

# DIFFERENTIAL ACCESS TO RESOURCES: ITS IMPACT ON ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITY

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## *Control, Ownership and Exploitation of Resources: Their Impact on the National Ethnic Minorities*

Ang mga daliri ng ating kamay ay magkakaiba. May maikli at may mahaba. May mataba at may payat. At may kani-kaniyang tungkulin at gamit. Ngunit kapag itinikom natin upang dumakot ng kanin at isubo, ang mga ito ay nagkakaisa at nagkakapantay-pantay.

Ganoon din sa ating lipunan. May bata, may matanda. May babae at may lalake. Mayroong nakatapos ng pag-aaral at mayroong walang muwang. Iba't iba ang ating kulay at wika. Sa tirahan, ang iba'y nasa kubo, ang ilan ay sa palasyo. Ang iba ay nasa lungsod at ang iba naman ay nasa bundok.

Anuman ang ating kalagayan, tayong lahat ay nagkakapantay, sapagkat tayong lahat ay nagugutom. Kailangan tayong lahat ay kumain. Ngunit mayroong ilan na labis at labis ang pagkain. Samantalang ang iba naman ay sapat lang. At marami ang nagkukulang. At ang ilan sa ating mga kababayan ay pinagkakaitan ng pagkain at kabuhayan.

At kung ang ganitong kalagayan ay magpapatuloy, ang mga daliri ay magtitikom at magiging kamao na ipaglalaban ang kanilang karapatang mabuhay na ipinagkakait ng mapang-api at mapagsamantalang lipunan.

This simple illustration of a farmer on the inequality and disparity in our society is descriptive of the situation of the Filipino people in general and of the national ethnic minorities, in particular: the deprivation of the basic needs of the majority of our populace because of the control, ownership and exploitation of our resources by a few whose interests are tied up with foreign economic and political interests.

## *Basic Issues and Problems Affecting the National Ethnic Minorities of the Philippines*

### A. Negrito (Aeta) (Bahuga)

The aborigines who moved around freely using the land now find their land has grown smaller and narrower.

1. Those in the Zambales Mountain Range, Pampanga, Tarlac, Bataan, and Pangasinan are poor, semi-nomadic, build makeshift houses and engage in kaingin, fishing and hunting.

2. Illiteracy is high.
3. In selling their forest products, they are easy prey to unscrupulous *unat* (lowlander) merchants.
4. They have a very vague concept of land ownership and land title. They are easily eased out by others who want to take over their land.
5. Clark Field Air Base reservation has appropriated 55,000 hectares of Negrito land covering the Zambales mountain range.
6. Those who are gathered in reservations round the U.S. bases (Clark, Subic and Cubi) are engaged in scavenging activities and other exploited labor.
7. In the January-February 1980 report of *Tribal Forum* we quote the following: "The military is interested in our land because the soil is good for growing sugar and coconuts. A certain colonel warned us that if we do not vacate our land, our tribe will be exterminated."

#### B. Dumagat

Pockets of Dumagat settlement populate the Sierra Madre range which cuts across Cagayan Valley, Nueva Vizcaya, Nueva Ecija, Quezon, Bulacan, Rizal and Sorsogon.

1. Like the Negritos, the Dumagats are semi-nomadic and engage in hunting and fishing for their living. They have no access to education and most remain illiterate. They are easily cheated by middlemen in the sale of their products and deceived on the claim and ownership over their territory.
2. The Dumagats were ejected by the entry of the Southeastern Timber Corporation, Palanan Lumber Enterprises and a logging concession reportedly run by the military in Ibona, Quezon.
3. Dumagat settlements have also been appropriated by big haciendas like the Soriano-Montenegro Estate (Soriamont). The hacienda which covers 200,000 hectares will be turned into a plantation.
4. An entire Dumagat Village had been uprooted in Barrio Matawi, nine kilometers east of Dingalan, Quezon. Matawi has been chosen as the site for the multi-million peso tourist resort complex by Searanch Corporation. Searanch is allegedly a joint

venture by the Angara family and Australian investors. The displaced Dumagats were not given a single centavo while the Tagalog settlers were given "disturbance payments" of ₱5,000 per family.

5. Seven Dumagat workers of SETIC were cruelly tortured last November 1979 inside the Army barracks in Umiray, General Nakar, Quezon. Being suspected of pilfering company properties, the "water cure" treatment was applied to them.
6. The Dumagats have repeatedly been uprooted from their ancestral lands. Waves of foreign invasion – the Spanish, American and Japanese have banished them out of their communal farmlands and pushed them further back into the mountains. Lowland merchants, land speculators, logging concessions and mining firms are fast eating into whatever source of livelihood there is left to the Dumagats.

### C. Ilongot

In a discussion between Les Plett and Delbert Rice, it was mentioned that the Ilongots who are being served by the New Tribes Mission are now in danger of losing 40,000 hectares of their prime ancestral lands.

### D. Tingguian

1. In 1972, the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources granted Cellophil Resources Corporation a 200,000 hectare logging concession covering four provinces: Abra (92,314 hectares), Kalinga and Bontoc (90,809 hectares), Ilocos Sur (3,930 hectares), Ilocos Norte (10,291 hectares). Most affected by the concession is Abra which is predominantly Tingguian land. Out of 24 towns of Abra, 18 are within the Cellophil concession.

2. How do the Tingguians themselves receive Cellophil's promises of progress, development, hospitals and roads?

"The entry of the Cellophil Resources Corporation into our Municipalities and Barrios will destroy water sheds . . . critical to our water supply for drinking and irrigation . . . will result in pollution and drying up of the rivers and brooks where we catch fish for our daily subsistence.

‘ The cutting of trees from our steep mountains will cause erosion and destroy our fields and farms, depriving us of our livelihood as well as the destruction of our forests.’

‘ The entry of Cellophil will decimate the culture, tradition, customs and other vital interests of our people.’

The Tingguians complain that when Cellophil started buying land at P1.30 per sq. m., it harassed those who refused to sell. Fields were reportedly razed or bulldozed by company men, irrigation waters cut off, small farms fenced all around with barbed wires.

#### **E. Ibaloi**

Some 200 Ibaloi families of Ambuklao were affected and 500 hectares of their land was submerged when the Agro River Basin Development Project was started in 1952 with the construction of the Ambuklao Dam.

Relocation was promised. The first sites in the Allah Valley; Barbong, Nueva Ecija and Lamut, Ifugao were found to be already settled. In 1976, the second relocation scheme pinpointed the Conwep Valley in Nueva Vizcaya. The Ibalois discovered that Conwep is the ancestral land of the Ilongots. In November 1976, Palawan was proposed as the third relocation site. Twenty-three Ibaloi households, out of 56 resettled families returned to Benguet when the land given to them proved to be unfit for agriculture. A potable water supply was absent, food was inadequate and farm implements were unavailable. Before departing for Palawan, the Ministry of Agrarian Reform assured the Ibalois of these provisions.

#### **F. Kalinga and Bontoc**

Because of the determination of Bontocs and the Kalingas to fight for their land, the postponement of all National Power Corporation activities in the Chico Valley was announced on May 22, 1975.

However, the triumph of the Bontocs-Kalingas was shortlived when the work was shifted from Chico II (Bontoc) to Chico IV (Kalinga). The government forces were led by the Presidential Assistance on National Minorities (PANAMIN), which was charged with the task of “minimizing opposition”.

This campaign has been carried out through bribery of local leaders; special agreements with some villages to break the united opposition and resistance, propaganda campaigns, and show-case of relocation sites for cooperating Kalingas.

In 1978 the control of operations in Kalinga was turned over to the military. With this, there has been increasing polarization towards "military solution" to the Chico problem.

#### G. T'boli

Lake Sebu Dam is listed as the first of NEDA plans to construct five great dams and twelve minor dams in Mindanao.

Once started, Lake Sebu Dam will displace 10,000 people, mostly belonging to the T'boli tribe, and the destruction of over 3,000 hectares of prime agricultural land yielding two crops a year.

#### H. Mangyan of Panaytayan, Mindoro Oriental

A situational report given by Fr. Anton Postma refers to land tenure as the main problem confronting the Mangyans. Because of the lack of a strong and stable social organization and lack of education, they are unable to make proper claims to their ancestral territory.

#### I. Palawani

The report of the Les Plitt discusses the land problems of a particular group of Palawani who are being forced out by a settler who is illegally using a pasture lease.

#### J. Ata and the Mansaka-Mandaya

The Ata and the Mansaka-Mandaya tribes had long established their communities in Davao and Cotabato. In the 1930's, migrants from nearby provinces, Visayas and Luzon, came in. Later, the land owned and filled by the Ata and the Mandaya were taken over by the businessman settlers.

In the late 60's, the first banana plantation was developed. In a matter of three to four years, from 1967 to 1970, close to 20,000 hectares of the choice lands in Davao del Sur had been converted to banana plantations. The banana export industry uprooted overnight all the hard labor of the small farmers, tenants and other ethnic minorities. In their place stood the plantations of three great transnational corporations: Del Monte, Dole and United fruits.

### *Legislative and Administrative Policies, Priorities and Programs Affecting The National Ethnic Minorities*

During the American colonial period, the enactment of certain laws,

established and reinforced the ground rules for the ownership, control and utilization of territorial resources.

The Land Registration Act of 1902 required claims over land based on *informacion possessoria*, registration under Spanish mortgage, and imperfect title on possession since 1894. The Cadastral Act of 1907 required cadastral surveys before granting titles to land.

The national ethnic minorities, unaware of the land registration procedure under the 1902 Act and unable to pay the cost of surveys required by the 1907 Act, were slowly and technically deprived of their lands. This allowed educated elites, bureaucrats and American land speculators who were familiar with the bureaucratic procedures to usurp the ethnic groups' lands.

The Public Land Act of 1905 declared as public territories all lands unregistered under the 1902 Act. This Act laid the basis by which the national ethnic minorities were deprived of their claims over their lands.

The Mining Act, also of 1905, declared "all public lands in the Philippines to be free for exploration, occupation and purchase by the citizens of the United States and the Philippines". Benguet Consolidated Inc., the largest gold producer in the country has its origins with 12 claims in 1902 by the American John Husserman.

In 1929, Executive Order No. 217 declared as "unalienable and non-disposable" the Reserve, covering 80% of the entire provinces of Benguet, Ifugao, Mountain Province, Kalinga, Apayao and Mountain areas of Abra, Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, Pangasinan and Nueva Vizcaya.

The Commonwealth Act 137 in 1935 limited and punished those engaged in native mining or gold panning, and prohibited native use of areas covered by logging and mining concessions.

The present Martial Law regime has continued to adopt the basic strategy which maintains and intensifies the colonial policy of primary resource extraction. The Martial Law "development strategy" calls for resource exploitation, the expansion of logging, mining, agribusiness and dam construction, all at the expense of the national ethnic minorities' territories and resources.

A brief look into the laws, policies and priorities set by the present regime, consistently shows that it favors the interests of capitalists, bureaucrats, landlords, corporations (mostly foreign) as well as of its military establishment. The government has treated these territories as unappropriated resources which are tapped for the state and private enterprises (mostly foreign), while the vast majority of the national ethnic minorities are deprived and impoverished.

### *Summary*

A government or administration that is pro-capitalist, pro-landlord,

pro-bureaucrat-capitalist, pro-transnational corporations, pro-agribusiness (plantation) is not for the ethnic minorities.

We have personal and collective responsibilities in identifying the basic issues and problems of the national ethnic minorities, documenting their plight and conditions, analyzing the processes of incursions, deprivation, dislocation and exploitation of these groups. We cannot keep distance from their struggles for survival. We should not forget to see our national ethnic minorities in relation to the majority of our people who are similarly victims of the same social classes and forces which dominate and exploit our society. The liberation and the development of the national ethnic minorities are inseparable from the liberation and development of the peasants, the workers, the urban poor, the fishermen and other oppressed sectors and classes of Philippine society.