

Writing Samples 1: Opinion pieces
Written for OpinYon Newsmagazine

[Hindi matalo-talo...](#)

Posted on [April 10, 2014](#)



By Richard James Mendoza

THOSE were some of the words uttered by Wilma Austria-Tiamzon, the wife of Benito Tiamzon, both of whom are the alleged leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), as they were asked for some words in an ambush interview. Her complete statement was : “Binabati ko ang Bagong Hukbong Bayan sa ika-45th na anibersaryo nito. Patuloy na lumalakas sa buong bayan. Hindi matalo-talo ng AFP!” (“I greet the New People’s Army in its 45th anniversary. They continue to grow in strength nationwide. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) can never win against it!”). It was a defiant statement delivered with full conviction, and it was actually quite inspiring that she is steadfast in her principles even though she has been arrested and placed behind bars.

Premonitions

As the anniversary of the New People’s Army neared, several tactical offensives were launched after the arrests of the Tiamzons on March 22nd, although it is not sure if it was either connected to the aforementioned arrest or to its nearing anniversary. Lightning rallies were also conducted by allied organizations of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), the political arm of the CPP. Members of the revolutionary women’s group the Malayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan (Free Movement of New Women, MAKIBAKA) staged a lightning rally along Rizal Avenue on Tuesday, while those belonging to the government employees group Makabayang Kawaning Pilipino (Patriotic Government Employees) held theirs at the Divisoria Market on Wednesday.

Both of the lightning rallies mentioned, including the one that I'll narrate next, called for the release of the Tiamzons and the other political prisoners, as well as calling on the people to celebrate the NPA's 45th anniversary.

The clash at the Peace Bridge

Last Thursday another lightning rally was held, this time led by the Revolutionary Council on Trade Unions (RCTU) alongside the Kabataang Makabayan (Patriotic Youth, KM), the PMST as well as COMPATRIOTS (Revolutionary Movement of Our Compatriots Abroad and Their Families), all which are allied organizations of the NDFP. It looked to be a grand finale of sorts, as the NPA's anniversary neared. At the same time though, a group of Moros were holding a prayer vigil celebrating the recently-signed Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro (CAB) at the historical Mendiola Bridge.

While a representative of the RCTU was reading its group's statement, the Moros began to shout at the marchers who thought that it was a show of disrespect against them. As soon as the road traffic became empty, the latter began to run against the activists which resulted in a minor riot. The NDF force was outnumbered and was forced to run away from the scene. Some of them, including the media, were caught along the ensuing scuffle that resulted in injuries. It was only after the intervention of the Imams and the police that the melee was contained. At the time, the activists had already fled from the place.

After the confrontation, a certain "Mario", perhaps from the RCTU, was interviewed by the media about what had just happened. He said that they came from Bustillos Street and that they didn't mean anything disrespectful to the Moros and issued a call for our Muslim brothers to unite against their common enemies, which he mentioned as the Aquino government, US imperialism, bureaucrat-capitalism, and feudalism.

It's hard to point fingers here; where to place the sole blame on the incident. While some courtesy could have been shown by the marchers for the Muslims who were reading the Quran as part of their program by minimizing their chants, perhaps our Muslim brothers shouldn't have bothered to pay too much attention to them, since all they did was read their own statement. The revolutionaries would probably have marched onwards Recto Avenue after that. As of this writing, I'm waiting for the statements of the parties involved, as well as the statement of the present administration.

These tactical offensives and lightning rallies, despite the fact that the third lightning rally disastrously degenerated into a bad riot, are most likely meant as a show of force by the revolutionary movement to the Aquino regime in light of the arrest of the Tiamzons and their companions, as well as celebrating the 45th anniversary of the New People's Army.

Peace delayed

The Aquino regime is boastful of its so-called achievement in arresting the Tiamzons despite the fact that the arrest violates the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), which the current administration along with the peace panel regards as "irrelevant" in the peace talks. They argue that they are ineligible because "...that would mean they can wage war and violence against government and when caught, claim Jasig protection and expect to be released," as said by Presidential Spokesperson Edwin Lacierda sometime ago.

He may sound like he has a point, but it's quite shallow. Isn't it precisely because the CPP-NPA-NDFP is waging a protracted armed struggle against the government that they are involved in peace talks? The GRP, through the likes of Ging Deles and Alex Padilla, are narrow-minded in their view about the peace talks. They believe that one should surrender first before talking about peace. How does that solve the question of peace? How can that kind of attitude address the root problems of poverty? But what can one expect of the Aquino regime in resolving the question of peace if he himself has sided time and time again with the side of the exploiters and oppressors?

Yet, there may still be some shred of hope in resuming peace negotiations between the GRP and the NDFP. In an article written by Andreo Calonzo of GMA News, "PHL govt, communists can still break impasse in peace talks – analyst", "Rey Casambre, executive director of the Philippine Peace Center,

said both parties should immediately discuss their disagreements, through informal talks, to remove impediments to the peace negotiations.

“Both have repeatedly announced they are open to peace negotiations. Neither one has issued a notice of termination to the other party... The impasse can be broken if both parties agree to consultation and/or informal talks to discuss the alleged violations and the disagreements, ” Casambre said at a press briefing Wednesday.

However, I doubt the GRP would press on with the negotiations given the actions that it undertook. Prof. Jose Maria Sison, the founding chairman of the CPP, said in a report, “Joma Sison on Tiamzons’ arrest: It may be the last straw“

“I hope that the President will think hard about what he’s doing. While he might believe that he will benefit more from arresting and imprisoning political consultants, truth is, it is better for the country when peace negotiations continue. Does he want to be known in history as the President who killed the peace negotiations?” Sison, who has been in exile here for years, explained in Filipino.

Contradictions arise out of a society where the exploiting class thrives on the hardships of its people; where the only known definition of peace is the peace of the cemetery. Perhaps the only way to resolve the Aquino regime’s contradictions is for the so-called leader to be ousted by a genuine mass movement. Then a transition stage shall take place for a new societal order that shall truly serve the people and not just a few.

[The Continuing Attack On The Left](#)

Posted on [April 10, 2014](#)

By Richard James Mendoza

These past weeks have witnessed the reactionary brigade attacking the Left through the channels of traditional and social media. Though this has been going on for so long in the undercurrents of the people’s discourse, it suddenly got a revival in social media through a “Thought Leaders” article by a yellow publicist entitled “How the Left has lost”. She narrated in her article how she used to be sympathetic to the leftists starting from her days as a college student when, though not becoming a member, she took the side of the militant youth group Kabataang Makabayan and being “borderline Pink” (what’s that’s supposed to mean?). She also mentions how she campaigned for Bayan Muna sometime ago.

That is, until she saw “how it has become harder to empathize with the Left”, whatever that means. She then began to attack the Left on the basis that they’ve become “indistinguishable from the trapos they despise”, basing on such flimsy arguments such as how they’ve supposedly benefited from pork barrel while being against it, as well as “[placing]...their beliefs on hold and allowed themselves to be used – in exchange for campaign funds”. She also rants on how “silent” the Left was on the supposed bullying of China.

First and foremost, the leftists in Congress have barely benefited from their pork barrel because they’ve voiced their opposition against the previous and present regimes. As a matter of fact, their allocated pork wasn’t being released to them. It’s only recently that they’ve received it, and in small amounts at that. Yet, the publicist was silent on Abad’s pork barrel that exceeds the congressional allotment.

She also confuses ‘utilizing the united front’ as “being used”. Funds aren’t necessarily the problem, since the Left is used to arousing, mobilizing, and organizing even as they lack the funds to do so (just ask some full-time activists). The aim of forging alliances is to mobilize the populace to achieve a certain goal,

and that erstwhile goal is to gain a seat in the Senate which was seen as a gargantuan objective to achieve. One does not need to compromise his principles in forging an alliance with a well-known reactionary party.

And perhaps she ought to read the websites of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) and Prof. Jose Maria Sison in order to look for herself how the left criticizes the actions of China in the South China Sea (I refuse to call it the West Philippine Sea, for it only legitimizes the arrogance of the Philippines in its combative stance in the issue just because it's riding on the back of the imperialist white tiger like a naive gadfly).

To get over her nonsense-ridden "thought", she rants that the CPP-NPA-NDF has "all but left the negotiating table" and, seemingly frustrated, exclaims hastily to "just exterminate the dwindling force permanently!", referring to what she calls the "National People's Army" (sic). Such attitude only rationalizes the violence being done by the PNP and the AFP against legitimate activists in the cities and in the countryside; to quote Randy Malayao, "Hitlerite" is a term apropos for the kind of "thought" she had propagated.

Afterwards, Rappler posted an article which seemed to be a response written by Raymond Palatino, the former representative of Kabataan partylist. Then came an article titled "A Catholic and a leftist" by Ted Tuvera, the spokesperson of the League of Filipino Students (LFS)-UST chapter. Compliments to these two for giving the social media public another perspective in the mainstream media.

Of course, the yellow's not the only one attacking the Left. The Armed Forces of the Philippines is ever present in attacking the left since time immemorial, both literally and figuratively. Just as the campaign for the abolishment of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) had begun to escalate, a series of Letters to the Editor directed against Anakbayan have been published in the Inquirer, red-baiting the group as a "communist front" and also calling it a "nuisance". One Google search reveals that the names and emails used in the LTTE's were not real; perhaps this is how the taxpayer's money is being spent by the ISAFP.

In the midst of these bogus letters, a news item surfaced that a member of Anakbayan-Abra chapter, along with his kin, were found dead in a shallow grave. Members of the 41st Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army led by a certain Lt. Col. Domingo are seen to be the perpetrators of the murder. The said member was supposed to give a testimony to a human rights office on how he was forcibly being used as a "guide" by the Army in their operations against the New People's Army.

Whether through the likes of PR publicists, misinformed bloggers, or internet sock-puppets (trolls) funded by reactionaries, attacking the Left has always been a favorite pastime of the reactionary State, its puppets and gofers. They've found the Left as their eternal scapegoat for its incompetence as well as to cover up their crimes against the populace. "Oh, our Armed Forces is having trouble with the rebels? Let's blame the Left because they don't like foreign intervention!" "Human rights violations? Nah, that's just leftist propaganda! We have no political prisoners here!" "Huh, those urban poor settlers are fighting back against the police and demolition teams? They were probably instigated by those activists again!"

Sarcasm aside, I must commend them for having all the time in the world for attacking a force that has a long history of serving the people. If the Left has truly lost, then why have they been relentless in attacking them? If the Left has truly lost, then why do they keep on saying so? If that is the case, then the Left should have died a long time ago.

But it hasn't died, and it will not die for as long as the people are being oppressed by the ruling class that are lording over the world, exploiting the labor of the people for their own gain. It will not die as long as the people continue to fight for a society that benefits everyone and not just the minority. Let's struggle for genuine social change.

People's Uprising

Posted on [November 20, 2013](#)

By Richard James Mendoza

JUST a few weeks ago, former Chief Justice Reynato Puno introduced the idea of crafting a law abolishing all kinds of pork barrel by means of a people's initiative through Republic Act 6735, also known as the Initiative and Referendum Law. Multiple sectors have expressed their support for the people's initiative; among those who have thrown in their support are the Catholic Church through the CBCP, as well as the transport sector and various militant groups—with the latter two planning to hold gatherings to gain signatures to help meet the required number of signatories.



(photo credit: <http://www.theosophy.ph>)

Malacanang on their part wasn't too receptive of the idea, with Sec. Coloma saying that the people's initiative "presupposes that the Legislative and the Executive branches of government are unwilling to enact and implement laws that will prevent the misuse of public funds." Well thank you very much, Captain Obvious (or should I say Captain Oblivious?)! It should have been apparent by now that under the present administration, the Executive and Legislative branches of the government are unwilling to enact and implement the laws preventing the misuse of public funds, whatever they may be.

No amount of deception created by your multi-headed Communications Office can cover the fact that a culture of impunity is being maintained by those in power. These people know that under such conditions they can get either get away with their crimes scot-free, or receive a mere slap in the wrist should they get their hands caught in the proverbial cookie jar.

Personally, I'm skeptical about the outcome of this people's initiative. After the Oct. 4 rally in Ayala, all of a sudden CJ Puno shows up with this idea. Though CJ Puno's people initiative is a welcome move that warrants its support, it should be taken with a grain of salt for the possibility of the move being hijacked (or even supported) by outside forces is very much real and shouldn't be easily ignored. And no, it's not going to be the ND Left like what the Million People March organizers have always insinuated with their statements.

I'm talking about the US imperialists of course, with the CIA along with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) as well as their related surveillance fronts like the US Aid, The Asia Foundation, etc., in coordination with the Yellows in power.

Besides, the proposed people's initiative is merely reformist in nature; it seeks to change the present circumstances within the framework of the corrupt system. Yet, it is interesting to note that the people's initiative was described by CJ Puno as "...the last peaceful alternative for the people to take charge of their destiny" and that "no other option would be left" should this option fail. Does this call for a more radical undertaking?

After the past several months of public outrage against the pork barrel system that manifested an underlying problem in the present political system of the Philippines; from the so-called "Million People March" and the humorous failure of "EDSA TAYO!," to the #ScrapPork network consisting of various anti-corruption coalitions and groups that were formed in the midst of the outrage against pork, now comes the next step of the plan.

Though there are a few exceptions, I don't think that the people are falling for the lies of the Aquino regime. As of press time, the President had just finished his little defense of the Disbursement Acceleration Program (DAP) on live TV, insisting that it's not pork barrel and that it's the fault of the opposition, the progressive Left, and of course his favorite scapegoat Gloria Arroyo. Based on personal experience, the power of collective action to bring concrete results is uncontested. It's time to raise the level of discussion in order to arouse the people about the issues that face our country, organize them into units, and then mobilize under a united front.

It's now time to push for a more direct and perhaps radical solution. Because until the ruling classes continue to thrive on the exploitation of the oppressed masses, they won't even bother to listen to our demands let alone take action for this issue. When our backs are pushed against the wall, what else can be done? Do we just ask the oppressor to stop? Reflecting the call of Anakbayan, let us work towards a people's uprising to abolish ALL kinds of pork and to advance genuine social change through the national democratic revolution.

Punish the plunderers and the corrupt that benefitted from exploiting the masses composed of the Yellows and their ilk, the large bourgeois-compradors and landlords, the bureaucrat-capitalists; in other words, those who are at the top of the social triangle. Let's reverse the triangle upside-down and place those at the bottom of the triangle, the workers and the farmers, on top and lead a new country free from the threeills that currently plague our country. Only then will we have achieved our victory.

[De-Americanizing the World](#)

Posted on [November 5, 2013](#)

By Richard James Mendoza

IN the wake of the U.S. government shutdown comes an editorial straight from China's state-owned media outlet Xinhua entitled: "U.S. fiscal failure warrants a de-Americanized world." The editorial points out the increasing expansion of the U.S. as a "global empire by imposing a postwar world order" by citing the actions the U.S. government did after World War II such as "fueling recovery in Europe... and encouraging regime-change in nations that it deems hardly Washington-friendly." The editorial was also critical of the hypocrisy of the U.S. government, mentioning its efforts to make it seem that they have the moral high ground, while pointing out the abuse of its status as the world's superpower, such as "...torturing prisoners of war, slaying civilians in drone attacks, and spying on world leaders," as well

as "...shifting financial risks overseas, instigating regional tensions amid territorial disputes, and fighting unwarranted wars under the cover of outright lies."

According to the editorial, the actions that were committed by the U.S. government had the international community reeling from the effects of a financial collapse due to the avarice of those in Wall Street, as well as agonizing many nations across the world, since their dollar assets are jeopardized due to the recent government shutdown after Washington failed to reach an agreement as to if they are going to raise the debt ceiling, as well as reaching for a solution for the federal budget.

The editorial gave several ideas as to what can be done to start the "de-Americanization" of the world. Among others, it suggested for countries to learn the basics of international law and respecting other countries' sovereignty. The recent disputes between the Philippines, China, and other neighboring countries in the Southeast Asian region regarding the ownership of several islands and shoals on the South China Sea (or the West Philippine Sea), most notably the Spratly Islands, is a good example. While China has insisted that the U.S. government keep its hands off the issue, the Philippines, mostly through the inanity of DFA Secretary Alberto Del Rosario, is practically begging for the help of the U.S. in settling the dispute.

As a sovereign country, we shouldn't allow the intervention of other countries that are outside the matter at hand, most especially the U.S., since they're only going to serve their own national interest and not ours. Those who believe that the U.S., either through plain ignorance or sheer idolatry of the U.S., are the ones who will save us from the "bullying" China fail to see that the ultimate bully is the U.S. government, using us as mere pawns to advance their own interests at the expense of our country and the region as a whole.



(photo credit: businessinsider.com)

The Xinhua editorial also calls for the recognition the United Nations as an authority for global issues, explaining that no country can wage any military action against one another without a U.N. mandate. As detailed in the book "Rogue State" by William Blum, the U.S. along with fellow rogue state Israel, has nullified and overridden hundreds of U.N. resolutions and mandates with its singular vote. As long as the U.S. veto exists, as well as the manipulatory influence of Israel, the votes of hundreds of countries are effectively deemed null and void. The U.S. has also staged wars, especially in the last decade, without a congressional hearing or a U.N. mandate. Thus, it can be deduced that the wars that they've waged then and now are illegal.

I'll add to the suggestion that the United Nations should change its address to a place that is considerably neutral, given that because the U.N. receives it's funding from the U.S. since it is located there, its decisions are most likely influenced by the U.S.. Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa has called

this "...an example of a relationship the US established with developing countries in the form of subordination."

Calling on the world to embrace "substantial reforms" in the financial system, such as better representation on major financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, "so that they could better reflect the transformations of the global economic and political landscape," the editorial also suggested for an introduction of a new international reserve currency that shall replace the U.S. Dollar, that could put the international community permanently away from the "spillover of the intensifying domestic political turmoil in the United States." In his article for the Asia Times, Pepe Escobar says that China isn't really advocating for the abolition of the Bretton-Woods system – for now – but it's for more deciding power, given that they have slightly more weight in the IMF than Italy. He also notes that the move from the U.S. currency is underway, in particular the BRICS coalition. "The US dollar is slowly but surely being replaced by a basket of currencies," he says.

Towards the end, the editorial says that the purpose of these suggestions "...is not to completely toss the United States aside, which is also impossible," but simply to have the U.S. play a more constructive role in global affairs. I beg to differ. Throughout its history, the role of the U.S. has been that of a deadly harbinger which brought nothing but destruction and misery to the countries that put its cursed touch into. Unless their system changes, we can't expect the U.S. to play a "constructive role" even if these reforms took place. Only through the national democratic revolution and international solidarity can we break the vicious cycle of US imperialism. A multipolar world free from US hegemony is possible.

Richard James Mendoza is an Information Technology student at AMA University; the administrator of the Bagong Katipunan blog site; and, a member of the youth organization Anakbayan.