

AUTONOMY WITH COMPENSATORY JUSTICE: THE NON-VIOLENT ALTERNATIVE TO THE MORO PROBLEM

Macapado A. Muslim

The Moro armed struggle is undeniably one of the severest threats to the Philippine state. This struggle which began in 1972 and was at its peak in the mid-seventies has been shudderingly costly in terms of number of human lives lost, number of families displaced, and properties damaged. It was reported that since its inception in 1972, about 100,000 persons have been killed and hundreds of thousands rendered homeless. Among those displaced are the reported 200,000 to 300,000 Moro refugees now still in Sabah, Malaysia.

Is the Moro military challenge to the Philippine state over, given the reduced frequency and intensity of mujahideen-AFP encounters in the last fifteen years and the establishment of agencies "designed to solve" the Moro problem like the Office of Muslim Affairs (OMA) and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)? The answer is no. The contemporary situation may be the lull before the likely big storm. The explanation is the fact that the Philippine government's conflict resolution efforts toward the Moros continue to be addressed on the symptoms of the Moro problem, particularly the existence of various mujahideen groups and their activities against symbols of government authority. In other words, the government's conflict resolution efforts have been evading what I would call "the Moro problem."

This problem consists of the following conditions that have characterized the lives of the Moros in the contemporary period, namely, their economic marginalization and destitution; political inferiorization and trivialization; desire to preserve their identity, which to them has been "under siege"; general feeling of physical insecurity, which was spawned primarily by the Ilaga and military atrocities in the two years preceding the declaration of martial law by the late President Ferdinand E. Marcos, and sustained by the everkill military operations in the Moro communities in the ensuing years; perception that the Philippine government is responsible or the party to blame for much of their sufferings and insecurities; their not untenable perception of the hopelessness of their condition under the existing political and economic order in Mindanao.

This paper is intended as a modest contribution to efforts aimed at finding a solution to the Moro problem and the continuing armed struggle that it ushered in. It presents a formula which has enormous potential to keep the territorial integrity of the country intact and address the basic elements of the Moro problem. The grant of "autonomy with compensatory justice" to the Moros is not only nonviolent, but the only alternative which, I think, has great chances of pre-empting the likely big storm in Mindanao.

The second part of this paper is a discussion of the government approach to the conflict which is a combination of both military and non-military efforts, and how such approach evades the problem. Part III is a discussion of the urgent need for the government to shift from its present approach that is based on an erroneous paradigm that views the symptom (the armed struggle and the mujahideens) as the problem to one that addresses the real problem, i.e., the Moro problem. It discusses also some of the wrong notions about the nature of the Moro armed struggle.

Government Approach

Since the inception of the Moro struggle, the approach of the Philippine government has remained the carrot and stick variety. But the stick aspect - the use of the state's superior instruments of violence - is certainly given more emphasis.

However, the Philippine experience in the past 18 years demonstrates the inefficacy of the military approach that erroneously views the armed struggle and the mujahideens as the problem, not the conditions that brought them to existence. It has become increasingly obvious that the government's continued use of its military might has only sustained and intensified the armed struggle. It has only provided the armed struggle with substantial centripetal force. More Moros (including women) have been pushed to the struggle by the government's largescale militarization and militarism in the Muslim areas in Mindanao.

Complementing the military approach are non-military efforts (carrot aspect) designed to appeal to and entice mujahideens (especially their leaders) and their sympathizers. These include the grant of amnesty to Moro "rebels" who returned to the fold of the law, the pampering of a few of the leader-returnees through offers of posts (mostly nominal and ad hoc) in the government and some business opportunities (mostly short-term). Some so-called special agencies were created not only to create the impression that the Muslim welfare was being attended to, but also as additional mechanisms to coopt some of the leaders of the mujahideens. Occasionally, some grandiose "programs for Muslim Mindanao" were announced.

Another carrot component is the government's "peace-making" efforts. The Marcos regime succeeded in coming up with the Tripoli Agreement in 1976 which it never intended to honor and implement as confirmed by future events. Under the Aquino administration, the government came up with some general provisions in the new Philippine Constitution for the grant of autonomy to Muslim Mindanao (also for the Cordilleras in Luzon). The government also created the Regional Consultative

Commission (RCC) that prepared a draft organic act supposedly to assist the Philippine Congress in coming up with the final legislation required to implement the autonomy for Muslim Mindanao mandated by the Constitution. Finally, in August 1989 President Aquino signed into law Republic Act 6734 (Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) prepared by Congress and for which a plebiscite was held on November 19, 1989. But even the peace-making efforts of the Aquino administration did not offer much promise. A closer analysis of R.A. 6734 which the Aquino administration viewed as the government's "blueprint for peace and development" in Mindanao will reveal its unresponsiveness to the core elements of the Moro problem.

In general, the non-military efforts of the government concerning the Moros and their struggle remain largely insincere gestures designed for propaganda purposes. Some are negative counter-insurgency measures that rest on the wrong assumption that "greed for power" among some Muslim leaders and leadership-aspirants is the principal cause of the struggle. Since the whole approach of the government evades the problem - the Moro problem - the government can never expect to end the contemporary Moro armed struggle for as long as it continues using this approach. It can never expect to liquidate the Moro struggle. It may be able to fully annihilate militarily the present generation of mujahideens (certainly this is unrealistic if you consider the fact that the capability of the Moro struggle became strengthened, not weakened, by the government's emphasis on violence), but certainly not the Moros' motivation to struggle. Even if the present generation of mujahideens may decide to give up their struggle (this is unrealistic also), there will always be Moros who will play their role for as long as the Moro problem remains unaddressed.

Urgency of a Paradigm Shift

One point that must be stressed is that the Moro armed struggle is not the problem, but just a symptom. But the

government continues to project the struggle as the problem. Hence, the overkill search and destroy military operations purportedly to extirpate its participants (leaders and followers), supporters and sympathizers. This view explains also the non-military components of the government approach which were designed to address the assumed "greed" of the leaders of the mujahideens, and eventually to cripple the armed struggle.

The second point is that the war in Mindanao continues not because the Moros want it. The problematic conditions in which they find themselves, including the nature of the government's "peace-making" efforts, make them continue their armed struggle.

A third is that it is not a product of some form of a flawed character or a culture of terrorism on the part of the Moros. The Moro mujahideens are engaged in genuine jihad, but not a religious war in the Orientalist sense. Although Islam highly disvalues the use of violence, it allows it when an individual or group is placed under intolerable oppression. The Moros are fighting against the Philippine government not because they are Muslims and the Philippine government is manned by Christians. It is not because they have a predisposition to be violent or their religion teaches them to wage war against non-believers of Islam. Talk to the mujahideens and you will not fail to notice how they dislike the war and are anxious to see their grievances addressed and have peace reign in Mindanao. Certainly most if not all of them are not the type of Moro who was reported to have said, "just give us arms and we will fight."

A fourth point is that the Moro struggle is not a product of foreign intervention. The involvement of some Muslim countries came after the war broke out. Their involvement began when Muslim communities in Mindanao were subjected to largescale search and destroy operations by the AFP and when numerous incidents involving massacre of Muslim civilians were reported. Certainly, they want to see the small Islamic community in the Philippines preserved.

An honest review of the involvement of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in the Mindanao conflict will show that contrary to the notion that it is a meddler with evil design, the truth is that it plays the role of a peacemaker, trying to mediate the conflict not only for the good of the Muslims and the MNLF but also for the Philippine government. It has served not only to help ensure the survival of the small Islamic community in the Philippines but also to keep the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Philippines intact. In fact, the Philippine government should be thankful to the OIC for insisting that the MNLF seek autonomy, not secession. Since the very start of the peace negotiations in the mid-1970s this has been OIC's position.

It should be noted also that the OIC'S involvement was sought by both parties to the conflict - the Philippine government and the MNLF. As pointed out earlier, President Marcos sought the help of the Muslim countries at the height of the conflict in 1975. On the part of the MNLF and the Moros they sought the involvement of the OIC as a measure of security for them in negotiating with the Philippine government which they have increasingly accused of insincerity, and consequently distrusted.

The OIC's peace-making role is expressed in the following statement made by Libyan Foreign Minister Ali Treki in October, 1977. A signatory (as witness) to the Tripoli Agreement, Minister Treki stated:

As a third world developing country, the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya will work with other delegations, directly or through collective arrangements, in resolving third world issues. On that basis and in the cause of third world solidarity and mutual cooperation, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the Islamic Conference have helped the people of the Philippines to resolve a people. As a result of the Tripoli Agreement, peace has been restored to

Southern Philippines for the first time in many years. We are confident that the response and positive attitude demonstrated by the parties concerned will encourage the *Islamic Conference to continue its work in resolving this issue, with the aim not of interfering in the internal affairs of another state but rather of promoting solidarity among the third world peoples*, of which the peoples of the members of the Islamic Conference also participates in reducing tensions in whatever part of the world they may arise.² (Emphasis added)

Similarly, Senator Mamintal Tamano pointed out:

We should not consider the Organization of Islamic Conference as meddler. It is out to help us. It says that if Misuari diverges from our stand that the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of the Philippines are to be respected, it will disown him. The OIC is an ally of the Philippines.³

The need for the government to address, not evade, the Moro problem cannot be more urgent. Its continual evasion of the problem has only alienated more Moros from it. Aside from some studies in the past that showed the Muslim' feeling of non-identification with the Philippine government, some contemporary developments are indicative of the persistence of the same feeling. The campaign period for the plebiscite on R.A. 6734 and the plebiscite results provided enough indication of how the government has alienated the Moros further.⁴ In fact, I was surprised to find how the vast majority of the Moros from practically almost all sectors shared the cause of the MNLF. Based on my observation of some of the informative debates, rallies, demonstrations, seminars and radio programs concerning the issue of autonomy, I think the Philippine government needs to address the Mindanao situation with dispatch and utmost sincerity. The mujahideens must have been happy to realize

(based on the said activities) that the vast majority of the Muslims, including intellectuals, religious leaders, and political leaders (including many in the government service) shared their cause.

Another adverse effect that continual evasion of the Moro problem will most likely usher in is the weakening of the group of Muslims (moderates) who, while sharing the cause of the mujahideens, advocate a legal or parliamentary approach and, thus, the strengthening of those who opted for the armed struggle. It will certainly reduce the appeal of nonviolent political actions to the Moros and boost the centripetal force of the armed struggle approach. In fact, one of the noticeably new trends in the armed struggle is its growing intellectualization, i. e., the coming in of many intellectuals who were previously among those who were convinced that the plight of the Muslims could be solved without resorting to armed struggle.

In addition, the continual evasion of the problem has the likely deleterious consequence of pushing some of the moderate Muslim leaders to the extreme left - those who advocate that the only effective alternative for the Muslims is armed struggle for secession. It will discredit also the moderate leaders and their position (i.e., autonomy), and consequently erode their influence on their constituents.

The need to address the causal fundamentals of the Moro struggle was aptly expressed by Senator Tamano when he stated that "Misuari is important, not because he is Misuari, but because he has a valid cause which attracts Muslims, both here and abroad."⁵

Autonomy with Compensatory Justice

To address the causal fundamentals of the Moro struggle or the core elements of the Moro problem requires an abandonment by the government of its emphasis on the use of its

superior military might. This suggests that the approach of the government has to be nonviolent. It needs an alternative approach that has great potential to convince the Moros to end their armed struggle, and at the same time keep the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Philippines intact. And given the circumstances involved (particularly the current sordid conditions of the Moros and their communities, their traumatic experiences with the AFP, and their factually tenable perception of the insincerity of the government towards them), the mujahideens cannot be expected to just lay down their arms. So far, I think, it is only the grant of genuine Moro autonomy that offers much promise.

There are some indications of the potential of autonomy as an alternative. The first is its acceptability to the mujahideens as demonstrated in the MNLF's signing of the Tripoli Agreement in 1976. The second is the fact that the vast majority of the Moro masses are for it. The third is its strong endorsement by the OIC.

It should be noted that the MNLF's reversion to secession was precipitated by the Marcos regime's efforts to impede the implementation of the Tripoli Agreement. In the words of MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari:

But despite our declaration of intention largely due to the mediation of the Islamic Conference, the MNLF and our people agreed to tone down our political demand.

Instead of asking, therefore, for complete independence and for the liberation of the entire Bangsa Moro national homeland of Mindanao, Basilan, Sulu, and Palawan... the MNLF agreed to put aside its original objective and opted merely for 'complete political autonomy'. ...[T]he area we demanded was reduced to 13 provinces and 11 cities, which is roughly 60% of our people's national homeland. ⁶

He added:

But then when the representatives of the Philippine government, the MNLF, the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission, and the Secretary-General of the Islamic Conference met again to flesh up the agreement and prepare the groundworks for its implementation, the Philippine government began to recoil and to put up obstacles in an effort to sabotage what had been formally agreed upon by all the parties concerned.⁷

Aside from the fact that the Moros demand autonomy, it must be noted that autonomy is appropriate to the situation in Mindanao. The archipelagic nature of the Philippines and the plurality and diversity of its composition require a setup where each of the component groups is given substantial control of its affairs. In the case of the Moros, given their present sordid conditions and how they were neglected and discriminated against as a group by the government, aside from their being a distinct national and religious group, the grant of autonomy is an urgent imperative.

What is the autonomy that needs to be established to end the Moro struggle? In this study, I have no intention to try to come up with a more detailed description of the kind of autonomy that is appropriate to the situation. That is certainly a herculean task that entails more time and resources. What I intend to do here is to identify some basic points that warrant consideration in any effort to conceptualize the kind of autonomy to be established.

The first is utmost sincerity on the part of the government to address realistically the Moro problem by granting the needed autonomy. This is a fundamental pre-requisite. Without government sincerity, all efforts to bring peace to Mindanao will be futile. There was no sincerity in the government's peace-making efforts under the Marcos regime and

the result was a scandalous failure. In the case of the recent efforts of the government under the Aquino administration, the Moros have enough grounds to believe that there is not much sincerity involved. The efforts of some top officials in the government to influence the works of the RCC (like the passionate demand to delete the title "Muslim Mindanao" as a designation for the area of autonomy which the Muslim commissioners vehemently opposed), and how the draft organic act prepared by the RCC was battered and virtually put to naught by the Philippine Congress, and how the final organic Act (R.A. 6734) failed to provide an acceptable form of autonomy are enough indications that there is not much sincerity in the Aquino administration's peace-making gestures.

The view that the Aquino administration's peace-making efforts did not have the needed amount of sincerity is shared also by some Muslims whose services were enlisted by the government in such efforts. In their daring book that exposed some uncalled-for or off-the-record efforts of the national leadership to determine the final shape of the draft organic Act that the RCC was expected to come up with, Muslim Commissioners Taha Basman, Mama Lalanto and Nagasura Madale stated:

The way the Draft was mangled by Congress without considering the efforts, sweat, tears, and insomnia of both the Commissioners and the staff during their seven months stay in the Region prompted the members of the Commission to inquire on the meaning of the Constitutional mandate "of participating in and assisting Congress" [referring to the role of the RCC].⁸

They added:

The members of the RCC realized that the once much ballyhooed RCC was not really meant to be a factor in the enactment of the Organic Act.

This was the *raison d'etre* for the Commissioners to think that what they were into for seven long months was actually an exercise in futility. The RCC was then either of two things: "showcase" (for the propaganda, here and abroad) or "scapegoat" (for the sham that was unfolding).⁹

Echoing the same disappointment is the comment of one RCC member that "the RCC is another Moro-Moro play of the government," adding that "for as long as the government continues to play Moro-Moro in dealing with the Mindanao conflict, there will be more Nur Misuaris' to come."¹⁰ Regarding R.A. 6734, it is important to note that even former Senator Ahmad Domocao Alonto who was a member of the 1986 Constitutional Commission that drafted the new Philippine Constitution which contains some general provisions concerning the grant of autonomy to Muslim Mindanao, and a former strong supporter of President Aquino, campaigned for its rejection, believing that it did not provide the autonomy it purports to grant.¹¹

The view that the government under the Aquino administration is also insincere towards the Mindanao conflict is shared even by some Christian Filipino observers and analysts. For example, Rony Bautista, an anthropologist specializing in Muslim affairs, and the incumbent Secretary General of the Mindanao-Sulu-Palawan Association, in one of a series of articles he wrote concerning the results of the 1989 plebiscite commented:

The question of why the MNLF remains intransigent can be answered by the lack of sincerity on the part of those in the corridors of power. It is said that during the 1988 meeting of the Organization of Islamic Conference in Amman, Jordan, President Aquino wrote the King of Saudi Arabia asking for more time to carry out the Tripoli Agreement. Seeing how the Tripoli Agreement had been sidelined, the OIC came up

with a formal decision to support the MNLF. To strengthen its position, the OIC flatly rejected the organic act [R.A. 6734]."¹²

A basic element of the required sincerity is for the government to abandon its apparent suspicious attitude toward its Muslim constituents, and start giving them adequate degree of trust, not only in terms of their intentions (like their demand for autonomy) but also their capability for active and meaningful participation. This negative attitude is best expressed in the following comment of the late Justice Fred Ruiz Castro, Chairman of the Judiciary Code Committee of the Supreme Court, on the proposed draft of the administration of Muslim Law Code prepared by the Research Staff for the Codification of Muslim Laws created by the late President Marcos in 1973. At a meeting of the committee where the two Muslim lawyers who headed the Research Staff were present, Castro raised the following questions (among others):

1. If we do adopt your recommendations to the extent that it is feasible, would these recommendations fit within the framework of our present Constitution?
2. If my impression is correct, you do not want a complete separate judicial system and I think you want to try to achieve an integrated judicial system to the judicial system we now have. What is the extent of the integration you propose?
3. There has been an impression all over the Committee as well as among people who have read your thoroughly prepared Muslim Code,

that it would appear that you gentlemen who are Muslims would rather secede than integrate?¹³

The urgency of the need for the government to develop a positive attitude towards the Muslim by starting to trust them was aptly expressed by Judge Jainal Rasul, a Muslim from Sulu, when he stated:

Although the final solution of the deep-rooted Moro problem will take time, many solutions that are immediately available for its various aspects should be taken by the government. Delay or hesitation will be misinterpreted as insincerity, if not refusal, to solve the problem. Competent advisers should be hired to assist the President. But the top priority should be the restoration of our faith or trust in Muslim-Christian relation. The problem ... is that *there can be no solution unless and until the national government and the Christian majority begin to trust the Filipino Muslims* or to accommodate them in the running of our government. This first step may be difficult. The goal of the journey may be too distant to reach. But as the Chinese saying goes, the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.¹⁴ (Emphasis added.)

The above discussion suggests that the government needs to refrain from making evasive or diversionary explanations like the emphasis on the fact that there are many factions

among the Moro mujahideens, that autonomy will be used by the Moros as a stepping stone for eventual independence, and the fact that the Muslims are in the minority in the region involved.

The second point is that efforts to determine the autonomy to be established must be historically informed. This means that the past relations between the Philippine government and the Moros must be revisited and analyzed without blinkers. This also entails acknowledging how the Moros have been neglected and discriminated against by the government and how the government has allowed and even participated in the plunder of the Moros' resources, particularly their lands. Unless the past, especially its muddy aspects, is taken into account, it would be hard to view or treat the Moros and their problems as a special case requiring extraordinary attention, and the Moros (the victims) will continue to be viewed as culprits, as trouble-makers or destabilizers. Without revisiting the past, the Moros' struggle will continue to be viewed by some as morally and legally baseless, their demand for autonomy unrealistic, and even the title "Muslim Mindanao" to be "too much" of a concession to them.

The third point is the irrelevance of numbers or the "politics of census" to the issue of Muslim Autonomy. It must not be glossed over that the Moros were forced to join the Philippine state system. Their being a part of the Philippine body politic was not of their own accord. In fact they were brutalized by the Spaniards, the Americans and the Indios to be a part of the Philippines. They were dispossessed of much of their lands which were eventually disposed to foreign and domestic capitalists and the millions of northern Filipinos whose migration to Mindanao was, until recently, a major policy thrust of the government. In other words, if the Moros have become a minority even in the 13 of Mindanao's 27 provinces, it is not their fault. The blame rightfully belongs to the government.

The apparent unfairness of emphasizing the fact that the Muslims are in the minority and the Christians in the majority in the decision-making on the autonomy issue was aptly expressed by Almuzrin Jubaira, a Muslim columnist. Arguing

against the requirement of subjecting the organic act for Muslim Mindanao autonomy (R.A. 6734) to popular vote (plebiscite) which, to me, is one clear mechanism of the institutionalization of the politics of census in the government's peacemaking efforts in Mindanao, Jubaira stated:

A very strong, convincing, and appealing argument to subject the proposed organic act for autonomy in "Muslim Mindanao" into popular vote is the population factor. Through this process, the idea of democratic decision, the voice of the majority, is guaranteed and shall be unquestionably in effect. In spite of the fact that the basis for autonomy is the consideration for the voice of the minority, the plebiscite goes unopposed - naturally, since it is what the majority wants. It follows that the majority shall have a shouting voice: and in conclusion, the minority will now have to whimper.¹⁵

He added:

The irony of the plebiscite is that while it seeks to listen to the voice of the majority, that voice is precisely why the whole of the south awake to conflicts. The influx of Christian settlers into the Muslim areas and the social displacements they have caused up to the present is what autonomy intends to solve. But it appears that such is not the case; frankly, the

proposed autonomy perpetrates the colonial approach to integration of Muslims into the majority (Christian dominated) culture. There is no letdown on this as Christians continue to multiply and penetrate into the last Muslim areas as they have always done so from the early part of this century.

In almost all fora organized to discuss [the] autonomy issue, the majority factor throws its weight around. "Strength in number," that colonial dictum is having a fresh meaning.¹⁶

Echoing the same logic, Representative Michael Mastura pointed out:

It is unfair [for] the Christians to say, "There are more of us than you," because that is not the point. How would you like it if we went to Batangas and take over the leadership there? Would you like to go to Cebu and lord it over the Cebuanos?¹⁷

He added:

We [the Muslims] do not want to impose this idea of federation or autonomy on the other areas. However, the Muslims are united on this issue. The Christians in the areas should not hamper that. If they do not want it, they should move away from the

Muslim areas. After all, they chose to go there. I can argue with them on legal points.¹⁸

The view that the population factor is irrelevant to efforts aimed at finding a lasting solution to the Mindanao conflict is shared by some objective Christian observers of Mindanao. Reacting to the issue of the fact that the Christians were in the majority and the Muslims in the minority as an explanation for the violent situation in Cotabato in the early seventies, Indalecio P. Soliongco, a Christian Filipino columnist of the *Manila Chronicle* commented in 1971:

It is to be expected that the administration should have many easy explanations for what is happening in the northern part of Cotabato. The instrument of the Administration, which is the Philippine Constabulary, has also advanced many reasons for the animosities between the Muslims and the Christians. But perhaps the cutest justification ever given for the conduct of the Christians in the turbulent sector of the province is that the Muslims are now in the Minority.

"Before," the unnamed apologist of the Christians was quoted as saying, "the Moros were in the majority, but now the Christians constitute 60% of the population of the province, and the Moros only 40%."

Here is a statement that can be attributed only to a people

whose salvation has been guaranteed by their faith. The statement has the virtue of being straight and to the point, but its implications are ominous indeed. For what can the majority of Moros in Cotabato expect? Have their rights diminished in direct proportion to the decrease in their number? And most important of all, what is the obligation of our Christian Administration toward the Moro minority in Cotabato?

The point is that it is cruel and senseless to talk of majority and minority in connection with the enjoyment of civil liberties and political and economic rights by the citizens of the state.¹⁹

The above discussion suggests that to implement the autonomy alternative, the national leadership needs to exert utmost efforts in convincing the Christian Filipino residents, and the big capitalists (foreign and domestic) doing business in the concerned areas about the appropriateness of autonomy to the Mindanao conflict.²⁰ The government should exert efforts to convince the inhabitants (Christians, Muslims and Lumads) of Mindanao to cast aside whatever prejudices each one has against the other; and realize that one's security and stability depend on the security and stability of the other and each group has the right to be given the opportunity and capability to avoid, or liberate itself, from poverty.

The fourth basic point for consideration is the need for the active participation of the mujahideens in all efforts designed to settle the Mindanao conflict. The major Moro armed organizations (MNLF, MILF, and MNLF-RG) must be adequately represented. As the mujahideens were a principal party in the

conflict, their exclusion from the formulation of R.A. 6734 has no basis in conflict-resolution theory and practice. This becomes all the more important if we consider the fact that the great majority of the Moros share the cause of the mujahideens. In fact, one of the major reasons cited by the Muslims for rejecting R.A. 6734 is the exclusion of the mujahideens in its formation.

The fifth is the need to use the Tripoli Agreement as the framework in the detailed conceptualization of the kind of autonomy to be established. While the agreement does not provide the specific aspects of the autonomy to be established, since they are "to be discussed later" or "to be fixed later," if reviewed with the assumption of sincerity on the part of the Philippine government, it is workable and clear with respect to some crucial aspects of the autonomy issue, like the territorial coverage of autonomy, the structure of the regional government, the establishment of a regional security force, and the allocation of function between the national government and the regional government. Certainly, the agreement could be improved. With goodwill and sincerity, there is no reason that those items "to be discussed later" cannot be worked out to the satisfaction of the contracting parties.

The implementation of the Tripoli Agreement is an international obligation of the Philippine government. Its non-implementation damages the reputation of the government, especially to the governments of the 46 countries affiliated with the OIC that mediated and also signed as witness to the agreement. Senator Tamano, who is also a prominent legal luminary, pointed out that "the Tripoli Agreement must be the starting point of any negotiation because, first, it is the solemn obligation of the Philippine government. Second, it is in our national-interest."²¹ He added that the Tripoli Agreement "is really not such a bad agreement. There is nothing in it that cannot be worked out with goodwill."²²

One sure advantage of using the Tripoli Agreement as the basis or framework for the government peace-making efforts is the fact that it ensures that the mujahideens, particularly the

MNLF, cannot go beyond the 13 provinces as the area of coverage of the regional government to be established, or demand something that smacks of secession.

It should be noted that non-implementation of the Tripoli Agreement is another major reason for the Muslims' rejection of R.A. 6734. For many Muslims the Tripoli Agreement is synonymous with autonomy. And they did not believe that R.A. 6734 embodies the basic elements of the agreement.

The sixth point is that the OIC must be involved in the efforts to solve the conflict. This is not due to the fact that both the Philippine government and the mujahideens sought its assistance, and the fact that it was involved in the previous negotiations which culminated in the signing of the Tripoli Agreement. With OIC's involvement, the Philippine government is assured that secession is completely out of the picture in future negotiations and the focus will be just autonomy for the 13 provinces. As pointed out earlier, the position of the OIC on the Mindanao conflict remains to be autonomy for the Muslims. And I do not think Misuari and the rest of the mujahideens can afford to go against the OIC's position.

Another advantage is that by involving the OIC, the Philippine government will be able to improve its apparently stained image to the governments of some OIC-member countries that felt betrayed by the Marcos regime's bad faith in the Tripoli Agreement and by what they considered as continued footdragging on the part of the Philippine government. The government should acknowledge the fact that, certainly, the OIC does not like to see the small Islamic community in the Philippines just gradually disintegrate and disappear. It wants to see it preserved and enhanced. And with improved image, i.e., if a final settlement is hammered out, the rich Muslim countries (especially the OPEC-member countries) can be a potential source of financial assistance for the Philippine economy. The Islamic community in Mindanao can serve as an effective link between the Philippines and the Muslim world. This is exactly the point of Ambassador Alunan Glang, an academic

professional from Maguindanao who is also an exponent of Moro autonomy under a federal setup, when he stated:

If we have a federal setup, say in the Muslim areas, it is not farfetched for the Arab countries to help the Muslims. And if they do help, the Muslim federal unit can rechannel the aid that will be given to it to help other federal units in the country in their development undertakings.²³

Another important reason for the involvement of the OIC is the fact that the mujahideens - all three major Moro armed groups (MNLF, MILF and MNLF-RG) - will only negotiate for a settlement of the war under the auspices of the OIC. The reason is that to the mujahideens the involvement of the OIC is a security mechanism for them, i.e., to ensure that the Philippine government honestly negotiates with them. Another reason advanced by some Moro intellectuals is that with OIC's involvement, once a final settlement is reached, the OIC will most likely extend much needed material support to help ensure the development of the area of autonomy. This expectation is not unrealistic if we consider the fact that the Muslim countries, especially those in the Middle-East, have been a major source of financial support in the form of donations or endowments which helped in the construction of several mosques and the establishment and maintenance of some madrasahs in Mindanao.

Many Muslims believed that with an autonomous government the rapid development of their seriously depressed areas is assured. One thing likely is that financial, technical and educational (e.g., scholarships) assistance from the Middle-East will be systematized, regularized, enhanced and consequently made more responsive. This suggests that the Muslims' struggle for autonomy is also a struggle to be lifted from poverty and to grow and develop. And the continued delay on the part of the Philippine government on the issue of Moro autonomy is

certainly one of the reasons that made some Muslim (including young intellectuals) develop suspicion that it may be a part of some kind of a "master plan" to exterminate Islam or the Muslims in the Philippines, not in the form of wholesale military annihilation suggested by the atrocities against many Muslim communities in the 1970-1972 period but gradual disintegration and death through hunger, malnutrition, disease, and ignorance.

The seventh point is that the autonomy to be granted must give the Moros some form of self-rule or self-determination where they have the opportunity and the capability to address effectively the sufferings and insecurities associated with their current economic marginalization and destitution, political domination and incapacity, the inroads and constraints upon their identity, and the threats to their physical existence or security. This idea suggests giving the government of the area of autonomy the capability to be adequately self-reliant or self-sustaining, not mendicantly dependent on the central government. A basic aspect of this idea is financial capability. Autonomy for the Muslims is a sham if they are not given sufficient internal financial capability. Specifically, the regional government to be established must have adequate powers for revenue generation and utilization. Increased direct doleouts from the central government cannot substitute for this requirement.

Another related requirement is that the autonomy to be granted must embody some degree of compensatory justice for the Muslims. This idea means that the regional government must have the capability to correct or make up for some of the past injustices (i.e., the neglect and discrimination against them, and the plunder of their resources). This concept does not mean some form of an eye-for-an-eye compensation. The idea is that the Muslims cannot just be left autonomous in their present dispersed, disadvantaged, and impoverished situation. Autonomy for them must include a capability to overcome the crippling effects of their depressed and unjust conditions. For example, the regional government to be established must have the capability to assist effectively the Moros who were illegally

dispossessed of their lands by some corporations or individuals (like those cases in the sixties and early seventies) to recover their lands or obtain fair compensation from the culprits. In addition, the regional government must have the capability to help the Moros who were forced to leave their homes and farms as a result of the 1970-1972 atrocities against Muslim communities and the following escalation of the conflict into a largescale war (like the reported 200,000 to 300,000 Moro refugees now in Sabah, Malaysia) to return to their respective homes and farms, and to help them rehabilitate and revitalize their respective communities. As one young Moro intellectual commented regarding R.A. 6734 and the issue of land ownership rights, "there is no justice in saying that land grabbing will no longer be tolerated, or no more Christian Filipino settlements will be established in the Moro areas, at the same time when practically there are no more Muslim lands left that could be grabbed or where additional settlements could be established."²⁴

Does R.A. 6734 meet the discussed seven basic points? The answer is no. It was not blessed with the required utmost sincerity on the part of the Philippine government; it was not adequately informed by history; it emphasized the politics of numbers (institutionalized through the plebiscite requirement); it excluded the mujahideens in its conceptualization; it evaded the Tripoli Agreement; and it did not grant genuine and meaningful Moro autonomy. Regarding the last point, it did not give the regional government it envisioned the opportunity and capability to address effectively the Moro problem, or to be self-reliant, or to dispense some form of compensatory justice to the Muslims. It should be noted that the Muslims rejected R.A. 6734, not because they were against autonomy but because they believed that there was no autonomy in it. To many Maranaos, the autonomy that R.A. 6734 provides is *akal* (Maranao term for farce or fake) autonomy.

The Moros' demand for autonomy is not new. Even before the Philippine Independence, Muslim leaders vehemently had asked for it. And before the beginning of the Mindanao war, Muslim leaders and intellectuals persistently had advocated Moro

autonomy. Their advocacy continued to be confined exclusively to the legal or parliamentary arena. For example, in the 1971-1972 Constitutional Convention, the Manila delegates sought a constitutional approach to the Moro problem by proposing the introduction of some changes in the constitution that would address the plural and diverse composition of the country. In a resolution submitted to the convention on September 1, 1972, the fourteen Muslim delegates stated:

In order to safeguard as well as establish a true, just and lasting relationship among peoples and to maintain the loyalty of the Muslims to the Republic, their position as a minority in the national state shall be defined in constitutional terms, such that -

(1) The Republic of the Philippines shall *adopt a Federal structure of Government or establish an Autonomous Region for the Muslims* where they could live as self-sustaining communities within the body politic of the Filipino Nation, and where political authority would permit to manifest and protect their Islamic values and practices.²⁵

In the individual position papers of some of the Muslim delegates, they reiterated the same urgent imperative. For example, former Senator Ahmad Alonto stated:

If to achieve unity, it is necessary to divide the country into several autonomous states bound together by a common goal and sense of oneness, we should not hesitate to do so. If unity cannot be

achieved in a strictly unitary system, as experience has taught us, then by all means let us revert to the only option left open for us - *unity in diversity* - which seems to be the goal for us by Divine Wisdom...²⁶

Advocacy for Moro autonomy became stronger after the escalation of the conflict into a largescale war. The crumbling of Marcos' authoritarian regime and its replacement by the Aquino administration which was initially populist had generated an aura of optimism among the various sectors of the Moro society, including the mujahideens. An additional factor such as optimism is the Moros' awareness of the strong sympathy of Ninoy, the martyred husband of President Corazon Aquino, to the Moros and their demand for autonomy.²⁷ But their optimism turned out to be misplaced as the Aquino administration unleashed its peacemaking efforts which culminated in the approval of R.A. 6734. The Moros' clamor for autonomy continues until now when the Aquino administration is practically moving heaven and earth to convince everyone in the Philippines and the governments of OIC-member countries that it has already started implementing the autonomy being demanded by the Muslims. In March, 1990, the Aquino administration held the election for the officials of the regional government of the area of "autonomy" that comprises only four provinces. Despite the unconcealable indifference and opposition toward it by the majority of its target clients - the Moros (mujahideens and non-mujahideens) - and its obvious unresponsiveness to the Moro problem, the Aquino administration started implementing it.

Conclusion

The government's continued evasion of the Moro problem and its denial of genuine and meaningful autonomy to the Muslims involve some political risks to the country. Such a stance

has the possible effect of hastening the unfolding of what it is expected to guard against. The stance has the perceptible effect of increasing the alienation and radicalization among the Moro population. This means that continued emphasis on such a stance strengthens the very group which the government views to be the problem - the mujahideens - and wants crippled, by pushing to it more of those Moros who until now still hold on to the olive branch of peace in seeking redress of their grievances. As the government continues to deny the needed autonomy to the Bangsa Moro people, its potential as an alternative will continue to diminish also until such time that there will no longer be a workable alternative to secession. This is not plain alarmism, but a judgment based not only on my observation as a concerned peace researcher and native permanent resident in Mindanao but also on the experiences of several countries that have faced the same problem of state-ethnic conflict.

The danger involved in the continued denial of autonomy to the Moros was aptly expressed by the present two Muslim members of the Philippine Senate, particularly Mamintal Tamano and Santanina Rasul. Senator Tamano pointed out:

The example of Algeria [previously a French colony] is a lesson that we should bear in mind in trying to solve the so-called Muslim Problem. For there is a level of violence which, when reached, makes reconciliation no longer possible even between brothers or members of the same family.²⁸

He added:

I propose that the government act soon. There is not a moment to spare. Every day that passes by makes it more difficult to

put out this raging conflagration in Mindanao.

For only when the Muslims and the people of Mindanao are given the primary responsibility to set their houses in order, when they are allowed to truly govern themselves will the desired unity of the nation be achieved, the unity for which General Bautista and countless others gave up their lives.²⁹

In a similar vein, Muslim lady Senator Rasul stated:

If you keep it [autonomy under a federal setup] away from the Muslims because of that fear [Muslims will use federations as a stepping stone to secession], the bigger danger is that you may be pushing them against the wall, in which case you will really have secession.³⁰

It is very clear from the foregoing discussion that the grant of autonomy with compensatory justice to the Moros is an urgent imperative. This nonviolent solution is the only alternative that has the great potential to end the contemporary Moro armed struggle and at the same time keep the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of the Philippines intact.

Notes

1. A slightly revised version of a portion (Chapter VI) of "The Moro Armed Struggle in the Philippines: The Nonviolent Autonomy Alternative," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Hawaii, December 1990.

2. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *From Secession to Autonomy: Self-Government in Southern Philippines* (Manila, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1980), p. 26.

3. From the discussion portion of the Solidarity-sponsored seminar on Mindanao held on July 12, 1986 in Manila. See *Solidarity*, no. 110 (January-February 1987): 97.

4. It should be noted that according to the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), R.A. 6734 won or was accepted in four of the 14 provinces that participated in the plebiscite held in November 19, 1989. These four provinces (Maguindnao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu and Tawi-tawi) are among the five provinces in Mindanao where the Muslims are in the majority. Basilan, the fifth predominantly Muslim province, voted against it. Marawi City, the capital of Lanao del Sur, which is the intellectual center of Mindanao (being the seat of Mindanao State University and several big madrasahs) and the only predominantly Muslim city in the Philippines also voted against this law. This means that the present Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) comprises only four provinces, instead of the 13 provinces specified in the Tripoli Agreement. All the eight predominantly Christian provinces (including the eight cities located therein) overwhelmingly rejected the law, i.e., they opted out of the area of autonomy (see endnote # 19 for a discussion of the plebiscite results in the Christian areas).

Despite the COMELEC-released results (see Table 1, endnote # 19), it is my feeling that the great majority of the Muslims were against R.A. 6734. This assessment is buttressed by several surveys done before the plebiscite that showed that the

majority of the Muslims were against it. In addition, several groups from the various sectors (political leaders, religious leaders, intellectuals, women and youth) of the Moro society which are both affiliated with the mujahideens were reported to have expressed their vehement opposition to it. Confirming this opposition is my own observation of various Muslim gatherings (like seminars, conferences, debates, rallies and demonstrations) about the said legislation and the issue of Muslim autonomy held in Marawi City and Lanao del Sur and in some parts of Mindanao.

Many Muslims who had closely monitored the pre-plebiscite political activities could not accept the government's proclamation that R.A. 6734 won in the four provinces. This led some observers to suspect that some of the reported votes were not actually cast by the voters themselves, but "were cast for them" by other without their knowledge, or the election returns did not reflect the actual votes cast. Related to this event is the allegation made by Muslim leader Datu Macalimpowac Dilangalen, President of the Muslim Association of the Philippines (MAP), that the government, through the COMELEC, cheated during the plebiscite. In his column, "Food for Thought" in the *Philippine Muslim Times* (December 1-7, 1989), he stated:

Unfortunately, while we expected the people of the region covered by the Organic Act for Muslim Mindanao to express their free will, it was the COMELEC who has spoken and determined that political units that composed the Muslim Mindanao Regional Autonomous Government. Of course, our people are completely aware of this political shenanigan but they chose to remain in silence with revolted feelings and nobody knows what alternative action they would take. This is a dangerous

sign that it is risky to take them for granted.

Even assuming that the conduct of the plebiscite was "clean" and its results "accurate," the declaration that the inhabitants of the provinces of Maguindnao, Sulu and Tawi-tawi had accepted R.A. 6734 when less than half of the number of registered voters in each of the said areas voted affirmatively (yes) does not make much sense. In Maguindanao the number of affirmative votes represent only 28.6% of the number of registered voters, 41% in Tawi-tawi and 42% in Sulu. It is only in Lanao del Sur where affirmative voters represent more than half (52.9%) of the number of registered voters.

Another factor that supports the claim that the great majority of the Muslims were against R.A. 6734, and questions of accuracy of the plebiscite results in the Muslim areas is perceptible sharing by the great majority of the Moro population of the cause of the Moro struggle. And the leadership of the different mujahideen groups had expressed their strong opposition to R.A. 6734. In fact, the official position of the MNLF was boycott.

5. Mamintal Tamano, "Real and Meaningful Autonomy - The Peaceful Alternative to the Mindanao Conflict," in Tamano, *Autonomy: Keep This Nation Intact*, p. 132.

6. Nur Misuari, "Cultural Genocide in the Philippines," speech at the International Congress on Cultural Imperialism sponsored by the Lelio Basso Peace Foundation and held at the Palais des Nations, Algiers, Algeria on October 11-15, 1977, in Majul, *The Contemporary Muslim Movement* . . . p. 140.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Taha Basman, Mama Lalanto and Nagasura Madale, *Autonomy for Muslim Mindanao: The RCC Untold Story* (Manila: B-lal Publishers, 1989), p. 106-107.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 107. Note that even before the completion of the RCC's task, some of its members had expressed to me their disappointment with their realization of the insincerity of the government with its recent peace initiatives in Mindanao based on their experience at RCC. This information is from my informal talks with some of the RCC members in Zamboanga City and Marawi City in 1989.

10. From my informal talk with one of the commissioners in 1988.

11. Ex-Senator Ahmad Domocao Alonto is one of the Moro leaders who have persistently advocated the autonomy alternative. He served in both chambers of the congress: in the House of Representatives (representing the then undivided Lanao province) in 1954-1955 and the Senate in 1956-1961. He was a delegate to the 1971-1972 Constitutional Convention, and a member of the 1986 Constitutional Commission that drafted the new Philippine Constitution that contains some provisions regarding autonomy for Muslim Mindanao and the Cordilleras in Northern Luzon. In recognition of his contributions to the cause of Islam and the Muslims in the Philippines, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia awarded him "The King Faisal International Prize in the Service to Islam" in 1988. Alonto is the first Filipino and second Southeast Asian to receive this award which is the Islamic world's equivalent to the Nobel Prize.

12. Rony Bautista, "What do the People of Mindanao Want?" *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, November 25, 1989.

13. Quoted in G. Carter Bentley, "Islamic Law in Christian Southeast Asia: The Politics of Establishing Shari'a Courts in the Philippines," *Mindanao Journal* X, 2-4 (October 1983-June 1984): 138; citing Michael Mastura and Musib M. Buat, "The Introduction of Muslim Law into the Philippine Legal System," in *Studies on Muslim Laws (Shariah) and Customary Laws (Adat)* (Manila: Office of the Special Assistant on Cultural Minorities, Department of Public Information, 1976).

14. Jainal D. Rasul, "The Mindanao Problem: No Solution Without Trust," in *Solidarity*, No. 110 (January-February 1987): 148.

15. Almuzrin Jubaira, "Assalamu Alaykom," *Philippine Muslim Times*; October 13-19, 1989, p. 12.

16. *Ibid.*

17. From the discussion portion of the Solidarity-sponsored seminar on Mindanao held on July 12, 1986, Manila. See *Solidarity*. No. 110 (January-February 1987): 94.

18. *Ibid.*, 102-103.

19. In Renato Constantino, ed., *Soliongco Today: A Contemporary From the Past* (Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1981), p. 156.

20. The results of the plebiscite on R.A. 6734 held in November 19, 1989 are a clear indication of the continuing persistence of the old Christian Filipino prejudice against their Muslim brothers. This legislation was overwhelmingly rejected (which also means their exclusion therefrom) in all of the eight of Mindanao's eighteen predominantly Christian provinces that participated in the plebiscite (see table 9). The same is true of the eight cities located in these provinces. This is ironical because under this law, practically, there is nothing that the Christian residents of these areas have to lose, aside from the fact that it does not have much to offer to the Muslims as far as their quest for genuine autonomy is concerned. It seems that many of the Christian residents in the area view any government "concession" to the Muslims as their loss or threat to their interests, a view which suggests a lack of understanding not only of the law itself, but also of the development potentials of Moro autonomy not only for the Muslims but also for the Christian residents in the area of autonomy.

It should be noted that some surveys conducted shortly before the plebiscite reported that the title "Muslim Mindanao" was a major factor for the Christian's rejection of R.A. 6734. Specifically, the use of the term "Muslim" to qualify Mindanao to refer to the area of autonomy was unacceptable to many Christian voters. Actually, this title caused much controversy not only during the plebiscite period, but also at the deliberations of the RCC and the Congress. And the controversy was uncalled for because the title "Muslim Mindanao" has been adopted in the new Philippine Constitution that was duly ratified by the Filipino people in 1987.

While the Christians' rejection of R.A. 6734 is one indication of the difficulties and complexities of peace-making in Mindanao, there are also some encouraging signs that the problem (i.e., the lack of the needed cooperation and understanding of the Christian Filipinos in solving the conflict) is not insurmountable. There are some Christian residents (admittedly a small minority) that apparently are more inclined to be objective in looking at the issue of Moro autonomy. For example, on the controversy regarding the title Muslim Mindanao, one Christian congressman told his constituents "to remember that once upon a time Mindanao was a Muslim territory." In other words, to him the title is a recognition of that unconcealable aspect of the history of Mindanao. Related to this is the experience of one Christian government official in another predominantly Christian area, which she related to me and a few Christian colleagues from Mindanao in the first quarter of 1990. She was invited as guest at a meeting of one civic group held shortly before the plebiscite. Realizing that the member-participants were strongly opposed to R.A. 6734 primarily because of the title she sarcastically told them, "Look! You already have practically almost all of the lands in Mindanao, and even just the name Muslim Mindanao you cannot afford to give as a concession to our Muslim brothers."

Aside from the Christian Filipino residents in the area concerned, the national political leadership also needs utmost efforts to secure the cooperation of the big business firms

(foreign and Filipino-owned) operating in the 13 provinces in finding a workable solution to the conflict. This is important, considering the reported involvement of Manila-based corporations (including foreign firms) in the campaign against R.A. 6734.

Table 1. Results of the November 19, 1989 Plebiscite on R.A. 6734.

| Province/City | No. of Registered Voters | Affirmative Votes (Yes) | Negative Votes (No) |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Provinces: | | | |
| 1. Basilan | 103,272 | 20,924 | 36,288 |
| 2. North Cotabato | 280,624 | 26,734 | 114,568 |
| 3. Davao del Sur | 246,979 | 12,986 | 122,851 |
| 4. Lanao del Norte | 175,751 | 46,892 | 76,682 |
| 5. Lanao del Sur | 237,076 | 125,338 | 43,855 |
| 6. Maguindanao | 267,824 | 76,717 | 45,670 |
| 7. Palawan | 164,789 | 8,162 | 81,617 |
| 8. South Cotabato | 316,043 | 26,198 | 138,841 |
| 9. Sultan Kudarat | 153,589 | 5,601 | 70,827 |
| 10. Sulu | 233,181 | 99,911 | 35,245 |
| 11. Tawi-tawi | 99,039 | 40,596 | 15,125 |
| 12. Zamboanga del Norte | 226,191 | 5,872 | 136,766 |
| 13. Zamboanga del Sur | 405,392 | 14,543 | 211,782 |
| Cities: | | | |
| 1. Cotabato City | 58,184 | 3,356 | 8,449 |
| 2. Dapitan City | 28,184 | 462 | 19,449 |
| 3. Dipolog City | 39,532 | 845 | 24,009 |
| 4. General Santos City | 103,549 | 8,223 | 33,577 |
| 5. Iligan City | 108,432 | 2,044 | 61,983 |
| 6. Marawi City | 40,269 | 10,399 | 12,204 |
| 7. Pagadian City | 49,188 | 4,774 | 20,149 |
| 8. Puerto Princesa City | 45,155 | 3,283 | 19,798 |
| 9. Zamboanga City | 177,533 | 5,299 | 90,152 |
| TOTAL | 3,559,984 | 549,159 | 1,419,741 |

Source: *Philippine Muslim Times*, December 1-7, 1989, p. 1.

For an analysis of why the Christian voters rejected R.A. 6734, see Ed Lingao and Lynda Jumilla, "Christians Wary of Muslim Subjugation," *Manila Times*, November 15, 1989; Lynda Jumilla and Ed Lingao, "Info on Autonomy Inadequate," *Manila Times*, November 14, 1989; and Rony Bautista, "The 'Yes' and 'No' of Mindanao Plebiscite," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, November 25, 1989.

Regarding the involvement of big business firms in the campaign against R.A. 6734, particularly in "sowing fear in the Christian minds," see Rony Bautista, "Rejection of Autonomy Ironic," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, November 24, 1989; and Rony Bautista, "The 'Yes' and 'No' of Mindanao Plebiscite," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, November 23, 1989.

21. From the discussion portion of the Solidarity-sponsored seminar on Mindanao held on July 12, 1986 in Manila. See *Solidarity*, No. 110 (January-February 1987): 97.

22. *Ibid.*

23. From the discussion portion of the Solidarity-sponsored seminar on Mindanao held on July 12, 1986 in Manila. See *Solidarity*, No. 110 (January-February 1987): 102.

24. The statement was made in a seminar on R.A. 6734 held in Lanao del Sur in October, 1989.

26. "Resolution and Declaration of Intent and Purposes of the Muslim Delegates to the 1971 Constitutional Convention," typescript, p. 4.

27. Ahmad D. Alonto, Position Paper No. 2, typescript, submitted to the 1971 Constitutional Convention, p. 4.

28. One indication of Ninoy Aquino's sympathy for the cause of the Muslim Filipinos in his effort in trying to unify the different Moro armed organizations, particularly the MNLF and the Bangs Moro Liberation Organization (BMLO) to improve

their position vis-a-vis the Philippine government. In his lecture at King Faisal University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on March 12, 1981, he stated:

It is most unfortunate that the Filipinos are fighting against Filipinos today. I have come all the way from Boston precisely to urge our brothers especially the Moro National Liberation Front under Chairman Nur Misuari and the Bangsa Moro Liberation Organization most probably to start their unity efforts so that as one Muslim nation they will be able to present a more formidable force with any negotiation with the present government. This evening, I would like to announce to you that the MNLF under Chairman Nur Misuari and the BMLO under Sultan Haroun Al-Rashid Lucman have finally joined forces and together they will now continue the struggle for the freedom of our Muslim brothers in the Southern Philippines.

For this, see Benigno Aquino, lecture (no title) delivered at King Abdul Azis University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on March 12, 1981. p. 2.

It should be noted also that this lecture, Ninoy gave some recommendations on how to solve the conflict. The first is for the Philippine government to return to the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, under which, according to him "our Muslim brothers have given up the quest for independence and they will remain in the Republic provided they are given the Autonomy in the thirteen provinces of Mindanao," and "they will be able to govern

themselves." The second is the withdrawal of all Christian troops in Mindanao (referring to the Muslim areas) and to let the Muslim police themselves. The third is for the Muslims to set up their own Islamic (Shari'a) courts, their schools, and their madrasahs. He was of the opinion that local autonomy for the Muslims should be Muslim and their leaders should be elected by their own people.

For the above recommendations, see statement of Commissioner Ahmad Domocao Alonto as the Constitutional Commissioner of 1986, typescript, pp. 3-4 where they are quoted. The statement was reproduced by Sultan Alauya Alonto Memorial Foundation on the occasion of its annual conclave in 1988.

28. Mamintal A.J. Tamano, "Real and Meaningful Autonomy....," 134.

29. *Ibid.*, 134-135.

30. From the discussion portion of the Solidarity-sponsored seminar on Mindanao held on July 12, 1986 in Manila. See *Solidarity*, No. 110 (January-February 1987): 101.