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INTERVIEW OF FILIPINO ACTIVIST INTELLECTUAL E. SAN JUAN, Jr. at the Permanent People's Tribunal, The Hague, March 2007

SUBALTERN MOLE BURROWING IN THE 'BELLY OF THE BEAST'

**Interview by Dr. Rainer Werning,
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This interview was conducted in the afternoon of March 22, 2007 during the now historic Permanent People's Tribunal Session 2 on the Philippines held at The Hague, Netherlands. The interviewer is Dr. Rainer Werning, a German political scientist educated - among others - at the universities of Osnabrueck and Muenster. He is distinguished for his book of conversations with *Jose Maria Sison, The Philippine Revolution: The Leader's View (New York & London: Crane Russak, 1989)*, the recent *Handbuch Philippinen* (with Niklas Reese; Horlemann, 2006), and numerous articles published in newspapers and magazines in Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Luxemburg. He has done research at various educational institutions in the Philippines, Japan, and UK. The original interview was recently aired over German public radio (SWR 2).

Professor E. San Juan, Jr. is an internationally renowned Filipino cultural critic residing in the United States. He recently retired from Washington State University and the University of Connecticut as professor of English, comparative literature, and comparative ethnic studies. He was a scholar of the Center for the Humanities, Wesleyan University; Fulbright professor of American Studies at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium, and a fellow of the Rockefeller Study Center at Bellagio, Italy. He has lectured in various universities around the world, including the University of the Philippines and Ateneo de Manila University. He works with the Philippines Forum, New York, and the Philippines Cultural Studies, Connecticut, both of which assisted the People's Tribunal. Among San Juan's numerous books are the forthcoming *In the Wake of Terror: Class, Race, Nation and Ethnicity in the Postmodern World* (Lexington Books); *US Imperialism and Revolution in the Philippines* (Palgrave Macmillan); and *Balikbayang Sinta: An E. San Juan, Jr. Reader* (Ateneo University Press). He was involved in the U.S. anti-martial law movement in the seventies and eighties, and with diverse local/global forums with socialist platforms (among them, Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism, and the journals, Nature Society and Thought and Left Curve). His regular commentaries may be found in BULATLAT and other online magazines (see also www.rizalarchive.blogspot.com <<http://www.rizalarchive.blogspot.com/>>; www.esanjuanjr.com <<http://www.esanjuanjr.com/>>).

San Juan attended the entire weeklong session of the Permanent People's Tribunal (March 21-25, 2007) and consulted with major protagonists in the global resistance against U.S. imperialism and its local allies in the Philippines. The following transcript is a slightly revised version

of the taped interview, edited for style and accuracy. Questions by Dr. Werning (RW) are italicized.

RW: It's more than a century ago when the Americans stepped into the scene in Southeast Asia. Having spent so many years in the US and grown up in the Philippines, what do you think--as far as the US legacy in the Philippines is concerned--are the most outrageous and most critical aspects of U.S. oppression? And do you perceive some good aspects in the almost 50 years of official colonial rule?

Well, the question is large in scope but I think a brief answer would be to say that the Philippines after more than half a century of American colonial domination is still a very undeveloped, more precisely underdeveloped, economy largely agricultural still, in some aspects very backward in terms of technology and of course, it is basically a neo-colony--that is, it is formally independent but the US exerts a deadly stranglehold on its politics and its economy, on both its base and superstructure, especially through the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other multilateral agencies.

Culturally, it is an authentic subaltern, dependent formation. Why? Because most Filipinos now feel that the US seems to be the model of a "good society," affluent and sophisticated, where most Filipinos would like to go and no wonder if you ask a Filipino today, what nationality he would like to be aside from being a Filipino, he would say "American." That is, you know, the next best thing for the Filipino to be is an American—that is, to commit collective suicide and be reborn with another national trapping or identity-- and that in itself encapsulates the achievement of more than one-hundred years of American hegemony in the Philippines. That is why this hullaballo about trans-nationalism, border-crossing mutants without nationality, and "Filipinos" without any nation, is not only silly, highfaluting nonsense, but a symptom of pathetic victimization by the fashionable and trendy globalization ideology and discourse afflicting the intelligentsia at home and also the middle strata and petty bourgeois circles around the planet.

Good aspects? Are you kidding? Well, dialectically, the good aspects stem from the bad, so I will allow our listeners to do the extrapolations.... There is of course a unity of opposites, but at present the contradictions and their possible resolutions insist on their saliency, to which we will patiently attend at length.

RW: Isn't it ironic ... if I am not mistaken the population of the Philippines amounted to something between six and a half million people at the turn of the century around 1900. There are contradictory figures, between around 500,000 thousand up to more than 1 million people were literally butchered among the civilians!

That may be an underestimation. When the U.S. defeated the revolutionary forces of the First Philippine Republic--the Aguinaldo government which

had virtually defeated the Spaniards, it had to exterminate 1.4 million Filipinos in a war that lasted until 1913 because not only the Filipino guerrillas fought for a long time but also the Moros, the Moslems in the south also resisted American military domination and of course, cultural domination, too. We, the national democratic movement at home and abroad, are continuing that “unfinished” revolution. It is a durable tradition of resistance against imperialism, historically the first in Asia, and still continuing with all its vicissitudes, through defeats and resurgence....

I think what happened is that while there was a lot of physical destruction, the more serious effect of US colonization was the loss of a distinctive Filipino sense of identity, what we call a sense of self-determination. And that has been the root cause of the profound suffering but also the long struggle of Filipinos, up to today, to become independent, to exercise the universally recognized right of national self-determination.

And today, of course, we are faced with several successive governments and administrations that have continued to carry out the policies of the U.S. Especially now, in the war against terror, the Arroyo government has been unconscionably complicit with the brutal genocidal war inflicted by the U.S. on the people of Iraq, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Colombia, and so on.

With an unprecedented record of nearly 900 extrajudicial killings, hundreds of forcible disappearances, torture and massacres, the Arroyo regime has been guilty of all these policies in which the state has become so repressive because, well, it has to follow the policies of the US against any kind of resistance to world domination of the US, especially the predatory globalization policies of the World Bank, IMF, and WTO that virtually exercise a deadly control on the Philippine economy.

So I think in some sense, while the Filipino people have survived--in fact the population has increased to 87 or 88 million people now, the whole situation in terms of the economy, as well as its political and cultural impact, has really become insufferable. In other words, the neo-colonial State, with the U.S.-supported AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) and PNP (Philippine National Police) implementing a dual policy of rule by violence and electoral fraud, has continued to prove itself subservient to the U.S. corporate ruling bloc, to follow the policies of successive U.S. administrations, and of course the hegemonic program of the globalized corporate capitalists' interest around the world which is now led by the US. This is one reason why the fight against the Arroyo regime has to involve the struggle against the fascist laws and measures of Washington and the Pentagon, the new Homeland Security State and its legitimization of torture, “rendition,” Guantanamo prisons around the world, and “Balikatan” interventions in Mindanao, Sulu, and all parts of the Philippines. We need to employ all means in the struggle—legal or electoral, armed self-defense, people's justice to resist death-squads, etc.--in order to counter the enemy's

desperately indiscriminate methods of repression and exploitation.

RW: Considering the slaughter of so many people around 1900, how can you explain it – is it embedded in some sort of culture of amnesia, that this atrocity was never properly addressed in Philippine textbooks, curricula, and so on?

That is true. I think you might probably credit the way US colonial policy operated. In the beginning, of course, when they colonized the Philippines, the US government said it was there to liberate the Filipinos from the oppressive rule of the Spaniards. So it had something like what is happening now-- what the US was doing then in 1899 and 1900 up to 1946--and what it is doing in Iraq has some resemblance because recently, before and after the war against Iraq, during the US invasion of Iraq, many policy makers and also publicists in the US began to, you know, recycle the propaganda stereotype that what the US is going to do in Iraq is something like what they did in the Philippines in 1899, 1900, that is to say, to civilize the Filipinos, give them democracy and freedom-- and which is exactly what Bush is claiming to do in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As you know, this is an old story, the “mission civilizatrice” of the European colonial powers carried out in Africa, India, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Oceania. The Spaniards did it through the Church side by side with quite unholy genocidal violence.

Times have changed. Mercantilism was replaced by industrial colonialism, and later what Lenin called finance capitalism, imperialism being the highest stage of monopoly capitalism, with contemporary globalization as a further elaboration of the good old “civilizing mission.”

So I think the way the US operated, then as now, is to hide the actual acts of aggression in fact, genocide in some cases, by invoking all these slogans of freedom and democracy. Today it is “free trade,” individual choice for consumers, freedom to become migrant workers, etc. To repeat, that is the old policy of the pre-capitalist European colonial system, Spain, then France, England and so on, and this has its modern version in globalization discourse today: “the Washington Consensus,” free trade, neoliberalization, deregulation, privatization, and so on, that cannot be defeated simply by mouthing the slogans of the World Social Forum, however right or reasonable they may sound. We need mass mobilization, popular insurgencies across the world.

I would say, what caused the amnesia is the ideological apparatus, with its coercive mechanisms, of the US colonial government in the Philippines, so that quite mediocre administrators as well as stupid, lazy functionaries were able to “educate” millions of Filipinos to believe that the rule under America was for their own individual and collective good. And to some extent, well, compared to the Spaniards, they did institute a universal system of education, built hospitals, roads, etc. needed to establish a dependent neo-colonial order, not

solely for the survival and maintenance of the natives. And they allowed Filipinos to become educated so as to become employees in the government, but these are all part of the change, what I would more accurately describe as a change in the mode of production. Ideology, culture, modes of everyday thinking and behavior, follow this transformation in the social-material relations of production.

The US was a capitalist country at the turn of the century, and it was trying to make the Philippines into a capitalist dependent economy. So that the first thing the colonial rulers had to do was to train people, you know, to discipline the colonized to perform the function of workers and subaltern bureaucrats in a dependent, peripheral capitalist economy. And they did that, they tried to change to some extent feudal institutions that we had inherited from the Spaniards. The U.S. eliminated the preponderant power exercised by the church, they tried to show that individuals in the Philippines could improve their situation, they could become educated and free themselves from bondage from their landlords but it was half-hearted in a way. They only did it in order to develop a “middle class” that would run the government gradually, you know this strata actually became the oligarchy, the rich Filipinos now who were educated under American rule and who now succeeded the American colonial administrators, who now run the government but only under the influence of the US.

There was that ideological control that I think the American colonial system was able to implement successfully in the Philippines. That, in rough summary, explains why Filipinos themselves do not know their history. And that even my parents said, when they were in school, in the 30s and 40s, they knew more about American history than Philippine history. Petty bourgeois parents can recite the names of all the major cities in the US but they hardly know what happened in the Philippines before the Americans came, or for that matter, what happened to Sakay and other insurrectos who carried on the underground resistance, the Colorums, the Sakdals, and so on. So the collective amnesia can be explained by the successful disciplinary regimentation of the collective Filipino psyche (if you can admit this notion) which Renato Constantino called “the mis-education” of Filipinos which still persists. Notice Filipinos from every sector echoing the Wall Street/New York Times praise of the shopping malls scattered around the country which allows consumers of every nationality—of course, those with money—to sample multicultural fashions, cuisines, products from every culture and region—and this is the kind of education with supposedly global aims and orientation imposed by the State on all pedagogical agencies, institutions, etc.

That is one explanation. I suppose the other explanation is that given the poverty, the unemployment in the Philippines, and the fact that there are three million—close to three million Filipinos in the US, there is all this kind of illusion that if Filipinos can leave the Philippines and come to the US, they would attain success and some version of “the good life” first imbibed from TV, Hollywood films,

school textbooks, etcetera, and that is the image that has been projected by Hollywood, by mass advertising in TV and now the Internet, by the Western-controlled corporate media which has, you know, effective hegemonic control of the Philippine media, publications, etc. And so the educational system continues to reinforce the old idea that the American way of life is what the Filipinos should emulate. Actually it is a complicated issue, since capital rules not just by force but by consensus or persuasion—it's more economical, and also more sustainable, than the Arroyo method of brute force—but I would say that those are the main points that I would use to explain why there is this collective forgetfulness, this amnesia.

RW: What do you think – are there other root causes that explain the current stagnation in the Philippines? If, for instance, you compare the isles with other neighbouring countries like Korea in the late 1950s – the Philippines then was something.

Yes, Well, there are some basic political, economic, you might say social conditions that did not change in the Philippines and which changed in countries like South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, and so on. I think, the first thing the most people mention, and I won't elaborate any more on the continued American influence and control over Philippine politics and economics, but that is the general background.

The main point is that the country has not moved out of a kind of semi-feudal situation where you have, you know, extensive agricultural lands still owned by a few families. Now you will remember, in any system that is changing from the old medieval system, the old feudal system to the capitalist mode, you always have a change in the ownership of land, the ownership of the basic resources and means of production. And I think that what happened in South Korea and Taiwan is a good example, because in these socioeconomic formations, before they could develop the initial stage of industrialization, before they could really develop the means, the resources of the country, they had to get rid of the power of the old landlord class, the traditional ruling bloc, because that was the class coalition that prevented any kind of release of all the physical as well as spiritual energies of the people.

And, as everyone knows, we have never had a real land reform program in the Philippines during over half a century of American rule--in converting direct colonial rule to neo-colonial indirect rule, the U.S. had to continue to support an oligarchy, a landlord class to administer the State and its ideological apparatuses. So they prevented any attempt at real land reform.

All land reform programs we have had are really a mockery of any genuine break-up of large estates and distribution of arable land to peasant farmers. Look at Hacienda Luisita, large areas of Negros, Mindanao, and elsewhere. So that is one of the major reasons why the Philippines has not developed and prospered. And that is because we still have a ruling bloc, our local power elite, at least 260 family

dynasties indeed, that are entrenched by feudalized electoral “shows” and that prevent any kind of modernization if you like, modernization of the economy by way of capitalist industrialization....The country continues to have a very unequal division of wealth, and therefore of political power, based on the fact that only a minority owns or controls the large productive resources, primarily land and other natural resources and of course now, a tiny privileged minority owns many of the large businesses, enterprises, banks and they also administer or influence the State agencies, the courts, legislature, barangay trapos, including the military and police.

Based on that—in fact, under Arroyo’s irredeemably corrupt tenure, the conditions are worsening, as IBON researches document the gradual breakdown of the educational and health care systems-- we don’t really have any kind of efficient, modern, self-sufficient industrial economy, the country is plagued with the unrelieved immiseration of the population, dire poverty is almost 70-80%. Mass hunger ravages whole communities. This is not a secret anymore, despite the huge remittance of OFWs, the appreciation of the value of the peso relative to the dollar, and proliferating “call centers” around the country.

The unemployment problem has grown worse. So you have everyday, about three thousand Filipinos leave the country and you have about more than a million people leaving the country every year to find work in the Middle East, in Hongkong, in Taiwan, in Japan, in Singapore, in Europe, practically anywhere in the world—in cruise ships everywhere—you will find Filipino workers, seamen, domestics, etc.

So we have the continued rule of an oligarchic minority in the Philippines, they control the land, the resources, so there is an unequal distribution of wealth, there is poverty, in fact, endemic mass hunger now threatens the survival of whole communities. Alejandro Lichauco, one of our few progressive economists, has pointed out recently that hunger has become a very very serious problem in the Philippines, which has never been a real problem even in the worst time of the Marcos period. Hunger has deepened and widened, and so this is a clear symptom of intensifying inequality and the repressiveness of the whole system, politically and economically, and that is why I am told that most Filipinos have given up hope. Someone said the Philippines is the only nation in the world distinguished by the fact that most of the citizens want to flee, to escape... Have we come to this impasse, this crisis?

The Marcos dictatorship, in response to backwardness at home and corporate globalization abroad, started this whole process of encouraging migration, instigating people to seek work abroad, instead of developing the economy to provide jobs at home. And the successive administrations, from Aquino to Ramos, Estrada and now Arroyo, have not initiated any kind of real transformation of the economy for the reasons I have already adduced. They couldn’t, whatever the good intentions of some technocrats and the hired intelligentsia. In fact, these neo-colonial “puppets,” as Sison would call them, have suppressed any

kind of change, real democratization of the political economy, demonstrating total servility to the policies imposed by the US through direct influence on the AFP/PNP, the State administrators, and through the IMF, World Bank, WTO, etc.

And this is the explanation why we have now more poverty and exploitation, dialectically more protest and resistance (both legal and armed), and more inhumanity, thanks to Arroyo's killing machine and its U.S.-sponsored terrorist operations.

RW: Sonny, you have been visiting the Philippines frequently ... I mean retrospectively, how would you differentiate the Marcos era from the current GMA era?

Well, the Marcos government started out really with many grandiose programs of the "New Society" because Marcos, although he was elected in the old so-called democratic system, had I think four years of the presidency. And he was re-elected again for another four years but it was through, a kind of questionable process, well, cheating, actually. Elections in the Philippines since nominal independence have been characterized by fraud, manipulation, bribery, coercion, all kinds of trickery and deception—the tried and true formula of "guns, goons, and gold" that you will encounter again in this coming May election.

When his second term was ending, Marcos imposed martial law in 1972 and the intention there was to rule without any election but also to get rid of other landlord families, the other parts of the oligarchy because Marcos was (in his self-interpretation) not a part of the old landlord system. And in fact, his intention in the beginning was rather admirable. Some observers thought that Marcos wanted to "improve" the whole country in terms of a little bit of industrialization. And he tried very hard under crony capitalism to establish industries but that did not work out because first of all the World Bank and all other sources of financing and investments dried up and the whole machinery of corruption and subservience to U.S. dictates prevented any real change. So the Marcos dictatorship was forced to shift strategy, employing more violence than persuasion (through bribery, rewards, etc.) In the beginning people approved it. I mean, there was a kind of sentiment that Marcos was doing good, in a way -- he abolished many of the private war lords, and people felt that there was peace and order--recall that the New People's Army established in 1969 was no threat at all. So, I think there was this attempt to show that the dictatorship was going to improve the lives of people ---well, it didn't turn out that way. It was foolish then to believe that it would. Incredibly a whole stable of intellectuals hired by Marcos and who are still somehow publicly esteemed is nostalgic about "the good old days." By 1986, after Ninoy Aquino was killed in 1983, there was a whole popular sentiment to get rid of Marcos because of the economic failure, and the elite and middle strata, including the left, joined the February "People Power" revolt in 1986.

The Marcos period was no doubt a harsh period. Thousands of people were tortured, detained, killed, and disappeared. Accounts of the crimes by Marcos' henchmen and the military have not been settled up to now, indemnities ordered by the court have not been carried out. Not a single torturer has been punished. Injustice still reigns. The Moro people suffered hundreds of thousands of dead, countless more maimed and orphaned—civilians now treated as “collateral damage.” But now we are in the Arroyo....

RW: (Mic problems) OK, we may continue...

After February 1986, Marcos was rescued by the Reagan administration. Cory Aquino, the widow of the slain politician Benigno Aquino, took over and during her rule, there was a moment in which she could have begun reforming the system in a radical direction because in effect she administered an extra-constitutional government. But it was never revolutionary in intent or direction. How could it be when the U.S. was its patron? The old politicians came back and we had a restoration of what is called ‘elite democracy.’ So from the Aquino government to the successive regimes of Fidel Ramos, who was the general under Marcos, and then Estrada, and up to Arroyo, the Philippine economy became more and more...what I am trying to say is that the change from the time of Marcos to Arroyo is the time in which the Philippine economy worsened, deteriorated actually. Because, among other things, the semi-feudal system (not just the economic but chiefly the political instrumentalities) continued, there was more and more impoverishment in the countryside, and no real land reform program was carried out.

All that the successive neo-colonial regimes could do was to continue the old system of producing goods for export, only benefiting the propertied few, and also this time with assembly plants coming from the investment of trans-national corporations. The international labor market changed. When China opened up its economy to trans-national corporations in the 80s and 90s, most of the investments dried up in the Philippines and they went to China and to other countries. And today, the system survives with the help of the remittance (amounting to 12 billion dollars annually) sent by 10 million Filipinos abroad—the OFWs (Overseas Filipino Workers) today constitute a new sector of the economy—who are the most reliable earner of foreign exchange. Which means that the unjust and backward system in the Philippines can continue supporting a minority with its obscene outlandish “life-style” by the sacrifices and sweat of ten million Filipinos abroad who send a large part of their earnings to help their families. The economy has deteriorated because land that was used to grow staple crops like rice and corn are no longer producing them so the country has to import food-- the Philippines is no longer sufficient in food and this is a symptom of an unequivocally grave crisis.

Now what happened is that while the Arroyo regime was ushered in by a kind of parody of the February 1986 revolt, the previous government was very corrupt and there was a whole popular sentiment to replace him.

Arroyo assumed power in 2001 but in the 2004 election, she cheated flagrantly; she was exposed by a reformist section of the military in the "Hello Garci" episode—Arroyo's phone call to her officials to fabricate a million votes in her favor. The majority of Filipinos recognize that Arroyo has no legitimacy, she has aroused a lot of protests due to rampant corruption by her officials, relatives and cronies, aside from being subservient to the policies of the Bush administration and its "war on terror." Arroyo now depends on the support of the military, especially on a clique of officials implicated in the election scandals.

In the last two years, there was a revolt by low-ranking officers in the military—proof that the AFP is not united in supporting her, and she has now appointed many generals and retired military personnel who have expressed support for her, and she has rewarded them so it is a government that is now reliant on the military in suppressing any kind of opposition and this explains over 800 extra-judicial killings or assassinations, the abduction and torture and imprisonment of many legal personalities, activists of the party-list and other civil-society groups. And there is the continuing harassment and brutalization of people by the military, police, and their paramilitary thugs.

In effect, as I have written elsewhere,* the Arroyo regime is very weak, it is an illegitimate regime, it relies on brute force, legal and illegal—the entire machinery of the Dept of Justice is working to suppress dissent and penalize the opposition. And I think, gradually, people will rise up against it. Because so far there has been no improvement in the economy, poverty is rampant, more and more people are leaving the Philippines and so you have a very serious crisis and consequently the US has intervened in overt and covert ways, as it has in the past (for example, during the Fifties to combat the Huk uprising), to support the Arroyo military because right from the beginning from the time when the Philippines became formally independent, in 1946, the AFP has depended on US logistics, weapons, aid and all kinds of training of officers so that the whole Establishment is considered really an extension of Washington. So you have a Philippine military which carries out the advice of the Pentagon with the local supervision by Arroyo's henchmen.

And so the present regime relies on the military and bureaucracy to maintain the neo-colonial order, with the support of a tiny fraction of the elite. Evidently the elite bloc is divided and we will witness more and more the signs of intra-elite conflict in this May election, which in one aspect is really a competition among sections of the elite. Obviously the Arroyo clique doesn't have the full and unconditional support of the business and the landlord class, riven as they are by antagonisms at every level. Meanwhile, because of that her rule has become desperate and precarious, which is why she is killing, kidnapping and arresting her critics and that is where we are now, that is why the People's Tribunal, heeding the appeal of Filipino organizations, is trying the Arroyo regime for its massive human-rights violations with

the support of the US, that is why I think it is very crucial historic event and I think the Filipinos who are here have united together with the help of the solidarity of the Europeans and people around the world, including Bishop Tutu of South Africa who unreservedly endorsed the principles of this tribunal... We are here trying to mobilize the world community to express outrage at the barbaric rule of the Arroyo government backed by the Bush administration—an insult and offense to all civilized peoples everywhere.

RW: Sonny, what could be the reason why there is much less outrage over the killings now than there was at the very end of the Marcos dictatorship?

Well, I venture the opinion that there were all kinds of atrocities during the Marcos dictatorship but I think quantitatively it did not reach the proportion that it has in this current dispensation. Second, perhaps there is much more fear among certain sectors of the citizenry that if they express open criticism against Arroyo regime, they would be killed or forcibly disappeared. A third reason, I think, the ruling class, part of the ruling class is also afraid if they openly and much more strongly express opposition to the Arroyo regime, the Left or what we might call the popular insurgency, that is, the national-democratic insurgency would become more powerful and would take over, and so there is some anxiety among the relatively secure middle strata—how infinitely precarious is their status in the midst of the global crisis of capital—and, of course, among the comprador and tributary classes that the insurgency would benefit from the destabilization of the Arroyo government.

As you know, despite the counterinsurgency plans of various administrations, from Aquino to Ramos, Estrada and now Arroyo, the insurgency (including the Moro struggle for self-determination) has continued to grow, it suffered a bit under the Aquino regime, but it has rebounded because...well, because many people feel that there is no solution, no legal or peaceful solution—which can only do so much, given the fascistic and terrorist framework of elite thinking—except through a radical change of the whole system. So I think that explains one of the reasons why there has been no open support from the vacillating middle-strata. But, again, this is a matter of timing, susceptible to sudden and unpredictable shifts in the alignment of political forces.

The second reason is that after 9/11, we have been in a period of extreme reaction, that is to say the US supports the Arroyo regime with its systematic extrajudicial killings—well, there is a deliberate policy to demonize the resistance, the popular forces under the slogan of “communists as terrorists,” therefore open to brutal treatment by the State. There is a recent bill that was passed, the anti-terror bill, euphemistically called “Human Security Act,” which is patterned after the USA Patriot Act that Arroyo will use to justify what she is doing now, and more after July. Dr. Carol Araullo, chairperson of BAYAN, has described this legislation as a “license to kill” dissenters and all advocates of participatory democracy.

So I think, in a way, the fear is there, the division among the ruling classes, the hesitancy among the middle strata to join and express more public opposition [the mass indignation at this May's electoral cheating may indicate the beginning of a shift in the political climate]. But I think, there is a tendency, I mean, up to now as we are speaking, there is a strong public consensus against Arroyo's human rights violations. Even among the traditional opposition [note the Supreme Court's recent ruling in favor of the Batasan 6] and some sectors of the business class because they see that the more the abuses by the military and the police are exposed and criticized, the more the prospect for investments and business may suffer. So in terms of practical reasons, part of the ruling class would like Arroyo removed and they are supporting this democratic movement to get rid of the military abuses under Arroyo as well as the corruption which has become institutionalized as a way of life, a standard *modus operandi*—of course, it has always been in this neo-colonial order, but perhaps not so vulgarized or normalized without delicadeza.

In fact people have become nostalgic--they say that Marcos looks good now that Arroyo is around because people always forget the miserable times, the painful experiences. Of course under Marcos it was very harsh and you know, brutalizing (have you seen Lino Brocka's *Ora Pro Nobis*, a film which is still publicly banned?), but now they feel they are facing a government which (unlike that of Marcos who was able to some extent rein in the military) is beholden to the military, or manipulated by a few thoroughly corrupt officials--anyway, it seems that the military has more say in the Arroyo regime than before. And so, we see the making of a fascist militaristic regime whose evil, I think, most Europeans would understand, given their historic experience. We Filipinos are just beginning to learn the lessons of the ordeals we suffered under the Marcos dictatorship.

RW: Whatever you think was left out, please feel free to make additional comments or add what you consider to be of importance.

Being in Europe, one always has the impression that one can be more free here, relatively speaking. Well, I am a Filipino residing in the US which is now (according to Noam Chomsky) one if not the leading terrorist state in the world... I am referring specifically to the Bush administration...coming to Europe is a kind of moving to a place which has more space, let us say, fresh air. Maybe this is a temporary illusion, as love for an ideal often proves to be.... Nonetheless we are hopeful that even in the Netherlands where some of our compatriots have been labelled as terrorists-- I think we are receiving generous expressions of support from ordinary citizens and progressive circles. So I think Europe --at least, some communities here may still preserve and practice a tradition of humanist thought and conduct that may give migrant Filipinos, not just the activists, more encouragement and hope. With the help of the solidarity of our European friends we can exert more pressure on the US government (which has now become the most backward

politically) to stop aiding the illegitimate Arroyo government from brutalizing Filipinos.

Living in the “belly” of the imperial beast, we Filipinos in the U.S. are confronted with class and racial violence every day. Opposition to the repressive laws of the USA Patriot Act and to the ongoing war is weak, at this current conjuncture, and the left or progressive organizations have not yet fully recovered from decades of neoconservative, rightist devastation of the welfare State. The mass media is controlled by the corporate globalizing elite intent on advancing U.S. military and political hegemony on everyone through preemptive strikes, smart bombs, nuclear threats, economic blackmail, and so on. And so progress here is like the “old mole” burrowing underground, in the belly of the leviathan monster—to mix Marx’s and Jose Marti’s famous metaphors.

In any case, we are thankful to our friends in Germany, Holland, Belgium and throughout the European community that we are holding this tribunal and on behalf of my co-workers in the U.S., I thank my friend Rainer Werning and other revolutionary comrades everywhere for this opportunity to advance the cause of social justice and human rights in the Philippines where the class and nationalist struggle is reaching a decisive point of no return.

• See the following online resources:

<<http://www.countercurrents.org/juan150507.htm>>

<<http://www.indymedia.le/article/82578>>

<<http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/sanjuan180207.html>>

radicalnotes.com <<http://radicalnotes.com/>> /content/view/48/39

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* <http://www.bulatlat.com/2007/06/burrowing-belly-beast>

* <http://rizalarchive.blogspot.com> <<http://rizalarchive.blogspot.com/>>