

Stalinist Communist Party of the Philippines supports right-wing Robredo campaign

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The Stalinist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), and the array of organizations that follow its political line, is struggling to form an alliance with a bourgeois candidate in the May 2022 presidential elections.

After a period of negotiations and back-room deals, all of the candidates running for president filed their certificates of candidacy and announced their senatorial slates on November 13. The final list of official candidates constitutes the most right-wing and fascistic election slate in Philippine history.

Ferdinand Marcos Jr, son of the former dictator, is running with Sarah Duterte-Carpio, daughter of the current president, as his vice presidential candidate. Panfilo Lacson, head of the torture apparatus of the Marcos regime, and Isko Moreno, a right-wing populist mayor, are also seeking the presidency.

Current Vice President Leni Robredo, heads the bourgeois opposition to Duterte and has the strong backing of Washington. Marcos has made clear that he intends to continue Duterte's policy of orienting the country's diplomatic and economic ties increasingly toward Beijing. A political organization, ISambayan, was formed earlier this year with the focused intention of endorsing a presidential candidate who would confront, rather than cooperate with, China. ISambayan selected Robredo.

Robredo's campaign has been oriented above all to middle-class layers. She presents herself, in opposition to the fascistic Duterte, as a kind and rational political figure, but one determined to uphold the demands of law-and-order. She has assembled a Senatorial slate of reactionary figures, including Antonio Trillanes, who rose to prominence as a leading plotter of military coups and head of the far-right political party, Magdalo.

The CPP has never, in its fifty-year history, mounted an independent political campaign. Election cycles are opportunities to strike an alliance with a faction of the ruling elite. They invoke the Stalinist theory of a two-stage revolution and claim that national and democratic tasks—above all, land reform—must be accomplished prior to any struggle for socialism. Falsely presenting this as a “Marxist” perspective, they argue that a section of the capitalist class will play a progressive role in this first stage.

They term this layer of the capitalist class the “national bourgeoisie,” and with the opening of every election cycle they pin this label on one or another representative of the ruling class. The CPP and the various political organizations to which it provides ideological leadership profit from this arrangement. The campaign

funds of elite politicians pay for the glossy banners, travel expenses, and salaries of their Stalinist allies.

The CPP has in this played a central role in Philippine politics for the past half-century, using the banner of Marxism and revolution to bring mass support behind a section of the ruling class. This has been a history of unmitigated betrayals, lies, and the propping up one bourgeois figure after another. No force has been as responsible for the stabilization of elite rule in the Philippines as the CPP. The Stalinist party has intervened in every major social struggle, strike and upheaval, to channel the social anger of the working class and peasantry behind the interests of the party's bourgeois allies.

The far-right character of the current election is the direct result of this history. It was above all the CPP which facilitated the rise to power of Rodrigo Duterte. They supported him for decades during his terms as mayor of the southern city of Davao, assisting in his rise to national prominence and covering up his fascistic, murderous politics. The CPP throughout its history has cultivated the notion that reactionary, and even racist, nationalism, was the solution to the poverty and oppression of the Filipino masses. They made possible the noxious political atmosphere that hangs over the country today.

The bankruptcy of the politics of the CPP is becoming widely known and is much remarked upon. The public lecture delivered last year by historian Joseph Scalice documenting the CPP's support for Duterte, and campaign mounted by the *World Socialist Web Site* defending him against Stalinist attacks, thoroughly exposed the lies of the party.

As the 2022 election period opened, Makabayan, the umbrella organization of the various political groups that follow the national democratic line of the CPP, sought to form an alliance with Leni Robredo. Makabayan senatorial candidate Neri Colmenares was a founding member of ISambayan, alongside the far-right Magdalo party. In this capacity, Makabayan endorsed Robredo's candidacy.

In October, Robredo announced her senatorial slate but left one slot open for a “representative of the marginalized.” Makabayan mounted a social media campaign to get Colmenares on her ticket. She refused, selecting instead Sonny Matula, president of the Federation of Free Workers (FFW), a labor union umbrella organization founded on militant anti-communism.

Colmenares and Makabayan's other senatorial candidate, Elmer Labog, chair of the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) labor organization, secured guest spots on the senatorial slate of boxer

turned politician Manny Pacquiao.

Founder and ideological leader of the CPP, Jose Ma. Sison issued a statement on October 31 declaring that Robredo was a “lite version of Duterte” and hailed Makabayan’s participating in the presidential campaign of Pacquiao, whom he termed “pro-people” and “pro-worker.” Pacquiao was until quite recently a key supporter of Duterte and he is running a right-wing campaign, committed to the restoration of the death penalty and the lowering of the age of criminality to twelve.

The CPP, however, is not content with Pacquiao. Middle-class sentiment has lined up behind Robredo as the opposition candidate, and the CPP will follow suit.

The WSWWS wrote on December 1:

Critical to Robredo’s calculations is the limitless opportunism of the Stalinist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), who have done everything possible to provide support for her candidacy. The various political organizations that follow the political line of the CPP – Makabayan, Bayan, Bayan Muna – have demonstrated that they are prepared to endorse her campaign even when she publicly repudiates any alliance with them.

This assessment has already been confirmed. The political direction came from Sison, who gave instructions on November 21 that Leni Robredo was “the most credible opposition presidential candidate.... It is not good that Neri [Colmenares] was not included in Leni’s slate. Even so, it needs to be a joint struggle against Duterte and Marcos... We still need a united front.” He made no mention of his assessment three weeks earlier that she was the “lite version of Duterte.”

This support was already in the works. On November 16, Colmenares, shared images on Facebook of the posters that Makabayan was preparing for its campaign. They featured Colmenares and Labog, beneath Leni Robredo, who featured most prominently.

Despite her repudiation of their support, Makabayan was secretly preparing to campaign for Robredo. In a similar fashion, Makabayan secretly printed material supporting Duterte in 2016, despite the fact they were officially allied with Grace Poe, a rival candidate.

Makabayan hit a serious obstacle in their support for Robredo on November 26, when she met with top military brass and declared her support for the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC). The NTF-ELCAC was formed in late 2018 with immense funding and a mandate for repression. Among its powers is the ability to arrest without warrant anyone accused of terrorism, and the Communist Party has been labeled a terrorist organization.

Makabayan and the CPP are acutely sensitive to middle class opinion and they are aware that criticizing Robredo will earn them the ire of this social layer. At the same time the activist members of their own organizations have been harassed, arrested, and even killed under the auspices of the NTF-ELCAC.

Judy Taguiwalo, who was hand-picked to be a cabinet member of the Duterte administration in 2016 by the CPP when they were still in an alliance with him, wrote a public letter to Robredo, “Dear VP Leni, like many others I support your strong condemnation of Duterte’s human rights violations and of Marcos’ legacy of terror. Like many others, I would like to be clarified about the seeming shift in your position on the notorious NTF-ELCAC... I hope to read a clarification from you soon. Thank you.”

Colmenares wrote an even more grovelling public statement, “I have no doubt that Vice President Leni Robredo shares our view that the decades-long armed conflict can only be resolved by decisively addressing its roots and by pursuing peace negotiations. She knows that the conflict stems from historical and deeply-ingrained social injustices that continue to fester to this day. The people are behind VP Leni in her desire for peace. She can retain good relations with the AFP [Armed Forces of the Philippines] without supporting the militarist, violent and anti-people actions of the NTF-ELCAC.”

There is deep seated opposition among the rank-and-file members of Makabayan and its sister organizations to yielding any ground to NTF-ELCAC. The Duterte administration has used its red-tagging to justify the killing of a good many activists. The leadership of Makabayan, however, while they have not yet publicly endorsed Robredo since her declaration of support for NTF-ELCAC, has begun secretly campaigning for her. In December, the Robredo-Labog-Colmenares posters began to go up around the country, as is clear from public postings on Facebook.

Colmenares and Labog joined with Sonny Matula in forming a labor group to campaign for Robredo, “Alliance of Labor Leaders for Leni (ALL4LENI).” ALL4LENI issued a statement calling on Robredo “to reconsider her position on the NTF-ELCAC.” Labog and Colmenares remain leaders of All4Leni.

It is clear that for now the Makabayan leadership intends to campaign for Robredo, while lying about it to their own members. On Monday, a chapter of 1Sambayan was founded in the UK and Colmenares and Labog delivered video greetings alongside Robredo and Antonio Trillanes.

The political line of the CPP serves the interests of their elite allies. Just as they did in 2016 when they facilitated the rise to power of Duterte, so too now they are preparing to carry out another immense betrayal of the Filipino masses. The evidence is overwhelming.



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