

Let Us Celebrate 20 Years of Struggle !



(Speech delivered at the 20th National Democratic Front [NDF] anniversary celebration in Brussels, Belgium, April 23, 1993.)

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Twenty years ago, the National Democratic Front (NDF) of the Philippines was born. Let us celebrate twenty years of revolutionary struggle of the Filipino people!

At no time in the history of the Filipino people have the revolutionary forces been able to achieve the breadth and depth they have attained so far. In practically all the provinces throughout the country, there are revolutionary mass organizations, organs of political power, agrarian reform, health, educational and cultural programs, units of the New People's Army (NPA), basic units and leadership organs of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), and units of other NDF-allied organizations. This breadth and depth is also shown in the wide variety and number of allied organizations in the NDF.

This breadth and depth was achieved in a life-and-death struggle against the forces of the Marcos dictatorship, the 'total war' machine of the Aquino

regime, and the current intensification of 'total war' with 'psywar' of the Ramos regime, all of these with the backing of the world's biggest military power – US imperialism.

These are achievements not only of the NDF's 20 years of struggle. Before the birth of the NDF, 12 years of struggle had been carried out by anti-imperialist forces who launched anti-imperialist mass movements on March 14, 1961. On that day, a powerful demonstration of young men and women in the halls of Congress stopped the hearings of the Committee on Anti-Filipino Activities. This Committee aimed to harass students, teachers, and others to prevent them from expressing their national democratic aspirations. As the revolutionary mass movement grew, legal national democratic organizations emerged such as the Kabataang Makabayan (KM, Patriotic Youth), the Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan (MAKIBAKA, Patriotic Movement of New Women), and the Christians for National Liberation (CNL). These are now allied organizations of the NDF. In the meantime, the CPP was reestablished in 1968 and it founded the NPA in 1969.

Why and how did we achieve this breadth and depth?

First of all, because the Filipino revolutionary masses have persevered in revolutionary struggle through all these years.

Why with all the risks and difficulties have the Filipino masses joined the national democratic revolution and persevered in it? It is because their fundamental aspirations are responded to by the revolution. Take, for example, the peasants. They constitute the biggest part of the Philippine population. Since time immemorial, when their lands were taken away by the colonialist and later by the neo-colonialist and land-grabbers, they have yearned to own and till their piece of land. I remember soon after Martial Law was declared in 1972, a peasant in the southern part of Negros said to me: "As long as there is air in my nose, I will never leave my land!" When the CPP issued its "Revolutionary Guide for Land Reform" in September 1972, the peasants enthusiastically studied and implemented it.

Immediate problems of the people are addressed by the Filipino revolutionaries. In the early years, small teams of the CPP and the NPA integrated with the peasant population in the villages, living with politicized relatives and friends. They participated in planting and harvesting, cutting firewood, hauling water, and other tasks. They systematically conducted their

social investigation and discreetly provided political education to a group of reliable peasants. They pinpointed the immediate and urgent problems.

One of the immediate problems often met was that of cattle rustling -- the stealing of the carabaos of the peasants. The carabao is a much needed help to the peasant. It is almost like a close friend. When a cattle rustling syndicate operated in an area, it became a heavy and immediate problem of the peasants. The revolutionary unit discussed with the peasant group how to handle the problem. They did not take on the whole syndicate; they made it known that ordinary members of the syndicate would not be punished; only the leader should be punished if he refused to leave the area and stop his anti-people activities. Once the leader was neutralized, the ordinary members easily left the area or changed their ways.

By upholding the fundamental aspirations and helping resolve the immediate and urgent problems of the peasants, by not confronting whole syndicates but rather narrowing the target instead to the diehards, and offering leniency to ordinary members, the CPP and NPA were able to grow steadily in strength.

Utilizing Mao's theory of people's war and applying it creatively to the concrete conditions in the Philippines, the CPP combined armed struggle, agrarian revolution, and base building. Base building is the combination of building revolutionary mass organizations of peasants, women, youth, workers, cultural groups, and others, and the setting up of organs of political power.

Health is both a long-term aspiration and an immediate problem of the toiling masses in the Philippines. The majority of those who die are not even able to see a doctor. The government's health service delivery has practically collapsed in the countryside. Hence, revolutionary health care, in the form of people's clinics, the use of medicinal herbs, training of medics and paramedics, and the use of acupuncture, is a crucially important revolutionary task.

So is education. In many areas, there are literacy programs conducted together with revolutionary education. In some areas, primary schooling is being offered by the revolutionary forces.

The main mass campaign in the countryside, however, is that of agrarian revolution. This consists mostly of the minimum program of lowering land rent, raising farmworkers' wages, reducing or eliminating usury, and forming

cooperatives. The maximum program of land confiscation and its free distribution is limited to cruel landlords and landgrabbers and applied only in exceptional cases. The Northern Luzon revolutionary forces, upon summing up 20 years of agrarian revolutionary work, concluded that 500,000 peasants in their area have benefitted from agrarian revolution, mostly through the minimum program.

The Legal Democratic Movement in the Urban Areas

Together with the revolutionary work in the rural areas was the development of the legal democratic movement in the urban areas. The First Quarter Storm (FQS) of 1970 projected the national democratic movement in Manila and throughout the country. In the following years, many educated activists went to the rural areas to perform vital revolutionary tasks. The workers' movement resurged in October 1975 with the historic La Tondeña strike. More than 500 workers, mostly women, occupied the distillery plant for 44 hours, the first big open workers' defiance of the Marcos dictatorship.

On the eve of the La Tondeña strike, some 50 leaders met again. (They had met everyday from 4:30-10:30 p.m. for two weeks to prepare the strike.) When they realized that the Marcos military would arrest them, they all became quiet. Not a sound. You could hear a pin drop! Then, a woman worker stood and said: "We must go on with the strike, otherwise there is no future for our children!" A dark-skinned young man, barefoot, uttered: "Five years of anger within my breast must explode tomorrow!" They did launch the strike. After being detained for a day, they got most of their demands. The daring strike broke the spell of fear under martial law. There followed numerous workers' strikes. Then the mass movement of youth and students re-emerged.

We have developed various forms of revolutionary work in the legal democratic movement. Among the most important are:

(1.) organizing, politicizing, and mobilizing the workers, urban poor, youth and students, women, indigenous peoples, teachers, government employees, and other professionals on the immediate and burning issues. This is most important: in building a militant and sustained revolutionary mass movement with an underground core. With the resurgence of the mass movement from the mid-1970s, underground national democratic organizations formed the backbone of the open mass movement. Kaguma (a teachers organization) was revitalized and new organizations such as Armas (an

organization of artist and writers) and Masapa (health personnel organization) emerged. In Northern Luzon, the powerful Cordillera People's Democratic Front (CPDF) was established;

(2.) defending the rights of internal refugees, victims of human rights violations, political prisoners, etc.;

(3.) working within the reactionary government, institutions, and organizations;

(4.) upholding the correct line in peace negotiations, in exploratory talks, and in the propaganda battle before, during, and after such talks; and,

(5.) electoral struggle, which occurs every so many years. This may increase in importance at certain times.

Building the National United Front

From the beginning, the CPP had seen the need for building the national united front. In areas where it had political power, it won the support of local politicians, members of the national bourgeoisie, and others. It was in the form of an alliance that cooperation was realized. In 1971, the CPP set up a Preparatory Commission (PrepCom) to build the NDF as a formal united front organization. On April 24, 1973, the NDF PrepCom published its 10-point program as the framework of cooperation of all anti-imperialist and democratic forces against the Marcos dictatorship.

In the early years, the CNL played a significant role in providing personnel for various revolutionary lines of work, for *Liberation*, the official publication of the NDF PrepCom, for communications between revolutionary organs and units, and for guerilla zone preparation. These were done in addition to its other tasks as a revolutionary organization of church personnel.

The NDF program was elaborated and re-issued in November 1977, with elaborations of the current situation, tasks, and the declaration of the socialist perspective. In the years that followed, the NDF-allied organizations consolidated and expanded. Quite a number held their congresses. The CNL held its second Congress in 1981, its third in 1986, and its fourth in 1990. The CPDF held its First Political Congress, with more than 4,000 participants, in January 1987, and its First Organizational Congress in March 1989. KM held congresses in 1984, 1988, and 1991; Kaguma in 1985; and Makibaka in 1987 and 1991.

The NDF held its First Congress in July 1990 and now has 15 allied organizations. Significant recent additions have been the Moro Revolutionary Organization (MORO); Lumaban, an organization of lawyers; and LAB, a league of scientists.

The NDF performs the important function of paving the way to building organs of political power on the municipal and higher levels. It also undertakes representation work in the international field and has represented the revolutionary movement in peace negotiations or exploratory peace talks.

The CPP and other revolutionary organizations also undertake other ways of building the national united front by developing alliances in many areas in the countryside and in the legal sphere for the benefit of the Philippine revolution.

The Revolutionary Framework and Orientation

The CPP provides the framework and orientation in which the fundamental interests and the immediate problems of the people are addressed. This is the people's democratic revolution. This is the national democratic revolution of the new type.

In 1896, Andres Bonifacio and other revolutionaries in the Katipunan launched a national democratic revolution. It aimed for national independence from Spain. It was inspired by the French revolution. Moreover, the leadership was taken over by the native bourgeoisie of that time: the *ilustrado*.

The present national democratic revolution is of a new type. Its leadership is that of the working class through its revolutionary party, the CPP. And it has a socialist perspective, because it is in the era after the birth of the first socialist state, in the era of socialism and the socialist revolution. It is, therefore, a two-stage revolution. The first is the national democratic stage; the second is the socialist stage.

Summing-up, Study of Revolutionary Theory, and Raising Revolutionary Practice to Theory

Three years after the reestablishment of the CPP, a summing-up was undertaken. Valuable lessons were learned. For example, there should be the proper balance between expansion and consolidation. There must be sufficient political preparation before any military action. These were hard-earned lessons paid for by the blood and sweat of the people.

In 1972, the "Revolutionary Guide for Land Reform" was issued. In December 1974, Amado Guerrero, the chairman of the CPP, wrote "The Specific Characteristics of Our People's War," stressing the principle of centralized leadership and decentralized operations and recognizing that the archipelagic character of the Philippines, while initially a disadvantage, would in due time become an advantage and would cause the dispersal of the enemy troops. In 1976, after a seven-year summing-up, the CPP issued "Our Urgent Tasks." This made use of advanced experiences of the revolutionary masses and the Party and NPA organization in several regions. Guidelines for organizing the masses in the countryside, in four distinct steps, were presented. The combination of the anti-fascist, anti-feudal, and anti-imperialist mass movements was clarified and elaborated. The Party's *Primary Course* was soon developed into the *Basic Party Course* and a campaign to conduct this on all levels of Party organization was carried out from 1979 to 1982. The KM, CNL, and other revolutionary organizations drew up mass courses and other types of educational materials and publications and utilized these for their political education work.

By 1983 to 1985, the Philippine revolutionary movement had made unprecedented gains. Guerilla fronts were established in more than 60 provinces. Agrarian reform, health care, organs of political power, and mass organizations had spread and taken root throughout the country. Especially after the Aquino assassination, the mass movement in the cities surged tremendously.

Errors and Setbacks

But erroneous ideas seeped in. After 1982, theoretical education was neglected in many areas. Consolidation work suffered in the face of rapid expansion. The valuable lessons learned earlier were forgotten.

The petty-bourgeois desire for undue haste to win victory in just a few years prevailed among some in the leadership of the CPP and the NPA. Big, premature, and unsustainable formations of the NPA were built. The masses suffered and complained, but this line of action was continued and intensified in 1983 up to 1988. Insurrectionist ideas sprouted, wishful of victory in a short time through an armed insurrection. Cadres in the countryside started going back to the city, instead of the healthy tradition of cadres from the city going to the countryside. Heavy losses were inflicted on the revolutionary movement, not only by the division- and brigade-sized operations of the enemy, but more

so by the uncorrected big errors of the revolutionary leadership. Under conditions of setbacks and lack of consolidation, the hysteria of the anti-infiltration campaign occurred, causing further grave losses.

The Rectification Movement

Starting in 1988, with the revolutionary masses insisting on corrections, various regional party organizations called for a rectification movement. In 1990, the CPP withdrew the erroneous concept and program of the Strategic Counter-Offensive (SCO) within the stage of strategic-defensive of people's war. In 1991, the CPP chairman, utilizing summings-up, assessments, and reports from numerous revolutionary units over the years, drew up the rectification document "Reaffirm Our Basic Principles and Rectify Errors." This was approved and amended by the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the CPP on March 5, 1992. Subsequently, the 10th Plenum of the Central Committee (CC) of the CPP further amended and approved it in July 1992, together with a supplementary document -- "General Review of Important Events and Decisions" (1980 up to 1991). The CPP leadership has called for a rectification movement, to unite and build on our achievements, rectify our errors, and implement the decisions of the 10th Plenum. The NDF chairman, Manuel Romero, and NDF Secretary-General Frank Fernandez have declared the support of the NDF for the rectification movement.

This rectification movement is now being carried out by the CPP, NPA, and other NDF-allied organizations throughout the country. The top-heavy formations of the NPA are now being proportionately redeployed, with some 75 percent of the forces engaged in mass work while only 25 percent are in relatively bigger formations. The latter are, however, not usually in absolute concentration. More often, they are in relative concentration, spread out in several villages and undertaking mass work as well. Other corrections in theoretical education, in political and organizational work, are also being undertaken.

Only a relatively small and decreasing number are opposing the rectification movement. Among their leaders are those who were directly involved in the errors and those who refuse to admit errors or their involvement in them.

The rectification movement is mainly an educational movement. It is another major step in strengthening the Philippine revolutionary movement,

both in theory and in practice. It provides the firm ideological moorings and the clarity of vision needed for a solid and sustained advance.

We cannot celebrate our 20th anniversary without commemorating and honoring, once again, our revolutionary martyrs. Their example inspires us and gives us the necessary strength in the most difficult times.

Favorable Domestic and International Conditions

The worsening economic crisis in the Philippines and the deepening political crisis of the U.S.-backed Ramos regime are favorable domestic factors. While in the international sphere, the significant lessons learned from the collapse of the revisionist regimes in Eastern Europe, the ongoing economic decline of the U.S., and the deepening crisis of the capitalist world are favorable conditions for the further advance of the Philippine revolution.

Together Let Us Build a Genuinely Just World Order

The Philippine revolution is part of the world revolution. It is a just struggle that merits the solidarity of the world's peoples. Its advance and victory contribute to the revolutionary struggles of other peoples.

As we celebrate with you today our 20 years of revolutionary struggle, allow me, in behalf of the NDF and revolutionary Filipino people, to express our deep appreciation for the solidarity of our just struggle. We reiterate our readiness to further develop our cooperation, for the mutual benefit of our respective struggles, and to strengthen the unity of the anti-imperialist and socialist movements.

Together, let us struggle against capitalist exploitation and oppression! Together, let us fight for national liberation and social emancipation! Together, let us build a genuinely just world order!