, to “protest harassment”: “We call on Bayan Muna and other progressive groups to denounce these practices and to demand that the NPA stop harassing Akbayan organizers”.

Of course, other electoral Left party lists were similarly harassed by the CPP-NPA: the ones of the PDSP, Salankas, Amin in Mindanao, etc.

Boy Ocmen. This year, as mentioned in the introduction, an Akbayan officer was for the first time killed. May 26, 2003, Florante "Boy" Ocmen, 52 years old, Jabonga, Agusan del Norte, was abducted. He was killed on May 27. He was Section Chairman of Akbayan at the municipal level.

This murder has not been officially claimed but, according to Akbayan! Citizen Party Headquarters, local eyewitnesses confirmed that known New People's Army (NPA) operatives in the area were responsible for Manong Boy's abduction and murder. In its May 28 Press Statement, Akbayan "condemns in the strongest terms the abduction and killing yesterday of one of (its) local leaders in Agusan del Norte. Florente 'Boy' Ocmen, 52, was shot in the head after being held hostage by rebel forces purportedly belonging to the New People's Army". It seems that Ocmen was tortured before being shot, which may explain that the killing will never be claimed.

In a mail sent the same date, Akbayan wrote: “Boy Ocmen was an active Akbayan leader being the elected Akbayan Municipal Chair of Jabonga, Agusan del Norte; an active "kahanay" of Pandayan Para Sa Sosyalistang Pilipinas; the Barangay Captain of Sitio Banga; and a peace-loving citizen”.


**Teteng Tejeno.** February 4, 2003, a peasant leader, Raymundo “Teteng” Tejeno, was murdered in the Bondoc Peninsula, Quezon province. He was a municipal leader of MAKAMMASA or Federation of Small Farmers of San Narciso, an affiliate of the KMBP or Peasant Movement of Bondoc Peninsula, and part of the UNORKA or National Co-ordination of Autonomous Local Rural People’s Organizations.

This assassination has officially been claimed by the CPP-NPA.

Akbayan gives supports the peasant movements Teteng Tejeno was member of.

**Uncompleted picture.** As I said, the picture is far from complete. I have presently little information on what is happening in other regions, as for example in the Visayas where you have both the CPP-NPA and the Revolutionary Workers’ Party of the Philippines (RPMP), which is a different organization than the RPM-M in Mindanao.

Nevertheless, the general trend is clearly national in character. It expresses a policy of the central leadership of the CPP.

**ALL COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY CRIMINALS**

The CPP claims that it never assassimates political or ideological opponents, only rabid counter-revolutionaries and unrepentant criminals. As if, by chance, the main leaders of the 1992 and 1997 oppositions were all criminals…

The CPP claims also that it killed Romulo Kintanar because he had lately become an agent of the government. But let’s recall here that Kintanar was first condemned to death in 1993 and that the list of crimes he is supposed to have committed, according to the CPP statements published after his killing, is so long and so variegated, going back to the times he was successfully heading the NPA, that the charges lose any credibility. Like Liu Sahoshi according to the Chinese Gang of Four, Kintanar according to the Sisons and Tiamzons’ couples was a counter-revolutionary almost since his (political) birth.

Statements and articles from the CPP and the political current which is attached to it, the “reaffirms”, are ridden with quick accusations against any critics, very easily labeled “counter-revolutionaries” and “enemies of the people”, “playing into the hands” of reactionaries. Be sure that what I am writing will be denounced as an "assault on the Philippine movement, ideological counterpart to the current reactionary military encirclement and suppression campaigns“ (I quote here an article written by Pete Victoria against Benjamin Pimentel and Gemma Nemenzo's criticisms of Kintanar's assassination and in defence of Edgar Jopson's legacy).

For those of us who are old enough, it reminds us of the vocabulary then common to some trends of the 1970s international radical Left. Hopefully, times have changed and fewer and fewer organizations are speaking such language.

But it must be underlined that in present day Philippines, to be called a counter-revolutionary by the CPP leadership may well mean to become a “legitimate” target for the NPA assassination teams. That’s no joke.
We are faced again to one of the main questions raised by the political stands of the present CPP: its refusal to accept the existence of a pluralistic popular movement, of a plural progressive and revolutionary Left.

AN ESCALATING TREND

The decision to condemn to death opponents was disputed in the CPP and because the first “traitors” to be named in the party’s official statements were then not killed, there was hope, among the Left, that cooler heads within the CPP had been able to keep the split from becoming violent.

Later, when assassinations began in the provinces, there was a concern, among many progressive organizations, to avoid intra-Left killings to spread nation-scale, to reach Manila and to target “above ground” legal figures. So, to avoid “provocation” and in the hope that reason will eventually come to the Sison-Tiamzon leadership, little was done to counter the CPP on this essential question.

Nevertheless, the CPP decided to progressively intensify its assassination policy, once it has reorganized itself after the 1992 crisis. Killings spread in the provinces and eventually reached Manila, with Kintanar’s murder. The legal Left has become an open target, in addition to the underground revolutionary organizations. And regional or local cadres continued to be assassinated as a matter of routine.

Old names appeared again in the official CPP-NPA statements, as Ricardo Reyes (from Akbayan) and Arturo Tabara (from RPMP). New names were recently added also: Nilo dela Cruz (former head of the CPP urban military units in the Capital Region, now in RPMP) and Nathan Quimpo, after they spoke out too loudly against Kintanar’s murder.

Nathan Quimpo was one of the first, in the 1980s, to put to debate inside the CPP key issues of strategy and to bring to the party experiences of various revolutions beyond the Chinese one (from Vietnam to Central America). When he came to live for some years in Europe, he did his best to open the NDF to international realities. All this ran against the dogmas maintained by the "reaffirm" wing of the CPP.

Nevertheless, unlike for Joel Rocamora, his name did not appear in the 1993 CPP statements denouncing the "traitors". While travelling in the Philippines, he learnt only in November 2002, from a reliable source within the movement, that he actually was on the NPA "death list", but "not in the priority". The fact that, after Kintanar's assassination, he was named as "counter-revolutionary" in an official CPP statement clearly appears as a threat: if he continues to be too vocal, he could very well climb the ladder of the "death list" and become a "priority" in the NPA "order of battle".

Rumours are going around the archipelago on whom may be next on the NPA “hit list”. Some know for sure that NPA assassination teams are on their trail, and they have to live under that permanent danger of being killed by former comrades. Many others cannot know for sure, and have to live with that question in mind.

The CPP’s “policy of threat” is very much at work. Which means that individuals and organizations have to try to protect themselves from possible NPA attacks, as if to face
governmental repression, US intervention, the danger of criminalization of mass movements under the guise of anti-terrorist laws, and a de facto state of war (in Mindanao) were not enough.

2004: YEAR OF ALL DANGERS

There are many reasons to worry. Kintanar’s assassination has raised strong protests in the Philippines, and also some significant ones internationally. Friends of the victims of the 1980s purges organized on May 10 a public event in the memory of those who died, an initiative the CPP at first strongly denounced.

The only answer of the Sison-Tiamzon leadership of the CPP has been new death threats and new killings by the NPA.

While there is this tension building up within the Left, the government is intensifying its "counter-terrorism" drive. Its focus is presently on the Moro rebels, especially the MILF. But come election time, and it will be again the CPP-NPA-NDF.

Since election is the time for "guns, goons, gold", both the government and the NPA may just use the opportunity to hit their favored targets. 2004 looms as a very bloody election year. We better act now to try to prevent the worst developments to occur.

The CPP asks us, in the solidarity movement, not to make public our denunciations of the ongoing assassinations, not to name the names of those who are politically responsible for the killings, because their movement has to face governmental repression, because their own members are killed by the military. They ask us to abide by the rules and protect them. Which we did. But they are now, and for years already, breaking all rules to the point where they are murdering left activists. How can they expect us to remain silent in such conditions? People we know are going to be killed -and we should do nothing to prevent it?

The Filipino Left and progressive movements need more than ever international support and solidarity. For governmental repression not to hit Muslim and Lumad communities, popular movements and progressive parties. But also for the CPP to reverse its policy and to announce officially that not one of its former members will ever again be killed any more, as well as not one member of the other Left organizations and progressive movements.