

Memorandum on Present Status and Needs  
of the Philippine Workers' Movement

- Over 200,000 industrial workers are actively involved in the Revolutionary Movement of Workers, a member organization of the NDF.
- The Revolutionary Movement of Workers has a proud history of fighting oppression. At the end of the 19th century, Filipino workers joined the national revolution against the colonial rule of Spain. Since 1902, when the first labor federation was founded, Filipino workers have fought against U.S. colonial rule and the exploitation and oppression of foreign and local capitalists.
- After martial law was declared by President Marcos on September 21, 1972, the Filipino workers have intensified their struggle.
- On May 1, 1975, Bukluran (Solid Unity of Workers) was founded, representing 9 independent labor unions.
- By January 1976, Bukluran had grown to 130 unions covering about 80,000 industrial workers.
- On November 24 and December 6, 1975, on May 1 and October 10, 1976, On May 1, 1977 and September 23, 1977, Filipino workers led huge protest demonstrations against the US-Marcos dictatorship.
- Despite the strike ban of the Marcos regime, more than 500 strikes have been launched by workers since October 1975.
- On May 1, 1980, over 25,000 workers and their supporters staged a huge open rally to demand their rights and protest against the exploitation under the US-Marcos dictatorship.
- Filipino workers suffer greatly under the Marcos regime. Their daily wage is only about ₱15 (or Italian lire 1,500) while the cost of living for a family of six in the Philippines is ₱47.00 (Ital. lire 4,700). An estimated 11.5 million are unemployed.
- The increased and intensified exploitation and oppression under the Marcos regime has only served to intensify the workers' militance and struggle.
- Women workers are even more exploited and oppressed. They are given even lower wages.

- Maternity leave has been reduced from 14 weeks (6 weeks before delivery, 8 weeks after) to only 6 weeks (2 weeks before, 4 weeks after). It often happens that the women are still bleeding after delivery but they already have to go back to work.
- Many companies have the practice of dismissing the women after they get married. The companies do not want to give maternity benefits.
- Many women workers, especially those in the Free Trade Zones, are subjected to sexual exploitation. If they wish to retain their jobs, they have to submit to the sexual desires of management personnel.
- In the face of all this oppression and exploitation, many Filipino women workers have joined the Philippine revolution. About half of the 200,000 members of the Revolutionary Movement of Workers are women. Some have joined the New People's Army.

Present needs of the Revolutionary Movement of Workers:

- inside the Philippines: funds to help support full time worker organizers. In Greater Manila area alone, more than 50 full time worker organizers need support. Financial support for one full time organizer is about ₱1,000 per month (about Italian lire 100,000). This amount is not enough for the whole family, but other members of the family (wife or husband, elder children) work to help in the expenses of the family. Funds are also needed to support underground workers' newspapers. These workers' newspapers are needed in broad educational work among the workers.

Medicines (analgesics, vitamins, anti-biotics) are also needed for the workers and their families, who due to malnutrition and hard work under inhuman working conditions, are often sick.

- outside the Philippines: recognition and support for the underground Revolutionary Workers' Movement.

There is an ever increasing number of Filipino migrant workers (in Italy there is an estimated 15,000 Filipinos, mostly women, working as domestics). Support and legal protection for the organization of Filipino migrant workers is needed.

This, in very summary form, is the situation of the revolutionary movement of workers in the Philippines, as well as a very concise presentation of its most basic needs.

The Filipino workers, especially the women workers, are extremely exploited and oppressed under the US-Marcos regime. But like their forbears in the past, they are militantly fighting for their rights and for national liberation. They play a key role in the overall struggle for national independence and democracy.

Submitted by:

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