

A New Revolutionary Hope amidst Challenges - The Second Congress of RPM-M and How It Became a Success

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Many challenges... many revolutionary tasks to be done...

These are just some of the statements that made the principles of Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa – Mindanao (RPM-M) stronger in holding its Second Congress. After its founding Congress in 2001, the party successfully held its Second National Congress last August 2010 at Camp Usman, Mindanao. It was attended by 130 delegates from the three peoples in the different areas of Mindanao. It was also attended by two comrades from the French and Dutch sections of the Fourth International, of which the RPM-M has been a member since 2003.

The Congress is supposed to be conducted every three years, as stipulated in the party's Constitution and By-Laws. However, unexpected circumstances in struggles in which the Party has engaged created unfavorable objective and subjective conditions which greatly affected the Party and the regular launching of the Congress. But these difficulties, however, have not effectively derailed the Party's direction in advancing socialist revolution. Despite the material, logistical and financial constraints, party members and cadres worked enthusiastically to make the Congress a success.

Prior to the set schedule, all front and district held Pre-Congress conferences where Party members collectively reviewed and discussed the party documents for the Congress. The Second Congress attained its objectives. It reviewed the nine years experiences and lessons learned from these years including its successes and weaknesses. The Party's constitution was amended and its organizational, political, ideological and military programs for three years have been approved.

Camp Usman is named after a comrade in the Revolutionary Peoples' Army (RPA) who offered his whole life to the peoples' revolution. Participants slept in quarters and main hall constructed by the preparatory team consisting mostly of RPA and mass activists and supporters in the vicinity. Secured by a sizeable group of RPA combatants who served as look-outs in the hills, the congress went through in a secured atmosphere. Because of its clandestine nature, participants and the activity itself could not be exposed to the neighboring communities, so the delegates' entry were at night or at dawn. A challenges, because one had to carefully negotiate on rocky and slippery roads and rivers until the entrance of the Congress venue.

The oldest comrade welcomed the delegates from the different field of works, base, areas and peoples to symbolize inclusiveness and revolutionary experiences after the singing of the International and a local revolutionary song while comrades from the RPA rendered a salute and the opening statement by the leadership. It would later be concluded by the youngest comrade who had attended the Congress. This is to symbolize the knowledge learned after the last Congress and the new hope that will inspire everybody after the second Congress.

Discussions and debates were vibrant and fulfilling, despite the circumstances and despite of

material and financial limitations – not to mention the security considerations that the party has constantly faced. This reflects the fact that the party's goals and principles were, and never will be, shaken by any challenge or difficulty. The review and adoption of the basic party documents were based on the present international and national situations. The Party's reading and analysis of the current conditions of the working class has been the main considerations in framing the three year program. All of these documents were discussed, debated and approved democratically.

The Congress, on the other hand, also elected a new set of party leaders. The striking feature of the Congress is, that it has elected young party members to major positions and entrusted a majority of the membership of Central Committee not just to young party members but also to women comrades. This shows that within the party, the role of women and youth is given value in advancing the socialist revolution. This is a sign of a strong continuity and great hope for the young Party to move forward.

Electing these people in the position, however, is not the only act of Congress that shows how important women and youth are – it also supported the consultations called by and for women and LGBT (Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgender) members of the party. These consultations created resolutions and recommendations for the party to study the creation of women and LGBT commissions as well as corresponding party documents to guide each member in strengthening and organizing the sectors.

Towards the end, the Congress made concrete actions for a three years period. It adopted recommendations that let the party engage in informal sector organizing, initiating gender-sensitivity and gender-awareness studies, continuation of electoral engagement and pursuing peace talks with the Philippine government but with lessons learned and review of the existing peace mechanisms including the secretariats and the criteria in having it in the peace talks, intensifying organizing work with and among migrant workers, conduct conferences in all lines of work, create a propaganda committee, and others which will be defined by its leadership body.

The Congress ended with challenges addressed to every Party member that revolutionary works shall be advanced in all levels and always conscious that it is the responsibility of all Party members to advance socialist revolution, in whatever circumstance and wherever such event is unfolded and whenever the opportune moment favorable to socialism comes.

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