



Cordillera People's Democratic Front

DESTRUCTION OF PEACE WITHIN TRIBES AND COMMUNITIES IS THE MEANING OF THE DUTERTE REGIME'S OPLAN KAPAYAPAAAN

Simon "Ka Filiw" Naogsan Sr.

Spokesperson

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In its mad scramble to meet the deadline of the morally bankrupt Oplan Kapayapaan of the US-Duterte regime, it continues to destroy the tribes and communities in the Cordillera through militarization and intensified recruitment of AFP-PNP forces from among the national minorities. This is in accordance with the indigenous peoples (IP)-centric approach component of the said counter-insurgency program which aims to devastate the unity of tribes and communities in line with its divide-and-rule tactic.

The Cordillera has been one of the testing grounds of the IP-centric approach during the implementation of the US-Aquino II regime's Oplan Bayanihan. Since this approach was tried, we have witnessed the intensification of recruitment of state forces from among the national minority youth in the region. The regime offers military and police service to cover its gross failure in creating new jobs due to the lack of national industrialization and the state's offering of lands and natural resources of the Philippines to foreign capitalists. In its desperation to recruit more, they had even lowered the height and educational requirements needed to enter the military service. In addition, it has refined its deceptive tactics such as marrying local lasses to avail of the protection of the tribes and utilization of traditional socio-political structures such as the bodong and dap-ay for counter-insurgency purposes. For example in Kalinga, groups such as the Kalinga Bodong Council (KBC) and Matagoan Bodong Consultative Council (MBCC) are known for conniving with the military in digging for issues against the NPA and harassing the families of full-time Red fighters.

With the conscription of national minority youth to service in the mercenary AFP-PNP and CAFGU paramilitaries, the regime is slowly stripping the indigenous identities of minority youths and indoctrinating them with an unquestioning loyalty to the reactionary government. They are the ones who are being sent to the frontlines during military operations that bring fear and dread to the communities. Recruitment of national minority youth to military and police service is one of the biggest threats to peace within and between tribes.

Under the Oplan Kapayapaan of the US-Duterte regime, this divisive tactic is being heightened. In breaking the unity within the national minorities, it aims to cover up the real problems and issues - the grabbing and plunder of ancestral lands through large-scale projects such as mining, energy and irrigations such as the Chico River Pump Irrigation Project, the continuing neglect of needed basic services and welfare of the farmers who have been repeatedly ravaged by calamities such as typhoons and the ongoing drought, commercialization of services such as education, health among others, the destruction of indigenous socio-political structures, and the militarization which have long been burdens on the national minorities not only in the Cordillera but in the whole country. Added to these are other issues such as the exorbitant prices of basic commodities and services, very low wages, inhuman working conditions and other crosses that majority of the Filipino people bear.

Particularly in the ongoing construction of the Chico River Pump Irrigation Project in Kalinga, the regime and the Chinese contractor did not respect the rights of the national minorities in Pinukpuk because the said project did not go through the process of consultations with the affected communities since its planning up to the ongoing construction at present. Even residents on the site at Bgy. Pinucoc are unknowing of the said project and they were surprised when large equipments of the Chinese came and started digging at the part of the river that is in their territory. This project is also being used to absorb the excess labor force of the Chinese, as evidently seen in the influx of Chinese workers in the site of the said project, instead of giving jobs to the local residents. In this project alone, the low regard of the regime in the Cordillera is shown, as it only regards the Cordillera as a "resource base" and it is not interested in utilizing the natural resources of the Cordillera for the development of the national minorities, giving these instead to the imperialist China in exchange for token loans and other favors that they are dying to get their hands into. It is in this context why destroying the militancy and unity of the national minorities is being intensified, in order to implement neoliberal policies such as the projects under the "Build, Build, Build" program of the regime in the Cordillera along with other large-scale destructive projects in the region.

In its attempt to gain sympathy in its rotten and fascist counter-insurgency program, it has resorted to sensationalizing and highlighting the emotional factors whenever armed engagements between the AFP-PNP and NPA takes place, instead of giving attention to the true problems that are the real causes of the armed conflict. It also bullies and coerces local governments to implement its counter-insurgency measures, which is the reason why it appointed former general Eduardo Año as chief of the Department of Interior and Local Government. In Tubo, Abra, Gov. Joy Bernos forcibly pushed, together with the AFP the corruption-laden surrender campaigns through rumor-mongering, threats and intimidation. In the municipality of Besao, Mountain Province, the DILG coerced the local barangay councils to sign the ordinance banning members of the NPA from the barrios, and it is stipulated in the said ordinance that it will give reward money every member of the NPA that they will report. Groups that were put up supposedly for the anti-drug and anti-corruption campaigns, such as the Masa-Masid, Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Councils and the like are being used as instruments for anti-insurgency. These wicked measures of the government further wedges misunderstandings and suspicions among the people, instead of fostering unity and peace.

The CPDF calls once again to all Cordillerans to critically analyze the real issues. We should call for stopping militarization and the conscription of the national minority youth to the AFP-PNP-CAFGU. Likewise, the regime should take concrete solutions to the real problems plaguing the country. Because genuine and just peace will only be achieved if the basic problems impoverishing the masses - the grabbing of farmlands and ancestral lands, inhuman working conditions, lack of national industrialization, disrespect of indigenous socio-political structures, political misrepresentation and destruction of indigenous identities and customs in the name of profit are resolved. Genuine peace does not only mean the end of armed conflict but above all, it is the people's equal access to their basic economic, political and cultural needs free from any form of slavery and oppression. As opposed to the pretenses of the regime, the second agenda of the stalled peace talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, the Comprehensive Agreement on Socio-Economic Reforms (CASER) is an encompassing solution towards achieving genuine peace based on social justice. But for the regime, silencing the opposition and unconditional surrender is the solution that it wants to enforce and it doesn't care if the masses are further mired in the quagmire of poverty, as long as they continue to enrich and indulge themselves and most especially their US and Chinese imperialist masters.

As the people of the Cordillera are further pushed to deeper poverty and oppression under the tyrannic rule of Duterte, the national minority struggles shall sharpen together with the majority of the Filipino peoples. The advancement of the national democratic revolution to higher stages is the only solution to oust the corrupt and blood-hungry US-Duterte regime.

Revolution is the true solution to poverty!

Stop the militarization in the Cordillera and the whole countryside!

Fetad! Rebolusyon kayet!