

# May Day Greetings, 2009

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Dear Comrades,

Socialist Solidarity Greetings on May Day from the Partido Lakas ng Masa, Philippines.

We greet this May Day with the working class movement around the world facing the challenges of a capitalist system in deep crisis. The contradictions of the system emerge as wide-open cracks visible to the masses in their day-to-day struggle for survival. And working people and the poor are heroically struggling in their millions worldwide, against capitalism's 'solutions' and for system change — from the movements for democracy in Thailand and Pakistan, to the workers strike movement in France, to the movements for 'Socialism of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' in Latin America.

In the Philippines we face a situation where the political, social and economic system of elite rule is in deep crisis. The current regime of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo is one of the most unpopular governments to ever exist, since the overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986. The political institutions in the country are discredited and exposed as being in the pockets of the Arroyo political clan, from the Congress to the Supreme Court to the Electoral Commission. Despite several attempts to oust the regime, including the development of a mass movement calling for her ouster and a military in mutiny led by junior officers, the regime has managed to cling onto power. A situation of stalemate now exists.

Meanwhile the global economic crisis has hit the country with force, with a collapse in exports, zero growth forecast for 2009 and a spiralling increase in retrenchments and unemployment. According to the ILO in 2008 some 250,000 workers in plant and machine operation and assembly were retrenched. If workers in electronics and garment and textiles are included the total number could be well over 300,000 retrenched last year, mostly since October when the economic crisis hit. Meanwhile thousands of Overseas Filipino Workers are returning home as factories close overseas.

The Department of Labor and Employment figures contradict the independent research data, claiming that only some 40,000 workers were laid-off in 2008. This under-representation of the impact of the crisis on unemployment is typical of a long-list of lies peddled by the regime to cover up it's incompetent rule and intensified exploitation of the people.

In the 2009 budget, the Philippines government would spend P7,391.54 per person for debt servicing while allotting only P2,050.98 per person for education, P301.52 for health, P57.48 for housing and P112.80 for social services. In a crisis situation, when large-scale economic stimulus to boost the national economy through public expenditures and wage increases is required, such a budget represents the continuation of the anti-people neoliberal economic policies that this government and the political establishment of this country is still wedded to.

In 2010 we face a national and presidential election. The Partido Lakas ng Masa aims to intervene in these elections at all levels: from the presidential, to the senate, congress and local councils. The main purpose of our intervention is to build a mass movement for system change and an end to elite rule. Today we are actively developing alliances between the left led basic sectors of the working class (trade unions, rural workers and the urban poor), the middle-class and the military rebels, to

run an anti-establishment unity-ticket, with candidates at all levels. In the Philippines we call this an anti-trapo ticket and campaign, trapo meaning traditional politician, which in Filipino also means a dirty rag.

As we develop our tactics and strategy we are well aware of the need to draw lessons from the advanced movements for system change and socialism in Latin America, especially Bolivia and the “Socialism for the Twenty First Century” movement in Venezuela. We acknowledge, with deep admiration and respect, that these developments in Latin America would not have been possible without the survival of the Cuban revolution — a superb and heroic record of fifty years.

Today we live in special times. As we face the tremendous challenges ahead, at the same time we have a historic opportunity available to this generation, to advance towards a socialist alternative. This means that we can and must put forward the socialist alternative through concrete demands that the people can understand, while at the same time pointing to the need to struggle for system change. The challenge is to put forward socialism as a living theory and movement, one not mired in dogma and schemas. This approach will surely help us build the Socialism of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Long Live May Day! Mabuhay!

Long Live International Working Class Unity and Solidarity! Mabuhay!

Long Live Socialism!

*Mabuhay Sosyalismo!*

Sonny Melencio

Chairperson, Partido Lakas ng Masa