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Philippines

Message to the RPM-M Second Party Congress

- IV Online magazine - 2010 - IV429 - October 2010 -

Publication date: Wednesday 6 October 2010

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These greetings were brought to the Second Congress of the RPM-M by comrade Roman representing the Fourth International.

Dear comrades,

Magandang hapon.

I am very happy to be here with you and I wish to bring you three salutes in one:

Being a member of its bureau, a salute from the Fourth International, which is very proud of its Philippine section.

As well, a salute of my French organization, the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NAP) – in French, the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste or... NPA! I am very sorry for the confusion the French acronym can provoke in the Philippines! Many links have already been tied between the RPM-M and the NPA, especially through the youth.

And I would like to add a more personal salute to these two official ones, as the Philippines became part of my own political history.

I first came to the Philippines in 1977 – quite a while ago already! I went to Mindanao (Davao) the following year. I then traveled through above ground Nat-Dem networks and could also exchange with a woman from the (Philippine) NPA. My great sin that year was not to meet anyone from what would become the CMR – the Central Mindanao Region of the CPP, which is the ancestor of the present RPM-M. For sure, I should have stayed a long time in Mindanao to ever have a chance to reach Central Mindanao comrades...

The many following years, I related with several trends of the Philippine Left and developed solidarity activities to the Philippine people's struggle (which was unfortunately disapproved by some CPP dark lords, a sectarian attitude which did not help the strengthening of the solidarity movement in Europe).

It is only after the great splits of the early 1990s that I eventually met you. The FI had and keeps good political, solidarity, relations with several trends in the Philippine Left. But it happens that the latest contact to be established went the furthest, became the closest when you decided to join the FI (is this what we call dialectics?). I must say that we are very happy that you did take such a decision, and I would like to explain here why.

I learnt, we learnt a lot from the Philippine Left, and especially from you – because you are a Mindanaoan organization and Mindanao is one region where many issues are expressed in a very acute form – it constitutes both a quite dangerous and a very rich background for revolutionary activities and thought. Also because you have undergone an in depth work of programmatic and political re-evaluation since your CPP times and you have opened the party to new generations of cadres as the composition and the debates of this congress show.

As many activists of my generation the world around, you had to reassess the articulation of various forms and fields of struggles with changing times, periods and situations. I appreciate the way you did it in a non-sectarian and inventive way. I would especially like to underline how much your multifaceted experience is of international significance and of importance for the FI.

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Because of your history and roots in Central Mindanao, you always squarely addressed the issue of the Tripeople, majority nationality, Moros and Lumads, with a constant aim: to build crossed solidarities allowing the people of these three communities to live in peace and fight for common aims. This experience is especially precious nowadays when, under capitalist globalization, the powers that be use the “divide and rule” policy even more thoroughly than in the past. To a large extent, our success or failure in the future will depend on our capacity to oppose cross solidarities to the divide and rule policy of the capitalists and imperialists.

The divide and rule policy not only try to pit a majority nationality against minorities. It also intends to pit oppressed communities one against other ones. You have in Central Mindanao a very concrete experience in dealing with such an issue, because while thoroughly defending the right of self-determination of the Moro, you also enhance the rights of the Lumads over their ancestral domains located within Bangsa Moro boundaries. You defend both self-determination rights, while a large part of the Philippine Left only addresses the Bangsa Moro one and overlooks the Lumads'. That's one of your qualities, and one of the many reasons for which your experience is so interesting to us.

With the global ecological crisis, the indigenous people struggle has taken an especially important international significance. Many of them are people of the forest and the forest is a vital but threatened component of the common goods of humanity. Here again, we can learn a lot from your own experience, for example from how you brake with the old CPP-NPA “commandantist” policies of ruling above these communities. How you recognize that the right of self-organization and of political self-determination of Lumad communities have to be respected and implemented now, and not be postponed into a far away future, after the victory of revolution.

At a time of military globalization, of “preventive” imperialist wars and of the Bush legacy of “war in permanence”, the struggle for peace, the building of antiwar movements, have become key international tasks for progressives. For long, you have been fully involved in such activities in Mindanao – a land of wars! –, together with other groups, and you are probably one of the sections of the FI with the richer experience in this field. In addition, engaging in peace talks with the government, the RPMM/RPA has elaborated new concepts and practices: the concerned local communities and people's movements have to be direct actors of the peace process and not simply spectators or hostages of negotiations restricted to armed and governmental forces.

Because of the global ecological crisis, human disasters are becoming even more frequent and geographically more widespread than before. For very unfortunate reasons, Mindanao is a territory known for its human disasters provoked by natural calamities, government incompetence, ruling classes corruptions and wars. For many years now, RPM-M members have been facing such calamities, mobilizing social networks and people's organization to rescue Internal Displaced People (IDPs) and to defend their rights in times of economic reconstructions. Here again, there is much to learn for us, in the FI, and for other progressive movements.

I have one regret: that you do not write on these issues to transmit internationally your experience and thought – or you write so little. On such matters, you are of an oral tradition, hindi ba? But that does not help much for international collectivization of experiences and elaborations. Beyond the general principles, we have to reflect on concrete experiences: what did we aim at, how did we do, what worked, what did not work, why, what lessons we have drawn from each of these experiences on building solidarities, building peace, facing disasters...

One more word concerning armed struggle. Unlike the previous points, it is today less of universal application: we are not going to establish a camp Usman in the French Central Mountains and we are not going to ask you to send us an International Brigade! But it does not mean that the in depth refection you have engaged on the changing role of armed struggle in the Philippine context is not of interest for outsiders. We need to revive our thought on strategy. This can be done only by comparing various situations – and various concrete answers given to these various situations. We do learn of course from movements which are not FI. But within the FI nowadays, unlike in the past,

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you have a unique role in bringing this type of experience into our collective political elaboration.

Speaking of armed forces, I take the chance to thank the RPA units for the heavy work done for camp Usman to be able to receive the many delegates of the RPM-M congress, and to insure our security. This is very much, greatly appreciated. Maraming salamat.

We know that you are living in Mindanao in a situation of permanent threats, with so many unfriendly armed groups around: army and police, vigilante and extreme right militias, CAFGU, goons and private armies of warlords, bandits, kidnapers... name it, you have it! The very sad reality is that one of the main threat is now coming from former comrades – the CPP-NPA, which engaged in a deadly sectarian drive after the 90s crisis. We have actively contributed to impulse an international solidarity campaign against its policy of assassination and death threats, with some results. But the pressure has to be maintained and more solidarity has to be offered, while you are facing so many armed enemies.

We appreciate very much the lessons you have drawn from the CPP times on the importance of democracy (our democracy, people's democracy) in the revolutionary struggle, as well as the importance given to the gender question and women's right, the openness the LGBT issue, the place given to the younger generations, and the growing role you are playing in the FI (clearly reflected during the recent world congress).

In times of imperialist globalization, global ecological crisis and capitalist crisis, internationalism is more needed than ever. With the birth of the Global Justice Movement the world around, it has begun to revive. FI organizations have been very much involved in this broad and multifaceted process. It is our common responsibility to contribute actively to this new wave of internationalism, to root it deeply in the struggles of people's movements.

Asia is one of the parts of the world where there are presently many possibilities to extend links between radical and revolutionary left forces, in an open and non sectarian spirit. In collaboration with other organizations, like in Pakistan, you are playing a growing role in building such links. It is essential to consolidate progressive and revolutionary networks in the Asia-Pacific region. We, in the FI, are very conscious of the importance of this task and we know how much you do to fulfill your responsibilities in this regard.

Thank you for what you have achieved and thank you for what you will achieve.

Mabuhay ang internasionalismo!

Roman

Camp Usman, Mindanao, August 2010