The post-1992 Communist Party of the Philippines
and its policy of “death condemnations”

A response to the July 26, 2003 document
of the National Democratic Front

(based on CPP-NDF’s own statements and documents)

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In my paper dated July 4, 2003, I presented the increasingly grave policy of “death condemnations” initiated by the leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People’s Army (NPA), after the 1992 crisis that shook this movement; a policy which threatens the whole Filipino Left and cost many former members of the CPP and cadres of other progressive organizations their lives. (1) In a document dated July 26, 2003 and widely circulated, the National Democratic Front (NDF) denounced “some groups and individuals abroad” and “some renegades” spreading “brazen lies” after the killing of Romulo Kintanar last January. (2)

I must be, according to the CPP-NDF, one of those who “abroad” spread such “lies”. Thus, I shall answer here both the accusations and the assertions contained in this NDF statement. I will mainly do so by quoting at length various CPP documents. Indeed, the best way to answer the NDF claims is to let the CPP speak for itself. Reading these quotes is very unpleasant and distasteful, but it will be quite difficult for the “Reaffirms” (the political “block” identified with the line of the CPP-NPA-NDF) to disclaim such sources of information. The CPP leadership speaks here in its own words. Anyone in the solidarity movement should then see how alarming the situation has become for the Filipino Left.

I shall refer to, but not repeat, what I already wrote in my July 4, 2003 paper. The present text complements the previous one, in which I mostly quoted the progressive organizations that have been targeted by the CPP, their members ending up as victims of its deadly sectarianism.

“MORE BLOOD TO FLOW”: A GENERAL PATTERN

One striking feature of the NDFP July 26, 2003 document is that it deals only with Romulo Kintanar (and briefly with Popoy Lagman), and does not say a word of the many known cases of assassinations of Left activists committed by the NPA since 1992. While this is precisely the problem we are facing: Kintanar’s execution fits into a general pattern. The most important is then to understand how, and what are the implications of the decision by the CPP leadership to have him killed in January 2003, long after his first condemnation in 1993.

I’ll come back later on the specific cases of Kintanar and Lagman. I want first to complement the already extensive documentation I presented in my previous writing, by referring more in detail to various CPP sources.
Not only did the CPP hail Kintanar's assassination, it also announced that there are more to come. In an article entitled “More Blood Will Flow”, the Inquirer interviewed Gregorio Rosal (“Ka Roger”), the official spokesperson of the CPP. "All the traitors to the revolution cannot escape from retribution. Sooner or later, every traitor will fall and pay for his blood debts to the people and the revolution. Revo [revolutionary] justice is revo justice. They can escape and hide, but they can’t escape and hide forever. Look at what happened to Kintanar". (3)

Difficult to be clearer: Kintanar’s execution was a warning, a message to the Left and the Nation: the threat of execution is very real. If the CPP has decided to, and if the NPA has been able to kill someone like Kintanar -armed, legal and so well known- no one targeted by the CPP can feel safe anymore. This warning has already been followed by acts in the provinces: we know of three more killings committed recently (see my previous paper); and there may well be others I do not know of.

**Those who are named**

In its statements following Kintanar’s execution, the CPP named in a very threatening way several of its former leaders and cadres. Some of them had been publicly and officially condemned to death in 1992-1993, some not. By doing so, the CPP leadership tries to frighten them (“stay put, or else…”) or to lay down the political ground for their future execution.

- In its February 7, 2003 statement, Gregorio Rosal names Arturo Tabara, Nilo dela Cruz and Nathan Quimpo, described as "counterrevolutionary renegades who are all guilty of grave crimes and have accountabilities to the revolutionary movement. They spew venom and spread disinformation" after Kintanar’s death. (4)

- February 8, 2003, the CPP claimed the right to kill “rabid and incorrigible criminals and counter-revolutionaries”. Rosal named this time the 1992-1993 “four principal traitors to the party and revolutionary movement”, two of them dead (Popoy Lagman and Kintanar), two of them still alive: Arturo Tabara and “Ricardo Reyes who heads the Akbayan” (it is important to note that, through Reyes, the broad Left legal party Akbayan is here explicitly targeted). (5)

- In its July 26, 2003 document, the NDFP adds another name to the list of so-called “renegades”, Sixto Carlos, presently also a cadre in Akbayan: “Among the most active vilifiers of the CPP and NPA are Ricardo Reyes and Sixto Carlos who are using their contacts with Trotskyite groups and right wingers in nongovernmental organizations to spread lies against the revolutionary movement”. (6)

To be named in an official CPP statement is often to receive a warning. You are “given a chance to show genuine remorse and willingness to make amends” to quote it. (7) If you retreat out from political activity, your life may be spared.

To be named in such ways in official CPP statements also means that you can become a “legitimate military target” in the “order of battle” of the NPA. If you “prove unrepentant”, “maximum penalty” (meaning death) might be implemented. One should never forget it: the lives of the named ones are threatened.
Those who are not named

There are as well those activists who have never been named in an official statement, but have nevertheless been condemned by CPP leaderships. There are many more of them than those publicly named. They are already listed in the “order of battle” of the NPA and they can be killed any time. Quite a number of them already died during the past decade.

The NDF representative for Mindanao (South of the Philippines) has been interviewed end of January 2003. The journalist reports: “The Communist New People’s Army has warned it would carry out more ‘death sentences’ against former comrades who have joined the government either as ‘spies’ or ‘combatants’. The NPA cites the assassination of its former chief, Romulo Kintanar, as the fate of those who will be meted ‘revolutionary justice’. In an exclusive interview yesterday, NPA spokesperson for Mindanao Jorge Madlos told The Manila Times that the communist people’s court had meted out death sentences against several former Maoist guerrillas throughout the country. But he denied reports that President Macapagal-Arroyo’s chief of staff, Rigoberto Tiglao, is one of them”. (8)

Rigoberto Tiglao is not in. But the “hit list” or “death list” of the CPP-NPA does exist contrary to the denials of the NDFP.

The escalation

One of the main purposes of my previous paper was to show that ten years after the 1992 crisis, with Kintanar’s killing, we were witnessing a very dangerous escalation in the policy of death threats and actual assassinations of Left activists initiated a decade ago by the CPP leadership. This is precisely why the whole Filipino Left is so alarmed.

Before 2003, the main focus of NPA military actions against other Left groups were underground and armed movements formed after the 1992 CPP crisis, the first aim being to forcefully gain control over territories. It escalated especially in Negros and in Central Luzon. Already, carefully planned assassinations of party and mass cadres of other organizations were becoming increasingly common, including in Central Mindanao. All this was already extremely grave. So, why is 2003 a new turning point in the post-1992 CPP policy?

In 2003, for the first time, a well-known public figure, Kintanar was killed in the heart of Manila. For the first time, a former key national leader (and not a regional cadre) of the CPP was gunned down, while the names of those condemned in 1993 were published again, with new ones added. This raises very seriously the possibility of other national figures of the “Rejectionist” movements being assassinated.

In 2003 as well, for the first time, a broad above-ground party, Akbayan, has been openly targeted in official CPP-NDF statements. For the first time, one of its municipal officers was actually killed: Florence Omen, in May. For the first time also, a peasant leader from Unorka, an independent, militant federation of peasant organizations, was assassinated: Reymundo “Teteng” Tejeno, in February (See my July 4, 2003 paper). The NPA has killed here unarmed progressives.

Sometime end of March, I had the occasion to speak with two CPP-NDF representatives. I got the distinct impression that they did not foresee the international reactions to Kintanar’s execution. Reactions were especially strong in Europe among various Left political parties and a
Left European Parliamentary Group, which were then actively mobilizing against Washington’s decision to introduce the CPP in the CIA “terrorist list”. They made it very clear that they strongly condemned Kintanar’s assassination and any policy of physical threat within the Left, that it was for them a basic matter of principle. Unwilling to understand such responses to the CPP policy of “death condemnation”, one of the CPP-NDF representatives even said: “It’s a non-event. Nobody speaks of it any more”.

Now, for the first time, with its July 26, 2003 document, the NDFP fully justifies on the international scene, through the case of Kintanar, this post-1992 policy of assassination. It is a test. If there are only few additional reactions to the recent killings in the Philippines and to the NDFP document, the leadership will understand it as a “green light”: it should be able to go on with new threats and new assassinations without having to pay for these an unacceptable political price internationally. If the reactions are strong and many, it will understand it as a warning: the Left and the solidarity movement do not consider such grave matters as “non-events” or routine acts of war.

THE DUTY OF SOLIDARITY

The issue we are speaking of is of the utmost importance: can political assassinations inside the Left be tolerated? Can it be tolerated by progressives in the name of solidarity (!?) and, especially, by revolutionaries in the name of revolution?

Members of the international solidarity movement are often reluctant to speak about the assassination of Left activists by the CPP-NPA-NDF and to face openly such a troubling political issue. It seems that many would prefer not to know, or not to know too much. But, because we can actually do something to avoid new killings, our responsibility is engaged and we cannot simply close our eyes and keep silent.

According to the NDFP document, only “some groups and individuals abroad” and “some renegades” in the Philippines have condemned Kintanar’s killing and the political assassination of activists committed by the NPA. In fact, all major Left parties (except for Bayan Muna and other components of the “Reaffirm” block) have done so, as well as grassroots organizations, NGOs and people’s movements. But because they are under very real threat, and find it very difficult to protect themselves from a well-armed NPA, it is not easy for them to campaign internationally without endangering their members locally. It is much easier for us, abroad. They need our help to put maximum pressure on the CPP-NPA-NDF for it to change its policy on that single vital issue.

We surely have a duty of solidarity toward those who face state repression in the Philippines because of their political engagements in people’s struggles. The CPP-NPA-NDF and the “Reaffirm” block do face such a repression; but it is also true of other Left organizations —being popular, progressive or revolutionary. Our duty of solidarity extends to all of them. Should it suddenly stop when their members are killed by the CPP-NPA and not by the Army? How could we justify such a perverse logic?

The effects of such a situation are very deep, destructive. People who are legal but targeted may have to go underground not because of the government but because of the CPP. The threat is permanent, sowing suspicion: organizations have to worry of possible attacks from both the Army and the NPA. The unity of all progressive forces, so necessary for people’s struggles, becomes very hazardous, more and more difficult to establish with the “Reaffirm block”.
The reactions to a recent proposal from Rep. Satur Ocampo that Bayan Muna’s members be armed with guns as a self-defense measure against harassments and killings (9) illustrate the depth of the problem. Bayan Muna is the electoral party belonging to the “Reaffirm block” and Satur Ocampo (former member of the CPP politburo) is the most well known legal figure of this political current. Bayan Muna is indeed often harassed by the Military or by landlords’ goons. But in her answer, Rep. Etta Rosales, from Akbayan, raises a key question: “The case of Nong Boy Ocmen, a local organizer and farmer from Agusan del Norte who was abducted by suspected members of the New People’s Army and then later shot in the back upon being released from captivity last May is only the most recent case in our own list of injustices committed against our members. In Bondoc Peninsula in Quezon, our farmers’ leaders face the day-to-day threat from the NPA rebels and landlords (…). Can Ocampo truly guarantee that their members will not use such weapons to harass other party-list organizations and local candidates in 2004?” (10).

People’s movements are under threat, not only other Left political parties. A Task Force was sent to the Bondoc Peninsula to assess the situation faced by the farmer’s organization Unorka. It documented a long list of harassments from landlord’s goons and an increasing use of violence by the landlords, but also by the NPA. Here are some extracts from their report: “On June 8, 1998, peasant leader Edwin Vender was brutally murdered by goons of the landowner (...). Last February 4, 2003, Reymundo Tejeno Jr., another peasant leader, was also violently murdered by armed men identified as members of the Ma. Theresa de Leon Command of the New People’s Army.” “On July 22 and 23, 2003, twelve armed men” led by the son of the landowner threatened peasants “while around sixteen heavily armed men, believed to be members of the NPA were on standby within the vicinity, apparently as a back-up of the armed men against possible resistance of the tenants.” “On August 27, 2003, the house of Discoro Tejino Jr., was encircled by seven armed men, six were identified as NPA members and a goon of the landowner. They were looking for Tejino Jr. who at that time was nowhere in the area. The NPA had earlier on sent bullets to Tejino Jr. to signify the death sentence rendered to the peasant leader.” (11).

In such a situation, local organizations have issued a call to “respect citizens basic human rights” and for “genuine reforms for rural poor people”. This call was addressed jointly to the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the CPP-NPA-NDF! (12)

Let’s take one more example, for everyone to feel the atmosphere of hate presently spread by the CPP-NDF-NPA in the Philippines. A videotape is broadly shown by “reaffirm” activists, including by some “righteous” RA teachers in the University of the Philippines. Titled “Sanlibong Sulo” (“A Thousand Torches”) it is supposed to be a review of the Filipino peoples’ struggles. At each stage, it features as “traitors” former leaders of the movement, often turned “rejectionists”. Youngsters who know nothing of the history of popular struggles in the Philippines, nothing of the richness and complexity of the CPP’s history, are taught a tale where dissent equals treason, and the Sison-Tiamson leadership was always right. People who have devoted most of their lives to the people’s struggles and to the revolutionary movement are presented to thousands as born-traitors. Their relatives in a barrio, their children in a classroom can hear their names and see their pictures, diabolized as traitors…
“PUNISHMENT”, NOT A FAILED ATTEMPT OF ARREST

According to the NDFP document, Kintanar was killed by an “arresting team of the New People’s Army” only because he was armed and “resisted arrest with force”.

This assertion is ludicrous. The NPA operates in a very professional way. It knows how difficult it would be to arrest someone armed, in daytime in a busy district of Manila. In such conditions, one has to act swiftly, which means to kill. Statements of the CPP and interviews published soon after the murder clearly tell of “punishment”, not of a failed attempt of arrest.

The day after Kintanar was killed, before the CPP publicly claimed responsibility, Jose Maria Sison (who should know of this, as the Chairperson of the CPP), speaking as NDFP Chief Political Consultant, referred to “three theories” as to who ordered the assassination. The third (and good) theory was that it was the CPP-NPA: “It is widely known that Kintanar made himself liable for punishment by the revolutionary forces because of the crimes he committed (...) If any revolutionary force punished Kintanar, it would likely admit responsibility in due time.” (13)

The “prediction” of Professor Sison proved of course true. Two days later, Gregorio Rosal issued the official CPP claim under the title: “It was absolutely correct to punish Romulo Kintanar”. The word “punish” appears again in the text. Rosal mentioned a “special unit” of the NPA, not an “arresting team”. Sure, according to him, “The NPA had long been ordered to arrest” Kintanar, but it never proved possible. January 23, 2003 was another matter: “Punishment was successfully meted on January 23, 2003 by a special unit of the New People’s Army. This is part of the Party and the NPA’s determination to make accountable to revolutionary justice those guilty of the most serious crimes against the revolution and the people, whether they be present or former leaders of the Party and the NPA or are wealthy or powerful highly placed reactionaries”. (14)

Fr. Santiago “Sanny” Salas, spokesperson of the Eastern Visayas-NDFP also issued a statement titled “Kintanar’s punishment is apt and just”. Our good Father does not mention any arrest attempt. (15) The same goes for Teddy Casino, head of Bayan (the coalition of mass organizations belonging to the Reaffirm block). He faithfully endorsed the official line of argumentation of the CPP leadership and concluded: The NPA had to kill Kintanar because “unfortunately, the CPP-NPA-NDF is not a state power. It has no regular courts, no jails, no lethal injection facility. Thus, the only way it can impose capital punishment is by gunning down those convicted by its ‘People’s Court’.” (16)

The NPA “special unit” simply “gunned down” Kintanar, to speak in the very words of Bayan’s Teddy Casino.

Many others were previously summarily gunned down, instead of being arrested (see the documentation in my previous writing). This year, three victims were first kidnapped and were detained hours or days by the NPA before being killed: Reymundo Tejino, Florente Ocmen and Donie Valencia (from the Marxist-Leninist Party of the Philippines, abducted in June). Nevertheless, there was no people’s court, no trial, no defense counsel. The three of them were simply shot in cold-blood.
THERE IS NO “PEOPLE’S COURT”

The NDFP document claims that a “competent body of prosecutors in the revolutionary movement made a thorough investigation of the charges against” Kintanar to present them “to the people’s court”. Words are chosen to give the impression of the existence of an independent due process. In reality, it is all under the control of CPP leadership bodies at various levels. Decisions are clearly political rather than judicial.

It is possible that in some places there have been attempts to create real “people’s tribunals” at local levels. But beyond this possibility, there are no people’s tribunals but bodies filled by CPP cadres. It is well known by members and former members of the Party. Interestingly, a Political Bureau document on “Rules in the investigation and prosecution of enemy spies” states it very clearly. (17)

Sure enough, the document warns (point I-3): “the investigation, prosecution and judgment of enemy spies should be strictly based on and in accordance with scientific spirit and methods. The offense should be clearly proved based on sufficient evidence”. But whatever the “scientific spirit and methods” are, it does not mean independent due process. Read point I-4, following immediately the above quote: “4. Abide by democratic centralism. Decisions and judgments should be made under the firm leadership of appropriate Party committees.”

The whole document details how party organs control the overall process of investigation and judgment. To the point that “it is the duty of the Party committee having jurisdiction over the arrest and trial to designate at the earliest possible time a defense counsel for the person arrested and set the schedule for trial” (point IV-9). The prosecutors have the “duty” to choose the defense counsel of the prosecuted!

Relevant party leadership organs themselves create the so-called people’s courts: “5. The people’s courts are judicial tribunals which are formed by territorial and national commissions, or their standing committees, regional committees or their executive committees, and central organs of the Party.” (Point VI-5).

The document bans the use of torture (point V-2) and list a number of rights of the accused (point VI-2), including that he is “to be presumed innocent until proven guilty” (by Party leadership bodies, it should be recalled). But the very first point (I-1, under the chapter “General Principles and Methods”) deserves to be quoted: “I. Trust in the Party and strictly safeguard the mutual trust among Party members and the trust of the masses in the Party and the revolution. Combat whatever thinking, speech or actions that might destroy this” (my underline).

These are rules and guidelines concerning “enemy spies”, nothing less. And they begin by a solemn call to “combat” whatever “thinking” (!!!!), "speech or actions" that could be judged (by the leadership) as a threat to the trust in the Party. Which means that whoever discusses or challenges the Party (leadership) line might be accused of being an “enemy spy” moving from within to undermine the revolutionary movement. A CPP member is not allowed to speak and even to think (!!!!) freely.

These rules have been approved by the CPP leadership after the terrible experience of the paranoid, self-destructive, 1980s purges which cost the lives of hundreds (some even say up to two thousand) innocent members of this party, wrongly accused of being spies, “deep
penetration agents” of the Military. At that time, any protest (including against the use of torture by party prosecutors) could turn suspicion against a CPP cadre. Wasn’t he destroying the trust in the party and its leadership? No lesson has been drawn from these dark years.

**TEN YEARS AFTER...**

Commenting on Kintanar’s execution, Jorge Madlos, head of the NDF in Mindanao, said in the already quoted interview: “He was convicted by a people’s court in 1993 and the decision was reviewed by the central committee (of the CPP-NDF-NPA). We talked to him. He was warned but he did not listen”. (18) Jorge Madlos (“Ka Oris”) being himself member of the CPP Central Committee confirms here that the decision to implement the “maximum penalty” was taken after the top Party leadership “reviewed” his case.

The following quote of CPP Spokesperson Gregorio Rosal also shows that the decision to kill Kintanar came in 2002, a full decade after he was first sentenced to death, in 1993 (soon after the 1992 splits). His assassination in January 2003 was the implementation of the verdict: his execution was carefully planned. It is clear that, for Gregorio Rosal, Kintanar’s case was closed after the 2002 “review”. There was no word in his statement of a new “trial” which should have taken place in 2003.

“The first cases against Kintanar were filed before the people’s court in 1993. All things considered, the gravity of his cases and criminal accountabilities to the people and the revolutionary movement up to that time were sufficient bases to impose the maximum penalty.”

“The Party and the revolutionary movement have a policy where, during the trial or event afterwards, those who show genuine remorse and rectify their errors are granted amnesty. This policy was applied on all those who betrayed the Party and the revolutionary movement, including Kintanar. But he showed not an iota of remorse nor did he make any form of rectification. The number of cases filed against him in relation to his criminal and counterrevolutionary activities continuously grew. In the review of his case conducted by a special people’s court in 2002, weight was given to new evidence proving that Kintanar had turned into a rabid criminal and counterrevolutionary (...).”

“Having proven that he committed capital crimes, he was sentenced by the special people’s court to receive the maximum penalty. Aside from this, as a military intelligence operative (...) he had become a legitimate military target in accordance with the international rules of war as stipulated in Section II, Article 43 of Protocol I of the Geneva Agreements (1949) (...).

“I have clarified in my previous statements that the maximum penalty within the framework of the revolutionary justice system is reserved only for persons who have been found guilty beyond reasonable doubt of capital crimes against the people and the revolutionary movement. These are carefully decided and repeatedly reviewed by the people’s court to ensure the decision’s correctness. I have also recently clarified that only a handful of the most rabid criminal and counterrevolutionary elements have been sentenced to receive the maximum penalty.

“But the revolutionary justice system that is so thorough, scientific, just and humane is being distortedly portrayed by Malacañang [the Presidential Palace], the AFP [Armed Forces of the Philippines] and psywar manufacturers as arbitrary and worthless”. (19)
Replace “people’s court” by Party leadership organs (in this case, the core of the national leadership) and the question comes: why was the decision to kill Kintanar taken at that point in time? I tried to give some answers in my July 4, 2003 paper. I do not come back here on this matter. But the decision was clearly a major political one, and the issue I wish to underline again is that ten years after the 1992 splits, Kintanar’s assassination is used by the CPP-NPA-NDF as a means to threaten their former leaders (who opposed Sison’s line in 1992) and the other Left organizations. Ten years after… Think about this! It is one of the most worrying aspects in the present course of the CPP.

THE CHARGES AGAINST KINTANAR

Who was Kintanar at the time of his death? I am not in a position and won’t try to respond to that question. There are very contradictory assessments on this matter and the answer will eventually have to come from the Philippines. The CPP accuses him of being an agent. For his political friends, from his positions (including as security consultant for the Bureau of Immigration and the National Electricity Administration) he was still trying to help revolutionary movements. Several progressive organizations, without accusing him of being an agent, stated that not much of what he did in the recent years can be accepted within a Left perspective. Others do confirm that Kintanar did actually help, to initiate peace processes for example.

It is not difficult to understand why there is such uncertainty on Kintanar’s recent moves. When he was underground, he led the NPA to its peak (about 25.000 fighters) and inflicted severe damages to the military. He is considered one of the best field combatants and politico-military leaders the CPP ever had. When he decided to become legal again, his life was in danger, both because of the military and because of his former comrades. Ambiguity could have been a means of protection. If indeed so it was, it was a dangerous game that eventually cost him his life.

But abroad, we do not need to judge Kintanar for us to take a clear stand on the present deadly course of the CPP-NPA-NDF. As we have seen, his execution fits into a general pattern. That is the main point. Even if Kintanar had become an agent, this would remain true: his death is used by the CPP-NPA-NDF to threaten other Left and people’s organizations, to justify or cover up other assassinations, to put into question the very existence of a pluralistic progressive movement in the Philippines.

The Filipino organizations understood well what was at stake. The whole non-Reaffirm Left condemned his assassination and most came to his wake, even those who were quite critical about his policy. We can understand why they did so.

Another problem is that the NDFP document (as the CPP ones) does not prove its accusations: it affirms and asks us to trust its words. Even the reference to President Arroyo confirming that Kintanar was a government agent at the time of his death (and not since 1992…) is indirect (just one sentence at the end of a press article, without specifics) and far from being sufficient given the context (see above). In the past, the CPP has already fabricated accusation charges with no consideration whatsoever to truth (except if one considers that “truth” is nothing more than what is politically convenient for the party leadership at a given point in time). And today there are so many charges listed against Kintanar that the accusation is losing credibility. (20)
It is hard to understand how Kintanar could have accumulated a fortune and live, with “his cohort”, “a luxury and decadent lifestyle” unnoticed by the CPP-NPA leadership. It may have been possible if he had been based abroad (in Utrecht, the Netherlands, for example), but certainly not in the Filipino underground. Difficult also to imagine how he could have multiplied “unauthorized” initiatives and “criminal and gangster operations”, and stolen from the party “huge amounts of money” in an organization where even the location of each weapon is carefully checked.

Difficult also to understand how the NPA (when it was supposedly led by a “traitor” and a “gangster”) reached its peak and registered so many successes.

Kintanar is also accused today of “criminal actions” which, at the time, had been decided collectively by the CPP leadership and was then considered perfectly legitimate.

Clearly, part of the many “criminal” charges listed in the documents are plainly the simple expression of political disagreement. It shows how the CPP leadership identifies any critical stand to its line with “factionalism”. The 1991-1992 debate grew from within the party and was, given the circumstances, unavoidable, necessary and legitimate. No organization can experience the 1980s in the Philippines and do without such a debate. But for the CPP leadership, it just proves that Kintanar was “one of the most rabid instigators of factionalism at onset, and the eventual attempts to destroy the Party and the revolutionary movement”.

FROM 1993 ON…

It may be important to recall here that all leaders of the 1991-1992 oppositions to Sison’s line have been accused of being “criminals”, to begin with the so-called “Four Principal Traitors”, Kintanar, Reyes, Tabara and Lagman. (21) Every one should be able to recognize here a well-known pattern: to criminalize political dissent as a way to forbid the internal debate, to purge the party (and later to demonize and threaten the “splinter” groups).

But why worry? The justice system of the CPP is “thorough, scientific, just and humane”. And “the party has a policy that those who show genuine remorse and rectify their errors are granted amnesty”. As Gregorio Rosal “clarified” (see above): “only a handful of the most rabid criminal and counterrevolutionary elements have been sentenced to death”. (22) Just put your trust in the CPP leadership’s humanity, close your eyes and your ears, and shut your mouth!

Felimon “Popoy” Lagman

According to the NDFP document, “some groups and individuals abroad even made the preposterous claim that the NPA killed Felimon ‘Popoy’ Lagman”, former head of the Manila-Rizal region. As far as I am concerned, I never claimed that the assassination of Popoy Lagman was done by the NPA. I even thought that it was probably not the case, but I was of course—and I am still- unable to conclude on who masterminded it.

What I did in my previous writing was to quote the Workers’ Party of the Philippines (PMP, a legal party which Popoy led) protesting that the CPP was trying to provoke a bloody confrontation between themselves and the organization it accuses of having murdered Popoy. Having read the relevant CPP statements, I consider that the PMP is correct in its understanding of the CPP leadership’s intentions on that matter.
The 1993 dynamics and today

As mentioned in my July 4, 2003 paper, Joel Rocamora was singled in 1993 by the CPP as one of the key “counterrevolutionary traitors” (I quote) while, unlike the others, he had never been a leading cadre of the party, living many years in the United States after being released from Martial Law detention, and later in the Netherlands, before going back to the Philippines. The Executive Committee of the Central Committee (EC-CC) issued a memorandum, dated October 5, 1993, under the title “Chronology of Information on Joel Rocamora”. This memorandum offers a good example of how Jose Maria Sison can fabricate an accusation with no concern for reality or even for mere credibility. For example, he is accused of having worked for “a group of American and Indonesian technocrats supporting the Suharto regime after the anti-communist pogrom of 1965”. (23) Unfortunately for Sison’s credibility, Joel Rocamora is well known for his contribution to a very authoritative study disproving Suharto’s regime claims and for his active involvement in solidarity campaigns against the violations of human rights in Indonesia (for which he was blacklisted by the dictatorship and could no more enter the country).

Joel Rocamora answered this “Chronology of Disinformation” in an “Open Letter to the Underground”. I just want to quote here his conclusion which I found relevant to the present situation: “These attacks (contained in the memorandum) and the more serious threat of kangaroo court ‘trials’ are meant to intimidate the opposition, to escalate the struggle, to go one more step closer to physical sanctions as an instrument of ideological struggle. It will play into the worst anti-communist prejudices about the way the CPP leadership deals with those within the party and outside who disagree with them.”

“The progressive movement in the Philippines is in the throes of reorientation and organizational rearrangement. There are those within the CPP on both sides of the ideological divide who continue to believe in the need for armed struggle. There are others who believe that their energies should be devoted to rebuilding the mass movement and strengthening multi-tendency coalitions. There is a broad consensus on the need for struggle in many different arenas and on principled resolution of disagreements. By threatening Stalinist physical sanctions against those who disagree with them, the EC-CC is only isolating itself.” (24)

In many ways we are today confronted to similar dynamics, in the policy of the CPP leadership, than the ones analyzed ten years ago by Rocamora, but at a much higher level. On one hand, with the multiplication of assassinations, physical sanctions are no more only threats. On the other, pluralism has consolidated, gaining deeper roots, in the Philippines people’s movement and the Left. This is probably one of the main reasons why the CPP leadership decided to escalate its policy of threats and assassinations, so much of a menace it feels pluralism in the progressive and revolutionary arena: The CPP-NPA-NDF still considers itself as the sole representative of the Filipino people in a way which goes far beyond what is usually understood as "vanguardism". Let's say that the CPP behaves as the leading faction of society.

PLURALISM AT STAKE

I wish to elaborate a bit more on the issue of pluralism in the Left and my own stand on this essential matter.

In the eyes of the CPP-NDF leadership, I am surely one of those “individuals and groups abroad” who “would rather peddle lies than tell the truth about events in the Philippines in
their vicious scheme to malign the Philippine revolutionary movement”. (25) I guess that they truly think so. Seeing the world at their own image, it is genuinely difficult for them to understand the mind of a revolutionary who values pluralism in the progressive and people’s movement (including pluralism in the revolutionary movement itself).

I think that today’s CPP has lost most of the political qualities and potential it had in the past (see my previous paper). I am more than worried by its present evolution. The simple fact that a decade after the 1992 splits, its leadership’s assassination policy is escalating instead of fading away should alarm anyone of us. But I also think that many revolutionary and people’s organizations activists continue to identify with the CPP-NPA-NDF. I hope that there are still human and political resources inside the CPP to reverse its present course. But to give a slight chance to such a possibility, the widespread condemnation of “murder as politics” in the Left has to be strongly felt.

In my own view, the CPP and the people’s organizations belonging to its political block (the “Reaffirms”) should be part of a pluralist Left in the Philippines. But the problem is that the CPP kills those it should ally with.

It is essential to remember that the people’s movements and the Left in the Philippines are plural. Today, in addition to the CPP and the “Reaffirm” block, the political Left is composed of five major parties (two legal and three underground), plus some smaller formations. There is a broad range of people’s organizations (Trade Unions, peasant associations, women’s movements, etc.) and NGOs, either independent or identified to various political “blocks”.

Somehow, this pluralism always existed, even when it was overlooked because of the strength on the National Democratic block in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It began to be more strongly felt in the mid-1980s and became very obvious since 1986 (the downfall of the Marcos dictatorship) and 1992 (the open crisis in the CPP ranks). To deny this pluralist reality is to deny an essential democratic right of the Filipino people itself since, ultimately, our solidarity goes to the Filipino people and not only to one given organization.

The very existence of a pluralist radical Left in the Philippines has to be defended against the dangers inherent to the US intervention in the country, against the power of the Filipino military rising again, and against the repressive logic of the government and the presidency’s policies. Unfortunately, today it has also to be defended against the threat coming from the CPP… Using its military might, which no other group can match, the CPP-NPA can try to close the democratic space opened in the Philippines by popular mobilizations.

These are death or life questions for the future of the Left internationally and for the socialist project. The revolutionary Left is at the crossroads. Either democratic pluralism becomes an integral part of the socialist and revolutionary project. Or the revolutionary Left, as a progressive force, is doomed.

This is true internationally, after Stalinism. It is also especially true in the Philippines, after the terrible experience of the 1980 purges. The CPP leadership claims that it has drawn all the lessons from these purges, unlike the 1992 splits, which did not "rectify" (by "reaffirming" the 1968 line!). But it still labels as "unrepentant criminals", "agents" and "counterrevolutionaries" many of its former leaders, and members of other progressive and revolutionary organizations. Which means that it still uses fake "people's tribunals" and the death penalty as a threat to deny others the right to act independently.
TO PUT AN END TO THE KILLINGS

Alerting the international solidarity movement on the gravity of the situation faced by the Filipino Left, we actually do pursue only one goal: the end of the intra-Left killings in the Philippines. If nothing is done, friends we know are going to die, people’s movements and Left organizations we value are going to be left alone to confront a situation becoming increasingly dramatic.

One can disagree with the elements of analysis concerning the historical course of the CPP I presented in my previous writing. One can also disagree on my conception of people’s and revolutionary pluralism. But there is at least one basic principle on which we should all agree: no assassination of labor, of people’s movements and of Left parties activists, cadres, can be tolerated. Military capacity must not be turned against the components of a plural progressive Left.

The assassinations have to stop. We, abroad, can help to that end, by raising two basic demands:

1. All those representing, associated to or identified with the CPP must clearly condemn the killings and call on the CPP to change radically its policy on that matter. The issue is too grave to allow ambiguity.

2. The leadership of the CPP must officially and publicly announce that all “death sentences” pronounced against its former members are forever lifted, that it will no more physically attack members of other progressive organizations.

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(6) NDFP, op. cit.


(14) CPP, “It was absolutely correct to punish Romulo Kintanar”, Gregorio “Ka Roger” Rosal, Spokesperson, Communist Party of the Philippines, 26 January 2003.


(18) Herbie S. Gomez, op. cit.


(20) CPP, “It was absolutely correct…”, op. cit.

(21) The 1993 charges against these four leaders of the CPP are all titled in the same way: “Mga pananagutang kriminal at IPO ni Felimon Lagman (Carlos Forte, Popoy)” (“The Criminal and IPO (ideological, political and organizational) Responsibilities of Felimon Lagman (Carlos Forte, Popoy)”, “of Romulo Kintanar (Daniel Bagani, Dan)”, “of Ricardo Reyes (Paco Arguelles)”, “of Arturo Tabara (Victor del Mar, Pol, Piloy)”.

(22) CPP, “On issues arising…”, op. cit.

(23) CPP, “Isang Kronolohiya ng Inpormasyon tungkol kay Joel Rocamora (Tales Duhaylungsod)” (“Chronology of Information on Joel Rocamora (Tales Duhaylungsod)”), 5 October 1993.


(25) NDFP, op. cit.