

The Philippine Left and the 2010 Elections (Comment piece No. 4)

Philippines left and and Military rebels in the elections

Sunday 9 May 2010, by [MOHIDEEN Reihana](#), [NEMENZO Francisco "Dodong"](#) (Date first published: 6 May 2010).

By Reihana Mohideen, based on an interview with well-known Marxist Francisco Nemenzo

May 6, 2010 — An important political development in recent years, a result of the widespread opposition to the government of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo [known in the Philippines as GMA], is the radicalisation of junior officers and soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), which has drawn a new generation into progressive politics.

Several military rebel groups have recently emerged. These include the Magdalo, led by Lt. Col. Antonio Trillanes, who is currently imprisoned by the Arroyo government, and Para sa Bayan, whose key leaders are also in jail. Trillanes contested the 2007 senate elections while imprisoned, with little or no resources or publicity, and still managed to garner around 11 million votes to win a senate seat (which is the official count, so the actual vote is very likely to be higher than this). General Daniel Lim, who was recently acknowledged as the leader of the various military rebel groupings including the Magdalo and Para sa Bayan, is also running for a senate position in the May 10, 2010, elections this year, albeit from behind bars. Colonel Ariel Querebin, currently imprisoned by the Arroyo government, is also running for a senate position. Lt. Sg. James Layug, a recently released Magdalo leader, is running for a congress seat in Taguig (Second District).

Francisco Nemenzo, well-known Marxist and the former president of the University of the Philippines, is active in the campaign to elect Danny Lim and features in television advertisements in support of Lim. In a recent letter to staff and students of the University of the Philippines, entitled "How I will vote", Nemenzo explains his support for Danny Lim:

"Of almost 90 contestants for 12 senatorial seats, General Danilo Lim stands out. He is not the soldier we love to hate. He exemplifies a thinking military officer who sees his job as defending the Filipino people, not protecting their oppressors. He is painfully aware of what is wrong with the military and police, but he is not one who merely growls without doing something about it. In February 2006 he made the bold decision to withdraw support from Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, outraged by the revelation in the Garci tapes that soldiers were used to cheat in the 2004 elections. When Arroyo's minions in the House of Representatives aborted the impeachment process, he realized that defiance was a patriotic act. He reminded himself that he swore allegiance to the republic, not to the incumbent President.

Danilo Lim is one of the few respected generals in the armed forces. His military education in West Point heightened his sense of nationalism instead of turning him into a little brown American. He

earned exemplary combat record as an officer of the Scout Rangers. He was teaching mathematics in the Philippine Military Academy when he helped organize the Young Officers Union. He is a man of impeccable integrity and was never involved in human rights violation. Danny Lim would have been a strong contender for AFP chief-of-staff had he sold his soul to GMA. When it came to a crunch, he heeded the people's clamor for the ouster of his commander-in-chief.

Now that Danny Lim is pursuing his advocacy for system change in the electoral arena, I shall vote for him and the three other senatorial candidates who stood for the ouster of the illegitimate president in 2006. If elected, they will symbolize our continuing struggle for a just, democratic, modernized and independent nation."

The military rebels, like the left, have been unable to put up a unified ticket. According to Nemenzo, "[The military rebels] had different origins. There seems to be a difference between the Philippine Military Academy 1990 batch and the batches after 1995. They also had different field experiences: the Scout Rangers, the Marines, the SWAG, the Air Force the regular navy, etc."

Nemenzo's assessment is that the military rebels were "never united organisationally" but unlike the left which "was once united but split, distinct groups [amongst the military rebels] are easier to unify than former comrades".

Nemenzo is also supporting Col. Ariel Querebin, Risa Hontiveros (Akbayan leader running on the senate ticket of the Liberal Party presidential candidate Noynoy Aquino) and JV Bautista (Sanlakas and Partido Lakas ng Masa, running on the senate ticket of the former president Erap Estrada).

In his letter Nemenzo also explains his position on the electoral system:

"I do not consider elections as the essence of democracy; in most instances they serve as a façade for oligarchy. I cannot even consider elections in the Philippines a "simula ng pagbabago". Change will not come as a result of the coming elections, regardless of who wins. The colossal problems we face today are rooted the system of elite rule. For as long as this system prevails, any change will be superficial and its benefits will not trickle down to the masses."

P.S.

* From Socialist Feminist:

<http://socialistafeminista.blogspot.com/2010/05/philippine-left-and-2010-elections.html>