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HISTORY OF CHICO RIVER PROJECT

PATRICIO GUYGUYON

In 1962, the National Power Corporation made a study on the hydro potential of the Chico River. And in 1965, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation made a study on the Cagayan River Basin resources. The Cagayan River has the Chico River as one of its tributaries.

In 1964, when the NPC made the first attempt to survey the Chico in Kalinga, the Kalinga of Kagalwan tried to prevent the survey. And according to the people, the NPC and the people of Kagalwan made an agreement that the NPC would exclude Kagalwan from the survey. And at that time, the cost benefit equation did not favor the construction of the Chico Dam. It was more cost than benefit.

In June 1973, Lanmayor International, an engineering company of Germany made a technical pre-feasibility study on the hydro electric development of the Chico River Dam. This company proposed the construction of four dams along the Chico River. Two dams would be built in Bontoc territory and another two in Kalinga territory. Chico I would be built in Bontoc; Chico II in the municipality of Gadangat near the barrio of Kadwagan and Anabel; Chico III, right across the border of Kalinga, that is in Basao; Chico IV, in Tomiangan where the two rivers meet, the Chico and the Basil.

From the study of Lanmayor, the total power potential would be 1,010 megawatts. Chico II was found to be the most economical. In the following year, 1974, the Philippine government applied to the government of Germany for \$74,415,000 to finance Chico II. Next in priority was Chico IV.

Now what would these four dams mean in terms of lands to be affected? According to the paper prepared by Lanmayor the total affected area would be 3,419 sq. kms. On record, the families to be affected are: Chico II would dislocate about 500 families directly; Chico IV would affect 672 families directly and about 300 more indirectly. And there was an estimate done by people in

Kalinga who tried to reckon the value of the ricefields alone that would be affected. This would amount to ₱69,750.00.

Now I'll try to describe to you the events that followed the Lanmayor study. I'll divide the narration of events into three periods. The first period covered October 1973 to October 1975. The main actors there in the area would be the National Power Corporation, the local governments -- provincial and municipal -- and the local PC Command. Of course the people were also main actors. The second period which covered October 1975 to June 1978 is called the Panamin period. The Panamin entered Kalinga in October 1975 and left in June 1978 by Presidential Order. I'll give the main events from the government side, the covert actions of government agencies and the people's response to the government troops.

In October 1973, the Philippines, just like the other countries, felt the oil crisis. And the government had to look for new sources of cheap energy. And so the study of Lanmayor was just on time. This time with the rising cost of the importation of oil, Chico Dams I-IV would provide cheaper energy than imported oil. And so in 1974, the National Power Corporation was sent to the area. Survey teams went to Bontoc and Kalinga. There were meetings held in the two provinces in order to inform the local government officials of the plans to survey, to make further study based on the Lanmayor recommendations. Already here in the first meetings in Bontoc, we are aware that the Bontoc people were suspicious of the plans. And when the first survey team tried to survey the Chico area of Bontoc, they met with opposition. There were reports of Bontoc women meeting the NPC survey team and driving them off, with the men armed with spears and bolos standing by on the ready just in case something would happen to their women.

In Kagalwan, Kalinga, the people tried to prevent the survey. And since some NPC teams were accompanied by soldiers there were incidents between soldiers and the people. On one occasion two boys of Kagalwan were made to stand with coconut on their heads and the soldiers used them for William Tell practice.

From March to July 1974, five delegations of Bontoc and Kalinga tried to see the President in Malacañang. Remember this was the second year of Martial Law. The five delegations tried to see the President. And we are aware of only one occasion where the President met them and dismissed their opposition to the dam project by saying their objections were only sentimental. He appealed to them for their patriotism as they have shown in World War II. But they were sent home some with sardine and clothes to pacify them. But the sardines and clothes were not accepted by the people.

Then in 1975, the NPC still tried to make surveys from time to time. And at one time they had to resort to aerial survey by helicopter because they could not do surveys on land.

In January 1975, the issues between the Bontoc and Kalinga and the Government finally broke out into the mass media. Maricor Carpan wrote an open letter to Bishop Claver about the Chico situation. And Bishop Claver from Bukidnon went to Bontoc (he is from Bontoc anyway), dialogued with his people and came out with an open letter to the President. This came out also in print.

Almost at the same time, Prof. Joel Rocamora was writing on the Chico issue in the magazine "Asian Alternative." I don't know if it was for this or for other activities that he was tagged a subversive. But Maricor Carpan and Bishop Claver would be called subversives from that time on.

In the meantime among the people themselves in May 1975, one hundred and fifty Bontocs met in Manila on a conference they called the Bojong Conference. It was called after their Bodong, their peace pact. So in that Conference, they vowed to oppose the dam project and to punish any of the tribesmen to both tribal groups who would join any activities that would help the construction of the dam project.

There were so much agitation from then on that in the latter part of May, Alejandro Melchor himself went to Bontoc, had an ocular survey, and interviewed people. And then he announced the suspension of the NPC activities in the area and the withdrawal of men and equipment from the Chico area. And so the Bontoc and Kalinga felt victorious. They felt that their opposition finally got a hearing from the government. And they erected three monuments at three dam sites. On those three monuments they quoted the words of the President, that is, that he is not willing to destroy the cultural heritage of the people; and the words of Bishop Claver; and their own words during their conference.

But while they were celebrating their victories in July, a project was set up in Kalinga. I don't know which agency it was but it was called project Mampiyaan. This was a human settlement committee for relocation of people to be affected by Chico IV. In response two months later as they saw the workings of the Mampiyaan Project, the Kalingas held a Bodong among the affected villages. And there they specified their rejection of the Mampiyaan project and they branded as traitors all those who would be acceptors of this Project. And they also vowed to treat the traitors according to their usual tribal specifications on the treatment of traitors.

And so here ends the first period. It was the time of NPC activities, with the help of local government officials and PC soldiers of both commands, the Bontoc PC Command and Kalinga PC Command. On the other side were the Bontocs and Kalingas who on several occasions wrote their statement of opposition or sent delegation to Manila to see the President, or among themselves held Bodong to strengthen their opposition.

Now we come to the second period, the Panamin period. This is from October 29, 1975 to June 20, 1978. On October 29, the advance party of the Panamin arrived in Kalinga. They were followed a few days later, on November 5 by Secretary Manuel Elizalde. In public speeches they told the people of Kalinga that they were on a fact-finding mission. In their first meeting, Elizalde claimed that he had no knowledge of the dam problem of the people and that he was there only to assist them. But strangely, he insisted on the village elders everywhere in the affected area to endorse him and the Panamin to represent the people's interest with the President. He insisted on a signed statement to this effect. On October 30, just the day after the first Panamin party arrived, ninety-five Bontoc and Kalingas met to assess the coming of this new agent. And since they were not knowledgeable about the intentions of the new agent, they took the position "don't take any pay from them."

On the second week of December, there was a split in the Kalinga opposition. Some local government officials, provincial as well as municipal, and former politicians went along with the Panamin party, accepted their promises of positions or jobs or money and joined them in their activities, while the majority of the Kalinga remained suspicious.

Also, strangely, the Panamin did not have any party going to the Bontoc area at that time. There were no attempts to go to Sadanga barrios, to Anabel or to Bontoc itself. The Panamin activities had been confined to Kalinga.

Now during the second week of December 1975, Elizalde got together one hundred and fifty Kalinga delegates promising them that he would take them to see the President in Manila so they could tell him about their opposition to the dam project. And so he took them on December 5 to Manila. He housed them according to the delegates in four different hotels, kept them there day and night. And every day and night throughout the whole period of four or five days, he put pressure on them to sign a statement of consent to the Chico Dam Project. And finally on the fifth day when all except one delegate signed the document, he presented them in Malacañang.

It was on that occasion that the President held a celebration with them and signed the Presidential Decree No. 848 declaring the Chico area the KSDR, the Kalinga-Special Development Region to be under the sole authority of Panamin. Also on the occasion he cancelled Dam III, the dam in Batao, and ordered the lowering of the water level for Chico IV.

Now the Kalinga went back home and they could be hardly accepted by the people once they found out what happened in Manila. A few days after the delegation left Manila, Elizalde went back to Kalinga, this time he was with a very heavily armed military escort. There were two helicopters hovering over the convoy of vehicles. There were jeeploads of soldiers and truckloads of supplies, and people claimed they even saw a machine gun. So it was a different way of arriving in Kalinga territory from the first time that Elizalde and his group went there. So the Kalinga, once they found out what happened with their delegates in Manila did not want to cooperate with any of the activities of the Panamin. There were meetings called by Panamin. These were boycotted. There were community projects announced by Panamin. Very few joined and those few joined because of the job opportunity. Then in January 1976, because the Kalinga opposition was still quite strong, Letter of Instruction No. 359 ordering the arrest of dam meddlers was issued. This included foreign missionaries or other visitors who might want to agitate the people.

In February 1976, Elizalde made the barrio of the cancelled Dam III a model Panamin barrio. He organized there a civil home defense force of sixty-two men giving them sixty-two rifles. While in the other barrios, the people crystallized their opposition in the slogans "Panamin derecho," "Panamin Bullshit." They were so disappointed with what happened and what was happening in the next barrio, Batao, that the slogan came to be very common among Kalinga oppositionists. It expressed their attitude towards the Panamin. Since it was the end of the school year, February-March, this was the time of campaign for Panamin scholarships for the following year. So scholarship were promised to every child of every family of the affected area. And in the meantime, it also organized the YPOK — Young Pangats of Kalinga. These are young people, especially students, who were organized to be, as later to be found out, spies everywhere for giving information to Panamin about activities of the people, or of opposition support groups. Even the Bishop's residence in Baguio was also to be spied upon.

On March 15, the Kalinga leaders met in Baguio to strategize for an organized opposition. And they came out with three resolutions in their meeting: first, to work for the retraction of the first consent of those who went to Manila with the Panamin; second, to work for the resignation of Panamin employees – the Kalingas who became employees of Panamin; third, to make use of the Bodong system to deal with Kalinga traitors. And they worked on these three resolutions during the following months.

Now, besides the National Power Corporation, there was the Panamin and the local PC. Later on these would be reinforced with the 55th Battalion which would serve until November 1977. In November 1977, the 60th Battalion took the place of the 55th Battalion.

Meantime among the people, they held a lot of demonstrations like dismantling the camps of the NPC and the PC at the dam sites of the Chico IV. And for this as well as for grabbing the survey instruments of NPC, about one hundred eighty of the Kalingas were detained. Fifty of them for eight months in Camp Olivas, and one hundred in the Bulanao PC stockade.

This narration of the story simply demonstrates a show of force by the government side during the second period, and a show of opposition from the people's side which got more and more violent. The people would be joined here in the later part of 1977 by the NPA. And just to cut it short, last month the Panamin was withdrawn from Kalinga. Five hundred thirty-seven (537) employees of Panamin were laid off.

There are speculations among the people that the pullout of Panamin might mean heavier militarization or a complete take over of Kalinga by the military. So far these are the main events that I could describe about the Chico River Project.

TO KNOW THE MEANING OF THE CHICO PROJECT

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The first part of my paper deals with what Fr. Guyguyon had talked about this afternoon. I'm sorry I would like to go directly to