

New Zealand pseudo-lefts silent on Maoist alliance with Philippine president

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Rodrigo Duterte, who took office as president of the Philippines on 30 June, is a fascistic figure. In the name of an “all out war” against drugs and crime, he intends to restore the death penalty by public hanging, and lower the age of criminal liability from 15 to 12. He has instructed police to kill alleged criminals and drug addicts. He has promised to fill Manila Bay with 100,000 corpses in his first six months as president.

The rise of Duterte is a warning that the Philippine ruling class is preparing to use violent and dictatorial methods to suppress the working class, which will be propelled into struggle against soaring social inequality and US-led preparations for war with China.

Political responsibility for Duterte’s victory rests with the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The party’s front organisations campaigned vigorously on his behalf, fraudulently promoting him as a progressive candidate. Celebrating Duterte’s inauguration, CPP leader and founder José Maria Sison hailed the CPP’s peace talks with the new government as the foundation for an “independent, democratic, developed, prosperous and peaceful” Philippines. The CPP has accepted three cabinet positions in Duterte’s administration.

These developments have profound international significance: they are a damning exposure of the nationalist, pro-capitalist program advanced not just by the CPP but by its co-thinkers throughout the world. These include the New Zealand pseudo-left groups Fightback and Redline, which emerged from the break-up of the Maoist Workers Party in 2011. Fightback and Redline have remained silent on the CPP’s support for Duterte, thereby tacitly endorsing its actions.

For years, the Workers Party hailed the CPP and Maoist parties in India and Nepal as model “revolutionary” organisations. A typical statement on 23 December 2008, still available on the Fightback web site, declared that the CPP and its founder Sison had “led the struggle against feudalism, capitalism and imperialism” and its “commitment to internationalism has given confidence to many

organisations and individuals in the struggle for world revolution.”

In October 2010, the Workers Party and the now-defunct Socialist Worker (whose leading members joined Fightback) promoted a speaking tour of New Zealand by Luis Jalandoni and his wife Coni Ledesma, leading members of the National Democratic Front, a CPP front organisation. A statement published by the Workers Party and Socialist Worker hailed the couple as “veteran leading figures in the Philippine revolutionary Left.”

Jalandoni is now a principal negotiator of the political alliance between the CPP and President Duterte. On 19 May, after Duterte offered cabinet positions to the CPP, the Philippine *Inquirer* quoted Jalandoni saying they were “very happy for this gesture ... It shows his trust and confidence in the Communist Party of the Philippines, the New People’s Army and the National Democratic Front.”

The Redline blog has published numerous articles glorifying the CPP and its armed wing, the New People’s Army, as a “revolutionary movement” which “insist[s] on fighting for nothing less than socialism.” Most recently, on 20 June 2015, Redline reposted a statement by Sison criticising the Greek Syriza government’s anti-democratic move to impose drastic austerity measures dictated by the European Union and the banks. Yet Redline has said nothing about Sison’s embrace of Duterte, who aims to encourage greater private investment in the Philippines and violently suppress any opposition from the working class.

In fact, Sison has never led a genuinely revolutionary party. The Philippine Stalinists repeatedly supported bourgeois governments. Sison, on the executive committee of the PKP (Communist Party of the Philippines), led the newly formed Workers’ Party (Lapiang Manggagawa) to enter a coalition with President Diosdado Macapagal from 1963-65. In 1965 Sison switched to supporting Ferdinand Marcos and his Nacionalista Party for the presidency, leading the PKP youth wing, Kabataang Makabayan, to back his presidency. In 1967 Sison split from the pro-Moscow PKP and founded the pro-Beijing CPP, which denounced

Marcos as a “fascist” and allied with his bourgeois rivals.

Far from advancing an internationalist program of world revolution, the CPP based itself on Stalin’s so-called “two-stage theory” of revolution, and his nationalist doctrine of “socialism in one country.” Stalin attacked Trotsky’s Theory of Permanent Revolution, which had guided the Russian Revolution, and which held that in countries of a belated capitalist development, such as Russia, China and the Philippines, only the working class was capable of fulfilling the national democratic tasks.

In 1970, Sison echoed Stalin’s theories in *Philippine Society and Revolution*, stating that the aim of revolution was national democracy, not socialism, under a “united front dictatorship of the proletariat, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie, national bourgeoisie and all other patriots.”

The CPP’s integration into the Duterte government is the logical outcome of its anti-Marxist perspective of forging an alliance with the national bourgeoisie.

The New Zealand Maoists have followed an equally right-wing political trajectory. The NZ Communist Party (NZCP) was the first Stalinist party in a developed capitalist country to align with Beijing in the early 1960s, following the Sino-Soviet split. In 1966, a pro-Moscow splinter formed the rival Socialist Unity Party. While continuing to glorify Stalin, the NZCP covered up all Mao’s crimes, including the disastrous “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” and Beijing’s betrayal of the Vietnamese struggle against imperialism.

The NZCP and its off-shoot, the Workers Communist League (WCL), founded in 1980, also supported the CPP. The WCL played a key role in the New Zealand Philippines Solidarity Network, which sent a delegation to visit the Philippines in the late 1980s after the fall of the Marcos dictatorship.

Following the collapse of the NZCP and WCL in the early 1990s, several former Maoists pursued careers in bourgeois politics and the trade unions, while others helped to establish the predecessors of Fightback and Redline. Former WCL member Robert Reid now leads FIRST Union, one of the largest in the country. Another, Graeme Clarke, is general secretary of the Manufacturing and Construction Workers Union. Both unions have scapegoated foreign workers for unemployment and attacks on wages and conditions following the 2008 financial crash.

Prominent ex-WCL member, Sue Bradford, was a Green Party parliamentarian from 1999 to 2009. The Greens supported the then-Labour Party government, including its decision to send troops to Afghanistan.

In 2011, Bradford helped launch the Maori nationalist Mana Party, which was promptly joined by the pseudo-left groups Fightback, the International Socialist Organisation and Socialist Aotearoa. Mana’s founding platform called for

larger government payments to Maori-run businesses, and discrimination against foreign workers, along with minor reforms such as an increased minimum wage. Mana contested the 2014 election in an alliance with billionaire Kim Dotcom’s openly right-wing Internet Party and failed to win any seats in parliament.

Mana has supported anti-immigrant campaigns led by the opposition Labour Party and the right-wing populist New Zealand First. These parties have scapegoated Chinese people, in particular, for the country’s housing crisis.

Redline criticised Fightback’s decision to join the Mana Party, which it denounced as reformist, and criticised Labour’s anti-Chinese statements. Neither group, however, has opposed the CPP’s furious attempts, over the past two years, to whip up anti-Chinese chauvinism, at the same time as the Philippines has been integrated into US preparations for war against China. In 2014, Mong Palatino, a leader of the CPP front organisation Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN), stated: “Hate China? Then join the people’s army, strengthen the people’s movement, and be prepared to fight for the motherland.”

Fightback and Redline are silent about the CPP’s embrace of US imperialism and anti-Chinese warmongering because they have no fundamental political differences. They have not said a word about the New Zealand political establishment’s support for the US military build-up against China, including the government’s announcement that it will spend \$20 billion on new military hardware to support “interoperability” with US and Australian forces.

The New Zealand pseudo-lefts’ support for the CPP must be taken as a warning: these groups do not represent the interests of the working class, but sections of the upper middle class, who orbit around the trade unions, the Mana Party and Labour. As the drive to war intensifies and the social crisis deepens, these organisations are lurching to the right. Like their counterparts in Australia, the US, Europe and Asia, the pseudo-lefts are seeking to integrate themselves into the political establishment to advance their own interests under capitalism.



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