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The CIA and asylum rights

AT A TIME when the rights of refugees are under threat throughout Europe, a sinister incident has taken place in The Netherlands. On October 31, 1991, a representative of the Groen Links (the Green Left) in the Dutch parliament called upon the Minister of the Interior to account for the role played by the secret service, the BVD, in relation to political refugees, and the freedom of action accorded to the CIA in the Netherlands.¹

The government is supposed to give legal protection to seekers of exile resident in the country. But it has now been shown that the BVD delivers refugees directly into the hands of the CIA.

PAUL PETITJEAN

NATHAN Quimpo, a member of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDF), was stopped in the street on October 10 of this year by two people introducing themselves in the name of the Dutch Ministry of the Interior. He agreed to speak to them, thinking that it concerned his request for asylum. It transpired that one of the men belonged to the BVD and another to the CIA. The American dominated the interview from start to finish, hoping that Quimpo would turn informer. The latter immediately spoke to his friends, then got in touch with a television team.

Meeting filmed

The second meeting, in the cafeteria of a hotel, was recorded and filmed by the TV crew. The CIA agent offered \$1,000 to Quimpo, promising him as much each month, guaranteed him that he could travel and dangled before him the possibility of obtaining a passport. When the TV crew revealed their presence, he turned to threats, saying "Quimpo, you are finished". The same evening, the affair was made public, during a news broadcast.²

These revelations embarrassed the Dutch government, as much on the legal as the political and moral planes. The Dutch BVD was made to look like a mere transmission belt in the service of Washington. The functionaries of the Ministry of the Interior have handed a refugee, who is supposed to be under their protection, over to the CIA, an enemy organization of the NDF if ever there was one. Nathan Quimpo asked to be given asylum in April 1990. The government has still not granted it, although he fulfils the criteria demanded.

Thus he has been without status for a year and a half, without knowing what his future will be. The secret services are thus using the situation of weakness and uncertainty in which refugees find themselves to exercise pressure against them and manipulate them. Moreover, the CIA agent seemed to be aware of what Quimpo had said in confidence to the Ministry of Justice in support of his application, whereas these proceedings are supposed to be secret.

A series of lies

Obligated to explain herself before parliament, the Minister of the Interior, Ms. Dales, told a series of lies. She claimed that the CIA agent had said he had no powers so far as passports were concerned, whereas the recording of the interview demonstrated the contrary, and that he had not said to Quimpo that he was "finished" but rather that he was "fired".³

She attempted to justify the cooperation of her services with the CIA with the ridiculous claim that the New People's Army (NPA, a guerilla organization which is a part of the NDF) was preparing the assassination of American citizens in Europe, as well as an attack on the Dutch embassy in Manila, and that the National Democratic Front was nothing more than a "terrorist" organization.

The National Democratic Front quickly responded that it was not a terrorist organization but a liberation movement, that the NPA had never in its history carried out a military operation outside of Philippine territory and that it had no reason to attack the Dutch embassy in the Philippines at a time when it has just opened an office in Utrecht, in the Neth-

erlands.⁴

Ms. Dales had to admit that other refugees in the Netherlands had been contacted by the BVD. As a representative of Amnesty International put it, the whole procedure of demanding asylum has been put in question by the Dutch Ministry of the Interior. What refugee will agree to tell the truth about his circumstances if he knows that the secret services will use it against him?

Government fabrication feared

It is also to be feared that the government, in order to extricate itself from this situation, will fabricate a dossier against the representation of the NDF in the Netherlands and will seek to make Nathan Quimpo pay dearly for his integrity. Quimpo's situation is today more precarious than ever.

Arrested in the Philippines under Marcos, he has been tortured. Numerous members of his family have been harassed and one of his brothers has been killed. He attempted in vain to pursue his activities legally after the fall of the dictatorship in 1986. Threatened by the army he had to return to clandestinity, then go into exile. Today there is a price on his head in the Philippines. If he is expelled, he risks immediate arrest, indeed assassination by "vigilante" groups.⁵

Numerous organizations have protested against the policy of the Dutch Ministry of the Interior in relation to refugees. The television chain that revealed the affair has issued a denial of Ms. Dales' declarations on the basis of the documents in its possession. Representatives of three opposition parties, from both left and right, have demanded more information. The affair should then shortly be brought up again in parliament.

As the European Community "harmonizes" its policy in relation to asylum seekers, "the Quimpo affair" creates an important precedent. Political refugees need legal protection! ★

1. BVD; Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst (Internal Security Services). CIA; Central Intelligence Agency, the principal secret service of the United States.

2. During the "Achter het Nieuws" ("Behind the news") programme broadcast by the VARA chain, Nederland 2, on October 26, 1991.

3. The Minister of the Interior refused to receive the transcript of the interview that the television chain offered to fax him, preferring to rely exclusively on the statements of the BVD agent.

4. Statements of the NDF dated October 28 and 30 and November 1. In fact it is the Aquino government and the Philippine far right who are putting pressure on the Dutch government to close the NDF office. It is hard to see why the NDF would offer such a pretext for its expulsion from the Netherlands.

5. Nathan Quimpo has never belonged to the NPA or participated in military operations. He has been active on the political scene in the framework of the NDF. He is accused of having written numerous articles under the pen name of 'Nathan' in the magazine *Debate*, published in the Netherlands (see the article on the debates on the Philippines published in IV 211).