

Brief address on Kabataang Makabayan on its 45th founding anniversary

Saturday, 28 November 2009

By Prof. JOSE MARIA SISON
Founding Chairman, Kabataang Makabayan

It is a great honor for me to have been the founding chairman of Kabataang Makabayan (Patriotic or People's Youth). And it is my pleasure to talk to you about KM on the occasion of its 45th founding anniversary.

The KM was founded on 30 November 1964, the birth anniversary of the great worker and founder of the Katipunan, Andres Bonifacio. Since the beginning, the KM has been dedicated to the just cause of continuing the revolutionary struggle of the Filipino youth and people for national liberation and democracy against foreign and feudal domination.

The Filipino people are proud for being the very first nation in Asia to fight and defeat a Western colonial power, specifically Spain. But unfortunately, a modern imperialist power, the United States, intervened and launched a war of aggression against the Filipino people to destroy the Philippine republic and kill 1.5 million Filipinos in order to recolonize and occupy the Philippines. To this date, the US continues to dominate the Philippines through the local exploiting classes and their political agents.

The KM has inherited the rich revolutionary tradition of the Filipino people in fighting against Spanish colonialism for more than three centuries, in defending their national sovereignty against the US war of aggression, in resisting the colonial power of the US and the Japanese fascist invasion during World War II, and in carrying out a people's war against the semicolonial and semifeudal system under the US and the local exploiting classes of big compradors and landlords. Since the beginning, Kabataang Makabayan has been determined to carry out a national democratic revolution under the class leadership of the working class in the global era of modern imperialism and proletarian revolution. This new type of national democratic revolution is meant to overcome the weaknesses and failures of the bourgeois leadership in the old democratic revolution of 1896.

The KM has assumed the task of assisting the working class in carrying out a new democratic revolution on the basis of the worker-peasant alliance, with the augmentation of further alliances with the urban petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie against the big comprador-landlords and their foreign masters. Under certain circumstances, the united front is further broadened against the narrowed enemy force.

The KM is conscious of the fact that in Philippine history and current circumstances, the Filipino youth have been in the forefront at every upsurge of the Philippine revolution. This is not surprising because the youth are receptive to revolutionary ideas, they tend to rebel against the reactionary system, they are energetic and are willing to contribute their time, effort and abilities to a just cause.

The KM did not drop from the sky. It emerged in response to the extreme reaction and rabid anti-communism that followed the defeat of the old people's army and the armed revolutionary movement of the people in the early 1950s. It arose from the concrete conditions of sharpening oppression and exploitation of the Filipino youth and people from the early 1960s onwards.

The KM is a comprehensive youth organization of the students and the young workers, peasants and professionals. The student component of what would become the KM took shape in the late 1950s in the form of study circles on the Philippine revolution and Marxism-Leninism under the auspices of the Student Cultural Association of the University of the Philippines (SCAUP). The university study circles arose ahead of the youth contingents from the working class, peasantry and the professionals.

After a decade of intense reaction since 1950, the first protest mass action with an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal character occurred on March 15, 1961 upon the initiative of the SCAUP in a united front with other campus organizations. Five thousand students literally scuttled a hearing of the Committee on Anti-Filipino Activities of the reactionary congress conducting a witchhunt against UP faculty members and students who had written anti-imperialist and anti-feudal articles.

As a result of the anti-CAFA mass action, I was removed from my teaching fellowship in the UP. But I gained time to do further revolutionary student organizing in several universities in a clandestine way and encouraged the formation of progressive student organizations on a national scale. I went to Djakarta to study the Indonesian language and observe the strong mass movement there during the first half of 1962. When I returned home in the second half of 1962, I joined the trade union movement and the Worker's Party. In both I was assigned to do research and education work.

As vice chairman for education of the Workers' Party, I organized seminars for trade unionists from several major labor federations and big independent unions. Then, I established the youth department of the Workers' Party. This would

become the source of young workers for KM. I wrote articles on land reform and from early 1963 gave refresher courses to peasant leaders and veteran fighters of the old people's army. They recommended their children and other young relatives to become members of the KM at the preparatory phase of its founding, starting at the beginning of 1964. The young professionals that had been the first to join the KM came from the ranks of teachers. Eventually, they came from the various professions because they had become progressive while they were still students. It is not surprising therefore that in the succeeding years the progressive mass movement would have activists from the ranks of health professionals, lawyers, scientists, engineers, artists, cultural workers and other professionals.

After its founding in 1964, the KM became a training school for activists in the national democratic movement for the purpose of arousing, organizing and mobilizing the youth in the schools, factories, farms, communities and offices. The schools for national democracy were instituted at various levels of the KM and in various spheres of work. The emphasis was on training young cadres for the trade union and peasant movement and students and young teachers for rapid nationwide expansion of the KM.

The KM became outstanding in mobilizing the youth in mass protest actions against the unequal treaties with the US in the economic and military fields, against new dictates by the US in every field, against the killing of Filipinos in US military bases, against the puppetry of the reactionary regime, against the big compradors and landlords, against oppressive and exploitative school authorities and against the US war of aggression in Vietnam and elsewhere.

The KM became the largest militant youth organization. Its members had a high level of political education and training for the advance of the national democratic movement. Thus it became a major part of the Workers' Party in 1964 and then its successor the Socialist Party of the Philippines (SPP) in 1966. It also became the major part of the Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism (MAN), a national united front formation in 1966. I became the general secretary of SPP and MAN because of the well-rounded political and organizational strength of the KM.

At the core of Kabataang Makabayan were proletarian revolutionary cadres, who had become members of the old merger party of the Communist and Socialist parties (OMPCSP) since 1962 and who from year to year became dissatisfied with the growing current of modern revisionism. From 1964 onwards, the proletarian revolutionaries increased and outnumbered the old members of the old merger party. They demanded a rectification movement to criticize the major errors and shortcomings of the old merger party since the 1930s.

The Lava revisionist renegades opposed the rectification movement and sought to expel the proletarian revolutionaries. The young proletarian revolutionaries and their senior comrades separated from the Lava revisionist renegades in April 1967, intensified the rectification movement and began preparations for the reestablishment of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), under the theoretical guidance of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought on 26 December 1968. The newly-reestablished CPP benefited from the nationwide scale and grassroots organizing of the KM among the workers and peasants, youth, women and professionals. The proletarian revolutionaries linked up with their counterparts in the old people's army, repudiated the Taruc-Sumulong gangster clique, and formed the New People's Army on 29 March 1969.

The KM became an even larger and more effective assistant of the working class and the CPP when the protest mass actions that had been intensifying since 1969 peaked in the First Quarter Storm of 1970. This involved the weekly mass actions of 50,000 to 100,000 people in Metro Manila and spread to many provincial cities and capitals. It provided thousands of KM recruits on a national scale and led to the strengthening of KM regional and provincial committees and KM chapters at the grassroots level.

But at that time, Marcos became ever more determined to impose a fascist dictatorship on the Filipino people. He engineered the Plaza Miranda bombing in order to suspend the writ of habeas corpus and start suppressing the KM and other progressive mass organizations on 21 August 1971. Subsequently, he declared martial law on 21 September 1972 to suppress the entire range of opposition.

Since 1971, when its national and regional offices were raided and some of its leaders were arrested, the KM had made a systematic retreat from the aboveground level of mass struggle. It organized the underground in Metro Manila and other cities in order to provide immediate safety for the known KM activists and to prepare for their systematic distribution to the guerrilla zones in the countryside and to underground work in other cities where they were not known to the enemy and could find support.

The KM played a key role in the Filipino people's struggle against the Marcos dictatorship. It was broadcaster of the revolutionary message and organizational seeds. It supplied cadres and mass activists for the expansion of all revolutionary forces, including the CPP, the NPA, the mass organizations, the organs of political power and the alliances. Wherever they went to perform their revolutionary duties, the KM cadres and activists were tempered further as revolutionaries and developed others to become revolutionaries.

Many KM cadres and activists became martyrs for the revolutionary cause but many more prevailed over tremendous odds and assumed higher responsibilities in the revolutionary movement. After the fall of the Marcos fascist dictatorship in 1986, the KM could have chosen to surface, pursue the legal forms of struggle and benefit from the prestige of having fought valiantly and effectively against the fascist dictatorship. But it decided to stay underground and perform the role of the Communist Youth League and be a key member of the National Democratic Front.

The Kabataang Makabayan continues to carry out the tasks of arousing, organizing and mobilizing the Filipino youth in line with the Filipino people's struggle for national liberation and democracy. It provides ideological, political and organizational training to the mass activists to become advanced, and to the advanced mass activists to become proletarian revolutionaries and become full-fledged members of the CPP. It deploys its personnel with a high level of revolutionary consciousness, competence and militance to all kinds of work demanded by the revolutionary movement in the political, economic, military, cultural and other fields.