



PERMANENT PEOPLES' TRIBUNAL

Second Session on the Philippines

Indicting the U.S.-backed Arroyo Regime for Human Rights Violations,
Economic Plunder and Transgression of the Filipino People's Sovereignty

Summary of the Opening Speech of Dr. Gianni Tognoni, General Secretary Permanent Peoples' Tribunal

During the Convening of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal
Second Session on the Philippines
October 30, 2006
The Hague
The Netherlands

It is a great honor - and at the same time the expression of a firm commitment to assume the charge of the case of the violation of the fundamental rights of the Filipino people – to be present in this event.

Let us consider briefly some of the reasons, and the overall background of the PPT decision, which is de facto considered a “Second Session” of a history which dates back in 1980, when the violations of the fundamental rights of the Filipino People by the Marcos dictatorship were brought to the judgment of the PPT. The Tribunal had been established approximately one year before, in June 1979, in Bologna, Italy. Its constitution – based on the Universal Declaration of Peoples' Right to self-determination (Algiers, 1976) – was targeted to underline and possibly to bridge, if not to fill, a vacuum of international law: despite a long and productive season of production of Declarations, Conventions, Instruments to promote and protect human rights, no international Court was available to take charge of the violations. More broadly, the violations perpetrated through the enforcement of economic, political, and social measures on peoples could not even have a visibility in international law.

The case of the Philippines was at that time specifically significant to put into evidence the dramatic role of dictatorships in a region of the world, Southeast Asia, considered by many a “natural” component of the US Empire.

Aside from being one on the first sessions of the Tribunal, the first session on the Philippines was of specific interest because we had then the strong support of some groups in Algeria who in fact helped very much in preparing and filming the broadcast of the information on the Philippines. It was one case of an important alliance of peoples who had experienced colonial repression. Since then many things had happened: in the Philippines, formal democracy was declared, while in Algeria the situation was evolving towards the dramatic decade of the Nineties (which has been the object of a Session of the PPT in Paris in 2004).

The establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 1998 represented an important step forward to fill -- at least in principle -- the vacuum of jurisdiction in the protection of human rights. Besides the weaknesses and the contradictions of the implementation of the mandate of the ICC, it was clear however that the violations of peoples' rights due to economic crimes were not ever included in the terms of reference and the competence of the ICC, despite the fact that it is all too well known that this is the area where human rights are more systematically violated and denied.

The interest of the Tribunal in assuming this case and convene the second session on the Philippines are due to three main reasons:

1. The Filipino case is a model case on what is occurring in the world today with respect to the prevalence of the so called economic "Low-Intensity Wars", conceptualized and practiced to substitute the old dictatorships.
2. The Filipino case appears to us as a dramatic model case of the silence which exists in the world today. During the time of Marcos, at least everybody knew what was going on. The present situation of the Philippines is a successful case of silent repression. It is thus important to make this case visible.
3. The Philippines is a model case of globalization. Filipino people are spread out all over the world as migrants. Yet, they are not declared as migrants but as "moving workers", as part of a kind of a "natural economic law". Behind these labels, we see the exploitation of the more developed countries of the Filipino people's situation of forced migration to strengthen their local economy, creating situations of discrimination.

According to its Statutes, the Presidency of the PPT has therefore decided to assume the request of the broad spectrum of representatives of the Filipino people to convene a Second Session on the Philippines, to be held in The Hague in March 2007. Following its procedures, an intensive work is foreseen by the PPT to collect and analyze all the available evidences from different sources, documents, and witnesses. An international Jury will be selected to judge all the aspects of the case.

