

Duterte government opens peace talks with the Communist Party of the Philippines

Joseph Santolan
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Leading representatives of the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) met in Oslo on Tuesday with a negotiating team appointed by newly-elected Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte to begin talks to end the CPP's 47-year armed struggle.

Duterte, who takes office on June 30, is a fascistic political figure who promises the violent suppression and extra-judicial murder of suspected criminals. Since his election on May 10, vigilantes and the police have murdered more than 20 alleged drug dealers and petty criminals. Cardboard signs left on the corpses identified the murders as part of the campaign solicited by the incoming president.

Duterte has long-standing ties to the CPP, having been part of its youth organization in the 1960s and, according to CPP head Joma Sison, a "long-time member of [CPP front organization] BAYAN." The CPP and its front organizations supported Duterte throughout his career as mayor of the southern Philippine city of Davao, where he was the notorious head of the city's death squads, which he publicly claimed were responsible for over 1,000 murders during his terms as mayor.

In the immediate wake of Duterte's election, Sison, who has been living in exile in the Dutch city of Utrecht since 1987, announced the CPP would open peace negotiations with the new government. Fidel Agcaoili, who has functioned as Sison's right-hand man since the early 1970s, when he attempted unsuccessfully on multiple occasions to lead the smuggling of arms from China to the Philippines, traveled to Davao to meet with Duterte.

Agcaoili carried with him Sison's list of CPP representatives who could serve in Duterte's cabinet. Duterte appointed Sison's selections to serve as secretaries of social welfare and agrarian reform and undersecretary of labor.

Congressional representatives of the CPP's party-list

organizations, Ariel Casilao of Anakpawis and Carlos Zarate of Bayan Muna, signed a public pledge of "full support" for Duterte and for Pantaleon Alvarez, the likely speaker of the house, who is a member of Duterte's party. Casilao has joined the peace negotiations in Oslo, while Zarate is holding joint press conferences with the Davao police chief.

The CPP's front organizations are working to depict Duterte's fascistic policies as progressive. Carol Araullo, the chair of BAYAN, published an editorial in the country's leading business daily, *Business World*, arguing that Duterte's commitment to wage a violent campaign against "petty criminality and street-level lawlessness" would benefit the poor—whom she said are "victimized by anarchy, violence and rough-and-tumble of the mean streets"—and not the "upper and elite classes."

Duterte's negotiating team is composed of Jesus Dureza, who headed peace talks under former Presidents Ramos and Arroyo; Sylvestre Bello, who is incoming secretary of labor; and Hernani Braganza, who was secretary of agrarian reform under Arroyo. Sison described the meeting on Tuesday as a reunion of "old friends." Bello had been the secretary general of BAYAN in Mindanao in the 1980s. Braganza is a former member of the CPP.

Among the items that the initial peace talks will negotiate is a ceasefire in the armed conflict, the release of political prisoners and Sison's safe return to the Philippines.

The CPP's publication *Ang Bayan* on May 15, five days after Duterte's election, called for an alliance between the CPP and the new government. The publication maintained, however, that the party "stood firm that basic changes could only be affected through armed struggle."

In a range of interviews with the Philippine press, Sison asserted that the goal of the peace talks was to form a

“coalition government” of the CPP and Duterte administration. This coalition would need to carry out “democratic reforms that would lead to national industrialization and genuine land reform,” but “we are not asking for a switch to socialism.”

On June 10, Sison delivered an address via Skype to an All Leaders Forum on the Peace Talks, which was staged by a number of the CPP’s youth front organizations. In the speech, which was entitled “Prospects under the Duterte Administration and the tasks of the Filipino youth,” he clarified and developed his ideas on a coalition government.

Sison told his audience: “What is in sight is a kind of coalition government that involves the participation of the Communist Party amidst other patriotic and progressive forces. It is a government of national unity, peace and development.” Sison stated: “The question therefore arises whether the national democratic revolution can be completed in the absence of a people’s war.”

Sison called for getting an “interim ceasefire in place, and further negotiations on the end of hostilities and redistribution of the armed forces of both sides.” What precisely did Sison propose would happen to the estimated four to five thousand members of the CPP’s New People’s Army (NPA)? He told his audience: “Revolutionary armed units can become guards of the environment and the industries under conditions of peace and development. Integration of armed forces is permissible.”

Sison made explicit that he is not calling for state-owned industries, but for national industrialization to be carried out largely under private Filipino ownership, with state sponsorship and protection.

With his proposal to redeploy the NPA to serve as guards of industry and as members of an integrated Armed Forces of the Philippines, Sison is proposing to make NPA forces the suppressive arm of the capitalist state. The “guards” would be directly responsible for breaking strikes, and disciplining the workforce. The NPA would serve as the shock troops of the fascist Duterte regime.

Sison told the CPP’s youth front organizations they “must support the patriotic and progressive initiatives and measures undertaken [by the CPP] in an alliance with an otherwise fully reactionary government.”

The CPP’s call for a coalition government with the bourgeoisie is not a new development; it is the party’s programmatic core. In the CPP’s central document, *Philippine Society and Revolution*, first published in 1970,

basing himself on the Stalinist two-stage theory of revolution, Sison stated that the goal of the revolution was national democracy, not socialism. National democracy would function under a “united front dictatorship of the proletariat, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie, national bourgeoisie and all other patriots.” He described this as a “joint dictatorship of all revolutionary classes.”

The Stalinist two-stage revolution is fundamentally anti-Marxist. Lenin in his seminal work, *The State and Revolution*, wrote: “The essence of Marx’s theory of the state has been mastered only by those who realize that *the dictatorship of a single class is necessary* not only for every class society in general, not only for the proletariat which has overthrown the bourgeoisie, but also for the entire historical period which separates capitalism from ‘classless society,’ from communism. Bourgeois states are most varied in form, but their essence is the same: all these states, whatever their form, in the final analysis are inevitably the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The transition from capitalism to communism is certainly bound to yield a tremendous abundance and variety of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same: the dictatorship of the proletariat.”

No joint class dictatorship is possible. The choice is either capitalism and the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, on the one hand, or socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat, on the other.

The CPP is a bourgeois political party and has always been hostile to the interests of the working class. At every political turn of the past half-century the CPP has labored, with lies and betrayals, to subordinate the working class to its enemy, the bourgeoisie.

What is being prepared now is a qualitative development in the class politics of the CPP. As the Duterte government is openly looking to recruit a mass base in the petty bourgeoisie and lumpen elements for its fascist policies, the CPP is positioning itself to serve as the shock troops in the suppression of the working class on behalf of capitalism.



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