

The Revolution Continues

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The birth and development of Filipino nationalism is inseparable from the people's historic struggle against foreign domination. This essay traces such development from the viewpoint of the Philippine Left. It argues that despite a century of heroic struggle the twin goals of Filipino nationalism — full assertion of sovereignty and a self-reliant economy — remain basically unfulfilled.

THE ASSERTION OF FILIPINO NATIONALISM, IN BOTH OF ITS TWO manifestations — first, as the core of the Filipino consciousness of their nationhood, identity, history and destiny as a people; and second, as a political mass movement intertwined with the struggle for national freedom from foreign domination — has been a protracted struggle for more than 100 years. The struggle has been generally uphill, with periods of ebb and flow. To be sure, there have been many victories, particularly in the political movement. But these victories have either been subsequently truncated or, as nationalists fear today, are under threat of being reversed by the machinations of the reactionary forces, foreign and local, that have historically collaborated to stifle the nationalist impulse.

The Filipino people's continuing struggle for national freedom from successive foreign domination has two phases. The first phase was the struggle against the colonial rule by Spain for more than 300 years. That fight was substantially won in September 1898 by the Philippine Revolution, which was begun by the Katipunan in 1896. The second phase, which started barely five months after the victory over Spain and two weeks after the formal establishment of the first Philippine Republic, was initially against direct colonial rule by the United States for almost half a century. Since 1946, it has been a struggle against a dissembling imperialist or neo-colonial domination.

In the intervening period of World War II, the Filipino people showed their nationalist fervor by fiercely resisting Japanese military occupation. The victory of that war of resistance could have also led to the severance of the US colonial grip for good. Instead, through the guile of an independence 'granted' to the Philippines, the US inaugurated the neocolonial arrangement that has persisted to this day.

Two objectives define this protracted struggle, which has entailed both revolutionary war and legal political struggles. One is for the Filipino people to assert their independence and sovereignty, and the other, to reorder Philippine society towards attaining genuine democracy and an independent and self-reliant economy.

HISTORICAL ROOTS OF NATIONALISM

FILIPINO nationalism owes its birth, in the last 30 years of the 19th century, mainly to two historical factors: first, the gradual merging 'into one mighty stream' of the 'various rivulets of grievances and revolts' during more than three centuries of Spanish rule (Lansang 1968); secondly, the articulation and dissemination by the Propaganda Movement (1872-1896) of the Filipinos' (then pejoratively called *indios* by the colonizers) demand for equal rights and status as subjects of Spain, together with their realization that they were, 'geographically and ethnically, a distinct people with a history that went back to precolonial times' (Lumbera 1981). That nascent nationalism in turn gave birth in 1892 to the Katipunan, a secret mass organization preparing for the armed revolution that would put an end to Spanish rule. The Revolution of 1896 that the Katipunan initiated has been described by an eminent Filipino scholar, OD Corpuz, as 'that epic and noble struggle that is the watershed of the nationalism of our people.'

Indeed, a source of pride for the Filipinos is the fact that the victory of the Philippine Revolution marked the first successful national anticolonial war in Asia, and that the Philippine Republic was the first democratic republic with a Constitution to be established in the region. But the intervention of an emerging imperialist power, the United States, cut short the enjoyment by the Filipino people of the fruits of that victory. US intervention changed the course of the Revolution and of Philippine history. Because of that intervention, which continues to this day with ever-increasing crafti-

ness and cupidity, the Philippines has remained a neocolony and is likely to remain so until the early part of the 21st century.

A HOLLOW CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

THUS, the government-sponsored centennial celebration of the declaration of Philippine independence in Kawit, Cavite, on 12 June 1898, has a hollow ring. There are two reasons for this. First, the declaration was impaired, if not indeed negated, by its invocation of the 'protection of the Mighty and Humane North American Nation' (referring to the US). Not long after, the 'protector' turned into the aggressor, stole the Philippine Revolution's victory over Spanish colonialism, truncated the life of the Philippine Republic, and replaced Spain as colonial ruler. Second, the 'protection' has continued to this day, thanks to the multiple shackles to the independence that the US 'granted' on 4 July 1946 (or 'restored' as the official apologists would have it in 1962, when President Diosdado Macapagal changed the observance of Independence Day from 4 July to 12 June).

Among the shackles were the retention of the US military bases in the country for 99 years, the Parity Amendment to the 1935 Constitution granting American citizens equal rights to exploit the country's natural resources and to operate public utilities, and the Bell Trade Act that continued a free trade regime highly skewed in favor of the US. (It was only in the early 1970s that the Parity Amendment and the Bell Trade Act, renegotiated as the Laurel-Langley Agreement

in the 1950s, were terminated. The US military bases were removed only in 1992, after the Philippine Senate rejected a new treaty extending the RP-US bases agreement.) Far from being beneficial, US 'protection' has impeded the assertion of Philippine independence and sovereignty, making

a mockery of Philippine foreign and defense policies for decades, and stunted national economic development. From this condition stemmed the impulse of the continuing struggle for true sovereignty, for genuine democracy and a self-reliant economy.

There was more sense in observing the centennial of the Katipunan Revolution of 1896 (which the Ramos regime casually overlooked), be-

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cause it signified the Filipinos' coming around to recognize themselves as a people united by common misery and rising up, for the first time as a people, to fight for national freedom and democracy against foreign domination, tyranny and oppression. Or, instead of the Kawit event, the Cry of Pugad Lawin should be celebrated as the authentic declaration of Philippine independence.

VIEW OF THE PHILIPPINE LEFT

FOR the Philippine Left there is no equivocation on this point, even as it asserts that the 1896 Revolution is unfinished and that the current national democratic revolution — the revolutionary movement led by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), aimed primarily at ending US imperialist control and the elite ruling system it has nurtured and protected — is the logical continuation of the 1896 Revolution.

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In a statement issued on 12 June 1998, Armando Liwanag, CPP central committee chair, refers to the Cry of Pugad Lawin as 'the signal act of declaring Philippine independence.' Although acknowledging that the Kawit declaration 'reflected the people's revolutionary movement and aspirations for national independence and democracy' and inspired the Malolos Congress (which drew up the first Philippine Constitution) and the establishment of the first Republic, Liwanag says 'the reference to US protection manifested an unpatriotic and counterrevolutionary tendency in the liberal bourgeois leadership' (under Emilio Aguinaldo). He argues that the betrayal by 'local reactionaries' within that leadership was one factor, complementing the 'violence and deception by US imperialism', that led to the defeat of the 'old democratic revolution'. In the typical language of the CPP, Liwanag adds:

The conversion of the Philippines from a colony to a semicolony or neocolony has allowed US imperialism to oppress and exploit the Filipino more violently and more deceptively than ever before through the local exploiting classes of big *compradors* and landlords and their reactionary politicians. The bureaucrat capitalist puppets in the reactionary government are the conspicuous taskmasters of the Filipino people. But

US imperialism, together with other imperialist powers, continues to control the economy and finances of the country, extract superprofits, impose an intolerable debt burden on the people, reduce them to a life of poverty and misery and supply the weapons for suppressing revolutionary resistance.

Liwanag reiterates that the CPP 'has inherited from the Katipunan the mantle of revolutionary leadership,' and that under CPP leadership 'the Filipino people persevere in their struggle for national liberation and democracy against foreign and feudal domination. They continue to carry out the unfinished tasks of the Philippine revolution.'

A similar assertion is made by the National Democratic Front (NDF), the underground political alliance of the CPP, the New People's Army and 12 other national democratic organizations. In the introduction to its 12-point program, adopted in 1994, the NDF states:

Ours is an unfinished revolution. Today the Filipino people's new democratic revolution, a continuation of the old democratic revolution of 1896, is forging ahead with the task of completing the struggle for national liberation and democracy. It is being waged at a new and higher stage, under the leadership of the working class and having a socialist perspective.

The distinction between old and new democratic revolution pertains to a differentiation between the social and economic conditions, the objectives of the revolution, and the class character of its leadership a century ago and today. At the time of the Katipunan's founding, 300 years of feudal exploitation and oppression plus religious obscurantism had characterized the Spanish colonial rule. Logically the people's cry was for freedom from foreign domination and from feudalism. Bonifacio, a worker inspired by the French Revolution, realistically raised as the Katipunan's battlecry the end to foreign domination and the recovery and restoration to the peasants of the lands seized by the Spanish friar corporations. Today, the new democratic revolution continues the Katipunan struggle against foreign domination (now US neocolonialism) and feudalism (by combining agrarian reform with national industrialization) through the overthrow of the reactionary state run by bureaucrat capitalists in the service of US imperialism

and the local big landlord class. During the American colonial rule, the leadership of the nationalist, revolutionary movement shifted to the working class. From then till now, the CPP has relied for its organizational strength on the basic alliance of the workers and peasants, who comprise the vast majority of the people.

BEGINNING A TRADITION

THE confluence of the resort to arms and the power of logic of the Propaganda Movement in the Revolution of 1896 started the tradition, or pattern of progression, of reform leading to revolution — of popular education and propaganda leading to mass political organizing and maturing into revolutionary action. This is evident in the various phases of the development of Filipino nationalism and of the revolutionary movement that sprung from its womb and which nationalism continues to nurture. Conflicting class interests and political and ideological differences among those who joined the struggle also have made inevitable the recurrent debate within the movement to this day: between continuing the struggle and capitulating or collaborating with the enemy, between pursuing reform and waging revolution, or specifically between armed struggle and parliamentary struggle. Whichever side became dominant at crucial stages of the struggle determined the ebb or flow; capitulation and collaboration have always led to an ebb, if not tactical or strategic setback.

The writings of the Propagandists, chiefly Jose Rizal, Marcelo del Pilar and Graciano Lopez Jaena, and Rizal's two social-realist novels, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, helped develop among our forefathers their national consciousness as a people victimized by three centuries of Spanish tyranny and religious obscurantism. They also developed a sense of pride in their past, imbuing them with confidence to determine their own destiny. From these writings, the Filipinos at the time were made aware of their basic rights and freedoms as a people equal, not inferior, to the Spaniards. They thus increasingly clamored for recognition of equal rights and freedoms.

For instance, Rizal's essay, 'On the Indolence of the Filipinos' (1890), disputed the Spanish allegation that Philippine society was backward and disorderly because of the pathological laziness of the Filipinos. He provided authoritative proof that the loss of incentive to work was the direct

consequence of the abuses of the colonial government and the friar corporations as feudal landlords, abuses that generally deprived the Filipinos of the enjoyment of the fruits of their economic enterprise.

Rizal's annotation of Morga's *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (1890), on the other hand, sought to awaken the Filipinos' consciousness of their past 'that there was a broad common culture in the Philippine islands worth being proud of at the time of the Spanish conquest,' by citing historical evidence he had gathered at the British Museum of their distinct mores, customs, livelihood and social organization. Iletto (1979) sees in the formation of the revolutionary ideology of the Katipunan by Andres Bonifacio and Emilio Jacinto the objective of restoring that image depicted by Rizal of the precolonial society, a 'paradise lost'.) And in *The Philippines a Century Hence* (1889-1890), Rizal tried to present realistic alternatives for the Philippines in the future, a glimpse into their destiny (Ikehata 1981).

The writings of the Propagandists were reformist, in the sense that the political and social changes they demanded in order to redress historical grievances and injustices were sought within the framework of Spanish sovereignty. The general thrust was for recognition and assimilation of the Philippines as a province of Spain, with proper representation in the Spanish legislature, the Cortez. Nonetheless, to a large extent, these reformist writings helped spark the popular agitation and political upheaval in the 1890s.

Some scholars who have analyzed the Propaganda Movement have come up with citations of Rizal's and del Pilar's writings, mostly letters to friends, that indicate the two had considered separation and independence from Spain, or revolution, as inevitable. But the scholars could not agree whether the two did definitively advocate the revolutionary option. While the logic of his analysis of Philippine society led to the inevitability of revolution, Rizal hesitated to advocate such course of action, entertained reservations about the preparedness of the people, and recoiled at the grim prospects of bloody strife.

KATIPUNAN RESOLVED THE DEBATE

IT took Bonifacio, Jacinto and the other Katipunan leaders to resolve the issue of reform or revolution. The founding of the Katipunan as a secret society and its subsequent political organizing work — not only in Manila

and its environs but in some regions of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao — transformed the nascent sense of nationhood and national outrage and the demand for reforms into a political movement calling for armed revolution. (Before that time, the numerous revolts — one of them was led by Dagohoy in Bohol and lasted 86 years — had been local or regional in character, not yet national.)

In the writings of Bonifacio and Jacinto, and later of Apolinario Mabini, resonated the political and moral ideas articulated earlier in the works of Rizal, del Pilar, Lopez Jaena and other Propagandists. These ideas pertained to the relations of the individual to society, the ideas of freedom, justice, democracy and equality, the role of government, the welfare of the people, and the people's exercise of political will. The difference, however, is that the Propagandists, writing mainly in Spanish, articulated their ideas basically from the viewpoint of European bourgeois liberalism and addressed them principally to the Spanish government in Madrid, whereas Bonifacio and Jacinto wrote in Tagalog from the viewpoint of the Filipino masses and addressed them directly. Bonifacio wrote mostly in verse, akin to Francisco Baltazar (Balagtas, 1788-1862), while Jacinto wrote in lucid prose.

Although Bonifacio's writings were scant, literary critic Bienvenido Lumbera considers these to be enough indicators of how the founder of the Katipunan 'was able to seize the desperation of a colonized people and turn it into a revolutionary force.' Bonifacio's poems, *Katapusang Hibik ng Filipinas* (Filipinas' Final Plea) and *Pag-ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa* (Love for the Native Land), were easy to memorize and were recited whenever a gathering was needed to be mobilized for the revolution. According to Lumbera, *Katapusang Hibik* 'uses the dramatic framework of children disowning a parent, in order to emphasize the separatist aims of the Katipunan in its struggle against Spanish colonialism.' On the other hand, Jose Ma Sison (1967), founding chairman of the CPP (reestablished in 1968), reads in *Hibik* 'the peasant protest against feudalism' as well as a 'call for revolt against feudal exploitation' alongside a 'call for armed struggle against the colonial power.' Sison's observation correlates Bonifacio's identification of the peasants' protest with the Katipunan's setting as an objective to recover for the peasants the lands seized by the friar corporations. This explains why the Revolution drew participation hugely from the peasants, as does

the present new democratic revolution. Not generally known is that the Katipunan objective was nearly fulfilled, were it not for US interventionism.

One of the first directives issued by the first Philippine Republic, through the *Ordenanzas de la Revolution* authored by Mabini, revoked 'all usurpations of properties made by the Spanish government and the religious corporations' and declared the Filipino people as the 'true owners'. Unfortunately, after the Americans defeated the fledgling Republic, the new colonial regime nullified the land directive and restored to the Spaniards the lands that had already been recovered by the Republic. That first official attempt at agrarian reform — in its intent and mode of implementation — largely inspired the NDF agrarian reform program. In its maximum phase, the NDF plan involves 'the confiscation of landlord property and the equitable distribution of the land to the tillers at no cost to them.'

SECOND PROPAGANDA MOVEMENT

TOWARDS advancing the new democratic revolution, a Second Propaganda Movement was launched, mainly through the youth and student movement, in the second half of the 1960s. That movement was also billed as a 'cultural revolution' (inspired by a movement spurred by Mao Zedong in China at the time). It produced a bountiful harvest: new national democratic mass organizations burgeoned in the various regions of the country, each one spreading the message of a revitalized Filipino nationalism espousing high hopes for national liberation in the new democratic revolution. These organizations became the recruiting grounds for cadres and members of the underground revolutionary movement.

These new organizations drove the upsurge of the legal democratic mass movement that effectively carried forward the nationalist crusade, which Claro Mayo Recto almost single-handedly initiated in the late 1950s, and turned the tide of antinationalist political repression and anti-communist witchhunt (to the reactionaries, nationalists and communists were one and the same). After Recto's death in 1960, Lorenzo Tañada carried on the nationalist fight till his retirement from public life in the late 1980s; he supported the formation, and became the father figure of a political mass movement, the Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism, in 1967.

The Second Propaganda Movement became necessary in order to raise the level of the people's revolutionary consciousness: to enable them to link their continuing poverty and oppression — under a supposedly independent and sovereign republic avowedly governing through democratic principles and processes — with the unfulfilled objectives of the 1896 Revolution. The logical trajectory of the new consciousness is to fight to end the semicolonial and semifeudal economic and social system, rooted in Spanish colonial rule and preserved by US colonial and neocolonial policies. The means prescribed is revolutionary action, mainly through armed struggle combined with various other forms of struggle.

The revolutionary movement spurred by the Second Propaganda Movement grew fast and strong with the struggle against the Marcos dictatorship. Due to 'left military adventurist' errors and 'right opportunist' political errors in the 1980s, however, the movement suffered major setbacks under the Aquino regime, coincidentally as the international socialist movement reeled from the unraveling of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European 'socialist states'. However, the CPP now claims the movement has recovered and is advancing anew, thanks to the rectification campaign the party launched in 1992, and to the worsening economic and political crisis.

CHALLENGE OF 'GLOBALIZATION'

TODAY, the accelerated 'free trade' offensive of imperialism (or global monopoly capitalism), under the deceptive aegis of 'globalization', has impelled the national democratic movement to undertake what may be a second phase of the Second Propaganda Movement. This is to educate the broad masses of the people on the real meaning of globalization, as against the benefits being hyped by the imperialists and the Ramos regime, and spur them into action against the graver threat that globalization poses to the people's sovereignty and economic future.

The movement asserts that the 'globalization' mania of today is the same acquisitive drive that, a century ago, motivated the US, then the emergent imperialist power from the 'New World', to engage in the contest for colonies among the colonial powers of the 'Old World'

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(Europe). By warring against Spain, then a much-weakened colonial power, the US was able to grab the Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico.

Thus globalization is nothing new; it has been at work in the Philippines for a hundred years. It has been at the root of the country's underdevelopment; it has prevented genuine agrarian reform and national industrialization in order to maintain the Philippines as a US neocolony, with the vital segments of the economy in foreign hands. Now globalization threatens to make total the foreign control of the entire economy.

Globalization challenges anew the Filipino people to assert their nationalism, perhaps more than they did a century ago. In neighboring Indonesia and Thailand and in South Korea, a nationalist resurgence has already begun as a logical response to the Asian crisis, spawned by rapid financial liberalization and deregulation. The nationalist protests have been directed against the International Monetary Fund, and the US as its principal backer, for pushing measures that have caused losses in incomes and jobs. It remains to be seen, however, if this nationalist resurgence shall lead to the revival of the revolutionary movements in these Asian countries and thus become a source of support for the Philippine struggle.

The Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan, the alliance of open national democratic organizations) and its leading affiliates have spearheaded the anti-globalization campaign since 1996. They have initiated various alliances, coalitions and networks of progressive and nationalist formations and individuals, or reinforced existing ones, to resist specific programs implementing the triad of globalization policies — liberalization, deregulation and privatization — that the Ramos regime avidly pursued. Among such coalitions have been those against the oil price hike and deregulation of the oil industry (now against the industry cartel), the Philippine Mining Act of 1995, and against amending the Constitution to weaken its nationalist principles and excise the provisions on the national patrimony and economy that reserve to Filipino citizens primary if not sole enjoyment of the country's natural resources.

The Estrada government has pledged to carry on and to complete the liberalization, deregulation and privatization programs of the Ramos regime, even as it avows to protect the poor and marginalized sectors from these programs' damaging impacts. The anti-globalization struggle is likely to intensify under the new government.

MAJOR DRAG TO NATIONALISM

BUT with regard to nurturing and elevating the Filipinos' nationalist consciousness, the struggle has been less successful. Despite the gains of the national democratic movement in instilling among the Filipino people a stronger sense of nationhood and a strong will to stand up against oppression and injustice, it realizes it still has much ground to cover.

A major drag has been what the NDF calls 'a culture of subservience, blind imitation of foreign things and backward thinking' that is still prevalent among the Filipinos of all social strata. This culture of subservience, built up by centuries of foreign and feudal rule, 'has made foreign and feudal exploitation and oppression palatable or unrecognizable.'

To counter and ultimately efface this negative culture, the revolutionary forces have been waging a cultural revolution 'to develop the consciousness that impels the people to fight and overthrow their oppressors, and in the process, give birth to a national and progressive people's culture.' The campaign involves, among others, the creation and popularization by revolutionary and patriotic artists of various art forms (literature, visual arts, theater arts, music, dance, etc.) that express the conditions and aspirations of the people. It involves literacy and education programs aimed at combating ignorance, superstition and 'the lies and half-truths propagated by the imperialists and the local ruling classes.' It involves developing and popularizing the national language, and the 'rewriting of Philippine history from the Filipino people's point of view, highlighting their role in the making of history' and rectifying the distortions and omissions in books written from the viewpoint of the imperialists and local ruling classes. It is a cultural revolution, the NDF acknowledges, that shall encompass the entire course of the national democratic revolution and shall continue 'in the subsequent period of socialist revolution and construction.'

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