

LIBERATION

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HISTORIC CPP SECOND CONGRESS: TRIUMPH FOR THE REVOLUTION AND THE PEOPLE

The Communist Party of the Philippines' Second Congress was a congress of unity. Lessons and decisions forged at the Congress have profound and historical significance for the continued advance of the Philippine revolution (Read the Communique in *Ang Bayan*, March 29, 2017.) At the same time, the process of the activity itself has distinct details. In a guerrilla base, one battalion of the people's army, almost a hundred leading Party cadres and members, and members of the people's militias were able to assemble in one camp despite on-going enemy operations.

Ensuring Democracy for Stronger Unity

The congress is the forum for the highest form of democracy within the Party. Thus, participation of the

delegates, especially those from different regions, was ensured by having the facilitator go around the hall and by having cadres help translate into the local languages of those who had difficulty speaking in Filipino, the congress' official language. During heavy rains, wireless microphones were passed around and connected to two big amplifiers. English and Filipino versions of the documents under discussion were projected simultaneously on two separate screens, as members of the presidium kept track through their computers from their places on the podium.

Although the facilitators found it hard to reign in discussions that poured out from decades of accumulated experience, there was a relaxed atmosphere of reciprocity among participants who all aimed for unity. A member

▶ continued on page 2



ADDRESSING THE ROOTS
OF ARMED CONFLICT 3



MAY DAY ACROSS
THE WORLD 6



INTERVIEW WITH AN
NPA IN MINDANAO 8



REVOLUTIONARY
MARTYRS LIVE ON 15

of the documentation team shared that “I couldn’t participate much in the discussions because I had to get all the ideas into the minutes, but when I really had something to say, I was also given the chance. The discussions were really lively. And I’m happy because I was able to see my comrades from my previous collectives whom I haven’t heard from for decades.”

In approving proposed amendments or resolutions, three members were assigned to count the number of hands raised, and those who abstained were given time to register their opinion and explain if they had reservations. Elections for the new set of leaders were done through secret ballots, and counting at the plenary session where every name was called out by the canvassers and confirmed by three watchers from different regions was simultaneously recorded on the blackboard, the projector, and on paper.

The whole assembly decided that only those getting a majority vote from the delegates would be accepted for the Central Committee and the Political Bureau. As long as the agreed number of seats for each of the two organs were not filled, run-off elections were done repeatedly, extending up to twelve midnight. However, the participants did not feel tired. One delegate joked, “see, it’s been years since we voted in the corrupt government [elections], so let’s even it up here.”

One young military cadre who was elected to the leadership said, “It’s so inspiring to get to know and mingle with comrades from various areas throughout the archipelago, with different generations, meeting one another in a historical event and exchanging views.”

The activity’s steering committee did everything possible to put the delegates at ease and thus help them concentrate on the discussions. From the giant four meter Party flag in front of the session hall and the 24 medium-sized Party flags at both sides for the 48 years of struggle, up to the orchids and other forest plants used to decorate the tables, comrades meticulously poured their attention to make the gathering successful and memorable.

“When I learned that the mural, streamers and banners I was assigned to do were for the Congress, I was overwhelmed; I had goose bumps all-over,” a young artist who was part of the decorations committee said. “This event happens only once, and I never expected to be part of it. I almost got ill with stress, but I was inspired.”

To keep abreast with the current situation, a television set was placed in the mess-cum-social hall, to monitor the daily news. The television also served as recreation for the support staff. At night, when there were no enemy movements around, even those in the sentry posts could come to watch Korean telenovelas or other movies that were interpreted on-the-spot by comrades to make it comprehensible in the local language.

Unity was present not only among the delegates but extended to the revolutionary masses around the camp. Up to more than ten kilometers away, the masses sent news about enemy troop movements. Members of the Party branches in the villages around the camp sent local delicacies they cooked for the comrades. They assisted in marketing and fetching or being guides to comrades who went in or out of the camp.

Party cadres and members, Red commanders, Red fighters and organized masses around the camp participated in the cultural programs at the opening and closing of the Congress. Each unit had a prepared number, and the regions shared their dances: patting from the Cordilleras, curacha from Samar, and Lumad dances from Mindanao. Delegates from other regions participated in the dances. For those who could not go with the dances, a part of each of the programme was set aside for more popular dances such as cha-cha and “maskipaps” (slang for freestyle dancing) still in the tune of revolutionary songs with the appropriate tempo. Comrades also performed their local songs, including the kulilipan and dawes of the Cordillera.

Also introduced in this occasion were two songs created for the Congress, Muog na Buo (Solid Fortress) and Pag-ugit ng Kasaysayan (Shaping History) that celebrated the Party’s determination to develop the regions in step to advance the people’s war faster to greater heights.

METICULOUS PREPARATIONS

At least three months before the Congress, regional committees held their plenary discussions on the draft constitution and program and listed their comments and proposals. They also drafted proposed resolutions that they wanted to present to the Congress. They elected their representatives to the Congress through secret balloting, both the attending and non-attending delegates. The transportation staff also prepared routes and alternative routes, and various modes of transportation.

A few weeks before the activity, the revolutionary mass organizations, people’s militia, and people’s army units in the area were busy building the big session hall, clinic, barracks and individual huts, and other camp structures. Among these were five bathrooms for the whole camp and several bathrooms for comrades with mobility difficulties. Several people’s militia squads moved construction materials and food supplies to stock houses accessible to several kitchens at different areas of the site. Boxes of medical supplies were brought in as preparation for any emergency.

Even earlier, comrades had started raising animals for food because the usual vegetable production of the people’s army was expected to fall short of the demands for a long period of such big gathering. Sacks of flour were also stored to be baked into bread and cakes which were served as snacks for the whole camp. When the delegates and other staff arrived, they had accommodations ready

for them complete with electricity in every hut, copies of the collated comments from the regions, and even the doctor, nurse and other paramedics to administer medical check-ups, supervise nutrition, and give medical services to the whole camp, especially to the elderly and those with medical conditions.

According to one member of the medical group who had long prepared herself for her assignment, “We were the ones who monitored those with hypertension and those taking maintenance drugs. I am glad the historic Congress concluded without any comrade falling with a major illness. The comrades were amazed that we could conduct ECG check-ups inside the camp.

“And we had an in-house doctor who could immediately interpret the results. It was tiring but I had fulfillment.”

Long Delay

During the last part of the 1980s, when the revolutionary forces had gained enough strength and expanded its reach and the US-Marcos dictatorship had been overthrown, plans were in place for a Party congress. The draft documents had been prepared, but because revisionist counter-revolutionaries were present within the Party leadership, the congress that almost became a congress of disunity was not held.

Around mid-2000s, preparations for the congress were again started and drafts were disseminated among the Party committees. But again, it did not push through because of big changes including intensive and widespread enemy campaigns at the planned site. Now, despite the long delay, the Congress was truly successful and historic. ■
