The Philippine ‘left’ and the constitutional crisis

Joseph Santolan
20 December 2011

The ongoing constitutional crisis in the Philippines has revealed the bankrupt and unprincipled character of every section of the so-called ‘left.’ Philippine President Benigno ‘Noynoy’ Aquino is carrying out a systematic assault on the judiciary and has dramatically expanded the power of the executive branch, while conducting a political vendetta against former Philippine President Gloria Arroyo and her allies. His anti-democratic onslaught has been both instigated and supported by Washington in its prosecution of its imperialist interests against China in the region (see: “Constitutional crisis erupts in the Philippines”). At every turn, the various groups of the ‘left’ have provided Aquino with political cover and helped to carry forward his campaign.

In the presidential election of 2010, each of the rival groups on the ‘left’ sought to ally itself with one of the bourgeois front-runner candidates. Each sought to barter its tatty radical credentials, supplying its candidate with a populist veneer, and in turn ride on his coattails into office should he win.

Akbayan—an amalgamation of ex-Maoists, decrepit Stalinist holdovers from the sixties and social democrats of various stripes—managed to position themselves as the left flank of the Aquino campaign. Upon Aquino’s election, they received several choice bureaucratic appointments, including the role of leading presidential advisor. They have become Aquino’s political attack dogs.

On every major issue, whenever the interests of the administration are at stake, one can expect to find a rally of support from Akbayan. They show up, cameras of the mass media conveniently at the ready, with their matching glossy expensive yellow posters, and chant slogans favoring Aquino. In July this year, Akbayan representative Walden Bello went to the disputed Spratly Islands and delivered a war-mongering speech on behalf of the Aquino administration and the interests of US imperialism (see: “The Philippine ex-left and the South China Sea”).

Beyond the repetition of mealy-mouthed shibboleths about the interests of the poor, Akbayan has lost even the veneer of being ‘left-wing’. In an act of reprisal against the Aquino administration for its detention of Arroyo, who is patron to a majority of the justices, the Supreme Court ordered Aquino’s family land—Hacienda Luisita—redistributed. Akbayan responded with the most convoluted of political statements. They praised the Aquino administration’s Department of Agrarian reform, called on Aquino to continue a supposed project of land reform, and demanded the overhaul of the Supreme Court.

They have since staged numerous protests demanding the impeachment of Chief Justice Corona. In a privileged speech in the House of Representatives, Walden Bello demanded that the legislature impeach ‘the bastard.’

Akbayan has become a hatchet-man for a section of the Philippine bourgeoisie, nothing more.

The impeachment campaign has also demonstrated the political bankruptcy of the various front organizations of the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), under the leadership of BAYAN and Bayan Muna.

The CPP adheres to the Stalinist two-stage theory of revolution. The tasks of the revolution in the Philippines, it claims, are national democratic, not socialist. The Philippines, according to the CPP, is a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country, a backward status which has been imposed by US imperialism. The national bourgeoisie must thus play a revolutionary role in throwing off imperialism and in the industrialization and democratic development of the Philippines. The various organizations of the CPP are always on the look-out for some representative of this ‘progressive national bourgeoisie’ to which to attach themselves.

During the 2010 presidential elections, the legal front organizations of the CPP were, like Akbayan, searching for a bourgeois politician with whom to ally and upon whom they could confer the much sought-after badge—representative of the progressive national bourgeoisie. They approached Aquino, offering to endorse his candidacy. He turned them down, allying instead with Akbayan.

Unfazed, Bayan Muna approached his rival, the billionaire real estate developer Manny Villar. Villar accepted their endorsement. Embarrassed that Villar had no written political platform, Bayan Muna drafted one for him, which he promptly relegated to the dustbin. When Villar lost the election—and lost badly—the front organizations withdrew their endorsement and ended the alliance.

Statements that the umbrella group BAYAN and the party-list organization Bayan Muna have released over the past two weeks reveal the extent of the promiscuous opportunism of the ‘left.’ They are prepared to ally with, and serve the interests of, any bourgeois politician if they feel it will serve their immediate tactical interests.

For the past year, with the express intention of ‘pushing Aquino to the left,’ Bayan Muna and other CPP front organizations have been prosecuting his political vendetta against Arroyo on his behalf. Carol Araullo, head of BAYAN, declared proudly in an

© World Socialist Web Site

editorial on November 18, that "all the cases filed against GMA [Arroyo] and her cohorts have been by progressive party list congress persons."

When Aquino ordered the legislature to sign articles of impeachment against Chief Justice Corona, Bayan Muna and the other party-list front organizations eagerly did so. Bayan Muna representative Teddy Casiño admitted that none of them had been able to read the document that they signed. Despite not knowing the details of the charges against Corona, Bayan Muna placed one of its representatives on the team of 11 congresspersons who will be responsible for the prosecution of Corona in the Senate.

In a second editorial a week later, Araullo wrote: "The Aquino administration's credibility and following rests to a large extent on its repeated pledges to hold the Arroyos accountable and eradicate corruption in government … The people need to be vigilant and push the executive to promptly take the proper and necessary measures to ensure that the Arroyos are prosecuted and eventually convicted of their high crimes against the people."

The head of the largest front organization of the Maoist CPP would have us believe that Aquino is being forced to prosecute Arroyo in order to maintain his credibility. This is a bald-faced lie. The prosecution of Arroyo has been his family's vendetta from before he took office, and has been driven, aided and abetted by the interests of US imperialism.

What is more, Araullo would have the Philippine working class, youth and peasantry 'push the executive' to carry out precisely what is in its own interests. When Aquino has achieved his aim, undermined the judiciary, subsumed the majority of the legislature to his control, and eliminated his political rivals—when he has gained dictatorial power in the executive branch—he will turn the full force of that power against the working class. The CPP front organizations have served as Aquino's vanguard in his consolidation of power; they are laying the groundwork for devastating defeats for the working class.

Recent history demonstrates this. The CPP front organizations played precisely the same role when Arroyo was installed as president after Joseph Estrada was removed from office in a 2001 constitutional coup. They spearheaded her prosecution of her political rival Estrada, claiming that they would push the executive to carry out her mandate from the people.

When groups of the urban poor gathered to protest Estrada's ouster, BAYAN issued a statement denouncing "the raging, bloodthirsty pro-Estrada mob now at the foot of Mendiola and the vicinity of Malacanang Palace" and demanded "the immediate arrest of all of its instigators, agitators and financiers." Once Arroyo was firmly ensconced in the presidency, having arrested her rivals and gained control of the military, she turned the full brunt of her power against the people. Extra-judicial killings became commonplace, workers' organizations were cracked down upon, basic democratic rights were assaulted.

The front organizations of the CPP are serving the interests of the bourgeoisie; they are its political left-flank. Time and again, they have sought to marshal the forces of the working class, of youth and the peasantry in a campaign to support a bourgeois representative, ostensibly to 'push him to the left.' Time and again, this treacherous policy has led to devastating defeats for the working class.

Araullo continued in her editorial: "The people … must continue to be vigilant, unshakeable and make their voices heard unequivocally and strong so that in the end, their will would be undeniable and in fact become truly sovereign." This is the petty bourgeois logic of protest politics. The will of the working people does not become sovereign because they make their voices heard. Heard by whom? Araullo's answer is: The bourgeoisie, who will then supposedly wield state power on their behalf. But the will of the working class becomes sovereign precisely when it seizes state power *from* the bourgeoisie.

The Filipino working class and peasantry must take warning. As they did with Arroyo, the 'left' in the Philippines is preparing massive defeats for them. The treacherous tactics of the CPP and its allies are not a result of moral failings on the part of leaders, or of misunderstandings, or misappraisals; they are the inevitable result of the absolutely fundamental theoretical tenets of Stalinism and Maoism.

As Trotsky clearly demonstrated in his Theory of Permanent Revolution, the national bourgeoisie is organically incapable of carrying out the tasks of the national democratic revolution. Those tasks fall to the working class, at the head of the oppressed masses, which on seizing power will be compelled to make deep inroads into private property as part of the struggle of workers internationally for socialism.

The interests of the proletariat are inimical to those of the bourgeoisie. The CPP seeks to subordinate the proletariat politically to its class enemy. To defend their interests, even their lives, the Philippine working class, youth, and peasantry must reject the leadership of the CPP and form a section of the world party of socialist revolution, the International Committee of the Fourth International.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site