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Philippines

The Filipino revolutionary movement

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Following the Second World War, the revolutionary process in south east Asia was long dominated by developments in Indonesia and Vietnam. However, after the bloody crushing of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in 1965 and a decade later the historic victory (although achieved in very difficult conditions) of the Vietnamese resistance, it was in the Philippines that the continuity of struggle was affirmed with the most constancy.

From 1975 to 1985, the Philippine revolutionary movement was dominated by the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines. The imposition of martial law in 1972 ended the initial pluralism of the far left: the PKP (a CP which had become pro-Soviet) capitulated. As for the anti-Stalinist Marxist currents (including a small Trotskyist group which disappeared without leaving any trace), they proved incapable of maintaining their activities. Despite heavy losses, the CPP organized, essentially alone, the mass resistance to the Marcos dictatorship and a dynamic guerrilla struggle. It thus won a lasting hegemony.

This hegemony fissured in 1985-1986, when the dictatorship collapsed at the time of the presidential election, under the convergent pressure of an immense democratic mobilization and a military rebellion. The CPP leadership did not believe that the régime could be overthrown according to a strategic schema that was so far from its dogma of the encirclement of the cities by the countryside. In the new conjuncture, some personalities and minority currents of the radical left (independent Marxists, Christian socialists) enlarged the field of their activities. The divergences inside the Maoist party intensified until the expulsion and splits of 1992. The pluralism of the far left was revived.

The crisis of the Maoist movement posed Philippine militants deep seated problems, as the world situation was transformed. They showed the need to integrate the experience of other countries and enter into dialogue with various revolutionary organizations. A very new approach for the groups that had split from the CPP. Thus, the regional structure of Manila-Rizal (the capital) grew closer to the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) of Australia. That of the central Mindanao (in the south of the archipelago), which took the name of the Revolutionary Workers' Party (RPM-M), established links with the Fourth International, inside of which it enjoys permanent observer status.

The political and organizational link established between the Fourth International and the RPM-M is an opportunity. With a thousand members at a stage when it has not yet gained legality, the RPM-M is a socially implanted organization, capable of acting on all terrains (mass mobilization, electoral campaign, clandestinity). It is also a test for the Fourth International: it must integrate a party with different traditions, bearer of the heritage of a militant generation which cut its teeth in the Philippines under the dictatorship, in the framework of a difficult guerrilla struggle. One does not become Trotskyist in the European fashion in a country where this reference has no concrete historic reality. Thus the RPM-M defined itself, like the other CPP splits, as Marxist-Leninist (ML), to mark its rupture with the old orientation (the CPP identifying itself with 'Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought'). Whereas in Europe, the acronym 'ML' was appropriated by the Maoists!

Moreover, the process of establishing a new revolutionary party on the national scale is far from over. The RPM-M has attempted a fusion with other organizations originating from the CPP, in the centre and north of the country. This was a failure, in part because of the complexity of the political situation. The South lives in a latent state of war between the army and the Muslim forces. Armed groups proliferate (among them those of the CPP, which sometimes assassinates its former comrades). It is hard in these conditions to sign a peace agreement with the government which is not a capitulation. One wing of the unified organization accepted such an agreement, which the RPM-M in Mindanao rightly rejected. The fusion was then aborted. A new attempt at fusion is underway, between forces originating from the split of the CPP in the capital and close in particular to the DSP of Australia - an attempt that our comrades in Mindanao are following sympathetically, without wishing to involve themselves too quickly. Thus, even in

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a country where the Fourth International has consolidated links with an organization like the RPM-M, the question of revolutionary regroupment, in the context of a vast and long process of political recomposition, continues to be posed.