

On the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations



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Jose Maria Sison

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Editor

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Preface

This book, *GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations*, spans the years 1986 to 2022. It reflects the role that I have played in exploring and realizing the peace negotiations. It carries the essays, statements and interviews related to the tremendous odds, explorations, preparations, the forging of agreements, frustrations and advances. I hope that this book can further enlighten and inspire the people, the advocates of a just peace and the contending parties to work for a just and lasting peace in the Philippines.

Before the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations

Since the 1960s, when the national democratic movement resurged in the Philippines, the Filipino people have clamored for full national independence, democracy, social justice, economic development through genuine land reform and national industrialization, expansion of social services, a patriotic and progressive culture, international solidarity and independent foreign policy for peace and development.

The patriotic and democratic forces and people identified US imperialism, domestic feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism as the three basic problems afflicting the semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system, causing its chronic socio-economic, cultural and political crisis and inflicting a high rate of unemployment, low incomes, inflated prices of basic goods and services, lack or dearth of social services and mass poverty. The reactionary government of big compradors, landlords and high bureaucrat capitalists did not solve the aforesaid problems but proceeded to exploit and oppress the people.

In response to the problems, which require the revolutionary solution, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) was reestablished on December 26, 1968 and it organized the New People's Army (NPA) on March 29, 1969 in order to wage a protracted people's war for realizing the program for people's democratic revolution with a socialist perspective. Since then, the armed revolution has grown in strength nationwide.

The CPP is in all provinces of the Philippines and has more than 150,000 members. The NPA is in more than 110 guerrilla fronts in more than 90 percent of the provinces. The full-time guerrilla fighters are in the thousands and are augmented by the people's militia in tens of thousands and the self-defense corps in hundreds of thousands. The activists of the revolutionary mass organizations and alliances of workers, peasants and other classes and sectors are in the millions. And the local organs of political power, which constitute the people's democratic government, administer more millions of people.

In all the years that Marcos was in power until 1986, he did not find it necessary to negotiate peace with the revolutionary forces led by the CPP. He was intoxicated with overweening arrogance, did not care about the basic problems of the people and underestimated the strength and potential of the revolutionary movement. Instead, he coddled the puny revisionist party which was isolated from the people and subservient to the fascist dictatorship.

The CPP did not find it necessary to negotiate peace with the Marcos regime. It concentrated its efforts on arousing, organizing and mobilizing the people to wage revolution. The legal national democratic movement, the intra-systemic opposition and the armed revolution grew in strength, pressured the US and the local reactionary classes to junk Marcos and caused the downfall of his fascist dictatorship.

The peace negotiations after the Marcos dictatorship

The first of the post-Marcos regimes was headed by President Cory Aquino. She released all political prisoners and expressed interest in peace negotiations with the CPP. The CPP responded with the offer that the National Democratic Front (NDF) would represent all the revolutionary forces of the people (including the people's provisional government) in the peace negotiations and that steps would have to be taken by the Aquino regime to terminate the US-RP Military Bases Agreement.

Under pressure of coup threats from the Enrile-led Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM), Aquino reduced her offer of peace negotiations to ceasefire negotiations aimed at forging a 60-day ceasefire agreement during which the agenda for peace negotiations would be agreed upon. A ceasefire agreement was signed by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) on November 26, 1986. But the ceasefire agreement broke down due to the Mendiola massacre of peasants on January 23, 1987. And on February 7, 1987 the Aquino regime unsheathed the sword of war against the people's armed revolution, instead of investigating the pro-Marcos saboteurs among her palace guards.

Within the years of 1988 to 1990, Aquino sent emissaries to Utrecht in order to explore the possibility of holding peace negotiations. The most important emissary was Rep. Jose V. Yap who was chairman of the

Congressional Committee on National Defense. An agreement to conduct peace negotiations in The Netherlands was made but could not be realized because Aquino became frightened by the Noble military uprising in northern Mindanao in October 1990.

After becoming president in 1992, Ramos took the initiative of releasing all political prisoners and nullifying the Anti-Subversion Law but he made the charge of simple rebellion a nonbailable capital offense. He sent Speaker Jose de Venecia and Rep. Jose V. Yap to The Netherlands to explore the holding of peace negotiations. The NDFP agreed to negotiate a framework agreement for peace negotiations. On September 1, 1992, the GRP and NDFP chief representatives, respectively Rep. Yap and Luis Jalandoni signed The Hague Joint Declaration, setting the aims and purposes, guiding principles, substantive agenda and basic methods for making agreements.

However, the formal opening of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations could not be held until June 26, 1995 because on the same day Ramos issued Executive Order No. 19, he self-contradictorily created the National Unification Commission supposedly to try “localized peace negotiations” first with certain renegade groups that had split from the NPA. Despite the three-year disruption, the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations produced the following: Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), Joint Agreement on the Ground Rules of the Formal Meetings, Joint Agreement on the Sequence, Formation and Operationalization of Reciprocal Working Committees (RWCs) and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL).

Ramos was unable to sign the CARHRIHL but President Joseph Estrada was able to sign it on August 7, 1998. When AFP General Victor Obillo was captured by the NPA in Mindanao, Estrada took offense and terminated the peace negotiations on May 30, 1999 despite the offer of the NDFP to release the general. The legal national democratic movement concentrated on generating mass actions against Estrada and succeeded in ousting him from power mainly on issues of corruption.

President Gloria M. Arroyo went through the motions of resuming the peace negotiations by reaffirming all the previous agreements. After a few sessions of the negotiating panels within a few months in 2001, she suspended indefinitely the peace negotiations upon the advice of her Cabinet’s security cluster which wanted to concentrate on the military campaign of suppression (Oplan Bantay Laya I, II and III). After becoming president in 2010, Benigno Aquino III delayed the resumption of peace negotiations until 2011 and then lost interest in these in favor of the military campaign of suppression (Oplan Bayanihan).

After the sparse sessions in the peace negotiations during the time of Estrada, Arroyo and Aquino, Duterte proclaimed himself in 2016 as the first “Left” and “socialist” president, eager to make peace with the NDFP and form a coalition government with it. But alas he was just pretending and tried to knock out the NDFP with a few gangster tricks like releasing only 22 political prisoners instead of more more than 400, appointing certain progressives to his Cabinet as “representatives of the CPP” without permission of the CPP; and demanding that the people’s democratic government give up its vital function of taxation.

In less than a year of being president, Duterte openly included the armed revolution as a target of his military campaign against the Maute group (Dawlah Islamiyah) in May 2017. Soon enough, he issued a torrent of proclamations to render the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations impossible. These included the Proclamation No. 360 terminating the peace negotiations on November 23, 2017, Proclamation 374 designating the CPP and NPA as “terrorist” organizations on December 5, 2017, Executive Order No. 70 creating the National Task Force-Elcac on December 4, 2018, Proclamation No. 374 declaring the CPP and NPA as “terrorist” organizations on December 5, 2017 and Republic Act No. 10168, or the Anti-Terror Act (ATA) on July 3, 2020.

The ATA creates the Anti-Terror Council as a Board of Inquisition, criminalizes a wide range of democratic acts, designates organizations and individuals as “terrorist” and subjects suspects to indefinite detention that allows other forms of arbitrary punishment, including torture and summary execution. The NDFP has been designated as a “terrorist” organization since last year under ATA, with the clear malicious intent to disable it from playing a role in peace negotiations. NDFP negotiators and consultants have also been designated “terrorists” despite the safety and immunity guarantees under JASIG. Worst of all, sixteen of them (unarmed, at home and mostly in their seventies) have been tortured and murdered by the Duterte death squads.

From the beginning of his presidential term, Duterte launched an all-out war campaign under the cover of continuing Aquino’s Oplan Bayanihan in 2016 until his own Oplan Kapayapaan in January 2017. From month to month, he urged the reactionary armed forces and police to do the most brutal acts, such as bombing rural

communities (especially of indigenous people), mass murder of suspects, shooting suspected women guerrillas in the vagina and all kinds of barbarities similar to those committed in the bogus war on illegal drugs.

After the termination of the peace negotiations in 2017, he pretended to engage in “localized peace negotiations” which was calculated to bait and trap rebel suspects, their friends and relatives in murder schemes with promises of cash, jobs, homes and lots. But it turned out that the so-called Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP), Community Support Program and Barangay Development Program (BDP) were nothing but rackets to serve the corruption of high bureaucrats headed by Duterte and by a few favorite generals.

The most unreasonable and most counterrevolutionary among officials of the reactionary state are those who claim that the biggest problem of the people is the resistance of the people to oppression and exploitation and not the three problems of US imperialism, domestic feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism, that the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations have run for decades since 1986 or 1992 and not only for a few months under each one of the post-Marcos regime and that there is no need to share credit with the NDFP if the GRP takes the initiative to solve the problems of national and class oppression and exploitation.

In fact, if the reactionary state of big compradors and landlords runs against its class nature and defies the dictates of foreign monopoly capitalism, the Filipino people and their revolutionary forces would certainly applaud the miracle, approve it and support it. But such miracles do not occur by any amount of prayers, wishful thinking and false promises.

Prospects for GRP-NDFP peace negotiations

All opposition presidential candidates running against the Marcos-Duterte tandem in the 2022 elections promised to resume the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. But all made enough qualification to their promises in order to evade fulfilling them and allow them to conform to the dictates of US imperialism and concrete orders from pro-US officers of the reactionary armed forces. At any rate, whoever shall be the top puppet of US imperialism will have to face a far worse economic, social and political crisis of the semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system.

Most unfortunately, the Duterte regime in collaboration with US imperialism has succeeded at rigging the 2022 elections in favor of the Marcos-Duterte tandem and slate in order to continue the state terrorist and anti-communist campaign of military suppression to prevent the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations and seek in vain to destroy the people’s democratic revolution. As a result of the electoral fraud, the crisis of the ruling system has worsened and is further fanning the flames of the civil war. The US anticipates that it can use the puppet military to take power in case the civilian puppets fail to destroy the revolution and stop the further worsening of the political and economic crisis.

The revolutionary forces of the Filipino people have demonstrated that with or without GRP-NDFP peace negotiations they can take advantage of the ever-worsening crisis of the ruling system in order to preserve their strength and grow further and respond resolutely and vigorously to the demand of the people for revolutionary change. While still small and weak in the past, the armed revolution grew in strength by leaps and bounds against the repressive rule of Marcos, including 14 years of fascist dictatorship. And even during the post-Marcos regimes, when campaigns of military suppression continued, the armed revolution for national and social liberation advanced.

Nevertheless, the NDFP and all other revolutionary forces have shown interest in peace negotiations when honest third-party advocates of a just peace and enlightened elements in the GRP offer peace negotiations as a just, reasonable and feasible way to address the basic problems of the people and arrive at the solutions in the form of basic reforms for the benefit of the people. At the least, the revolutionary forces of the people have the ample opportunity to explain and propagate their program for a new democratic revolution in the course of peace negotiations despite the usual attempts of reactionaries to sow confusion among the people and the revolutionaries.

The best circumstances for peace negotiations are when the armed revolution is about to complete its general offensive and gives a chance to the final holdouts of the enemy the chance to exchange prisoners of war and surrender to the people’s side; or short of achieving complete victory in the civil war there is an agreement to engage in truce and national unity for independence, democracy, genuine land reform and national industrialization or confront and fight against a far worse reactionary enemy or a foreign aggressor.

Without the aforesaid circumstances, the broad masses of the Filipino people need to pursue their new

democratic revolution until they end the semicolonial and semi-feudal ruling system through a protracted people's war. They have learned a lot of experience, lessons and skills from fighting their enemy self-reliantly and without cross-border advantages as in mainland Asia. And the conditions for ever greater victories are being generated by the escalating contradictions among the imperialist powers, between capital and labor in imperialist countries, between the imperialist countries and the oppressed peoples and nations and between the imperialist powers and countries assertive of national independence, democracy and socialist programs and aspirations.

Before I close this preface, let me consider the possibility that through peace negotiations the GRP and NDFP agree to cease and desist from trying to destroy each other and decide to take the road of national unity and reconciliation, full national independence, democracy, social justice and economic development through genuine land reform and national industrialization and expansion of social services by using as the key the availment of certain natural resources (marine and mineral) that the Philippines has in abundance in the West Philippine Sea (aside from the methane nodules, oil deposits and heavy metals in Benham Rise), instead of allowing or emboldening China as one more imperialist power to violate the national sovereignty of the Filipino people, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 2016 judgment of the Permanent Arbitration Commission in favor of the Philippines against China.

Fisheries in the West Philippine Sea

According to geopolitical analyst Robert D. Kaplan, in his 2014 book *Asia's Cauldron*, fish stocks in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) could amount to a tenth of the global landed catch. As early as 2007 the total value of fish stocks in the WPS was estimated to be US\$966.59 billion, or close to \$1 trillion in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). At the exchange rate in that year, it was P44.61 trillion or nearly 6.5 times the Philippine GDP then. If the estimate extends to the marine resources in the extended continental shelf, it is easily \$1.5 trillion, or P69.24 trillion. That's 10 times the GDP in 2007.

But the Chinese intruders, using the technology of industrial fishing and fleets of fishing boats, have been robbing the Filipino people of their marine resources. They have encroached upon even the Panatag Shoal (Scarborough Shoal) and have been preventing Filipino fishermen from the central lagoon and vicinity of the shoal. The traitor Duterte has publicly admitted in a state of the nation of address that he has a "verbal" deal with China to allow the Chinese to fish in Recto Bank (Reed Bank), which is within the Exclusive Economic Zone.

Such a deal is patently unconstitutional and grossly unfair to the Filipino people because Recto Bank covers an area of 8,660 sq km or 58 times as large as Scarborough Shoal. That is 14 times the size of the national capital region of Metro Manila. In this regard, former Supreme Court Senior Justice Antonio T. Carpio has warned that the Chinese can "very quickly" deplete fish stocks in Recto Bank, instead of the Philippine fishing industry being able to serve the needs of the Filipino people as well those of the Chinese and other peoples and in the process avail of the net earnings for Philippine economic development.

The Chinese fishing fleets and trawlers have not only prevented the Filipino fishermen from fishing from their own fishing grounds but have also inflicted catastrophic damage to the coral reefs in the course of constructing artificial islands in the West Philippine Sea. The seriously damaged reefs extend to 550 hectares in Panatag Shoal and 1,300 hectares in the Spratlys. Marine scientists estimate that such damage costs the Philippines at least P33.1 billion a year. The destruction of the coral reefs makes fish reproduction harder on top of the excessive fishing of various marine life, including sea turtles and giant clams.

Panatag Shoal (known as Bajo de Masinloc in the Spanish colonial period) is an integral part of the Philippine territory. It is part of the Municipality of Masinloc, Province of Zambales. It is a chain of reefs and rocks about 124 nautical miles (NM) from the nearest coast of Luzon and 472 NM from the nearest coast of China. It is within the 200 NM Exclusive Economic Zone and 200 NM Continental Shelf of the Philippines. One of the earliest known and most accurate maps of the area, named *Carta Hydrographica y Chorographica De Las Yslas Filipinas* by Fr. Pedro Murillo Velarde, S.J., and published in 1734, included Bajo de Masinloc as part of Zambales.

In 1792, another map drawn by the Alejandro Malaspina expedition and published in 1808 in Madrid, Spain, also showed Bajo de Masinloc as part of Philippine territory. It showed the route of the Malaspina expedition to and around the shoal. It was reproduced in the Atlas of the 1939 Philippine Census. The *Mapa General, Islas Filipinas*, Observatorio de Manila published in 1990 by the US Coast and Geodetic Survey, also included Bajo de Masinloc as part of the Philippines.

Oil and Gas in the West Philippine Sea

The mineral wealth of the Filipino people in terms of oil and gas in the West Philippine Sea is so many times far bigger in value than that in terms of marine life. According to Kaplan's book, *Asia's Cauldron*, there are about 7 billion barrels of oil and 900 trillion cubic feet of natural gas proven to lie beneath the WPS. Some estimates even go as high as 130 billion barrels of oil, making the Philippines second only to Saudi Arabia in terms of oil reserves. Justice Carpio has also noted that methanol, an alternative biofuel abundant in the WPS, can fuel China's economy for 130 years. Certainly, a small portion of these resources can serve the Philippines' energy needs and the export income from the rest can propel comprehensive economic development.

The patriotic and development-oriented Retired Brig. Gen. Eldon G. Nemenzo, former deputy commander of the 3rd Air Division of the Philippine Air Force (PAF), made a thorough research in his thesis when he took the advanced course at the Command and Staff College of the PAF in Villamor Air Base, Pasay City. He commented on the vast oil reserves of the Philippines found in various parts of the archipelago, specifically the Recto Bank (Reed Bank), the largest of them all, and the Mischief Reef in the Spratly Islands or the Kalayaan Island Group (KIG) in the following manner: "The Philippines is like a blind beggar sitting on a mountain of gold. Within the country's 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) are potential recoverable hydrocarbon deposits worth an estimated US-D26.3 trillion. This is more than enough to lift the country from the centuries-long morass of poverty and underdevelopment".

However, because of the control of the Philippine ruling system by the big comprador-bureaucrat capitalists, 90 percent of ownership of our oil and gas resources come under ownership by foreign oil monopolies and only 10 percent would under the ownership of the the Philippine National Oil Corporation. This pattern of ownership is established in Malampaya, with Chevron and Shell owning 45 percent each and the PNOC only 10 percent. The greed of three foreign monopoly firms and banks and the corruption of the big comprador-bureaucrat capitalists limit the share of PNOC ownership to only 10 percent of the resources owned by the Filipino people.

In his research, Nemenzo further discovered that the amount of hydrocarbon deposits in the country could be more than US\$26.3 trillion in value, as indicated by the recent discovery of oil reserves in the Sulu-Celebes Sea which is also within Philippine territory. His conclusions are supported by findings from other sources, including a report by China's Ministry of Geology and Mineral Resources, that the oil deposits in the Spratlys could reach 17.1 billion barrels. This surpasses the 13 billion barrels of oil deposits of Kuwait, one of the world's top oil producers. Aside from oil and natural gas, minerals and polymetals such as combinations of gold, silver, iron and nickel are found under the West Philippine Sea.

Because of the recent findings about the oil and natural gas being abundant in the West Philippine Sea, the US has become more determined to hold on to the Philippines as a semicolony and influence the general run of bureaucrat capitalists that these natural resources should be subordinated to the US oil monopoly interests and not come under the control of the patriotic and democratic forces in order to serve and advance the national and social liberation of the Filipino people. Also driven by its own monopoly capitalist interests, China has adopted a policy of violating Philippine national sovereignty and territory.

It aims to grab from the Filipino people 531,000 square kilometers of maritime area on the basis of its illegal nine-dash line which violates the UNCLOS. Such space is 77 percent larger than the Philippine total land area. It covers 80 percent of the Philippine EEZ, including the whole of Recto Bank and part of the Malampaya gas field. At the same time, it encroaches on all of the extended continental shelf of the Philippines.

It is unfortunate for the Filipino people that the incumbent Philippine president Duterte has manifested a predisposition to betray and sell out their sovereign rights, which are spelled out by the 1987 Constitution and the 2016 Arbitral Tribunal ruling. He has offered to China full control of oil and gas exploration and extraction in exchange for graft-laden loans for infrastructure projects. This offer follows a related memorandum of understanding previously signed between Manila and Beijing. Driven all along by sheer treason, corruption and unabashed cowardice, Duterte has refused to demand the withdrawal of China from the islands it has made and militarized in the West Philippine Sea and the just compensation for unpaid rent and damage to the marine environment.

It is even more unfortunate for the Filipino people that Duterte's rigging of the 2022 elections has delivered power to the worst of the country's corrupt and brutal political dynasties, those of Marcos and Duterte, which have served as bureaucrat capitalist and big comprador agents of foreign monopoly capitalism and which would surrender the natural wealth of the people to the greediest foreign monopolies rather than use it for the economic

and social development of the Philippines.

In the aftermath of the fraudulent elections of 2022, the Marcos, Arroyo and Duterte oligarchs are now moving fast to establish their bureaucrat capitalist and big comprador dominance over the Malampaya and Recto Bank gas and oil resources in collaboration with certain foreign oil and gas monopoly firms. The estimated USD 26.3 trillion worth of gas and oil resources in the West Philippine Sea are being divided between the giant foreign energy monopolies and the big compradors at the expense of the Filipino people who are bereft of a government that can ensure their sovereign ownership and use of the energy resources for genuine land reform and national industrialization and the attainment of a just and lasting peace in the Philippines.

Only if the national and democratic rights and interests are upheld, defended and promoted can the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations serve as a process for making comprehensive agreements on social, economic and political reforms to address and solve the basic problems at the root of the armed conflict and to enable the rise of a patriotic and democratic leadership to unite the people, administer the natural and social wealth of the people, raise the resources for genuine land reform and national industrialization and accomplish the comprehensive and balanced development of the Philippine economy.

The exploration and development of our oil and gas resources should not be delivered to the worst of the foreign oil monopolies. We should examine and judge carefully what are the necessary companies that are most respectful of the national sovereignty and most beneficial to the Filipino people. We should take into account that the Royal Norwegian government, the third-party facilitator, has a common interest with the Filipino people in the success of the peace process and has the companies with the expertise for developing undersea energy sources in the WPS.

Despite the environmentalist demand to cut down carbon diode emissions and prevent global warming, the world capitalist system remains dependent for energy supply on fossil fuel to the extent of 85 percent and has been unable to reach the climate goals set out in the Paris climate agreement. Fortunately, according to a UN report, carbon capture with permanent storage (CCS) or utilization of the capture of the captured CO₂ (CCU) have been developed as tools for reducing emissions and combating climate change. These tools can be used to create carbon-neutral processes or even to create a net negative greenhouse gas intensity of products. Today CCS is being used to prevent annually almost 40 million of CO₂ from escaping into the atmosphere and hundreds of similar carbon capture projects are being developed.

The patriotic leaders, economists, scientists, engineers and toiling masses of the Filipino people must be in charge of extracting and processing the natural resources of the Philippines, engaging the local and foreign companies with the necessary expertise and preventing the foreign monopoly control and super-exploitation by US and Chinese monopoly firms and banks. Otherwise, the extraction of such natural resources even if in abundance will not serve the rights and interests of the Filipino people but will continue to perpetuate the state of underdevelopment, unemployment, depressed incomes and mass poverty in the Philippines.

Jose Maria Sison
Utrecht, The Netherlands
May 31, 2022

On Marcos and Aquino re CPP

December 21, 1985

In a recent blast against the Aquino-Laurel tandem, President Marcos accused it of taking a “dangerously naive policy” in offering ceasefire and negotiation to the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People’s Army. In the process, he also cited alleged CPP former Chairman Jose Ma. Sison as having previously proposed a grand coalition or united front council to support a new democratic government. Philippine News and Features forwarded a list of questions on the subject to Mr. Sison.

Hereunder are the questions and his answers.

Can you comment on the comparison made by President Marcos between the Philippines and Nicaragua?

JMS: His comparison is inappropriate if not impertinent. If a comparison has to be made, Marcos is the Anastacio Somoza of the Philippines. The reelection of Anastacio Somoza in a US-sponsored electoral farce damned not only the Somoza dictatorship but the entire ruling system of the big compradors and landlords as well.

What is your reaction to President Marcos’ assertion that there is a democratic state in the Philippines being opposed by terrorists?

JMS: The so-called democratic state in the Philippines is a joint class dictatorship of the comprador big bourgeoisie and the landlord class both subservient to US imperialism. Worse, this class dictatorship has narrowed into a fascist dictatorship—an open rule of terror—that has done away with tokens of bourgeois democracy. Those who rule the country today are the real terrorists against the people. It is not terrorism on the part of the people to fight the instruments of tyranny.

Can you compare the positions of President Marcos and of Cory Aquino re the CPP and NPA?

JMS: Mr. Marcos’ position is one of fanning the flames of civil strife in order to justify his fascist dictatorship. He wants to get a “fresh mandate” for escalating violence against the revolutionaries and the people. He is bent on a killing spree. Yet he has plunged the economy into a grave crisis and he has increasing difficulties giving his own troops decent pay.

What socioeconomic efforts to match military efforts is he talking about?

JMS: The position of Mrs. Aquino is wise and commendable. She promises to seek a ceasefire and negotiations. Apparently, she understands the need to develop the broadest possible unity of patriotic and progressive forces in order to face up to the grave political and economic crisis. What is this idea of a grand coalition or united front council attributed to you by President Marcos? Is it already existent or in the making? Does it include the CPP/NPA and the NDF?

I proposed a grand coalition or united front council among all legal democratic organizations and opposition political parties to work for a democratic coalition government about a year or so ago. On the basis of news reports, I observe that all entities in the legal opposition are exerting all efforts to unite against the fascist dictatorship in every field of legal struggle. The inclusion of the CPP, NPA and NDF in some broad democratic arrangement is something beyond my competence to effectively propose to the legal opposition.

What do you mean by reorienting and reorganizing the AFP?

The AFP must adopt a patriotic, democratic or pro-people orientation. It must not be a tool of a foreign power and of the local exploiting classes. It must be cured of its blind loyalty to Mr. Marcos and purged of its crimes as the instrument of fascist tyranny.

Naturally, a new regime will have to reorganize the AFP in accordance with its own orientation. It would be foolhardy for Cory Aquino if, after winning the presidency, she retains within the AFP the diehard Marcos loyalists and assassins of her husband as well as other victims. She herself would be in grave danger from these rascals.

By controlling and manipulating 280,000 men of the military, police, paramilitary and cultist groups to kill and persecute opponents, the fascist dictatorship is not only a monitor lizard but a large man-eating crocodile or

shark. Pick your metaphor.

Do you suppose the CPP and NPA will respond positively to Cory Aquino's promise of general amnesty for armed rebels and CPP legalization as well as her offer of ceasefire and negotiations?

JMS: I am not in a position to answer your question. But as one who studies political developments very closely, I think that the revolutionary movement will seriously consider any sincere proposal for the good of the people. Unlike Marcos who never offers anything but demands outright capitulation and surrender in the guise of an offer, Cory Aquino inspires confidence and merits serious attention.

If Cory Aquino wins and releases you among other political prisoners in accordance with her pre-election commitment, what will you do?

JMS: That is a big if because the fascist dictatorship will do everything to cheat and terrorize its way to victory. But let me go with your assumption. I will go on writing and teaching. I will enjoy being reunited with my family. I will be in a position to do more in the service of the people than I can now.

Conditions for a Ceasefire

March 29, 1986

Ceasefire means the cessation of armed hostilities between two forces. Its synonyms are truce and armistice. It does not denote the surrender or laying down of arms. It is usually considered better than continuing hostilities when it becomes possible to forge an agreement between hostile forces in order to achieve common objectives and to fight a common enemy.

In view of the long-drawn-out armed conflict between the AFP and the NPA and the determination of either side not to surrender, a ceasefire rather than the surrender of one side to the other is a reasonable goal.

It is unreasonable to expect either the AFP or the NPA to agree to voluntary self-dismantling because each presumes itself to be the main instrument of defense for a form of state or government. The NPA is founded on the premise that it is the main military instrument of a people's revolutionary government already in the making. On the other hand, the AFP is premised on the fact that it is the military force in the service of the state or government.

In any event, a ceasefire is attainable between the AFP and the NPA, and can be reached through two stages.

The first stage involves improvement of the situation to such a degree that the climate for national reconciliation becomes pervasive and undeniable. This stage requires the Aquino government to carry out unilateral acts of goodwill towards the armed revolutionaries and to strengthen its control over what is supposed to be its own military instrument.

The second stage involves the negotiations proper between the highest civilian representatives of the Aquino government and the Communist Party of the Philippines. Both sides can be expected to raise certain demands even as they try to work out an agreement. The CPP can be expected to push hard for an agreement along anti-imperialist and anti-feudal lines.

Let us consider the first stage.

The CPP could maintain that before negotiations for a ceasefire can be held the Aquino government has to achieve the objectives it has set for itself in the transition to a constitutional government. These objectives have been declared in President Aquino's Proclamation No. 3.

The President must give priority to measures that will thoroughly reorganize the government, eradicate unjust and oppressive structures and all iniquitous vestiges of the previous regime.

She must appoint men and women of unquestioned integrity, patriotic and progressive orientation in her Cabinet, commissions, task forces, constitutional commission, legislative council and the courts. And, of course, the AFP, which was used by Mr. Marcos to oppress the people and support his dictatorial rule, must be thoroughly reoriented and reorganized. It is generally recognized that the AFP has remained intact and has been completely carried over from the old regime to the new one.

Mrs. Aquino must take full command of the armed forces. Otherwise, she cannot secure her share of responsibility for the negotiations and then for the ceasefire if negotiations succeed. The NPA cannot confidently go into negotiations or accept a ceasefire if Mrs. Aquino does not control the AFP.

She must reduce the government's military forces and military expenditures so that the savings can be channeled to economic development and essential public services. She must put an end to militarization, return regular troops to the barracks, deactivate the CHDF units and place the police under the mayors or civilian officers-in-charge.

Even before there can be a negotiated ceasefire, armed conflict can be reduced by ordering the AFP to shift from a posture of strategic offensive to one of strategic defensive in consonance with the NPA's own posture of strategic defensive. AFP units are vulnerable to ambushes and raids because they are deployed to attack the people.

President Aquino must give priority to measures that guarantee and make effective the civil, political, social and economic and cultural rights and freedom of the people.

She must see to it that the Bill of Rights is faithfully observed for the sake of the working class, the peasantry, the national minorities, the middle social strata and the rest of the people. All legislation and other issuances of

Mr. Marcos which oppress the people must be repealed. All violators of human rights must be arrested, tried and punished.

The new constitution should be assertive of the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Philippines. It must declare, among others, that no foreign military bases will ever be allowed in the country.

In accordance with the principle of pluralism and the current multiplicity of political parties, a multiparty system—preferably parliamentary—must be established. The two-party presidential system is easily monopolized by the factions of the exploiting classes. The political system must be opened up to parties of the working class, the peasantry, and the middle social strata.

The prospects for making a truly democratic constitution would be brighter if a constitutional convention of popularly elected delegates were held instead of a constitutional commission of appointed members. Most of those who will be appointed to the latter body are likely to be pro-US and reactionary elements.

The President must give priority to measures that rehabilitate the economy and promote the nationalist aspirations of the people. The economic sovereignty of the people must be asserted. Economic plans must be made in accordance with the basic demands of the people and not in accordance with the dictates of the US, the multinational firms or the IMF and the World Bank. National industrialization and genuine land reform must be initiated.

Foreign loans which have not been beneficial to the economy and the people must be repudiated. Better terms of credit should be worked out with foreign creditors. If any further foreign borrowing is to be made, it should not merely sink the country deeper in the debt trap but should supplement domestic savings in building up economic productivity.

Economic relations with the third world, socialist and lesser capitalist countries must expand in order to counter and dilute US economic dominance in the country. Countertrade must be utilized in order to revive depressed exports and bring in productive equipment and other essential imports.

The President must give priority to measures aimed at recovering the ill-gotten wealth amassed by the leaders and supporters of the Marcos regime and protecting the interests of the people through sequestration and freezing of illegal assets or accounts.

A certain portion of the income from recovered ill-gotten properties must be used to indemnify and rehabilitate the victims of human rights violations. If certain properties are to be sold to the private sector, these should be offered to employees who shall pay for their shares on an instalment basis, not with their salaries or wages but with the yearly income from such shares.

The President must also give priority to measures that eradicate graft and corruption and punish those guilty thereof. The Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) should take action against the corrupt officials and associates of the Marcos regime as well as prevent the recurrence of graft and corruption under the new regime.

Before there can be a serious basis for negotiations towards a ceasefire, the Aquino government will have to fulfil its avowed objectives in the transition period and pay special attention to realizing particular objectives of profoundest interest to the armed revolutionary movement.

The second stage toward a ceasefire would be more difficult. Each side will make stringent demands on the other. But if enough mutual confidence were generated in the first stage, there would be mutual predisposition or willingness to arrive at principled compromises.

This early we can anticipate the demands made by each negotiating party in the second stage. The UNIDO-Laban ng Bayan alliance behind President Aquino has its program of government. So do the CPP and the NDF.

Going over the programs of the UNIDO and Laban ng Bayan on the one hand and the CPP and the NDF on the other, we can foresee that a mutually satisfactory agreement for a ceasefire between the Aquino government and the CPP can be worked out.

The agreement can entail people's consultative council, a coalition government or a coalition within an elected legislature. A multiparty system, parliamentary or presidential, would allow parties of the toiling masses to get a significant share of seats in the legislature.

So long as there is no ceasefire agreement, the AFP and NPA will continue to engage in armed conflict. The question of a ceasefire can be settled only at the highest levels: the Central Committee of the CPP and the Office of the President of the Philippines. Approaches to the CPP, the NDF and the NPA at lower levels would be futile even if these approaches were sincere and not intended to cause centrifugal trends within the armed revolutionary

movement.

That the NPA continues to operate and launch tactical offensives is not exactly an unfortunate thing for Corazon Aquino or the Aquino government. She can regard the NPA as providing her with the leverage for asserting and gaining control over the AFP. While she does not yet have full control over the AFP, the NPA acts as the instrument of the very people's power that brought her to the presidency.

The NPA can concentrate on launching tactical offensives against Marcos loyalists, unreformed AFP officers and men, local warlords, unruly police and CHDF units and bad elements. In this regard, the reformed AFP officers and men can elect to fight alongside the NPA.

We can assume that the CPP, the NPA and the NDF are willing to cooperate with the Aquino government in the process of dismantling the structures of fascist dictatorship and restoring formal democratic rights, and even more so in completing the struggle for national liberation and peasant emancipation.

The killing of Olalia manifests a scheme of the United States to terrorize people from joining the Partido ng Bayan (People's Party) so that the parties that are pro-US and the comprador-landlord classes would continue to monopolize the electoral and other legal political processes. In connection with this, the United States is pushing the restoration of the two-party system instead of having a multiplicity of six parties belonging to the same exploiting class. The United States would like to simplify the situation. If there are six parties of the exploiting classes fighting each other, the situation would remain complicated and be more difficult for the United States to manage. The Partido ng Bayan would then have more chances of breaching the hold of pro-US reactionaries on the government.

The murder of Olalia signifies the escalation of fascist terror. You know that there has never been a let-up in the attack of the military against the people in the countryside. Now a very dramatic fascist atrocity has been committed in the city.

The United States is manipulating the various factions and, of course, the factions concerned with their respective interests are fighting it out among themselves. The progressive movement has to keep in mind these two levels so that it can adopt the proper tactics; while it may side with the less reactionary Aquino faction against the more reactionary Marcos and Enrile factions, it should not lose sight of the US hand.

All of these upper-class factions are pro-US, pro-imperialist and reactionary. The Aquino faction may be differentiated from the Marcos and Enrile factions in that it wishes to have liberal-democratic embellishment. But there are no fundamental differences among them except that each one would like to gain the upper hand and monopolize power. Of course, the Aquino faction has had the benefit of having fought the Marcos fascist dictatorship and used populist slogans. But all these factions do not offer any solution to the fundamental problems of the people. US imperialism and domestic feudalism. By itself, the Aquino government cannot solve these problems.

The United States has used Enrile together with his colonel boys to pressure Mrs. Aquino. There are reliable reports that a compromise arranged by the US was made as early as November 10, requiring Mrs. Aquino to reorganize her cabinet: Enrile resigns, but the rest of her cabinet also resigns and the new cabinet would include more pro-US reactionary elements. Even if Enrile has resigned, the strongly pro-US Gen. Fidel Ramos has become a bigger politico-military figure. The resignation of Enrile has paved the way for a smarter fellow who can pretend to protect Mrs. Aquino but check her and induce her to take pro-US positions on issues. The United States has made preparations for the passage of a US-RP military bases treaty no later than 1988. This would mean the extension of the US military bases after 1991.

Ramos is now the top figure of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), but because there has been no legal action or punitive measure against those involved in repeated coup attempts, the colonel boys of Enrile are very much allowed to be a force. In the AFP there are now four factions: the Aquino-Ileto faction, the Ramos faction, the Enrile faction, and the Marcos faction.

Within the AFP there has been an interweaving of personnel of the Marcos and Enrile factions. There has been cooperation in certain joint actions such as in Cebu City and in a city in Mindanao. There has also been an interweaving of the personnel of KBL (the Marcos party) and the Partido Nacionalista. Enrile has attended rallies and delivered very strong anticommunist speeches.

The realignment of the KBL and the Partido Nacionalista into a coalition party is impending. On the other side, Mrs. Aquino's brother has been organizing the Lakas ng Bansa as the Aquino party. So the two-party system being pushed by the United States is in the process of being carried out.

The new cabinet appointees are very pro-US and reactionary. Vicente Jayme is well-associated with the Makati Business Club, very pro-US, known to be an ultraconservative religious man, and has a reputation of being technocrat. Carlos Dominguez is also pro-US and known as a technocrat. He was a deputy minister even during the Marcos regime and Japanese buyers of Philippine logs know that he is very corrupt. Jaime Ferrer, who is replacing

Aquilino Pimentel, is an old CIA asset and was closely connected with Colonel Lansdale and Magsaysay, who was Lansdale's puppet. So, these new appointments manifest an increase in the pro-US and reactionary character of the Aquino cabinet.

The character of the Aquino government will increasingly be exposed as pro-US and reactionary, as the broad masses of people continue to demand genuine and thoroughgoing land reform and the settlement of questions of national sovereignty, including the issue of the US military bases, extraordinary privileges of the transnational companies, International Monetary Fund and World Bank policy dictates on the Philippines, and so on.

These fundamental problems cannot be covered by any psywar build-up for Mrs. Aquino. She has to act on the fundamental problems because the crises of the ruling system and the economy are worsening without let-up. The revolutionary movement is bound to demand the fulfilment of the people's struggle for national liberation and democracy.

The Aquino government is likely to consider itself consolidated with the ratification of the new constitution on February 2 and especially with the holding of elections in May. But the Aquino government cannot rest content with being able to undertake certain processes within the ruling system and establishing the constitution through the electoral process.

The revolutionary movement through the National Democratic Front (NDF) has made the 60-day Ceasefire Agreement with the Aquino government. It might be said, for the time being, that a big gift has been practically given to the Aquino government, which is the big gainer in the Ceasefire Agreement. The only gain that can be claimed by the NDF is that it has been practically recognized as a co-equal of the Manila-based government. There is no surrender or submission by the revolutionary movement to the political authority of the Manila-based government. But aside from that, there is practically no more gain for the revolutionary movement.

The big gain of the Aquino government is that it is being assisted in consolidating itself. The military can continue its patrols and psywar operations, at least, in the countryside, without fearing any tactical offensives from the New People's Army. Units of the AFP can move around freely. This is what is bad about the ceasefire in place. A ceasefire in place prior to discussion and settlement of the substantive issues like land reform and the question of sovereignty, can be extended repeatedly and indefinitely. The hands of the revolutionary forces would be tied while the fundamental demands of the people are not being fulfilled, and so the revolutionary movement can become paralyzed.

It might appear as a gain that the NDF can set up offices in Manila. But that cannot be a gain. the Aquino government might even encourage the NDF to set up big offices. Why?

First, the NDF personnel would be placed under imperceptible or white-shadow surveillance and they would become tracers.

Second, the bigger the NDF offices are, the bigger the number of personnel and resources needed and the more would other aspects of the revolutionary movement be deprived of such personnel and resources.

It is very risky for the NDF to have offices in Manila. This is like putting the cart before the horse. Or in clearer terms it is like what the provisional revolutionary government of South Vietnam did not do; you know that the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam did not send the delegation to Saigon before signing the Treaty of Paris. The delegation was posted there while the Vietnamese revolutionary forces were ready to take the general offensive. The risks come not only from the AFP in general, but also from the most brutal elements of the military which are associated with the Marcos and Enrile factions. In other words, the NDF delegation will be very vulnerable. The NDF may be allowed to carry arms for security, but the possession of arms would be an occasion for provoking them. And really, there is always a higher capability that can be mastered by the mischievous military, anytime it chooses to do mischief. So, it is absolutely necessary for the NDF to be vigilant.

The NDF should also recognize that it has always been the policy of the Aquino government to disarm private armies, pseudo religious fanatical cults, and other criminal organizations. But it has failed and it is doubtful if the Aquino government can comply with its obligation to disband these paramilitary units.

The military can also be expected to continue violating the Ceasefire Agreement. They can use ordinary communications and food supplies as pretext for intensified patrols, psywar operations and other types of operations in the countryside. The most that they will do is to conduct surveillance and stock-up intelligence for future attacks. But I suppose the units of the AFP will also engage in armed attacks under the pretext of stopping taxation by the revolutionary forces; it can say it is within their lawful power, to use the expression in the Ceasefire

Agreement, to apprehend New People's Army (NPA) elements. I suppose every time there is a chance for the military to apprehend NPA suspects, they will do so.

To the credit of the NDF, there is a provision that anyone of the two contracting parties can withdraw anytime from the agreement.

Even under conditions of ceasefire there is no stopping the legal democratic movement from conducting mass campaigns, demanding genuine and thoroughgoing land reform and the resolution of questions of national sovereignty. The national democratic movement must avail themselves of the conditions of the ceasefire. The NPA troops may have to concentrate on politico-military training and mass work in order to make good use of the time involved in the ceasefire and should not take any kind of incentive to go to towns to parade themselves and be vulnerable to offers of whatever concessions from the enemy. They should learn from the disintegration of many units of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) as a result of the Tripoli Agreement.

All the revolutionary forces must be alert against the possibility of a surprise attack not only from the AFP in general but also from such bloodily mischievous factions as those of Marcos and Enrile. The NDF, in as much as it has been recognized as an equal of the government of the Republic of the Philippines either as co-belligerent or as an ally, must change the venue for negotiations of the substantive issues, because they are vulnerable in Manila. It would be a good idea if they explore the possibility of a non-aligned country serving as a mediator and provider of a new venue.

Whatever defects and adverse consequences the Tripoli Agreement between the MNLF and Marcos had, it must be recognized that even the Marcos government was willing to talk with the MNLF in a foreign land. There is no reason why the Aquino government should be tougher or more resistant to the idea of having talks on the substantive issues carried out in another neutral place.

It is necessary for the talks to be conducted elsewhere because for the NDF and all the other revolutionary forces to gain the status of belligerency, there should be one country serving as mediator and formalizing in the eyes of international law the status of belligerency that properly belongs to the revolutionary movement. The revolutionary movement would certainly be destroyed if this ceasefire in place prior to negotiations on the substantive issues is prolonged or extended repeatedly or indefinitely; the very thing that has made the NDF worthy of being an equal of the Manila-based government would be paralyzed or destroyed.

Some kind of damage has been inflicted already on the revolutionary movement in that it would be pictured as the troublemaker if it is the one unwilling to extend the ceasefire. The Aquino government and the AFP could choose to attack the revolutionary movement after the ratification of the new constitution. But they will not, if they are wiser, because without firing a shot, the movement can be weakened through the repeated extension of the ceasefire. You see, a guerrilla army that is already bound not to fight is subject to self-disintegration, with the troops asking for leaves of absence to visit with friends or relatives.

The NDF has been wise enough to include the provision, which is a very common provision in ceasefire agreements, that any of the two contracting parties can withdraw anytime, or can refuse to extend the agreement on the ground that the other party has made violations of the agreement or has failed to comply with its obligations in the agreement.

It is easy for some observers to see that the Aquino government has been receiving too many gifts from the revolutionary movement without any reciprocation. For instance, the position of "critical yes" has been given to the Aquino government. Now, you have this Ceasefire Agreement being given as the biggest gift, without any reciprocation more than the recognition of the NDF as an equal in a contract.

The revolutionary movement should have shown support to Mrs. Aquino through serious statements such as those issued soon after the murder of Rolando Olalia. Such statements of support also involve warnings to the Aquino government. The statements would roughly run this way: Mrs. Aquino, you better act decisively against the Marcos and Enrile factions which try to restore fascism. You must solve the murder of Rolando Olalia and act decisively against those who have killed him. Otherwise, you will come out merely as a sweet-smiling president of a ruling system whose military remains fascist. If you move decisively against the fascist factions, then you have our support. That is a fair statement.

You see, Mrs. Aquino has always been assured of support from the progressive forces against the worst of the pro-imperialists and reactionaries. Soon after the killing of Olalia, the gut reaction of the NDF was very correct because it suspended the talks indefinitely.

But the timing of the Ceasefire Agreement was such that the killing of Olalia seems to have been forgotten and the solution of the killing also seems to have been forgotten. And Mrs. Aquino was giving an ultimatum. This government which has not yet acted against the killers of Olalia would even be so arrogant as to issue an ultimatum. And before that ultimatum date of November 13 there was a Ceasefire Agreement. So, the NDF appeared frightened and obsequious.

Whatever the denials are, the objective facts show that there are certain things which should have delayed such an agreement.

Ceasefire, Constitution and Coup d'etat

**Interview conducted by Vivian de Lima in Hongkong
for *National Midweek*, January 21, 1987**

The current ceasefire agreement signed by the National Democratic Front (NDF) clearly denies the status of belligerency to the NDF now and in the future. Does this mean that the NDF itself accepts a status of being merely an insurgent force subject to the criminal laws of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP)?

The status of belligerency is not something that can be denied to or bestowed on the NDF by a mere scrap of paper. It is a status that has been earned through revolutionary struggle.

Long before Mrs. Aquino could rise to the presidency of the GRP, the revolutionary forces had been building the people's revolutionary government.

Does the people's revolutionary government really exist? Are you suggesting that the GRP-NDF agreements are merely preliminary to negotiations and agreements between the people's revolutionary government and GRP?

My answer is yes to both questions. the revolutionary movement has been establishing organs of political power since 1968. these organs of political power comprise the people's revolutionary government. Since 1971, there has been the constitution of the Provisional Revolutionary Government.

No solution to the fundamental problems of the people and no comprehensive agreement for lasting peace can be worked out if GRP insists on negotiating and making agreements with the NDF within the pro-imperialist and reactionary framework of GRP authority, constitution laws, institutions and processes.

I suppose that, in the eyes of the people's revolutionary government, GRP-NDF negotiations and agreements are at best preparatory to GRP-People's Revolutionary Government negotiations and agreements; and for GRP-NDF agreements to have some effect would be a matter of people's revolutionary government tolerance.

It is obvious that the thrust of the GRP position is to deny to the revolutionary movement the status of belligerency and to dismantle the New People's Army (NPA) in exchange for the legalization of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), general amnesty and rehabilitation measures. What can the NDF and the people's revolutionary government do?

It is an undeniable fact that the people's revolutionary government has millions of people and large areas under its governance, commands a powerful people's army and exercises comprehensively the functions of government.

In facing up to GRP, NDF can insist on the solution of such fundamental problems of the people as US domination and feudal exploitation. If GRP keeps on sidetracking the fundamental issues, NDF can stop negotiating with GRP, and it would be justified in so doing with the full support and understanding of the people.

On its part, the revolutionary forces and the entire people will have to change the balance of forces until GRP sees the necessity of negotiating with PRG itself. I suppose it is absolutely clear to everyone that the revolutionary armed struggle will not cease until the revolutionary cause of the people—which is national and social liberation—is achieved.

The revolutionaries are in the revolutionary movement to realize a cause far larger than any concession that may be offered by GRP. In this light, CPP legalization, general amnesty and rehabilitation measures for surrenderers are candies for small kids.

If the NDF is a mere insurgent force and without a status of belligerency, can it ever hope to make an agreement of lasting peace with GRP, involving the solution of fundamental social problems, and effect a coalition government to ensure the implementation of the agreement?

There is no hope. By insisting on reducing NDF to a mere insurgent force, GRP can even ignore completely the fundamental issues or break off further negotiations. However, aside from demanding the dissolution of the NPA, GRP may also choose to go through the motion of discussing fundamental issues just to be able repeatedly or indefinitely to extend the ceasefire, place the NPA at a political and military disadvantage and use exposed facilities and personnel of the NDF involved in the negotiations as unwitting tracers for the AFP intelligence services to track down underground personnel and organs of the revolutionary movement.

Let us assume that GRP and NDF go as far as reaching a comprehensive agreement regarding the fundamental

problems. The set of solutions agreed upon will not amount to anything but mere promises by the GRP president, subject to Congress and its processes. for instance, a land reform program agreed upon will be subject to mutilation and negation by a big comprador-landlord Congress.

The kind of coalition that GRP can offer—and only as a possibility—is one in which the CPP surfaces as a legal party, fields candidates in elections and works out an alliance within and outside the reactionary legislature. In other words, what GRP would want to achieve is a legal CPP working within the reactionary framework of exploitative and oppressive laws and institutions. this kind of coalition is different from one between the people's revolutionary government and GRP; and it would override the conflicting political authority of both.

The plebiscite on the new draft constitution will soon be held. what do you think should be the position of the illegal and legal forces of the national democratic movement?

The national democratic movement should wage an educational campaign all the way, explaining to the people the positive and negative aspects of the draft constitution. You see, this draft is a basket of good and rotten apples.

It contains nice big words about the formal democratic rights of the individual in the abstract (*i.e.*, it is blind to the reality of exploiting and exploited classes.). but there is absolutely no provision which eliminates or drastically reduces foreign and feudal oppression and exploitation.

There is no obligation on the part of the national democratic movement to categorically say "yes" or "no" to the draft constitution. In the first place, the people, especially the working class and the peasantry, had nothing to do with the formation of the Con-Con (Constitutional Commission) and the making of this draft.

The revolutionary forces, which have their own constitution and program of government, would, I suppose, be unwilling to endorse the Aquino constitution. there may be certain individuals and organizations in the broad national democratic movement opting for a critical yes. Their position may be tolerated by the more progressive forces. but still the best position is to conduct the educational campaign all the way, beyond the plebiscite.

But there are indications that the overwhelming majority of the people will go to the polls; and that the constitution will be ratified by most of them.

Will the national democratic movement not be isolated?

By conducting an educational campaign, the national democratic movement cannot be isolated and avoids being damned for endorsing a liberal yet pro-imperialist and reactionary document. The movement can simply seek to raise the people's level of political consciousness and expand the advanced section of the people. This advanced section and the middle section which tends to take the critical yes position make up the majority of the people.

The US and local reactionaries may also say that the middle and backward sections of the people comprise the majority of the people. But they are divided into *yes* and *no* blocs. The backward section will tend to take the *no* position in response to the calls of the Marcos and Enrile factions.

The plebiscite is a passing thing. the fatal flaws of the Aquino constitution are permanent. A pro-imperialist and reactionary, though not outrightly fascist, document cannot solve the ever worsening economic and political crisis of the ruling system.

In the forthcoming plebiscite, the people are not actually making a choice between a constitution that suits their fundamental interests and a constitution that suits the reactionary and exploitative interest of the big compradors and landlords. they are simply being asked to vote *yes* or *no* to a big comprador-landlord constitution. and the middle and backward sections of the people are vulnerable to the economic, political and cultural influence of the competing factions of the same exploiting classes.

The revolutionary movement has its own way of concentrating the sovereign will and best interests of the people. It is by waging a people's war. It is not by counting the votes in elections, plebiscites and opinion polls which are controlled and manipulated by the exploiting classes; but by building the revolutionary party, people's army, organs of political power, mass organizations and the united front despite the odds posed by the oppressors' control and use of the economy, the coercive and persuasive apparatuses of the state, the schools and the mass media.

In your view, were there real coup attempts against the Aquino government? What have been the consequences of these will-publicized coup attempts?

I do not think there were real or serious coup attempts. No one among the supposed plotters has been

arrested. There was merely a US-inspired shake-down of the Aquino regime. Enrile was used to the limit in compelling President Aquino to reduce the number of nationalists and liberal democrats in her cabinet.

There are indications that, as early as November 10, there had already been a compromise arranged by the US for Enrile to resign in exchange for the resignation of all other cabinet members, allowing Mrs. Aquino to throw out certain elements (except Maceda) disliked by the US

The key cabinet posts (defense and economic) have always been held by rabid pro-US and reactionary elements. But the US wants a thoroughly pro-US and reactionary cabinet to firm up the resolve of the executive to extend in 1988 the US military bases beyond 1991 and to do every bidding of the US

In exchange for willingness to serve US interests, President Aquino is now assured of full US support. The ruling clique is now in the process of rapid consolidation as a US-Aquino clique. This has been signaled by the appointment of General Rafael Iletto to the position of defense minister. He is simultaneously a pro-US and a pro-Aquino man.

General Ramos momentarily appears to have become even stronger than Enrile ever was. But he will be an easy pushover once the Aquino constitution is ratified. He is vulnerable to the charge of overstaying in the military and can be easily shunted to some other position eventually.

Are you saying that President Aquino is going to have a stable government?

In the short term, a US-Aquino ruling clique is being consolidated, especially vis-à-vis other reactionary factions. But in the medium term (two to three years), the coup threat will become real and imminent if the fundamental problems of the people are not solved and social crisis continues to worsen.

A military faction will try to ride to power on the issue of corruption, which has already begun to afflict the regime, as well as on the issue of the regime's failure to quell the revolutionary movement.

It would take only one year for the Aquino regime to rot and stink, because it keeps itself within the parameters of foreign and feudal domination; and no matter how tricky or brutal the Aquino presidency and the military may be in fighting the revolutionary movement, the ever worsening economic and political crisis will continue to provide the fertile ground for armed revolution.

It was widely talked about in October and November that you were a primary target of a military clique. Were you aware that there was a serious threat to your life?

It was during the third week of October when I learned that there was a threat to my life. I was then in Manila to get my visa to Japan. leaks from military cliques had been verified and collated. The scheme was ostensibly to launch a coup, involving a surgical operation against progressive leaders and so-called leftists in the Aquino cabinet and converting President Aquino into a figurehead.

I could see that progressive leaders were vulnerable and that the military plotters had already started the bombing incidents. But I did not take the threat to my life then as seriously as when the bombing incidents were already harming people and Victor Corpus had been presented by the military to slander me. Of course, the threat would become even more serious immediately after the brutal assassination of Lando Olalia.

But the people rose up to give Lando the greatest funeral honors ever given to a proletarian and revolutionary martyr in the entire history of the country and to condemn the US and the fascists who are still scot-free. More people have become convinced that there are more forms of struggle than one to combat the enemy and carry out social revolution.

What are the implications of Olalia's assassination? How will this affect the plan and chances of Partido ng Bayan in the forthcoming elections?

The scheme of the US is to restore a system of two parties controlled by factions of the same big comprador-landlord classes subservient to the US and to marginalize the Partido ng Bayan through a campaign of slander and through terror tactics.

The US wants to make sure that all its dictates, especially the extension of the US military bases beyond 1991, are carried out by a subservient government. CIA and DIA operatives have orchestrated the campaign of slander and terror tactics against Partido ng Bayan.

But the national and democratic movement, including Partido ng Bayan, has gained a lot of experience and strength in the course of struggle against a blatant rule of terror—the US-instigated Marcos fascist dictatorship. Partido ng Bayan cannot be daunted because the assassination of Lando Olalia has served only to expand the ranks of those determined to carry out social revolution.

There are organizations whose task is to carry out the armed revolution. But Partido ng Bayan is determined to conduct legal struggle. Despite tremendous odds, it can win a significant portion of the local executive and legislative seats in the forthcoming elections.

Whether the reactionaries have only two or six major parties, they will be bitterly divided against themselves. They cannot solve the ever-worsening economic crisis and cannot find a way of reversing the trend toward violent conflicts among themselves.

A Response to Mrs. Aquino's Declaration of Truce

September 14, 1990

This statement is in response to Mrs. Aquino's declaration of truce of suspension of the offensive military operations of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in earthquake-devastated areas, including Metro Manila, Baguio and three Northern Luzon provinces.

The entire people know that the National Democratic Front (NDF) was ahead of the Aquino government in declaring such a truce. As early as July, soon after the earthquake, the NDF unilaterally declared ceasefire in quake-devastated areas and called on all its forces to aid the victims and the people.

In my personal opinion, truce on humanitarian grounds in specific areas and for a specific period of time is permissible and can be on of the items in the agenda of possible talks.

The central authorities of the two contending parties, the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front must discuss and agree on such matters as the specific areas and duration of the truce and the question of access of humanitarian personnel to the specific areas.

The GRP and the so-called peace advocates are advised that, in the course of the truce or suspension of armed hostilities, there should be no scheme to dislodge or alienate the National Democratic Front or any of its component organizations from the people in any specific area.

On the Question of Peace Talks

October 4, 1990

I am pleased and honored to have been consulted by Rep. Jose V. Yap, Chairman of the National Defense Committee of the Philippine House of Representatives and representative of President Corazon C. Aquino's home district, before he had conversations with the official representative of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDF), Luis Jalandoni, Vice Chairman for International Affairs, regarding the possibility of bilateral peace talks between the NDF and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) on September 27 and 29 in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

I welcomed the initiative of Rep. Yap, expressed support for the idea of bilateral peace talks between NDF and GRP and agreed to be a resource person or consultant in the peace process. It is my patriotic duty and progressive commitment to be of service in a process of working for a just and lasting peace in the Philippines.

I believe that the bilateral peace talks between GRP and NDF can be easily opened as President Aquino takes certain steps to create a favorable atmosphere for dialogue. These steps are in accordance with national sovereignty and democracy and are her executive prerogative and responsibility to take.

The NDF has not set any substantive preconditions which are beneficial or costly solely to any side. The substantive issues can be taken up in the formal talks, during which each side is able to present fully its views and proposals before any agreement can be reached. Before the formal talks, procedural matters can be agreed upon on a mutually satisfactory basis.

I presume that the NDF will seek to discuss the roots of the armed conflict even if an agreement concerning mutual respect for human rights and the humanitarian norms of war is to be realized first before a comprehensive agreement for a just and enduring peace can be attained.

The bilateral talks between GRP and NDF can be in harmony with the multilateral discussions being promoted and undertaken by various patriotic and progressive forces interested in peace. Such multilateral discussions can serve to clarify what substantive issues ought to be taken up and settled in order to achieve a liberating, just and lasting peace.

These discussions can exert a positive moral influence on the GRP-NDFP bilateral talks and can help bring about a national consensus and a broad unity to effect the solution of the national and social problems which have caused the civil strife. Therefore, I welcome these discussions so long as these are directed towards the attainment of peace based on justice.

The GRP and its supporters should not be obsessed with schemes of pacifying the revolutionary forces and the people. Rather than the pacification of the oppressed and exploited by the oppressors and exploiters, a just and lasting peace should be achieved in accordance with the national and democratic rights and interests of the entire Filipino people.

to the Question of Peace

May 10, 1991

A just and lasting peace is possible only if the Filipino people's demand for national liberation and democracy is satisfied. It is the outcome of the people's revolutionary struggle. It goes without saying that the national democratic revolution is at once the struggle for a just and lasting peace. The strategic line of this revolution which is to complete the struggle for national liberation and democracy, is the same strategic line that the NDF has to pursue in seeking a just and lasting peace.

There can be no other strategic line. To say that the NDF does not have such a line in seeking peace negotiations is to suggest another line or to confuse the line. To engage in peace negotiations, without addressing the roots of the armed conflict and without seeking substantial satisfaction of the people's demands for national liberation and democracy, is to create confusion and even fall into capitulation.

Peace negotiations may be conducted before the total victory of the national democratic revolution. If the success of these involves the truce agreement of the two contending sides in the civil war, for the purpose of uniting against a common foe or against a certain set of problems, there is a mutual adjustment of policies. But the NDF is not obliged to give up its firm revolutionary principles. Neither can GRP be expected to change its counterrevolutionary principles.

Peace negotiations constitute only one of the forms of struggle in the overall struggle for a just and lasting peace. They may arise only because in the first place there is an armed conflict to settle. They reflect and yet interact with the balance of strength in the battlefield. To obscure or to underrate the relationship of the battlefield to the negotiating table is to fly into fantasy, unless the "realistic" objective is to capitulate.

Peace negotiations do not always necessarily arise between the two sides in a civil war. That they may arise depends on the strength and willingness of the two warring sides and on the concrete situation. An incumbent state power can refuse to negotiate peace because it thinks it can beat the opposite side in the battlefield. However, it is always willing to negotiate if the other side wishes to capitulate or can be tricked into capitulation. It can also use peace rhetoric in order to misrepresent itself as the just and reasonable side, split the ranks of the armed opposition and mislead the people.

It is known in history that quite a number of regimes have refused to negotiate seriously even when they are desperate or when they are about to be defeated. Even in such a case, the revolutionary movement must show that its position is just and reasonable, that it seeks a just and lasting peace, in order to gain more popular support at home and abroad and to isolate and defeat the side that stands for the violence of an oppressive and exploitative system.

Before undertaking peace negotiations, it is necessary for the Philippine revolutionary movement to study both the relevant historical experience and found understanding struggle for a just and The Philippines has a deep and rich experience with regard to various types of armed conflict and peace negotiations. It is useful to review this experience and learn from it. We can only point to the most significant and relevant historical events.

Peace negotiations in Philippine history

In precolonial times, the disparate communities in the Philippines engaged in trade and cultural interaction as well as in wars. Wars were settled either through the victory of one side and the defeat of the other or were negotiated through the mediation of a third party in the course of war or in its aftermath.

The peace process of the precolonial past can still be observed in certain areas which are not tightly integrated into the social and legal system dominant in the country. The revolutionary movement has understood this kind of peace process in the hinterlands and has often acted as the third party to assist in the peacemaking between conflicting communities and unite them against the Manila-based and local forces of oppression and exploitation.

For instance, in the mountain provinces of Northern Luzon, the tradition of the bodong (peace pact) has been adopted by the revolutionary forces to settle tribal or communal armed conflicts and has acquired a national and democratic orientation.

Pacification by Spanish colonialism

In the conquest of the Philippines, the Spanish colonialists used the divide-and-rule policy. They engaged in blood compacts and alliances wherever they could, and pacified one community in order to conscript troops to augment the few foreign troops needed to conquer and subjugate another community.

In the conduct of pacification, the Spanish colonial troops used armed force or threatened the use of it in order to suppress or discourage the resistance of the natives. The Spanish priests had the special function of persuading the natives that it was better to submit to than to resist colonial rule.

The sword-and-cross combination worked effectively while the native indios were still lacking in national consciousness. The Moros, the Igorots and other tribes could resist longer because of definite factors which favored resistance, like Islam as the rallying point of the Moros and the spontaneous tendency of the Igorots to unite against the uninvited foreigners and lowlanders and use their mountainous terrain to their advantage. The Sulu sultanate accepted Spanish colonial garrisons only in the middle of the nineteenth century. Some Igorot communities were subjugated only in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The concept of local dialogues and community-based peace espoused by General Fidel Ramos through his peace and order councils or by the Coalition for Peace under the slogan of “zones of peace and zones of life” harks back to the pacification of the Philippine islands by Spanish colonialism. The colonial use of this concept of pacification is a much earlier tactic than the tactics of denying the armed revolutionary movement of its mass base in the US conquest of the Philippines and the use of “strategic hamlets” in the Vietnam war.

In the course of the protracted war between the Spaniards and the Moros through the centuries, there were interludes of peace negotiations and truce agreements. The Moros had the strength and dignity of being able to go into these because of their determined armed resistance. They were always ready to fight against the threat of total conquest.

The Pact of Biak-na-bato

Following the outbreak of the Philippine Revolution of 1896, the Spanish colonialists used both armed force and peace negotiations to end the Aguinaldo-led armed resistance of the Filipino people. As a result of the efforts of Pedro Paterno as intermediary, the first negotiations between the colonial power and the Philippine armed revolution led to the capitulation and exile of Aguinaldo and other leaders of the revolution under the Pact of Biak-na-bato in 1897.

In resuming the armed revolution against Spanish colonial power, the Filipino revolutionaries engaged in negotiations and cooperation with the United States. Subsequently, the US negotiated them out of advantageous positions in the siege of Intramuros and secretly negotiated with Spain the surrender of the Spanish forces to the US. Eventually, the Treaty of Paris of December 10, 1898, was forged strictly between the US and Spain.

In the course of the Filipino-American War, which started in early 1899, the US offered “peace” and “benevolent assimilation” to the Philippine revolutionary government. The “peace” offer induced a split within the Cabinet of the Philippine revolutionary government, resulting in the replacement of the Mabini Cabinet by the Paterno Cabinet and ultimately in the assassination of General Antonio Luna, the commanding general of the revolutionary army.

In conquering the Philippines and imposing its colonial rule on the people, the US combined the use of superior military force to crush the armed revolutionary forces and localized “peace” dialogues and agreements (with the assistance of the reactionary clergy) to recruit the local gentry into the service of US domination. The localized “peace” dialogues and agreements were always crowned with local elections dominated by the local gentry.

While it was preoccupied with quelling the revolutionary forces in Luzon, the US went so far as to make a peace agreement, the Kiram-Bates Agreement of 1899, with the Sulu sultanate. After Luzon and Visayas were in the main pacified, it was the turn of the Moro people to be brutally conquered.

Upon the intercession of Dr. Dominador Gomez, Macario Sakay of the Filipino Republic placed himself and his forces in the hands of US colonial authorities in 1906 after an informal peace agreement. After a brief period of being feted and escorted by enemy troops, Sakay and his colleagues were tried and punished for “banditry.”

The Neocolonial Compromise

In Philippine history so far, the most successful negotiations regarding the fate of the entire Philippines have been those between the US government and the puppet legislative officials from the Nacionalista Party on the subject of changing the colonial status of the Philippines to a semi-colonial or neocolonial one. Thus, in 1935, the

Philippine Constitution and the transitional Commonwealth government and in 1946 the proclamation of nominal independence became possible.

To make the neocolonial compromise, the Nacionalista Party did not have to lead a people's army and conduct a people's war. Nationalist rhetoric, peaceful campaigns and missions to Washington looked sufficient. But in fact, the US took into account the revolutionary history and potential of the Filipino people and mass agitation for independence as well as the conditions of social unrest in the Philippines, in the US and in the world at large due to the great depression, the rise of fascist regimes and the need for an anti-fascist popular front in the thirties.

What important for the colonialists, in agreeing to a neocolonial compromise, is that they retain their property rights and control of security forces even as national administration is handed over to the natives.

It was in the latter half of the thirties that President Quezon informally negotiated with Crisanto Evangelista and other detained leaders of the Communist Party for the legalization of the CPP and cooperation in a “program of social justice” and in the anti-fascist struggle. With no objection from the US authorities, the representative of the Communist Party of the USA prodded Quezon to release the imprisoned CPP leaders in 1936.

Towards the outbreak of World War II, the merger party of the Communist Party and Socialist Party pledged its loyalty to the Commonwealth government and pleaded for the arming of the people against the imminent threat of Japanese invasion. The puppet government refused.

The Japanese “peace” offer

In imposing its rule on the Philippines from 1942 onward the Japanese fascist negotiated “peace” with all the available pre-war pro-US officials to shift their loyalty to Japan. If the pro-US officials were not available for one reason or another, the new foreign rulers recruited their own political puppets from the local exploiting classes.

After the arrest of the principal leaders of the CP-SP merger party in early 1942, the Japanese fascists sent out Guillermo Capadocia from prison to contact the other CP-SP merger party leaders for peace negotiations on the condition that his failure to return before the deadline would mean the execution of the imprisoned party chairman Crisanto Evangelista and the general secretary of the party Pedro Abad Santos.

Capadocia was arrested by the Manila-Rizal command of the Hukbalahap and was tried and subjected to disciplinary action by the CP-SP merger party for agreeing to be the messenger of the Japanese fascists. His failure to return to prison sealed the martyrdom of Evangelista and Abad Santos.

In the course of the resistance against Japan, the CP-SP merger party was able to build a people's army, the Hukbalahap. But even before the landing of the US troops in late 1944, the CP-SP merger party decided to opt for parliamentary struggle and to convert the Hukbalahap into a veterans' organization. This domestic political line would be reinforced by the international line of peace and democracy proclaimed by the Soviet Union and the international communist movement.

Once more Pax Americana

In reconquering the Philippines in 1945, the US reinstalled its pre-war officials or set up provisional officials wherever the former were no longer available. It put into prison local officials installed by the revolutionary forces in Central Luzon.

Informally, Sergio Osmeña, the last president of the Commonwealth, accommodated the CP-SP merger party in the arena of parliamentary struggle and agreed to the alliance of his Nacionalista Party and the Democratic Alliance in 1946 elections, notwithstanding the bloody actions already being undertaken by US and local reactionaries against the Hukbalahap and the progressive movement.

After his electoral victory, Manuel Roxas as first president of the puppet republic was able to extract from the right opportunist leadership of the CP-SP merger party a commitment to surrender Hukbalahap arms and register Hukbalahap fighters. But the massive anti-communist campaign of terror against the people and the people's army continued and the members of the Democratic Alliance elected to Congress were unseated in order to pave the way for the legislative approval of the Parity Amendment and other unequal agreements between the US and the Philippines. Nevertheless, through various devices, the merger party continued to plead for peace negotiations and forward peace proposals to the reactionary government.

The Quirino-Taruc peace agreement

Under President Elpidio Quirino in 1948, the reactionary government showed interest in negotiating with the revolutionary movement. The main negotiator of the government was Judge Antonio Quirino, brother of the President. With the approval of the leadership of the CP-SP merger party but without correct and clear explanations to the rank and file of the revolutionary mass movement, the commander of the Hukbalahap Luis Taruc engaged in peace negotiations in Hukbalahap territory with the Quirino government. An agreement was made on amnesty, surrender of arms and renewed registration of Hukbalahap fighters and reinstatement in Congress of the ousted congressmen from the Democratic Alliance.

The objectives of the CP-SP leadership in allowing Taruc to do what he did were to make propaganda and to try the road of parliamentary struggle. Undermining the stand and will of the revolutionary forces, Taruc and his kind put themselves above the armed conflict and premised the desire for peace on the claim that the people were tired of war and its costs.

The CP-SP merger party also presented in 1948 to the Committee on Un-Filipino Activities of the Philippine House of Representatives a memorandum reiterating support to the Constitution of the reactionary government and declaring that the new democratic revolution would have a capitalist basis.

While the amnesty agreement was in effect, the troops and secret agents of the Philippine Constabulary could mingle with the fighters of the Hukbalahap and enjoyed safe conduct in the Huk-controlled barrios of Central Luzon. Large numbers of cadres of the underground became exposed as they surfaced and facilitated the surrender of arms and the registration of Hukbalahap fighters.

After a short period of only two months, the amnesty agreement was broken as the Philippine military started

to kill leaders of the revolutionary movement. Among those killed was the principal leader of the peasant movement, Juan Feleo who was under the constant escort and surveillance by the Philippine Constabulary. The demonstrated bad faith of the Quirino regime and its US master was a powerful motive for the declaration of all-out armed struggle by the CP-SP merger party in 1950.

Localized “peace” approaches

Even after the failure of the Quirino-Taruc amnesty and truce agreement, Filipino assets of the US Central Intelligence Agency like Manuel Manahan and Colonel Osmundo Mondoñedo (who belonged to the outfit of Colonel Edward Lansdale) systematically approached local revolutionary leaders and local commanders of the Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan (name of Hukbalahap adopted in 1950) to offer localized peace and personal concessions to their family members, including jobs and scholarships for their children.

Because the role of Taruc in negotiating with the Quirino regime was never correctly and properly explained to them, field commanders of the HMB and local leaders of the revolutionary movement were susceptible to approaches by enemy agents masquerading as men of peace and goodwill. A number of them made separate deals from a narrow localist or even personal viewpoint.

The main reason for the defeat of the armed revolutionary movement in the early fifties was the Left opportunist or adventurist line of quick military victory in two years’ time, exaggerating the spontaneous character of the masses due to the social crisis and not paying attention to the balance of forces and the need for painstaking mass work to lay the ground for social revolution and to counteract the military superiority of the enemy forces. But the deceptive “peace” approaches to local leaders of the revolutionary movement by US and reactionary agents augmented and complemented the heavy military onslaughts of the blatant enemy in the entire strategy to defeat the revolutionary forces.

After the crushing defeat of the armed revolutionary movement, no basis whatsoever was left for any kind of peace negotiations for a long time. In 1957, the Garcia regime enacted the Anti-Subversion Law (drafted during the earlier Magsaysay regime by the American Jesuit priest Father Weiss and the US embassy political officers), which gave the ultimatum to leaders of the Communist Party and related organizations to surrender and seek amnesty within six months or else face the death penalty.

Peace through revolutionary struggle

With regard to the Communist Party of the Philippines, reestablished in 1968, the Marcos regime never saw the need to go through the motion of seeking peace negotiations with it. Instead, the regime always tried to destroy it outright. What the regime found more appropriate was to secure the formal surrender of the Lava revisionist group in 1974 and to give it paltry concessions in the vain hope of using it for intelligence and propaganda purposes against the Communist Party of the Philippines, New People's Army and the National Democratic Front.

Since the beginning, the Communist Party of the Philippines has always regarded its program for a people's democratic revolution as the strategic line and political basis for a just and lasting peace. Despite the all-out determination of the Marcos regime to destroy the armed revolutionary movement, which Marcos had pointed to as the principal reason for declaring martial law in 1972, the CPP in its sixth anniversary statement in 1974 declared that there could be a truce if the regime was willing to come to a mutually satisfactory agreement sufficiently beneficial to the people in terms of national independence and democracy. At the same time, so as not to confuse its own ranks, the CPP described the possibility as a remote one.

As it has proceeded from the very beginning, the armed revolutionary movement has always championed and promoted a just peace, especially wherever it and the people can exercise revolutionary power and can therefore undertake campaigns of social benefit. The armed propaganda teams and other units of the people's army have always espoused and helped build a social life that is productive and just and that is peaceful, quiet and tranquil against the depredations of the ruling system and the bad elements in local communities.

The armed revolutionary movement led by the Communist Party of the Philippines builds people's democratic power in the rural areas even as reactionary state power is still entrenched in the cities. Such a democratic power defends the people, enables them to make the all-round progress that is possible and fights for a just peace. Such a power rejects the very idea that a just peace consists of laying down the arms of the people and seeking accommodation in the violent ruling system of oppression and exploitation.

The local units and leaders of the revolutionary movement have had a long experience in effecting peace and working relationships with allies since the beginning of the revolutionary movement. These have not involved the

movement giving up people and territory to GRP authority under any guise.

There is certainly a qualitative difference between the peace instituted in localities by the people's organs of democratic power and the "community-based peace" which GRP and the Rightwing advocates of pacification are pushing in order to remove the revolutionary forces from localities and put the people under the sway of their oppressors and exploiters.

The Tripoli agreement

The most conspicuous peace negotiations carried out by the Marcos regime were with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in Tripoli, Libya in 1976. The Manila-based regime was compelled to negotiate with the MNLF and to negotiate abroad because the latter was waging an armed struggle of such a magnitude as to tie down in Moro land one third of the total combat strength of the Armed Forces of the Philippines at that time. The Libyan government acted as the third party.

There was a give-and-take in the Tripoli Agreement. In the first provision of this agreement, the MNLF submitted to the principle that the Moro question was within the framework of Philippine national sovereignty and territorial integrity. At the same time, the MNLF gained recognition for its status of belligerency, especially among the Islamic states.

The biggest practical gain made by the Marcos regime was in inducing the highest MNLF officials, local MNLF commanders and units to expose themselves in displays of strength before the eyes of the AFP during prolonged ceasefire. Consequently, the political agents of Marcos were able to offer material concessions to specific MNLF officials and commanders and their families and persuade them to leave the MNLF. Since the Tripoli Agreement, the MNLF has been weakened by breakaways and desertions.

Marcos peace overtures

The first significant instance that the Marcos regime brought up the subject of peace negotiations with the Philippine armed revolutionary movement was when Marcos did so with this writer when he was presented as a captive on November 10, 1977. He told this writer that armed struggle was passe and that national unity and reconciliation could be negotiated and agreed upon between the regime and the revolutionary movement.

Conscious of the bad example of Aguinaldo in issuing a capitulationist statement to the revolutionary forces and the people, after his capture by the US army at the beginning of the century, this writer replied to Marcos that he was no longer in a position to represent the revolutionary movement upon his capture and that the automatic loss of position upon capture by the enemy is a protection of the movement against the bad example of Aguinaldo.

But this writer also told Marcos that the latter could always get in touch with him about anything beneficial to the people like he did with his captive Senator Benigno Aquino; and reminded him of historical examples of the highest authorities talking with a political prisoner, like Quezon with Crisanto Evangelista in 1935 and 1936; Sukarno with D.N. Aidit in 1951; and Khan with Bhutto in the early 1970s. This writer also reminded him of the French consulting with Ben Bella and the British with Jomo Kenyatta in prison. However, it was absolutely clear that it was the active leaders of the revolutionary movement who made the decision on the question of war and peace.

Notwithstanding the physical torture this writer was put through from November 13 to 18, 1977 and his being shackled to a cot in solitary confinement, a series of Marcos emissaries from the military came to his isolation cell from late November 1977 onwards, to discuss the possibility of peace negotiations and, of course, to try also to fish for information. The very first of them was a ranking security consultant of Marcos, a supposedly retired military officer, who had been most instrumental in the surrender agreement between the Marcos regime and the Lava group. He never returned but the second emissary, also a senior military officer, was the one most persistent.

The premises of the emissaries were constant: there could be a peace agreement, in fact an agreement of surrender, if the revolutionary armed movement renounced violence and surrendered its arms. The premises of this writer were also constant: the movement might be willing to consider agreeing to a truce if there were basic anti-imperialist and democratic reforms.

When Marcos announced the elections for the Interim Batasang Pambansa in February 1978, the second emissary came to the cell of this writer to offer his removal from solitary confinement and his chains in exchange for a public statement endorsing the elections and expressing an intention to run as candidate for a seat in the sham

parliament. The example of Benigno Aquino and other political detainees were cited. But this writer refused.

Conference of detainees

The emissary made the rounds of the principal political prisoners, including Bernabe Buscayno, Jose Luneta, Satur Ocampo and this writer in 1978. Came November 1978, they were allowed to confer. All of them understood that they were in no position to negotiate with the regime, that they were only being consulted by the enemy and that, if Ocampo and Luneta had been given temporary release, they would be able to communicate to the movement what the regime wished to communicate.

Valuable knowledge and experience were gained by talking to the emissaries of Marcos from 1977 onwards. The strategy and tactics of those in power in talking about peace were clear and sharpened the sense of those political detainees approached of what could be the strategy and tactics of the movement. There is a lot of difference between the reading of the history of the Philippines and other countries on the one hand and actually conversing with reactionaries who talk "peace" on the other hand.

In all discussions with the "peace" emissary of Marcos, the aforementioned political detainees held the moral high ground in expressing their opinions which can be distilled in the following manner:

The free and active leaders of the revolutionary movement make the decisions. There can be no giving up of revolutionary principles. There can only be a mutual adjustment of policies to achieve a truce and not the Capitulation of any side. But the constant principled point is to satisfy the people's demands for national liberation and democracy. Following the precedent of talks between the Philippine government and the MNLF in Tripoli, Libya, the venue of peace negotiations should be abroad.

Somehow, one of the political detainees was able to have a comprehensive exchange of information and ideas with the active leadership of the revolutionary movement about the approaches of the regime. For the first time in the history of the reestablished CPI', there was a serious effort to consider and clarify under what terms the movement could negotiate with its enemy. The movement ultimately decided that it was not yet time to engage in any kind of negotiations for a number of good reasons.

Calls for peace

In the eighties, before the assassination of Benigno Aquino, former president Diosdado Macapagal, Lorenzo M. Tanada, Jose Diokno and this writer issued public statements proposing at various instances a peaceful settlement of the armed conflict, but always with the big IF, if the people's national and democratic interests were to be served. The statements were in accordance with the national and democratic interests of the people and were correctly done more to expose the anti-national and anti-democratic character of the regime than anything else in view of the regime's own objective of seeking the Capitulation of the opposition forces.

After the assassination of Benigno Aquino and the rise of popular outrage against the fascist regime, no one of national significance could seriously entertain the idea of reconciliation and unity with the forces of Marcos. By then, Marcos was completely hemmed in by the popular outrage, the US pressures and other factors which converged on him.

The kind of peace proposals being made by various leaders opposed to the Marcos regime was meant to broaden and strengthen the united front against the fascist regime and to be realized after the fall of Marcos.

It was in this spirit that Aquino supporters made contacts and cooperated with the progressive underground and aboveground organizations and the widow Corazon Aquino visited political prisoners in Bicutan to make a dramatic expression of support for them. She advocated their release and ceasefire with the armed revolutionary movement upon the end of the fascist regime.

Through public statements, the revolutionary movement and this writer, in his personal capacity, encouraged the idea of a broad united front of democratic forces to overthrow the fascist regime, satisfy the people's demands for national freedom and democracy and thereby to work for a just and lasting peace. In her campaign speeches in 1986, Aquino pledged to release all political prisoners and to negotiate a ceasefire with the revolutionary movement.

II. GRP-NDF peace talks during the Aquino regime

In her speech at the graduation exercises of the University of the Philippines in March 1986, President Corazon Aquino expressed her desire for a ceasefire and negotiations towards it.

The formation of the National Reconciliation Commission was announced in a newspaper report. Chairmanship of the commission was reportedly offered to and refused by Lorenzo M. Tañada. It was also trial-ballooned in the press that the job was going to be offered to this writer. But he was never formally approached and he never had the chance to refuse it on the ground of propriety.

At any rate, the Jesuits, especially Fr. Bienvenido Nebres, and Defense undersecretary General Rafael Ileto tried to push the formation of the National Reconciliation Commission and undertook a series of consultations with Bemabe Buscayno, former commander-in-chief of the New People's Army, from April to June 1986.

But it would be the feelers of the Aquino regime through Executive Secretary Joker Arroyo and the late Jose W. Diokno, chairman of the Philippine human rights committee, that would be seriously entertained by the revolutionary movement.

NDF as peace negotiator

General Ramos kept on insisting that the Communist Party of the Philippines should be the one to face the Government of the Republic of the Philippines in negotiations. But the decision in the revolutionary movement was that it should be the National Democratic Front. It was made clear that all member-organizations of the NDF, including the CPP and NPA, could sign the authorization for the NDF to negotiate and make agreements.

In early June 1986, at the Singapore seminar on Philippine trends sponsored by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, this writer essayed to make a comprehensive estimate of the CPP's view on a possible peace process and related matters. As in previous speeches and press interviews in Manila, he made clear that there could be a just and lasting peace only if the basic demands of the people for national liberation and democracy were to be substantially met; and that if GRP really desired a ceasefire all that it had to do was to end the strategic offensive of the AFP, pull back the troops to the barracks, disband the paramilitary forces and put the police under the local executive officials who were appointees of the new regime.

Also in June, GRP and NDF announced that they would form their negotiating panels. GRP stated that no representative of the military would sit in its panel, although this panel would consult with the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

NDF peace framework

In July 1986, the leaders of the revolutionary movement were able to fully discuss and formulate its framework for peace negotiations; and to appoint the members of the negotiating panel and related personnel. The framework included the principles guiding the NDF negotiating panel; the agenda consisting of exchange of views on the experience of the Filipino people since 1972, the issues of democracy and national sovereignty, the question of temporary ceasefire, and the terms and methods for realizing the truce; the safety and immunity guarantees; the time scale of negotiations, the alternate venues, the procedures and technical requirements of the talks and other related matters.

The following basic decisions were made: 1) The fundamental principles and strategic line of the NDF in peace negotiations are all in the program of the national democratic revolution. The roots of the armed conflict are to be addressed and the satisfaction of the basic demands of the people for national liberation and democracy is to be sought up to a certain level that allows an adjustment of policy and a truce.

a) The substantive issues to be put in the agenda came under the headings of anti-fascism (civil liberties and human rights), anti-feudalism (land reform) and anti-imperialism (national independence in questions of economic policy, foreign military bases, etc.).

b) Coming ahead of these issues in the agenda was to be the discussion and agreement on the experience of the Filipino people since 1972 so that a common ground of facts could be established, the objectives of negotiations could be clear, the demands on each side of the negotiations could be within reasonable context and no mechanical quid pro quos could be demanded at the expense of the revolutionary movement, especially with regard to the question of armed forces.

2) Regarding nationwide ceasefire, it could be agreed to at any time only if the Aquino regime would make an executive declaration ordering the dismantling of the US military bases on or before their expiry date in 1991, in accordance with her own signature on the Declaration of Unity on December 26, 1984.

When someone suggested that localized peace talks and ceasefires could relieve guerrilla fronts under attack, it was made clear that such localized peace talks and ceasefires could not be allowed because these were calculated to confuse and fragment the revolutionary movement. It was stressed that guerrilla fronts under heavy onslaughts by the AFP were to be relieved by NPA offensives in other areas and not by seeking localized ceasefires.

3) The alternate venues were supposed to be mainly in the countryside and secondarily in Metro Manila although in the latter place there would be a strong information office. Safety and immunity guarantees for the negotiators and related personnel were clarified and were supposed to be on a mutual and reciprocal basis. It was also made clear that the share of publicity to be expected from the bourgeois mass media was not worth the exposure of cadres to the AFP and would be overwhelmed anyway by the amount of publicity to be given to the GRP.

The test of actual negotiations

The NDF framework for peace negotiations underwent the test of actual negotiations because the other side, GRP, had its own framework. The GRP panel was obsessed with ceasefire. Ceasefire first, then matters like affirmation of GRP constitution, general amnesty, legalization of the CPP and other underground forces, rehabilitation of rebel returnees and surrender of NPA personnel and arms could be discussed. These were the items in the agenda which GRP insisted upon.

The talks became narrowly known as ceasefire talks in the bourgeois mass media. Moreover, the reactionaries pushed the line that ceasefire meant the surrender of arms and that sincerity of the NDF was to be measured along this line. In the days towards the visit of Aquino to the US, the GRP panel pressed hard that ceasefire be declared as a kind of send-off gift for her to impress the US authorities in Washington. The NDF did not give in to this demand.

In her speech before the US Congress in September 1986, Aquino declared that she was engaged in ceasefire talks so as to gain the moral high ground for subsequently unsheathing the sword of war. While Aquino cultivated the image of being the champion of human rights and peace, her big comprador-landlord regime sought to consolidate its power and the reactionary armed forces launched large offensives against the NPA in five regions of the country and quietly organized and trained the vigilante groups.

In deference to the head of the GRP negotiating panel Senator Diokno who was not in good health, the ceasefire talks between the GRP and NDF panels proceeded from August onwards in Metro Manila at the great risk of surveillance and sabotage by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and at the probable expense of the NDF panel, the underground and aboveground allies on whom the panel was relying.

After the office of President Aquino sent word to the NDF panel that she was about to break off from the negotiations, the NDF responded to the bluff by issuing in early November 1986 a statement that it was willing to have the national negotiating panel replicated at lower levels. This had the potential of fragmenting the revolutionary movement.

In the first version of the same document, which had been circulated domestically and internationally, the NDF also obliged itself to show the faces of representatives of the fourteen member-organizations of the NDF at lower levels. The line was for the revolutionary movement to show its “human face” as if this had not been known to the people in the expanding revolutionary mass base.

In quick response to the brutal kidnapping and murder of Rolando Olalia, chairman of Partido ng Bayan and the Kilusang Mayo Uno and vice chairman of Bayan on November 13, 1986, NDF announced the suspension of its negotiations with GRP. Members of the NDF panel showed up at the huge Olalia funeral march of one million people.

But soon afterwards, the GRP and NDF panels announced that they would sign the two memoranda of agreement concerning the ceasefire and the safety and immunity guarantees on the birth anniversary of Benigno Aquino, November 27.

The two-month ceasefire

According to agreement, the ceasefire was meant to create the atmosphere for settling the agenda and negotiating on the substantive issues. There was yet no mutually agreed upon substantive agenda. It was supposed to be still negotiated during the 60-day ceasefire period from December 10, 1986 to February 8, 1987.

One of the memoranda co-signed by GRP and NDF stated: "This agreement, the preliminary ceasefire agreement, and any other subsequent agreement, or any provision or provisions thereof shall not invest the NDF with the status of belligerency under the laws of war."

In negotiating sessions during the ceasefire period, the GRP panel insisted that the NDF submit to the GRP Constitution as the legal and political frame for negotiations and then such matters as general amnesty, rehabilitation, legalization of underground organizations and the surrender of arms, could be subsequently discussed.

By insisting that NDF must first submit itself to the GRP Constitution as the legal and political frame of negotiations, the GRP panel was in principle and in effect killing the peace process and thus fended off the demand of the NDF panel that substantive issues such as those in the NDF list be put into the agenda. For the NDF to submit to the GRP Constitution would be to render the peace talks unnecessary, because then the NDF would accept GRP authority, its institutions and processes as the way to deal with the basic demands of the people.

Within December 1986, the revolutionary movement decided to let the NDF negotiating panel make the most out of the ceasefire by pressing for the taking up of substantive issues; and not to extend or renew the ceasefire agreement in view of the refusal of the GRP to take up the substantive issues and in consideration of certain valid criticisms from within the revolutionary movement.

What had been expected as negotiations to set and cover a comprehensive range of substantive issues was further frustrated by GRP when its panel declared that it could no longer assure its own safety and the NDF panel's in the face of death threats from certain military groups.

Sabotage of ceasefire agreement

In fact, in a clear act of perfidy and sabotage of the negotiations, General Ramos issued "Guidelines," ordering the AFP units to disarm, arrest, detain and charge in court all armed NPA members they could surveil and encounter. This was in direct contravention of the safety and immunity guarantees and specifically the agreement of the GRP and NDF panels that violations of the ceasefire agreement by any member or unit of both the AFP and NPA would be subject to the discipline of the army concerned. The NDF panel filed a formal protest to President Aquino but she took no action.

On January 22, 1987, peasants and their urban supporters who were demonstrating in front of the presidential palace were brutally fired upon by presidential guards and augmenting military and police units, massacring at least 19 demonstrators and seriously injuring hundreds. That was the last straw. The NDF panel and all their personnel decided to return to the underground, although the ceasefire was still to last up to February 8, 1987.

During the ceasefire period, the NDF panel engaged in consultations with the people and organizations from various walks of life and generated mass actions all over the country. As in the ceasefire of the MNLF with GRP in the past, some revolutionary personnel in the underground were encouraged to come out into the open and play loose with their security.

Post-ceasefire evaluation

When the GRP-NDF negotiations broke down, Generals Ileto and Ramos were boasting to the press that the AFP intelligence services had increased their surveillance stocks by 25 percent. The movement would have been remiss had it not studied and acted on the connection of the exposure of "human faces" during the ceasefire period with the arrests of revolutionary cadres from 1987 onward or earlier during the pre-ceasefire talks with the arrest of NDF consultant Rodolfo Salas in September 1986.

In the aftermath of the ceasefire, a press monitoring group sponsored by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines made a quantitative analysis of how much space in seven major Manila newspapers were allocated to the major players in the ceasefire drama. GRP (including the GRP panel, civil and military officials) got the overwhelming amount of space. The much lesser amount of space given to the NDF was not always necessarily favorable to the NDF cause.

GRP actually sought not only to consolidate the position of the new ruling clique and make it look good as a champion of peace and human rights but also to do harm to the revolutionary movement by trying to deceive, split, discredit and induce it to surface for surveillance and punitive action.

In breaking off from the peace negotiations and declaring the end of the ceasefire according to schedule, the NDF issued a statement reaffirming its revolutionary principles and its determination to seek a just and lasting peace on the basis of addressing the roots of the armed conflict and arriving at the solutions to the basic problems of the Filipino people. The NDF also reiterated its policy commitment to engage in a new round of peace talks upon this basis at any time.

New peace initiatives

In 1987, the NDF declared its adherence to Protocol H of the Geneva Convention and challenged GRP to comply with the terms of this protocol which it had signed. In early 1989 the NDF took a new initiative to stimulate a new round of peace talks by proposing that Aquino make an executive declaration banning the US military bases beyond 1991 and in response the NDF declare a unilateral ceasefire. Aquino never replied to this proposal of the NDF, except to say arrogantly in the press that she does not take cues from the NDF.

In 1988, the Coalition for Peace organized a forum on peace to which the NDF was invited. The NDF refused to attend not only because CfP could not assure the NDF representatives of their safety in Manila but essentially because the forum was strongly slanted against the NDF's concept of a just and lasting peace.

The CfP has been trying to present itself as a domestic third party wishing to revive the peace process in the Philippines between GRP and NDF. Its favorite interest, however, is to promote its concept of and campaign for local dialogues and zones of peace/ zones of life even without and prior to GRP-NDF negotiations at the appropriate national level. As a matter of fact, all experiments of the CfP on zones of peace/ life have proven to be devices to support GRP authority and displace the NDF and the NPA from local areas.

The concept of zones of peace/ life is similar to the concept of peace and order councils promoted by General Ramos under Oplan Mamamayan during the time of Marcos and subsequently under Aquino. It seeks to mobilize the local respectables (especially reactionary politicians, businessmen, landlords and conservative clergy) and create public opinion against the armed revolutionary movement and "restore trust and confidence" in GRP, including the violence of oppression and exploitation.

In 1989 the concept of a forum for representatives of the GRP, NDF and MNLF to air their respective views on the terms and methods of resolving the armed conflict was reportedly initiated within the National Council of Churches of the Philippines (NCCP). This was supposed to be held abroad and sponsored by international Christian organizations, especially the World Council of Churches, the Christian Conference of Asia and the Catholic Institute of International Relations on an ecumenical basis.

The concept was further developed from one of a one-shot international forum regarding the peace process to one of a long-term program to promote and assist the peace process, especially in the international arena. This concept has gained the support of several international organizations, including the World Council of Churches, which has provided valuable assistance to peace processes in different parts of the world.

A peace emissary

In the last quarter of 1989, an emissary of a group interested in peace negotiations and counting the membership of a close associate of President Aquino came to the Netherlands to explore the possibility of a new round of peace talks between GRP and NDF. He consulted with this writer and talked appropriately with Luis Jalandoni, chief international representative of the NDF. The latter readily agreed to talks about peace talks abroad. But GRP backed out of these as a result of the serious coup attempt in December 1989.

In 1990, the National Peace Conference (NPC) under the auspices of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) and the Peace Desk of the protestant National Conference of the Christian Churches of the Philippines (NCCP) separately started efforts to promote the peace process in the Philippines. Such efforts have been welcomed by the NDF, provided these are even-handed and are not slanted towards GRP. Representatives of peace advocates from the religious sector have exchanged views with NDF representatives.

In collaboration with foreign organizations, especially International Alert, the CfP attempted to organize a forum in Hongkong in July 1990. But this forum was aborted because, contrary to a previous agreement, the GRP refused to have the interface with the NDF. The NDF was also critical of the fact that participants so-called in the forum were being chosen solely and lopsidedly by CfP in favor of the Right. And they were supposed to evaluate the GRP and NDF positions.

But in the Philippines, a dialogue was held in lieu of the forum and was participated in by GRP and NDF representatives on July 20. In this meeting, NDF representatives committed the NDF to a unilateral ceasefire in

earthquake-stricken areas on humanitarian grounds. Within 24 hours, the General Command of the NPA announced that the NPA would take a defensive posture and abstain from launching offensives in the aforesaid areas, would participate in relief work and would not interfere with the relief work of others.

Multisectoral peace advocates

From this meeting would emerge the Multisectoral Peace Advocates (MSPA). Although progressive elements like Senator Wigberto Tañada and Dr. Maria Serena Diokno are prominently here, there are representatives of conservative organizations that have a pro-GRP orientation, like the Coalition for Peace, and that have a strong presence here.

The MSPA has put forward a framework for a peace process and has been conversing with Cluster E of the Aquino Cabinet (the cluster in charge of national security matters) for the purpose of promoting the settlement of armed conflicts and bilateral peace talks between GRP and NDF. The NDF has welcomed the domestic third-party initiative of MSPA and has expressed appreciation for its views (1) that the roots of the armed conflict must be addressed and (2) that the GRP-NDF bilateral peace talks may be held abroad, if necessary. At the same time, NDF objects to certain points in the MSPA framework.

1. Conscious of its national revolutionary status, the NDF refuses to be regarded as being at par with RAM, SFP and YOU (mutinous foFC€S Within the AFP) or even with the MNLF (scope limited to Moro people and land). The NDF is a nationwide alliance of patriotic and progressive forces, carrying out a national democratic revolution, with organs of political power and a well-disciplined people's army and in control of considerable portions of the Philippine population and territory. It is engaged in a civil war with GRP and not in a mere insurgency. It is a belligerent force and not a mere insurgent force.

2. True to its revolutionary principles, the NDF does not accept the GRP Constitution as the sole and one-sided legal and political frame of negotiations and refuses to be drawn at the outset to the line of "restoring of trust and confidence in GRP." Neither does the NDF demand that GRP submit itself to the NDF Constitution and Program. Instead, NDF proposes such mutually acceptable principles as national sovereignty, democracy, social justice and the like and the agreements still to be made as the legal and political frame of negotiations.

3. The NDF is opposed or institution, posing as ing parties in the civil war and claiming the people for itself, to focus on areas where the NDF and its member-organizations (especially the New People's Army) as well as people's organs of political power exist; seek to push out or paralyze these popular entities; picture the NPA as something unwanted by the people as the AFP; but in fact, to uphold the political authority of GRP. Proposals for "localized peace to the scheme of any particular organization third force morally superior to the contending parties.

"Peace dialogues," "localized ceasefires," "community-based peace" and "zones of peace, zones of life" are calculated to undermine and fragment the revolutionary movement and run counter to the proposal for GRP-NDF bilateral peace talks at the national level.

4. The NDF does not agree to the surrender of arms as the bias or predetermined objective of the peace process. The substantive issues, addressing the roots of the armed conflict, must first be tackled. In the meantime, with regard to the question of ending the armed conflict, it may simply be put in the agenda by referring to armed forces and redispotion thereof. To effect the end of hostilities, there are several possibilities, including a lasting truce. The ceasefire on humanitarian grounds is best clarified in a full agreement on human rights.

5. With regard to the question of ceasefire, it cannot be taken up until after discussion and agreement on the substantive issues, unless such ceasefire be on a humanitarian ground for a limited period of time or in connection with the dismantling of the US military bases. Ceasefire on humanitarian grounds is best clarified in a full agreement on human rights.

Framework for a just and lasting peace

On its own ground and understanding of a just and lasting peace and upon the stimulus of a broad array of peace advocates in the Philippines and abroad, the CPP as the leading party in the revolutionary movement and the NDF as the united front organization have further developed their own framework for a peace process.

This framework has been developed in line with the national democratic program, taking into account new conditions and lessons learned from the 1986-87 pre-ceasefire talks and ceasefire period.

In response to an invitation from the NDF, a close associate of President Aquino met with NDF vice chairman for international affairs Luis Jalandoni in Singapore on September 24, 1990. There was no substantial result from this meeting, except a show of goodwill between the two sides.

First meeting with Yap

The first serious emissary of the GRP to seek an audience from the NDF and show readiness to talk concretely about the peace process was Rep. Jose Yap, chairman of the national defense committee of the Philippine house of representatives and close political associate of President Aquino. He came to Amsterdam, Netherlands on September 25, 1990, consulted with this writer and sought his help as a consultant for the peace process. Subsequently, Yap met with Luis Jalandoni, NDF vice chairman for international affairs, and Byron Bocar, NDF international representative, from September 26 to 29.

Other members of the Yap mission were his advisors Horacio Morales, president of the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement, and Atty. Romeo T. Capulong, chairman of the Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace. This writer had the privilege of being consulted by both the Yap mission and the NDF officials.

Rep. Yap and the NDF representatives agreed to work for certain measures to improve the atmosphere for GRP-NDF bilateral negotiations. These measures included the review of cases of political prisoners and their release in accordance with respect for the right to bail and the eventual repeal of the Marcos PD 1866 which negates the right to bail in many cases.

Most important of all, the letter of Manuel Romero, NDF chairperson dated September 20, 1990, comprehensively unfolding the NDF strategic view of the peace process framework for negotiations was given to Rep. Yap for delivery to President Aquino. In addition, upon the request of Yap, the NDF also sent to Aquino the aide memoire of NDF vice chairman Jalandoni on the lessons from the 1986-87 peace talks.

The NDF framework for the peace process includes the following points:

1) A new round of peace talks can be started at any time, without any substantive precondition that is unilaterally beneficial or costly. The NDF is willing to form a negotiating panel simultaneously with GRP at any time.

2) Safety and immunity guarantees are agreed upon and co-signed by the two sides or are issues by one to the other side on a mutual and reciprocal basis to enable the free and unhampered movement of the members and related personnel of the negotiating panels.

3) To create a favorable atmosphere for negotiations, the NDF expects GRP in accordance with its own Constitution and laws to do the following as a matter of course: respect the right to bail, repeal PD 1886, review cases of political detainees and release said detainees on the basis of their right to bail or by dropping charges. A number of the released detainees will participate in the negotiations, either as members or support personnel of the NDF negotiating panel and working groups.

Also, to create a favorable atmosphere, NDF will declare a unilateral ceasefire if GRP in accordance with its own Constitution and the principle of national sovereignty and territorial integrity bans the US military bases and troops on or before September 21, 1991.

4) The legal and political frame of the peace negotiations is constituted by the mutually acceptable principles of national sovereignty, democracy and social justice and by the agreements still to be made through the negotiations. Neither should GRP insist on its Constitution as the sole and one-sided legal and political frame nor the NDF on its own Constitution and Program.

5) The substantive agenda of comprehensive peace negotiations includes the following: a. A preliminary mutual understanding on the objectives of the negotiations and the basic problems of the people. b. Mutual respect for human rights and international humanitarian law; c. Social and economic reforms; d. Political, constitutional and electoral reforms. e. The end of hostilities and redistribution of the armed forces.

6) Notwithstanding its willingness to forge agreements on a wide range of issues, the NDF seeks as immediate minimum goal an agreement with the GRP on human rights and international humanitarian law and on the mechanisms and processes to ensure respect for these.

Such an agreement should be able to stand whether the armed conflict continues or a peace settlement is ultimately made. This agreement is immediately demanded by the Filipino people and all domestic and international organizations concerned with human rights.

7) A quarter of a year can be devoted to each of the major items in the substantive agenda for negotiations and agreement, as enumerated under No. 5 above. The time frame can be accelerated with the employment and assistance of working groups per item, which shall prepare in advance the working drafts of the negotiating panels.

8) The peace negotiations must be held at a mutually agreed place abroad in order to assure safety and convenience. In this connection, lessons must be learned from the pre—ceasefire talks and ceasefire period in 1986-87.

GRP has repeatedly held peace talks with the MNLF abroad. It is the common practice for parties in armed conflicts to hold peace talks abroad.

9) At best, a state or interstate entity or the UN general secretary can serve as the good offices or intermediary in the peace talks. Such a third party can assume the role of a witness, observer, good offices or intermediary. At the least, for a start, any respectable international nongovernmental organization or appropriate UN agency may be a facilitator of the peace talks.

10) The broad array of peace advocates in the Philippines is recognized by the NDF as a moral force for a just and lasting peace, as a forum and medium of national consensus and as a resource base for assisting the peace process.

On October 3, 1990, Jalandoni, Yap and this writer as a consultant in the peace process issued parallel and similar press statements regarding their respective roles and what was accomplished in the Amsterdam talks. The three of them expressed optimism about the prospects of peace talks.

Peace advocates: right, middle and Left

On October 5, 1990, the NDF National Council issued the Message to the Advocates of a Just Peace, affirming the NDF position on the peace process and the need to address the roots of the armed conflict and criticizing those who seek the pacification of the revolutionary movement. In a letter to Senator Tañada and other members of the MSPA dated November 5, NDF chairman Romero reiterated the position of the NDF and reaffirmed the valuable role of the peace advocates.

There is a broad array of peace advocates inside and outside of the MSPA in the legal arena. They are not a homogenous lot. They include the Right, Middle and Left. The Right concurs with the basic premises of GRP rather than with those of the NDF. The Left concurs with those of the NDF rather than with those of GRP. At the same time, there is the Middle trying to be the honest broker, operating according to principles and general terms which do not offend any of the basic negotiating parties, GRP and NDF.

So far, the Right wing "peace" advocates have been the most articulate and active in putting forward a comprehensive framework for the pacification of the revolutionary forces calling on them to submit to the GRP Constitution, to restore trust and confidence in GRP, to beg for accommodation and paltry concessions, abandon the people in one locality after another under the slogan of zones of peace/ life and to surrender arms.

So far, the legal progressive forces (Left and Middle) have concentrated on the general call for addressing the roots of the armed conflict and have not yet put forward a comprehensive framework for a peace process, comparable to that of the Right. Thus, the Right has gained some initiative in swaying some elements of the Middle and even the Left.

In the Philippines, the united front for addressing the roots of the armed conflict and for a just and lasting peace was broadened through the People's Caucus, which gathered on October 14, 1990 the signatures of representatives of hundreds of people's organizations and personages.

The NDF has rejected the importuning of the Right "peace" advocates for the pacification of the revolutionary forces and has been waiting for the legal progressive forces (Left and Middle) to unite, take initiative and put forward their own peace proposals towards a just and lasting peace. The broad array of genuine peace advocates can serve as a strong moral force to compel GRP to negotiate, as a forum and medium of national consensus and as a resource base for assisting the peace process.

The substantive agenda

In further support and elaboration of the NDF chairman Romero's letter to Aquino dated September 20, 1990, Jalandoni, the NDF vice chairman for international affairs, delivered the speech, "Sovereignty and Peace: Options and Alternatives for the Philippine Revolutionary Movement" on November 17, 1990, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the trial of the Marcos regime by the Permanent People's Tribunal. He went into detail about the substantive agenda proposed by the NDF.

Hereunder is the outline of the substantive agenda of the NDF. 1) Agreement on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law a) Respect for and compliance with Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions and other international humanitarian laws. b) End of the government's total war policy, investigation and prosecution of human rights violations, and indemnification of the victims, including return of internal refugees to their domicile. c) Repeal of all repressive laws and reversal of the Supreme Court ruling on warrantless arrest. d) Safe conduct for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and all other medical personnel across battle lines and contested areas.

e) Respect for personnel and facilities of schools, medical profession, religious institutions and places of worship, voluntary evacuation centers and development projects of genuine NGOs. f) Exchange of prisoners, preferably thru a UN agency or the ICRC. g) Occasional local ceasefires of definite brief duration on humanitarian grounds (natural disasters and medical reasons) approved by national authorities of both NDF and GRP (not by local authorities); h) A mechanism and process to ensure compliance of the two sides with the agreement, the exchange of complaints and monitoring.

2) Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms a) Guidance by International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights. b) A genuine and thoroughgoing agrarian reform. c) A policy of national industrialization, with strong incentives to local entrepreneurs and restrictions on foreign multinational firms. d) Freedom from foreign debt through cancellation of fraudulent debts, moratorium, debt cap, rescheduling and other measures. e) Rechanneling of funds from debt service payments and military spending to social services and genuine development programs. Urban reform plan, stopping the demolition of urban poor dwellings and providing low-cost housing for the poor and support for means of livelihood. Strict measures to stop the degradation of the environment and to protect and promote a healthy environment.

3) Agreement on Political, Constitutional and Electoral Reforms a) Guidance by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Covenant on Political and Civil Rights. Guarantees to basic human and democratic rights of the people, especially the workers and peasants, in accordance with mutually acceptable principles and provisions of the Constitution and other laws of the GRP and those of the NDF. Abrogation of unequal agreements and treaties, especially the Military Bases Agreement, Military Assistance Agreement and the Mutual Defense Pact with the US Immediate removal of US bases and a program of base lands conversion. Respect for the right to self-determination of the Bangsa Moro, Cordillera and other indigenous peoples. Electoral reforms to take away undue advantages of political parties of the comprador and landlord classes and provide for genuine democratic pluralism, allowing a fair chance for political parties representing the workers, peasants and the middle class. A mechanism like a Council of National Unity to ensure the implementation of political, constitutional and electoral reforms and the holding of free and fair elections as well as the economic and social reforms agreed upon.

4) Agreement on the Ending of Hostilities and the Redisposition of the Armed Forces a) Removal of US control over the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). b) Reorientation, reorganization, and reduction of the AFP. Demobilization of AFP units and disbanding of paramilitary forces and private armies. Legal status of the NDF and its member organizations, including the Communist Party of the Philippines. Redisposition of the New People's Army. 'Mutual general amnesty. Suspension of hostilities or lasting truce.

Second meeting with Yap

In late November 1990, the Yap mission came for the second time to Amsterdam, Netherlands. He reported on actions undertaken by President Aquino and consultations with defense secretary Ramos and AFP chief of staff de Villa but did not carry with him any formal written reply from President Aquino to the letter of NDF chairman Romero.

Instead, he brought with him the framework for peace drafted by the Department of National Defense and Armed Forces of the Philippines for the Government of the Republic of the Philippines. This is not a framework for peace negotiations but for killing the peace process by demanding at the very outset the surrender of the NDF to the Constitution of GRP and ultimately the liquidation of the NPA and surrender of NPA arms.

The NDF did not take offense at the lack of a formal written response from Aquino but noted in strong terms that the DND/AFP cannot deal directly with the NDF and bypass the political authority of GRP. According to a later report from MSPA, Cluster E of the Aquino Cabinet confirmed the framework of the DND/AFP as that of GRP.

Hereunder are verbatim extracts from the GRP framework:

Statement of General Principles:

1.1 The supremacy of the GRP Constitution as the fundamental law of the land and the basis for national peace and progress must be accepted by all. No one may be allowed to violate the fundamental law of the land. The Supreme Court is the sole and final arbiter on questions of constitutionality. The Constitution recognizes the right of political forces to lawfully compete for the political leadership of the country. The use of force and violence to achieve political ends must be renounced.

1.2 Peace is of paramount importance to the wellbeing of the people and the country's political, economic and social development. The current internal conflict can be resolved through a peace process.

All paths towards peace must be explored. Peace must be given a chance.

1.3 There must only be one authorized and recognized armed forces of the country. All other organized armed groups must be deemed illegal and are to be disbanded.

Agenda for the Peace Process:

The agenda for the peace process shall be limited to relevant issues that can be resolved within the mandate of the parties concerned. Principal agenda items shall be composed of the following:

1. Suspension of hostilities in mutually agreed upon specified prioritized areas.
2. Amnesty for insurgents.
3. Laying down of arms.
4. Disbanding of the NPA.
5. Safe return of insurgents to a peaceful and productive life.
6. Government assistance to and protection of insurgent returnees.
7. Legalization of the CPP.
8. Treatment of NPA "hold outs."

Phases of the Peace Process:

The phasing of the peace process is a vital dimension of the framework. The peace process shall proceed along the following:

1. Initiation of peace process through exploratory talks between the government and peace advocates (MSPA).
2. Establishment of formal mechanism for the peace process.
3. Formalization of Agreements.
4. Implementation of Agreements.
5. Monitoring and evaluation of substantive compliance.
6. Treatment of violations and sanctions against violators.

Obstruction by General Ramos

At any rate, certain tentative agreements were still made by the NDF representatives with Rep. Yap regarding the possible release of political prisoners and mutual ceasefire in the humanitarian spirit of Christmas and New Year; and the formation of the human rights working groups of GRP and NDF which were to lay the groundwork for negotiations and agreement on human rights and international humanitarian law.

The tentative agreement on mutual ceasefire in the humanitarian spirit of Christmas and New Year would be carried out, with changes towards a shorter duration of three days per occasion. But the release of political prisoners and the formation of negotiating panels and working groups on human rights were not fulfilled according to the agreed time frame.

In the name of DND and AFP, General Ramos has been obstructing the peace process. President Aquino and Cluster E on national security of the Aquino cabinet have gone along with General Ramos whenever he takes an adverse initiative to sabotage the peace process. He is reported to be consulting with US authorities and following their orders.

Subsequent to the last Yap mission to Amsterdam, GRP has limited itself to dealing with the MSPA in accordance with the DND-AFP line that GRP must first talk with the MSPA and only after agreements have been made between the two can the NDF deal with the prior agreements made between GRP and MSPA. In other words, a device is being used in which the bilateral peace talks between GRP and NDF are being blocked.

Taking advantage of the nonviolence pact among the reactionary parties and the growing fever over the 1992 elections, GRP has cut down talks even with the MSPA.

It is clear once again that the GRP uses the show of willingness to talk with the NDF only as a tactical ploy for trying to cope with the worsening crisis, to douse social unrest and to blunt the offensives of the revolutionary movement.

Nevertheless, NDF has remained firm on its comprehensive framework, which adheres to revolutionary principles and has the flexibility of adjusting policy to allow negotiations and agreements with GRP, for the benefit of the people along the national and democratic line.

The national democratic line

Like any strategic line, the national democratic line in the entire peace process and in any concrete peace negotiations contains and permits certain tactical lines which serve the strategic line. It is always possible to work out a truce agreement or even an agreement of alliance between two adversaries in order to confront a bigger adversary of the nation like US imperialism or solve certain crucial problems.

As a revolutionary force, the NDF can be expected to reject any proposal for surrender but can always be expected to consider any proposal for truce and alliance if predicated on the national and democratic rights and interests of the people and on a popular struggle against common adversaries and common problems.

It is noteworthy that Senator Juan Ponce Enrile (defense minister/ secretary under Marcos and Aquino) seemed to have a better and more positive understanding of the NDF's strategic line than President Aquino or General Ramos. Enrile was quoted by the press as saying that if he would be president of GRP, he would engage the NDF in a truce and coalition government for three years and would not require the NPA to surrender arms. Of course, especially because of his background, it remains to be seen whether he means what he says.

At whatever rate the GRP shows interest or loss of it in the peace process at any point, the NDF can persevere in taking a just and reasonable stand on behalf of the people in seeking to inspire a broad united front for national liberation and democracy and in working in the international arena for recognition of the NDF as the legitimate representative of the revolutionary forces and people.

Confidence of NDF

Whichever conservative party or clique of reactionaries is in power in Manila, the NDF can be expected to be ready to negotiate a just and lasting peace in accordance with the national democratic line. A common resolve to address the roots of the armed conflict and face a common foe or confront certain problems; and a truce and realignment of forces along the national democratic line can be the initial stage in the process of attaining a just and lasting peace.

Abroad, through the efforts of the National Democratic Front, the European Parliament approved on December 13, 1990 a resolution endorsing the bilateral peace talks of GRP and NDF. For the first time, no less than an interstate entity, the parliament of the European Community, recognized the NDF and put it on an equal footing with GRP. There are also specific states which have been approached by the NDF and have agreed to offer their good offices to both the GRP and the NDF.

At the same time, respected international organizations and institutions are expressing support for the just and reasonable peace framework of the NDF and are extending moral and material support for its realization and for the NDF as a legitimate political force, representative of the ever-growing number of people militantly engaged in carrying out a national democratic revolution and building a new kind of government.

The NDF is confident that in due time the growing strength of the revolutionary forces and people, the worsening crisis of the Philippine ruling system and the moral forces of domestic and world public opinion would compel GRP to engage the NDF in peace negotiations.

The NDF Framework

in Contrast with the GRP Framework

May 15, 1991

Upholding its revolutionary principles and recognizing its own strength and the ever-worsening crisis of the ruling system, the Philippine revolutionary movement through the National Democratic Front (NDF) has amply demonstrated its willingness and readiness to engage in bilateral peace negotiations with GRP.

NDF Chairman Manuel Romero sent to GRP President Aquino the letter dated 20 September 1990, defining the NDF framework for peace negotiations. To this day, she has failed to make a formal written reply. Intransigently, the GRP insists that the NDF must submit to the GRP Constitution and surrender the arms of the armed revolutionary movement.

It is completely the responsibility of GRP that the peace process desired by the Filipino people and the organized revolutionary forces has been obstructed and prevented from progressing. While the NDF desires a just and lasting peace on the basis of satisfying the national and democratic demands of the people, GRP simply wants the pacification of the revolutionary forces and the people by peace rhetoric what it cannot win by force of arms and thus serve the ever-violent system of oppression and exploitation.

Contrary to the claim of certain quarters, the NDF and the revolutionary forces through their documents and their practice have made clear that they have a consistent strategy for the peace process and that they do not view the process as a mere tactical ploy. It is the intention of this article to demonstrate the sincerity and seriousness of the revolutionary movement in pursuing the peace process.

1. The struggle for a just and lasting peace

Since its very beginning and long before the GRP paid any lip service to the need for a peace process, the Philippine revolutionary movement has always been committed to the struggle for a just and lasting peace in the most comprehensive and strategic way.

The struggle for national liberation and democracy against US imperialism and local reactionary classes is a struggle for a just and lasting peace because it strives to solve the fundamental problems of the nation and people, fight and defeat the violence of oppression and exploitation and bring about the basis for a just and lasting peace.

The strategic line of national democratic revolution is the NDF's strategic line for a just and lasting peace. There is no other strategic line. To claim the absence of it or to replace it is to confuse the people and the revolutionary forces.

The struggle for a just peace entails as many specific forms of struggle as does the national democratic revolution. These include all legal and illegal forms of struggle. Among these forms of struggle is armed struggle, the principal form of struggle because it settles the question of power which is the principal question in any revolution. No social revolution is possible without the prior change of political power.

There can be no peace negotiations between GRP and NDF if in the first place there is no armed conflict between them. It is only when there is an armed resistance of a certain level of strength that the incumbent reactionary state starts to consider whether it should seek peace negotiations or not.

The struggle for a just peace cannot be narrowed down to peace negotiations between GRP and NDF. Peace negotiations are only one of the specific forms of the struggle in the constant and comprehensive struggle for national liberation and democracy and, therefore, for a just and lasting peace.

Even as the NDF is willing to negotiate, there can be no guarantee at any time that peace negotiations with GRP would occur. In history, oppressive regimes either negotiate at some point or refuse to do so to the very end.

Since the very beginning, the revolutionary movement led by the Party has created the conditions for a just peace in the areas where organs of people's democratic power are established. The people undertake campaigns to benefit themselves within the context of the national democratic revolution.

In contrast with the strategic view of the NDF that the national democratic revolution is the way to a just and lasting peace, GRP has for its strategic view the preservation of the oppressive and exploitative system and the

defeat and pacification of the revolutionary forces.

Thus, GRP demands first of all the submission of the NDF to the GRP Constitution and as soon as possible the liquidation of the New People's Army and the surrender of its arms.

What GRP has been demanding or angling for is not a peace process but a process of surrender. If the NDF were to accept the terms of such a process of surrender, then GRP would engage in talks with NDF without delay or hesitation.

In sharp contrast, the NDF has manifested its just and reasonable position by declaring that although the optimum condition for a just and lasting peace is the total victory of the people in their national democratic revolution the NDF is willing to engage in peace talks for several important reasons, including the promotion of national independence and democracy and a number of basic reforms, immediately beneficial to the people.

It is possible to engage in peace talks and probably work out a truce in the end in order to face common problems and carry out basic social reforms; or to fight a common foe and fulfil the people's aspirations for complete national independence.

The revolutionary movement keeps to its fundamental principles and its strategic national democratic line. But in the sphere of policy, it can make readjustments and expects the other side to do likewise. There has to be a mutual adjustment of policy to affect, redirect or settle the armed conflict.

It takes the two basic parties in the armed conflict to agree on a truce and what national social purpose is to be served. Even if the peace talks were to fail, then the people can see who has the just and reasonable position.

One may call as merely tactical any one reason or any series of reasons provided for peace talks that falls short of the strategic goal. But the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary movement or any other force are inseparable from each other. The strategy consists of tactics; and the tactics constitute and serve the strategy. It is wrong to say that the revolutionary movement has only a tactical View of peace negotiations.

Peace negotiations are an important form of struggle in the constant and comprehensive strategic struggle for a just and lasting peace. These are also the form of struggle which refers most directly to a peace 'agreement, if the other side is willing to engage in peace negotiations. But then the occurrence and value of peace negotiations change from one period to another.

Revolutionaries determined to carry out the objectives of the national democratic revolution can logically and legitimately consider peace negotiations as a way of pushing forward the aforesaid objectives, in the same way that the other side considers the same peace negotiations as a way of pushing forward its own objectives. Inevitably, the struggle across the table reflects first of all the struggle in the battlefield and then influence further developments in the battlefield.

But revolutionaries can also see that short of winning total victory in the revolution it is possible to engage in peace talks towards a truce in order to undertake a common struggle against a common national foe or to try to solve in common the fundamental national and social problems. At one time, GRP may not be interested in these important reasons for talks. At another time, it may be interested.

With or without peace negotiations, the revolutionary forces and the people firmly fight for a just and lasting peace through the stages and phases of the national democratic revolution.

2. Character of the armed conflict and the basic conflicting parties

The armed conflict between GRP and NDF is a civil war. It is an armed conflict between two belligerent forces. One is the incumbent government centrally seated in Manila; and the other is a revolutionary movement, with absolutely clear features that qualify it as a belligerent force under the laws of war.

As a belligerent force, NDF has a demonstrated national political leadership over a considerable part (thirty percent) of the population and territory of the Philippines; has effective command over a sizeable people's army; and comprehensively performs functions of government through local organs of political power which may be summarily called the people's revolutionary government.

The NDF has the capability to exercise the rights and obligations of a belligerent force under the laws of war within its ample jurisdiction. The two-month ceasefire in 1986-87 proved beyond doubt that the NDF has effective political leadership and command over revolutionary forces nationwide.

The NDF is a belligerent force in a civil war and not a mere insurgent force engaged in unlawful armed actions against a lawful and duly-constituted authority. GRP and the bourgeois mass media keep on calling NDF an insurgent force in order to propagate the lie that it has no belligerency status. To be an insurgent is to be criminally

liable for rebellion under the Philippine penal system. It is a slightly better status than banditry or ordinary criminality but short of belligerency status under the laws of war.

The NDF or the armed revolutionary movement is not a mere police problem, which insurgency is. The fact is that all the regular services of the Armed Forces of the Philippines have been engaged in a strategic offensive against the NDF and NPA for a long time (for more than 22 years) and to no avail. Instead, the revolutionary forces keep on growing.

In July 1986, the revolutionary forces had the choice of allowing the Communist Party of the Philippines as the leading party or the NDF as the united front organization to represent them in negotiations. They chose the NDF.

It is perfectly a legitimate objective for the NDF to seek recognition of its status of belligerency. This proceeds from the fact that it has the status of belligerency. It wants the GRP and AFP to conform to and be accountable under the laws of war. The recognition of the NDF's status of belligerency may arise from GRP-NDF bilateral negotiations and from the involvement of a state or interstate entity as third party in the negotiations.

The European Parliament resolution, dated December 13, 1990, endorses the Philippine peace process, mentions in the same breath GRP and NDF as parties to the armed conflict and in effect puts the NDF on an equal footing with GRP. This is a step forward in the international recognition of the NDF's status of belligerency.

Even without a state or interstate entity as third party in negotiations though, recognition of the NDF's status of belligerency can be explicitly or implicitly accorded by GRP. For instance, the NDF could have gained recognition of the status of belligerency if the memoranda of agreement related to the 1986-87 ceasefire co-signed by GRP and NDF representatives had not carried an explicit provision which stated that "This agreement, the preliminary ceasefire agreement, and any other subsequent agreement, or any provision or provisions thereof shall not invest the NDF with the status of belligerency under the laws of war." Then defense secretary Enrile had this provision inserted in the agreement.

When it comes to the NDF, GRP is extremely cautious about any action or statement that could implicitly or explicitly mean a recognition of the NDF status of belligerency. But in the Tripoli Agreement in 1976, the MNLF gained the recognition of its status of belligerency by virtue of the mediation of Libya. At the same time, MNLF submitted to the first provision of the agreement which declared that the settlement of the Moro question was within the framework of Philippine national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The MNLF retreated from its previous assertion of Moro national independence but gained the recognition for its status of belligerency through the mediation of Libya in the Tripoli Agreement and the continuing mediation of the Organization of Islamic Conference.

GRP is afraid of the recognition of the NDF's status of belligerency because it does not want NDF to hold it responsible under the laws of war and does not want NDF to relate to other states and transact business with them, without such states becoming chargeable for interference in the affairs of the Philippine state. The MNLF has enjoyed relations with Islamic states, without GRP being able to accuse these of interference.

The character of the armed conflict between GRP and NDF as a civil war can be further clarified by reference to the fact that it is an armed conflict between political forces domestic to the Philippines and that it is not yet a national war against foreign aggression, although US intervention in favor of GRP is escalating on the side of GRP and has the potential of escalating further to the level of aggression.

At the moment in the Philippines, the two basic forces in the nationwide civil war are GRP and NDF and should therefore be the two basic parties in peace negotiations. They can have equal footing as belligerent forces.

Recently, a notion was propagated that there could be multilateral peace talks among GRP, NDF, MNLF, RAM, SFP and YOU in order to settle the armed conflicts in the Philippines.

There are points of principle that make multilateral peace talks impossible, whether these be formal talks seeking binding agreements or these be a mere forum for ventilation of views without seeking any binding agreement.

The only nationwide civil war going on in the Philippines now is between GRP and NDF. Definitely, RAM, SFP and YOU cannot be put on an equal footing with the NDF. They are mutinous forces of the GRP, specifically AFP. They are the internal problems of GRP.

The MNLF is of a higher political category than these mutinous forces of GRP. They enjoy recognition of the status of belligerency accorded by GRP and by a number of Islamic states. But the population and territory claimed by the MNLF is limited to the Moro population and Moro land. So, there lies one big difference between NDF and MNLF.

In fact, GRP has repeatedly admitted that on a national scale and in terms of revolutionary challenge, NDF is the most "serious threat" to GRP. The NDF is therefore the force that GRP must talk to in any serious bilateral negotiations about peace in the Philippines.

3. Talks about peace talks

To begin with, the GRP and NDF positions are diametrically opposed to each other comprehensively, strategically and on many crucial issues. That is why there is an armed conflict between them. There is a bitter struggle between revolution and counterrevolution because of fundamental national and social issues.

Preliminary talks about bilateral peace talks between GRP and NDF are therefore important. These can try to thresh out a framework of peace negotiations which can be accepted by the two warring sides. It is more fruitful to engage in formal bilateral talks if there is a prior agreement on the objectives, the legal and political frame, agenda, timetable, venue, procedures and other matters. However, the NDF has expressed willingness to form a negotiating panel simultaneously with the GRP and let these two panels complete and firm up what may otherwise be threshed out in preliminary talks.

Before any formal meetings of the two panels, there must be written agreement, reached in preliminary talks, on the safety and immunity guarantees for the members and related personnel of the negotiating panels of GRP and NDF. These guarantees are agreed upon on a mutual and reciprocal basis and are strengthened by the good offices of a foreign state or interstate agency.

So far, there has yet been no serious peace talks, with a substantive agenda, between GRP and NDF. Setting the agenda involves a struggle. The agenda desired by each side in negotiations carries its strategic and tactical objectives.

The two-month ceasefire of 1986-87 was supposed to have been undertaken in order to create a favorable atmosphere for peace talks and to provide the conditions for an agreement on a substantive agenda. But GRP and NDF failed to agree on a substantive agenda.

Before the ceasefire, the GRP panel refused to agree with the NDF panel on a substantive agenda. The former simply wanted a ceasefire and wished to accomplish certain one-sided objectives through such a ceasefire. And during the ceasefire, it parried and refused any legal and political frame and any agenda other than its own.

GRP was responsible for the failure to set a substantive agenda. It insisted that the NDF should first of all submit itself to the GRP Constitution. Had the NDF done so, then the very idea of peace negotiations would have been killed instantly. Because a submission to the GRP Constitution would mean NDF surrender to the principle that the so-called duly-constituted authorities of GRP had the superior authority and jurisdiction over any agenda. GRP declared that it was willing to discuss with NDF only such matters as modes of surrender of firearms, general amnesty, rehabilitation and legalization of underground forces after submission to the GRP Constitution.

On its part, the NDF stood firmly for a substantive agenda, encompassing items most demanded by the people, under the headings of human rights, democratization and national independence.

Aside from trying to effect the capitulation of the NDF in principle and in fact, the GRP tried to use the ceasefire in 1986-87 to break the momentum of the armed revolutionary movement, cause the revolutionaries to split and induce them to go out into the open for surveillance and eventual punitive action.

In the preliminary talks about peace talks between the Yap mission of GRP and the NDF in September 1990, the NDF made concrete proposals for creating a favorable atmosphere for peace negotiations and for a comprehensive substantive agenda. These are contained in the 20 September 1990 letter of NDF Chairman Manuel Romero to GRP President Aquino.

GRP President Aquino has not formally replied in writing to this letter and has not taken any step to get the GRP—NDF bilateral peace talks started, notwithstanding the second meeting of the Yap mission and the NDF in November 1990. Instead, the DND-AFP has taken all the initiative to determine the GRP position and to offer nothing but a framework of arrogant unilateral assertions and wishful thinking for the process of NDF surrender.

The NDF has made clear that it is ready to form a negotiating panel anytime and as soon as GRP forms its own. Without any substantive precondition beneficial or costly to any side, the two negotiating panels can meet in order to discuss and agree on their substantive agenda and all procedural matters.

In so many ways, GRP has made it appear to the NDF that Cluster E of the Aquino Cabinet, the Department of National Defense and the Armed Forces of the Philippines are opposed to any peace negotiations outside of the framework unilaterally decided by GRP.

GRP has refused the NDF proposal for the GRP to act according to its own avowed commitment to Philippine national sovereignty and democracy and to create a favorable atmosphere for peace negotiations by dismantling the US military bases and respecting the right of political detainees to bail and dropping charges which run counter to this right.

GRP has also refused the NDF proposal that separately and simultaneously they announce the formation of the negotiating panels and the working groups on human rights, irrespective of whatever rate the GRP can act on the proposal to improve the atmosphere for peace negotiations.

The Yap mission to the NDF has been relatively the most serious and the most willing to go into concrete discussions and tentative agreements. But there are rabidly reactionary elements in the Aquino regime, especially among the military who are opposed to serious GRP-NDF peace negotiations. Thus, the preliminary talks about peace talks have not yet resulted in formal peace negotiations.

It is becoming obvious that the Aquino regime engaged in peace rhetoric for a certain period in the latter half of 1990 in a vain attempt to prevent the broad range of opposition forces from uniting, preempt the revolutionary mass movement and break out from the isolation caused by the violently worsening crisis of the ruling system.

Even the Multisectoral Peace Advocates (MSPA), which tries to be a domestic third party between GRP and NDF and whose framework concurs on several points with that of the GRP, has observed a reduced interest on the part of Cluster B (part of the Aquino cabinet in charge of national security) in discussing the peace process.

On April 5, 1990 the NDF met with MSPA representatives Senator Wigberto Tañada and Dr. Maria Serena Dikno and discussed with them fully and extensively the NDF framework for peace negotiations. The NDF also expressed its view on the role of the domestic third party and expressed appreciation as well as criticism of various points in the MSPA framework.

On the Question of Violence and Ceasefire

Whether or not there is armed resistance by the people and the revolutionary forces, the violence of oppression and exploitation is the full responsibility of the oppressors and exploiters ruling the people and the country.

The response of the people to the violence of the ruling system is armed revolution. Not satisfied with the violence inherent in their system, the oppressors and exploiters have escalated their violence in the vain hope of suppressing the armed revolution.

The NDF condemns the violent ruling system and the ongoing "total war" policy of the US-supported Aquino regime. The NDF cannot allow itself to be maneuvered into a position of being pictured as equally violent and equally responsible as GRP for the armed conflict or even worse as an insurgent or bandit force without popular support and without a just and reasonable cause for armed resistance.

It is unreasonable for anyone to demand in the name of peace that NDF show its "sincerity" in wishing peace negotiations by unilaterally ending the armed resistance of the revolutionary forces and the people or by agreeing to any ceasefire outside of humanitarian considerations for limited periods of time and outside the NDF commitment to declare a ceasefire in connection with the dismantling of the US military bases.

The sincerity of the NDF in this regard is to be measured by its steadfastness in defending and upholding the people's interests, its firmness of principles even while making policy adjustments to achieve certain specific anti-imperialist (for example, the immediate removal of US military bases) and democratic (e.g., genuine and thoroughgoing land reform) demands, and its vigilance in frustrating every scheme to undermine the gains and achievements of the revolutionary movement and the people.

In a speech in Singapore in June 1986 and in further statements, this writer observed that the New People's Army was still in the stage of strategic defensive and the Armed Forces of the Philippines was in the stage of strategic offensive; and that if GRP had been truly interested in the drastic reduction of the armed conflict it could order the AFP troops to desist from launching offensive operations and to go back to their barracks and could also disarm and disband the paramilitary and warlord gangs.

This writer thinks that his views in 1986 are still valid today. The burden of responsibility for reducing the armed conflict lies on the part of the GRP and its military instrument, the AFP. As soon as they desist from carrying out onslaughts against the people and the guerrilla fronts, there would be a dramatic reduction of the armed conflict. Consequently, GRP would even be able to save on military expenditures and reallocate its resources towards nonmilitary activities.

The NDF has made known to the public that it is willing to agree with GRP on the mechanisms and processes

of undertaking ceasefires on the basis of humanitarian considerations, for limited period of time, that are defined in a formal agreement on human rights and international humanitarian law.

But the NDF has also made known that it will not repeat the error of going into any protracted ceasefire (two months subject to extension or renewal as in the 1986-87 period) before a substantive agenda is agreed upon. Neither can the NDF be expected to go into such protracted ceasefire upon an agreement merely on the substantive agenda still to be taken up item by item in negotiations.

The only exception made by the NDF is its commitment to declare a unilateral ceasefire upon the dismantling of the US military bases. The political ground is patriotism and the promotion of national independence.

In case the US military bases are dismantled, the NDF can be expected to declare a unilateral ceasefire and at the same time demand that GRP reciprocate its patriotic goodwill. It is logical that the NDF will not allow itself to be destroyed by its own unilateral ceasefire but will expect GRP to hold back its own armed forces and move towards peace negotiations.

Aside from temporary ceasefires for reasons already explained, the NDF is interested in a lasting truce that is the result of mutually satisfactory agreements which substantially benefit the people in accordance with the national democratic line. The NDF is vigilantly against proposals for ceasefires, local or nationwide, which are outside of those reasons already clarified.

The NDF is also opposed to the proposal and propaganda that so-called community-based peace (like “zones of peace, zones of life”) should be undertaken by GRP and pro-GRP entities posing as third party. The NDF regards this as calculated to preempt and undercut bilateral GRP-NDF peace talks at the national level and to take away people and areas from the revolutionary movement under the pretense of excluding both the AFP and NPA but in fact retaining GRP authority and supporting the AFP in such areas.

Even if mutually agreed upon for a good reason, any protracted ceasefire is more advantageous to the GRP and AFP and potentially more damaging to the revolutionary movement.

During ceasefires, there will inevitably be accusations and counteraccusations of ceasefire violations. The NDF and NPA can suffer not only from the propaganda assaults but also from straining to verify the truth or falsity of the enemy claims. At the same time, the NDF will be exerting strenuous efforts to counteract the ceasefire violations of the enemy and collect the information regarding these.

The ceasefire can also be GRP's way of inducing revolutionary personnel to relax and expose themselves to surveillance for punitive operations; of weakening the revolutionary will; and of introducing dissensions within revolutionary ranks.

The NDF has to take seriously the lessons from the pre-ceasefire talks and ceasefire in 1986-87. AFP intelligence raised its surveillance stocks by twenty five percent, according to Generals Ileto and Ramos. The line of showing the “human face” of the NDF not only to the bourgeois mass media but also to covert operatives of the enemy had its bitter fruit subsequently.

The NDF has also to consider seriously how the MNLF has split several times, weakened and lost personnel politically and militarily as a result of the Tripoli Agreement and the ceasefires that transpired under the Marcos and the Aquino regimes.

The GRP, especially AFP, is always obsessed with ceasefires, without satisfying the requirements for a just and lasting peace, because it expects to thereby damage the NDF and benefit from them more than the NDF can. The GRP and AFP officials are feigning whenever they say that the NDF gains more from ceasefires than GRP does.

5. The Legal and Political Frame of Negotiations

In demanding that the NDF submit itself to the GRP Constitution as the legal and political frame of negotiations, GRP instantly kills the very idea of bilateral peace negotiations with the NDF and prevents them from starting. The demand has been made by GRP in preliminary talks about peace talks between GRP and NDF representatives.

The NDF has objected to the unreasonable character of the demand but has not retaliated by demanding that GRP submit itself to the Constitution and Program of the NDF. Instead, with utmost reasonableness, the NDF has proposed that the legal and political frame be one of adherence to mutually acceptable principles such as Philippine national sovereignty, democratization, respect for human right, social justice and the like; and an open-mindedness towards the agreements that are still to be made in the peace process.

If GRP is insistent on a reference to the GRP Constitution, then an equal reference must also be made to the

NDF Constitution and Program in the preamble of any agreement to be made. The key point is to refer to the mutually acceptable principles and provisions in the basic documents of GRP and NDF.

Per item in the substantive agenda, there may be pertinent treaties, covenants, protocols and other international legal instruments signed by the GRP and agreed to by the NDF. These can become part of the legal and political frame, provided these are mutually acceptable and these are not used to deny the NDF's status of belligerency.

The preliminary talks about peace talks can do a lot to clear the way for the formal bilateral talks. But in its sincere desire to start the formal talks, NDF has repeatedly declared that it is willing to form its negotiating panel as soon as the GRP is willing to do the same. The GRP and NDF negotiating panels can meet as soon as possible and start the negotiations even prior to a mutually agreed legal and political frame of peace negotiations.

The two negotiating panels can discuss and work out what would be the mutually satisfactory legal and political frame. The formation of the negotiating panels and the opening of formal negotiations should not be prevented by the intransigent demand of the GRP that the NDF must first submit itself to the GRP Constitution.

Before the two panels tackle the substantive agenda, they can agree not only on the mutually acceptable guiding principles and objectives but also on the historical facts and current circumstances which make the peace negotiations necessary and desirable.

6. The Substantive Agenda

The NDF has proposed four major items in the substantive agenda of peace negotiations. These are: (a) respect for human rights and international humanitarian law; (b) social and economic reforms; (C) constitutional, political and electoral reforms; and (d) the end of hostilities and redistribution of armed forces.

Regarding respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, there can be an agreement that binds both GRP and NDF and their respective armed forces, whether the armed conflict continues or whether there will ultimately be a comprehensive peace settlement. This agreement should be the minimum goal to be achieved immediately even as peace negotiations are aimed at the maximum goal of comprehensive peace settlement.

More important than any abstract reaffirmation of the principles and provisions of domestic and international laws, the agreement to be made by GRP and NDF should create the mechanisms and processes for promoting and protecting human rights; investigating, trying and punishing human rights violations on both sides; and indemnifying the victims and their survivors.

The two sides should be able to verify compliance with the laws on human rights; exchange complaints on human rights violations; define certain categories of persons, facilities and sites which should not be targeted by any military operations; declare ceasefire of limited duration on humanitarian grounds; effect the exchange of prisoners of war; and so on.

The agreement on human rights and international humanitarian law should be so framed and worded that it can either be the preparation for the end of hostilities or the way to promote respect for human rights even if the civil war cannot as yet be ended.

Regarding social and economic reforms, the GRP and NDF should make an agreement which can effect economic emancipation, national industrialization, genuine and thoroughgoing land reform, the improvement of the people's livelihood, freedom from the crushing debt burden, the expansion and improvement of the educational system and the protection and healthy utilization of natural resources.

There can be some crucial provisions in the agreement which are effective in solving the social and economic malaise. There may at the same time be other problems which can be dealt with in general terms in the agreement but which will have to be dealt with in detail consequent to the realization of constitutional, political and electoral reforms.

Regarding constitutional, political and electoral reforms, the GRP and NDF should make an agreement which can end foreign domination and the monopoly of political power by the political representatives of exploiting classes of the big bourgeoisie and landlord class and allow the empowerment and greater freedom of the broad masses of the people.

The political parties, movements and organizations of the basic exploited classes and the middle social strata must have a fair chance in electoral struggle; acquire the guarantees of representation in elective and appointive positions; and fully enjoy democratic rights free from coercion and punitive actions by anti-national and anti-democratic forces.

There must be a Council of National Unity to direct the enactment and implementation of constitutional, political and electoral reforms until such time that a new set of leaders are elected under the reforms.

Regarding the end of hostilities and the redistribution of armed forces, GRP and NDF can make an agreement more easily if all the aforementioned agreements are made. The NDF is interested in the suspension or end of its armed resistance if the roots of the armed conflict are addressed first to the satisfaction of the oppressed and exploited people.

The NDF can agree to a lasting truce but never to the liquidation of the NPA and the surrender of its arms. Any framework of peace negotiations which requires the surrender of NPA arms is totally unacceptable to the NDF. This is not the only option there is. The NDF is not also demanding that the AFP liquidate itself and surrender its arms to the NDF and NPA.

Even former defense secretary Enrile has apparently seen the light when he proposes that were he to become president he would invite the Left, Middle and Right to a coalition government and would be satisfied with a truce with the armed revolutionary movement for three years and not require the liquidation of the NPA and the surrender of NPA arms.

The concept of a lasting truce is worthy of discussion and realization. But the surrender of any side is considered preposterous by the NDF.

It is better to first discuss and agree on the substantive issues, redounding to the benefit of the people in accordance with their national and democratic rights and interests, than to ram through the bias of any side for the surrender of arms by the other side.

7. Time frame of negotiations

The NDF has told GRP that, as far as NDF is concerned, the peace negotiations can be as short as one year, a quarter of a year per major item in the agenda.

Indeed, the time frame of negotiations can only be as short as the time it takes for both GRP and NDF to come to terms in accordance with the national and democratic demands of the Filipino people.

The peace negotiations can be accelerated by the formation of working groups by GRP and NDF for the different major items in the substantive agenda. These working groups of GRP and NDF can undertake research, make tentative agreements and draft in advance the agreements to be made; and thus, provide effective assistance to the negotiating panels.

In November 1990, the Yap mission agreed tentatively with the NDF representatives that the negotiating panels and the human rights working groups of GRP and NDF could be formed in December 1990 or in January 1991. But General Ramos prevented the realization of the agreement by interposing that the negotiating panels should not yet be formed and that there would only be one working committee on human rights to consist of three members from GRP and one from NDF and that GRP decides who should be the NDF representative.

It is absurd for General Ramos to propose that the NDF subordinate itself in any way or degree to any single committee constituted and dominated by GRP.

In the formal GRP framework for peace negotiations, drafted by the department of national defense and approved by Cluster B, the GRP indicates no time frame for peace negotiations.

Instead, it indicates two kinds of time frame for a process of surrender. First, the NDF can surrender immediately and directly to GRP. Second, the GRP can talk first with "peace advocates" regarding the terms of surrender; and subsequently NDF can approach the "peace advocates" and either take or refuse the terms of surrender. In effect, GRP seeks to use the "peace advocates" as a buffer to delay or frustrate direct bilateral peace negotiations.

Because GRP insists on its absurd framework, the peace negotiations cannot start at all.

8. Venue of the Negotiations

The NDF has declared that negotiations must be held abroad in view of the lessons learned from the pre—ceasefire talks and ceasefire in the 1986-1987 period.

It is definitely clear that if talks were held in Metro Manila or in the countryside, the AFP intelligence services would surely surveil the NDF negotiating panel, its technical and other personnel and supporters and facilities for punitive operations.

The talks would be vulnerable to attack and sabotage by military, police or vigilante groups belonging to the AFP and GRP and antagonistic to the peace process.

The arrest of the NDF consultant Rodolfo Salas and his companions in September 1986; the murder of

Rolando Olalia, chairman of the Kilusang Mayo Uno in November 1986; the guidelines of General Ramos for the arrest of and other punitive actions against the NDF during the 1986-87 ceasefire; the Mendiola massacre of peasants and other people in January 1987; the admitted surveillance of NDF personnel and supporters by the AFP during the ceasefire; and the numerous arrests of NDF personnel and supporters after the ceasefire are the incontestable factual arguments against peace talks being held in the Philippines.

Practically all peace negotiations of the same nature as those possibly between GRP and NDF have been held in foreign venues. Talks abroad have been safer and more convenient. In fact, GRP representatives have already held preliminary meetings with NDF representatives abroad in Italy, Singapore and the Netherlands.

The GRP has repeatedly negotiated with the MNLF in the Middle East; and has made it possible for the latter to acquire recognition for its status of belligerency. There is no reason why the GRP cannot negotiate with the NDF abroad. The GRP is being unreasonable whenever it insists that having a foreign venue for peace negotiations with the NDF is not possible.

The European Parliament and a number of states are willing to provide the venue for the peace negotiations, as soon as GRP agrees. Such a venue will certainly be safer and more convenient for both sides of the negotiations.

The free movement of the members and related personnel of the NDF negotiating panel from the Philippines to the foreign venue and in foreign countries can be covered by the safety and immunity guarantees and by the good offices of the foreign third party.

9. *The foreign third party*

The foreign third party may be a state or interstate entity or agency thereof which assumes a formal role in the peace negotiations as a witness, observer, good office, intermediary and mediator.

The witness is one who signs as such on any agreement made between the two negotiating parties. The observer can give his opinions and signs as such on any agreement made. The good office provides the assistance in making the peace negotiations possible.

The intermediary can give proposals to both sides and each of the negotiating parties on the basis of what he has gathered from the negotiations and consultations. The mediator can arbitrate the negotiations.

The NDF has been seeking the good office of a state or interstate agency as the foreign third party in bilateral peace negotiations with the GRP. Such a foreign third party can also become the intermediary.

The European Parliament and a number of states have already indicated their willingness to become third party and to provide good offices. But GRP must agree.

The third party does not only provide the safe and convenient venue and other material forms of assistance but also exercises a moral influence that encourages serious talks and concrete agreements for a just and lasting peace.

There can be another type of foreign third party. This may be any nongovernmental organization or institution which assists the peace process in any appropriate way.

Even before GRP-NDF peace negotiations can occur abroad, the NDF has gained support for these from people's organizations, respected parties and institutions, states and interstate organizations; and has thereby gained recognition for the sincere desire of the NDF for a peace process.

The European Parliament resolution dated December 13, 1990 endorsing bilateral peace negotiations between GRP and NDF and the agreement of certain states to provide good offices are a step forward in the NDF's drive to draw GRP to the negotiating table and seek recognition for its status of belligerency and its struggle for a just and lasting peace.

10. *The domestic third party of peace advocates*

The Multisectoral Peace Advocates (MSPA) headed by Sen. Wigberto Tañada has been the most active and most prominent in seeking to promote the bilateral peace talks of GRP and NDF.

There are organizations represented in the MSPA like the Coalition for Peace, the National Peace Conference sponsored by the Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines, Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines, the National Council of Churches of the Philippines and so on. The People Caucus also has representatives in the MSPA.

The MSPA has put forward a framework for the peace process. The NDF welcomes the proposals for addressing the roots of the armed conflict to make a just and lasting peace and for a foreign venue of peace negotiations; and considers the proposal for ceasefire upon agreement on a substantive agenda as a positive although insufficient departure from the kind of ceasefire (prior to substantive agenda) in the 1986-87 period.

But at the same time, NDF takes exceptions to the MSPA premises of upholding the GRP Constitution, restoring trust and confidence in GRP, localized peace dialogues, community-based peace ("zones of peace/ zones of life") and surrender of the New People's Army. These are being pushed by Rightwing advocates of pacification within MSPA.

The NDF recognizes that there is a broad array of peace advocates, inside and outside of MSPA and the People's Caucus. They are linked by an avowed commitment to address the roots of the armed conflict and thereby pave the way for a just and lasting peace. They are not homogenous but are heterogeneous even when they belong to the same organizations, alliances or caucuses.

The broad array of peace advocates ranges from Left through Middle to the Right. The Left has the basic points in agreement with the NDF and the Right has those in agreement with GRP. The Middle has some points of agreement with the NDF and other points with GRP and tries to use principles and general terms which are not offensive to any side. The points of differences between the GRP and NDF positions and therefore of the pro-GRP and pro-NDF positions are clear enough in this paper.

The NDF is alert and opposed to the Right wing which espouses and supports basically the position of GRP and seeks to turn the people against the armed revolutionary movement and deprive it of people and territory zone by zone.

The NDF regards the Left and Middle peace advocates as helpful in building a national consensus and a broad united front for a just and lasting peace through the solution of the basic national and social problems of the people and in possibly acting as a facilitator and resource base in the peace process.

11. Examples of peace negotiations abroad

If the revolutionary forces (represented by the NDF) are resolute in carrying through to the end the national democratic revolution of a new type, it is worthwhile to study the peace negotiations undertaken by the Chinese Communist Party with the Kuomintang for a truce and a united front between them in the war of resistance against Japan; and once more those in Chungking in 1945. The pertinent articles of Mao Zedong can be enlightening, if only to know the difference between truce and capitulation.

It is also worthwhile to study the experience of the Vietnamese in peace negotiations in Geneva in 1954 and those from the late 1960s to 1972 in Paris. Each time the Vietnamese knew how to work for an agreement beneficial to their revolutionary side and never missed the correct relationship between the negotiating table and the battlefield.

All the national liberation movements, which achieved a high degree of national independence and anti-imperialism through revolutionary armed struggle, provide good lessons to the Philippine revolutionary movement on the question of war and peace. But, of course, it is also useful to recognize the historical instances when colonial powers grant nominal independence to colonies as in the Philippines and elsewhere.

The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) provides the unique example of an anti-imperialist government negotiating itself out of power under the pressure of US antagonism and Soviet decrease of support. The Sandinista leadership, which had gone into "fixed economy" without thoroughgoing land reform and without industrialization and into pluralism without sufficient restrictions on the exploiting classes, thus could not override the difficult objective conditions. In the end game of the peace process, the FSLN lost power not only to the National Union of the Opposition (UNO) at the national level but even more disastrously to the local gentry in the *alcaldias*.

The Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) has been able to gain politically from peace negotiations but is taking risks and changing attitudes in the backwash of the FSLN fall from power. The political retreat of FSLN was the main prize sought by the US when it allowed the El Salvador government to negotiate with FMLN. The NDF can critically learn from the El Salvador government-FMLN peace negotiations. Notwithstanding an already protracted people's war, some leaders of the FMLN have swung from a repeatedly frustrated insurrectionist line to a line of suing for peace on the premise that the revolutionary forces cannot win the armed struggle, especially because of the current international environment.

We are reminded of the Philippines' own historical experience of negotiating for a semicolonial or neocolonial compromise acted out by Quezon and the Nacionalista Party in the thirties as we witness Nelson Mandela and the ANC negotiate within South Africa and without a people's army waging and active people's war. The African National Congress (ANC) is still in the stage of opposing colonialism and racism and seeking mutual accommodation with the ruling South African white reactionaries who insist on retaining their property rights and control over security forces. The ANC is now in the throes of choosing between neocolonial compromise and massacre on a worsening scale because of the peculiar domestic conditions and the current international environment.

Quezon and the Nacionalista Party were able to obtain the Philippine Constitution of 1935 and establish the Philippine armed forces; and yielded to the property rights of US citizens and corporations. They could successfully negotiate for nominal Philippine independence in the Philippines and in the US without having revolutionary forces behind them but by taking advantage of the revolutionary history and potential of the Filipino people; their growing clamor for national independence; the social unrest due to the US economic depression; and the international anti-fascist current running high.

The kind and level of revolutionary struggle now being waged by the Filipino people should not be depreciated by the worship of any foreign model. The new democratic revolution in the Philippines is of a high level, because of a self-reliant protracted people's war and the successful building of Red political power even as there is still much to be done in gaining international support and recognition for the status of belligerency for the revolutionary movement represented by the NDF.

12. Perspective on the struggle for a just and lasting peace

The chances are currently dim for bilateral peace negotiations between GRP and NDF to occur before the end

of the current term of the Aquino regime. More than ever General Ramos is determined to obstruct and prevent any progress towards peace negotiations. His position has been undermined within the Aquino regime but not to the point that he and his likes in the Armed Forces of the Philippines cannot block peace negotiations. Notwithstanding the current obstacles to peace negotiations, the NDF is more than ever pursuing the struggle for a just and lasting peace because it is pursuing the national democratic revolution and waging all possible forms of struggle. The further advance of the national democratic revolution might someday compel or induce the GRP to agree to negotiate with the NDF. Whether peace negotiations are still possible or no longer possible under the Aquino regime, the NDF continues to firm up the framework and prepare the personnel for peace negotiations. This preparedness will someday serve the NDF in good stead. As the peace negotiations do not occur due to the intransigence of the GRP, the NDF gains time to strengthen its fighting and negotiating position, broaden the united front and gain further international recognition for the NDF's status of belligerency and international support for the people's demand for a just and lasting peace.

Two Articles

on The People's Struggle for a Just Peace

June 1991

The main reason for the defeat of the armed revolutionary movement in the early 1950s was the Left opportunist or adventurist line of quick military victory in two years' time, exaggerating the spontaneous character of the masses due to the social crisis and not paying attention to the balance of forces and the need for painstaking mass work to lay the ground for social revolution and to counteract the military superiority of the enemy forces. But the deceptive "peace" approaches to local leaders of the revolutionary movement by U.S. and reactionary agents augmented and complemented the heavy military onslaughts of the blatant enemy in the entire strategy to defeat the revolutionary forces.

Revolutionaries determined to carry out the objectives of the national democratic revolution can logically and legitimately consider peace negotiations as a way of pushing forward the aforesaid objectives, in the same way that the other side considers the same peace negotiations as a way of pushing forward its own objectives. Inevitably, the struggle across the table reflects first of all the struggle in the battlefield and then influence further developments in the battlefield.

The sincerity of the NDF ... is to be measured by its steadfastness in defending and upholding the people's interests, its firmness of principles even while making policy adjustments to achieve certain specific anti-imperialist (e.g., the immediate removal of U.S. military bases) and democratic (e.g., genuine and thoroughgoing land reform) demands, and its vigilance in frustrating every scheme to undermine the gains and achievements of the revolutionary movement and the people.

***For the Immediate Turnover
of the US Military Bases upon Rejection
of the Draft Treaty by Philippine Senate***

September 16, 1991

In accordance with its own constitution, the Philippine government cannot allow US military bases to stay one day longer in the Philippines after September 16, 1991 in the absence of a treaty allowing them.

Therefore, upon the rejection of the so-called treaty of friendship, cooperation and security, the US government must immediately turn over all US military bases to the Philippine government. To delay the turnover up to September 16, 1992 would definitely be a violation of the constitution of the Philippine government.

The immediate turnover of authority and general control over the US military bases can allow the withdrawal of the US troops and movable assets within two weeks and the residual presence of specific US technicians needed for the transfer of certain facilities and equipment and for the rehabilitation and development of the former US bases.

The withdrawal of US troops and movable assets can and must be accomplished before the end of September this year. Only a small number of residual US personnel may be allowed up to the end of 1991 to effect the transfer of certain specific facilities and equipment to the appropriate personnel of the Philippine government.

The long-term rehabilitation and development of the areas damaged and polluted by the US military bases must be done under the responsibility and authority of the Philippine government by employing Filipino professionals and workers, with some foreign technical and financial assistance.

The immediate takeover of all the US military bases and facilities by the Philippine government provides the soonest opportunity to convert these to productive uses, more profitable than the measly amount offered by the United States for their military use.

The continued stay of the US military bases under the guise of “orderly withdrawal” or continuing “access” will give the US and its Filipino political agents the opportunity to negate the nonconcurrence or rejection resolution of the Philippine Senate.

The US government and the Aquino regime openly declare that they are determined to overturn such a resolution of the Philippine Senate by holding a referendum under Republic Act 6735. The pro-bases forces are set to wage a US-funded campaign for the retention of the US military bases.

After the nonconcurrence resolution of the Philippine Senate, the broad masses of the people face the tremendous odds posed by the imperialists and traitors and must wage a resolute struggle against the US military bases on a nationwide scale.

In the absence of the immediate turnover of all US military bases and facilities to the Philippine government and the complete withdrawal of the US military forces from the Philippines before the end of September, I will not be surprised if the National Democratic Front would soon consider terminating its unilateral ceasefire order to all units of the New People’s Army.

As regards the NDF call for the Philippine government to reciprocate the NDF unilateral ceasefire, agree to the opening of a new round of peace talks and end the barbaric total war policy, the latter and its armed forces have made only negative, arrogant and bloodthirsty responses and have escalated offensive campaigns and operations against the people and the revolutionary forces. I do not think that the people and the revolutionary forces can indefinitely limit themselves to defensive measures.

It is entirely the responsibility of the Philippine government and the Armed Forces of the Philippines that the civil war continues. The broad masses of the people, the revolutionary forces and the genuine advocates of a just and lasting peace have ceaselessly pointed out that the two belligerent forces must address the roots of the civil war and move towards ending the violence of oppression and exploitation in the country.

Notwithstanding the fact that the US supplies weapons to its reactionary agents in many countries where there are no US military bases, the traitors in the Philippines use the specious logic that they need the US military bases to assure themselves of the supply of US weapons and operational funds for killing Filipinos.

While assisting US economic power in bleeding the people through the extraction of super profits and debt service and in keeping the country underdeveloped, the traitors also use the desperate economic and financial situation as the very reason for retaining the US military bases, notwithstanding the fact that the US makes quick-profit investments, trade accommodations and loans for its own neocolonial exploitative purposes even in countries where there are no US military bases.

The National Democratic Front has so generously offered the olive branch of peace by declaring a unilateral ceasefire. But the chief political and military agents of US imperialism are obsessed with keeping the people in bondage and in suppressing the popular demand for national liberation and democracy.

Against Disinformation

September 20, 1991

I hereby denounce the disinformation being spread that I wish to return to the Philippines and serve as mediator in peace talks between the National Democratic Front (NDF) and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP).

The disinformation seeks to push the idea that the peace talks between the NDF and the GRP can be held in the Philippines. As far as I know, the NDF is firm about its proposal to hold comprehensive peace talks with GRP abroad, particularly in Geneva, availing of the good offices already offered by the Swiss government and accepted by the NDF.

As before, I am always willing to be consulted by the representatives of the NDF and GRP whom I know personally. But I have never fancied myself as a mediator between the two belligerent forces in the civil war. More modestly, I would consider myself a mere consultant in steps already taken towards a peace process.

The civil and military officials of the GRP are daydreaming in seeking to inveigle local cadres and commanders into localized dialogues and ceasefires for divisive purposes and refusing to accept the longstanding NDF offer of top level and comprehensive peace talks abroad.

By fulfilling its pledge to declare a unilateral ceasefire in response to the Senate rejection of the US military bases, the NDF has proven itself to be seriously interested in a just and lasting peace based on the achievement of national liberation and democracy.

In sharp contrast, the Aquino regime and the Armed Forces of the Philippines have thoroughly exposed themselves as traitorous puppets of American power by seeking to perpetuate the US military bases in the country in violation of the constitution that they are sworn to, failing to fully reciprocate the NDF ceasefire order, spurning the offer of peace talks and escalating total war.

That the civil war is continuing is totally the responsibility of the Aquino regime and the AFP. They are the original source and ceaseless escalator of the unjust violence calculated to keep the people under foreign and feudal oppression and exploitation.

Valid and Strong Reasons for NDF

to End Ceasefire

September 22, 1991

The declaration of the National Democratic Front to end its unilateral nationwide ceasefire order to all units of the New People's Army has come to my attention. In my opinion, the two major reasons given for ending the ceasefire are definitely valid and strong.

Why should the NDF continue with its unilateral ceasefire in the face of the Aquino regime's determination to retain the US military bases and to escalate the US-instigated total war policy against the revolutionary forces?

By completely disregarding the Senate rejection of the US military bases and allowing them to stay on, the Aquino regime violates not only the constitution of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines but also that of the National Democratic Front.

The Aquino ruling clique is an outlaw in terms of both the GRP and NDF constitutions. The treasonous conduct of this clique is among the worst in the entire history of puppetry to a foreign power in the Philippines.

How can the Aquino regime superimpose the GRP constitution on the revolutionary forces and the people when it wantonly violates the few better-sounding provisions of this constitution?

As far as I know, the principal obstacle to the holding of peace talks between the GRP and the NDF is the ridiculous insistence of the Aquino regime that the NDF surrender in principle to the GRP constitution and eventually surrender the arms of the New People's Army.

The NDF has taken a just and reasonable stand by proposing a framework of peace talks based on mutually acceptable principles avowed in both GRP and NDF constitutions and on the evolvment of agreements that are precisely the subject of negotiations.

The Aquino regime is accountable to the people for its consistent spurning/rejection of every possibility for starting a process towards a just and lasting peace in the Philippines.

On US Military Bases and Peace Talks

Interview by *Justice and Peace Review*

Publication of the Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace.

October 7, 1991

On the US bases

1. Please give a brief account of your stand for the withdrawal of the US bases in the country.

JMS: Since my high school days in the 1950s, I have been for the withdrawal of the US military bases out of a sense of patriotism and a basic understanding of the Filipino people's national sovereignty and Philippine territorial integrity. I have benefited from an anticolonial and anti-imperialist tradition in my family, the teaching on patriotism in the public school and the anti-imperialist and anti-bases pronouncements of Claro Mayo Recto in the 1950s.

It is a matter of public and historical record that I have advocated the dismantling of the US military bases in the youth, labor and comprehensive national democratic organizations and movements since the 1960s. Recall the programs and mass actions of Kabataang Makabayan, the Lapiang Manggagawa and the Socialist Party of the Philippines and the Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism. Without letup, I have stood for the removal of US military bases through the 1970s, 1980s and now the 1990s.

2. How do you view recent developments on the Bases Treaty? a. the Senate rejection b. President Aquino's withdrawal of the termination notice c. the proposed referendum d. the president's plan to resort to RA6735

JMS: a. The Senate's rejection of the so-called US-RP treaty of friendship, cooperation and security is a patriotic action. The twelve anti-bases senators are commendable for their action of rejecting the draft treaty and removing the legal basis for the continuance of the US military bases beyond September 16, 1991 in accordance with the constitution of the Philippine government.

b. President Aquino's withdrawal of the termination notice of May 1990 is treasonous and is meant to allow the US military bases to stay beyond September 16, 1991 in violation of the constitution of the Philippine government. The pro-bases forces are given time to reverse the Senate rejection of the proposed treaty on the US military bases as well as possibly to remove the constitutional provision requiring a treaty for the continuance of the bases.

c. Under the present terms of the constitution of the Philippine government, a referendum cannot ratify a draft treaty already rejected by the current Senate. At any rate, it is treasonous for any regime to hold any referendum at any time to put national sovereignty and territorial integrity into question.

d. The Aquino regime is determined to hold a referendum under R.A. 6735 after the five-year ban on constitutional amendments for the purpose of removing the provision requiring a treaty for the continuance of the US military bases. At the same time, the US government and its pro-bases agents expect to produce a new Senate in 1992 that would ratify the draft bases treaty if there would still be a constitutional provision requiring a treaty for the continuance of the US bases.

3. What role has the presence of US bases played and continues to play in the government's total war policy/ "counterinsurgency" drive? a. from 1987-91 b. how would the withdrawal of the US bases affect such role?

JMS: a. The US military bases have been used to support the total war policy of the Aquino regime in a comprehensive way. These are the backup for US control of the Philippine government and its armed forces.

Under the guise of advisors, US military officers control and influence the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). According to the highest Philippine civil and military officials, the AFP depend on the US government for 63 percent of operational funds and equipment.

Logistical support comes from these bases. US military aircraft, naval vessels and communications equipment are used to surveil the revolutionary forces. US trainers provide training on these military bases as well as on AFP camps to AFP officers and men. US troops carry out psywar, intelligence and other operations on the ground in combination with and independent of the AFP.

b. Actually, even without the US military bases, the Pentagon can still control the AFP and provide all kinds of support. In many countries, the United States has no military bases of its own. But it can still control and

influence the local military forces because these depend on the United States for supplies and all kinds of military assistance. Take the cases of Egypt, Indonesia, Thailand and so on.

Even within the reactionary pro-US frame of mind, it is not a necessity for the US to maintain military bases in order to control and supply a mercenary force like the AFP. The United States has the strong economic and political motives to provide military assistance to the AFP even without the US military bases in the Philippines.

4. *“Bases scenarios” and the perspective of total war: a. What do you foresee as the future of US bases? Is there a possibility of their complete withdrawal? b. In this context, what do you perceive as the perspective of the total war policy? c. What are the prospects of continued militarization after the 1992 elections?*

JMS: a. It is likely that the United States will retain Subic naval base and communications facilities in various parts of the country. US officials are now manipulating the politicians of the ruling system, including a number of those senators who voted against the bases, to allow a situation in which no less than the constitutional provision requiring a treaty for the extension of the bases is removed.

The United States has already gained the time to move against that constitutional provision. The Aquino regime is using one device after another, like the withdrawal of the notice of termination and the notion of orderly withdrawal in three years, to give the United States and the pro-bases politicians more than enough time to negate the Senate rejection of the draft bases treaty.

At the very least, the US will finance the pro-bases party and candidates so that the next administration and the next Senate will carry out US orders regarding the bases.

While the US military bases still tend to stick to the Philippines, there are at the same time factors which argue for the reduction of overseas US military forces.

The United States is deficit-ridden and is in economic decline. It has been asking Japan and other capitalist countries to share military burden. The Soviet Union is no longer considered as much of a threat as before outside of its borders, especially in Asia. The American people are calling for the so-called peace dividend.

The reduction of overseas US military forces will proceed in stages but the United States will always try to maintain certain holdouts in order to secure its own interests and not to give up all initiative to other capitalist powers and certain countries with regional significance. Complete withdrawal of US military bases from the Philippines before the end of the century is not yet in the cards of the United States.

b. The so-called total war policy of the US and Philippine government will continue even after the end of the current term of the Aquino administration. And, of course, the policy will continue to fail.

It cannot succeed because it seeks to preserve the oppressive and exploitative system by the most brutal methods of the so-called military solution; and yet these methods serve to aggravate the economic and political crisis of the system and arouse the broad masses of the people to engage in armed and other forms of revolutionary resistance.

The total war policy is self-defeating. The ruling system of big compradors and landlords is weakened by the excessive allocation of resources for military forces that fail to suppress the revolutionary forces but succeed in goading the people to armed resistance.

c. Militarization will continue to grow after 1992. The civil and military officials of the Aquino regime are day-dreaming when they say that the AFP shall have put the revolutionary forces under “strategic control” in 1992 to 1993. They are merely announcing that they will continue with militarization.

The Philippine government is hellbent on suppressing the people who demand national liberation and democracy against foreign and feudal domination. Militarization is being used as the principal method in the attempt to pacify the people.

The staying and growing power of the revolutionary movement is now being enhanced by a renewed adherence to basic revolutionary principles and by a rectification of errors and shortcomings, according to sources in the revolutionary movement. How can the reactionaries in the Philippine government expect to defeat the revolutionary movement?

On peace talks

Are peace talks between the government and the NDF appropriate and timely?

JMS: It is well known that the National Democratic Front has a constant policy of seeking a just and lasting peace. The strategic line for this kind of peace demanded by the people is no different from the line of the struggle for national liberation and democracy. The NDF is therefore willing to engage in peace talks with the Philippine

government (GRP) any time that the latter agrees to a mutually satisfactory framework and to an agenda that addresses the roots of the armed conflict. Unfortunately, the Philippine government is stubborn at preventing the start of the peace process by demanding at the outset the capitulation of the revolutionary forces to the constitution of the Philippine government and the eventual surrender of the New People's Army.

2. What should the agenda of such talks be?

JMS: Within the framework of mutually acceptable principles such as those avowed in the constitutions of both the Philippine government and the National Democratic Front and those agreements that are still to be made between these two belligerent forces, the substantive agenda should include the following: a) adherence to human rights and international humanitarian law; b) economic and social reforms; c) constitutional, political and electoral reforms; and d. disposition of the armed forces and lasting truce.

3. What do you think are the chances that the government, particularly the military, would agree to hold such negotiations?

JMS: Repeatedly there have already been preliminary talks about peace talks abroad between representatives of the GRP and the NDF since 1990. But these preliminary talks cannot advance because the GRP side demands the immediate capitulation of the NDF to the GRP constitution and eventual surrender of NPA personnel and arms and refuses to consider the reasonable proposals of the NDF for a mutually satisfactory framework and substantive agenda.

Time and again the NDF has suggested that the GRP and NDF should form their respective negotiating panels. But the GRP has refused.

In an impasse like this, the only chance for peace talks to start is for the revolutionary movement to resist the escalating violence of the GRP and to change the balance of forces in the battlefield. At a certain point, the GRP will recognize the need for peace talks because of its increasing defeat, its worsening crisis and its need for truce or alliance against a common foe.

4. Would such talks require a ceasefire on both the military and the NPA sides?

JMS: Peace talks can be held even while fighting between the armed forces of the GRP and the NDF continues. It is disadvantageous and even disastrous for the revolutionary movement to have any prolonged ceasefire before the peace talks produce any substantive agreement.

If ceasefire is made concomitant, peace talks might be used by the GRP only to weaken the revolutionary will of the people and to split their ranks. In this way, GRP will have no incentive whatsoever for seriously negotiating agreements with the NDF to satisfy the basic demands of the people and the revolutionary movement.

A just and lasting peace is the objective of the peace negotiations. Before this objective is attained, an agreement on mutual adherence to human rights and international humanitarian law can protect the rights of civilians and combatants and guarantee the safety of all educational, medical, religious and other entities.

There can also be occasional ceasefires on humanitarian grounds such as those on Christmas and New Year and those allowing medical personnel to treat and carry the wounded across the battlefield. The NDF has also been quite generous in declaring a unilateral nationwide ceasefire in support of the trend for the rejection of the draft bases treaty in the Senate. Unfortunately, the GRP proceeded to commit one more act of treason to extend the US military bases by withdrawing the notice of termination. It also failed to fully reciprocate the NDF ceasefire. Instead, the AFP escalated military offensives against the revolutionary forces.

5. Do you think such talks would be successful?

JMS: There is no point yet in talking about the possible success of peace talks because in the first place the GRP refuses to engage in peace talks which are within a mutually satisfactory framework and have a substantive agenda. Probably, GRP is waiting for the time that the NDF is about to clinch total victory in the civil war.

6. In what way can the NDF show its sincerity in seeking dialogue?

JMS: The National Democratic Front has demonstrated its sincerity by presenting to the public and to the GRP what is the strategic line of the NDF in the peace process, the legal and political framework of negotiations, the substantive agenda, the timetable, the venue and the roles of various types of foreign and domestic third parties.

The NDF engaged in a ceasefire agreement in 1986-87. It has gone to so many preliminary talks about peace talks since 1990. It has repeatedly expressed its readiness to go into formal bilateral talks with GRP. But the GRP has consistently refused to reciprocate the NDF offer for peace negotiations.

Until now, GRP President Aquino has failed to formally reply to the letter of NDF Chairman Manuel Romero

dated September 20, 1990 proposing peace negotiations between the GRP and the NDF. I witnessed the conveyance of this letter by the NDF vice-chairman for international affairs, Luis Jalandoni, through Rep. Jose Yap, chairman of the national defense committee of the House of Representatives.

7. What would the Filipino people gain from such talks?

JMS: The Filipino people will certainly benefit from peace talks if these result in substantive agreements which give way to respect for human rights and international humanitarian law and basic reforms in the economic and political fields. The biggest benefit comes from the attainment of a just and lasting peace through the fulfilment of the basic demands for national liberation and democracy.

8. Why do you think the 1986 peace talks failed?

JMS: The 1986-87 ceasefire agreement and peace talks failed because the GRP wanted to use these only to gain time for consolidating the power of the Aquino ruling clique, create the wrong impression that GRP was interested in peace, weaken the will of the revolutionary forces and the people and split their ranks, and put the cadres and allies of the NDF under AFP surveillance for subsequent punitive operations.

9. Did the last talks improve the conditions for peace?

JMS: Preliminary talks about opening a new round of peace talks have gone on since 1990. There is yet no progress to the point that negotiating panels are formed by the GRP and the NDF.

The GRP is acting as if the political and military conflict between the GRP and the NDF is not between two belligerent forces in a civil war, as if the two sides did not negotiate before and co-sign the ceasefire agreement in 1986.

It is completely absurd for the GRP to imagine that the NDF is willing to consider itself a mere outlaw or insurgent force and be put at the level of the Philippine National Police or the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

The NDF is firm about its revolutionary character and principles. It understands that it has an inherent status of belligerency by virtue of the victories of the revolutionary movement in establishing organs of political power, a people's army and various types of mass organizations in a considerable part of Philippine population and territory on a nationwide scale.

The organs of political power are under an effective national political leadership, with a constitution and a program of national democratic revolution. The people's army has an effective national command and has grown by winning victories against the regular forces of the AFP.

On the Question of Revolutionary Violence

February, 1993

Comrades and friends, first of all, let me convey my warmest greetings to the leadership and the entire membership of the LFS. I congratulate all of you for holding the lecture series on the Philippine crisis and revolution. I am deeply pleased and honored to participate in this lecture series and to speak before you right now. The geographic distance makes no gap between us. The electronic means of communication instantly connect us. But most important of all, we have the fastest line of communication because we have an immediate basis for common understanding.

We adhere to the same general line of pursuing the people's revolutionary struggle for national liberation and democracy against the US, Japanese and other foreign monopoly capitalists and the local exploiting classes of big compradors and landlords.

Introduction to the subject

The subject assigned to me is of crucial theoretical and practical importance. Before you can begin to become revolutionaries, you must in the first place recognize why there is the need for revolutionary violence. There are the priorly existing conditions of oppression and exploitation and the priorly established system of violence called the state. You must reckon and contend with these facts if you are for social revolution.

As a student of social science like you, I urge you to form yourselves into the teams in order to conduct social investigation and mass work among the workers and peasants and find out for yourselves whether they are suffering from intolerable oppression and exploitation and whether there is an urgent need for revolutionary violence. Best of all, you can decide to serve the people all your lives and devote yourselves to their revolutionary struggle.

In any exploitative society, whether slave, feudal or bourgeois, the state is the highest form of political organization, whose class character is determined by the dominant exploiting class and is used by it to coerce other classes into submission.

In the history of civilization there is yet no example of one form of exploitative class society being replaced by a higher form of class society always unleashes counterrevolutionary violence against the newly rising progressive class and the people who demand revolutionary change. Therefore, the new social system can arise only upon the victory of the armed revolution waged by the upcoming ruling class and the rest of the people. In the course of waging revolution against the feudal order, the bourgeois recognized forthrightly the need for revolutionary violence and actively used it to seize political power. And after becoming the ruling class, it would use the power of the state to put under its control the proletariat and rest of the people and suppress any revolutionary movement initiated by the proletariat.

In reacting to the proletariat's revolutionary ideas and actions, the bourgeoisie, its ideologue, propagandists and politicians, gloss over the historical fact that the bourgeoisie itself has gained political power through revolutionary violence and has kept his power against the proletariat through counterrevolutionary violence. However, the bourgeoisie misrepresents the state as supraclass or as a non-class product of voluntary social contract or constitution-making among the people, thus misrepresenting its own exploiting class interests as those of the entire people in the abstract. There is in effect a continuing mystification of the state ¹¹⁸ as a creation of the heavens or as the realization of the self-development of thought.

In an exploitative class society, the state is essentially an instrument of class coercion, of class dictatorship, in the hands of the dominant exploiting class. It consists of the army, police, courts and prisons. These are employed by the ruling class to enjoy the freedom to exploit the ruled classes and to pretend using solely the means of suasion, like the schools, the mass media, the church and other institutions, the electoral competition, the legislative process and so on to keep the social order.

The reactionary state employs its coercive apparatuses against individuals, organizations, classes and the people that raise basic revolutionary demands and participate in a revolutionary movement against the fundamentals of the ruling system. You must recognize that when the legal democratic movement of the workers, peasants and youth resurged in the Philippines in the 1960s, there was an escalation of efforts on the part of the US and the Manila government to use force against it.

And when the Communist Party of the Philippines was reestablished and the New People's Army came into existence because militants in the mass movement recognized the need for the revolutionary armed struggle, the reactionary state began to undertake the brutal campaigns of suppression. It would rather use counterrevolutionary violence than undertake basic reforms to meet the basic revolutionary demands of the people. A state that violently reacts to the revolutionary demands of the people is ripe for overthrow by armed revolution.

In the history of mankind, the bourgeois state of monopoly capitalism is the worst kind of revolutionary state. In addition to serving as the instrument for the domestic exploitation of the proletariat, for the extraction of surplus labor, it engages in imperialist domination of other peoples in order to draw in super profits and debt service payments. The 20th century is drenched with the blood of the people because of the violence unleashed by the imperialist states against them in colonies and semi-colonies and in the two world wars among the imperialist powers themselves. The cold war between the US imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism also exacted a heavy toll on the people.

There has been an imperialist ideological offensive which drums up the idea among others that social revolution is possible without the violent overthrow of the reactionary ruling class and that armed revolution is counterproductive. This idea runs counter to the revolutionary idea that only consequent to the seizure of political power by the most progressive class in a given historical epoch is it possible to carry out social revolution.

In the bourgeois and imperialist ideological offensive of 1989- 1991, the neoliberals and the social-democrats misrepresented the French Revolution of 1789 as an unnecessary exercise and not as the necessary way by which the bourgeoisie made its historic triumph over feudal rule, to pave the way for the political preeminence of industrial capitalism. And the disintegration of the revisionist ruling parties and regimes was misrepresented as the fall of socialism. It was in fact the culmination of the peaceful evolution of socialism through bureaucrat capitalism to undisguised capitalism. This process has been relatively nonviolent as it involves protracted degeneration from a higher form to a lower form of society.

The counterrevolutionary ideas of neoliberalism, populism and social democracy currently being espoused by unremolded petty bourgeois elements are sterile and ineffectual in the Philippine situation. The semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system in the Philippines is so rotten and its chronic crisis is worsening so rapidly that no argument and no effective countermeasure can be made by the reactionaries against the ongoing revolution of the 120 people led by the proletariat and guided by theory of Marxism-Leninism.

There can be no alleviation of the domestic crisis of the ruling system. This arises from the fundamentals of an agrarian, preindustrial and semifeudal Philippine economy that is an appendage of the world capitalist system. The domestic crisis is part of the long running depression in most of the third world countries and in the former Soviet bloc countries due to the lopsided economic investments favoring the industrial capitalist countries, the deteriorating terms of trade and the mounting debt burden.

Following the neocolonial internationalization of capital, the depression of the underdeveloped or the less developed countries has recoiled upon the major industrial capitalist which are now in a state of prolonged recession, if not depression. The drive of the monopoly firms to increase their productivity and their rates of profit through the application of high technology is deepening and aggravating the crisis of overproduction in the world capitalist system.

There is now a new world disorder. There is social turmoil in many third world countries, in the former Soviet bloc countries and in the major industrial capitalist countries. We are once more on the eve of social revolution in several countries and several continents. We are entering a new period of revolutionary struggle in the world. The international environment for the Philippine armed revolution is increasingly favorable.

Revolutionary and counterrevolutionary violence in Philippine history

It is an iron law of history that oppression and exploitation engender resistance. Philippine history and current circumstances provide ample proof of this truth. One period in Philippines history is significantly and radically different from another as a result of violent developments. The social condition of the people in every period is determined by what kind of economy and political power is holding sway and is the outcome of the balance and struggle of the forces of armed revolution and armed reaction.

Spanish colonialism conquered the Philippines by force of arms in the 16th century. Inasmuch as the native inhabitants were in disparate patriarchal slave and tribal societies in the archipelago, the conquistadores could apply divide-and-rule tactics over the native people and conscripted native troops in one area to augment the

Spanish troops and quell the resistance of the people in other areas.

In more than 300 years of colonial rule, Spain systematically used the sword to impose its rule on the people and build a colonial and feudal society. It had to have a nationwide centralized system of administration for the purpose of oppressing and exploiting the people. Unwittingly, the colonizers drove the colonized people to perceive ultimately a common enemy and to unite in resistance to oppression and exploitation.

Since the 16th century, there had been sporadic and spontaneous outbreaks of violent popular resistance of varying geographic and time scales. Although these were quelled by the colonizers, there was a cumulation of the violent struggles of the people and a cumulation of anticolonial, antichrist and antifeudal national consciousness.

The qualitative leap occurred in 1896 when under the flag of the Katipunan the Philippine revolution broke out. These demands were for national independence from Spain and the social emancipation of the peasants from the feudal rule of the religious orders that were the biggest landowners.

The qualitative leap was not only one from a long cumulative train of spontaneous uprisings to a nationally conscious and 122 nationwide revolutions against colonial rule but it was also one from the reformism of Jose Rizal and the propagandists to the line of armed revolution of Andres Bonifacio and the Katipunan.

Anyhow, the Philippine revolution of 1896 was of the old democratic type, bourgeois liberal in ideology and led by the nascent bourgeoisie. The lasting value of this revolution was that it bequeathed to us a revolutionary sense of nationhood and democracy.

Without this legacy made sacred by the blood of our forefathers, without the just violence of the Filipino nation against the prior unjust violence of the foreign oppressors, we as a people would be in a much lesser position than we are today in the community of nations. As a matter of fact, we are proud to claim the honor of being the first nation to liberate itself from colonialism in Asia.

After our victory over Spanish colonialism, the US could intervene successfully and could conquer the Philippines because of superior military force and the inadequacies in the ideology and strategy and tactics of the Philippine revolutionary government and army.

In the course of the Filipino-American war, which started in 1899, the US aggressors killed off nearly one-tenth of the Filipino people, through combat, massacres, forced relocations, food blockades and other forms of barbarities. At the same time, the US used the slogan of benevolent assimilation and peace negotiations in order to split the ranks of the revolutionaries.

The liberal ideology of the leadership of the revolution could be coopted by a modern imperialist power. The latter also used the slogans of liberalism and ladled out concessions to the leaders who were inclined to compromise with the enemy and betray the revolution. After all, a modern imperialist power like the US was in a better position than the old type Spanish colonialism to concede to the reformist demands previously submitted to the Spanish parliament before the start of the armed revolution.

As a result of its successful war of aggression, the US was able to put the Philippines under its own colonial rule and begin converting the Philippines into a semifeudal society, dominated by the resident or native comprador big bourgeoisie and a landlord class subservient to the new colonial order.

The comprador big bourgeoisie grew from the expanding trade with the industrial capitalist countries. It teamed up with the landlord class. The peasantry would quantitatively decrease from more than 90 percent of the population towards 80 percent. And the industrial proletariat would emerge in significant number as one more basic exploited class. The middle social strata of the urban petty bourgeoisie and middle bourgeoisie would also increase as never before in the 19th century.

The problems of foreign and feudal domination persisted. Thus, there would be violent uprisings in every decade. In 1930, the CPP was established to engage in legal struggle but was soon suppressed by the US colonial authorities. The class struggle between the proletariat and the big bourgeoisie and between the peasantry and the landlord class intensified as the world depression worsened and the inter-imperialist war loomed.

In early 1942, the Philippines came under occupation by the invasionary forces of fascist Japan. On March 29, 1942, the merger party of the CPP and the Socialist Party formed the People's Army Against Japan (Hukbalahap or Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon).

In conjunction with the armed struggle against Japan, the revolutionary movement was able to establish Red political power and carry out land reform in Central Luzon. Were it not for the Right opportunist retreat-for-de-fense policy, which weakened guerilla warfare by absolutely dispersing small armed teams of 124 three to five

men the revolutionary forces would have won greater victories.

At any rate, armed struggle was waged and solid mass organizing was done. The people gained political power in the barrios and carried out land reform and social reforms. Towards the end of the Japanese occupation, the revolutionary forces took advantage of the concentration of the Japanese troops in the Cordillera and went on a general offensive in Central Luzon. They were able to seize power in the municipal centers of several provinces in Central Luzon.

In the process of reconquering the Philippines after WWII, the US military forces, together with the pro-US guerilla forces, the pro-Japan Constabulary troops and the landlord-organized civilian guards, suppressed the revolutionary forces through massacres and other forms of barbarities and reinstated landlord power over Central Luzon.

The US proceeded to grant nominal independence to the Philippines and thus turned it into a semi-colony or a neo-colony. The joint class dictatorship of the landlord class was installed nationwide. The politicians of the two exploiting classes became directly responsible for the national administration of the Philippines.

But the US made sure that it retained property rights, military bases and control over the Armed Forces of the Philippines by making it dependent on the US for strategic planning, indoctrination, officer training, supplies and so on.

The leadership of the merger party of the Communist and Socialist parties had prevented the Hukbalahap from continuing the revolutionary armed struggle with the right opportunist line of "peace and democracy" and welcoming the return of the US forces and the Commonwealth government. Because of the relentless bloody assaults on the revolutionary forces and the 125 people and the unseating of legislators belonging to the Democratic Alliance, the Hukbalahap was converted in 1950 into the People's Liberation Army (Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan). The Jose Lava leadership of the old merger party declared all-out armed struggle against the US-Quirino regime.

However, the strategic line of the armed struggle was "Left" opportunist. It called for a quick military victory in two years' time on the basis of a total HMB armed force of only 3000 riflemen deployed mainly along the Sierra Madre. There was no consideration of the need to do painstaking mass work and to accumulate armed strength over a long period of time. The crisis of the ruling system was expected to participate in the uprisings.

Within months after the successful first wave of HMB offensives in August 1950, the merger party of the Communist and Socialist parties and the HMB main forces were being smashed by the US-directed and US-supplied Armed Forces of the Philippines, which had fielded 30 battalion combat teams in Central and Southern Luzon and an efficient intelligence network in Manila. The defeat of the armed revolution made the entire decade of the 1950s one of extreme reaction, whipped up by McCarthyism and the cold war.

It took nearly two decades before the revolutionary armed struggle could resume. A few months after its reestablishment on theoretical foundation of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought on December 26, 1968, the Communist Party of the Philippines formed the New People's Army on March 29, 1969.

The CPP correctly analyzed Philippine society as semicolonial and semifeudal and, correspondingly, the Philippine revolution as national democratic of a new type, under working class leadership. The proletariat was recognized as being in basic alliance with the peasantry, in further alliance with the urban petty bourgeoisie and still further with the national bourgeoisie. 126 All these patriotic classes were ranged against the reactionary classes of big comprador and landlords. The Philippine revolution was set forth as a process to be realized in two stages: national democratic and socialist.

The protracted people's war is made possible by the chronic crisis of the semicolonial and semifeudal system, by the proletarian revolutionary leadership guided by Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, by the peasant majority of the population and their democratic demand for land reform and by the favorable tropical terrain. The revolutionary organs of political power can be created in the countryside even while the reactionary state is still entrenched in the cities.

Even before the Marcos ruling clique declared martial law in 1972, the armed forces of the counterrevolutionary state of big compradors and landlords were already engaged in the most brutal campaigns of suppression.

One after the other, Task Force Lawin and Task Force Saranay, each in division strength, were deployed against a few hundreds of fighters of the NPA in the second district of Tarlac from 1969 onward and in Isabela

from 1971 onward.

But the Party and the NPA engaged in guerilla warfare with an ever widening and deepening mass base. When the enemy forces concentrated on one area, they had difficulties in occupying the target areas and the adjoining ones and they gave up far wider areas beyond.

The NPA has therefore deliberately expanded and consolidated its mass base in the countryside on a nation-wide scale in order to have the widest room for maneuver. The most successful deployment of the NPA has always involved the existence of a center of gravity in relative concentration (no more than one-third of total armed strength) and many more units dispersed for mass work (at least two-thirds of the total armed force).

Martial law from 1972 to 1986 has proven futile in trying to destroy the armed revolutionary movement. It merely incited a greater number of the people to fight back. The shift to the pseudo democratic regime of Aquino has also proven to be ineffective in suppressing the armed revolution. General Ramos is the consistent prominent figure in all the failures of the reactionaries to suppress the armed revolution.

Today, the total NPA armed force nationwide is equivalent to several brigades or more than a score of battalions or several scores of companies or hundreds of platoons or so many hundreds of squads.

The NPA is in about 60 guerilla fronts in substantial portions of about 60 provinces or in several hundreds of municipalities or in at least 10,000 barrios. A guerilla front is built out of a number of guerilla zones. A guerilla zone has roughly the size of a municipality.

The NPA can victoriously carry out the revolutionary armed struggle, only as it is supported by the organs of political power, the mass organizations and the local Party branches and is augmented by the local militia units and self-defense units.

The NPA would have become a much stronger force in the 1990s and up to the present, were it not for the “Left” opportunist errors of militarism and insurrectionism which have played into the hands of the AFP and undermined the revolutionary mass base.

You must already be aware of the movement launched by the Communist Party of the Philippines within its ranks to reaffirm basic Marxist-Leninist principles, rectify errors and further strengthen all the revolutionary forces. This movement is expected to raise higher the fighting will and capabilities of the CPP and the people. The CPP recognizes the need for revolutionary violence in order to overthrow the oppressive and 128 exploitative ruling system and install a new social system in which the people enjoy national independence, democracy, social justice, material and cultural progress and peace.

Character and direction of the Ramos regime

The Ramos regime is fundamentally similar to the Marcos and Aquino regimes and to their predecessors since 1946. It is the principal political agency of the semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system in the current period. It has a big comprador-landlord character subservient to the US, Japanese and other foreign monopoly capitalists. General Ramos is the current chief representative of the local exploiting classes and top running dog of US imperialism.

Militarization and total war policy

At the same time, Ramos and his clique have certain peculiarities. Their key men are retired and active military officers. They represent the increasing militarization of the ruling system. General Ramos was the military hatchet man of Marcos and, subsequently, Aquino. Now he is his own president. He and his ilk are at the pinnacle of reactionary power. They have more license than ever before to carry out military plans against the revolutionary forces and the people.

In terms of background and service record, General Ramos is a long-running dog of the US. He graduated from West Point. He served in the Korean war and in the Vietnam war and specialized in intelligence work and psywar before he became the chief of the Philippine Constabulary, the most brutal and notorious military service. He was one of the so-called “Rolex 12”, the conspiratorial group under Marcos that planned and launched martial law in 1972.

Even before the proclamation of martial law, he had directed the campaigns of suppression against the revolutionary forces and 129 initiated the formation of paramilitary and vigilante groups. When he became chief of staff of the AFP under Marcos, he launched Oplan Mamamayan as a comprehensive plan seeking to assault and destroy the revolutionary forces as well as wage psywar campaigns through “peace and order” councils.

Under US direction, Ramos collaborated with Enrile in order to form a faction called the Reform the AFP

Movement (RAM) to oppose and overthrow the Marcos-Ver faction. Under the Aquino regime, he pushed hard the “total war” policy and the US-instigated “low intensity conflict” scheme in his capacity as chief of staff of the armed forces and then as defense secretary. He was practically the president for military affairs. Although he became the target of anti-Aquino and anti-Ramos military factions, he was able to take personal advantage of the fictionalization of the reactionary armed forces and the coup attempts against the Aquino regime.

General Ramos offers no solution to the basic problems of the Filipino people. He has adopted policies aggravating these basic problems. His “total war” policy continues to wreak havoc on the lives of the people. Since his coming to power, he has escalated the military campaigns of suppression against the revolutionary forces and the people.

The master plan Lumbat Bitag II has fully deployed all the six divisions of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the revolutionary movement. They are pursuing a war of quick decision (strategic offensive and gradual constriction). There is less use now of the so-called special operations teams (SOTs) but an increased use of bombardments from the air and from the ground by artillery fire in order to massacre the people, destroy their homes and farms and force their evacuation. So-called base-denial and search-and-destroy operations are rampant.

General Ramos has completely no remorse over the more than two million people turned into refugees by his total war policy¹³⁰ and over the thousands of victims of massacres, warrantless arrests and seizures of property, torture and extrajudicial killings since the start of the Aquino regime in 1986.

The military obsession of the Ramos regime is made most obvious by the fact that for the first year of its rule, the military budget has been increased by 20 percent to P31.2 billion. In comparison, the budget for health and education have been decreased by 51 percent and 20 percent respectively. The appropriation for the CAFGU is P1.78 billion or P5 million per day and the number of CAFGU personnel is being increased from 60 thousand to 80 thousand. The budget for intelligence services has also been increased to P392 million. Daily military expenditures is P88 million, excluding those camouflaged under departments other than the department of national defense.

The reactionary armed forces are the main component of the reactionary state and at the same time remain the puppet and mercenary force in the US. The United States has all the levers for controlling the AFP. Although the US has withdrawn its forces from military facilities in the Philippines, they retain access to these and have the core personnel in these under the guise of advisors, liaison officers and technical experts. The military facilities are now maintained mainly at Philippine expense. The US has reduced its financial and military grants and military sales credits are enough to make the reactionary armed forces dependent on the US.

The US and the Philippine reactionary forces are collaborating in the conduct of the “total war” policy. This involves not only the provision of equipment and other supplies but also strategic and tactical advice, technical support and the feeding of intelligence and reconnaissance data from the Pentagon and the CIA.

The socioeconomic crisis of the ruling system

The socioeconomic and political crisis of the ruling system is bound to deepen and aggravate under the US-Ramos regime.¹³¹ Together with the total war policy, all other policies already stated by General Ramos can only exacerbate the crisis of the system and the suffering of the people.

The IMF and the World Bank dictate economic policies on the US-Ramos regime as in previous regimes. These favor the foreign monopoly capitalists and the local exploiting classes at the expense of the broad masses of the people. General Ramos has already acceded to more investment privileges for foreign monopoly capitalists and accepted all foreign debt obligations, including the fraudulent loans.

General Ramos wants to turn the Philippines into an economic “tiger” like Hongkong and Singapore reexporting low-value added products and he believes that this can be achieved by further pressing down wage levels. But he disregards the fact that there is already a glut of reexports from the so-called economic “tigers” in the face of the recessionary trend in the industrial capitalist countries.

All major industrial capitalist countries, especially the United States, are reducing consumption. They are consolidating their financial positions nationally and regionally and are holding back on investing and lending money to third world countries like the Philippines because of the huge ocean of unpaid debts from such countries. In the current crisis of overproduction, the winning monopoly firms are trying to further increase their rates of profit in their home grounds by adopting high technology and throwing workers out of their jobs.

Undermining the financial position of the Philippines, General Ramos has announced that foreign monopoly

firms and the big comprador landlords can – without any limitation – retain their foreign exchange earnings abroad. The worsening economic situation is likely to adversely affect the foreign exchange earnings of contract labor which has been the biggest dollar earner. The terms of trade for Philippine raw-material exports and reexports continue to deteriorate.

The Ramos regime is running out of means to service the foreign debt. There is no debt cap. Getting new loans to service or pay old debts has been exhausted since a long time ago. And during the entire period of the Aquino regime, local public borrowing to pay for foreign debt stands at US\$29 billion, despite the fact that from 1986 to the end of 1991, more than that amount was paid in foreign debt service.

General Ramos is not even pretending to be concerned about the land problem, which involves the peasant majority of the population. He has expressed his lack of interest by announcing that he would raise the land retention limit to 50 hectares, thus excluding at least 95 percent of all landlords from the pretended coverage of the bogus land reform program of the previous regimes.

His regime has agreed to the proposal of extending 99-year lease on land to foreigners and to that one of exempting Mindanao from the coverage of “land reform” in the next thirty years in order to accommodate fifteen “industrial estates”.

Because of the nonsolution and aggravation of the land problem, it is clear that the ground for people’s war remains exceedingly fertile. It is the armed revolutionary movement led by the CPP that is responding to the demand of the peasantry for land reform. At the moment, the minimum land reform program is being carried out on a wide scale by the revolutionary forces. This includes rent reduction, control of interest rates, improving farm wages, raising prices of farm products and raising production in agriculture and sideline occupations.

Eighty percent of the peasantry are landless and they expect the maximum land reform program of the revolutionary movement to ultimately satisfy their hunger for land. Eighty percent of the people live below the poverty line according to the latest data. Unemployment is running high. At least 50 percent of the labor power in the Philippines is unemployed. Inflation is soaring. Production continues to break down. Basic producer and consumer goods are in short supply. Basic services are inadequate and are breaking down. There is environmental disaster due to imperialist plunder and pollution. There is lack of relief from the series of natural calamities that have struck the Philippines.

The political crisis and peace pretense of the regime

General Ramos is a minority president. Even his claim to having gotten 23.5 percent of the vote is under question. Thus, since the start of his regime he has adopted tactics in order to expand and consolidate his political base. At this point in time, he has approached the Marcos, Eduardo Cojuangco, Enrile and other reactionary groups for reconciliation and he has made shady deals with them, including the retention of their ill-gotten wealth and new business privileges.

Following the Pentagon’s orders and serving his own selfish interests, Ramos has made it a major policy to reconcile and work out compromises with the anti-Ramos military factions. So far, he has reconciled with them to an extent that the underground leaders and members of the Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabansa, Soldiers of the Filipino People and Young Officers’ Union have agreed to surface. As a result, these factions are in a better position to expand and consolidate their following within the AFP.

It looks like that so far the Ramos regime is succeeding in consolidating its position. But in a short time to come, when the revolutionary armed struggle and the legal democratic movement rise to a new and higher level because of the ever-worsening crisis, the contradictions among the political and military factions within the ruling system will once more burst out as never before.

Related to his drive to consolidate his political position and to make his regime appear even handed in dealing with all types of opposition, he has taken the posture of being willing to enter into peace negotiations with the NDF. He has no illusions that there will ever be an agreement for a just and lasting peace. But he calculates that he can gain certain advantages from going through the motions of seeking peace negotiations with the NDF.

In an attempt to make himself credible about his willingness to negotiate peace, he has undertaken certain “confidence-building” measures. While in the process of releasing all detainees belonging to the anti-Ramos military factions, he has released proportionately fewer Left political detainees and far more slowly. He has repealed Republic Act 1700 (Antisubversion Law) but he retains all the oppressive laws like those making political offenses criminal and nonbailable and allowing warrantless arrests and seizure of properties. The violation of human rights

in the informal ways of the military, paramilitary and vigilante groups continues unabated.

There is sophistication in the peace pretense of the US-Ramos regime. Hypothetically, the regime is willing to go all the way to peace negotiations and agreements, using the El Salvador model. At every step towards formal peace negotiations, the regime seeks to undermine first the position of the NDF through the total war policy and its complement of psywar schemes. The objective is to liquidate the revolutionary armed struggle.

The Ramos regime has already gone so far as to approve mutually with the NDF the Joint Declaration, co-signed by the GRP and the NDF representatives in The Hague in September 1992. The declaration has put the NDF and the GRP on an equal footing and set forth a mutually acceptable substantive agenda. But it also gives the peace pretense of Ramos a semblance of seriousness, which is useful in its psywar scheme.

The National Unification Commission has been created to peddle the old line of amnesty and rehabilitation to surrenderers. It is also a revival of the old “peace and order” councils under Oplan Mamamayan. It seeks to round up and mobilize leaders of the reactionary government, the churches, big business, the landed gentry and non-governmental organizations at various territorial levels to campaign for the regime’s line of pacification to isolate the armed revolutionary movement under the pretext of engaging in consultations; to entice local cadres and commanders of the armed revolutionary movement to surface and capitulate; and to split the revolutionary movement.

Another related move undertaken by the Ramos regime is to recruit some renegades and use them to attack no less than the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its major decisions, especially the rectification movement which is meant to correct the errors made by these renegades and further strengthen the revolutionary movement.

The peace pretense of the US- Ramos regime is meant not only to consolidate its political position to enable it to run government in a civil manner. It is intended to disarm and let down the guard of the progressive legal forces, the underground revolutionary forces and the entire people. The US-Ramos regime is already preparing for a return to undisguised military fascist rule. The regime is anticipating the worsening of the crisis and knows no other way to rule other than in the manner of using open terror. Both houses of Congress are now under the overwhelming control of the Ramos ruling clique. A proposal to change the form of government through constitutional amendment is now underway to pave the way for a situation in which the Marcos style president can revert to despotic rule in a false transition from an old form to a new form of government.

The legal progressive forces should expand and intensify the anti-imperialist, antifeudal and antifascist movement and combat the antinational and antidemocratic schemes of the US-Ramos regime. They should not entrap the issues within the narrow framework of wishful thinking or prospecting for a peace settlement with the regime. And they should keep their Left position and not be drawn to the position of “third force” between the GRP and the NDF.

Conclusion of the discussion

Let me now raise the question which is supposed to be the focus of my discussion. Is there a need for revolutionary violence?

The objective social conditions – the fundamental character and the chronic crisis of the semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system – have persisted and worsened since the time that the armed revolutionary movement was resumed in 1969 by the Communist Party of the Philippines. If you ask the revolutionary forces and the people themselves, they will certainly answer that there are even greater reasons now to persevere in the revolutionary armed struggle and win greater victories in the national democratic revolution.

They can also point to the fact that the US-Ramos regime is not offering anything to address the root causes of the civil war. It is in fact carrying out policies that deepen and aggravate the basic social problems. Indeed, it would be incomprehensible and shameful for the revolutionaries to capitulate to a regime that is escalating its total war and yet is weakening due to dwindling resources for feeding its own corruption and undertaking its brutal campaigns of suppression. Considering the background and the current circumstances of the present regime, there is no bigger inciting factor to armed revolution than the character and direction of the regime.

Despite its fullest and best possible deployment in the field, the reactionary armed forces can concentrate on only nine out of the 60 guerrilla fronts of the New People’s Army. In the face of this, the New People’s Army can win greater victories by carrying out people’s war through extensive and intensive guerilla warfare with an ever widening and deepening mass base.

In coordination with the revolutionary forces in the countryside, the legal democratic movement based in the

urban areas can also expand and intensify their efforts at arousing, organizing and mobilizing the people along the national democratic line of all the burning issues.

If the aim is to seize political power and consequently make social revolution, the main form of revolutionary struggle is the armed struggle. Although in this context the legal struggle is secondary, it is important and indispensable because it combines with the armed struggle to win over millions upon millions of the people to the revolutionary cause.

Without the development of the legal democratic movement in the urban areas, especially that of the working class and the urban petty bourgeoisie, the revolutionary armed struggle that is still based in the countryside can be isolated in political and technical terms and cannot be benefited by a continuous supply of cadres from the urban areas.

I can very well understand the acute need of the revolutionary forces in the countryside for coordination with those in the cities and for more cadres to be dispatched to the countryside from the cities. While people's war now requires that the people's army encircles the cities from the countryside, there is always a great demand for cadres to go to the countryside before political power can be seized in the cities. Thank you.

NDFP Welcomes Macapagal-Arroyo's Call for Resumption of GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations

Press Statement, January 23, 2001

I appreciate and welcome the prompt public pronouncement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that she is interested in the soonest possible resumption of the peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

To create immediately the atmosphere for resuming the peace talks, the new GRP president can order the release of all the political prisoners as a goodwill and confidence-building measure, in response to the pleas of the human rights organizations, the families of political prisoners and the people.

She can find precedence in the unilateral act of former President Aquino in releasing all political prisoners in 1986 after the fall of Marcos in response to popular clamor.

In reciprocation to the release of all political prisoners, the NDFP is ready to order the release of the prisoners of war in the hands of the New People's Army.

It is the policy of the NDFP panel to receive any exploratory team or new negotiating panel as soon as designated and dispatched by the new president.

The NDFP assumes that the resumption of peace negotiations means the revival of all the agreements previously made by the GRP and NDFP at the level of the principals and at the level of the negotiating panels.

Among the most important agreements are The Hague Joint Declaration, the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.

The peace negotiations made substantial progress during the term of President Ramos until Estrada deliberately scuttled them.

Resume the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations

in a Neutral Venue Abroad

Press Statement, February 20, 2001

Having announced their respective negotiating panels, the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) should soon be able to resume peace negotiations in a neutral venue abroad.

In the course of the peace negotiations, some of the NDFP negotiators and consultants who are based abroad may go to the Philippines from time to time for consultations. Their travel shall be covered by the documents of identification under the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) and not by any safe conduct pass issued by the GRP.

But the peace negotiations will have to be conducted in a neutral venue abroad because this is mutually convenient and safe, does not involve the deployment of large forces by the opposing armies for the security of the negotiating panels and is more economical in terms of time and resources.

To resume the peace negotiations is to revive all previous agreements, including the provision for the holding of the negotiations in a neutral venue abroad. The NDFP will never agree to the GRP's idea of reviewing previous agreements for the purpose of nullifying them and wasting so many years of work.

It is also necessary for the GRP to release all political prisoners as an act of good will in response to the demands of the human rights organizations, the churches, families of the political prisoners and the people. They continue to be outraged by the refusal of the Macapagal-Arroyo regime to release all political prisoners and by its tricky announcement of releasing only a few through some protracted and uncertain process.

Upon the release of all political prisoners, the NDFP shall reciprocate the release of all political prisoners with the release of the two prisoners of war in the custody of the New People's Army in response to the appeal of the humanitarian and peace mission of Senator Loren Legarda, Bishop Jesus Y. Varela and Supreme Bishop Tomas A. Millamena.

After the release of all political prisoners, the GRP and NDFP exploratory teams designated by the GRP and the NDFP negotiating panels can meet in order to prepare the resumption of the peace negotiations.

In accordance with its principles and policies, the NDFP is ever ready to respond appropriately to whatever position and action the GRP takes on issues. It is prepared to frustrate every foul tactic of the militarists in the Macapagal-Arroyo regime to sabotage the resumption of the peace negotiations.

The NDFP is conscious of the fertile conditions for the revolutionary struggle due to the ever worsening economic and political crisis of the ruling system.

GRP-Declared “Indefinite Recess”

August 17, 2002

As NDFP chief political consultant, I agree with the recommendation of the NDFP Negotiating Panel to the NDFP National Council to put under indefinite study the “indefinite recess” that had been declared by the GRP since June 2001 in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

The resumption of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations is actually blocked by the following factors:

1. State terrorism is escalating. This is in violation of the GRP-NDFP Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). The military, police and paramilitary forces of the GRP are committing the most vicious human rights violations on a wide scale under the Macapagal policy of waging an all-out war against the people and their revolutionary forces.

2. The Macapagal regime insists on the line of pursuing “back channel” talks until its pipedream of NDFP capitulation is fulfilled. It is violating The Hague Joint Declaration and other GRP-NDFP agreements that must guide the peace negotiations. It has also collaborated with the US in persecuting and threatening the negotiators, consultants and staffers of the NDFP abroad. It has openly endorsed the designation of the CPP and NPA as “terrorist” organizations by the US, in violation of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG).

3. The NDFP must not negotiate with the GRP while the Macapagal regime is allowing the US military forces to trample upon the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Philippines. The regime is collaborating with the US in its scheme of escalating military intervention and building the infrastructure for the reestablishment of the US military bases against the Filipino people and the peoples of the neighboring countries in Asia.

I share the view of the NDFP Negotiating Panel that it would be more productive to resume the peace negotiations after Macapagal ceases to be president and someone like Raul Roco or Loren Legarda assumes the presidency. The end of the current term of

Macapagal is only one year and nine months away, unless Vice President Guingona can somehow replace her earlier.

At the same time, we anticipate that the peace negotiations would completely collapse if the US would have its way in making president someone like General Angelo Reyes whom the US is now projecting as the more credible law-and-order leader in lieu of Macapagal.

She is widely expected to lose the 2004 presidential elections because of the aggravation of the socio-economic crisis, unbridled corruption, rampant criminality of the military and police officers, state terrorism and puppetry to the US.

Interview of Prof. Jose Maria Sison on US Terrorist Listing and De Venecia's Warning

By Lira S. Dalangin, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*

September 26, 2002

Kumusta po, [How are you] Prof. Sison!

My name is Lira Dalangin, a reporter for INQ7.net, the news website of Philippine Daily Inquirer. I hope you take time to reply to my query on issues related to the peace talks.

A news report at the bulatlat.com [bulatlat – search thoroughly] website quoted you as identifying Speaker Jose de Venecia as being the one who had disclosed the US plot to scuttle the talks as early as last year.

You talked of the same matter in your opening statement in a press conference, Sept. 18, but did not identify the speaker as the source. Was it de Venecia, indeed, who talked to you about the confidential information?

JMS: It was indeed Speaker Jose de Venecia who told me about the scheme of the US to demonize the CPP, NPA and the NDFP chief political consultant as “terrorists” when he phoned from Mexico in November 2001 when he was attending the international conference of the Christian democrats.

But there was nothing confidential about his revelation to me. A PDI columnist Belinda Olivares Cunanan and other Filipinos were with Speaker de Venecia and they were able to listen to our phone conversation. Later on, Belinda would write a column about the main point in said conversation, chiefly the revelation about the scheme of the US to demonize me by misrepresenting me as a “terrorist.”

According to a highly-placed source other than Speaker de Venecia, the national security adviser and the highest defense and military officials in the entourage of Macapagal last November 2001 sat in Washington with their US counterparts to plot the international psywar campaign against me for the purpose of threatening me with extradition to a US territory and thereby intimidating me and the NDFP negotiating panel towards capitulation.

But Ms Macapagal-Arroyo is dumb for believing that the CPP, NPA and NDFP can be made to capitulate by merely threatening the NDFP negotiating panel and myself. You are correct in pointing out that the US scheme merely serves to scuttle the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. You can be sure that the CPP, NPA and NDFP would terminate said negotiations as soon as it becomes clear to them that the US and GRP are putting the NDFP negotiating panel and NDFP chief political consultant under duress.

It is good that in the meantime the NDFP and the broad masses of the people are demanding that the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations be resumed in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration as the framework agreement. The European governments are also being reminded that they must comply with the 1997 and 1999 resolutions of the European parliament endorsing and supporting the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

Lira Dalangin: How did you react then when you learned about the forthcoming terrorist label, freezing of funds, etc? Were there specific actions from the CPP and NDF leadership to verify this, or avert them from happening?

JMS: I was not at all intimidated by the forthcoming terrorist label, freezing of whatever funds and so on. Neither was I intimidated by the thinly veiled threats of extradition or assassination by the CIA. Modesty aside, I could not be intimidated by the Marcos fascist dictatorship, even while I was already in maximum security detention. Neither was I ever attracted to any offer of unprincipled compromise and high position from Marcos or any of his successors.

The NDFP, its negotiating panel and chief political consultant did not do any kind of bending towards any threat from the direction of the US and GRP. They simply stressed the need to resume the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration, to accelerate negotiations on social and economic reforms and to promote the implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.

Lira Dalangin: In an interview, de Venecia confirmed he warned you about the CPP's inclusion in the state department's list of foreign terrorist organizations. But he denied mentioning other details you cited in your September 18 statement. Could you enlighten me on his exact words? Did he also tell you who his source was in the state department about the information?

JMS: I am glad that you mention de Venecia's confirmation of his warning me about the US State Department's plan to list the CPP, NPA and myself as “terrorists.” De Venecia is not my only source. Even national

security adviser Roilo Golez is also my open source. Did he not declare publicly (see the Aug. 22 issue of PDI) that the US would eventually trump up a criminal charge against me by somehow linking me to the killing of Colonel James Rowe in 1989?

The mouth of Norberto Gonzales is also quite an open source. I have other sources in the Macapagal entourage of November 2001 to Washington. But I cannot identify them because they gave to me details on a confidential basis. You understand my point because you are a journalist and you know that discreet sources of information cannot be identified publicly.

But let me now return to Speaker de Venecia. He said that he was warning the NDFP about the US scheme and was proposing as a way out of that malicious scheme that the NDFP sign soon a final peace agreement drafted within two or three months. What he said in November 2001 by phone in Mexico, he would reiterate in our interfaces in Europe in November, December and July.

Sometimes, I thought that he was underestimating the integrity, capabilities and fighting spirit of the revolutionary forces and people. At other times, I thought that he had a good estimate of the strength and morale of the revolutionary movement whenever he said that the US scheme would only exacerbate the civil war in the Philippines. He also said that taking me out of Europe and out of the negotiations would be to sabotage the negotiations.

Lira Dalangin: Of “exploratory talks,” how are you preparing for this?

JMS: GRP negotiating panel chairman Silvestre Bello III is always planning to come over with some of his panelists to the Netherlands for talks with their NDFP counterparts to pave the way for the soonest possible formal negotiations in Oslo Norway. He is welcome. In this regard the Norwegian government has reiterated its willingness to facilitate the peace negotiations.

It would be too late for Bebot Bello to come if the US and Dutch governments succeed in extraditing any one of those involved in the peace negotiations on the side of the NDFP or in making it so clear that they wish to put the NDFP negotiating panel under duress. I think that the NDFP is ready for serious negotiations and is likewise ready for terminating them if necessary. The state terrorism and all-out war policy of the US imperialists and the reactionary puppets in power can only serve to incite the people to wage armed revolution.

GRP Has Grievously Violated Agreements and Terminated Peace Negotiations with NDFP

November 3, 2002

The Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) under the Macapagal-Arroyo regime has grievously violated all major agreements in its peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). These agreements include The Hague Joint Declaration, the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CAHRIHL). Thus, the GRP has unilaterally terminated its peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

1. The GRP grossly violates The Hague Joint Declaration by setting the capitulation of the NDFP as precondition for the resumption of the peace negotiations and by seeking to impose on the NDFP a “final peace agreement” that GRP militarists and bureaucrats have unilaterally drafted. The GRP is utterly malicious when it mendaciously claims that its door is open to formal negotiations but in fact demands the prior capitulation of the NDFP. Also, the constant rumors of “backdoor” talks are being generated by the GRP to mislead and confuse people.

2. The GRP brazenly violates the JASIG by conniving with the imperialist governments of the US and European Union in criminalizing as “terrorists” without due process such principal organizations of the NDFP as the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the New People’s Army (NPA) and the NDFP chief political consultant, and by putting the entire NDFP, its negotiators, consultants, staffers and supporters under duress. With the assistance of the imperialist governments, the GRP has practically scrapped the JASIG and is threatening to criminalize the NDFP as “terrorist” and cause the restriction of movement, imprisonment and dispossession of anyone associated with the NDFP.

3. The GRP flagrantly violates the CAHRIHL by perpetrating the most vicious acts of state terrorism or gross human rights violations on a wide scale and thereby exposes its complete contempt for the peace negotiations. The GRP and the imperialist governments label the revolutionary forces as “terrorist” but make no mention of the atrocities and depredations of state terrorism.

The revolutionary organs of leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines and the people’s democratic government do not have to formally declare the termination of their part in the peace negotiations with the GRP. They can simply express recognition of the prior fact that the GRP has grievously violated the aforementioned agreements and has in fact and effect unilaterally terminated its peace negotiations with the NDFP.

Henceforth, it is just and reasonable for the NDFP to demand that the GRP apologize for the aforesaid violations, set these aright and make amends for them before there can be any resumption of peace negotiations. It is also necessary and wise for the NDFP to demand that the GRP prove its seriousness in peace negotiations by renouncing its puppetry to US imperialism and its policy of state terrorism.

However, the Macapagal-Arroyo regime is manifestly no longer interested in resuming the peace negotiations in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration. It has already declared an all-out war policy in conjunction with the US designation of the revolutionary forces as “terrorists”.

Under the super-terrorist policy of the US, the Macapagal-Arroyo puppet regime has decided to undertake the bloody repression of the revolutionary forces and the legal democratic forces. We cannot expect any GRP-NDFP negotiations to happen in Europe or anywhere else while the US-directed Macapagal-Arroyo ruling clique is still in power and the US and European imperialists demonize the revolutionary forces as “terrorist.”

As the CPP national information officer has made known to the public, the revolutionary forces and people are well prepared to counter the escalating brutal campaigns of suppression carried out by the military, police, paramilitary, deputized private armies and vigilante groups of the GRP.

The US and puppet regime of Arroyo are hell bent on destroying the revolutionary movement and permanently chaining the people to the exploitative and oppressive ruling system of the big compradors and landlords.

But the broad masses of the people are rising against the daily worsening conditions of oppression and exploitation. They are poised to put an end to the Arroyo regime, together with its retinue of crooks, professional butchers and the most unprincipled renegades. In fighting one enemy regime after another, the people accumulate the strength to ultimately put an end to US domination and the domestic ruling system.

Reply to Open Letter of Alejandro Lichauco

Sunday, September 12, 2004 Utrecht, The Netherlands

Dear Ding,

Thank you for your open letter dated September 9, 2004 in your op-ed column in the *ABS-CBN.news.com*. I appreciate the serious patriotic intent and urgent tenor of the letter. Indeed, in this time of unprecedentedly grave crisis, we are all challenged to do what best we can do to overcome the lethal problems besetting our motherland.

I understand and respect your reasons for not responding to my request in 1995 to help the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) in drafting a comprehensive agreement on social and economic reforms. Anyway, your writings have been important reference materials. What is important now is that you, the distinguished nationalist, are making a proposal to the NDFP.

I agree with you that imperialist globalism is the evil that all of us must abhor and combat. The myth of “free market” globalization has been used by the United States and its camp followers to prettify the rapacity of the monopoly capitalists. This is diametrically opposed to the people’s demand for national liberation, nationalization of the economy and socio-economic reforms.

The purpose of the NDFP in negotiating with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) is not to compromise with or capitulate to the evil of foreign monopoly capitalism but to propagate the people’s program for national liberation, democracy, development, social justice and peace. The NDFP avails of every possible way to broadcast this program.

I welcome your declaration that the time has come for you to make a proposal to the NDFP. As you say, the situation is a lot different now from building railroad networks in the 1800s. Several of the American allies also never paid back debts to the US acquired during World War I.

Some of the fraudulent debts of the Marcos cronies are: Rodolfo Cuenca, CDCP, \$323 million; Alfredo Montelibano, Planters Products, \$150 million; Roberto Benedicto, Velasco, Nobel Phil., \$14 million; Geronimo Velasco, Republic Glass, \$2 million; Herminio Disini, Nasutra/Philsucom, \$265 million; Benjamin Romualdez, Meralco/First Holdings, \$370 million; Marcos/Jose de Venecia, Landoil, \$165 million; Geronimo Velasco, PNOC, \$123 million; Geronimo NPC, \$795 million; Roberto Ongpin, NIDC, \$795 million; Roberto Ongpin, NIDC, \$157 million; Roman Cruz, PAL, \$321 million; and Conjuancos, PLDT, \$654 million; (From data of NEPA and IBON data bank) *The Philippine Debt Crisis*, published by the Freedom from Debt Coalition, March 1989, pp.2526).

When Corazon Aquino succeeded the dictator Marcos after EDSA I, she had all the moral ascendancy at that time to repudiate Marcos’ debts of dishonor since world opinion was behind the people’s movement that toppled the dictatorship. But Aquino instead promptly went to deliver a speech before the US Congress as an invited special guest to assure all the Philippine foreign creditors that the country will pay for all its external debts, including the loot that Marcos has stashed away in foreign banks, mostly in Switzerland, which is estimated to be around \$13 billion to \$20 billion. Indeed, this subservience and cowardice of Aquino is one of the major factors why we are in our present crisis.

The solution to our fiscal crisis is not for the people to carry its burden since they had not been responsible for it in the first place. In fact, the masses have long been subjected to the effects of the constant scrimping of the national budget, mostly affecting the appropriations for social services, in order to defray government debts. The solution is not to increase all kinds of taxes, like what the government and the 11 UP professors are clamoring for, which will just exacerbate the miseries of the people, but for the government to have a strong political will to renegotiate all debts, especially foreign.

Another way out from the fiscal crisis is to likewise to renegotiate the Philippines’ commitments under various trade agreements to lower down and eventually eliminate its tariffs for all sorts of products, particularly agricultural, which ridiculously include products that the country has in abundance like vegetables. Revenues foregone from custom dues, which are estimated at P100 billion annually, for the entry of diverse products into the Philippines, have contributed greatly to the escalation of the government deficit. Still another alternative to confront this particular diminution of government revenues is for the Philippines to withdraw from WTO as a member. Instead, the Philippines can enter into various bilateral trade agreements with countries, whose products we need. Countries like Taiwan and Vietnam are not members of WTO and yet they get along very well with their foreign trade, compared to the Philippines with its richer natural resources.

The drain of around 20 percent from the annual national budget due to graft, patronage and tax evasion must also be eliminated. This massive leakage

The lowering of tariff rates for cabbages, lettuce, string beans, tomatoes, etc., that farmers in Northern Luzon produce in abundance, has bankrupted these farmers after the entry of the Philippines into GATT.

With the Philippine state deeply mired in foreign debts, which even forebodes a closing of its government within the next two years, its foreign creditors through the IMF can bring it down to its knees and impose such deadly requirements for the economy that its people will bleed white. Such a situation will bring ruin to all, including the banks and the business of the comprador bourgeoisie, ever faithful but dispensable partners of US imperialism. But the majority of the people have long been ruined, forced to a hand to mouth existence, millions robbed of their human dignity, subsisting on morsels thrown by the government and the rich and living in squalid places only fit for animals. The masses have seen one Philippine president after another come and go without the least improvement in their lives even in times of government budget surplus and supposed economic growths of GDP and GNP. In fact, the plight of the masses has worsened through the years as we have seen. Thus, one fiscal crisis after another, and there had been several in the past, though the present is the most severe, have become of no concern any more to the long enduring and suffering masses.

The IMF post program monitoring team

Yearly, the IMF sends survey missions to the Philippines to monitor closely whether the Philippine state is faithfully following its various commitments under its programs with the Fund (the term commonly used to refer to the IMF), especially with regards to debt servicing. An IMF survey mission conducted a so-called post program monitoring (PPM) from June to July, 2004, on how the Philippine government is managing its deficit as we have already discussed above. The Philippine government last entered into a stand-by agreement (under a credit line called by the Fund as a precautionary agreement) during the Estrada administration, which secured a US\$1.3 billion from the Fund. The IMF survey team last June made sure that all the commitments under this precautionary stand-by agreement are being complied with. The Arroyo administration is contemplating to borrow under another new stand-by agreement with the IMF to meet the current fiscal crisis. With the entry of WTO in 1995 to supervise more stringently the observance of the trade liberalization policy (a continuing commitment with the IMF) of the Philippines, the country has been more closely integrated to serve the business agenda of the TNCs in the name of so-called globalization.

Diosdado Macapagal, and the various very liberal investments laws of Marcos (Investment Incentive Act of 1967, Export Incentive Act of 1970, PD 1034, the latter allowing offshore banking units in the Philippines, etc.) , all compiled under the Omnibus Investment Act, the Labor Code of 1974 (disallowing strikes in so-called vital industries) and the laws under various structural adjustment programs of liberalization, privatization and deregulation, implemented by the Aquino up to the Arroyo regimes. Most of these laws since 1949 have been commitments under various letters of intent with the IMF, now called Memorandum of Economic Agreement. Such agreements are made to appear as if they embody reforms formulated by the Philippine government itself, though they are in fact based on recommendations from various studies conducted by IMF-WB survey missions before such economic reforms are adopted by the Philippine government. Thus, there were the industrial reforms of 1956 and 1979, financial reforms of 1972 and 1980, agricultural reforms of 1980 and 1996 and educational reforms of 1982, 1997 and 2001 implemented in the Philippines following the proposals of sundry IMF-WB survey missions, from the Bell mission, Ranis mission and others.

Neocolonial laws are easily enacted in the Philippines due to the fact that Congress is dominated by the upper classes of our society, composed mostly of the landlord class and the comprador bourgeoisie or their representatives. The comprador class basically favor a dependent trade relationship with the US since their business in cash crop exports, like sugar, coconut, hemp, etc., benefit from this relationship. Thus, free trade arrangements like the Bell Trade Act and export incentive laws are to the great advantage of the Philippine landed gentry. This is the reason why this class supported the US policy of not dismantling the semi-feudal structure of Philippine agriculture when the country became an American colony in 1899. A study of the US Bureau of Labor in the first decade of the century recommended to the US government that the feudal relationship of tenant to landlord already entrenched during the Spanish regime must not be disturbed. Soon after, the US passed the Payne-Aldrich Act (or the first free trade law in the Philippines) in 1909. The retention of semi-feudalism in the Philippines, semi since a great part of the Philippine agricultural produce are exported, would reduce the production costs of the

comprador bourgeoisie in the countryside to their advantage as well as their trading partners, since tenants and sacadas (seasonal workers in haciendas many of which are tenants) incur for the comprador lower payments for labor and thus cheaper export goods. The comprador bourgeoisie have also maintained the backward state of technology in their haciendas since manual labor in the countryside is plentiful and the acquisition of machineries in their farms will just increase their cost of production. Thus, throughout the years even with various land reforms, which are always diluted by a landlord-dominated Congress, the tenancy and the sacada systems persist in the countryside. In 1980 tenancy still existed in 26 percent of total farms in the Philippines and this further increased to 35 percent of all farms by 1996.

What can be done?

The Philippines must first and foremost re-negotiate all foreign loans, since a great part of these are odious loans, particularly those incurred during the Marcos regime, when our external loans ballooned from \$599.5 million in 1965 before Marcos to \$28.2 billion after he was ousted in 1986. Thus, Marcos incurred a total of \$27.8 billion loan during his regime, including the scandalous \$2.3 billion for the defunct Bataan Nuclear Power Plant and other loans to his cronies. The Philippine government still continues to pay for the interests and principals of many of the Marcos loans, which formed part of the total current \$57.8 billion foreign debt of the country. And there are other questionable foreign debts like those incurred by Napocor from the Ramos up to the Arroyo regimes that a tough and determined government mission can negotiate with the country's foreign creditors. Other countries like Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Cuba, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zaire have at one time or another unilaterally suspended or repudiated part or all of their debt servicing. Even the United States repudiated some of its debts, such as those which she incurred from British financiers in 1995 and we should talk about now and the future as Filipinos racing against time.

You refer to mass hunger as a common adversary of the GRP and the NDFP. You also point to the looming collapse of the Western financial system as the most disturbing aspect of the situation. I agree with your critical view that the GRP is not prepared to deal with the problem like a first-grade pupil not prepared with an exam in calculus.

Thus, you observe that "the Filipino people might just have to take matters in their own hands and act as if there isn't any government except that which they can put up themselves." You urge that the people put up one soon if they are to avert what is an imminent catastrophe.

Let me point out that a people's democratic government already exists, consisting of the organs of democratic power established by the people and revolutionary forces in the countryside. It is basically a revolutionary government of the workers and peasants in opposition to the counterrevolutionary government of big compradors and landlords headed by the Macapagal-Arroyo reactionary ruling clique.

In peace negotiations with the GRP, the NDFP has been representing the broad masses of the Filipino people, the people's democratic government, the communist party, the people's army and the mass organizations. These revolutionary forces are resolutely and militantly fighting against US imperialism (the main cause of that mass hunger that you perceive as the common adversary) and the reactionary puppet classes of big compradors and landlords.

Truce and alliance between the NDFP and the GRP are realizable if these contending forces succeed in following up the GRP-NDFP Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law with comprehensive agreements on social, economic, political and constitutional reforms. These agreements can be reached only if the people and the patriotic and progressive forces can prevail over the US imperialists and their most rabid agents within the GRP.

You seem to have given up on the GRP because of the puppetry and corruption of its officials. The GRP-NDFP peace negotiations have come to a standstill because of US intrusions and interferences that the NDFP consider unacceptable. The GRP has shown complete incapacity to go along with the NDFP on asserting national sovereignty and independence against US interventions and obstructions in the peace negotiations.

By listing the Communist Party of the Philippines, the New People's Army and the NDFP chief political consultant as "terrorists", the United States violates the national sovereignty and jurisdiction of the Filipino people over events in the Philippines. It also transgresses the safety and immunity guarantees for duly authorized persons in the peace negotiations. It has shown utter contempt for the civil and political rights of Filipinos and the Hernandez political offense doctrine pertaining to armed revolution.

The GRP has failed to oppose US encroachment upon the national sovereignty and jurisdiction of the Filipino people and has even applauded it. At this time of severe economic and financial crisis, the GRP does not seriously seek the alliance of the NDFP. It does not seek the support of the people but it imposes on them all the burdens of crisis, especially mass unemployment, peso depreciation, a heavier tax burden and austerity measures.

It continues to sink the country in underdevelopment, deficits and indebtedness. Being so bankrupt not only in economic and financial terms but also in political and moral terms, it follows the US dictate of neoliberal globalization and collaborates with the US in the worst crimes of terrorism, such as wars of aggression and the brutal repression of entire nations and peoples.

In general, the NDFP can easily agree with you that there is a need for a new government established by the people and serving them. But would the US and the current reactionary government allow such a new government to exist? Would both of them not use the coercive apparatuses of the state to suppress those forces trying to establish the new government?

As NDFP chief political consultant, I estimate that the NDFP would welcome your proposal for the establishment of a broad united front government through a Congress of the People, using the 1966 Program of the Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism as a starting point for deliberating on a program of government. I think that the NDFP would be open to considering the possibility of a broad-based government of national unity against the domination of foreign monopoly capitalism.

But I do not think that the NDFP will ever declare any indefinite ceasefire or truce prior to a clear program and solid foundation for a united front government that is much broader than the current worker-peasant government in the countryside. I think that the NDFP would be willing to explore the possibilities for such a government either through peace negotiations with the GRP or through an assembly of the patriotic and progressive forces of the people.

Louie Jalandoni and I would have no problem of returning to the Philippines permanently and calling on the patriotic and progressive sections of the bureaucracy and military of the GRP to cooperate with the broad united front government if in the first place the revolutionary forces and people recognize and accept that there is a program and organizational basis for such government. Maoists, nationalists, Christians, Muslims and other people can support such a government in their best possible common interest.

All the Filipino people of different philosophical persuasions, religious beliefs, social circumstances and ethno-linguistic background should take pride in living up to the revolutionary legacy of Andres Bonifacio and the Katipunan and be able to unite on a program of establishing and developing a government that upholds the national sovereignty and independence of the Filipino people.

I agree with you that the program of the Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism in 1966 is still valid and relevant today. Such basic problems of the Filipino people as US monopoly capitalism, feudal and semifeudal exploitation and bureaucratic corruption, have persisted and have become aggravated. Thus, the MAN program is still a useful guide or reference material for all patriotic and progressive Filipinos.

It is fine that you invoke the memory of MAN. I continue to cherish how at best we, together with the late Senator Lorenzo Tanada, Renato Constantino, Dean Jose Lansang, Rogaciano Mercado, Felixberto Olalia, Ignacio Lacina, Satur Ocampo and many other patriots and progressives, could formulate a program and work together to advance the national and democratic rights and interests of the Filipino people.

Dear colleagues and friends, greetings of solidarity!

Thank you for inviting me to speak at your well-known institution. I am delighted and honored by your invitation. I have long appreciated your work in peace research and in providing support to peace negotiations.

I wish to describe the socioeconomic and political realities in the Philippines and proceed to a discussion of the need for peace negotiations between the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP).

Socioeconomic realities

Many people, including Filipinos, think that the Philippines is a small country. In fact, it has a population of 84 million, which is the 12th largest or within the top 6 percent of national populations. It has an area of 300,000 square kilometers, which is the 73rd largest land area or within the top 38 percent of the 191 member-states of the United Nations. At nominal prices, the gross domestic product for 2004 is PhP 4.843 trillion or USD 86.482 billion. It includes a lot of overvaluations in the industrial sector and a lot of false estimates in the agriculture and service sectors.

The estimated output value share of agriculture is 14.8 percent, industry, 31.9 percent and services, 53.2 percent. The output value share of agriculture is understated. It does not cover the considerable part of the agricultural product which the peasants consume. The estimated employment share of agriculture is 36 percent, of industry 16 percent and of services 48 percent. Based on this, the peasants are responsible for more than 69 percent of the basic production of goods and the industrial workers for nearly 31 percent.

The Philippine social economy remains underdeveloped, despite all previous official rhetoric about development. It is still basically agrarian and pre-industrial in terms of the development of the productive forces. The principal means of production is still agricultural land, which is mainly for domestic food consumption and secondarily for export crops (coconut, sugar, bananas, pineapple, etc.).

The degree of mechanization in agriculture is limited and is concentrated on estates for export crops. In 2001, only some 11,500 tractors and 700 powered harvester-threshers were available for over 13 million hectares of agricultural land. Only 30 percent of the country's total farm area is irrigated as of 2002. Land ownership is heavily concentrated with less than one-third of landowners owning more than 80 percent of all agricultural land. The Philippines has rich natural resources and most of the minerals for industrialization. But after extraction, the mineral ores do not go beyond the primary stage of processing and are exported as raw materials. There is a certain amount of modern industry but this is based on equipment, fuel and other inputs from abroad. The industrial sector produces neither capital goods nor basic metals and chemicals.

Export-oriented low-value added semi-manufacturing, which have come into favor with policymakers and investors since the late 1970s, is far more import-dependent and provides less regular employment than the repackaging and reassembly for import-substitution and domestic consumption in the 1950s and 1960s. It has reduced output value and employment since the 1997 economic and financial crisis in Southeast Asia.

The crisis of overproduction of semi-manufactures for reexport since the middle of the 1990s (1994 for garments and 1996 for electronic assembly) has come on top of the earlier crisis of overproduction of raw materials since the late 1970s. However, despite the continuing global oversupply of low value-added semi-manufactures, the Philippines has continued to stick to electronic assembly and garments. These account for 75 percent of gross export earnings. However, the high imported content of the semi-manufactures up to 85-95 percent in the case of electronic equipment yield a very small amount of net export earnings.

The Philippine economy is a neocolonial adjunct of the US and world capitalist system. It is exceedingly dependent on direct investments, loans and trade with the global centers of capitalism. It is bound by policies dictated by major capitalist countries bilaterally or through multilateral agencies like the International Monetary Fund

(IMF), World Bank (WB) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Despite its external linkages, the Philippines retains a distinct system of socioeconomic relations. These are precisely called semi-feudal. The comprador big bourgeoisie and the landlord class are the basic exploiting classes and together constitute a fraction of one percent of the population. The basic exploited classes of workers and peasants are 15 and 75 percent of the population, respectively. The intermediate social strata are the middle bourgeoisie and the far more numerous urban petty bourgeoisies.

The Filipino people have long clamored for genuine land reform and national industrialization as integral factors for breaking the persistence of large feudal holdings and realizing Filipino-owned industrialization in order to raise the level of economic development and change social relations for the better. But one reactionary regime after another has done nothing more than to pay lip service to land reform and national industrialization.

After the US and other capitalist powers shifted policy stress from Keynesianism to "free market" globalization, the reactionary regimes in the Philippines have obscured the need for land reform and national industrialization by harping on the need for raising productivity for the global market. In this regard, the real drive has been to further allow the foreign monopolies to take over natural resources, privatize public assets, get more tax exemptions and tariff cuts, and dump their surplus goods on the Philippines.

The Philippine economy is in a chronic state of crisis. This has rapidly deepened and aggravated under the current policy regime of unbridled "free market" globalization under which foreign monopoly capitalism is actually on a rampage. The semi-feudal economy is incurring huge foreign trade deficits faster than ever from the unequal exchange of its raw-material exports and consumption-driven manufactured imports. The foreign trade deficits have not been relieved but in fact been aggravated by the export-oriented low-value added semi-manufacturing because this involves a high amount of overvalued imported content.

The huge trade deficits and rising debt service result in chronic current accounts deficits and unfavorable balance of payments. But the deficits are often covered by new debts at more onerous terms, including short-term portfolio investments and the flotation of bonds by state corporations in the capital market. These render the economy more vulnerable. The foreign debt is ever mounting. The foreign exchange remittances of overseas contract workers are in fact used for further import-dependent consumption but are often cited as a resource for paying a major part of the foreign debt.

The high level of government budgetary deficit is due to economic depression, the sale of income-generating state assets, reduction of tariffs, tax evasion by the exploiting classes including tax holidays and exemptions, bureaucratic corruption and high military expenditures. Moreover, the reactionary government and its various corporations enter into onerous loan and supply contracts with foreign banks and companies that aggravate the deficits to be covered by local public and foreign borrowing.

The Philippine economy and the reactionary government in particular are bankrupt. But they are kept afloat by exporting ever larger volumes of certain goods whose prices keep on sinking, by rescheduling of old debts and incurring new debts at ever more onerous terms under various programs dictated by the IMF and the World Bank, by privatization of government assets and by capturing the foreign exchange remittances of Filipino overseas contract workers who now constitute 10 percent of the population and whose annual remittances have grown to USD 8.5 billion in 2004.

We can trace the deterioration of the Philippine economy by looking at the growth and uses of foreign and domestic borrowing, from one regime to another. The Marcos regime was the very first one to dramatically raise the level of foreign borrowing from the level of USD 600 million in 1965 to USD 27.2 billion in 1986. The regime used the foreign funds to finance the graft-ridden construction of sugar, coconut, copper and nickel mills, irrigation systems, roads and bridges and tourist facilities. This was mainly under the auspices of the Keynesian policy stress of the World Bank before 1980.

But at the onset of the 1980s, economic policy stress would shift to monetarism and neoliberalism in the US and in the world capitalist system. Supposedly the time had come to act decisively against so-called wage inflation and social spending by the state. Both were blamed as the cause of the stagflation problem. While the US sought to attract funds from abroad by offering high interest rates in the market, the World Bank was made to cut down on concessionary official lending and the IMF was made to whip up trade and investment liberalization, privatization and deregulation as payback from the third world debtors.

The tight international credit situation in the 1980s compelled the Aquino regime to raise the level of local

public debt from PhP 144.4 billion in 1986 to PhP 521 billion in 1992. The Aquino regime restricted imports and brought the level of foreign debt to USD 29.9 billion in 1992. To countervail depressed prices in the global market, the raw material exports of the Philippines had to be increased.

Still the financial crisis sharpened in the early 1990s

The Ramos regime harped on "free market" globalization. It outstripped the Marcos regime in foreign borrowing and the Aquino regime in local borrowing. It brought the level of the country's foreign debt to US\$ 46.2 billion and total domestic public sector debt to PhP 922 billion in 1998. These borrowings were made in order to cover foreign trade and budgetary deficits, respectively. The deficits grew as the regime promoted the export-oriented low-value added semi-manufacturing and private construction of high-rise office buildings, residential towers, hotels, golf courses and other recreational facilities. The economic and financial collapse came as a major part of the 1997 Southeast Asia crisis.

The bankruptcy of the Philippine economy and state was conspicuous when the Estrada regime took over. Government expenditures went too far ahead of tax revenues. The IMF kept on pressing the regime to reduce government expenditures, adopt new tax measures and give priority to debt service. To pursue its bureaucrat capitalist purposes, the regime engaged in scams by raiding the pension funds of state and private employees and collecting money from the underworld. The Estrada regime raised the level of the country's foreign debt to US\$ 51.2 billion and local public debt to PhP 1.068 trillion by year end 2000.

The Arroyo regime raised the level of the country's foreign debt to US\$56.3 billion and the local public debt to PhP 1.833 trillion in June 2004. The compounded foreign and local public debt is PhP 6 trillion. In fact, the foreign debt has gone beyond USD 60 billion and the local public debt beyond PhP 2.5 trillion. In terms of the size of the total public debt, the Philippines is in a worse situation than Argentina. The Philippine public debt/GDP ratio has risen from 56 percent in 1997 to 80 percent in 2004. Last year, the reactionary government paid 81 percent of its revenues for both interest and principal amortization. This year it is allocating 94 percent of revenues for debt service.

Since 2001, the Arroyo regime has overborrowed from the private capital market, mainly US, by floating bonds. It is now given a low credit rating and is being forced by the IMF to raise taxes amid a depressed economy. The value added tax is being raised by 20 percent. Other measures for raising taxes are being implemented. Under conditions of deregulation, the oil companies are allowed to freely raise their prices and so are the power, water and other public utilities, their service rates. The reactionary government is raising the fees for services it provides.

The IMF and WTO require the regime to undertake further denationalization, liberalization, privatization and deregulation. State assets such as those in the National Power Corporation are being bargained away. Debts of state corporations being auctioned off remain as sovereign debt and do not become the liability of the new private owners. The mineral, forest and water resources of the country are further being opened up for unrestricted exploitation by the foreign monopolies. Mimicking the Bush regime, the Arroyo regime is planning to privatize the social security agencies of the state.

Major official statistical data in the Philippines are falsified to conjure the illusion of achievement. The Arroyo regime claims that the GDP grew by 6.1 percent in 2004. The Employers Confederation of the Philippines describes this as jobless and industry-less growth. The regime pretends to surpass by so many times the stagnant growth rates in the most advanced capitalist countries. It absurdly cites the heavy electoral spending last year; the proliferation of international call centers and false estimates of production rises in agriculture and service sectors of the economy as major items in the GDP growth.

The chronic rate of mass unemployment in the Philippines goes beyond 40 percent. One can arrive at this rate by compounding the officially admitted unemployment and underemployment rates (the latter is actually unemployed). Unemployment has increased conspicuously since the 1997 Asian financial crisis, with the formal sector shrinking fast. The claimed unemployment rate of 11.7 percent in 2004, which is comparable to that of Germany, is simply unbelievable. Supposedly "employed" by some specious definitions are 30.635 million workers out of a total labor force of 34.571 million. But only 18.62 percent (5.067 million) are verifiably employed in the formal sector, while 67.47 percent (20.670 million) are in the informal sector, which is a realm of random surveys and false estimates.

The real value of nominal wages has drastically gone down due to the rapidly soaring prices of basic commodities and services. Inflation has been pushed by the peso devaluation, the scarcities in import-dependent

basic producer and consumer goods and the heavy electoral spending by the regime. The inflation rate of 5.4 per cent for 2004 in IMF and government statistics is simply unbelievable.

The peso has been devalued vis-à-vis the US dollar and is now less than half its value in 1996 and only a third its value in 1985. Funds for essential producer and consumer imports have become scarce because of superprofit-taking by the monopoly firms, the huge amounts of debt service, spending for foreign-made luxuries and weapons and salting away of dollars by big Filipino businessmen and high bureaucrats.

The broad masses of the people suffer the rising costs of basic commodities and such services as transport, water and electricity. Since the privatization and deregulation of public utilities in the 1990s, the price of oil products has increased on average by 160 percent, of electricity by 175 percent, and of water services by 450 percent. The social infrastructure is breaking down and the allocations for such social services as health, education, unemployment relief and housing are being cut back. The Arroyo regime has drastically slashed real spending on education by 3.2 percent, on health by 24.5 percent and on housing by 61.0 percent from 2001-2004.

Contrary to absurd government claims that poverty has fallen from 40 percent to just 30.4 percent of the population in 2003, some 90 percent of the population live on the equivalent of around USD 3 a day. A recent report by the Asian Development Bank points out that the Philippine government achieved the reduction of the poverty level not by raising the people's income but by lowering the poverty line. Indeed, while the general price level supposedly rose by some 15 percent between 2000 and 2003, the government raised the poverty line by just 7 percent to just PhP 33.60 or some USD 0.60 a day.

Millions of children are subjected to forced labor, malnutrition, deprivation of education, military assaults on rural communities and forced evacuation. Women are degraded and forced to leave their families in order to earn a living abroad. Large numbers of women and children are forced into prostitution. The environment is being damaged by logging for export and foreign mining pesticide-dependent plantations and other pollutant enterprises.

Social discontent is acute and widespread among the toiling masses of workers and peasants and the middle social strata of entrepreneurs, traders and intelligentsia. They are increasingly engaged in strikes, protest rallies and other forms of concerted action. But the regime always tries to intimidate the people and orders the military and police to attack them. Human rights violations are rampant. There is more than enough of socioeconomic exploitation and political oppression to drive so many people to wage revolutionary resistance.

The Filipino people demand such bourgeois democratic measures as land reform and national industrialization in order to break the agrarian, pre-industrial and semi-feudal character of the economy. They demand measures to be undertaken to uphold national sovereignty, conserve and use wisely the rich natural resources of the country and make sure that the social wealth created serves the material and spiritual well-being of the current and future generations.

Political realities

The Philippine ruling system is semi-colonial. It has been so since the US formally ended its colonial rule, granted nominal independence on 4 July 1946 to the Philippines and turned over the reins of national administration to Filipino bureaucrats and politicians from the exploiting classes. At the same time, it has retained strategic control over the Philippines in the economic, financial, security and other fields.

Unequal treaties have ensured the subservience of the Philippine ruling system to the US. The Treaty of General Relations of 1946 guaranteed that US corporations and citizens retained their property rights and that US military forces kept their military bases and their radar and loran stations. A series of bilateral economic and trade agreements gave US corporations and citizens so-called parity rights to exploit natural resources and operate public utilities. The predecessor agencies of the US-AID started the practice of planting agents in key agencies of the puppet government.

A series of bilateral military agreements on US military bases, military assistance and mutual defense has bound the Philippines to US military power. Even after the dismantling of the US military bases in 1992, following the nonrenewal of the military bases agreement by the Philippine Senate in 1991, the US continues to exercise military control over the Philippines through control of military logistics, planning, indoctrination and training of military officers.

It continues to encroach on Philippine territory and use Philippine military facilities under the Visiting Forces Agreement ratified by the Philippine Senate in May 1999 and the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement signed by

US and RP defense officials in November 2002. It uses various general pretexts such as mutual defense, regional security and war on terrorism and more specific pretexts like joint military training exercises, civic action, humanitarian mission and the like.

The key binding factor of the Philippine ruling system is US hegemony. But the politicians and bureaucrats of the local exploiting classes of big compradors and landlords have their relative autonomy from the neocolonial master. They feed on the common trough of bureaucrat capitalism and compete in pretending to be for public service. They are divided into factional parties of the same dominant classes.

From 1946 to 1972, a two-party system or a duopoly existed, patterned after that of the US. In this system, the political factions of the exploiting classes engaged in political and electoral struggle in an increasingly violent way. Subsequently, the Marcos ruling clique usurped all powers of government through a fascist dictatorship from 1972 to 1986. Since the fall of the Marcos regime, there has been a proliferation of reactionary political parties and coalitions. There is not a single reactionary party or coalition that can claim a majority of the electoral votes at the national level.

The instability of the ruling system has worsened from the period of 1946 to 1972 through the Marcos fascist dictatorship and further on to the period of the post-Marcos regimes. The political crisis is chronic and it involves the contradictions within the ruling system becoming more violent. It is a reflection of the ever-worsening socio-economic crisis. As the pie for bureaucrat capitalist looting decreases, the struggle over it becomes more bitter and more conspicuous.

There is of course a semblance of civility and noblesse oblige among the reactionary political factions in the ruling system when they utter platitudes to the public and try to show good behavior to the US, the chambers of commerce and the dominant church. But they do have their own violent factional strife. To consolidate and expand their power and wealth against their rivals, they cultivate links with groups of military and police officers and they operate armed groups and private security agencies.

The coercive apparatuses of the state, the military and police, are themselves divided into factions. These reflect the major political factions whose patronage is necessary to ensure promotions in rank and assignments to lucrative posts. They also arise from rivalries in operating or taking payoffs from criminal syndicates of various types, including those engaged in the numbers game (jueteng), illegal logging, drugs, kidnapping for ransom, bank heists, smuggling and so on.

At this moment, the Arroyo regime is extremely unstable and isolated. The sentiment is widespread that Arroyo was not really elected as president last year. She is widely perceived to have bought the votes and cheated in the counting. But what is really most damaging about the regime is the crudity and conspicuousness of its puppetry to the US and the colossal multinationals, the corruption of gargantuan proportions, the imposition of a heavier tax burden on the people in a depressed economy, the soaring prices of basic commodities and services and the escalation of human rights violations in the urban and rural areas under the pretext of counterterrorism.

A broad united front of opposition forces is growing against the Arroyo regime. The key forces in this broad united front are the political parties and groups that have demonstrated significant electoral following, military and police officers that dissociate themselves from rampant corruption and other criminality of their colleagues and the patriotic and progressive forces with the organized masses willing to confront the regime and cause its downfall, as in the case of Marcos in 1986 and Estrada in 2001.

The broad united front is reportedly trying to form a revolutionary council of patriotic and progressive forces to succeed the Arroyo regime and to lay the basis for the election of a new government in six months to one year after the ouster of Arroyo. It seeks to unite the military and police officers in upholding the principle of civilian supremacy, withdrawing their support from the regime, letting the masses rise up in protest and causing the regime to resign.

In reaction, the Arroyo regime has become even more servile to the US, more corrupt, more arrogant and more ruthless in the face of the developing broad united front. It believes that it can continue borrowing from abroad by complying with the demands of the IMF for increasing the tax burden and giving priority to debt service and that it can receive huge amounts of US military and financial assistance in exchange for its support for the Bush "war on terrorism", the rise of US military intervention, the reestablishment of US military bases and the inflow of foreign investments.

There is a trend towards an unbridled rule of open terror, without any proclamation of martial law. The

minions of the regime are now busy pushing the enactment of an anti-terrorism law and the removal from the 1987 constitution of the provisions that put limitations on the declaration of martial law, that guarantee the basic rights of a criminal suspect under the Miranda doctrine, that assert economic sovereignty and limit foreign investments, that protect the national patrimony and that prohibit foreign military bases and foreign troops.

To say the least, the extremely pro-imperialist and reactionary elements in the Arroyo regime wish to prevent the implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law and the negotiation of social, economic and political reforms and would rather scuttle the peace negotiations than address the roots of the civil war in the Philippines. The terrorist-listing is calculated to extort from the NDFP the capitulation and pacification of the revolutionary forces either under the guise of a "final peace agreement" of empty generalities and a prolonged ceasefire without the substance of a just and lasting peace.

Relatedly, the most vicious kinds of pressure are being exerted on the NDFP. Under the direction of US psywar experts, the military and police have unleashed a campaign vilifying the most respectable institutions, organizations and personages as "terrorists" and then telling them to clear themselves by denouncing the revolutionary forces. This psywar campaign is combined with a campaign of assassinations and abductions directed against patriotic and progressive religious, lawyers, human rights activists, journalists, leaders of the party lists (like Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and Gabriela) and leaders and members of the mass organizations of workers, peasants, urban poor, women, youth and others.

It is reprehensible that the Arroyo regime has collaborated with the US government in demonizing and listing as "terrorists" the Communist Party of the Philippines, the New People's Army and the chief political consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. In the current wave of assassinations and abductions, the NDFP senior legal adviser Justice Romeo T. Capulong has been clearly targeted for assassination. NDFP consultants residing in Philippines are experiencing increased surveillance and intimidating actions from armed agents of the GRP.

This "terrorist" listing violates the mutually acceptable principle of national sovereignty and the noncapitulation principle in The Hague Joint Declaration, the safety and immunity guarantees for all duly-authorized persons in the peace negotiations under the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees and the basic democratic rights and the Hernandez political offense doctrine as affirmed by the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.

Since August last year, when the US renewed the "terrorist" label and listing of the CPP, NPA and the NDFP chief political consultant, the NDFP has expected the GRP to join it in condemning the unjust act of the US and to comply with all the aforesaid agreements as well as with the related agreements in the Oslo Joint Statements I and II. The GRP must comply with existing agreements or else the NDFP sees no point in negotiating with it.

At whatever rate the GRP complies with mutual agreements or whether the formal talks in the peace negotiations will resume sooner or later or never, the NDFP is committed to upholding, defending and promoting the national sovereignty of the Filipino people. This is the main guiding principle of the NDFP in seeking political and constitutional reforms through the peace negotiations.

The NDFP can consider the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations worthwhile and useful only if these can become the way for asserting the national sovereignty and empowering the workers and peasants who comprise ninety percent of the Filipino people. The toiling masses should have all the conditions and possibilities for expressing and realizing their national and democratic rights and interests.

Need for peace negotiations

The two contending and negotiating parties, the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) have in their respective ways recognized the need for peace negotiations and have set forth the objectives they wish to achieve.

According to the stalwarts of the national security division of the Arroyo cabinet, the maximum objective of the GRP in pursuing the peace negotiations is to cause the capitulation of the NDFP or facilitate the military victory of GRP and the minimum objective is to conjure false illusions, befuddle the consciousness of the revolutionary forces and people and split the ranks of the revolutionary movement.

The NDFP has been quite open in declaring that the line of struggle for national liberation and democracy is the same line that it pursues in the negotiations for a just and lasting peace. This is the maximum objective of the NDFP in the peace negotiations. The NDFP also has the minimum objective of propagating the national

democratic line on issues, arousing the people in their millions to raise the level of revolutionary struggle and seeking allies within the ruling system for the purpose of isolating and defeating the intractable foe.

Since the time of the Marcos fascist dictatorship, I have been privileged to be involved in discreet and public discussions about the question of peace negotiations. I can use the historical method to demonstrate clearly the development of the position and attitude of both the GRP and NDFP about the question of peace negotiations. But such an approach might only ignite a speculative debate about the motivations and calculations of the contending parties. We are on more solid ground if we look at the existing agreements of the two negotiating parties.

Since 1992 the GRP and NDFP have forged twelve agreements. We can use these agreements to determine and measure what the two parties are willing to consider and agree upon as matters in the interest of the Filipino people. The preliminary stage of 1992 to 1995 yielded serious agreements that paved the way for the stage of formal talks from 1995 to the present.

The Hague Joint Declaration was mutually approved by the principals of the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels in 1992. It proclaims the need for peace negotiations in order to address the roots of the armed conflict and arrive at reforms for laying the stable foundation for a just and lasting peace.

It declares the mutually acceptable principles of national sovereignty, democracy and social justice as the guiding principles for the negotiations. It is against any precondition that negates the inherent character and purpose of peace negotiations. It sets the substantive agenda, to include respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, social and economic reforms, political and constitutional reforms.

The Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) was mutually approved in 1995 by the principals of the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels. It protects the panelists, consultants and all other persons duly authorized in the peace negotiations and provides the mechanism for terminating the peace negotiations by any of the two parties and for allowing persons duly-authorized to participate in the peace negotiation to go to their safe positions within 30 days after the date of the notice of termination.

The Joint Agreement on the Formation, Sequence and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees was mutually approved in 1995 to guide the drafting of the tentative comprehensive agreements one after the other in accordance with the substantive agenda as set forth by The Hague Joint Declaration. A supplementary agreement was mutually approved in 1997 to require mutual approval by the principals of the comprehensive agreement on social and economic reforms before there can be a negotiation of political and constitutional reforms.

The Comprehensive Agreement of Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) was approved by the principals of the NDFP and GRP in 1998. This is the first of the four comprehensive agreements in accordance with the substantive agenda. Since 2004, the GRP and NDFP have agreed on the operating guidelines of the Joint Monitoring Committee and has fully constituted it, together with its Joint Secretariat in Manila, to monitor the joint and separate implementation of the CARHRIHL.

At the opening session of the resumption of formal talks in Oslo in April 2001, the NDFP Negotiating Panel and the GRP Negotiating Panel agreed to cooperate in trying to finish the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms within six months from June 2001. Had the GRP cooperated with NDFP, this comprehensive agreement would have been finished a long time ago. There would have been a chance to finish the comprehensive agreement on political and constitutional reforms in 2002 and that on the end of hostilities and disposition of forces in 2003.

Unfortunately, in June 2001 the GRP suspended indefinitely the formal talks until 2004 avowedly in protest to the killing of Colonel Rodolfo Aguinaldo by the New People's Army. He was one among the most notorious torturers and murderers of the Marcos fascist dictatorship. Even while in civilian office, he continued to participate in military operations against the NPA and the people in Cagayan province. The NPA therefore had long regarded him as an armed combatant with abundant blood debts.

To further complicate matters, the GRP agreed with the US government in November 2001 to put the CPP/NPA and the NDFP chief political consultant in the "terrorist" list in a bid to pressure the NDFP to capitulate by signing the so-called final peace agreement which the GRP had unilaterally drafted. The US made the "terrorist" listing in August 2002, followed by various other governments (Netherlands, Britain, Australia and Canada) and by the European Council.

There are now two major obstacles blocking the resumption of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations:

1. The "terrorist" listing. It is a malicious act which seeks to blackmail and pressure the NDFP to capitulate. It violates the principles of national sovereignty and non-capitulation in The Hague Joint Declaration; the protection to persons duly-authorized to participate in the peace negotiations under the JASIG and the basic democratic rights and the Hernandez political offense doctrine in the CARHRIHL.

The GRP has made the resumption of the formal talks impossible by failing to end its complicity with the US in labeling and listing the CPP, NPA and the NDFP chief political consultant as "terrorist." It has also failed to join the NDFP in upholding the Oslo Statements I and II against the "terrorist" listing. Worst of all, it has repeatedly duedted with the US on the line that the NDFP must capitulate in order to have the names of revolutionary forces removed from the list. It must join the NDFP in complying with the existing agreements to pave the way for the resumption of the formal talks.

2. The demand for capitulation. The NDFP rejects the demand for capitulation carried by the so-called final peace agreement drafted by the GRP. This violates the non-capitulation and substantive agenda provisions in The Hague Joint Declaration and the Joint Agreement on the Formation, Sequence and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees. The NDFP also rejects any attempt to convert the peace negotiations into ceasefire negotiations that lay aside the principle of addressing the root causes of the armed conflict through the negotiations on social, economic and political reforms.

The GRP must comply with the existing agreements. If it does not, how can the NDFP expect that the GRP will ever comply with the comprehensive agreements on the substantive agenda? But it is highly probable that the GRP is already looking for a way to prevent the negotiation of social and economic reforms and to scuttle the peace negotiations. It is trying to make the NDFP capitulate and, if the latter does not capitulate, to subsequently escalate the war against the revolutionary forces and people.

It should be realistic and reasonable for the Arroyo regime to agree to the resumption of the formal talks on social and economic reforms.

The broad masses of the people expect this; they are looking for way out of the current social, economic and political crisis. After resumption of the formal talks, conversations between special representatives of the GRP and NDFP principals on how to accelerate negotiations and agreements are possible, without violating the existing agreements.

But the problem of the Arroyo regime might be the false illusion that the US can provide it with economic and military assistance sufficient for buoying up the ruling system and defeating the revolutionary forces and people. In the meantime, the regime is becoming more and more isolated, weak and vulnerable to the rising resistance of the people and broad united front of opposition forces. This is the worst time for the Arroyo regime to be arrogant and shun the peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines.

June 21, 2005

We wish to clarify the prejudicial questions that have arisen from the actions undertaken by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the US government to intimidate and pressure the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), obstruct and possibly to scuttle the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. At the same time, we wish to cite the proposals of the NDFP to resolve said prejudicial questions. We also anticipate that the Filipino people and revolutionary forces represented by the NDFP will raise the level of their resistance against intimidation and repression.

Prejudicial questions

The NDFP has raised four prejudicial questions and has repeatedly declared that these must be resolved before the formal talks in the GRP-NDFP negotiations can be resumed.

The prejudicial questions pertain to: 1. the "terrorist" listing of the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army and the NDFP chief political consultant by the US and other governments, 2. the attempts of the GRP to use the "terrorist" listing to intimidate the NDFP and pressure it to capitulate through a "final peace agreement" or a "prolonged ceasefire" one-sidedly decided by the GRP, 3. the attempts of GRP personnel to intimidate and assassinate the NDFP chief political consultant, the senior legal adviser and other consultants of the NDFP and 4. the continuing failure of GRP to indemnify the victims of human rights violations under the Marcos regime.

1. "Terrorist" listing. The GRP connived with the US in November 2001 and August 2002 to designate the CPP/NPA and the NDFP chief political consultant as "foreign terrorists" since August 2002. Through the late Foreign Secretary Blas Ople, it openly campaigned for the "terrorist" listing of the same by the Council of the European Union.

The "terrorist" listing violates the principles of national sovereignty and non-capitulation in The Hague Joint Declaration (THJD), the guarantees for duly-authorized panelists, consultants, staffers and others in The Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) and the Hernandez political offense doctrine of simple rebellion and basic democratic rights enshrined in the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL).

2. Preconditioning and Pressure. The GRP and the US have repeatedly declared publicly that the delisting of the CPP/NPA and the NDFP chief political consultant would occur only after the capitulation of the NDFP. Through Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo and US ambassador Francis Ricciardone, the two governments have duetted in saying that the CPP/NPA must first cease the armed revolution and have demanded that the revolutionary forces and people stop resisting oppression and exploitation.

The GRP has gone to the extent of stating that the US has the sovereign right to trample on the national sovereignty of the Filipino people and all the agreements done by the GRP and NDFP. It has blatantly used the "terrorist" listing by the US, the European Council and other governments to intimidate the NDFP panelists, consultants and staffers, pressure the NDFP to capitulate and to precondition the resumption of formal talks with the capitulation of the NDFP.

3. Acts of Intimidation and assassination. The NDFP chief political consultant has been subjected to the most brazen acts of human rights violations, including deprivation of the essential needs of human existence and the right to due process despite what amounts to criminal sanctions. Death threats have been made against him by the GRP national security adviser Norberto Gonzalez and by a Bangkok-based organization of the US special forces.

Now, the acts of intimidation and assassination are already extended to other NDFP consultants. Senior legal adviser Romeo T. Capulong has been the target of two assassination attempts. Other consultants have noticed increased surveillance on them. The office of the NDFP section of the Joint Monitoring Committee has not been established in Utrecht because of false "terrorist" presumptions of the European Council, Dutch and other European governments against the entire NDFP.

4. Indemnification of the Plaintiffs in Human Rights Case Against Marcos. The continuing failure of the GRP to fulfil its obligation under CARHRIHL to indemnify the nearly 10,000 successful class and individual plaintiffs in

the US human rights litigation against the Marcos estate is prejudicial to the continuance of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. The GRP has been unjust to these victims of human rights violations by preventing them from seeking justice in the Philippines and now by trying to rob them of their indemnification.

Resolving the prejudicial questions

1. The least that the GRP must do in order to help pave the way for the resumption of formal talks in the peace negotiations is to agree with the NDFP in reaffirming The Hague Joint Declaration, JASIG, CARHRIHL and the Oslo Statement I and Oslo Statement II in condemnation of, in opposition to or in relation to the "terrorist" listing by the US and other governments in 2002 and thereafter.

The GRP must in fact comply with the existing agreements with the NDFP and must continue to pursue the effective measures required by the Oslo Statement I and Oslo Statement II in order to overcome the implications and consequences of the "terrorist" listing which are adverse to the continuity of the peace negotiations.

2. The GRP must cease forthwith to insult the NDFP by demanding the capitulation of the NDFP in any form or manner. After the resumption of formal talks in accordance with the immediately preceding No.1 above, the GRP and NDFP must proceed to discuss and negotiate item No.2 on social and economic reforms in the substantive agenda and accelerate the work of the Joint Monitoring Committee that has been created under CARHRIHL.

Subsequently, the GRP and NDFP principals can appoint their respective special representatives to discuss in advance items No. 3 (political and constitutional reforms) and No. 4 (end of hostilities and disposition of forces) and to exchange proposals for accelerating the peace negotiations and defining additional reasons for holding ceasefires, without violating the existing agreements. In this regard, the third-party facilitator and others are invited to provide assistance for research and socio-economic projects.

Even before item No. 4 of the substantive agenda is reached, there may a cumulative kind of ceasefire related to the following: 2.1 the investigation, trial and punishment of human rights violators among the GRP military, police and paramilitary officers and 2.2 the undertaking of mutually approved relief, rehabilitation and development projects by people's organizations in localities in accordance with the Joint Agreement in Support of Socio-Economic Projects of Private Developments and Organizations.

3. The GRP principal must forthwith issue a declaration condemning the threats to and acts against the life, limb and liberty of the NDFP panelists, consultants, staffers and others and ordering the GRP military and police forces to respect the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees. The clear cases of the NDFP chief political consultant and senior legal adviser being threatened with assassination must be cited.

4. As required by the CARHRIHL, the GRP must forthwith fulfil its obligation to the nearly 10,000 successful class and individual plaintiffs in the US human rights litigation against the Marcos estate. Congress must do what needs to be done in order to ensure that the victims of human rights violations under the Marcos regime receive what is due to them. Depriving them of what is due to them will outrage the people.

Futile threats against the NDFP

The worst elements of the GRP and certain foreign governments have tried to intimidate and pressure the NDFP Negotiating Panel, its consultants and staffers with the implications and consequences of the "terrorist" listing of the CPP, NPA and the NDFP chief political consultant and with the actual escalation of state terrorism in the Philippines and on a global scale under the direction of the US.

However, the NDFP has declared in defiance that the worst that such governments can do to the NDFP panelists, consultants and staffers does not even amount to a pinch on the entire revolutionary movement of the Filipino people. The persecution and martyrdom of a few vulnerable Filipinos by such governments can only inflame the revolutionary spirit of the Filipino people and drive them to intensify the armed revolution.

The Arroyo regime, which is depending too much on militarists and clerico-fascists in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations, is itself in a precarious, unstable and isolated position. It is now confronted by a broad united front of opposition forces that is poised to oust it from power.

In fact, the Arroyo regime is now in the process of falling as a result of the exposure of the tapes proving that Arroyo herself had a direct hand in the commission of fraud in the 2004 elections. If necessary, the NDFP can wait for the emergence of the next regime of the GRP. The Arroyo regime is not in any position to frighten the revolutionary forces and people. By further offending them, it can only push them to intensify the people's war.

The NDFP stands firm that the GRP must comply with the existing agreements and with the just and reasonable demands of the NDFP, all in accordance with the national and democratic rights and interests of the Filipino

people. The Arroyo regime can only put itself in a worse situation by running counter to the firm principled position and the just and reasonable demands of the NDFP.

It is the GRP's own lookout if it reneges on agreements, it has already made with the NDFP. The crisis conditions of the Philippine ruling system and the US and world capitalist system are favorable for intensifying the Filipino people's revolutionary struggle for national liberation and democracy against the US and the local exploiting classes of big compradors and landlords.

There is no more reason for the NDFP to negotiate with the GRP if the latter does not comply with agreements already made. No amount of intimidation and bloody repression can compel the NDFP to capitulate to the GRP. Every time the GRP and other governments raise the level of intimidation and repression against the NDFP can only signal to the Filipino people and revolutionary forces the need to raise the level of resistance.

The crisis-ridden GRP can only go closer to the cliff by trying to intimidate and pressure the NDFP towards capitulation. The revolutionary people and forces represented by the NDFP are well-tempered and tested by decades of revolutionary struggle, including a long period against the Marcos fascist dictatorship. The revolutionary movement has grown in strength and advanced precisely through people's war.

***Distinction between Postponement
of Formal Talks and Continuity
of GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations Is Important***

August 6, 2005

So far, the principal of neither the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) nor the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) has given to the other side a formal written notice to terminate the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) and in effect the entire GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

Neither the NDFP postponement of formal talks between the negotiating panels nor the so-called GRP notice of suspension of JASIG amount to a formal written notice of termination approved by a principal, as required by the JASIG. If the GRP wants to terminate the JASIG, it must give to the NDFP a formal notice of termination signed or authorized by the GRP principal as then president Joseph Estrada did in 1999.

The distinction between the NDFP postponement of formal talks of the negotiating panels in accordance with basic procedural rules on the one hand and the continuity of the peace negotiations in accordance with the JASIG on the other hand is important because even when the formal talks are postponed there is still some work that is being done in the peace negotiations.

The negotiating panels and their consultants, advisers and staffers continue to work. So do the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) and the Joint Secretariat (JS) related to the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). And so do the reciprocal working committees on social and economic reforms in accordance with the Joint Agreement on the Formation, Sequence and Operationalization of Reciprocal Working Committees.

But if the GRP really wants to terminate the JASIG, it must make the proper categorical notice of termination. There is no such thing as notice of suspension in the JASIG. Even if the GRP makes the proper notice of termination, it should not forget that certain safety and immunity guarantees and basic civil rights go beyond the thirty-day allowance for NDFP personnel to seek safety if they are in any unsafe position.

Persons who belong to NDFP organizations and who are duly-authorized to participate in the peace negotiations enjoy safety and immunity guarantees under JASIG. At the same time, they constantly secure themselves from any surprise attack of the GRP. On any normal day, they are safe either because they are abroad under the protection of international conventions or because only their alternative names are listed in accordance with the safety procedure for documents of identification stipulated by JASIG.

Among those who are actually most threatened with abduction and murderous assault by the GRP are NDFP-nominated consultants, advisers, staffers, researchers and other volunteers who do not belong to any NDFP organization and who are legally residing in Manila and elsewhere in the Philippines. Although they do not belong to any NDFP organization, they have in good faith assisted the NDFP negotiating panel, the reciprocal working committees and the JMC and JS in order to advance the peace negotiations. Should any harm be done to these NDFP-nominated persons by the likes of Ermita, there will be far reaching consequences that will destroy all the agreements so far made, that will prove the treachery of the GRP and that will immeasurably inflame the armed revolution.

At the very first instance that the safety and immunity guarantees and civil rights of any NDFP person or any NDFP-nominated person in the peace negotiations are violated by the GRP, it would be reasonable for the NDFP to issue a formal notice of termination of the JASIG to the other side, undertake further actions that will counter the treachery and brutality of the GRP and possibly close the peace negotiations for a long time.

Since long before the Arroyo regime became extremely isolated and unstable, the GRP has connived with the US government in designating the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), the New People's Army and the NDFP chief political consultant as "foreign terrorists" and have violated the national sovereignty provision in The Hague Joint Declaration, the safety and immunity guarantees in the JASIG and the basic rights and Hernandez political offense doctrine in CARHRIHL.

Since the Arroyo regime became extremely wobbly, it has been unable to deal with the prejudicial questions

raised by the NDFP in any way and has shown an utter incapacity to pursue the peace negotiations. No less than the OPAPP secretary has resigned abruptly since July 8 and called for the resignation of Arroyo. Ermita has been usurping her functions. Nieves Confesor has shown more interest in scuttling the peace negotiations than in anything else. Thus, the NDFP regards her as a phoney negotiator and has never accepted her credentials.

Ermita, Confesor and the like have been engaged in a wanton campaign of disinformation against the NDFP. Either they themselves are ignorant of the contents of GRP-NDFP agreements or they try to take advantage of the low level of knowledge about such agreements among those who interview them. They claim brazenly that the NDFP has withdrawn from the peace negotiations, when in fact the NDFP has merely postponed the formal talks between panels until such time that there is a new GRP administration that is willing to negotiate social, economic and political reforms that address the roots of the civil war.

The broad masses of the Filipino people and the broad united front should hasten the ouster of the Arroyo regime from power so that the formal talks of the negotiating panels can be resumed and the entire peace negotiations can move forward. Otherwise, the Arroyo regime would have all the opportunity to destroy the peace negotiations and commit so much treachery and brutality against NDFP negotiators, consultants, researchers, staffers and other volunteers.

**Informal Exploratory Talks Can Lead
to Formal Peace Talks If Arroyo Regime Complies with Prior GRP-NDFP Agreements**

January 26, 2008

If it really wants to resume formal peace talks, the Arroyo regime must comply with the prior agreements between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and do away with all the impediments that violate said agreements and prevent peace talks. Informal exploratory talks in Oslo can thus lead to formal peace talks.

The NDFP has listed 12 major impediments which the Arroyo regime has previously put up. One of these is the precondition of the regime that the NDFP must cease the people's armed revolution before there can be any formal talks and before there can be any substantive agreement on social, economic and political reforms. This precondition violates The Hague Joint Declaration which stipulates that no side in the peace negotiations shall seek to impose on the other any precondition that negates the inherent character and purpose of peace negotiations.

It is utterly wrong for the Arroyo regime to lay aside the agenda on social, economic and political reforms and convert the peace negotiations to one of surrender and pacification at the expense of the Filipino people and revolutionary forces. As a matter of revolutionary principle and compliance with prior GRP-NDFP agreements, the NDFP cannot agree to the surrender and pacification of the revolutionary forces and people under the guise of an indefinite ceasefire.

The end of hostilities and disposition of forces constitute the fourth and last item of the substantive agenda of the peace negotiations. This comes properly for negotiation only after comprehensive agreements on social, economic and political reforms are forged and signed by the principals of the GRP and NDFP. The Arroyo regime should not use the last item in the agenda to lay aside the people's demand for basic social, economic and political reforms. The military hawks and clerico-fascists in the regime should stop imagining that they can force or outwit the NDFP to capitulate.

It is obvious that the Arroyo regime is not at all interested in serious negotiations to address the roots of the civil war and produce agreements on social, economic and political reforms. The regime is obsessed with the so-called military solution, augmented by demands for the pacification and surrender of the revolutionary forces, by sham localized talks with ready-made stooges and by pretended amnesty and rehabilitation for fake and ghost surrenderers.

However, the Arroyo regime cannot really impose its precondition on the NDFP. Oplan Bantay Laya 1 & 2 are resounding failures in sharp contrast to the growing strength and advance of the people's armed revolutionary movement. The military and police forces of the regime have become fatigued by futile campaigns of suppression, factionalized by political and criminal rivalries and thoroughly discredited by rampant human rights violations.

The Arroyo regime's false claims to economic growth are being exposed as big lies by the rapidly worsening living conditions of the people and by the deepening crisis of the underdeveloped Philippine economy under the weight of the rapidly worsening crisis of the US and world capitalist system. The broad masses of the people are clamoring for revolutionary change. They wish to liberate themselves from the escalation of oppression and exploitation.

Prospects for Resumption of Formal Talks

Are Bright if Gloria M. Arroyo Is Ousted

February 16, 2008

Prospects for the resumption of formal talks in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations are bright if the broad masses of the Filipino masses and the broad united front succeed in ousting Gloria M. Arroyo from the position of president which she has usurped through electoral fraud and kept through brute military force.

The broad mass movement can succeed to oust Arroyo only with the full active participation of the patriotic and progressive forces. These would have some significant weight in the new government and would certainly demand the resumption of the aforesaid formal talks in order to address the roots of the civil war through comprehensive agreements on social, economic and political reforms.

The downfall of the Arroyo regime would mean defeating the brutal but futile scheme of the imperialists, militarists and clerico-fascists to paralyze and put aside the peace negotiations and use all-out military force to seek the outright destruction or capitulation of the revolutionary forces and the people.

So long as Gloria M. Arroyo is in power, she will continue to engage in state terrorism and inflame the armed conflicts in the Philippines. She will use the military and police forces to further entrench herself in power and attack both the legal democratic mass movement and the armed revolutionary movement of the people under the pretext of fighting terrorism.

GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations

Part III Interview: by Roselle Valerio

Editor, *Liberation International*

June 27, 2008

Q1: What is the position of the NDFP on the question of resuming the formal talks in the peace negotiations with the GRP? What is the key step towards overcoming all the impediments?

JMS: The NDFP is always ready to resume the formal talks in the peace negotiations with the GRP in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration and subsequent agreements, especially the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), the Joint Agreement on the Formation, Sequence and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees (Joint Agreement on RWCs), the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) and the Oslo Joint Statements I and II.

The NDFP and GRP must address the roots of the armed conflict through negotiations and agreements on economic, social, political and constitutional reforms in accordance with the agenda and methods set by The Hague Joint Declaration and the Joint Agreement on RWCs. The two negotiating parties and their principals succeeded in forging the CARHRIHL. If they muster the needed political will, they can make the comprehensive agreements on social and economic reforms (SER), on political and constitutional reforms (PCR) and on the end of hostilities and disposition of forces (EHDF).

Q2: Why does the NDFP consider as impediment the demand of the GRP for a permanent or indefinite ceasefire? The NDFP calls this an impermissible precondition. But is not the NDFP making its own preconditions.

JMS: The GRP demand for a permanent or indefinite ceasefire as precondition to the resumption of formal talks is an impediment because it violates The Hague Joint Declaration which stipulates that there shall be no precondition whatsoever which negates the inherent character and purpose of the peace negotiations. Supplanting the peace negotiations on substantive issues with ceasefire negotiations simply to pacify the revolutionary forces is a blatant violation of The Hague Joint Declaration. The GRP is seeking a ceasefire agreement that kills the negotiations on the substantive agenda of economic, social and political reforms. The issue of ending the armed hostilities is the fourth and last item of the agenda.

Unlike the GRP, the NDFP is not setting any precondition. It is simply telling the GRP to comply with the agreements that it has signed with the NDFP. What is the point in negotiating with the GRP if it can refuse to comply with agreements already made and even violate these so flagrantly. What the GRP cannot win in the battlefield, it seeks to win across the table by pushing a permanent or indefinite ceasefire that amounts to the pacification and capitulation of the revolutionary forces and the people and therefore the end of the peace negotiations without any substantive agreement on basic reforms.

Q3: It has long been bruited about that the NDFP has set as precondition to the resumption of formal talks the removal of the names of the CPP, NPA and yourself from the US list of terrorists so called. How true is this? What exactly is possible and acceptable to the NDFP by way of overcoming the "terror" list as an impediment to peace negotiations? How are Oslo Joint Statements I and II related to the question of "terrorist" listing?

JMS: Since the last week of November 2001 the NDFP has known for a fact from then Speaker Jose de Venecia that it was the Arroyo regime that had requested the US to list the CPP, NPA and myself as so-called terrorists. It should be necessary and appropriate for the GRP to request the US to delist the CPP, NPA and myself for the sake of promoting the peace negotiations. But shamelessly the Arroyo regime has declared that it is the sovereign right of the US to impose its political and legal categories and presumptions on Philippine events that are strictly within the jurisdiction of the sovereign Filipino people.

Knowing the extent of puppetry of the Arroyo regime to the US, the NDFP has frankly told the GRP several times that the NDFP cannot expect a puppet regime to tell its imperialist master to delist the CPP, NPA and myself. Instead, the NDFP has proposed that the GRP and NDFP sign together a declaration upholding national sovereignty and territorial integrity against foreign interference in the internal affairs of the Philippines. The Hague Joint Declaration declares national sovereignty as one of the mutually acceptable principles guiding the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

The Oslo Joint Statements I and II call on the GRP to be proactive in seeking the delisting of the CPP, NPA and myself. But the GRP has consistently said that it is the sovereign right of the US to interfere in Philippine affairs

and that the way out of the “terrorist” list of the US and other foreign governments is for the CPP, NPA and NDFP to capitulate and submit themselves to a sham peace accord, that is obviously drafted by the US Central Intelligence Agency and its Philippine assets like executive secretary General Eduardo Ermita and national security adviser Norberto Gonzales.

Q4: Do you consider the US and the Arroyo regime as the biggest impediments to the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations? How do you propose to overcome US military intervention and the US-instigated war on terror, the human rights violations under Oplan Bantay Laya and the false charges in the “legal offensive” under the Inter-Agency Legal Assistance Group (IALAG), including the charge of rebellion, multiple murder in Leyte and the current charge against you of inducing the murder of Kintanar and Tabara?

JMS: Indeed, the biggest impediments are the US and the Arroyo regime itself. At the highest level, these have agreed on unleashing US military intervention in line with the US global war of terror. This has taken the form of Oplan Bantay Laya I and II and has resulted in gross and systematic human rights violations of the worst proportions since the Marcos fascist dictatorship. Progressive legal activists have not been spared from extrajudicial killings, disappearances, torture and false charges to stigmatize and imprison them.

The state terrorism that is going on in the Philippines is a matter of policy taken at the highest level on the GRP side upon the instigation of the US. Arroyo cannot be expected to change policy and course. She still daydreams that she can destroy the armed revolution or inflict a strategic defeat on it before she steps down or is ousted. She is in fact compelling and challenging the revolutionary forces and people to intensify the armed revolution. Her appointment of General Esperon as presidential advisor on the peace process is widely regarded as a provocation for the furtherance of the civil war in the Philippines.

The advocates of just peace and human rights in the Philippines and abroad have done well in exposing the gross and systematic human rights violations of the Arroyo regime. The UN special rapporteur Philip Alston has pointed out that the extrajudicial killings and disappearances are connected with the design of the “counter-insurgency” scheme and has called for the abolition of IALAG. It would be good if the GRP-NDFP Joint Monitoring Committee can function fully in accordance with CARHRIHL and the JMC Operating Guidelines.

It is fine that the Supreme Court has ordered the dismissal of the rebellion charge against me and 50 other opposition leaders. But IALAG continues to oppress opposition leaders, including myself, with trumped up murder charges in Leyte and elsewhere. The tentacles of the IALAG have also reached The Netherlands. I continue to face the false charges of inducing the murder of military assets like Kintanar and Tabara.

Q5: What led to the suspension of the JASIG by the GRP? Was the GRP justified in suspending it? How do you overcome the suspension of JASIG and the use of the list of holders of documents of identification (DOI) as wanted list, the murders, disappearances and imprisonment of NDFP consultants?

JMS: At one point in the second half of 2004, the NDFP postponed the formal talks in order to give the GRP the chance to comply with the Oslo Joint Statements I and II, regarding the “terrorist” listing. The GRP reacted by “suspending” the JASIG. The provisions of the JASIG do not allow “suspension”. They allow only either continuing validity or termination after a 30-day notice in advance. The NDFP’s position is that JASIG remains valid and binding in effect in the absence of any notice of termination.

The real and malicious intent of the Arroyo regime in the illegal suspension of the JASIG became indubitably clear when it converted the list of holders of NDFP documents of identification into a manhunt list (with a great deal of guessing the real identities behind the alternative names). At any rate, the manhunt list resulted in the murder, disappearance, torture, arbitrary imprisonment and grave threats to NDFP consultants and staffers.

To resume the formal talks, the GRP needs to declare unconditionally the continuing validity and effectivity of the JASIG. The negotiators, consultants and staffers must be assured of safety and immunity guarantees. The GRP must give an accurate account of those NDFP consultants and staffers who have been victimized by the illegal suspension of the JASIG. Justice must be rendered for the benefit of the victims. Those who have violated their human rights must be held to account under the JASIG, CARHRIHL and pertinent laws.

Q6: In what way does the Anti-Terrorism Law impede the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations? What will happen to the peace negotiations if the Supreme Court recognizes its validity and allows its operationalization?

JMS: Should it be considered valid by the Supreme Court and operationalized by the GRP executive, the Anti-Terrorism Law (alias Human Security Act of 2007) would certainly kill the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations once and for all. The floodgates to human rights violations would open to an extent and in a manner as to outstrip the

Marcos fascist dictatorship. The Anti-Terrorism Law is a license for unbridled fascism.

Even without the Anti-Terrorism Law, gross and systematic human rights violations have been perpetrated. They would certainly become more rampant if the Anti-Terrorism Law were allowed. In the course of their constant struggle for power, the rival reactionary groups themselves would not be safe from the overbroad and vague definition of terrorism and from its draconian punitive measures.

It is fine that constitutional questions have been raised before the Supreme Court by a broad range of highly responsible associations and institutions. Many people expect the Supreme Court to invalidate the Anti-Terrorism Law as entirely unconstitutional. Like the Anti-Subversion Law of the past, the Anti-Terrorism Law would not discourage but would inflame the armed revolution against oppression and exploitation.

Q7: According to some reports, the Arroyo regime used for electioneering purposes in 2004 the money recovered from the Swiss bank account of Marcos. How can the victims of human rights violations under the martial rule of Marcos be indemnified after the reported misappropriation and squandering of the money by the Arroyo regime? In what way is the failure to indemnify the victims an impediment to the resumption of formal talks? How can this be overcome?

JMS: There are indeed reliable reports that the Arroyo regime misappropriated and squandered the money intended to indemnify the victims of human rights violations under the Marcos fascist dictatorship. At the same time, the GRP Negotiating Panel informed the NDFP Negotiating Panel in 2004 that such money was still available if a law would be enacted to amend the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law. But every year the Arroyo-controlled Congress fails to pass that amendatory law.

The GRP has to indemnify the aforesaid victims, who were winners in the human rights litigation against Marcos in the US. The indemnification is in accordance with CARHRIHL. Continuing failure to indemnify the victims exposes the bad faith of the GRP in co-signing agreements with the NDFP. It shows that the GRP has utter disregard for human rights and for rendering any measure of justice to the victims of human right violations. As soon as possible, the GRP should negotiate and agree with the representatives of the victims.

Q8: What can be done to overcome the prolonged failure of the Arroyo regime to fulfil its promise to release political prisoners in 2001 and 2004?

JMS: This is a matter of the GRP keeping its word in order to build good will and confidence. In comparison to the Ramos regime, the Arroyo regime has promised so little to show a measure of goodwill to the political prisoners but has failed to deliver. Some of those political prisoners who were supposed to be released in 2001 and 2004 are still in prison. Others have won their freedom through difficult legal struggle.

Instead of undertaking goodwill and confidence-building measures, the Arroyo regime has gone into an orgy of human rights violations under Oplan Bantay Laya I and II. After taking over the peace negotiations on the side of the GRP, fascists like Generals Reyes and Ermita and longtime CIA asset like Norberto Gonzales have merely used the illusion of peace negotiations as one of the minor tactics in their vain attempts to deceive the people and destroy the armed revolution through sheer military force.

Q9: How do you evaluate the localized peace talks and offers of amnesty and rehabilitation as well as the payment for weapons surrendered?

JMS: Real peace negotiations between two conflicting forces like the GRP and NDFP can be carried out only through negotiating panels created and directed by their respective principals who ultimately sign and approve the comprehensive agreements on economic, social and political reforms. The Arroyo regime has maliciously used so-called localized peace talks and offers of amnesty and rehabilitation and payments for arms surrendered in a futile attempt to supplant the negotiations at the proper level, deceive the people and split the ranks of the revolutionaries.

The GRP has long failed in these tactics. In so-called localized peace talks, the GRP talks with a handful of renegades and its own underlings and therefore with its own shadow for psywar purposes. The offers of amnesty are not believed because those who make the mistake of taking the bait are soon murdered by death squads of the regime. To pocket the money for themselves, corrupt military officers and bureaucrats collude in drawing up the lists of ghost beneficiaries of amnesty, rehabilitation and rewards for the surrender of arms.

Q10: What are the chances for resuming the peace negotiations while Arroyo is still in power?

JMS: It is doubtful whether the formal talks can be resumed while Arroyo is still in power. That is because the Arroyo regime is not making any move to meet the demands of the NDFP for doing away with the impediments that the GRP has put up. The impediments can be overcome if analyzed one by one and if what is just and

reasonable is aimed at within the framework of The Hague Joint Declaration and the succeeding agreements.

The NDFP is willing to go further into exploratory talks towards overcoming the impediments and resuming the formal talks. If these exploratory talks do not lead to formal talks during the Arroyo regime, they can probably lead to formal talks during the next regime. In this regard, good sense and energy will not be wasted. At the same time, reality beyond the negotiating table does not stand still. The crisis of the ruling system is ever worsening. And the revolutionary forces of the people are growing in strength and advancing.

***GRP Fails to Comply with JASIG
and Continues to Impede NDFP Consultants***

August 22, 2009

The Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) has rendered extremely difficult or even impossible the resumption of formal talks in the peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) by a series of deliberate acts to undermine and negate the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG).

The GRP has not complied with the JASIG and has not removed the impediments it has imposed on the fourteen NDFP consultants who are detained or who are subjects of warrants of arrest on the basis trumped-up criminal charges.

The GRP has not fulfilled its June 15 commitment to expeditiously remove before the end of July the impediments on said consultants on the basis of precedents (using as model the expeditious release of Danilo Borjal in 1997) in accordance with the JASIG. More than two months have passed since June 15 and more than one month since July 17 when the GRP announced that it would respect and comply with JASIG.

The GRP is condemnable for refusing to release any detained NDFP consultant in accordance with JASIG and for maliciously limiting the liberty of Randall Echanis to six months and making him a hostaged consultant. It is also condemnable for issuing sham safe conduct passes that in fact incriminate and condemn Vicente Ladlad and Rafael Baylosis and that practically serve as their death warrant.

The concerned NDFP consultants and their lawyers have taken a position that they would rather debunk the false charges in court and thereby seek relief than submit themselves to the vicious impositions and incriminations by the militarists like Generals Eduardo Ermita and Avelino Razon who constantly maneuver to undermine and negate the JASIG and the entire GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

The fundamental problem on the GRP side is the lack of political will on the part of the GRP principal Gloria M. Arroyo to engage in serious peace negotiations with the NDFP. She tries to evade responsibility by letting one set of subordinates to posture as being for peace negotiations and another set to brazenly generate impediments.

Because of the deliberate and systematic failure of the GRP to remove the impediments on the concerned NDFP consultants, the resumption of formal talks cannot be held in August and probably can never be held in the remaining months of the Arroyo regime, unless a preliminary meeting is held to remove the aforesaid impediments before the formal talks.

Thus, the NDFP intends to propose to the GRP through the Norwegian government that a preparatory meeting between the GRP and NDFP sides with their respective lawyers be held within the first week of September in order to produce a written agreement that reaffirms the JASIG and stipulates the methods for complying with the JASIG and removing the GRP-made impediments on the NDFP consultants.

Resumption of Formal Talks Conditional on GRP Respect for and Compliance with JASIG

August 29, 2009

It is still possible to resume the formal talks in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations if the GRP respects and complies with the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG). As soon as possible, the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels, with their respective lawyers, should meet in Oslo in order to put in writing the most expeditious methods of removing the impediments on NDFP consultants.

This meeting has been proposed by the NDFP negotiating panel through the Norwegian government because the GRP has not fulfilled the following commitments it made last June 15: 1) To respect and comply with the JASIG and remove within the month of July the impediments imposed by the GRP on the NDFP consultants so that these consultants can participate in preparations for the Oslo meetings that were slated to start on August 28; 2) To let the lawyers of the GRP discuss and agree with the lawyers of the NDFP on the most expeditious methods of removing the impediments on the basis of precedents in the time of GRP President Ramos; 3) To use the expeditious release of Dan Borjal in 1997 to serve as the model for releasing detained NDFP consultants; 4) To withdraw all trumped-up charges used by the GRP to detain NDFP consultants and issue warrants of arrest against NDFP panelists, consultants and other JASIG-protected persons; and 5) To release immediately those detainees whose release was ordered as goodwill measures by Gloria M. Arroyo in 2001 and 2004.

The GRP has not respected and complied with the JASIG. Instead, the militarist clique of Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita and OPAPP Secretary Avelino Razon have exerted their best efforts to undermine and negate the JASIG, to reinterpret it onesidedly and convert it into a tool of Oplan Bantay Laya, to generate further impediments and in brief to sabotage the peace process as a way of addressing the roots of the armed conflict and laying the basis for a just and lasting peace

The militarists defied the courts that ordered the release of Elizabeth Principe and for two weeks they tried to prevent her release. She was eventually released because of the clamor for her release by human rights organizations and many people. Then, the militarists claimed that they were responsible for her release.

They caused the issuance of a temporary release order of six months in a malicious maneuver to make Randall Echanis a hostaged consultant. They have issued sham safe conduct passes whose text incriminates Rafael Baylosis and Vicente Ladlad and serves as judgment of conviction and death warrants against them.

The GRP has not only deliberately made a zero compliance with the June 15 agreement but has further violated the JASIG and generated new impediments. So far, the GRP has not shown any serious interest in resuming the formal talks. The Arroyo regime is preoccupied by serving the interests of foreign and domestic plunderers, wallowing in bureaucratic corruption and unleashing the most vicious forms of reactionary violence against the people and the revolutionary forces.

Oslo Meeting of Negotiating Panels May Be Preceded by Manila Meeting of their Respective Lawyers

September 1, 2009

Secretary Avelino Razon, presidential adviser on the peace process, is reported to have said that the lawyers of the Government of the Republic of Philippines (GRP) and National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) can meet first in the Philippines.

Indeed, they can to discuss legal possibilities, on the basis of precedents in the time of GRP president Fidel V. Ramos and his then secretary of justice Silvestre Bello III and in accordance with the June 15 agreement for GRP to comply with the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) and remove the impediments on NDFP consultants.

But there is no substitute for the soonest possible meeting of the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels, together with their respective lawyers, in Oslo because it is the panels that can make agreements in writing in order to ensure compliance with the JASIG. The previous June 15 agreement needs to be further firmed up in detail and in writing by the panels because the GRP has failed to comply with the JASIG.

Compliance by the GRP with JASIG is long overdue. The consultants of the NDFP and other JASIG-protected individuals have been subjected to extrajudicial killings, abductions, torture and indefinite incarceration on the basis of trumped-up charges of common crimes. Only a rotten political, judicial and legal system like that of GRP can allow these barbarities. Razon has been involved in these, especially when he was head of Task Force Usig and coordinated with the world infamous Inter-Agency for Legal Action Group (IALAG) whose abolition has been recommended UN special rapporteur Philip Alston.

As regards the repeated intrigue of Razon that the revolutionary leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), New People's Army (NPA) and the NDFP is divided over the question of peace negotiations, he should read the August 31 CPP statement in Ang Bayan (www.philippinerevolution.net) declaring that the revolutionary leadership in the Philippines is 100 per cent behind the NDFP negotiating panel, with Luis Jalandoni as the chairperson and myself as the chief political consultant.

As regards my lifestyle, it cannot go far beyond borrowed money for bare subsistence. It is incomparable to the sybaritic life of corrupt high bureaucrats and military top brass in the Philippines and to the likes of Gloria and Mike Arroyo who gorge on million-peso banquets. I go only to modest pot lucks and barbecue gatherings.

So much for the trivialities of Razon. De facto GRP president Gloria M. Arroyo impresses the world as lacking in the necessary leadership to pursue the peace negotiations. The US-directed militarists like Ermita and Razon control her in this matter and have made her to believe that they could destroy the armed revolution of the people before 2010 through the sheer military force of Oplan Bantay Laya or through tactics of pressure and deception for pushing the NDFP to submit and surrender to the GRP political and legal system.

Until now, the NDFP does not see that the Arroyo regime is seriously interested in peace negotiations as a way of addressing the roots of the civil war through agreements on basic social, economic and political reforms as the basis of a just and lasting peace. Accordingly, the CPP, NPA and NDFP are united and ready to wage a tit-for-tat struggle against any scheme or maneuver of the Arroyo regime. Indeed, the Filipino people have been pressing on the NPA to intensify tactical offensives on a nationwide scale.

Just as the Arroyo regime is most interested in destroying the armed revolution of the people, the revolutionary forces are resolutely and courageously pursuing the people's war for national liberation and democracy. Their armed strength has acquired the critical mass for accelerating the advance of the people's war and building more units of the NPA to cover 179 rural congressional districts in the next 2 or 3 years. The revolutionary forces plan to attain the strategic stalemate and finally the strategic offensive within the next ten years. The ever-worsening crisis conditions of the world capitalist system and domestic ruling system are favorable for waging revolution. The broad masses of the people are demanding revolutionary change.

The revolutionary forces are also looking at the possibility within the next ten years that patriotic and progressive forces arise within the ruling system and make serious negotiations with the NDFP for a great historic concord of national unity and peace to uphold, defend and advance national independence, democracy as

empowerment of the people, economic development through national industrialization and land reform and a patriotic, scientific and democratic culture.

Arroyo and Razon Proclaim End of GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations

September 17, 2009

In their most recent statements, the de facto president Gloria M. Arroyo and her OPAPP secretary Avelino Razon Jr. have paid lip service to peace negotiations between the Government of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) only to proclaim the end of peace negotiations and blame the NDFP for their own malicious action.

Despite the extremely hostile pronouncements of Arroyo and Razon, the NDFP Negotiating Panel continues to seek the resumption of formal talks in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations and demand respect for and compliance with the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) and all other bilateral agreements made since 1992.

At the same time, the NDFP is acutely aware of the fact that GRP is hell-bent on seeking the destruction and pacification of the revolutionary movement of the people mainly through the military force of Oplan Bantay Laya and secondarily through psywar pretenses at wishing peace negotiations. The GRP has shown its malevolent scheme in the following ways:

1. It does not want to give up its policy and practice of using false charges of common crimes to demonize, harass, abduct, detain, torture and murder suspected revolutionaries, social activists and the NDFP pan-elists, consultants, staffers and other JASIG-protected people. It is thus incapable of respecting and complying with the JASIG and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL).
2. It wants to prevent the negotiation of social, economic and political reforms in accordance with the substantive agenda set forth by The Hague Joint Declaration and the Joint Agreement on the Sequence, Formation and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees. It does not wish the peace negotiations to be a way of addressing the roots of the armed conflict and laying the basis for a just and lasting peace through basic reforms.
3. It wants to front load the end of hostilities, which is the fourth and last item in the agenda, so that it can actually destroy the peace negotiations as a way of bringing about basic reforms for the benefit of the people. It is obsessed with imposing the framework of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration simply to pacify the people and perpetuate the rotten ruling system of oppression and exploitation.

By all indications, the Arroyo regime does not want the resumption of formal talks in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations, unless it realizes immediately its malevolent scheme and attain its malicious objectives against the Filipino people and their struggle for national liberation and democracy.

On People's War and Peace Negotiations

Interview by Roselle Valerio, *Liberation International*

September 20, 2009

Thank you for granting this interview in your capacity as the chief political consultant of the negotiating panel of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). I would like to ask some questions about the status and prospects of the people's war and the peace negotiations of the NDFP with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP).

1. But first let me ask you, what is your current personal situation in exile, as a political refugee?

JMS: I am taking seriously and enjoying my role as chief political consultant of the NDFP negotiating panel, and as chairperson of the International League of Peoples' Struggle. I do a lot of research, writing and speaking before various types of audiences. I manage to speak through Skype, Yahoo Messenger and other video-conferencing methods to audiences in the US and other countries which refuse to give me the visa.

I am on the terrorist blacklist of the European Union and other governments, and I have been detained on false charges supplied by the Arroyo regime. I am banned from paid employment and I am deprived of social benefits. I have to borrow money in order to survive. But my detractors misrepresent me as living it up whenever they get hold of pictures of me enjoying the company of compatriots and friends in social gatherings.

2. Will the Arroyo regime, as they claim, be able to destroy or reduce the New People's Army (NPA) into an insignificant force before the middle of next year?

JMS: No. Even the top officials and military officers of the regime admit that they cannot destroy the NPA. The intensity, frequency and wide scale of the NPA tactical offensives belie the claims of military success by the most rabid psywar officers of the regime. The regime is worried about the worsening crisis and the rising strength of the NPA and other revolutionary forces of the people.

3. Why has the Arroyo government failed in its military objective of defeating the NPA?

JMS: The regime's anti-people policies of subservience to foreign interests, its big comprador-landlord character, its bureaucratic corruption and gross human rights violations drive the people to wage armed revolution.

The ever-worsening crisis of the world capitalist system and the domestic ruling system fuels the people's war. The toiling masses of workers and peasants and the middle social strata suffer mass unemployment, lower incomes, soaring prices of basic commodities, more expensive social services and other grave difficulties.

Following the leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), the NPA has successfully pursued the general line of new democratic revolution through protracted people's war, and is at the moment carrying out an intensive and extensive guerilla warfare on the basis of an ever widening and deepening mass base.

4. In a recent interview with the Wall Street Journal, you said that there are about 6,000 fighters of the New People's Army. Is that all the armed strength of the NPA?

JMS: I said that the NPA should have at least 6000 Red fighters with automatic rifles because as early as 1986 their number was already 6100. I said this precisely to contradict the varying estimates of NPA strength of 4800 to 5200 by the reactionary armed forces. I also pointed out that the number of NPA fighters never reached 25,000 in the 1980s.

The revolutionary movement does not publicize the exact number of NPA fighters armed with automatic rifles. But I dare say that the NPA armed strength is far more than 6,000. And it is not limited to the thousands of Red fighters with automatic rifles. They are augmented by tens of thousands of members of the people's militia and the hundreds of thousands of members of the self-defense units of mass organizations in nearly 10,000 barangays of the country.

5. Aside from armed struggle, how else does the NPA build its political strength?

JMS: It is a matter of public knowledge that the NPA draws political strength from the people by arousing, organizing and mobilizing them along the line of the new democratic revolution, and by serving them in every possible and necessary way. In very concrete and immediate terms, the NPA draws strength from the revolutionary mass organizations, the organs of political power and allied forces. These arise and grow due to the work of the CPP, NPA and NDFP.

6. On the basis of information available to you as NDFP chief political consultant, what is your view or evaluation of

the plans of the CPP leadership to advance the people's war?

JMS: From what I read in CPP publications, it is logical for the CPP to aim for expanding the current number of guerilla fronts to more than 170, or enough to cover every rural congressional district within the next few years.

Fulfilling the political and military requirements for such an expansion would certainly mean a great advance of the people's war and would lay the basis for a possible strategic stalemate or even a strategic offensive within the next ten years.

7. If the CPP is aiming for a great advance in the people's war, why does it allow the NDFP to engage in peace negotiations with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP)? Isn't there a self-contradiction in this regard?

JMS: I don't think that there is a self-contradiction. The peace negotiations arise precisely because of the people's war. At whatever rate the peace negotiations run, the GRP seeks to destroy the armed revolutionary movement of the people and the revolutionary forces defend themselves and advance the people's war.

The peace negotiations provide the revolutionary forces the opportunity to broadcast their just cause of struggle for national liberation and democracy, and explore possibilities of basic social, economic and political reforms. Even on the eve of complete revolutionary victory, the revolutionary forces can engage in peace negotiations in order to facilitate the victory.

8. What are the chances for the resumption of formal talks in the peace negotiations before Gloria Arroyo steps down in 2010? What can be accomplished before then?

JMS: The Arroyo regime has refused to respect and comply with the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG). It continues to use false criminal charges to abduct, detain, torture and murder NDFP panelists, consultants, staffers and other JASIG-protected people. Moreover, it seeks to undermine and scrap the JASIG and all other bilateral agreements of the GRP and NDFP since 1992.

It regards the peace negotiations as a minor adjunct of Oplan Bantay Laya. It wishes to pacify the revolutionary movement of the people through military force and deception in peace negotiations. It is obsessed with imposing the framework of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration on the NDFP. It also wishes to frontload the issue of ending the hostilities and evade the prior issues of social, economic and political reforms in the substantive agenda of the peace negotiations.

If only the regime would agree to resume the formal talks and comply with the obligations stipulated by previous agreements, it is still possible to go a significant way towards a comprehensive agreement on social and economic reforms and to improve the human rights situation in the Philippines. But the regime is obviously determined to go down in Philippine history as a hated regime of unmitigated puppetry to US imperialism, unbridled corruption, and gross and systematic human rights violations.

9. Do you think that the next administration would be willing to negotiate with the NDFP?

JMS: I believe so. The crisis of the ruling system shall have become worse. More than ever, the people would be demanding peace negotiations even as they demand the advance of the revolutionary movement, especially because the peace negotiations have not as yet yielded substantial reforms for their benefit. The people clamor for basic reforms to realize a just and lasting peace, be it through people's war and/or peace negotiations.

10. Is it possible that the NPA and the people's war would someday become so strong that those in the GRP would choose to negotiate peace more seriously than now?

JMS: Just as it is possible for the revolutionary movement of the people to win complete victory in the next ten years, it is also possible for patriotic and progressive sections in the reactionary government to seek peace negotiations and accept a historic concord of national unity and just peace against foreign and feudal domination.

Such historic concord should uphold, defend and advance national independence, democracy through empowerment of the working people, social justice, development through national industrialization and land reform, a national, scientific and mass culture, and international solidarity for peace and development.

On the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations

Interview by J. M. Ragaza, *Philippine Collegian*

October 10, 2009

I am a feature writer of the Philippine Collegian, the official student publication of UP Diliman, and a legislative researcher for Kabataan Partylist. I would like to ask a few questions about the gains, problems and prospects of the peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines.

1. Can you briefly narrate the history of the peace negotiations between the NDFP and the GRP? When was it started? Who initiated it?

JMS: When Cory Aquino became president in 1986, she offered ceasefire talks with the NDFP. A ceasefire agreement was made in November 1986 as a prelude to further agreement on the substantive agenda of peace negotiations. Following the Mendiola massacre of peasants, Aquino scrapped the ceasefire agreement in February 1986 and unsheathed the sword of war.

When she was beset by grave socio-economic and political problems in 1989, she sent then Rep. Jose Yap to The Netherlands to explore the possibility of peace negotiations. When Ramos became president in 1992, he sent a GRP delegation headed by Yap to meet and with the NDFP delegation headed by Luis Jalandoni in The Hague. The two delegations agreed on the framework of peace negotiations, as embodied in The Hague Declaration.

The peace negotiations formally opened in Brussels only in 1995 after the forging of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), the Ground Rules of Panel Meetings and the Joint Agreement on the Sequence, Formation and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees.

2. What is the objective of peace negotiations between the government and the NDFP? Why do you think that the government is participating in such talks despite its obvious bias against the Left? On the other hand, why is the Left engaging in peace talks when its criticism of the current government is that it is there to perpetuate itself into power and uphold its economic and political interests? What are NDFP's gains in these peace negotiations?

JMS: There are peace negotiations precisely because there is armed conflict. As stated clearly in The Hague Joint Declaration, the objective of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations is to address the roots of the armed conflict and lay the basis for a just and lasting peace through basic social, economic and political reforms.

The GRP engages in peace negotiations because it is besieged by the crisis of the domestic ruling system and the world capitalist system and the growing strength of the people's armed revolution. It tries to use the peace negotiations as supplement and complement to its brutal policy of armed counterrevolution and systematic violation of human rights.

The NDFP participates in the peace negotiations in order to put forward and broadcast the demand of the people and revolutionary forces for national liberation and democracy, the empowerment of the working people, national industrialization and land reform, a patriotic, scientific and mass culture and independent foreign policy. If the NDFP does not engage in peace negotiations, it will become easier for the GRP to pretend that it is for peace and blame the revolutionary forces for the civil war in the Philippines.

So far, the NDFP has succeeded in pushing the GRP to be a party to the Comprehensive Agreement of Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. But of course, the GRP has not complied with its obligations but has become far more brutal than before in violating human rights. The agreement has become a standard for the NDFP to expose and oppose the gross and systematic violations of human rights by the GRP.

3. Can you briefly describe how a peace talk is conducted? What are the steps undertaken by both parties before entering into negotiations? Are there preconditions (both in principle and in process) on both parts before engaging in peace talks?

JMS: Before the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations formally opened in 1995, there were the exploratory and preliminary talks which resulted in joint agreements on the common objective, the mutually acceptable principles, the substantive agenda, the sequence of issues to be negotiated, the ground rules of panel meetings, the safety and immunity guarantees and so on.

The GRP and the NDFP have their respective ideological, political and socio-economic principles and systems.

Peace negotiations between them would be impossible if one side imposes its principles and system on the other side. The Hague Joint Declaration stipulates that the two negotiating parties are guided by mutually acceptable principles of national sovereignty, democracy and social justice but no precondition shall be imposed by one side on the other that would negate the character and purpose of peace negotiations.

4. In principle, why is it that the government should be the one to bring the rebel forces to the negotiating table?

JMS: It is not the GRP that has brought the revolutionary forces to the negotiating table. It has sued for peace negotiations precisely because it is stricken by crisis and is worried about the growing strength of the revolutionary movement. The NDFP has decided to engage in peace negotiations after weighing the advantages and disadvantages for the people and revolutionary cause under conditions where there are peace negotiations and where there are none.

5. What are the limitations of peace talks?

JMS: Peace talks cannot accomplish for any side more than what it has in the balance of forces in the battlefield. But there are examples in history and there are possibilities in which two warring parties can decide to go into a truce and alliance against a common enemy. The NDFP is open to the possibility that someday patriotic and progressive forces within the GRP would agree to a truce and alliance in order to fight for national liberation and democracy against imperialism and the worst of local reaction.

6. In a speech, former Senator Tanada once said that the government seems to prefer resorting to endless dialogue because it is neither prepared nor ready to undertake concrete reforms that address substantive social issues. Does it still hold true today (Arroyo regime)? Why?

JMS: What former Tanada said is true. So far, there is yet no leadership in the GRP that has the will to make agreements with the NDFP on basic social, economic and political reforms. The top leaders of the GRP are servile to US imperialism and to the interests of the comprador big bourgeoisie and the landlord class. However, the Arroyo regime is notorious not for endless dialogue but for having paralyzed and sabotaged the peace negotiations for so many years, for more than 90 per cent of the time from 2001 to the present.

7. Why is the NDFP still participating in peace talks after so many years? What are the prospects of peace talks given the current political and economic situation?

JMS: The NDFP has engaged in peace negotiations for so long since 1992 to gain experience and learn how to move in and out of peace negotiations. It has maintained its revolutionary integrity and has broadcast its revolutionary principles and policies domestically and internationally in the course of peace negotiations.

It is very unlikely that something positive and substantial for the people will arise from peace negotiations during the remaining months of the Arroyo regime. But the NDFP is not opposed to peace negotiations because it continues to foresee a future situation in which the crisis of the ruling system will be far worse than now and a new combination of patriotic and progressive forces will arise. But the NDFP keeps on hoping that someday the crisis of the ruling system will bring about a new combination of patriotic and progressive forces against imperialism and local reaction gain the upper hand and move against imperialism and local reaction.

8. Finally, what do you think is the government's notion of peace? How about the NDFP's?

JMS: The GRP's notion of peace under the Arroyo regime is the pacification of the people and the revolutionary forces through military suppression and psywar and their capitulation to their oppressors and exploiters in the rotten semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system.

The NDFP's concept of peace is one that is just and lasting because it satisfies the people's demand for national liberation and democracy; and it is founded on basic social, economic and political reforms.

A just and lasting peace is possible in the Philippines if national sovereignty is upheld against imperialist interests, if there is genuine democracy through the empowerment of the workers, peasants and the middle class, if there is economic development through national industrialization and land reform, if a patriotic, scientific and mass system of education and culture is promoted and if an independent foreign policy for world peace and development is pursued.

Letter to Annabelle Abaya

December 2, 2009

The problem really is rooted in the lack of political will of your principal, Gloria M. Arroyo, to respect and comply with JASIG and do what Fidel V. Ramos could do out of respect for the JASIG and the peace process in agreeing to the quashal of charges, releases on recognizance, archiving of cases and the like. These were possible even in such cases as those of Sotero Llamas who was the Bicol CPP secretary and was captured in a battle situation.

Sotero Llamas was charged with 11 cases of non-bailable offenses in several GRP courts. Prior to his arrest and unlike Echanis, Baylosis and Ladlad, he was not even a publicly known NDFP consultant in the peace negotiations. In less than 48 hours his defense lawyers and the GRP legal team were able to release him on recognizance and all the cases against him were subsequently archived and effectively dismissed by the Regional Trial Court of Quezon City. The lawyers of the Public Interest Law Center (PILC) who were the defense lawyers of Sotero Llamas and who are now the defense lawyers of Echanis, Ladlad and Baylosis can provide the OPAPP with a long list of cases similar to the case of Sotero Llamas, which can be invoked as strong and compelling precedents.

In contrast, false charges have been used by the current regime to place warrants of arrests on NDFP consultants (like Baylosis and Ladlad), detain (Echanis) or murder them (Velasco, Calubid, Calubad, etc.).

A related problem is the series of efforts of the regime to use the false charges and the GRP courts and DOJ prosecutors to undermine, render useless and probably even nullify the JASIG and the other bilateral agreements. You seem to be happy with what you deem as precedent in the continuing GRP hostaging of Randall Echanis under a 6-month limitation of his freedom, which is a mockery of the JASIG. In this regard, you must recognize that the NDFP is not bound by GRP executive and judicial actions that are unjust to individuals like Randall and that violate the JASIG. You must also understand why the lawyers are concerned about the rights and safety of Echanis, Baylosis and Ladlad who are their clients as individuals and as NDFP consultants. In the performance of their professional duty, the defense lawyers constantly seek guidance from, and act in close coordination and consultation with the NDFP panel and their individual clients.

In a recent earlier letter of mine to you, I wrote: "The exchange of certifications by Louie and acknowledgment by Nieves is without prejudice to any legal action that is really assuring and beneficial to the consultants as may be worked out by the lawyers of both sides with the judge concerned." During the Ramos administration, quashals, releases on recognizance, archiving and the like were availed of before the NDFP consultant in question applied for a passport or went to the Manila airport to leave for the peace negotiations in The Netherlands. Why should not the Philippine-based NDFP consultants seek every legal protection available in view of the Arroyo regime's dismal record of filing false charges against them, arresting and detaining indefinitely and even murdering them without any legal niceties.

Right now, the organs of the NDFP are considering whether or not the Arroyo regime is ready to comply with the JASIG by any degree and resume the formal talks. They are paying close attention to the question of whether the GRP executive or its prosecution arm in particular is pretending to have no leeway whatsoever in complying with the JASIG in a maneuver of the GRP to place the NDFP in a position of capitulation to the GRP courts and to the GRP. The GRP pretense is clear against the principle that no judge can stop the prosecution from deciding even on *nolle prosequi*.

I think that the GRP and NDFP should have more time to consider how to carry out the preliminary meeting and then proceed to the resumption of formal talks. In the face of the stubbornness of the GRP against Baylosis, Ladlad and Echanis, we might also have to wait for them as individuals to clear their names in court from the false charges against them. Previously the GRP Supreme Court found out the falsity of charges against some NDFP consultants, as in its 2007 judgment on the rebellion case against Sison et al. The Supreme Court went so far as to criticize the prostitution of the prosecution. Yet it has not disciplined the erring prosecutors. This kind of prosecutors continue to be a tool of the national security agency and the military in generating false charges.

There may not be enough time before 22 December or even within the whole of December to overcome the obstacles (neither hiccups nor kinks). Perhaps, we need time up to January or February. Or we simply let the Arroyo regime to run out and hope for a new regime with the political will to respect JASIG and negotiate a just

peace based on needed reforms.

Best wishes,
Joma

P.S. Has Nieves faxed to Louie her letter or letters of acknowledgment?

Two Proposals for a Just and Lasting Peace

July 27, 2010

The Negotiating Panel of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) has repeatedly declared its readiness to resume peace negotiations with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) under the Aquino II administration. It has also signaled its willingness to receive in The Netherlands or Norway a senior emissary or a team of emissaries of this administration to discuss the possible course and perspective of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

On my part, as chief political consultant of the NDFP Negotiating Panel, I have long proposed the resumption and acceleration of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations, especially with regard to social and economic reforms, in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration and subsequent major agreements.

I have also gone so far as to propose a concept of immediate truce and alliance on the basis of a mutually acceptable declaration of principles and policies upholding national independence and democracy, confronting the basic problems of the Filipino people and adopting effective measures of social, economic and political reforms. It is unjust for anyone to expect that the revolutionary forces and the people simply cease fire and surrender to a rotten ruling system that shuns patriotic and progressive demands and refuses to engage in basic reforms.

I hope that the Aquino II administration can consider seriously the two proposals for the benefit of the people. Like the NDFP, I welcome any serious step of this administration towards the attainment of a just peace and national unity by addressing the roots of the armed conflict and arriving with the revolutionary forces and the people at agreements on basic social, economic and political reforms.

I urge the Aquino II administration to override such counterrevolutionary notions as those previously spelled out by its officials that the military can get anything it wants despite the severe economic crisis and bankruptcy of the reactionary government, that the revolutionary forces and people surrender and that they can be destroyed and pacified in the next three years.

I challenge the Aquino II administration to reject the US Counterinsurgency Guide and take the path of seeking a concord of just peace and national unity with the NDFP by addressing the roots of the armed conflict and forging agreements on social, economic and political reforms. It is malicious and unjust to construe the people's resistance to injustice, oppression and exploitation as the problem rather than as the consequence of foreign and feudal domination.

Such monstrous problems as foreign monopoly capitalism, domestic feudalism and bureaucratic corruption are the long-running and current causes of underdevelopment, unemployment, poverty and misery. All well-meaning forces and people must unite and work together to confront and solve these problems and work for a new and better Philippines that is truly free and democratic, socially just, progressive and peaceful.

On the US-Aquino Regime,

Peace and Revolution

Interview by Roselle Valerio, Liberation International

August 11, 2010

1. On the basis of Aquino's policy pronouncements, appointments and other actions since his oath-taking as president, how do you characterize his regime and how do you compare it with the Arroyo regime?

JMS: The Aquino regime is the latest of regimes servile to US imperialism and representative chiefly of the local exploiting classes of big compradors and landlords. It follows such US-directed policies as neoliberal globalization and the so-called global war on terror which is used to justify state terrorism and US military intervention in the Philippines. The Aquino regime is fundamentally a continuation of the Arroyo regime. It is another running dog of US imperialism with a different collar. It tries to make itself look different from the Arroyo regime through sheer propaganda. From day to day, it does some publicity stunts and gimmicks to deflect attention from the big basic problems of the people, which are the main causes of poverty and corruption.

2. Would Aquino be able to fulfil his promise of sending Gloria M. Arroyo to prison for human rights violations and for plunder? Will it eliminate corruption and thus eliminate poverty? His main slogan has been: kung walang corrupt, walang mahirap (if there were no corrupt, there would be no poor). What will happen if he does not fulfil his promises?

JMS: Aquino is already making it evident that he has no intention of sending Arroyo to prison for human rights violations and for plunder. The Truth Commission is a device for getting Gloria M. Arroyo and her cohorts off the hook. The executive order creating the commission protects Arroyo from being held liable for plunder and human rights violations. The commission is also impotent and redundant even when it comes to the investigation of graft and corruption cases. The commission head Hilario Davide is a shared valet of the Aquino and Arroyo families. One who promises to eliminate poverty solely by eliminating corruption is obviously a big liar from the very outset. The Aquino regime cannot eliminate poverty and corruption without confronting foreign and feudal exploitation and carrying out national industrialization and land reform. Poverty and corruption will persist so long as the evils of foreign monopoly capitalism, domestic feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism afflict the country. In the backroom of the Aquino regime, the big comprador-landlord Cojuangco-Aquino family is plotting to keep Hacienda Luisita and amass wealth in other corrupt ways like privatizing Pagcor. Going by the example of Arroyo sending Estrada to prison in three months' time in 2001, the people expect Aquino to send her to prison before the end of September. If he fails, the people will take him to task for making false promises and lying. He will be hounded, discredited and isolated for the nonfulfilment of these promises that he has made and of course for the new wave of corruption that is sure to arise from

the new set of thieving bureaucrats handpicked by the big foreign and local businessmen, the Kamag-anak, Inc. and the Classmates, Inc.

3. Has Aquino taken any decisive steps to stop human rights violations and improve the human rights situation in the Philippines? Is he heeding the Alston report and recommendations? Do you expect him to do so sometime later?

JMS: Aquino has not taken any decisive steps to stop human rights violations. He has never spoken strongly and definitively against the gross and systematic violations of human rights committed by the previous regime. He has ignored the Alston report and recommendations. So far Aquino has not released the Morong 43 and other political prisoners. He condones the continuing use of false charges of common crimes against the panelists, consultants and staffers of the NDFP negotiating panel. Despite the severe economic crisis and the bankruptcy of the reactionary government, Aquino has boasted that he would give everything that the military forces demand. He has openly insinuated that he wishes to double the strength of the military because the population has doubled since the time of Marcos. He has openly urged the military to give priority to counterinsurgency and escalate military campaigns. The military forces of the reactionary government continue to commit human rights violations and carry out Oplan Bantay Laya. Aquino and his defense secretary Gazmin have demanded ceasefire, surrender and disarming of the New People's Army (NPA) as precondition to peace negotiations. The AFP chief of staff has boasted that the military would decimate the New People's Army in the next three years.

4. *What is the purpose of Aquino and the military officials in preconditioning the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations with a general ceasefire? Is it to prevent peace negotiations or pressure the NDFP towards capitulation and the laying aside of the people's demands for reforms? Is Aquino really interested in peace negotiations as a way of addressing the roots of the armed conflict and agreeing on reforms as the basis for a just and lasting peace?*

JMS: Aquino and the military officials appear to be grossly ignorant or deliberately contemptuous of The Hague Joint Declaration which prohibits any side of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations from preconditioning the formal talks with ceasefire, surrender or anything else that negates the character and purpose of peace negotiations. In fact, Aquino seeks to violate The Hague Joint Declaration by making a demand for a general ceasefire as precondition. He is expressing the old reactionary position of treating the peace negotiations as a mere tool of deception in the so-called counterinsurgency. Obviously, he regards the peace negotiations as a way of immediately pacifying the revolutionary forces and laying aside the need for negotiating and forging agreements as the basis for a just and lasting peace. He follows the US Counterinsurgency Guide which considers peace negotiations as dispensable in defeating the armed revolutionary movement.

Aquino and the presidential adviser Teresita Deles follow the US line that peace negotiations are a disposable embellishment on the use of all-out military force to dismantle and disarm the revolutionary forces. The so-called military solution is combined with pretenses at good governance, delivery of services, economic rehabilitation and development and security reforms. The Aquino regime is banking so much on US military and financial assistance. It is salivating for the grant of US\$434 million from the Millennium Challenge Corporation in exchange for further US military intervention and super-exploitation of our country and our people by US corporations and banks.

Now, the regime appears to find no urgent necessity to engage the NDFP in peace negotiations. But we should not be surprised if it is willing to resume formal talks for one reason or another. It does not give up the use of the peace negotiations in trying to deceive the people or to trick the revolutionary forces. At the same, the current worsening economic crisis, the widespread social discontent, mass protests and the intensifying revolutionary armed struggle are stimuli for Aquino to approach the negotiating table.

5. *Under the rotten ruling system of big compradors and landlords and the ever-worsening crisis, how far can the Aquino regime make pretenses at good governance, delivery of social services, economic rehabilitation and development and security reforms? Does the regime have enough resources to satisfy the economic and social demands of the people and at the same time to increase the personnel and equipment of the military, police and paramilitary forces?*

JMS: The Aquino regime cannot go very far in its pretenses at good governance. Aquino himself has become the most corrupt official by virtue of his accepting campaign funds from the imperialists and from his fellow big comprador-landlords and thus being bound to serve their interests. He has appointed to lucrative positions certain officials close to big business and notorious for being corrupt in previous regimes.

The Cojuangco-Aquino family is now using the power and influence of the president for the corrupt purpose of preventing land reform and clawing on to Hacienda Luisita. The persistence of the ruling system and its worsening crisis render impossible any adequate delivery of social services to the people and any economic rehabilitation and development for the country. The budgetary and trade deficits will grow. Local and foreign borrowing will become ever more burdensome. Collecting additional taxes will become ever more difficult in a depressed economy. How can Aquino impress anyone about tax collection when he is silent about the unpaid tax obligations and ill-gotten wealth of the Marcoses, Eduardo Cojuangco, Lucio Tan and other big shots?

The Aquino regime can only fan the flames of the armed revolution by using public funds and foreign grants to enlarge its military forces in terms of personnel and equipment and escalate campaigns of military suppression. Within the next three years, Aquino wishes to destroy or debilitate the revolutionary forces through propaganda stunts and brute military force. He can only fan the flames of people's war by exacerbating the socioeconomic crisis with rising military expenditures.

6. *How can the revolutionary forces and the people overcome the plan of the Aquino regime to destroy or debilitate them? Are they ready to fight tit for tat, deliver their own blows on the regime and the entire ruling system and advance to a new and higher stage of the people's war?*

JMS: I shall answer your question as a political scientist. The revolutionary forces draw the participation and support of the broad masses of the people, especially the workers, peasants and lower middle class, because the semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system is rotten, increasingly exploitative and oppressive and ceaselessly

afflicted with socioeconomic and political crisis. As the crisis of the ruling system and the world capitalist system worsens, the reactionary classes will have more difficulties because of increasingly violent factional contradictions and because of the further rise of the revolutionary movement.

The revolutionary forces have adopted the general line of people's democratic revolution through protracted people's war. This line has served the revolutionary forces and the people very well since the reestablishment of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in 1968. They grew from small to big and from weak to strong. They were able to overcome the 14-year long Marcos fascist dictatorship and build the New People's Army nationwide. Since the fall of Marcos, they have been able to overcome all kinds of violence and deception under such operational plans as Lambat Bitag I, II and III and Bantay

Laya I and II, conducted by the post-Marcos regimes. They have a wealth of experience and the will to win. According to the publications of the CPP Central Committee, the armed revolutionary movement has a plan of advancing the people's war from the strategic defensive to the strategic stalemate in the next

five years. The CPP has laid out the political requirements for such an advance. These involve the further strengthening of the CPP, the NPA, the NDFP, the mass organizations and the organs of political power. The Party has also made clear the strategy and tactics to wage intensive and extensive guerrilla warfare on the basis of an ever widening and deepening mass base, develop on favorable terrain highly mobile strike forces that can operate on inter-front, inter-provincial and regional scales and aim to build some 179 guerrilla fronts within the next five years.

7. Among the political requirements for advancing the people's war, what do you think is the most important one? Please answer according to your rich stock of knowledge and revolutionary experience since the 1960s.

JMS: In my opinion, the most important political requirement is the development of the mass movement by arousing, organizing and mobilizing the masses of workers, peasants and urban petty bourgeois who comprise the basic forces of the people's democratic revolution. After all, the revolution is a mass undertaking, from the process of overthrowing the rotten system to that of building a new Philippines that is truly independent and democratic, socially just, progressive and peaceful.

Success in the mass movement is best measured by solid mass organizing, concretely by a count of how many people become members of the various mass organizations, as a result of conscious and militant leadership, mass agitation and propaganda, members recruiting others and mass campaigns. The simplest and most effective method of expanding the mass organizations is to encourage all members to perform their basic duty of recruiting new members from among their friends, colleagues and relatives who are willing to accept the organization's constitution and program.

The mass organizations are based in the urban areas as well as in the rural areas, inside and outside of the guerrilla fronts. They can grow by relying on and trusting the masses. The imposition of unreasonable standards and sectarian biases and then the failure to further develop the limited number of members are factors that stunt the growth of mass organizations. The large numbers of members in the basic mass organizations serve as the main source of candidate members for the CPP and as its main basis for expansion.

8. Can you say more about building the CPP? What are the requirements involved? What factors cause the expansion or contraction of the Party organization?

JMS: I can talk in general terms. The ever-worsening crisis of the ruling system generates the conditions favorable to the building of patriotic and progressive mass organizations as well as to the building of the Party. The building of the Party entails ideological, political and organizational building. Ideological building involves education in applying Marxism-Leninism-Maoism on the history and current circumstances of the Philippines. Political building involves developing the mass movement along the line of people's democratic revolution.

Organizational building involves upholding the principle of democratic centralism. May I focus on the question of expansion or contraction of the Party

organization. Let me start by saying that it is the basic duty of all Party members to recruit as candidate-members those who accept the Constitution and Program of the Party. Within the period of candidature of six months for workers and peasants; and one year for the urban petty bourgeois, the Party unit concerned has the duty to see to it that the candidate-member is raised to being a full member by taking the basic level of Party education and carrying out the assigned tasks.

The Party organization expands quite rapidly if this standard is followed. If not, the growth of the Party

organization is stunted. Among the causes of the contraction of the Party organization are the failure to constantly urge Party members to carry out their basic duty of recruiting candidate-members in accordance with the Party Constitution, conceit manifested by applying unreasonable standards that deviate from the constitution, over-suspiciousness and inability to recognize the honesty of prospective and current candidate-members and sheer negligence of the duty to recruit candidate-members or to help them become full members.

9. *From your study of its published documents, can you explain how feasible is it for the CPP to establish 179 guerrilla fronts, develop relatively stable areas and reach the stage of strategic stalemate? Can you explain the strategy and tactics being pursued by the CPP?*

JMS: Indeed, I have studied the CPP documents. The CPP has set itself five years to carry out its plan to establish 179 guerrilla fronts, develop relatively stable base areas and reach the stage of strategic stalemate. At present, such revolutionary forces as the Party, the people's army, the mass organizations and organs of political power are well-based among the toiling masses and are spread out nationwide.

According to the CPP, these forces will expand and consolidate themselves from year to year. The NPA is the main revolutionary force for advancing the people's war. It pursues the strategic line of encircling the cities from the countryside in order to accumulate armed strength. It chooses the best possible physical and social terrain for basing itself and from there advance wave upon wave. It aims to raise its strength and offensive capabilities and to improve coordination among its units on the scale of several guerrilla fronts, provinces and regions.

It launches only those tactical offensives it can win and avoids battles that it is not sure of winning. Its main purpose is to wipe out enemy units, accumulate weapons and form more combat units. It seeks to punish the human rights violators, the plunderers and the worst anti-social elements. It is determined to dismantle antipeople, anti-national and antidemocratic enterprises (especially those engaged in landgrabbing, mining, logging for export and the like) in order to combat the worst forms of exploitation, make more land available for free distribution to the landless tillers and protect and conserve natural resources for national industrialization.

10. *What is the relationship of the NPA to the mass movement in the guerrilla fronts, the organs of political power, the people's militia and self-defense units? How is this relationship affected by the drive to reach the strategic stalemate?*

JMS: Let me continue restating what I read from CPP publications. Under the leadership of the CPP, the NPA does mass work in the guerrilla fronts. It does propaganda work to arouse the masses. It guides and encourages the masses to organize themselves in various forms of voluntary association. It urges them to undertake mass campaigns for the benefit of the people, such as those related to public education, land reform and production, health, defense, cultural affairs, settlement of disputes and so on.

The NPA guarantees the development of the barrio organizing committees into barrio revolutionary committees as local organs of democratic power. It gives basic training to the people's militia as the police force and the self-defense units of the various mass organizations. It is of key importance to develop Party members from the ranks of advanced mass activists and form the Party branch as the leading force of the local mass organizations, the organs of democratic power, the militia and the self-defense units.

When the local revolutionary forces led by the Party branch exist, the NPA units can be confident of having a guerrilla base for opening new areas as well as for launching tactical offensives. In the drive to reach the strategic stalemate, the direct mass base for people's war needs to expand and consolidate, become relatively stable and support the mobile strike forces of the NPA in undertaking tactical offensives for definite periods of time. The NPA can concentrate on tactical offensives because the local revolutionary forces can take charge of their own affairs in the localities.

11. *How would you compare the longevity of the Aquino regime and that of the armed revolutionary movement?*

JMS: The Aquino regime is just a passing pro-imperialist big comprador-landlord regime. It has made too many promises that are false and cannot be fulfilled. It is running against itself. It will soon be utterly discredited and isolated. Aquino has cashed in on the mystique of his parents. He is wantonly spending it. The revolutionary mass movement of the people will become stronger by fighting the regime and will outlast it. It will continue to exist and grow for as long as there is a need to fight for national and social liberation and to build a people's democratic system.

On the Resumption of Peace Negotiations

under Aquino

Online interview by Joyce Pañares of the *Manila Standard*

October 18, 2010

President Benigno Aquino III has appointed human rights lawyer Alexander Padilla as the government's chief negotiator for the peace talks with the Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front, a Malacañang source said Monday. I have a few questions, Sir, for an article I am doing. First, if Alex Padilla is acceptable as government chief negotiator. Does the NDF have conditions for the resumption of the peace talks? And what are the challenges that must first be addressed if peace talks resumed?

I think that Alex Padilla is a good choice of PNoy as GRP chief negotiator. Alex is known to understand the root causes of the armed conflict and the need for reasonable negotiations to arrive at mutually satisfactory agreements. He is known as a fair and reasonable person to talk to.

The NDFP makes no preconditions for the resumption of formal talks. Both the GRP and the NDFP are equally obliged to comply with the previous agreements, starting with the framework agreement, The Hague Joint Declaration.

The GRP and NDFP negotiating panels are expected to push the work of the Reciprocal Working Committees on Social and Economic Reforms, to let the Joint Monitoring Committee under the CARHRIHL deal with the complaints regarding human rights violations and to agree immediately on measures of goodwill and confidence building in order to improve the atmosphere for peace negotiations.

On the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations

Interview by *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, October 25, 2010

1. How do you see Alex Padilla and his team? Are they acceptable to the NDFP panel?

JMS: PNoy [President Benigno Aquino] has made an excellent choice of Alex Padilla as the chair of the GRP Negotiating Panel. Alex has an understanding of the Filipino people's struggle for national independence and democracy. He was a human rights lawyer and was once with Bayan. I also know Pablito Sanidad personally. He is also an excellent choice by PNoy. He is known as a man of integrity, a human rights lawyer, a patriot and progressive. I do not know the three other GRP panelists personally.

PNoy as GRP principal has the prerogative of appointing his own panelists. His panel appears to be so composed as to encourage the belief that there will be serious peace negotiations towards mutually satisfactory agreements. Through NDFP negotiating panel chairperson Luis Jalandoni, the NDFP has already publicly welcomed and accepted the new GRP panel.

2. What should be a good starting point for the renewal of the talks?

JMS: The chairmen of the GRP and NDFP Negotiating Panels should start immediately to communicate with each other. It is possible that by the time you go to press they shall have started to communicate and try to arrange preliminary talks between teams of the panels as soon as possible in Oslo. The preliminary talks are intended to pave the way for the resumption of formal talks in January or February.

Likely topics for the preliminary talks include compliance with the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (particularly to enable NDFP consultants to attend negotiations), the release of political prisoners in the same manner that Ramos released both the military prisoners and political prisoners in 1992, the enhancement of the work of the Joint Monitoring Committee under the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law [CARHRIHL] and the acceleration of negotiations on social and economic reforms.

3. What is it that the PNoy government should do to show it is sincere in talking peace with you? What can the NDFP panel do on its part to show the same?

JMS: PNoy has begun to show serious interest in peace negotiations by composing his panel. The NDFP has responded promptly by welcoming and accepting the new GRP panel. By way of showing goodwill and building confidence, PNoy can release the 388 political prisoners. After all, he has already ordered the release of close to 400 military prisoners.

The NDFP does not have a comparable number of prisoners of war to release in exchange or in reciprocation. That is because the NPA has always released its prisoners as soon as possible and does not accumulate them. But the NDFP can assure the GRP with concrete proposals for the acceleration of the peace negotiations and for the implementation of CARHRIHL in order to lessen human rights violations by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police.

4. I heard the NDFP panel is willing to send somebody to Malacanang to meet with PNoy before the start of the talks, is this true? Who is going to meet the president?

JMS: Indeed, the NDFP is willing to send somebody to Malacanang to meet with PNoy. To show goodwill, no less than the NDFP negotiating panel chairperson Luis Jalandoni is prepared to visit Manila and pay a courtesy call to PNoy. The visit can be made under the protection of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees.

5. What time frame are you looking at?

JMS: Luis Jalandoni and his wife Coni Ledesma are now on a speaking tour in New Zealand and Australia. They will be in Hongkong at the end of November. From there they can go to Manila on December 1 or 2 to have informal one-on-one talks with his counterpart Alex Padilla and possibly to make a courtesy call on PNoy.

6. Will you still go by the old framework of negotiating through the four agenda?

JMS: The GRP and NDFP will continue to negotiate in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration as framework agreement and will tackle the three remaining subjects in the substantive agenda; namely, social and economic reforms, political and constitutional reforms and end of hostilities & disposition of forces. After the

comprehensive agreement on social and economic reforms, fifty per cent of the peace process shall have been accomplished and shall push the further acceleration of negotiations on the two remaining subjects.

On Taxation and Peace Negotiations

Interview by Lira Dalangin Fernandez, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*

December 29, 2010

1. Several officials here say that the issue of revolutionary tax being imposed on firms, such as mining companies, should be among the agenda in the talks. What's your take on this?

JMS: There is yet no peace agreement. The two conflicting sides of the civil war in the Philippines are still negotiating. Everyone must recognize the fact that there are two governments in the Philippines. One is the reactionary government of the big compradors and landlords seated in Manila and headed by Noynoy Aquino. The other is the revolutionary government of workers and peasants based in the countryside and led by the Communist Party of the Philippines.

The revolutionary government has always made it clear that it collects taxes in order to cover the costs of administration, defense, land reform, promotion of production and social programs, including public education, health, cultural and other activities.

The GRP civilian and military officials are wrong and are engaged in disinformation when they say that the revolutionary forces are collecting taxes from foreign mining companies. My understanding of the policy of the revolutionary government is banning, disabling and dismantling such mining companies because they damage the economy and environment and take away land from land reform. Please read the latest policy statements of the CPP in www.philippinerevolution.net These are the 42nd anniversary statement of the CPP on December 26 and the reiteration of policy regarding mining on December 29.

May I add that the foreign mining companies take away nonrenewable mineral resources and damage permanently the people's aspiration for national industrialization. The CPP and other major patriotic organizations as well as the main religious organizations are opposed to the treasonous plunder of mineral resources by 100 per cent foreign-owned mining companies.

2. While not a precondition, do you agree that this should stop as confidence-building measure for the talks?

JMS: It is the duty and prerogative of the people's revolutionary government to collect taxes for purposes beneficial to the people. In contrast, the reactionary government collects taxes and engages in excessive foreign and domestic borrowing to serve the purposes of the foreign monopolies, the big compradors, landlords and the corrupt officials.

My understanding of the policy pronouncements of the CPP as leading party in the people's revolutionary government is that it will not collect taxes from the foreign mining companies but will ban, disable and dismantle such companies. That should raise the confidence of the people in their revolutionary government and expose the treasonous character of the reactionary government.

3. What are the other possible agenda in both the January and February meetings?

JMS: The January 14-18 preliminary meeting in Oslo aims to resolve certain issues and thus pave the way for the resumption of formal talks from February 15 to 21. The most important issues in the preliminary meeting pertain to compliance with the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees, the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law and certain confidence-building and goodwill measures.

The agenda in the resumption of formal talks will include: 1) exchange of credentials between the two panels, 2) the reaffirmation of the existing agreements, 3) compliance with JASIG, 4) implementation of CARHRIHL, 5) accelerated negotiations on social and economic reforms by the Reciprocal Working Committees, 6) the concept of working group on political and constitutional reforms, and 7) confidence-building and goodwill measures.

Prolonged Ceasefire Ahead of Basic Reforms

Amounts to Pacification and Capitulation

Interview by Sonny Mallari, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, January 9, 2011

Dear Sonny,

Because of hectic preparations for the Oslo preliminary talks, I do not have the time to linger on the general tenor of your letter or the onesided spins in the PDI editorial. Let me just answer what are clearly your two bunches of questions:

1. *The Sierra Madre natives even wondered how the two parties can sincerely talk peace when their armed groups continue to shoot each other to death. Hindi po ba talaga puwede na may ceasefire habang nag-uusap? Sabi ni Alex Padilla, ipapanukala niya ito sa informal phase ng talks next week. Can I have your reaction on this?*

JMS: Prolonged and indefinite ceasefire without first addressing the roots of the armed conflict through basic social, economic and political reforms to lay the ground for a just peace would amount to mere pacification and capitulation of the revolutionary forces and people to the unjust US-dominated ruling system of the exploiting classes, the big compradors and landlords, who are responsible for the ever worsening levels of oppression and exploitation, the poverty, underdevelopment, corruption and state terrorism.

The revolutionary forces and people have always made it clear that the root causes of all the aforesaid social evils and the consequent revolutionary resistance of the people are foreign monopoly capitalism, domestic feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism. It is perverse for anyone to suggest that the resistance of the suffering people to their oppressors and exploiters is the cause of the grave maladies and daily violence of the unjust ruling system.

Like some of his predecessors, Alex Padilla might propose a prolonged and indefinite ceasefire without first addressing the roots of the armed conflict in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992. If he does, that is his own lookout. But I think that he will not force his hand in order to angle for the pacification and capitulation of the NDFP and to replace substantive peace negotiations with prolonged ceasefire talks and the prospect of ceaseless preoccupation with claims and counterclaims of ceasefire violations. I do not expect Alex to abandon the substantive peace negotiations in favor of ceasefire talks.

The NDFP side will remind the other side that the NDFP has long put forward the proposal to accelerate negotiations on social and economic reforms in order to pave the way for negotiations on political and constitutional reforms within a few months. Any proposal to frontload the end of hostilities is regarded by the NDFP as a clear attempt to lay aside the need to negotiate first the social, economic and political reforms. But without doing away with the existing substantive agenda, the NDFP has also proposed an immediate alliance and truce on the basis of a common declaration of patriotic and progressive principles, including national independence, people's empowerment, democracy and respect for human rights, economic development through national industrialization and land reform, upholding the rights and livelihood of the working people, promotion of a patriotic, democratic and scientific culture and a truly independent foreign policy.

2. *May I ask sir, "With this new bid for peace, what can you promise to the Filipino people? I don't know how to ask this. I don't know how to ask this but many doubt the communists' sincerity in the new round of peace talks.*

JMS: I do not make promises to the people like those in power who take turns in oppressing and exploiting them. What I have always done in my life and what so many other people have done is to arouse, organize and mobilize the broad masses of the people to fight for their own national and democratic rights and interests. I have always pointed out the people's own demands and aspirations for genuine national independence, democracy, economic development, social justice, cultural progress and world peace. These should be expressed in realistic and realizable terms in the comprehensive agreements on social, economic, political and constitutional reforms through the substantive peace negotiations.

Those who merely doubt, denigrate or even demonize the revolutionary forces of the CPP, NPA and NDFP and the millions of Filipino people in the revolutionary mass movement obviously benefit from the unjust system of oppression and exploitation. They keep on dreaming that they can destroy the people's revolution with sheer military force, psywar tactics and attempts to push the revolutionary forces towards pacification and capitulation. They

seem not to realize that the revolutionary movement has overcome all the military campaigns of suppression and deception unleashed by the Marcos fascist dictatorship and the subsequent pseudo-democratic regimes.

At the moment, the GRP and NDFP sides are determined to hold preliminary talks to pave the way for formal talks in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration and other existing agreements. The continuing coordinated propaganda and military attacks on the revolutionary forces and people might be calculated to interfere with the efforts to resume the formal talks next month. But so far, the responsible leaders of the GRP and NDFP themselves have decided to carry forward the peace negotiations. In this regard, I do not get distracted by comments, innuendos, spins and suggestions to do away with the peace negotiations.

On the Impending GRP-NDFP Peace Talks in Oslo

Interview by Mynardo Macaraig,

Reporter, Agence France Presse Manila Bureau, February 11, 2011

I am a reporter for the international news agency, Agence France Presse, Manila and we are doing a story on the impending peace talks between the Philippine government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). As someone familiar with the operations of the NDFP, I hope you would answer some questions on the prospects of the negotiations. Some of these questions are as follows:

1. Do you think the talks can succeed considering the recent spate of attacks by the New People's Army (NPA)?

JMS: Please bear in mind that the armed conflict is two-sided. The military, police and paramilitary forces of the Government of the Philippines (GRP) wage armed offensives against the New People's Army (NPA) like the NPA does. There are peace negotiations precisely because there is a two-sided armed conflict going on. The peace negotiations can move forward and succeed if the Hague Joint Declaration and subsequent agreements are reaffirmed and the two conflicting sides negotiate in order to address the roots of the armed conflict with basic social, economic and political reforms and thereby establish the basis for a just and lasting peace.

2. The government negotiating panel has put a three-year deadline for peace talks to succeed. Do you think that is realistic? Do you think the NDFP will demand an extension?

JMS: In tactful terms, the GRP negotiating panel chairperson Alex Padilla has declared that best efforts be exerted by both sides to forge comprehensive agreements on the three remaining items in the substantive agenda and thus to make the over-all peace agreement within three years so that this can be implemented in earnest in the last three years of the Aquino regime. The GRP has not made any threatening deadline or ultimatum. I think that the three-year estimate for making the comprehensive agreements is reasonable and realistic and may be even too long if the two sides are earnest in negotiating and making agreements along a patriotic and progressive line.

3. What will the NDFP ask for in the talks? Congressman Satur Ocampo has said that they will call for a complete reversal of Aquino's economic policies. If this is true, won't this virtually assure that the talks will reach a stalemate?

JMS: The NDF asks for nothing from the GRP, except for what is just and beneficial to the Filipino people as a matter of national and democratic right. The two sides ought to agree on asserting and strengthening national independence, widening democracy by empowering the working people, carrying out economic development through land reform and national industrialization, promoting a patriotic, scientific and democratic culture and fostering international relations for peace and development.

The US-dictated policy of neoliberal globalization has brought about a severe crisis in the Philippines and entire world capitalist system. For his own good, Aquino should veer away from that policy as Satur Ocampo has suggested. He should also veer away from the policy of state terrorism and from the US Counterinsurgency Guide. If he is willing, the NDFP and the Filipino people can help him in overcoming the social and economic crisis through a patriotic and democratic alliance and truce.

4. Will the NPA ever agree to disarm if the talks are successful? Will the NDFP negotiators walk out if the government calls for the disarming of the NPA?

JMS: The end of hostilities and disposition of forces are the last item to be negotiated in the substantive agenda. This is not up for discussion in the forthcoming Oslo talks this February. The comprehensive agreement on social and economic reforms and that on political and constitutional reforms must first be made by the two sides and approved by their principals before any side can propose the disarming of the other side. Even in the future when the comprehensive agreements are reached on social, economic, political and constitutional reforms but are not yet fully implemented, it is best for the two sides to opt for a truce rather than for one side to demand the disarming of the other side. At the moment, it is premature to talk about disarming any side in the ongoing armed conflict.

5. The government has said there will be no preconditions in the talks. But are there issues that the NDF considers non-negotiable, where they will stop the talks unless the government gives in to them?

JMS: The NDF agrees with the GRP that there should be no preconditions to negotiations. But existing agreements require the joint or separate compliance by the negotiating parties. Both sides have agreed that formal talks

of the negotiating panels can be resumed upon the validity and full effectivity of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG). The GRP-NDFP negotiations have produced twelve (12) agreements since 1992. These must be respected, reaffirmed and complied with so that the peace negotiations can move forward.

6. How much is the NDF willing to concede to keep the talks alive? Will they call on the NPA to stop their attacks? Will they drop such previous demands like the delisting from the US and EU 'terror' lists?

JMS: I do not know exactly what you mean by asking what the NDFP is willing to concede to keep the talks alive. The GRP has not demanded that the NPA stop the revolutionary armed struggle or else stop the peace negotiations. Neither has the NDFP asked the AFP, PNP and CAFGU to stop their counterrevolutionary armed struggle. There are prior items to negotiate in the substantive agenda. Regarding the terrorist blacklists of foreign governments, the NDFP continues to demand that the GRP withdraw its treasonous acts of having requested the US, EU and other foreign governments to put the CPP, NPA and myself in the so-called terrorist lists and stop arguing shamelessly that those foreign governments have the sovereign right to intervene in the internal affairs of the Filipino people.

7. Do you see the possibility of the public turning against the NDF if they are seen as being intransigent?

JMS: The Filipino people will always fight for their national and democratic rights and build and support such revolutionary forces as the CPP, NPA and NDFP. It is the Aquino regime that will become totally isolated and detested by the people if it continues to serve the interests of foreign monopoly capitalists, the big compradors, landlords and bureaucrat capitalists. No amount of dole outs, palliatives and psywar can prettify a puppet, corrupt, brutal and mendacious regime. The people are already asking why Aquino has failed to deliver on his promise of holding the Arroyo clique accountable for corruption and human rights violations.

8. Critics say the NDFP is engaging in talks simply for publicity mileage and have no real desire to seek peace. They predict that once they get enough attention, the NDFP will find an excuse to call off the talks? Do you think that is true? Will the NDF use the talks for other purposes?

JMS: Would such critics prefer that the NDFP withdraw from the peace negotiations? Would not the NPA also make publicity mileage by intensifying the armed struggle? I think that the NDFP is negotiating in good faith. It has devoted so many years of hard work in the peace negotiations and has gone so far as to propose to the GRP a concise agreement for an immediate just peace through alliance and truce in order to strengthen national independence and transform the agrarian economy to an industrial one through land reform and national industrialization. Of course, if the Aquino regime spurns such a patriotic and progressive demand of the people, then the revolutionary forces of the people would be further motivated to wage armed revolution and gain further ground in the crisis-stricken Philippines.

On the Resumption of Formal Talks

in GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations

Interview by Floris van Straaten, Asia Editor NRC Handelsblad

February 25, 2011

I'm writing to you as I'd like to discuss with you the recent peace negotiations in Oslo and their outcome. It would be great if you would be willing to talk to me. In that case, I'd like to raise the following issues with you:

FvS: Is the Philippines finally really heading for peace, as the negotiators from both sides suggested?

JMS: The formal meetings in the GRP-NDFP have just been resumed. There is still a long way to go before the three comprehensive agreements on social and economic reforms, political and constitutional reforms and the end of hostilities & deployment of forces can be forged one after the other. The announced time frame of 18 months is quite optimistic. But it is based on estimate of best efforts imputing six months for the forging of every comprehensive agreement.

FvS: What is the reason that such an apparent breakthrough could occur after such a long stalemate?

JMS: Both the NDFP and the GRP agree that there is a need for resuming the peace negotiations because of the dire conditions of the Philippines as a result of the depredations made by the corrupt and brutal Arroyo regime and because of the ever-worsening crisis of the world capitalist system and the Philippine ruling system.

FvS: Some commentators have suggested that the relatively advanced age of the leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines played a part in the decision to negotiate. Is that correct?

JMS: The ageing of the first-generation leadership of the reestablished CPP is of no importance. What is of great importance is the desire of the CPP to advance the people's cause of national and social liberation through every possible means, including peace negotiations. Since the fall of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986, the CPP and other revolutionary forces in the NDFP have been committed to carrying out peace negotiations with the GRP in order to address the roots of the civil war through basic social, economic and political reforms and thus lay the basis for a just and lasting peace.

FvS: Which reforms would you demand from the government before you would sign any peace agreement?

JMS: The most important political and constitutional reforms involve the strengthening of national independence through the removal of unequal treaties and agreements with foreign powers and the expansion of democracy through the empowerment of the people. The social and economic reforms include assertion of economic sovereignty, the conservation of the national patrimony for the benefit of the people, land reform and national industrialization and raising the standard of living.

FvS: To what extent have the Philippines changed since you started your struggle in the late 1960's?

JMS: The basically agrarian and underdeveloped character of the Philippine economy has been aggravated and deepened. The workers and peasants are subjected to worsening levels of exploitation and oppression. The foreign multinational firms and banks, the big compradors, landlords and the corrupt bureaucrats have been extremely rapacious. The glossy towers and glittering shops in the upscale sections of major cities and the consumerism of the upper classes are made possible by super profits by a few from the cheap labor of the people and from the export of raw materials, sweatshop products and overseas contract workers.

FvS: Do you expect to return to the Philippines any time soon?

JMS: I hope to be able to do so soon enough, depending on the progress or success of the peace negotiations.

Note on Floris van Straaten: She has been Asia editor of the *NRC Handelsblad* since the beginning of the year. She has been with the publication for more than 20 years as correspondent in London, diplomatic editor and correspondent in New Delhi.

***Sign a Concise Agreement
with the NDFP for Alliance and Truce
to Complete the National Democratic Revolution***

Interview by Jeffrey Tupas
Davao Correspondent of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*
March 18, 2011

1. Padilla said the NDFP panel refused to agree to their request for a declaration of ceasefire while the joint monitoring committee is being convened in Manila. He said it would be ridiculous if the team is convened in Manila while there is a "shooting war."

It was unfortunate, he said, that the NDFP refused to agree to a ceasefire because "ceasefire is always important."

Question is, why did the NDFP turn down the request (if it were even a request in the first place).

JMS: The repeated request of the Government of the Philippines (GRP) for ceasefire to coincide with every formal meeting at panel and subpanel levels is calculated to undermine the revolutionary will of the people and the revolutionary forces, impose the precondition of pacification and capitulation and avoid addressing the roots of the armed conflict through basic social, economic and political reforms.

If GRP is in a hurry to end the shooting war, why does it not agree with the proposal of the NDFP for a concise agreement for an immediate just peace, without prejudice to the peace negotiations. The concise agreement is a declaration of principles to establish a common ground and justify an alliance or partnership and truce of indefinite duration in order to complete the people's struggle for national independence, democracy, industrial development and social justice.

2. *He said that within three years all the comprehensive agreements are expected to be closed—meaning, signed. With this, he said the NDFP and the CPP-NPA must take the three-year target as an opportunity to come to terms with the government for a negotiated settlement. Along this line, he said communism is a dying ideology.*

JMS: It is self-contradictory for the GRP to be setting what amounts to an ultimatum while putting up obstacles like attacking The Hague Joint Declaration as a document of perpetual division, preconditioning and negating the peace negotiations with a demand for the capitulation and pacification of the revolutionary forces and preconditioning every meeting of the panels and subpanels with a ceasefire.

The NDFP is simply aiming for the completion of the bourgeois democratic revolution against foreign and feudal domination in the Philippines. The issue now in the Philippines is neither socialism or communism, even as the people's demands for national liberation, democracy and socialism are resonating throughout the world because of the bankruptcy and depredations of the US-dictated policy of neoliberal or imperialist globalization.

3. *He also said that the while it is true that communism cannot be toppled by the government's war policy, the communists cannot also win the war through arm struggle.*

JMS: The Communist Party of the Philippines and the NDFP have a realistic program of national democratic revolution. The people's war led by the CPP is growing in strength and advancing precisely because it carries forward such a program and serves the people's demand for national and social liberation.

Why does not the Aquino regime come to terms with the patriotic and progressive demands of the people in order to make a just and lasting peace with the NDFP? The people and revolutionary forces are convinced that if they continue their revolutionary struggle, they have a chance of winning the national democratic revolution or making way for an anti-imperialist and democratic government of national unity, reconciliation and industrial development.

Accept NDFP Proposal for Alliance and Truce

Interview by Diana Lhyd Suelto *Mindanao Daily Mirror*, March 18, 2011

Earlier in a press conference Alexander Padilla, GRP chief negotiator, raised some points regarding the peace talks between the GRP and NDF. I would like to get your comment.

1. The NDF refused to agree to a ceasefire while the joint monitoring committee is being convened in Manila.

JMS: The NDFP does not agree with the GRP in preconditioning with ceasefire every formal meeting of the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels and even of the committees at the subpanel level because the repeated ceasefires seek to undermine the revolutionary will of the people and the revolutionary forces, impose capitulation and pacification on the NDFP and lay aside the need to address the roots of the armed conflict through basic social, economic and political reforms.

2. While the insurgency cannot be won by armed might, the CPP-NPA-NDF cannot win by armed struggle.

JMS: The revolutionary forces of the CPP, NPA and NDFP are in fact growing in strength and advancing. They are now in the process of advancing from the strategic defensive to the strategic stalemate within the next five years. Thus, there is an urgent need for the GRP to negotiate with the NDFP and forge agreements to address the roots of the armed conflict with basic reforms. The peace negotiations can be aimed at achieving national unity and reconciliation in order to complete the struggle of the people for national independence, democracy, industrial development and social justice.

3. Communism is a dead ideology so now is the best time for the NDF to negotiate.

JMS: The NDFP and the Filipino people are fighting for the completion of the national democratic revolution started by Andres Bonifacio and the Katipunan. The issue now in the Philippines is neither socialism nor communism. However, communism is not a dead ideology. The epochal struggle between the working class and the bourgeoisie is continuing. The proletariat and people are interested in theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism because of the rapacity of monopoly capitalism and bankruptcy of the neoliberal globalization.

4. That the peace treaty will be signed in three years.

JMS: A time allowance of three years for serious and sustained peace negotiations is reasonable. In the meantime, the Aquino regime can opt to agree with the NDFP proposal of a concise agreement for an immediate just peace. The agreement carries a declaration of common principles and policies to enable the GRP and NDFP to come to an alliance and truce of indefinite duration, without prejudice to the ongoing peace negotiations. The common principles and policies refer to asserting national independence, expanding democracy, undertaking land reform and industrial development, realizing social justice and developing international relations for peace and development.

On the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations

and Revolutionaries from Ateneo

Interview by Kevin Mizon, *The Guidon*

Ateneo de Manila University. August 20, 2011

1. The second agenda in the peace process is the CASER. What are the exact, specific socio-economic reforms that CPP-NPA-NDF is heavily pushing for?

JMS: The socioeconomic reforms include mainly upholding economic sovereignty and conserving the national patrimony, land reform and national industrialization, defending the rights of workers, promoting the people's livelihood, cancellation of odious debts, respecting the right of ancestral domain of indigenous peoples and equitable economic and trade relations with all foreign countries for the purpose of development.

2. The third agenda is the CAPCR. What are the exact, specific political and constitutional reforms that the CPP-NPA-NDF is heavily pushing for?

JMS: The political and constitutional reforms include upholding national sovereignty and abrogation of unequal treaties, agreements and arrangements, empowerment of the working people, gender equality, respect for the right of self-determination of the indigenous peoples, a patriotic, democratic and people-oriented system of education and culture, elimination of corruption, overhaul of the electoral system, revamp of the judicial system and independent foreign policy for development and world peace.

3. Once these reforms have been institutionalized, how different will Philippine society be? How drastic and different will the consequences and implications be?

JMS: If the aforementioned reforms are adopted and implemented, the Philippines will be greatly and substantially different from what it is now,

The implications and consequences will be drastically different in favor of the broad masses of the people. The long-frustrated aspirations of the people for national independence, democracy, social justice and all-round development shall be advanced.

4. As a general question, what are the different scenarios of the CPP/NPA/NDF's future? First, if the current round of negotiations finishes successfully in the three-year timeline? Next, if it doesn't?

JMS: If the peace negotiations are successfully completed in three years' time or sometime after, then the CPP, NPA and NDFP abide by the mutual agreements with GRP and there shall be just and lasting peace on a good foundation. If the GRP tries to impose capitulation and violation of principles on the aforesaid revolutionary forces, then the armed conflict shall continue and shall probably escalate to a new and higher level.

5. How viable is the armed struggle right now? Detractors of the CPP-NPA-NDF believe that your army's physical strength isn't enough in overthrowing the government.

JMS: Since the Second Great Rectification Movement in the 1990s, which repudiated and rectified major errors in the 1980s, the CPP, NPA and NDFP have become not just viable but far stronger than before.

Of course, the armed strength of the NPA is not yet enough to overthrow the entire ruling system. But the NPA and other revolutionary forces are now carrying out a plan to advance from strategic defensive to strategic stalemate.

The broad united front of revolutionary forces and legal opposition forces has high potential of overthrowing at any time a particular administration that is too repressive or too corrupt and thus hated by the people, like the regimes of Marcos and Estrada.

6. Sir, you have called parties working for radical reforms (such as Akbayan) as counterrevolutionaries. That in your side, there exists a false dichotomy between reforms and revolution. Any thoughts on this, sir?

JMS: I do not remember having said or written publicly that the Akbayan is counterrevolutionary. But of course, I am aware that CPP publications and statements of known progressives have criticized the Akbayan as pseudo-revolutionary, reformist and even counterrevolutionary.

There is a difference between reformism and reforms that are necessary and useful for the people, such as those reforms demanded by the NDFP in peace negotiations with the GRP. Reformism is the systematic pretense

for reforms or use of some reforms to block fundamental or revolutionary social change. In that sense, reformism is counterrevolutionary.

7. *In the over 40 rounds of peace talks conducted and in the numerous interruptions, where would you say was the GRP's at fault? Alternately, where would you say the CPP-NPA-NDF was at fault?*

JMS: Since formal opening of GRP-NDFP peace negotiations in Brussels in June 1995, sixteen years ago, the GRP (now called the GRP) has been responsible for interruptions amounting to 14 years under GRP declarations of suspension, collapse and JASIG termination, aggravating GRP violations of agreements.

If one misconstrues the ceasefire agreement in 1986-87 as the beginning of peace negotiations, the GRP has been responsible for interruptions amounting to some 22 years out of 24 years. Remember that Cory Aquino unsheathed the sword of war in 1987 and swung her sword in vain for so many years against the NPA.

The NDFP has never made any declaration of suspension, collapse and JASIG termination to interrupt the peace negotiations. Only twice has it declared postponement of the formal talks of the panels. The first one was in August 2004 when it asked for postponement of formal talks to allow the GRP the time to fulfil its obligation to release JASIG-protected persons. The second one was in June 2011 when it called for postponement once more to allow the GRP the time to release JASIG-protected persons.

8. *There is the study of a certain Japanese sociologist. He makes this provocative observation that revolutions lasting for more than one generation (20 years) tended to degenerate, not just in the actual military victories of the revolutionary group, but in the quality of its operations and its own cadres and fighters. That this holds true for the NPA, who has committed their own human rights violations, destruction of civilian infrastructures in the guise of a noble revolution, collecting revolutionary taxes – very anti-poor and trapo. Any response to this?*

JMS: That Japanese sociologist you refer to is obviously ignorant of Philippine history. Since the first of the more than 200 armed uprisings under the Spanish colonial regime, the Filipinos have waged wider and better armed resistance culminating in the Philippine revolution of 1896 onwards. The current new democratic revolution through people's war is in basic respects wider, deeper and better than the Philippine revolution of 1896 and the armed revolution that extended from the anti-Japan struggle in World War II.

The NPA is so far the biggest and strongest armed force of the revolutionary mass movement in Philippine history. It is led by the CPP which practises criticism and self-criticism on a daily basis and knows how to carry out a rectification movement as an educational mass endeavor to repudiate and rectify errors and set forth the new tasks for advancing the revolutionary struggle to a new and higher level.

I have no time or space here to answer such vicious claims as that the NPA is anti-poor and trapo. My suggestion is that those who make such claims go for social investigation in the guerrilla fronts of the NPA,

9. *The Oplan Bayanihan is a widely debated issue as a sugarcoated counterinsurgency program. (It's arguably highly similar to Arroyo's Oplan Bantay Laya) Does it mitigate or does it exacerbate? Any personal response to this program of the current Aquino administration?*

JMS: Oplan Bayanihan is the same dog as Oplan Bantay Laya. The only difference is that Oplan Bayanihan is even more deceptive as it becomes more brutal. It misrepresents its military campaigns of suppression as peace and development operations and its human rights violations as defense of human rights and human security. It is guided by US advisors who believe that more effective psywar results in more effective intelligence and military operations.

The Aquino regime is continuing basically the same policies of the Arroyo regime. It is also the same dog of the US and the local big compradors and landlords. It tries to present itself as better than the previous regime through sheer propaganda and it insults the people by trying to buwang-wang them through gimmicks. Aquino seems to be oblivious of the fact that there is now an unprecedentedly severe global and Philippine economic and social crisis which demands basic reforms.

There is now a growing estimate by the revolutionary forces that the Aquino regime is not sincerely and seriously interested in the peace negotiations with the NDFP and is about to stop its masquerade about peace negotiations. Since the beginning, the OPAPP and the GRP negotiating panel have been obsessed with seeking to disembowel and negate The Hague Joint Declaration, the JASIG and CARHRIHL and not to pursue the negotiations on CASER.

10. *Ateneans have been highly involved in the past, especially in the chaotic decades of the 70's and 80's. What do you think of this Ateneo? What are your thoughts on Atenean activists, such as Edgar Jopson and Emmanuel Lacaba,*

who joined the armed struggle and even died for the movement?

JMS: I have the highest respect and admiration for Edgar Jopson and Emmanuel Lacaba as Filipino patriots, proletarian revolutionaries and freedom fighters. I knew them personally and worked with them. They served the people and contributed greatly to the development of the new democratic revolution through hard work, militant struggle and their martyrdom.

There are many others from the Ateneo that have served the Filipino people like Edgar Jopson and Emmanuel Lacaba. They are products of that side of the Ateneo which inculcates social conscience and a strong sense of patriotism and social justice. Let us have more of such Ateneans. Not the type that is self-indulgent and bound by the dictates of foreign monopoly interests and the local exploiting classes,

11. The current Ateneo is identified as an “elite institution” but whose main educational framework spring from Liberation Theology. How about a critique to the Ateneo today? Also, on the Atenean revolutionaries involved with the party before, but have withdrawn support now?

The current students of the Ateneo can better describe and critique the Ateneo of today. At any rate, I agree that the Ateneo is an elite institution even as there are elements that are progressive rather than reactionary. Most of the Ateneo students come from well-to-do families. It is understandable that their main tendency is to stay in comfort within the ruling system even if oppressive and exploitative.

I do not think that this interview is the place for me to criticize anyone from the Ateneo who was supposedly revolutionary before but withdrew subsequently from the revolutionary movement. I can only say in general that any person has contradictory sides. One side can prevail at one time and another side at another time, depending on the will, the tests and circumstances of the person concerned.

12. In a nutshell, where do you think should Ateneo put itself in the ongoing people's war?

JMS: I personally knew one Jesuit priest at the Ateneo who belonged to the Christians for National Liberation and supported the people's war for national liberation and democracy. But I think that the Ateneo as an institution is in opposition to the ongoing people's war. At any rate, it has been sober and decorous in dealing with the issue and seems to acknowledge the social roots of the armed conflict.

Ateneo is not known to be strident, vicious or inquisitorial against faculty members and students who might be suspected by military authorities as sympathetic or even part of the revolutionary movement. You have to correct me if my observation from afar is wrong.

When I was at the Ateneo in the 1950s, one teacher of mine scorned the communist Casto Alejandrino and the anti-imperialist Claro Mayo Recto, both Ateneo alumni, and another teacher was proud of them in the classroom. When we took the papal social encyclicals in class, my Jesuit teachers focused on theme of social justice and refrained from talking like rabid anti-communists. They also recognized the root causes of the armed conflict that had raged in the Philippines since the 1930s.

Philippine Revolution and Just Peace,

Prospects in the Global Context

Letter to Dr. Bienvenido Lumbera, National Artist and Professor Emeritus, University of the Philippines

October 17, 2011

Dear Bien, I am honored and delighted to participate in the Festschrift in your honor on the occasion of your 80th birthday. In this regard, I am contributing this open letter. I understand that I can deal with any subject that is of interest to you. I have chosen to write on the question of revolution and just peace. But first let me reminisce.

It was sometime in November 1986 when we last met in Osaka where you were teaching Philippine studies at the Foreign Languages University. You expressed regrets that you were abroad when the Marcos fascist dictatorship fell. And I retorted that you had contributed a lot towards the downfall of Marcos since a long time ago and that even if I had been in the Philippines, I was under maximum security detention and had no chance to be with the masses at Edsa in February 1986.

At any rate, I have always thought that we belong to the same revolutionary tradition of the Filipino people and to the same continuum of struggle for national liberation and democracy. There are so many ways for us to contribute to the Philippine revolution and even if this were not completely realized in our lifetime, we are confident that it would go on and carry forward our contributions until the people win complete victory.

Since I became aware of your revolutionary work in the cultural field in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I have always kept you in the highest comradely regard. I have also been grateful to you for giving serious attention to my critical work on social consciousness in Philippine poetry and to my creative output of poems. You have generously expressed appreciation for *Prison and Beyond* and you have even more generously written the *dalit* [poem] for the musicale, *Ang Makata'y Mandirigma, Ang Mandirigma'y Makata* [The Poet is a Warrior, the Warrior a Poet]. We have a common cause in seeking the fulfilment of the people's aspirations for greater freedom, democracy, social justice, development and international solidarity. And I presume that you might be interested in an assessment of realities and possibilities in the last lap of our existence.

Philippine revolution and just peace

The semicolonial and semifeudal character of Philippine society persists. The US and its imperialist allies continue to dominate our country economically, financially, politically and culturally despite the grant of nominal independence in 1946. The local exploiting classes of big compradors and landlords are extremely servile to their foreign masters. So are their political representatives and agents who lord over the people.

The reactionary state uses all kinds of deception and violence to obfuscate the three evil forces: foreign monopoly capitalism, domestic feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism. These forces mercilessly exploit the people and cause their poverty and underdevelopment of our country. But the rulers of our country spread the obvious lie that the revolutionary resistance of the people is to blame for the widespread poverty and gross underdevelopment. They insult the victims by misrepresenting them as culprits.

They are hostile to such patriotic and progressive demands of the people as: the assertion and exercise of national independence to do away with unequal treaties, agreements and arrangements; the democratic empowerment of the people against the oligarchy of big compradors and landlords; land reform and national industrialization; promotion of a national, scientific and mass culture; and an independent foreign policy for development and world peace.

The Aquino regime is no different from the Arroyo regime. It is an instrument of big comprador-landlord rule. It does not propose anything to change the semicolonial and semifeudal character of society. It is so obsessed with seeking to destroy the revolutionary movement. Yet the ruling system is now so weak because of its own chronic crisis as well as the grave crisis of the world capitalist system. It has increasing difficulties in getting new foreign loans to cover the growing trade and budgetary deficits and the mounting foreign debt.

It is so desperate like the previous regime that it has wantonly opened the entire country to mining by foreign and big comprador firms, merely for the export of mineral ores at dirt cheap prices. The remittances of overseas contract workers are now being reduced by the crisis. The regime is corrupt no matter how much it tries to look

clean. The people see how officials continue to enrich themselves by collaborating with foreign banks and firms in the perpetuation of consumption-oriented imports and in the plunder of our natural resources. The regime condones the gross human rights violations by the previous regime and is perpetrating them at an alarming rate.

Oplan Bayanihan is a plan of military suppression designed under the US Counterinsurgency Guide. It is no different from Oplan Bantay Laya in terms of pursuing the triad of military psywar, intelligence gathering and combat operations. But the Aquino regime tries in vain to make it look different by using Orwellian language, misrepresenting outright military operations as peace and development operations. It is appropriating billions of pesos as handouts under a sham anti-poverty program for the purpose of undermining the mass base of the revolutionary movement and funding base-denial operations of the AFP.

The people's clamor for a just peace is resounding. But the Aquino administration and the particular office of the reactionary government (GRP) in charge of peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) are hellbent on paralyzing and scuttling said negotiations, unless the latter submits to a scheme of capitulation and pacification. They have made it indubitably clear that they have no intention of addressing the roots of the armed conflict and forging agreements on basic social, economic and political reforms.

They have openly derided The Hague Joint Declaration as a document of "perpetual division," the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees as devoid of any obligation on the part of the reactionary government and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Laws as of no value with regard to the gross violations of human rights and the more than 350 political prisoners detained on trumped-up charges of common crimes.

Like the Arroyo regime, the Aquino regime keeps on demanding ceasefire as a way of blocking and putting away the urgent need to address the roots of the armed conflict and agree on basic reforms. In response, the NDFP has proposed truce and alliance on the basis of a general statement of common intent to realize certain basic demands of the people, including the assertion of national independence, democratic empowerment of the working people, land reform and national industrialization and prioritizing education, health and other social services over the military and foreign debt service. But the Aquino regime has refused to seriously consider the NDFP proposal like all previous anti-national and antidemocratic regimes.

The Filipino people are keenly aware of the scheme of the US and the Aquino regime to destroy the revolutionary forces. They have therefore become more than ever resolved to pursue the general line of struggle for national liberation and democracy through protracted people's war; and to realize in five years' time the advance from the stage of strategic defensive to that of strategic stalemate.

Being the chief political consultant of the NDFP in peace negotiations with the Manila government, I am a daily visitor of <http://www.philippinerevolution.net>. Basing myself on the publications of the Communist Party of the Philippines, I am aware of the determination of the revolutionary forces to carry out the political prerequisites and the politico-military strategy and tactics for achieving the advance from strategic defensive to strategic stalemate.

The first political prerequisite is further strengthening the CPP as the advanced detachment of the working class and leading force of the Philippine revolution. The announced objective is to recruit at least 200,000 CPP members, educate them in Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and on the program of people's democratic revolution, develop cadres and members through mass struggles and in various fields of activity and to build Party branches and groups in the people's army and the localities.

The CPP is responsible for expanding and deepening the mass movement along the new democratic line through the people's army, the mass organizations and the national united front. More than ever the broad masses of the people are to be aroused, organized and mobilized. The mass organizations of workers, peasants, fishermen, urban poor, youth, women, professionals, cultural activists and children are to be strengthened. The cultural revolution, in which you are so deeply interested, plays a decisive role in enlightening and militating the masses.

The organs of democratic political power (starting with appointive barrio organizing committees and elected barrio revolutionary committees) are to be increased at various possible levels, from the village upwards. They function as the people's government replacing the reactionary government of the big compradors and landlords in the guerrilla fronts. They are based on the mass organizations and the unorganized masses and they are assisted by such working committees as those in public education, health, land reform, production, finance, defense,

arbitration and cultural activities.

The CPP ensures that revolutionary politics is in command and exercises absolute leadership over the New People's Army. With the latter, it is responsible for providing politico-military training to the NPA commanders and fighters as well as to the people's militia and self-defense units. The objective is to have an ever-increasing number of Red commanders and fighters with firm revolutionary stand, proficient in combat and capable of mass work, base building and production.

The NPA is expected to increase its rifle strength to 25,000 and build 180 guerrilla fronts in order to reach the stage of the strategic stalemate. The people's militia shall be strong in tens of thousands and the self-defense units of the mass organizations shall be in hundreds of thousands. They are to be strengthened as reserve and augmentation force for the people's army. They serve as the local internal security force to allow the full-time NPA units to engage in more tactical offensives on a wider scale, with short rest periods.

The strategic line of people's war is to encircle the cities from the countryside and accumulate armed strength until it becomes possible to seize power in the cities and on a nationwide scale. The enemy strength is divided by the expanse of the countryside and by the archipelagic character of the country. Whenever possible, rural-based commandos of the people's army and armed city partisans can deliver head blows to the enemy.

The people's army is conceived of going through three probable strategic stages of development: defensive, stalemate and offensive. At the current stage of the strategic defensive for the NPA, the enemy forces may be ten times strategically superior in terms of trained personnel and equipment. But at the tactical level, the NPA can be ten times superior by taking the initiative to choose the time and place to attack a weak part of the enemy and mustering the superior force to annihilate it.

The NPA launches quick tactical offensives that it is sure of winning and avoids protracted battles at which the outcome is uncertain. It is engaged in a war of fluid movement. It does not have fixed points or fixed structures to defend. It trades space for time to be able to gain a favorable position for launching tactical offensives. As required by circumstances, it can use flexibly such tactics of guerrilla warfare as dispersal, shifting and concentration.

Dispersal is a tactic for depriving the enemy of a visible target or for doing mass work under favorable conditions in certain areas. Shifting is a tactic for getting out of the way of a superior enemy force or getting out of an encirclement and going to a more advantageous position. Concentration is a tactic for gathering enough force for offensives or enforcing the policy or law of the revolutionary government.

The main and essential strength of the NPA is that it upholds, defends and fights for the national and democratic rights and interests of the people. For being puppets and mercenaries of the US and the exploiting classes, the reactionary army, police and the paramilitary forces are hated by the people and are kept blind and deaf by them. They also show off their strength and expose their weaknesses. They attack the people and incur their ire. Thus, the NPA has ample opportunities to discover the weak points of the enemy and to create the opportunities for tactical offensives. So many small army detachments, police stations, paramilitary units and private armed guards are so vulnerable to NPA offensives. In fact, the NPA is targeting them at an increasing frequency.

In the course of the people's war, the main objective of the people's army is to launch tactical offensives and annihilate enemy units in order to seize weapons from the enemy, accumulate armed strength and form more fighting units. Thus, the NPA weakens the enemy over time, steadily changes the balance of forces and realizes eventually the advance from one strategic stage to another. Many tactics are available for carrying out tactical offensives in the form of ambushes and raids with the element of surprise and quick decision.

Ambushes are carried out against enemy units travelling on vehicles or marching; and raids are launched against fixed positions of the enemy through subterfuge, surprise and superior force. The NPA gives priority to the seizure of weapons from the hands of enemy personnel or from their armories. An enemy position or unit may be wiped out or harassed and the reinforcement may be the main target for annihilation. When NPA offensives draw enemy reaction to concentrate on a certain area, the NPA can launch offensives in other areas where enemy forces are weak. A series of tactical offensives may be carried out according to a definite plan or according to general guidelines on the scale of a guerrilla front, a district, a province, region or the entire country.

Attrition is a secondary objective of the people's war but it is very important in weakening and demoralizing the enemy. Teams are formed and deployed for sniping, laying mines, harassing enemy detachments and sabotaging or destroying enemy equipment and facilities, such as military transport and fuel depots. Such actions have the effect of throwing off balance and deterring even to the extent of completely frustrating enemy offensive

operations. Strategically, the cumulation of losses from attritive actions by the NPA, the people's militia, the commando teams and armed city partisans contribute to weakening the enemy armed forces.

More and more enemy personnel can be forced to assume guard duties and become dispersed and vulnerable as the NPA carries out arrest orders against tyrants, human rights violators and other criminal bigwigs and dismantles or disables plantations, logging companies, mines and other business enterprises that disobey the laws and regulations of the people's government, engage in extreme exploitation, violently oppose land reform and ruin the environment. I suppose that the NPA is pleased whenever the rulers react by assigning armed units for guard duty or passive defense at disparate points, especially in the hinterlands.

As proven in the last more than forty years, the exploited and oppressed masses of the people are not helpless and hopeless. They have a clear general line of struggle for national liberation and democracy and have a clear perspective of socialism. The revolutionary forces and the people have overcome the terrible campaigns of suppression against them, including a 14-year long fascist dictatorship, the deceptive pseudo-democratic regimes after Marcos and the ten-year murderous and corrupt Arroyo regime.

They have also prevailed over major "Left" and Right opportunist errors and over the wrecking operations by the incorrigible opportunists who eventually went over to the enemy side. They have carried out successfully the Second Great Rectification Movement and have become far stronger than ever before. The strength of the NPA in 1986 would have been far more than 6,100 rifles (falsely claimed by the AFP to be 25,000) if not for the major opportunist errors in the 1980s and the earlier failure to set a policy of multiplying platoons on a nationwide scale as the strike force since 1979. As a result of the rectification movement, the revolutionary forces have revitalized themselves and are now in the process of striving to advance from the strategic defensive to the strategic stalemate. The plan to advance to the strategic stalemate is well-grounded on the current revolutionary strength and capabilities. It can be anticipated that upon reaching the threshold of the strategic stalemate the revolutionary movement would advance at a faster rate than ever before. The US can be expected to become more aggressive against the Philippine revolution even as it is now bogged down in several wars of aggression and preoccupied with a severe domestic crisis.

Prospects in the global context

At this point, I wish to consider the prospects for the Philippine revolution in the global context. The world capitalist system is now in a grave economic and financial crisis. A protracted kind of depression, comparable to and in some ways even worse than the Great Depression in the 1930s, afflicts the people of the world. It is generating fascism and related ultra-reactionary currents and causing further wars of aggression. The broad masses of the people are suffering severely from the relentless escalation of exploitation and oppression. But they are being driven to rise up and resist on a global scale.

When the neoliberal policy of "free market" globalization was launched more than thirty years ago, it was considered by the US and its imperialist partners as the sure-fire way of solving the problem of stagflation by pressing down wages and cutting back on government social spending and by liberalizing trade and investments, privatizing state assets and doing away with regulations. The one-sided premise is that the monopoly bourgeoisie is the creator of wealth and provider of jobs and must be provided with an abundance of capital and profitmaking opportunities in order to ensure economic growth.

As the monopoly bourgeoisie, together with its ideologists and publicists, have preached against class struggle by the workers, it has waged the most ruthless class warfare against the workers by accusing them falsely of causing inflation through wage hikes, by bringing down real wage levels and social benefits and suppressing trade union and basic democratic rights. Indeed, under the neoliberal policy, capital accumulation in the hands of the monopoly bourgeoisie has accelerated from the intensified exploitation of the working people in both developed and underdeveloped countries.

As Marx pointed out a long time ago, the fundamental problem of capitalism is that the crisis of overproduction or the contraction of the market results from the capitalist minimizing the fund for wages and maximizing profits and further accumulating capital. The problem is aggravated when in the course of competition, the capitalists further press down wages to raise profits. It is still further aggravated when finance capital is generated above the real economy in order to counter the contraction of the market and the tendency of the rate of profit to fall by resorting increasingly to debt financing at the level of the state, corporations and households in order to expand consumption.

The neoliberal dogma is that there is no limit to the so-called free market and free flow of bank money in solving every crisis. But certainly, there are limits to consumption and production that are dependent on excessive cumulative borrowing while wages continue to be pressed down and the money is created by banks and investment firms in the form of derivatives and at computer speed. Financial bubbles are exciting for a while until they burst.

The neoliberal policy has resulted in more than 100 financial crises in the global centers of capitalism and in particular global regions. Colossal amounts of bank credit have been poured on them every time. Thus, the public can remember only the biggest financial crises. But in over three decades the global debt has accumulated and mounted to the point that no less than the US and other industrial capitalist countries are confronted with the worst economic and financial crisis since the Great Depression.

In the first decade of the neoliberal policy, the major crises included the debt crisis of the third world countries (Latin America, Africa and Asia) and the revisionist-ruled countries (the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe), the US becoming a debtor country after high-speed spending for high-tech military production and outsourcing the production of basic consumer goods, the economic and political turbulence in China, the long-running economic stagnation resulting in political crisis that would soon topple the revisionist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and the beginning of the prolonged stagnation of Japan that extends to the present.

In the second decade of the neoliberal policy, contrary to expectations of a peace dividend from the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the US and NATO unleashed wars of aggression aimed at grabbing oil resources and controlling pipelines (Iraq and the Balkans). The crisis of Mexico burst out, exposing the fragility of third world economies depending on stocks and bonds bought by foreign investors in the privatization of telecommunications and other enterprises. The structural adjustment programs and austerity measures imposed by the IMF resulted in desperate economic and political situations and in extremely bloody civil wars (Rwanda and the Congo).

The so-called Asian financial crisis of 1997 broke out and jolted the global economy. It showed the disastrous outcome of excessive borrowing for real estate speculation and consumerism in Southeast Asia and in other regions and even for the expansion of production in durable and nondurable consumer goods as in South Korea, Japan and China. The Asian financial crisis adversely affected the US and Europe, even as they still boasted of economies boosted by high technology production and low inflation rates realized as a result of wage freeze and cheap consumer goods from China.

At the very start of the third decade of the neoliberal policy, the high-tech bubble burst in the US and other developed countries. The US took the lead in countering economic and financial crisis and trying to reinvigorate the economy by generating what would become the housing bubble and by stepping up military production and unleashing wars of aggression under the pretext of a "global war on terror" in retaliation for 9/11 (Afghanistan and Iraq) and later on under the pretext of humanitarian intervention (Libya).

We are now in the midst of a grave economic and financial crisis resulting from the unsustainability of consumption based on excessive debt, the bursting of the financial bubbles, the collapse of financial markets and the drastic fall of production and employment. The crisis is not being solved because the imperialist rulers stubbornly cling to the neoliberal policy and prohibit the state from directly undertaking any program to raise production and employment.

Huge amounts of public funds are used to bail out the big banks and corporations. And when certain amounts are appropriated to stimulate production and employment, these are delivered first to the favored giant corporations which subject the funds to saving on labor costs and widening the profit margin before any production is undertaken. Thus, unemployment remains high and incomes of the working people are kept low. The crisis has consequently worsened, deepened and protracted.

Since the open and rapid restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China, the adversaries of socialism and communism have proclaimed that communist parties and the socialist cause are hopeless and that history cannot go any farther than capitalism and liberal democracy. They have misrepresented the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the revolutionary mass movement as ideologically and materially dependent on the revisionist regimes and that therefore they can no longer preserve themselves and advance.

In the course of its Second Great Rectification Movement, the CPP renewed its stand for socialism against modern revisionism. It asserted that the people's democratic revolution can definitely go forward amidst the

semicolonial and semifeudal conditions and strive for victory against US imperialism and the local exploiting classes. As regards the future of socialist revolution, that is prepared for by the strengthening and victorious advance of the revolutionary forces and people in the course of the new democratic revolution.

Since the fall of the revisionist regimes and full restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe, the former republics of the Soviet Union and China, the CPP and the revolutionary mass movement have succeeded in preserving their strength and advancing the Philippine revolution, rectifying the major ultra-Left and Rightist opportunist errors and opposing steadfastly the US-instigated policies of neoliberal globalization and “war on terror.” They have also exposed the pro-imperialist and reactionary character of the various anti-communist petty bourgeois groups that assisted the US and the local exploiting classes in trying to taunt the CPP and the Philippine revolution to death.

What are the prospects of the Philippine revolution in the next five to ten years? That is more than enough time for the revolutionary forces and the people to advance from the strategic defensive to the strategic stalemate and consequently aim for the strategic offensive. Definitely, the strategic offensive shall already be in sight or in progress, depending on the accumulation of strength by the revolutionary forces, the state of disintegration of the ruling system, the gravity of the crisis of the world capitalist system and the overextension of US imperialism on a global scale.

All major contradictions within the world capitalist system are well on the way to intensifying right within the global centers of capitalism. The crisis is causing the class struggle between labor and capital to surface. The struggle for a redivision of the world is intensifying among the imperialist powers. Governments that assert national independence and invoke socialism are in increasing contradiction with the imperialist powers. The oppressed peoples and nations in the underdeveloped and impoverished countries are the most victimized by imperialism and reaction and are being goaded by the crisis to wage armed and other forms of struggle.

The adoption of higher technology has further sharpened the contradiction between the social character of production and the private monopoly character of appropriation. The monopoly bourgeoisie accelerates the extraction of profits not only from the process of production but also at a faster rate from the abuse of finance capital. The US and other global centers of capitalism have rapidly accumulated and centralized capital through ownership and control of high technology and through generation of money printing and financial derivatives practically without restraint.

The proletarian revolutionaries, social activists and the broad masses of the people refer to the rising social character of production and the escalation of exploitation and use information technology to advocate socialism. They are outraged that precisely when working class productivity is so high workers are subjected to mass layoffs and reduction of income while the parasitic finance oligarchs and their minions suck up private profits and public funds. Together with the rest of the people, the working class in the industrial capitalist countries is resisting the high rates of unemployment, the rising cost of living and the austerity measures and all other attempts of the monopoly bourgeoisie and the financial oligarchy to shift the burden of crisis to the people.

Such ultra-reactionary currents as fascism, chauvinism, racism, religious bigotry and war hysteria are being used by the monopoly bourgeoisie and their big media minions to obfuscate the capitalist roots of the crisis in the effort to mislead people. An increasing number of workers and youth are taking up the study of Marxism-Leninism and are proposing socialism as the alternative to capitalism. In the course of practical struggles, the advanced sections of working-class parties and the trade union movements are increasingly critical of revisionism, reformism and bureaucratism. The rise of anti-imperialist and progressive forces and movements in the developed countries is certainly of great support to the revolutionary struggle in the Philippines.

The integration into the world capitalist system of former socialist countries with a significant industrial base, like Russia and China; the rapid rise of the social character of production through high technology; the intensified forms of accumulating profits from the real economy and the financial markets; and the relentless need for expanded markets, sources of fuel and other raw materials, and fields of investment have combined to make the world capitalist system tighter and more implosive. The economic competition and political rivalries among the imperialist powers intensify and drive them inexorably to struggle for a redivision of the world.

At any rate, the imperialist powers in the G8 and G20 still manage to maintain their unity in exploiting the working class and the people on a global scale and launching wars of aggression against certain third world countries. There is yet no conspicuous alignment and counter-alignment of imperialist powers poised to wage war

against each other. The imperialist powers are still at that stage of holding different positions vis a vis the national policies and natural resources of particular countries, maintaining good economic and diplomatic relations and supplying arms to their clients and allies in the third world. Even now, if the new democratic revolution in the Philippines were victorious, it would be in a position to take advantage of the contradictions among the imperialist powers.

The US and its major imperialist allies in the NATO have applied high technology in the development and manufacture of weapons for the purpose of dominating the world, aggressing against states deemed as enemies, making profits on huge weapon sales to other states, especially the oil producing ones, and satisfying the dictates of corporations in the military-industrial complex. They have also applied high technology for the purpose of surveilling and threatening entire countries and peoples, for equipping and assisting reactionary puppets in campaigns of state terrorism and for unleashing propaganda against peoples and government opposed to imperialism and reaction.

The aggressive character of US imperialism and its NATO allies is evident in the launching of wars of aggression against third world countries. The United States takes the lead in conducting either covert or overt military operations in at least ten countries: Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Iran, Libya, Pakistan, the Philippines, Colombia and now Uganda. It has 820 military installations in at least 135 countries. In recent memory, the people in imperialist countries rose up in millions to oppose the wars of aggression against Iraq in 2003. We estimate that the overextension of the US and its domestic problems will increasingly limit its capability for intervention and aggression.

The US and China have been the main partners in implementing the neoliberal policy of globalization. The US has used its economic, trade and financial relations to concentrate on the production of big items and more profitable industrial goods of civil and military or dual character, to financialize the US economy and have a more effective handle on the global economy, to outsource to China the production of consumer goods on cheap Chinese labor and to have it use its export surplus earnings to buy US treasury bills and other securities.

The relationship seemed to work well until the US financial bubbles burst one after the other and the US started to worry over the shrinkage of its manufacturing sector in relation to high unemployment and the huge US public debt in relation to China's export surpluses. The contradictions between the US and China over economic, financial, political and military issues can be a source of tensions in East Asia but can also provide the Philippine revolution with some room for maneuver.

Certain countries in the third world are governed by parties and leaders that assert national independence and invoke socialism in order to oppose imperialism and its most reactionary agents, seek to improve their country's economic and social condition, win the political support of their own people and gain sympathy and support from patriotic and progressive forces in other third world countries. Such countries like China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia can be helpful to the Philippines, especially after victory in the national democratic revolution.

Certain countries have been victimized by imperialist wars of aggression such as Iraq, the Balkans, Afghanistan and Libya. The peoples in most of these countries are waging wars of national liberation against invasion and occupation. Right now, as they fight imperialism, they inspire the Filipino people to advance the Philippine revolution. They are helpful because they bog down much of the war personnel and resources of the US and its imperialist allies and lessen their capability for military intervention and aggression elsewhere. The Filipino revolutionaries view the growing tendency of the imperialist powers to wage aggression as unwittingly promotive of anti-imperialist armed resistance not only in the countries directly victimized but also further afield.

The overwhelming majority of the underdeveloped and impoverished countries are governed by such exploiting classes as the big compradors, landlords and corrupt bureaucrats acting as puppets of the US and other imperialist powers. Even before the imposition of the neoliberal economic policy, they have been afflicted by chronic economic and political crisis resulting in armed conflicts of various types. Under the aforesaid policy, they have been subjected to worse exploitation and oppression and kept in neocolonial bondage.

The dire conditions in such countries are favorable for the rise of new democratic revolutions through people's war. The armed revolutionary movements in Colombia, India, Nepal, Peru, Turkey and elsewhere contribute to weakening imperialism and reaction worldwide and serve to inspire other peoples to wage armed struggles for freedom and democracy.

As the crisis of the world capitalist system worsens and protracts, the imperialist powers find it easiest to shift the burden of crisis to the oppressed peoples and nations and plunder their natural resources. But the broad masses of the people are further driven to wage resistance. The neoliberal economic policy has devastated the general run of third world countries so much so that opportunities have opened for the rise of armed revolutionary resistance in so many countries and in entire global regions. The spread of the conflagration will certainly facilitate the advance and victory of the people's democratic revolution in the Philippines.

I am confident that in our retirement years and thereafter the Philippine revolution will win far greater victories than we have seen since the start of the people's war in 1969. In writing you this long letter, I wish to share with you the optimism and confidence that our contributions to the Filipino people's struggle for national and social liberation are not in vain and that they are part of a growing and advancing revolutionary movement that will ultimately win complete victory and lead to socialism.

Fraternally,
Joma

Remedies to Obstacles or Problems

in the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations

**Presentation at the press conference and forum to introduce the International Legal Advisory Team of the NDFP
Negotiating Panel.
November 14, 2011**

Let me state to you the remedies that have been used or can be used to overcome or solve 10 major obstacles or problems in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. Let me refer quickly to every obstacle or problem and then state the remedy.

1. Problem of diametrically opposite positions in a civil war

Remedy: The Hague Joint Declaration (THJD) makes it possible for the warring parties, GRP and NDFP, to become negotiating parties. It declares mutually acceptable principles of national sovereignty, democracy and social justice and no precondition whatsoever to negate the inherent character and purpose of peace negotiations. Both sides keep their respective political integrity in addressing the roots of the armed conflict by negotiating and agreeing on basic social, economic and political reforms.

2. Problem of safety and immunity guarantees

Remedy: The Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) provides the guarantees for both sides. Safety and immunity guarantees are necessary for the negotiators, consultants, staff and other personnel in the peace negotiations. Safety of such persons, documents and other things is necessary before, during and after the peace negotiations. Immunity ensures that they do not become liable for what they utter or do in connection with peace negotiations.

3. Problem of venue in view of previous bad experience in the 1986 ceasefire talks

Remedy: The JASIG has stipulated foreign neutral venue, with facilitation of foreign governments. During the ceasefire talks and ceasefire agreement in 1986 and early 1987, the NDFP personnel and allies were put under surveillance by enemy intelligence. Afterwards, a number of them were arrested, tortured and killed. Peace negotiations in a foreign venue do not require mobilization of large security forces by the negotiating parties. They are secure and economical for both sides.

4. Problem of orderly meetings and consultations

Remedy: Ground Rules regarding these have been agreed upon. To mention some of the rules, the chairpersons are responsible for the conduct of their respective panels and consultants and they co-preside the formal meetings. The chairpersons of the panels, teams or representatives thereof can engage in informal meetings and consultations to facilitate the formal meetings. The third-party facilitator is in charge of hosting and providing necessities for the talks and can attend the formal meetings.

5. Problem of having substantive agenda towards a just and lasting peace

Remedy: THJD requires addressing the roots of the armed conflict by negotiating and forging agreements on basic social, economic and political reforms and sets forth the substantive agenda: Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (already done); Social and Economic Reforms; Political and Constitutional Reforms; and End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces. There is the Joint Agreement on the Formation, Sequence and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees for making the tentative agreements before finalization by the negotiating panels. After a comprehensive agreement is approved by the panels, it is submitted to their respective principals for approval.

6. Problem of legal and judicial framework

Remedy: The CARHRIHL has used as main frame of reference the international conventions on human rights and international humanitarian law and the negotiating panels adhere to their respective constitutions. The prospective CASER avails of international conventions and the negotiating panels adhere to their respective constitutions. The prospective CAPCR will be guided by international law and will seek to make a new constitution on the basis of the constitutions of the GRP and NDFP and create new political mechanisms. The prospective EHDF will also be guided by international law and by a new constitution agreed upon by the GRP and NDFP.

7. Problem of violations of JASIG and CARHRIHL

Remedy: The NDFP has constantly demanded that justice be rendered to the JASIG-protected negotiating personnel who have been subjected to imprisonment, torture and extrajudicial killings. The refusal of GRP to heed the demand for justice and the immediate release of the JASIG-protected prisoners can be a just ground for the NDFP to withdraw from the peace negotiations but still the NDFP continues to demand and wait for the GRP to comply with JASIG. Like the entire people and the human rights, peace and religious organizations, the NDFP is demanding the release of more than 350 political prisoners who have been tortured and imprisoned on trumped-up charges of common crimes in violation of CARHRIHL, particularly the Hernandez political offense doctrine. The Aquino regime condones the human rights violations perpetrated under the Arroyo regime and is perpetrating its own. The NDFP has the just ground to withdraw from the peace negotiations because the Aquino regime does not comply with the JASIG and CARHRIHL.

8. Problem of demagogic demands for ceasefire to draw attention away from the roots of the armed conflict

Remedy: NDFP has offered truce and alliance on the basis of a general declaration of common intent in the spirit of encouraging and accelerating the peace negotiations. Such offer is intended by the NDFP to counter the frequent demagogic demand of the GRP, which obfuscates the need for addressing the roots of the armed conflict and tries to push the NDFP towards a position of surrender and pacification. But if the GRP seriously takes the offer, then there can be an immediate truce and alliance in general terms that will certainly encourage and accelerate the forging of the three remaining comprehensive agreements on SER, PCR and EHDF.

9. Problem of GRP undermining and seeking to nullify the THJD, the JASIG and even the CARHRIHL

Remedy: NDFP simply has to uphold the existing joint agreements in opposition to the efforts of the GRP to undermine and nullify them. The peace negotiations will not move forward or will even be terminated if the GRP does not remove the clique of clerico-fascists, military hawks and crooks that are in control of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process. Such clique is most responsible for the efforts to cast away the THJD on the false argument that it is a document of perpetual division, that the JASIG does not involve obligations but is only a matter of discretion for the GRP and that the CARHRIHL is not binding and effective, despite the approval of the principals. The current OPAPP has become notorious for attacking existing agreements with the NDFP or with the MILF. It is preoccupying itself with racketeering activities in connivance with certain paramilitary groups like the CPLA and the RPA-ABB which are misrepresented as rebel groups.

10. Problem of the Oplan Bayanihan, including US intervention and interference in the peace negotiations.

Remedy: NDFP exposes the US-designed Oplan Bayanihan as a military campaign plan masquerading as a peace and development campaign. We call on all peace-loving people to demand that the GRP, particularly the Aquino regime, engage in serious peace negotiations and build a just and lasting peace with the NDFP on the agreements already made. According to Oplan Bayanihan, the peace negotiations are merely a fig leaf on the naked brute force of the state. The GRP is supposed to use sham peace negotiations if only to reinforce the psywar misrepresentation of the military campaign of suppression as peace and development operations. The NDFP advises the GRP to engage in serious peace negotiations because the revolutionary forces are ready to frustrate the GRP strategy of deception and violence.

On the Revolutionary Movement

in the Philippines

Full Interview by Bill Fletcher, Jr.

January 22, 2012

Most people in the USA know little about the Philippines, its history, and/or its relationship to the USA. What do you believe are the reasons for this ignorance?

JMS: The US mass media are most responsible for informing, disinforming or simply keeping the American people ignorant about a country like the Philippines. I presume that most people in the USA become most aware of a country when the mass media are blaring out a certain extended course of sensational events of great interest to the US officialdom and the ruling class. I am sure that in the past there were times of long duration when the mass media called the attention of the American public to the Philippines, like when the US was justifying and carrying out its war of aggression against the Filipino people from 1899 onwards, when the Japanese fascists pushed the US out of the Philippines at the start of World War II and the US reconquered the Philippines in 1945 and when the US-propped Marcos fascist dictatorship was in the process of being overthrown.

When the extraordinary or sensational subsidies, the mass media pay less attention to the country and do not say much about the protracted reality of US colonial rule in the Philippines in most of the first half of the 20th century or the US semi-colonial domination of the Philippines since 1946. The ruling system in the US does not allow the Americans who know the truth about the Philippines to impart their knowledge to the public promptly, widely and sustainedly through the mass media or any other means.

Given what you are saying, do you think that the US media has consciously mischaracterized the situation in the Philippines by focusing on groups like Abu Sayyaf?

JMS: Yes, the US media drum up US policy and corporate interests and consciously misrepresent the Philippine situation, as in the focusing on the Abu Sayyaf. This small bandit gang, whose origin can be traced to the CIA and intelligence operatives of the Philippine army who organized and used it against the Moro revolutionaries (MNLF and then MILF), is magnified as an extension of Al Qaida in order to serve the false claim of Bush that the Philippines is the second front of a global war on terror as well as to rationalize state terrorism and US military intervention in the Philippines. Through the mass media, the US has spread the scare about terrorism in order to justify a whole range of actions: the curtailment of democratic rights in the US and on a global scale, the stepping up of war production to please the military-industrial complex and the unleashing of wars of aggression.

Would you sum-up the situation in the Philippines, particularly the state of negotiations between the NDFP and the government; the situation facing workers and farmers; the overall economy; and fighting that may be taking place?

JMS: The Philippines is severely stricken by crisis because of the rotting semi-colonial and semi-feudal ruling system and the growing impact of the crisis of the US and global capitalist system. The prices of the raw materials and semi-manufactures produced for export by the Philippines are depressed and foreign loans to cover the trade deficits and debt service are becoming more onerous than before. There is now less demand for overseas contract workers and thus their remittances are decreasing. The global economic and financial crisis is hitting hard the Philippines. The growing public deficits (budgetary and trade) and the public debt are growing and exposing the bankruptcy of the big comprador-landlord state.

Various forms of popular resistance, including people's war, are ever growing because of the extreme and ever worsening conditions of exploitation and oppression of more than 90 percent of the people, the toiling masses of workers and peasants. Like preceding regimes, the Aquino regime wants to destroy the armed revolutionary movement. It is implementing the US-designed Oplan Bayanihan, which is the same dog as Arroyo's Oplan Bantay Laya but which tries to be different by dressing up brutal military operations as peace and development operations and maintaining human rights desks in the reactionary army and national police for the purpose of shifting the blame for human rights violations to the revolutionaries.

On the other hand, the New People's Army led by the Communist Party of the Party is carrying out a five-year plan to advance from the strategic defensive to strategic stalemate in the people's war, increasing the number of

guerrilla fronts from 120 to 180. While their respective armed forces continue to fight, the Government of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) are supposed to engage in peace negotiations in order to address the roots of the armed conflict by forging agreements on social, economic and political reforms. But the GRP has paralyzed the peace negotiations by refusing to release a few political prisoners who are NDFP consultants in the negotiations and thus violating the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG). The GRP is also grossly violating the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CAHRIHL) by refusing to release more than 350 political prisoners who are imprisoned on false charges of common crimes.

You have described the Philippines as semicapitalist/semifeudal. Please explain what this means in practical terms. We are in the early years of the 21st century. How could there be a semi-feudal situation in the Philippines? The Philippines seems, for all intents and purposes, to be tied into global capitalism.

JMS: You can say bluntly that the Philippines is capitalist and has long been capitalist since the 19th century if you mean that the commodity system of production and exchange through money has come on top of the natural economy of feudalism when local communities could subsist on a diversified agriculture and engage mainly in barter. The specialization in crops for domestic food (rice and corn) and for export (tobacco, hemp and sugar) and the import of a certain amount of manufactures from Europe for consumption pushed the domestic commodity system of production as well as integration with global capitalism through colonialism as a part of the primitive accumulation of capital in Europe and subsequently under the banner of colonial free trade.

But it is utterly wrong to say that the Philippines is industrial capitalist or even semi-industrial capitalist. The Philippines does not have an industrial foundation. Its floating kind of industry consists of imported equipment paid for by the export of raw materials and by foreign loans necessitated by the chronic trade deficits. It is most precise to describe the Philippine economy as semi-feudal to denote the persistence of the large vestiges of feudalism in the form of disguised and undisguised landlord-tenant relations and usury at the base of the economy, the peasant class constituting 75 per cent of the population and the combination of the big compradors and landlords as the main exploiting classes. The big compradors are the chief financial and trading agents of the foreign monopolies and are often big landlords themselves, especially on land producing crops for export.

Global capitalism under the neoliberal policy of “free trade” globalization has not changed but has aggravated and deepened the pre-industrial and underdeveloped semi-feudal character of the Philippine economy. The share of manufacturing with the use of imported equipment and raw materials under the policy of low-value added export-oriented manufacturing in the last three decades has decreased in comparison to that share under the previous policy of import substitution. The illusion of industrial development has been conjured by excessive foreign borrowing for consumption of foreign manufactures, by conspicuous private construction projects and by the sweat shops that engage in the fringe-processing of imported manufactured components and yield little net export income.

Neither the series of bogus land reform programs since decades ago nor the neoliberal policy of imperialist globalization has broken up feudalism completely and given way to a well-founded industrialization. The backward agrarian and semifeudal character of the Philippine economy is now increasingly exposed by its depression and ruination due to the decreasing demand for its type of exports, the closure of many sweatshops of semi-manufacturing for export, the tightening international credit and the decrease of remittances by overseas contract workers in the current prolonged global economic and financial crisis in this 21st century of desperate, barbaric and imploding global capitalism. The conditions have become more fertile for people’s war in the Philippines.

In the 1980s, certain elements in the Philippines pushed the notion that the Philippine economy was no longer semifeudal but semicapitalist or semi-industrial capitalist in order to glorify the Marcos fascist dictatorship as having industrialized the Philippines. This notion also aimed to undercut the Communist Party’s strategic line of protracted people’s war involving the encirclement of the cities from the countryside by the armed revolutionary movement of the workers and peasants until such time that they have accumulated enough politico-military strength to seize the cities on a nationwide scale in a strategic offensive.

The bureaucratic big comprador Ferdinand Marcos conjured the illusion of industrial development by borrowing heavily from abroad and by importing consumption goods and luxuries and construction equipment and structural steel in order to build roads, bridges, hotels and other tourist facilities. The profligate spending of foreign loans only served to maintain the agrarian and pre-industrial character of the Philippine economy. Cognizant

of the persistent semi-feudal reality, the New People's Army under CPP leadership has been able to wage people's war successfully with the main support of the peasantry and under the class leadership of the working class.

When one talks of the Philippine working class, what are the main sectors in which it is found and how is neo-liberalism affecting it?

JMS: The Philippine working class is found in such main sectors as the following: food and beverages, hotels and restaurants, public utilities (power generation, water and sewage system), mining and quarrying, metal fabrication (imported metals), car assembly, ship assembly, transportation, communications, mass media, assembly of electronic and electrical products, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, oil refining, construction, construction materials (cement and wood), banks and other financial institutions and public sector services (education, health, etc). In the Philippines, the neoliberal policy has favored certain enterprises away from industrial development and has expanded employment in such enterprises during boom periods. The favored enterprises include those in mining and export-crop plantations, the assembly of electronic and electrical products, the semi-manufacturing of garments, shoes and other low-value added products for reexport, car assembly, construction of office and residential towers, cement production, hotels and restaurants, business call centers and financial services. They are vulnerable to the ups and downs characteristic of global capitalism under neoliberal policy and now to the worst crisis since the Great Depression.

Closures and reduction of production have resulted in a high rate of unemployment and the further immiseration of the people. Under the neoliberal policy, the working class has been subjected to wage freezes and reductions, loss of job security, flexibilization or casualization (reducing the number of regular employees and increasing the number of temporaries or casuals), systematic prevention or break up of workers' unions and ceaseless attack on union rights and other democratic rights.

The kinds of enterprises generated by the neoliberal policy involve cheap labor and the most tiring and health-damaging processes and conditions. They also limit the number of regular employees and expand the ranks of the casuals subjected to a series of short-term employment contracts in order to circumvent the law on regular employment. The scarcity of employment opportunities in the Philippines has compelled nearly 10 per cent of the population to seek employment abroad as overseas contract workers and undocumented workers with practically no rights. This fact proves the lack of national industrial development.

You mention that certain elements in the Philippines had a different view than yours (and the CPP) on how to characterize the Philippines today. What were/are the practical implications of these differences? Do the differences preclude any degree of unity or are there strategic differences that are irreconcilable?

JMS: Certain elements in the revolutionary movement put forward the subjectivist notion in the early 1980s that Marcos had truly carried out land reform, industrialized the Philippines and raised its urbanization to the level of 40 per cent. They subjectively concluded that it was already wrong to call the Philippines semi-feudal and to pursue the strategic line protracted people's war by way of accumulating strength in the countryside before seizing the cities. The subjectivist notion gave rise to two opportunist currents, Right and ultra-Left, both grounded on rejecting the line of protracted people's war but taking two different directions, one along the line of legalism and parliamentarism and the other along the line of military adventurism. The ultra-Left opportunists adopted the line of speeding up the regularization of the people's army or the premature formation of absolutely concentrated companies and battalions supposedly to catch up with the expected development of urban insurrections as the lead factor in the revolution. The prematurely enlarged military formations were unsustainable, became divorced from the masses and were easy for the enemy to locate and attack. When they incurred heavy losses, the ultra-Left opportunists engaged in scapegoating and blamed so-called deep penetration agents as the cause of their disasters. Meanwhile, the Right opportunists called for making legal struggle the main form of struggle against the dictatorship and for taking out working class leadership from the National Democratic Front of the Philippines supposedly to attract more people. After Marcos fell in 1986, they wanted to join the Corazon Aquino government and some of them succeeded in joining the new reactionary government. After failing to swing the Communist Party to a line of reformism, they fragmented into various groups and adopted various lines, including Gorbachovism, Trotskyism, social democracy, neo-revisionism and even neoliberalism.

The most notorious and most aggressive of the Right and ultra-Left opportunists have found jobs in the regimes of Cory Aquino, Ramos, Estrada, Arroyo and Noyon Aquino and the very worst of them have even joined even the intelligence agencies. They would be most hostile to any suggestion of reconciliation or unity with the

CPP. But many of those they have misled are known to have returned to the revolutionary movement or have dropped out to mind their own private lives.

What have been the chief obstacles to a negotiated settlement between the NDFP and the government?

The Manila government and NDFP have their respective constitutions, governments and armies. To lay the ground for peace negotiations, they issued The Hague Joint Declaration to define the framework for peace negotiations. They agreed to address the roots of the armed conflict or the civil war by negotiating and forging agreements on human rights and international humanitarian law and on social, economic and political reforms. They also agreed that they are guided by the mutually acceptable principles of national sovereignty, democracy and social justice and that no precondition shall be made by any side to negate the inherent character and purpose of peace negotiations, i.e. no side can demand the surrender of the other side. Under the current Aquino regime, his presidential adviser and his negotiating panel want to undermine and nullify the aforesaid declaration by asserting that it is a document of perpetual division. They are practically demanding the immediate surrender of the revolutionary movement. They do not respect the agreement on the sequence, formation and operationalization of the reciprocal working committees that are to negotiate and work out the agreements on reforms. The question of what kind of authority will be formed to implement the comprehensive agreements on reforms shall be settled when the time comes for negotiating the political and constitutional reforms. The Benigno Aquino III regime has shown no respect for and has in fact violated the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) by refusing to release some 14 political prisoners who are NDFP negotiating personnel and are therefore JASIG-protected. It has not called to account those military and police personnel who have abducted, tortured and murdered NDFP consultants who are JASIG-protected. Also, it has violated the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law by condoning violations of human rights of suspected revolutionaries and sympathizers by the Arroyo regime and by his own troops and by refusing to release 350 political prisoners who are unjustly imprisoned on trumped up charges of common crimes.

The regime keeps on demanding ceasefire in order to distract public attention from the agreement to address the roots of the civil war through basic reforms. The NDFP has offered truce and alliance on the basis of a general declaration on common intent on ten points, including the assertion of national independence, empowerment of the working people, land reform and national industrialization, immediate assistance and employment for the impoverished and unemployed, promotion of a patriotic, scientific and popular culture, self-determination of national minorities and independent foreign policy for peace and development.

The biggest obstacle to the peace negotiations is US political and military intervention. The US has upset the peace negotiations by unjustly designating the CPP, the NPA and the NDFP chief political consultant as terrorists. It has dictated upon the Aquino regime to draw up Oplan Bayanihan under the US Counterinsurgency Guide, which considers peace negotiations as a mere psywar device for outwitting, isolating and destroying the revolutionary movement. Oplan Bayanihan is a campaign plan of military suppression. But it masquerades as a peace and development plan. It regards peace negotiations only as a means to enhance the triad of psywar, intelligence-gathering and combat operations. Many people think that the US does not allow the puppet regime to make the overall agreement for a just and lasting peace with the NDFP.

Optimally what would a settlement between the NDFP and the government look like? What is the vision of the NDFP for a future Philippines?

JMS: The Communist Party of the Philippines, the New People's Army and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines have declared that their line in the peace negotiations is no different from their line of struggle for national liberation and democracy in the people's war, whose ultimate goal is a just and lasting peace. Through peace negotiations, they seek to forge agreements with the Manila government on social, economic and political reforms in order to pave the way for a just and lasting peace. The NDFP is desirous of a settlement in which the national sovereignty of the Filipino people and territorial integrity of the Philippines are upheld and unequal treaties, agreements and arrangements with foreign powers are done away with. The workers and peasants who compose the majority of the people must be empowered in order to have real democracy. Land reform and national industrialization must be carried out in order to have real development and realize just social relations. A national, scientific and mass culture and system of education and information must be promoted. An independent policy must be carried out in order to promote development and world peace. The vision of the NDFP is for the Filipino people to enjoy far better conditions when they have national independence, democracy, economic

development and social justice. They can aspire for still better conditions in a socialist society. The protracted and worsening crisis of global capitalism is resulting in the resurgence of the anti-imperialist movement as well as the socialist movement. An increasing number of people are saying that it is not enough to fight against capitalism and imperialism. It is necessary to fight for socialism.

Are you optimistic that negotiations can result in a just settlement?

JMS: Frankly speaking, I am not optimistic that negotiations can result in a just settlement. Like its predecessors, the Aquino regime is too servile to US imperialism and stands as the current chief representative of the local exploiting classes, the comprador big bourgeoisie and landlord class. It has shown no inclination to assert national independence and undo unequal treaties, agreements and arrangements that keep the Philippines semi-colonial. It also has shown no inclination to realize democracy through significant representation of workers and peasants in government and through land reform and national industrialization. It has become clear that the reactionary government is not seriously interested in peace negotiations as a way of addressing the roots of the armed conflict through agreements on basic reforms. Especially under the Aquino regime, the negotiators are always trying to lay aside the substantive agenda and to push the NDFP towards capitulation and pacification. Failing to accomplish their vile objective, they paralyze the peace negotiations by refusing to comply with obligations under the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees.

What has been the role of the USA? And, have US policies towards the Philippines changed under President Obama? If so, how? What is your overall assessment of the Obama administration?

JMS: The USA has not been helpful to the peace negotiations. In fact, it has obstructed these. The US designation of the CPP, NPA and myself (the NDFP chief political consultant) as terrorists is meant to intimidate and put pressure on the NDFP in the peace negotiations. The US Counterinsurgency Guide actually tells the Philippine reactionary government that peace negotiations are dispensable but are useful only for purposes of psywar to mislead the people, possibly split the revolutionary forces and make the reactionary killing machine more efficient. But the US policy against peace negotiations with the NDFP has served to make the revolutionary force and people more vigilant and more resolute in opposing US intervention in the internal affairs of the Philippines.

From the Bush II to the Obama regime, there has been no change in US policy towards the Philippines. Obama continues the policy of serving the interests of the US imperialists in the economic, political, military and cultural fields, collaborating with the big compradors and landlords, manipulating the puppet regime and its military forces, preventing land reform and national industrialization, controlling the fundamentals and direction of the Philippine cultural and educational system and stationing US troops in the Philippines and maintaining a permanent relay of US military forces under the US-RP Mutual Defense Pact and the Visiting Forces Agreement. Obama is a good servant of US imperialism. He used his glibness to make himself look better than the brazenly brutal Bush. But he is using the same glibness to cover many acts as bad as or even worse than those that made Bush infamous.

How did the CPP and NPA end up on a list of terrorist organizations? How did you end up on a list of supporters of terrorism? What steps are being taken to remove this label from you, the CPP and the NPA?

JMS: During the November 2001 visit of then Philippine president Gloria M. Arroyo to Washington, she requested then US President Bush to have the US agencies (State Department and the Office of Foreign Asset Control of the Treasury Department) designate the CPP, NPA and myself as “terrorists”. When US state secretary Colin Powell visited the Philippines in the early days of August 2002, he was reminded of the request and he assured Arroyo that he would act on it immediately upon his return to the US. Indeed, within August 2002 the CPP, NPA and I were designated as “terrorists.” The Philippine and US governments connived to take advantage of the terrorism scare that followed 9-11. They themselves engaged in terrorism by deciding to undertake harmful actions against the CPP, NPA and myself. The designation of the CPP and NPA as “terrorist” is absolutely absurd because they have carried out revolutionary actions strictly within the Philippines, have not engaged in any cross-border attacks against the US and up to now have not been discovered to keep bank accounts in the US or anywhere else outside of the Philippines. In my case, I have been falsely accused of being the current CPP chairman and being responsible for the alleged terrorist acts, in fact the revolutionary actions, of the NPA despite the fact that I have been out of the Philippines since 1986 when I was released from nearly a decade of detention under the Marcos fascist dictatorship. The malicious intention of the US and Philippine governments is to pressure the entire NDFP negotiating panel and me as its chief political consultant. Like the Arroyo regime, the Aquino regime uses the terrorist

designation as a kind of lever against the NDFP in the peace negotiations.

It is impossible for the CPP, NPA or myself to begin any legal process for undoing the terrorist designation in the US or in any other country tailing after the US in the so-called war on terror, without proving first the legal personality and material interest of the plaintiff. In my case, I could take legal action against the Dutch government for putting me in the terrorist list because I live in The Netherlands. After my administrative complaint, the Dutch government repealed its decision to put me in its terrorist list but took the initiative in having me put in the terrorist list of the European Union in October 2002. I went to the European Court of Justice and I succeeded in having my name removed from the EU terrorist list in December 2010 after eight years of legal struggle.

Has the “terrorism” designation made it difficult for NDFP supporters in the Philippines and in other parts of the world? If so, how? Have civilian political activists faced increased government-inspired violence as a result of this terrorism designation?

JMS: The “terrorism” designation is an incitation to hatred and violence and various forms of discrimination and harassment against known or suspected NDFP supporters in the Philippines and other parts of the world. Although the NDFP is not designated as terrorist, everyone knows that the CPP and NPA are the most important components of the NDFP. In the Philippines, the incitation to hatred and violence is quite deadly because the military, police and their death squads are emboldened to go on terrorist-hunting and are assured that they can abduct, torture and kill people with impunity. Abroad, the EU, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand have followed the US in labelling the CPP and NPA as terrorists and there are adverse consequences to Filipinos who oppose imperialism and the puppet government in the Philippines. The overseas Filipinos are vulnerable to discrimination, harassment, nonrenewal of work contracts and denial of residence permits. The Dutch authorities have advised the Norwegian government not to give any assistance to the NDFP negotiating panel for maintaining office and staff in The Netherlands on the claim that such assistance would be for building the infrastructure of “terrorists”. They have also raided the NDFP office and houses of NDFP panelists and consultants and seized documents and equipment needed in the peace negotiations.

Periodically the US media discuss alleged Muslim fundamentalist terrorism in the Philippines. What is the situation? In Mindanao there have been efforts at autonomy and self-determination. What has been the stand of the NDFP on these efforts? What is your take on allegations of Muslim terrorism?

JMS: The NDFP supports the Moro people’s struggle for self-determination, including the right to secede from an oppressive state or opt for regional autonomy in a non-oppressive political system. The Moro people have long been oppressed by the Manila government and by local reactionary agents. They are not free in their own homeland and are victims of Christian chauvinism and discrimination. They have been deprived of their ancestral domain. They have been robbed of agricultural land as well as forest, mineral and marine resources. The Moro people have all the right to fight for national and social liberation. The NDFP has therefore found common ground for alliance with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and subsequently with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) after the MNLF capitulated to the Ramos regime in 1996. By fighting well against their common enemy, the NDFP and the MILF gain better conditions for growing in strength and advancing in their respective struggles. The US government and the US media exaggerate the threat of Muslim fundamentalist terrorism because they wish to promote the entry of US corporations for the purpose of plundering the rich natural resources of Mindanao, especially oil, gold and deuterium. They also wish to justify the current stationing of US military forces and eventually the basing of larger US military forces for the purpose of strategic control over Islamic countries in Southeast Asia and strategic countervailing of China and the DPRK in Northeast Asia.

Like Al Qaida, Abu Sayyaf was originally a creature of CIA and the intelligence agency of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to counteract the MNLF. It has become a bandit gang since the capitulation of MNLF. It has also been convenient for the US and Manila government to depict the Abu Sayyaf as a Muslim fundamentalist group and as an extension of the Al Qa’ida, since 2001 when Bush declared Moro land as the second front in the so-called global war on terror. There are indications that the US and Philippine governments continue to arm and finance the Abu Sayyaf in order to block the advance of the MILF in Sulu and to provide the pretext for US military intervention in the Philippines.

In the 1990s there were several splits from the CPP. There were charges and counter-charges regarding sectarianism and militarism. Some who split seemed to have chosen to engage primarily in electoral politics. Some former CPP members have suggested that the CPP/NPA has attempted to kill/silence political opponents. Please give us your take on this

and on these allegations.

JMS: In answer to a previous question, I discussed the subjectivist ideological line that the Philippines was no longer semifeudal. Such line emerged in 1981 and induced the political currents of ultra-Left and Right opportunism among a few members of the CPP. Eventually in the early 1990s, there would be splinters, not big splits, initiated by grouplets who opposed the Rectification Movement which was launched by the Central Committee of the CPP in early 1992. The rectification movement was an educational movement inside the CPP to repudiate, criticize and rectify the major errors of ultra-Left and Right opportunism that had caused serious damage to the CPP and the revolutionary mass movement since 1981. But there were elements, whose connections with enemy intelligence were eventually exposed, who stridently attacked the rectification movement as a bloody scheme of “Stalinist purge” and who tried to spread the fear that those found in error would be terribly punished. The rectification movement was undertaken precisely to rectify the sectarian and military adventurist line of the ultra-Left opportunists who tried to accelerate ill-prepared tactical offensives and the unsustainable formation of companies and battalions supposedly to back up the impending urban uprisings of the armed city partisans and spontaneous masses as the leading force. No such armed urban uprisings ever occurred. But mass work in the countryside was neglected and the rural mass base decreased by 15 per cent by 1988 and by 60 per cent in 1991.

Under the influence of the ultra-Left opportunists, CPP cadres in the urban underground (Davao City and Cagayan de Oro) also exposed themselves in the early 1980s to the enemy through mass actions which did not use the mantle of protection from the broad anti-fascist united front. When the ultra-Left line was resulting in effective enemy offensives, the ultra-Left opportunists did not look into their wrong line but instead engaged in scapegoating and in a bloody witch hunt for presumed deep penetration agents and saboteurs.

By 1988, the ultra-Left opportunists were already a spent force, especially after the failure of the so-called nationally coordinated NPA operations, which resulted in a big loss of ammunition, without any gain in rifles. Frustrated, they swung to the Right and joined the longstanding Right opportunists. But certain ultra-Left opportunists who were captured by the enemy were recruited into the intelligence service. They were used to attack the CPP line of new democratic revolution through protracted people's war. And they tried to discredit the rectification movement and they collaborated with the Right opportunists in doing so. At any rate, the Right opportunists became a relatively wider array of grouplets than the ultra-Leftists.

Since the 1989-91 fall of the revisionist regimes in Eastern Europe and disintegration of the Soviet Union, which they revered as socialist, the incorrigible Right opportunists have shed off their communist pretenses and have become bitterly anti-communist. They have joined the ruling system by getting employment in the bureaucracy and corporate offices, operating imperialist-funded NGOs or attaching their grouplets to major reactionary parties. Those who have chosen to engage in electoral politics have limited success because they are divorced from the masses and do not have a substantial mass base like the CPP, NPA and NDFP and the electoral parties being Red-baited as proxies of the CPP. A handful of them have been appointed to high positions by the Aquino regime.

The so-called ex-communists are the worst anti-communists. At one time, they misrepresented a political map of pseudo-progressive groups published in the organ of the CPP's Central Committee, Ang Bayan (The People), showing how the opportunists of the past have divided and subdivided, as a hit list for NPA assassination teams in order to slander the CPP and Red-bait progressive legal mass activists. The psywar attack by the ex-communists emboldened the death squads of the reactionary government to abduct, torture and kill suspected communists and to cover their criminal deeds by claiming that communists were killing each other.

We are in a tumultuous global situation with a convergence of economic and environmental crises. In this conjuncture, what do you see as the prospects for socialism? In many parts of the Muslim World so-called political Islam seems to be a leading force. Is this political tendency outpacing socialism (and the Left)? Are there viable left-wing alternatives or are we still grappling with the implications of the crisis of socialism?

JMS: The prospects for socialism are bright precisely because of the convergence of the grave economic and environmental crises which point to monopoly capitalism as the culprit and cause of the crises. This is the criminal force that plunders labor power in the economy and the material resources in the environment all for the sake of profit-making and capital accumulation. The identification of the monopoly bourgeoisie and the financial oligarchy as the class enemy that captivates and plunders nature and society points to the working class as the opposite force capable of leading the entire people towards liberation in a revolutionary process. The epochal struggle

of the working class against the bourgeoisie involves zigs and zags and ups and downs. On the 150th anniversary of the Communist Manifesto in 1998, I traced the alternation of great advances and retreats of the working class in periods of three to five decades. It is about time that the working class rises again from a deep trough and moves forward from the disintegration of socialist societies due to revisionist betrayal by degenerated ruling communist parties. The crisis conditions comparable to those of the Great Depression are again favorable for the rise of communist and workers' parties and the resurgence of anti-imperialist and socialist movements. In the last three decades, the CPP has been proud to call itself a torch-bearer in a relatively dark period for the world proletarian revolution. For some three decades under the neoliberal policy, the greediest of capitalist relations of production thrived on the adoption of higher technology which facilitated production, distribution and abuse of finance capital as well as powered the system of education and information to serve the purposes of monopoly capitalism. But the higher social character of production made possible by higher technology contradicts the capitalist character of the relations of production and demands the socialist revolution to remove production from the clutches of the monopoly bourgeoisie. But it takes decades before the communist and workers' parties can take power again through the revolutionary process.

In the meantime, political Islam can arise and grow in certain Muslim countries against imperialism and against the most reactionary currents. But we cannot foreclose the possibility that Muslims, bourgeois nationalists and Marxists in Muslim countries can unite on the common ground of anti-imperialism and democracy to form secular states that assert national independence and aspire for socialism. There may also be viable Left-wing alternatives arising from the petty bourgeoisie or from a mix of workers and petty bourgeoisie. At the moment, they may be grappling with the petty bourgeois modes of thinking as well as with the implications of the defeats of the socialist cause. But we can be confident that in the long run communist and workers' parties will reemerge and resurge and will come to united front and united actions with other anti-imperialist and progressive forces.

Do the experiences of the 20th century with attempts at socialism, particularly socialism as articulated by Stalin, still hang over the heads of the revolutionary Left? Do you think that the crisis of socialism tells the radical Left something about a different vision that it needs for the 21st century?

JMS: We should recognize the great victories won by the proletariat and the rest of the people in building socialism in the 20th century. In the countries where socialism was built, especially in the Soviet Union and China, imperialist domination was ended and the exploiting classes were overthrown. The workers' socialist state was established. Socialist revolution and socialist construction were carried forward. Science and technology and proletarian culture flourished. Fascism was defeated. A powerful system of defense was established and the US and its imperialist allies were deterred from launching aggression against the socialist countries during the Cold War. It was modern revisionism (bourgeois degeneration of the party and state bureaucracy), not the US or Stalin, that corroded and ultimately brought down socialism in both the Soviet Union and China. The imperialists and petty bourgeois anti-communists of various types have been demonizing Stalin and Mao as responsible for the defeat of socialism in the Soviet Union and China, respectively. The cause of socialism cannot be carried forward by those who simplistically scapegoat the longest-time builders of socialism Stalin and Mao for the defeat of socialism and restoration of capitalism. These two great leaders had their share of achievements and shortcomings, with Mao correcting and improving on Stalin in certain important respects. We should be able to learn a lot of positive and negative lessons from the class struggles in the socialist countries and the comprehensive experiences of building socialism in the 20th century. By learning such lessons, we have the advantage of knowing what principles, policies and methods we can carry over into the 21st century and what major errors we should avoid. In 1992 the CPP issued a long document, Stand for Socialism Against Modern Revisionism, as a major document of the rectification movement and as a counter to all the attacks on the socialist cause churned out by the imperialists and the petty bourgeois anti-communists in the aftermath of the rapid full restoration of capitalism in the revisionist-ruled countries. For the purpose of building socialism in the 21st century, the CPP restated the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism, pointed to the positive and negative lessons from the socialist past, made proposals among others for the development of democracy, legality and restrictions on leading organs within the socialist framework, the mass line in every type of social activity, the well-balanced economy in the service of the people, the various aspects of cultural revolution and the use of science and higher technology for material and cultural progress and for promoting democracy.

You are generally identified as a Maoist. First, in light of various analyses of China during the time of Mao's rule, do

you see any limitations or weaknesses in Maoism? What is your sense of other left-wing tendencies (globally)? Do you see the chances for global and local strategic collaboration between differing left-wing tendencies? If so, do you have any examples from the Philippines or elsewhere? What role does Maoism have to play in the renewal of the Left?

JMS: I am aware of various analyses of China during the time of Mao's leadership in China. But despite my overall favorable view of Mao in philosophy, political economy, social science, strategy and tactics and so on, I do not think that Maoism is some kind of final perfection in theory and practice. It is a further development of Marxism-Leninism and goes as far as theory and practice of cultural revolution under proletarian dictatorship in order to combat revisionism, prevent the restoration of capitalism and consolidation of socialism. But soon after Mao died, the Dengist capitalist counterrevolution prevailed in China. It means to say that even as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution prevailed for ten years there must be reasons for its defeat. The lessons can be learned as in the earlier case of the defeat of the Paris Commune of 1871 which held power for some two months. The Paris Commune would serve as the prototype of the Great October Socialist Revolution in 1917. I have my grounding in Maoism. It is my guide to action. But I am open to all Left tendencies on the ground of anti-imperialism and common struggle for national liberation, democracy and socialism. The CPP is not confined in any exclusive club of Maoist parties. It has publicly declared that it avails of bilateral and multilateral ways to exchange ideas and information, debate ideological and political issues, raise the level of common understanding through resolutions and arrive at various forms of practical cooperation. The protraction, worsening and deepening of the crisis of the world capitalist system inflicts intolerable suffering on the people but it also generates favorable conditions for the resurgence of the revolutionary mass movement and for the strategic collaboration and united front of various Left-wing tendencies. There are various multisectoral, sectoral and issue-based alliances of anti-imperialist and democratic forces in Philippines. Maoism can play a major role in the renewal of the Left because it is concerned not only with the ideological building of the Maoist party but it is also concerned with political work, such as arousing, organizing and mobilizing the masses for the revolution and availing of the united front and united actions of various parties and groups in order to reach and militate the masses in their millions in the quickest possible manner. Maoist parties are waging people's war in a number of countries and have gained the respect of many people in the world for daring to answer the central question of revolution in the appropriate conditions. They are expected to increase in number as the crisis of the global capitalism protracts and worsens. Thus, they will be more inspiring to all Left forces and the people on a global scale. They will also need broad international support.

Let's focus, for a minute, on this matter of Stalin. Nationalities were expelled from their homelands; the leadership of the CPSU was largely annihilated; anti-Semitism was promoted after World War II; and it is difficult to identify any real mechanisms of worker control that were built during the Stalin period. What does the experience of the USSR and, in a different way, the PR of China, say about a vision for socialism for the 21st century? You speak about modern revisionism bringing down these various systems, but for our readers who have observed undemocratic systems that have called themselves "socialist", what would you say? What lessons have been taken from these experiences?

JMS: To say the least, despite all the allegations against him, Stalin must have made significant achievements with regard to keeping the Soviet Union as a state of various nationalities, with regard to maintaining the CPSU as the lead force in socialist revolution and socialist construction, with regard to letting Jews excel in Soviet society and defending them and the rest of the people against the racism of Nazi Germany and with regard to workers' control in factories and collective farms through the party and the workers' courts. I think that is inaccurate and unfair to make a complete negation of Stalin and/or Mao or to simply dismiss them as anti-socialist and anti-democratic. It is even more unfair and unjust to use allegations against them as a way of burdening or denigrating non-Soviet and non-Chinese communist parties and leaders or later generations of fighters for socialism, who must be assessed and evaluated according to their own history and circumstances in the light of Marxist-Leninist theory and related experiences.

I need not clutter my answer with trying to cover what you sweep as undemocratic systems that have called themselves as "socialist". Let me underscore that Stalin and Mao and their respective parties had remarkable merits and demerits. In studying their theory and practice, we must be as sober and fair as when we do not condemn and totally negate the French Revolution, the Jacobins and the liberal democratic revolution just because the French Revolution was followed by the Reign of Terror, Thermidorean reaction and the monarchical restorations in France. We can learn valuable lessons, positive and negative, from the experiences of socialist revolution and

socialist construction in the 20th century, for the purpose of fighting for and building socialism in the 21st century.

I have earlier referred to some lessons and proposals in this regard. Let me stress one of them: In the course of uniting the people for fighting imperialism and the persistent reaction and building socialism, let us ensure that democratic rights are respected and the state, the leading organs and leaders are prevented from abusing their power. We do so as a matter of principle as well as a matter of practical wisdom in view of the new means of communications which allow people to speak out to the whole world.

Did you ever think that the struggle would be this long? This is a question i have wondered for a while. When you and others formed the CPP and when the struggle started, did you ever conceive that it would be going on for this long?

JMS: At the founding of the CPP, I thought that the armed struggle to seize power would be protracted, perhaps ten to 20 years. I did not think that it would this long, more than 42 years already. It is even longer if you start counting from 1942 when the People's Army Against Japan (Hukbalahap) was formed or from the three centuries of Spanish colonial rule when more than 200 armed uprisings occurred before the Philippine Revolution could come into force in 1896. The people's struggle for national liberation and democracy will go on for as long as imperialism and the local exploiting classes of big compradors and landlords continue to oppress and exploit the people.

When the People Power uprising took place against Marcos, it appeared that the CPP and much of the Left was taken by surprise. What are your reflections on that period and lessons learned? I thought about this in light of the Occupy movement that we are seeing taking place in the USA and elsewhere and the role/place of the Left in it.

JMS: The CPP was not taken by surprise. The course of events was too clear. In fact, soon after the Marcos dictatorship cheated in the February 1986 presidential snap election, the CPP leadership issued a call for all-out people's resistance to overthrow the regime in concert with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines which condemned the illegitimate and immoral foundation of the Marcos regime and Cory Aquino who called for civil disobedience. The legal organizations of the national democratic movement were at the forefront of the open mass struggles to overthrow the fascist regime along EDSA highway and in front of the presidential palace and in the provinces in all the days before Marcos was flown out of the Philippines by the US.

The biographical books, *The Philippine Revolution: The Leader's View* which I co-wrote with the German social scientist Dr. Rainer Werning in 1988, and *At Home in the World: Portrait of a Filipino Revolutionary* which I co-wrote with the Filipino novelist Ninotchka Rosca in 2004, describe the significant participation of the CPP and the patriotic and progressive forces, which are often Red-baited as organizations of the CPP. Their participation in large numbers was not only in Metro Manila but also in major provincial cities and towns. These organizations played a key role in starting the mass uprising and in providing a conscious and disciplined force, a hard core, for the mass uprising at EDSA and elsewhere. What detractors of the CPP misrepresent as failure of the CPP to join the so-called EDSA revolution is actually the boycott policy adopted by the CPP leadership, in particular Chairman Rodolfo Salas and the Executive Committee, against the presidential snap election. The CPP leadership correctly stated that Marcos would use the election to keep himself in power but failed to see that, as in what was then a recent example in the Haiti of Duvalier, the US and the anti-Marcos forces would discredit and seek to oust Marcos on the charge of electoral cheating. Afflicted by sectarianism, the CPP leadership went to great lengths in disciplining CPP cadres in Metro Manila who opted for participation in the election and it failed to complement its boycott policy with a deployment of secret Party cadres and alternative legal formations to join the pro-Aquino electoral alliance. For sectarianism and inflexibility in the boycott policy, Salas himself would be removed from his position in May 1986.

I think that unarmed mass uprisings to confront those in power and seek their ouster are an important part of the revolutionary process. At a given time, such unarmed uprisings may not result in the overthrow of the entire ruling system but only the ouster of a corrupt and despotic regime and the adoption of some significant reforms. At any rate, they are part of a chain of events that can lead to the overhaul or overthrow of the ruling system. In this connection, I take a positive view of the Occupy movement in the US and elsewhere. whoever are the initiators at Wall Street. I appreciate the role that Left forces are taking in this movement. As chairperson of the International League of Peoples' Struggle, I have expressed solidarity with and support for the movement and have called on the more than 300 member-organization of the ILPS and their allies in more than 40 countries to expand and intensify the Occupy movement.

On Current Issues in the Philippines

Interview by Rio Mondelo, *Bulatlat* Correspondent

February 3, 2012

1. Is the report true that you are returning to the Philippines soon to take a cabinet position in the Aquino government and that the New People's Army is going to be integrated with the Armed Forces of the Philippines? Do you know the source of the report?

JMS: The report is false. It comes from the direction of a group of military officers and politicians loyal to the past Arroyo regime and coordinated by former defense secretary Norberto Gonzales, the butcher general Palparan and Alcover of ANAD. They are engaged in a psywar intrigue related to the sharpening contradictions between the pro-Aquino and pro-Arroyo reactionaries within the military and entire ruling system.

They think Aquino would be discredited among the reactionary military officers by being reported as giving to me a cabinet position. Even if the presidency of the puppet republic were offered to me, I would not accept it because I do not wish to become the chief puppet of the US and chief representative of the exploiting classes of big compradors and landlords, like Aquino.

2. At any rate, what is the status of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations? Will the negotiating panels of the two sides resume their formal talks soon?

JMS: In principle, the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations are still on because no side has yet terminated the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), despite the blatant attempts of the GRP side to undermine and render it useless. It is still unclear whether the GRP will comply with the JASIG and release the JASIG-protected consultants of the NDFP. Thus, it is still unclear when the formal talks of the negotiating panels shall be held.

3. The armed conflict between the GRP and NDFP is intensifying, with the armed forces of the GRP carrying out Oplan Bayanihan and the armed forces of the NDFP striving to advance the people's war from strategic defensive to strategic stalemate? How does the armed conflict affect the peace negotiations?

JMS: Because of the armed conflict, there are peace negotiations. The GRP finds the need for peace negotiations so long as it is failing to suppress the people and the revolutionaries with the current Oplan Bayanihan and so long as the New People's Army is successful in carrying out an extensive and intensive guerrilla warfare and creating an ever widening and deepening mass base.

4. Is the Aquino regime serious about running after Arroyo and her top colleagues for plunder? Are you satisfied with the pace at which Aquino has been running after them?

JMS: Compared with the speed of Arroyo in jailing Estrada for plunder, Aquino is a sluggard in making Arroyo accountable for plunder. He has jailed her on the charge of electoral sabotage and has reduced the plunder charges to graft charges after gaining control over the office of the Ombudsman. It remains to be seen whether he will push a plunder charge as a result of Senate findings.

5. So far the Aquino regime has not run after Arroyo and her military cohorts for the gross and systematic violations of human rights under the Arroyo regime, except for the dramatic although belated and token action against Palparan. Why the big delay or inaction of Aquino against Arroyo on human rights violations?

JMS: Indeed, Aquino has been too slow or even comatose about Arroyo's huge responsibility for gross and systematic violations of human rights. Many people think that he is afraid of the military or he himself wants to use the military for human rights violations under Oplan Bayanihan the same way that Arroyo used the military under Oplan Bantay Laya. The action so far taken against Palparan is quite belated and tokenistic in view of the so many human rights violations committed under the Arroyo regime and the growing violations under the current regime.

6. The Aquino regime continues to keep the more than 350 political prisoners. Does it mean that Aquino agrees with Arroyo in detaining them on charges of common crimes? Is he not condoning Arroyo's crimes and he himself is now doing what Arroyo has done?

JMS: So far Aquino has not proven himself any different from Arroyo when it comes to human rights violations. Even the Human Rights Watch has pointed to this glaring fact. Like Arroyo, Aquino is culpable for the gross

and systematic violation of human rights by continuing to detain the hundreds of political prisoners and by allowing the military to violate human rights, including abductions, torture, extrajudicial killings and the detention of people on trumped-up charges of common crimes.

7. So far, the NDFP negotiating panel has been known more to demand the release of a few individuals protected by the JASIG. But should not the panel demand the release of all political prisoners in accordance with CARHRIHL?

JMS: The NDFP Negotiating Panel has demanded the release of the imprisoned consultants by invoking the JASIG because this is the bilateral agreement that is most pertinent to them and that should expedite their release. At the same time, the NDFP panel is demanding the release of the more than 350 political prisoners in accordance with CARHRIHL. This also covers the JASIG-protected consultants.

8. Aquino and his followers claim that they must do everything to remove Corona from the Supreme Court because he is blocking the way to the punishment of Gloria M. Arroyo and others. Is this the only purpose of Aquino in causing the impeachment of Corona and pushing his possible conviction by the Senate?

JMS: Indeed, there are purposes other than the very popular one of clearing the way for the eventual punishment of Arroyo and her accomplices. But I think that the most urgent purpose of Aquino is to shake down the Supreme Court and make sure that the Aquino-Cojuangco clan get a huge amount of unjust compensation for giving up Hacienda Luisita, at least 5 billion pesos. The question of compensation is still a subject of contention before the Supreme Court.

One more important purpose of Aquino is to seek control over the Supreme Court and increase his power over the entire reactionary government. The anti-Arroyo purpose is not the most compelling purpose for Aquino because until now he has not pushed the cases of plunder and human rights violations against Arroyo. Two cases of plunder have been reduced to plain cases of graft and corruption. We still have to see what is done with the plunder case recommended by the Senate.

9. Aquino seems to enjoy the support of the mass media and gain more popularity as he attacks Corona. Is this some kind of a show to distract attention from the growing economic and social problems?

JMS: Yes, the Corona trial in the Senate is a big propaganda show that has the effect of boosting Aquino's so-called popularity. The show is indeed to draw attention away from the big economic and social problems and to obscure Aquino's failure to adopt policies for solving these problems. But the broad masses of the people have already begun to complain strongly against the ever-rising prices of fuel and basic goods and services. It is still possible for the protest mass actions to grow until these can totally discredit the current incompetent and corrupt puppet regime.

It is also possible for the prosecutors to fail in getting the conviction of Corona because the articles of impeachment were haphazardly prepared under the orders of a president enraged by the Supreme Court decision on Hacienda Luisita and because the prosecutors are already being widely criticized for engaging in fishing expedition and in excelling at trial by publicity.

10. With the progressive Makabayan congressmen going along with the Aquino coalition against Arroyo and against Corona, are they not concerned that Aquino is further boosting his popularity and eventually turn this against the revolutionary movement. But of course, the other possibility is that Aquino cannot become any more popular because incompetence and corruption will soon discredit his rule?

JMS: It is easy to understand that Makabayan congressmen and people are very willing to initiate as well as join any action to run after Arroyo and her mates for their crimes. Aquino cannot be allowed to monopolize the credit for running after them and yet fall short of the just expectations of the people. But I think that the progressive congressmen are careful to distinguish themselves from Aquino and remain vigilant and are critical of Aquino's pro-imperialist and big comprador-landlord agenda.

11. What are the forces of the Left doing to prevent Aquino from using the anti-Arroyo and anti-Corona theatrics to consolidate his power and then push even harder his anti-national and antidemocratic policies against the people?

JMS: The patriotic and progressive forces and people continue to demand that Arroyo and her accomplices be punished for plunder and human rights violations and criticize Aquino for having failed to fulfil his election promise of punishing the plunderers and human rights violators.

At the same time, they are intensifying their efforts to arouse, organize and mobilize the people against the pro-imperialist and reactionary policies and acts of the Aquino regime, including the continuance of the neoliberal economic policy, aggravation of underdevelopment, exploitation and poverty, rampant corruption, Oplan Bantay

Laya and escalating US military intervention.

12. How much attention should be given to the economic and social problems which are expected to hit the Philippines hard this year?

JMS: We should pay close to the economic and social problems. Even the World Bank has stated in a recent report that the economic and financial crisis will hit the Philippines hard this year. We should encourage and join the masses of working people in rising up against the rotten ruling system and fighting for national and social liberation against the imperialists and the local exploiting classes of big compradors and landlords like Aquino.

Updates on Peace Negotiations

and Related Issues

Interview by Imelda Abano, *Business Mirror* Senior Correspondent

March 5, 2012

1. Are you going back to the Philippines? When and what will make you decide to come home? You told me before that you are indeed going back because you wanted to retire in your home country.

JMS: I have no immediate plans of returning to the Philippines. I must stay abroad because of my role as chief political consultant of the NDFP in peace negotiations with the Manila government. I will certainly go home if and when the peace negotiations are successful or the revolutionary forces shall have won victory by overthrowing the ruling system.

2. Are you indeed running for an elective position in 2013? What position?

JMS: No, I am not running for any position in the reactionary elections of 2013. It was only Noynoy who floated that recently in an interview in Calapan.

3. What is your assessment for now of the Aquino administration regarding how he runs the government? And how peace negotiations are progressing now?

JMS: The policies and ruling style of the Aquino regime are fundamentally similar to those of the Arroyo regime. The Philippine Development Plan of Aquino is actually aimed at perpetuating underdevelopment and poverty. It allows the US and other multinational banks and firms and the local exploiting classes of big compradors and landlords to exploit the people and plunder the natural resources of the country.

Like the Arroyo regime, the Aquino regime is corrupt. The infrastructure projects and all kinds of business privileges, including jueteng, are being cornered by Aquino, his relatives and friends. Aquino has failed to run after Arroyo for plunder and human rights violations. Instead, the Aquino regime is now reeking with its own corruption and human rights violations.

The Aquino regime is still blocking the resumption of formal peace talks because it continues to imprison more than 350 political prisoners in violation of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) and the Hernandez political offense doctrine. In contrast, he released more than 400 military prisoners soon after he came to power.

In violation of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), the Aquino regime has failed to investigate and prosecute those responsible for the murder, torture and illegal detention of NDFP consultants and staffers who are entitled to JASIG protection. I refer to the cases of Sotero Llamas, Leo Velasco, Prudencio Calubid and others. Until now, the Aquino regime also refuses to release all the JASIG-protected prisoners.

The Norwegian government and the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP) are working hard to help pave the way for the resumption of formal talks. But OPAPP secretary Ging Deles and GRP negotiating panel chairman Alex Padilla are stubborn and unreasonable. Their main thrust is to nullify The Hague Joint Declaration, which they call a document of perpetual division, instead of being the document that opened the way to peace negotiations.

They also want to nullify the JASIG and terminate the peace negotiations by refusing to release even the publicly known JASIG-protected prisoners and by taking advantage of the fact that the Arroyo regime connived with the Dutch government in seizing and destroying the keys to the computer discs bearing the information regarding the JASIG-protected consultants, security officers and staffers.

At any rate, I still hope that the Aquino regime or the next regime will engage in serious peace negotiations with the NDFP. I have gotten used to waiting for the next regime when a current reactionary regime proves to be against serious peace negotiations. I am also used to waiting for further advances in the armed revolution of the Filipino people.

***On China's Claims and Intrusions
and the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations***

April 30, 2012

I am thankful to my dear friend, General Joone de Leon, for giving a lecture on my sociopolitical philosophy and to him and to all of you in the Regular Class 47 of the Master's program in National Security Administration for allowing me the privilege and honor of expressing my position and recommendations on certain current issues of great importance to our nation and people.

Regarding the claims and intrusions of China involving the Kalayaan group of islands and the Panatag shoal, I consider it a matter of principle and patriotic duty to uphold the national sovereignty of the Filipino people and the territorial integrity of the Philippines. The aforesaid pieces of territory are well within the 200-nautical miles of exclusive economic zone of the Philippines under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) which the Philippines and China have signed and which bind the two countries.

The UNCLOS provides us the strongest basis for the assertion of our sovereign right over the islands, shoals and reefs at issue under international law. Archaeological evidence shows that inhabitants of the Philippines have used these since prehistoric times in their fishing, coral harvesting and sailing activities. Spanish colonial mapping and other historical records show that these pieces of territory belong to the Philippine archipelago. The Morillo Map used by the US and Spain in forging the 1898 Treaty of Paris includes Bajo de Masinloc, Scarborough Shoal or Panatag Shoal.

Despite its assertiveness, China has so far avoided any outright military act of aggression. It is probably mindful of its claims to a peaceful rise and its binding commitments to the UNCLOS and the Declaration on Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. In my debates with foreign revolutionaries who claim that China is already an imperialist power, I have maintained that indeed China has become capitalist and does export a significant amount of surplus capital but it has not yet deployed combat troops to promote and protect its foreign investments. Even in the UN peacekeeping operations which it has joined, it has avoided committing Chinese combat troops.

We should also consider it a matter of principle and duty to seek a peaceful resolution of the territorial issues with China under the terms of the UNCLOS and the Declaration of Conduct of Parties in the South China sea. As much as possible, we may negotiate with China bilaterally as well as through the ASEAN. We are aware of the limits of these approaches and how the issue can protract without end. Thus, we must at all times demand that the issue be decided conclusively as soon as possible by presenting a case under the UNCLOS to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in Hamburg.

It is in our sovereign interest not to involve the country and people in any self-damaging act, like an unnecessary war or even unnecessary shows of military force or provocations. China has shown a preference for economic and diplomatic action rather than military action in international affairs. We should not be carried away by the illusion that the US is out to protect us. We must keep in mind that the US has far larger interests in China than in the Philippines and that the US-RP Mutual Defense Treaty, which carries no automatic retaliation clause, allows the US to avoid siding with the Philippines against China. What the US is bent on doing is to manage and manipulate the Philippine-China contradictions in order to further entrench itself militarily in the Philippines, continue to violate our national sovereignty and territorial integrity, serve as the *bantay salakay*, and intensify its efforts to strengthen US hegemony over the Asia-Pacific region.

Regarding the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations, these are now paralyzed by the stubborn position of the Aquino government or in particular its Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (PAPP) to get the immediate capitulation and pacification of the revolutionary forces represented by the NDFP; to undermine The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992 by labeling it as a document of so-called perpetual division rather than as a viable framework of peace negotiations; to cover up, condone and perpetuate the extrajudicial killings, torture and detention of NDFP consultants and staffers in violation of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity and Guarantees (JASIG) and to continue the detention of more than 350 political prisoners detained on trumped-up charges of common crimes in

violation of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) and the Hernandez political offense doctrine in particular.

Notwithstanding all the aforementioned issues, the NDFP holds the position that the peace negotiations are still going on in principle because no side has terminated JASIG and that in fact twelve formal agreements between the two sides remain valid and binding, the Joint Secretariat of the Joint Monitoring Committee under the CARHRIHL continues to operate in Quezon City, the panelists of both sides are allowed by the Ground Rules to meet at any time for consultations and the Norwegian third party facilitator shuttles back and forth between the two panels. Formal peace talks between the two negotiating panels have not been held since February 2011. The NDFP is very desirous of resuming such formal talks and is willing to have teams of the negotiating panels meet and engage in consultations in order to pave the way for the formal talks.

The NDFP continues to hope that the GRP comply with the JASIG and CARHRIHL as a matter of obligation and that the formal peace talks between the two panels are resumed so that the three remaining items in the substantive agenda can be negotiated and agreed upon one after the other. These are the a) social and economic reforms, b) political and constitutional reforms and c) the end of hostilities and disposition of forces. The NDFP continues to offer the special track of immediate truce and alliance between the GRP and NDFP as soon as they sign a general declaration of common intent even as the regular track of peace negotiations continues to deal with the three remaining subjects.

The general declaration of common intent proposed by the NDFP is something that cannot be opposed by any Filipino who is patriotic and desirous of democracy. It encompasses such objectives as upholding national sovereignty and independence and doing away with unequal treaties, agreements and arrangements; expanding democracy through certain mechanisms to empower the toiling masses and the middle class; carrying out a program of national industrialization and land reform; promoting a patriotic, scientific and pro-people education and culture; and pursuing an independent and active foreign policy for development and world peace.

If the Aquino administration were really interested in accelerating the regular track of peace negotiations under conditions of truce, there should be no reason for delaying the realization of the NDFP proposal on the special track for alliance and truce on the basis of a general declaration of common intent, all for the benefit of the Filipino people. I urge no less than the president of the GRP to muster the political will to do his crucial part in making the regular and special tracks succeed. The NDFP is always willing to meet his special representatives on the special track so that the conditions for peace negotiations are greatly improved and efforts are accelerated to address the roots of the armed conflict and lay the ground for a just and lasting peace. Let us define the common political ground and work together immediately for the benefit of the people.

Condemnation of Misrepresentation by Officials and Paid Hacks of Aquino Regime

May 5, 2013

Officials and paid hacks of the Aquino regime are misrepresenting me as having made threats of NPA tactical offensives. I did not make such threats. I condemn the misrepresentation of my analysis. I described and analyzed the situation and consequences of the termination of the peace negotiations by the Aquino regime.

My exact words in the interview by Sonny Mallari of the Philippine Daily Inquirer are as follows: “Because of the worsening economic and social crisis and the lack of real peace negotiations, the people’s revolutionary armed struggle will intensify for sure. The Aquino regime is asking for intensified tactical offensives by the NPA.”

“If the GPH does the termination, the NDFP looks after the safety and immunity of its panelists, consultants and other related persons and anticipates that GRP is going to escalate its campaigns of military suppression and deception.

“The CPP, NPA and other revolutionary forces and people represented by the NDFP strengthen their strategic defensive posture. At the same time, the tactical offensives of the NPA fulltime fighters, people’s militia, armed city partisans and its newly-announced commando units are intensified.

“The US-Aquino regime uses Oplan Bayanihan to seek the defeat of the revolutionary movement. The revolutionary forces fight back and strive to realize the advance from the strategic defensive to the strategic stalemate through the intensification of tactical offensives.

“By its termination of peace negotiations, the GPH inflames the armed conflict in the entire country. The US-Aquino regime will certainly go down in history as a puppet, corrupt, brutal and mendacious regime like the Marcos and Arroyo regimes. Human rights violations by the AFP, PNP and paramilitary forces of the GPH will increase rapidly.” Below is the full transcript of my interview with Sonny Mallari of the Philippine Daily Inquirer.

Mallari: Should the government have observed the process of terminating the peace talks – notice of termination, 30 days – what would be the position of the NDFP? JMS: Yes, the JASIG provides the way for either side to terminate the peace negotiations by giving written notice of termination to the other side and the termination takes effect after 30 days. Estrada regime gave a written notice of termination to the NDFP in May 1989. But the Aquino regime has no respect for solemn agreements.

Mallari: How would you view the prospect that the government would again aggressively pursue the localized peace talks?

JMS: There is no such thing as localized peace talks because the NDFP Negotiating Panel is the body authorized by the CPP and NPA for peace negotiations. You can have fake negotiations and fake mass surrenders done by the military for psywar and corrupt purposes (a way for officials to pocket money in the name of fake surrenderers).

Mallari: I was talking to the Solcom spokesperson a while ago and he said that they have long been undertaking localized peace talks, that is why many NPA fighters are surrendering.

JMS: Localized peace talks has been an old time since the time of Marcos. No genuine revolutionaries have surrendered.

Mallari: With this fresh local peace talks drive, they say that the communist insurgency would fall.

JMS: Because of the worsening economic and social crisis and the lack of real peace negotiations, the people’s revolutionary armed struggle will certainly intensify. The Aquino regime is asking for NPA intensified tactical offensives.

Sonny Mallari: If after the termination of peace talks the government ang follows up with a formal notification to the third party and the NDFP after the 30-day period, will you accept the end of peace talks? In this scenario what would be the next step of the revolutionary movement?

JMS: According to the JASIG, either one of the two negotiating parties can at any time decide for its own reasons to give the other party the written notice of termination of the peace negotiations and the termination takes effect after 30 days. It is at least a matter of courtesy but not a requirement stipulated in JASIG that the third-party

facilitator is informed by the party terminating the peace negotiations.

If the GRP were to proceed with the termination, the NDFP would look after the safety and immunity of its panelists, consultants and other related persons and anticipate that GRP would escalate its campaigns of military suppression and deception.

The CPP, NPA and other revolutionary forces and people represented by the NDFP would strengthen their strategic defensive posture. At the same time, the tactical offensives of the NPA fulltime fighters, people's militia, armed city partisans and its newly-announced commando units would be intensified.

The US-Aquino regime uses Oplan Bayanihan to seek the defeat of the revolutionary movement. The revolutionary forces fight back and strive to realize the advance from the strategic defensive to the strategic stalemate through the intensification of tactical offensives. By its termination of peace negotiations, the GRP further inflames the armed conflict in the entire country.

The US-Aquino regime will certainly go down in history as a puppet, corrupt, brutal and mendacious like the Marcos and Arroyo regimes. Human rights violations by the AFP, PNP and paramilitary forces of the GPH will increase rapidly.

Real Reasons Why Aquino Regime Has Ended Peace Negotiations with NDFP

May 7, 2013

By their pronouncements and actions, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) are highly desirous of continuing the peace negotiations between the Philippine reactionary government (GPH) and the NDFP in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration and subsequent agreements.

As Luis Jalandoni, chairperson of the NDFP Negotiating Panel, has repeatedly confirmed, the members and consultants of his panel enjoy the full confidence of all members of the CPP Central Committee and the NDFP National Council. His panel continues to carry the authorization of the CPP and NDFP and is ever ready to resume the formal talks in the peace negotiations.

I am only the Chief Political Consultant of the panel. Since my arrest by the Marcos dictatorship in 1977, I have never claimed to be an official of the CPP Central Committee and the NDFP National Council. It is the journalists and my academic colleagues who accurately refer to me as the CPP Founding Chairman. This is a historic fact which I am always proud to acknowledge and include in my resume.

OPAPP secretary and GPH panel chairman Alex Padilla are presumptuous and ridiculous when they talk as if they had the power and right to choose the negotiators and consultants of the NDFP. They sink to the bottom of the garbage dump of intrigues when they make false claims about my relations with the Tiamzons, whom I know to be excellent and sincere revolutionaries worthy of the highest respect.

The intrigues that Deles, Padilla and Lacierda are spewing out in the mass media are a desperate and futile attempt to obscure the real reasons why the regime is ending the peace negotiations, without giving the formal notice of termination to the NDFP. The real reasons are as follows:

First, the Aquino regime wants to scrap The Hague Joint Declaration and all subsequent agreements and to demonstrate that it does not have to negotiate with the NDFP because it depends totally on the violent and deceptive means under the US-designed Oplan Bayanihan.

Second, the Aquino regime is willing to talk to the NDFP only for the purpose of seeking the surrender and pacification of the revolutionary forces and people on the precondition of indefinite ceasefire that permanently evades the necessity of addressing the roots of the civil war through comprehensive agreements on basic social, economic and political reforms. The NDFP has already tested and proven on the “special track” that the Aquino regime is not willing to have a truce and cooperation with NDFP, even if such were based on a general declaration of common intent for the benefit of the people.

Third, the Aquino regime is allowing its corrupt bureaucrats and military officers to carry out fake localized talks and fake surrenders and to pocket privately lots of money from the Conditional Cash Transfer and PAMANA funds, which amount to more than Php 45 billion. The Commission on Audit has already exposed the misappropriation of such funds.

The much ballyhooed “new approach” of the Aquino regime involves the escalation of military campaigns of suppression and psychological warfare, the ending of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations, replacing these with fake localized talks and fake surrenders and pocketing of CCT and PAMANA funds by corrupt bureaucrats and military officers.

The advice that I have given to the NDFP Negotiating Panel is to be always ready for peace negotiations on the basis of The Hague Joint Declaration and subsequent agreements. If the Aquino regime continues to be intransigent, its three remaining years is not too long to let pass. The puppet, exploitative, corrupt, brutal and mendacious character of the regime will further weaken the ruling system of big compradors and landlords.

The Aquino regime is a rabid follower of the bankrupt neoliberal economic policy and aggressive expansionism of the US. It pays no serious attention to the basic problems of the Filipino people but is overdependent on mere publicity stunts, rigged poll surveys and preprogrammed elections by Smartmatic. The ultra-reactionary character of the Aquino regime and the worsening economic and social crisis are favoring the growth of the

people's democratic government and the revolutionary forces and people supporting it.

People's War in the Philippines and Terrorist Listing

Lecture at the University of Groningen,
May 16, 2013

First of all, I wish to thank the Studentenvereniging voor Internationale Betrekkingen (SIB), or the Dutch United Nations Student Association (DUNSA), for inviting me to lecture on the revolutionary armed struggle being carried out by the New People's Army (NPA) under the leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

I am honored and privileged to be invited because your association has high prestige and is well known to feature as guest lecturers, high officials of the United Nations, the European Union and the Netherlands, including prime ministers, cabinet officials, members of parliaments, senior administrators, high military commanders, outstanding professors and journalists.

I propose to discuss tonight the character and status of the people's war in the Philippines, in relation to the social crisis and the policies of the Manila government, also in relation to the long running peace negotiations between the Manila government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and further in relation to the issue of including the CPP, NPA and the chief political consultant of the NDFP (myself) in the so-called terrorist list of the EU.

Character of the people's war

Since its founding on 26 December 1968, the Communist Party of the Philippines has analyzed Philippine society and described it as semicolonial and semifeudal. The US formally ended its colonial rule over the Philippines and granted it nominal independence in 1946. However, it has retained indirect rule through the subservient local ruling classes of big compradors and landlords. These two classes have maintained the semifeudal, agrarian and underdeveloped character of the Philippine social economy.

In confronting the ruling system of big compradors and landlords under US monopoly capitalism, the CPP has put forward a Program of People's Democratic Revolution. The principal aims of this program are the following: to struggle for full national independence, to empower the working people, to realize democracy both in the sense of upholding civil and political rights and liberating the peasantry from feudal and semi-feudal captivity, to promote a national, scientific and mass culture and to foster international solidarity and world peace against imperialism.

The motive forces of the revolution are the working class, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie and the middle bourgeoisie. The leading class is the working class through the CPP as its advanced detachment. The main force is the peasantry which is the majority class. The urban petty bourgeoisie is still a revolutionary class but no longer the leading class, in the shift from the global era of bourgeois-democratic revolution to that of modern imperialism and proletarian revolution. Even as it has a reactionary fear of the masses, the middle bourgeoisie is a positive patriotic force at best interested in national independence and economic development.

It is the position of the CPP that the exploiting classes of big compradors and landlords, as already proven in Philippine history, will never give up their power and wealth voluntarily. With US military support, they use their state power (army, police, prisons, courts, legislature and bureaucracy) to suppress the people's national and democratic demands.

Thus, the CPP has set the line of achieving the people's democratic revolution through the politico-military strategic line of protracted people's war. This line entails developing in stages the people's army and other revolutionary forces in the countryside over a long period of time in order to accumulate armed and political strength until they gain the capability to launch a nationwide general offensive and completely seize political power from the reactionary ruling classes.

For this purpose, the CPP has deployed its cadres in the countryside since early 1969 in order to build the New People's Army (NPA) and the peasant movement, to carry out the revolutionary armed struggle and genuine land reform; and develop the mass base by organizing all possible forms of voluntary people's association (for workers, peasants, women, youth, cultural activists, children, and so on), building the local CPP branches and

establishing organs of political power in order to replace the political instruments of the exploiting classes.

The countryside offers the wide ground and rough terrain for the NPA to maneuver against the superior armed strength of the enemy and grow in stages by adopting the policy of strategic defense while carrying out tactical offensives against the forces of the enemy that are on the strategic offensive. The enemy forces are strategically superior to the NPA, at the ratio of 10 to 1, but through tactical offensives the NPA can gain superiority over the enemy forces, at the ratio of 10 to 1. Concentrated units of the NPA can pick the specific time and place to wipe out by surprise a specific part of the enemy force.

At the present stage, the NPA is waging intensive and extensive guerrilla warfare on the basis of an ever widening and deepening mass base. It uses the strategy and tactics of concentration, dispersal and shifting, as the need arises for achieving certain objectives. It concentrates a superior amount of force to wipe out an enemy unit. It wages only the battles that it can win. It disperses its units to conduct mass work and create more fighting units. It shifts its forces whenever it needs to evade a superior enemy force and gain a more advantageous position. It trades space for time and avoids battles that it cannot win. Most important of all, it enjoys the inexhaustible support of the masses and thus succeeds in keeping the enemy blind and deaf.

The CPP and the NPA envision a probability course of developing the people's war in three strategic stages. At the first stage, the NPA is on the strategic defensive as the enemy is on the strategic offensive. At the second, the two warring armies are in a state of relative equilibrium and are in the strategic stalemate. At the third, the NPA is on the strategic offensive and the enemy is on the strategic defensive. The NPA accumulates strength as it wins battles and weakens the enemy forces and achieves the shift in the strategic balance of forces; and advance from one stage to another by launching the tactical offensives by guerrilla forces and eventually by regular mobile forces.

The people's democratic revolution is basically completed upon the nationwide seizure of political power. The socialist revolution immediately starts, with the working class through its advance detachment continuing to lead the Philippine revolution, with the people's army as the main component of state power and with the commanding heights of the economy nationalized, even as transitory bourgeois democratic reforms are carried out in harmony with the main process of socializing the ownership of the industrial means of production and realizing agricultural cooperation and mechanization.

Status of the people's war

On the basis of reports published by the CPP and NPA (which you may check from www.philippinerevolution.net), we can inform ourselves on the status of the people's war or strength of the NPA in terms of armed struggle, land reform and mass base building. We can also inform ourselves about the plan of the CPP and NPA to advance from the stage of strategic defensive to that of strategic stalemate by fulfilling both the political and military requirements.

The NPA is now operating in more than 110 guerrilla fronts, each with a total force ranging in size from an over-sized platoon to a company and with a territory roughly equivalent to a congressional district of at least five municipalities. The guerrilla fronts cover substantial parts of 70 provinces out of the total 81 Philippine provinces. The number of full-time Red fighters with high-powered rifles is moving towards the level of 10,000. They are also augmented by tens of thousands of volunteers in the people's militia and in the hundreds of thousands of self-defense units of the mass organizations in the countryside.

The psywar experts of the reactionary government and its military are engaged in deception when they claim that the NPA had 25,000 Red fighters in the mid-1980s but now has only 4000 to 5000. The 1985 Plenum of the CC of the CPP assessed the NPA strength at 5,600 Red fighters with high-powered rifles. This rose to 6100 Red fighters in 1986. The people's militia and self-defense units were not as well organized and well-trained as now. The NPA was undermined by grave Left opportunist errors, which would become the target of the Second Great Rectification Movement launched by the CPP in 1992.

The CPP, NPA and the peasant movement have carried out on a wide scale the minimum land reform program, involving the reduction of land rent, elimination of usury or excessive interest rates, raising the wages of farm workers, improving the prices of farm products and promoting agricultural production and sideline occupations through rudimentary cooperation. The maximum land reform program of confiscating and equitably distributing the land to the tillers for free is being carried out at an accelerated pace over more areas, depending on the strength and capability of the NPA and mass base.

To make more land available for land reform and to save the environment, the NPA is dismantling enterprises owned by foreign corporations and bureaucrat comprador-landlords, especially those that have grabbed the land from the peasants and indigenous peoples. These are export-oriented enterprises, including mining, logging and plantations. The NPA also takes action against biofuel production enterprises that take away land from food production; against expansive tourist facilities and against sheer real estate speculation.

The mass base of the CPP, NPA and other revolutionary forces runs into millions of people. It has been realized by building the mass organizations of workers, peasants, women, youth, cultural activists and children, the organs of political power from the village level to higher levels and the local Party branches. The organs of political power are led by the CPP and are assisted by working committees and by the mass organizations. Programs and mass campaigns are undertaken to promote mass organizing, mass education, land reform, production, disaster relief and rehabilitation, health care, local security and self-defense, settlement of disputes and cultural activities.

The revolutionary forces and people have attained such strength that they are aiming to advance from the strategic defensive to the strategic stalemate and are working hard to fulfil the political and military requirements. The CPP membership is now beyond 100,000 and is expanding towards the goal of 250,000 in both urban and rural areas. The CPP is developing more Party cadres in the course of mass work and expanding Party membership. The NPA seeks to increase its Red fighters to 25,000 and its guerrilla fronts to 180. The organs of political power and the mass organizations are strengthening themselves and seek to cover more people by the millions through direct organizing and by united front work.

The ruling system in the Philippines is extremely outdated and is in chronic crisis, despite the urban gloss effected by neoliberal economic policy through conspicuous consumption, luxury imports and high-rise buildings financed by foreign borrowing and remittances of overseas contract workers. The chronic crisis of the domestic ruling system is now exacerbated by the bankruptcy of the neoliberal policy regime and the ever-worsening crisis of global capitalism.

The ruling system has perpetuated feudal and semifeudal exploitation and prevented genuine land reform and national industrialization. It is tied to the production of raw materials and semi-manufactures. Thus, it suffers chronic trade and budgetary deficits. It is sinking in a morass of public debt due to excessive local and foreign borrowing. The remittances of overseas contract workers are used to fund consumption spending and luxury imports by the exploiting classes. They are bound to decrease as the export of cheap labor is being countered by political turmoil in the Middle East and deepening recession in the imperialist countries.

In the wake of the worsening economic and financial crisis, the Aquino regime is being assisted by US agencies and public relations firms in touting itself as the “new tiger” in East Asia. It misrepresents as healthy economic growth the inflow of “hot money” or portfolio investments in the stock market. Manufacturing and agriculture have declined. The reassembly and reexport of electronic goods have plummeted since 2008. Business call centers, private construction and mining are the favored enterprises. The regime shuns Filipino-owned industrial development.

The broad masses of the people are made to suffer an ever-rising rate of unemployment, reduced incomes, soaring prices of basic goods and services and deterioration of the social infrastructure. The so-called anti-poverty programs of dole outs like the Conditional Cash Transfer and PAMANA have become devices of bureaucratic and military corruption and vote-buying in elections. Social discontent is widespread and sharpening among the toiling masses of workers and peasants and even among the middle social strata.

The false statistics of economic progress and rigged poll survey results of mass satisfaction are the object of public derision and contempt for the current regime and the ruling system. The recently-held elections are a brazen process of excluding patriotic and progressive leaders of the toiling masses and favoring clans and dynasties of big compradors and landlords. The economic and social crisis is generating conditions favorable to the people's war.

The US-directed Aquino regime is aptly described by the CPP as a fanatic of neoliberalism. It has no social conscience and is anti-worker and anti-peasant. It does not offer any solution to the basic social and economic problems, now being rapidly aggravated by the crisis. It is obsessed with assuring the foreign banks and corporations and the local big compradors with the opportunities to make super profits.

It overestimates its ability to use the bureaucracy, the military, the reactionary mass media and the imperialist-funded NGOs to obfuscate the raging social issues. It is preoccupied with seeking political monopoly by mass

deception and electoral manipulation and using military force under the US-designed Oplan Bayanihan to suppress the revolutionary movement of the people. Of recent, it has announced in the mass media the end of the peace negotiations with the NDFP, without giving the latter any formal notice of termination.

GRP-NDFP peace negotiations

Despite the determination of the revolutionary forces and the people to carry out the people's democratic revolution through people's war, they are open to the possibility of resolving the armed conflict through peace negotiations. The Central Committee of the CPP and National Council of the NDFP have created and authorized the NDFP Negotiating Panel to negotiate with the panel representing Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) in the time of the Ramos regime and thereafter.

The NDFP carries forward the general line of struggle for national independence and democracy through the peace negotiations. It is the same line carried forward by the revolutionary forces and people in the course of armed revolution. It offers to the current enemy government the opportunity to change course and forge a truce and alliance with the NDFP for the purpose of confronting US imperialism and the worst of reactionaries and solving the basic problems of the people.

The GRP can only discredit itself by refusing to address the roots of the civil war and to enter into agreements on basic social, economic and political reforms. By persevering in the general line of people's democratic revolution through protracted people's war, the revolutionary forces and the people prevent the GRP from prettifying itself, from using the peace negotiations to confuse their ranks and from obtaining their capitulation and pacification.

In engaging in peace negotiations, the NDFP is guided by the fact that the revolutionary forces and people have a democratic government of their own in the form of the local organs of political power under the leadership of the CPP as the ruling party and such a government governs a population that runs into millions. It has a disciplined people's army under an effective national command and a territory of over 100,000 square kilometers or 30 per cent of total Philippine territory. In fact, the CPP cadres and NPA fighters can move freely in more than 90 per cent of this national territory.

Under international law, the people's democratic government of workers and peasants and the reactionary government of the big compradors and landlords are co-belligerents in a civil war, with US military and other forms of intervention on the side of the reactionary government. To assert the existence and integrity of the revolutionary government, the NDFP promulgated on July 5, 1996 its Unilateral Declaration of Undertaking to Apply the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Protocol I of 1977 and deposited this on July 6, 1996 with the Swiss Federal Council.

It has manifested its determination to wage people's war under international law and to negotiate peace under the same. In fact, the GRP and NDFP have succeeded in forging the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) of 1998 under the principles and standards of the International Bill of Rights (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights, and so on) and the International Humanitarian Law (the Geneva Conventions and related conventions).

In 1986, soon after the fall of the fascist dictator Marcos, the GRP and NDFP agreed to hold ceasefire talks in Manila and to forge a 60-day ceasefire agreement which would lead to a further agreement on the substantive agenda of peace negotiations. The ceasefire agreement, which was mutually signed in November 1986, was broken by the massacre of peasant demonstrators and their urban supporters by presidential guards in front of the presidential palace on January 22, 1987. GRP President Aquino protected the officers responsible for the massacre. On March 25, 1987, she formally "unsheathed the sword of war" against the revolutionary forces and people and ordered a vicious campaign of military suppression called Lambat Bitag.

But in 1989 she became worried about the consequences of natural disasters, the social disaster of her own making and continuing coup threats. She sent Rep. Jose V. Yap as her emissary to me as CPP founding chairman in Amsterdam in order to offer peace negotiations between the GRP and NDFP. I welcomed the offer despite the earlier cancellation of my Philippine passport on September 16, 1988.

The NDFP gave to Yap an aide memoire for GRP President Aquino stressing that peace negotiations should not be held in the Philippines because of serious dangers to the NDFP, as proven in the ceasefire talks and agreement in 1986-87. The NDFP agreed to engage in peace negotiations if held abroad, with the facilitation by a host

government. But then defense secretary Ramos kept on obstructing the possibility of peace negotiations until he himself became GRP president in 1992 and sent back Yap to the NDFP officials in The Netherlands to conduct exploratory talks.

The GRP and the NDFP promulgated on September 1, 1992, The Hague Joint Declaration as the framework agreement for the peace negotiations between them, with the Dutch government as facilitator. The agreement stipulates that the aim of the peace negotiations is to lay the basis for a just and lasting peace by addressing the roots of the armed conflict and forging comprehensive agreements on social, economic and political reforms. It also stipulates that no side shall impose on the other any precondition that negates the character and purpose of peace negotiations.

It lays down the substantive agenda for making the following four comprehensive agreements: respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, social and economic reforms, political and constitutional reforms and the end of hostilities and disposition of forces. It requires the sequential formation of Reciprocal Working Committees to draft the tentative comprehensive agreements to be finalized by the negotiating panels and to be ultimately approved by the principals of the negotiating parties.

However, further exploratory talks were interrupted by the GRP's unilateral act of forming the National Unification Commission (NUC) for GRP-managed fake localized peace negotiations. After the NUC was dissolved, the GRP and NDFP made further major agreements in 1995 to strengthen the peace process, such as the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) on for the negotiators, consultants and related personnel on both sides, the Ground Rules for Meetings of the Negotiating Panels, and the Joint Agreement on the Formation, Sequence and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees.

The GRP and the NDFP negotiating panels held the opening of formal peace negotiations in Brussels, Belgium in 1995, with the Belgian government as facilitator. The negotiations were interrupted for more than a year because of the failure of the GRP to release from prison NDFP consultant Sotero Llamas in accordance with the JASIG. The GRP and NDFP negotiating panels cooperated in persuading GRP president Ramos to override the objection of the defense secretary to the release of Llamas.

They resumed negotiations upon the release of Llamas in 1996. They succeeded in finalizing and signing the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) on March 16, 1998. The NDFP principal, the chairman of the NDFP National Council, signed and approved it promptly on April 10, 1998. But the GRP President Ramos failed to approve it before the end of his term of office in the same year. GRP President Estrada approved it on August 7, 1998. But he would unilaterally find cause to terminate the JASIG and in effect the peace negotiations in May 1999.

“Terrorist” listing and other obstacles

After the Estrada regime fell in January 2001, as a result of massive protests against corruption, the Arroyo regime agreed with the NDFP to resume the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations, to reaffirm all previous agreements, to operationalize the Joint Monitoring Committee under CARHRIHL and to have the Royal Norwegian Government as facilitator of the peace negotiations. But in June 2001, it suddenly decided to paralyze the peace negotiations and pursue a brutal policy of all-out military suppression against the revolutionary movement.

It announced Oplan Bantay Laya as its counterrevolutionary military campaign plan aligned with the so-called US war on terror. When GRP President Arroyo visited the US in November 2001, she requested the US to designate the CPP, NPA and the NDFP chief political consultant as “foreign terrorists”. House Speaker De Venecia, together with other high GRP officials, came to The Netherlands towards the end of November to meet the NDFP negotiators and consultants. He told them that the US would designate the CPP, NPA and myself as “terrorists” unless the NDFP signed a “final peace accord”, which required the dismantling of the NPA and surrender of arms.

The NDFP refused to be blackmailed and insisted that the peace negotiations should proceed if the GRP showed respect for and compliance with JASIG with regard to the illegal arrest and detention of NDFP consultants. The US acted to designate the CPP and NPA “terrorists” on August 9, 2002 and myself on August 12, 2002. Within 24 hours, the Dutch government listed me as “terrorist”, froze my bank account, deprived me of all the social benefits granted to me as asylum seeker and even required me to reimburse pension payments previously made to me. I took the legal action of demanding from the Dutch government the basis for my being listed as “terrorist”.

The most that the Dutch authorities could show me was a press clipping of somebody else's article from Ang

Bayan, the CPP publication, in which the US is condemned and warned as an interventionist military force in Philippine affairs. Then the Dutch government repealed its “terrorist” listing of me only to become the prime movant in the Council of the European Union (EU) for the inclusion of my name in the “terrorist” blacklist of the European Union on October 28, 2002. Thus, I proceeded for many years to wage the legal action for the removal of my name from the EU blacklist. In the meantime, the inclusion of my name in the EU “terrorist” list served to undermine and paralyze the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations, despite previous EU Parliament resolutions endorsing and supporting these.

Ultimately, the European Court of Justice made a judgment in my favor on 30 September 2009. This became final on 10 December 2009 in the absence of appeal by the losing side. It ruled conclusively that my fundamental rights had been violated by my being listed a “terrorist” and subjected to sanctions without being charged with any specific terrorist crime. The fundamental rights violated included the following: the right to be informed of the charge if any, the right to be presumed innocent, the right to legal counsel and the right to judicial relief.

Since the “terrorist” listing of the CPP, NPA and myself in 2002, the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations have been paralyzed. The NDFP took the position that the foreign governments that blacklisted the CPP, NPA and myself as “terrorists” had no right to intervene in Philippine affairs and make judgments over Philippine entities and their alleged acts within Philippine territory. The NDFP proposed to the GRP to make a joint statement simply declaring that no foreign government had such right. But the craven puppet reaction of the GRP was to assert the “sovereign right” of the US and other foreign governments to intervene in Philippine affairs.

In 2004 the GRP and NDFP Negotiating Panels met in Oslo and issued a joint communique in which the two negotiating parties and the RNG as third-party facilitator committed themselves to exert joint and separate efforts to seek the removal of the names of CPP, NPA and myself from the “terrorist” blacklist. As soon as the GRP panel returned to the Philippines, the presidential adviser on the peace process issued a statement that foreign governments had the “sovereign right” to make judgments over Philippine entities and acts.

When in August 2005 the NDFP demanded GRP compliance with the JASIG and the Oslo joint communique, the GRP decided to “suspend” indefinitely the JASIG even as this agreement provides that either one or both negotiating parties have only two choices: either respect the effectivity of the JASIG or terminate the entire agreement. The practical effect of the “suspension” was the complete paralysis, if not yet complete death of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

Since 2005 the Arroyo regime had made representations to the Dutch government for my arrest on false charges of murder. In August 2007 the Dutch police arrested me and raided the information office of the NDFP and six residences of NDFP negotiating panelists, consultants and staffers. They took away papers and digital copies of documents related to the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

One after the other, the Dutch District Court of The Hague and the Appellate Court dismissed the false charge of murder against me in 2007 and eventually the Dutch National Prosecution Service dropped its investigation. The Dutch police returned most of the hard and digital copies of the documents they seized. But they did not return one disk containing the most important code and the four related disks were returned but had been corrupted or damaged. These five disks contained the codes for encrypting and decrypting the photos and information deposited in a safety box in a Dutch bank for the benefit of the NDFP consultants, security officers and staffers involved in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations in accordance with JASIG.

After the current Aquino regime replaced the Arroyo regime in June 2010, the GRP and NDFP agreed to meet and resume their negotiations. The GRP recomposed its negotiating panel for the purpose in November 2010. But unfortunately, it appointed as presidential adviser on the peace process the same Arroyo factotum, Teresita Deles, who had sabotaged the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations since 2004.

The NDFP negotiating panel and the newly-composed GRP negotiating panel met and issued a joint statement in Oslo in February 2011. The latter panel joined the reaffirmation of all previous agreements in the GRP-NDFP but maliciously insisted on inserting the clause that it had qualifications for signing and that the Hague Joint Declaration was a “document of perpetual division”, thus attacking the framework agreement which had validated and made possible the peace negotiations.

Despite the negative position of the GRP negotiating panel, the NDFP chief political consultant reiterated to the GRP principal the long standing NDFP offer to the GRP since 2005 for an immediate truce and alliance on the basis of a general statement of common intent to realize full national independence, democracy, social justice and

economic development through genuine land reform and national industrialization.

The offer had been made to answer effectively the constant GRP demand for indefinite ceasefire to effect the capitulation and pacification of the revolutionary forces and people. The NDFP chief political consultant averred that the truce and alliance offered by NDFP could be negotiated on a special track, while the regular track would proceed in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration and subsequent agreements.

The GRP boasts that it has no obligation to comply with the JASIG and insists that detained NDFP consultants can seek release only by going through the legal processes of the reactionary government, notwithstanding the falsity of the charges of common crimes which the Arroyo regime had fabricated in its so-called legal offensive of filing false charges of common crimes to tie down and persecute targeted opponents. It would be discovered later on that the Arroyo regime and the Dutch government had connived in using the Dutch prosecution and police to disable the codes for decrypting the photos and information on the JASIG-protected consultants.

The GRP used the aforesaid discovery as further pretext to refuse compliance with the JASIG on the release of detained NDFP consultants even on humanitarian grounds. It also refused to allow the reconstruction of the list of the documents that could not be retrieved due to the destroyed codes. After three years of negotiations between the Aquino regime and the NDFP, not a single NDFP consultant has been released in compliance with the JASIG. And yet the regime has maliciously spread the lie in the mass media that the NDFP negotiates with the GRP only to have the NDFP consultants released and returned to the battlefield.

In June 2012 when the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels met in Oslo again. The most that could be agreed upon was a short paragraph, stating that “meaningful discussions shall continue on the issues raised by the two sides”, without reference to the substantive agenda in the Hague Joint Declaration and the Joint Agreement on the Formation, Sequence and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees. This short-paragraph agreement is now being interpreted by the Aquino regime as the end of the peace negotiations on the regular track.

After a series of meetings between the NDFP chief political consultant, the GPH presidential political adviser Ronald Llamas and RNG Ambassador Ture Lundh, the GRP and NDFP delegations met in February 2013 supposedly to prepare on the special track for a meeting between the GRP president and the CPP founding chairman in a historic meeting in Hanoi similar to that between the former and the MILF chairman in Tokyo in 2011. The NDFP submitted a draft communique for such meeting and an elaboration of its initial draft Declaration for National Unity and Just Peace, providing for truce and cooperation.

The GRP delegation practically killed the special track by demanding that the truce be in the form of indefinite unilateral and simultaneous ceasefires within the legal framework of the reactionary government and without any kind of substantive agreement mutually beneficial to the two sides and the people. The NDFP delegation expressed the view that such demand made the special track unnecessary and that the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations be resumed to do the work on the substantive agenda stipulated by The Hague Joint Declaration.

In the meantime, the US-Aquino regime continues to engage in state terrorism. This involves the gross and systematic violations of human rights under Oplan Bayanihan, now in the process of surpassing those under Oplan Bantay Laya during the US-Arroyo regime. It does so in contravention of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) by illegally arresting and indefinitely detaining, torturing and murdering persons associated with the NDFP and involved in the peace negotiations and refusing to investigate and in effect condoning cases of violations of the JASIG.

On a far larger scale, violations of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) include the abduction, indefinite detention, torture and murder of social activists and suspected revolutionaries on false accusations of common crimes, indiscriminate military attacks on entire communities of the urban poor, the peasants and indigenous people, forced mass evacuations and evictions from land and homes.

Prospects of people's war and peace negotiations

Through its presidential adviser on the peace process, its negotiating panel chairman and its presidential spokesman, the Aquino regime has publicly announced that it shall no longer go into any formal talks with the NDFP in both the regular and special tracks of the peace negotiations. It has also announced that it has already informed the Royal Norwegian government (RNG) that it has terminated its peace negotiations with the NDFP. But upon inquiry by the NDFP Negotiating Panel, the RNG denied ever having received any notice of termination.

At the same time, the Aquino regime has announced taking a “new approach”. This refers to the end of the

peace negotiations, the escalation of the brutal military campaigns and psychological warfare under the US-designed Oplan Bayanihan. The psywar campaigns have been going on for some time. It involves faking localized negotiations and fabricating mass surrenders and doling out a part of the graft-ridden Conditional Cash Transfer and PAMANA funds, while most funds are misappropriated and end up in the pockets of the corrupt bureaucrats and military officers.

The US-Aquino regime is hell bent on using brute military in a futile attempt to destroy the revolutionary forces and the people represented by the NDFP. In the process, it will continue to commit gross and systematic violations of human rights.

The violations of civil and political rights include abductions or forced disappearances, illegal arrests and indefinite detention, false charges of common crimes against social activists, torture, extrajudicial killings, massacres and indiscriminate attacks on communities by bombings, strafing and artillery fire. The violations of economic, social and cultural rights include forced mass evacuations, destruction of employment and livelihood, grabbing of the land for the benefit of the foreign corporations and bureaucrat comprador-landlords, ethnocide against the indigenous people, wanton plunder of the natural resources and destruction of the environment.

Under the leadership of the CPP, the NPA is determined and prepared to fight the escalating counterrevolutionary violence and to carry out the plan to advance from the strategic defensive to the strategic stalemate. We are going to see the intensification of the civil war between the reactionary government of the big compradors and landlords; and the revolutionary government of the workers and peasants. The worsening crisis of the ruling system, the consequent suffering of the people and the absence of peace negotiations make the ground ever more fertile for the spread and intensification of the people's war.

Because of the extreme anti-national and anti-democratic character of the US-Aquino regime, there is no indication whatsoever that it shall soon agree to resume the peace negotiations and respond positively to the clamor of the advocates of just peace and human rights for the resumption of the peace negotiations. The NDFP still expects that upon the worsening of the crisis of the ruling system and the rise of the people's revolutionary strength, the possibility will grow that the US-Aquino regime or the succeeding regime will seek the resumption of peace negotiations.

On the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations

Full Interview by Voltaire Tupaz

Rappler, June 22, 2013

VT: Good morning, Ka Joma. This is Voltaire Tupaz, a journalist from Rappler.com a social news network in PH. May I ask you a few questions? Rappler recently interviewed head government negotiator Alexander Padilla. He said you want peace but not the CPP leadership in PH. Your comment, please?

JMS: The CPP, NPA and the NDFP are desirous of a just peace and want the peace negotiations to progress in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration as framework agreement and with all subsequent agreements.

They take the position that in principle the peace negotiations are still going on in the absence of any side giving a formal notice of termination to the other side. However, it is the GRP side that has announced repeatedly to the press since April that it has terminated the peace negotiations with the NDFP.

The CPP leadership has recently reiterated its trust in and support for the NDFP Negotiating Panel in which Luis Jalandoni is the Chairperson and to which I am the Chief Political Consultant. It is presumptuous for anyone in the GRP to determine the relationship of the CPP leadership in the Philippines with the NDFP Negotiating Panel.

VT: Padilla also thinks that the peace process would never end, "that it was a process actually intended not for peace but to continue the war [and for them] to get concessions." At least on social media, people tend to share the same sentiment. How do you address this perception coming from a generation which is not familiar with the complexity of the peace talks?

JMS: It is in fact the GRP that does not want the peace negotiations to continue. The NDFP cannot compel the GRP to go back to the negotiating panel. If the GRP merely wants war under its US-designed Oplan Bayanihan, the revolutionary forces and people have no choice but to defend themselves and defeat their enemy.

VT: Perhaps the strongest reactions we gathered were related to the use of landmines recent incidents that killed cops and soldiers. In the same way that the Party abandoned the use of Bobby traps because it was counterproductive, do you feel that it's time to assess whether the NPA should continue using command detonated landmines? There had been reports of civilian casualties, or at the very least, they expose noncombatants to harm (i.e., if detonated along highways, roads)

JMS: The use of command-detonated land mines by the NPA does not violate the Ottawa Treaty and its protocol. In this regard, the NDFP is well advised by an International Legal Advisory Team composed of prominent lawyers who are experts in international law. You complain against command-detonated land mines. But you do not complain against aerial bombs and artillery fire which are monopolized by the AFP and indiscriminately kill people.

VT: The conflict is also a battle for hearts and minds. The story of the mother of one of the landmine casualties is circulating as a human-interest narrative: Evelyn Pinated, mother of the slain SAF vehicle driver PO2 Elmark Rodney Pinated said the "devils" took her son away, and she wants them crushed. "The (NPA) must stop these senseless killings. They are killing those who are serving our people," Elmark had married his girlfriend Grace only last October 8. She last talked to him over the cellphone on May 20, her birthday, when he greeted her. What's your message to the grieving women?

JMS: My message to any real or possible complainant against the NPA is to present the complaint to the NDFP section of the Joint Monitoring Committee (under the Comprehensive Agreement of Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) or to approach directly the people's democratic government, particularly the people's prosecutors and the people's courts.

The officers and men of the AFP, PNP and paramilitary forces commit so many crimes against the people according to so many victims and families, the NDFP section of the JMC and domestic and international human rights organizations. You should also confront the GRP about these crimes committed by its armed personnel.

VT: So does it really mean the end of the peace talks under the Aquino government? What will it take for you to talk to them again for the sake of peace?

JMS: The absence of a formal notice of termination from the GRP to the NDFP can mean either one of two

things: GRP arrogance and contempt for the JASIG or GRP allowing itself space to resume formal talks according to its own later judgment. The NDFP will be receptive to any signal or approach of the GRP or Aquino regime for resuming the formal talks. The NDFP expects from the GRP nothing more than compliance with existing agreements and the desire to move forward with the negotiations.

VT: *Padilla said "there is a constant fear on my part that the next echelon of leaders might not even be receptive to discussion or negotiations. Kung tatawagin ko—utak pulbura." What do you feel about his pessimism?*

JMS: The GRP or the Aquino regime has only itself to blame if it offers no other possibility than the continuance and intensification of the civil war. It should see that the way is still available for peace negotiations.

VT: *The special report is scheduled to be published today, Sunday. BTW, one of our interviewees, Judge Sol Santos Jr of the Philippine Campaign to Ban Landmines suggested a possible confidence-building step to resuming talks: a moratorium or a calibrated reduction on the NPA use of command-detonated landmines might be reciprocated by something just as significant (say a moratorium or calibrated reduction on the AFP use of artillery fire and/or air strikes) on the GRP side (i.e., agreement on at least a relatively "small matter" of weapons use). Q: 1) Is this even feasible? 2) Would CPP/NPA/NDF be open to study/explore the proposal?*

JMS: The NDFP has long proposed to the GRP since 2005 to have an agreement of truce and alliance on the basis of a general declaration of common intent to realize full independence, democracy, and economic development through national industrialization and land reform. Such agreement can be made while the peace negotiations continue to take up the remaining three items in the substantive agenda.

If there is such an agreement, the armed conflict ceases and there is no more need for land mines, aerial bombs and artillery fire or any other kind of weapon. While there is still armed conflict, the NPA needs land mines to deter the AFP and PNP from easily encroaching on the territory of the people's democratic government. Land mines are a poor man's weapon. Aerial bombing and artillery fire are weapons of those who oppress the people.

Soliman Santos himself has written a number of times that command-detonated land mines are not prohibited by the Ottawa Treaty on land mines. CARHRIHL does not prohibit the same. And the people's democratic government (PDG) and its revolutionary forces are not bound by GRP laws.

Comments on Padilla Statements On Peace Negotiations in Rappler

Interview by Sonny Mallari

Philippine Daily Inquirer, June 22, 2013

Sonny Mallari: In view of the recent statements of Alex Padilla in Rappler, are the peace talks already dead? Please comment on his statements.

JMS: It is Alex Padilla who says that the peace talks are dead. This may be true, especially during the Aquino regime, which has the illusion that it can destroy the revolutionary movement with the US-designed Oplan Bayanihan. But I believe that peace advocates will increasingly call for peace negotiations because of the worsening economic and social crisis, the growing strength of the revolutionary movement and the intensification of the civil war.

Rappler (Rap): Padilla, a former activist himself who knew Sison and the other NDF panel members, said he started the talks believing he was the right man for the job. But he said he later realized it was a futile effort.

JMS: Louie Jalandoni and I were glad that Alex Padilla was appointed GRP Negotiating Panel Chairman at the start. We thought that having come from BAYAN he would understand the viewpoint of the NDFP and would know how to arrive at the middle ground, like Silvestre Bello III who had also come from BAYAN. Then, when the peace negotiations deteriorated, we thought that Padilla was following orders from his superiors. But now, he himself expresses his own view that the peace negotiations are a futile effort and, of course, he blames others for his frustrations.

Rap: "After assessing the behavior or the process itself, I was convinced that it was a process that would never end. That it was a process actually intended not for peace but to continue the war [and for them] to get concessions in the meantime," Padilla said.

JMS: The Aquino regime, its peace advisor Deles and chief negotiator Padilla have ensured that there are no more peace negotiations during the term of the regime because of the following:

1. Since the first formal talks in February 2011, they have vilified The Hague Joint Declaration as a "document of perpetual division" and have insulted the NDFP and previous regimes for making more than ten agreements, which include the now world-famous Comprehensive Agreement of Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL).

2. They have always misrepresented the NDFP demand for GRP or GRP compliance with the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) as preconditioning the negotiations and have consistently refused to release under the JASIG any JASIG-protected political prisoner.

3. They have insisted that the Aquino regime is not bound by any GRP agreement with the NDFP and in effect it is useless to negotiate and make agreements with the GRP.

4. They always demand a kind of indefinite ceasefire that can allow the GRP to make unnecessary the continuance of peace negotiations on the substantive agenda.
5. They are the ones who have finally terminated the peace negotiations since April 2013 and have been so arrogant as not to give any formal notice of termination to the NDFP in accordance with the JASIG.

Rap: Padilla said they were supposed to further discuss the "general declaration" in February when Sison gave the government panel a surprise: 3 new documents that pursued the "regular track," which was the path that had led to deadlocks in the past.

"After February, it was a complete impasse because Joma Sison wanted us to first terminate the conditional cash transfer, to finish the Oplan Bayanihan of the AFP, to stop all the Pamana efforts, to give land to 5 million landless farmers, etcetera before we can even move on to that next level," Padilla said. The conditional cash transfer is the government's flagship program to fight poverty, while Oplan Bayanihan is the military's counter-insurgency campaign that's focused on building communities.

JMS: The Amsterdam meeting of February 2013 was intended to pave the way for the so-called first historic meeting in Hanoi between Aquino as GRP president and myself as CPP founding chairman. This was supposed to be similar to the earlier Aquino-Murad meeting in Tokyo in August 2011. Presidential political adviser Ronald Llamas had proposed the Aquino-Sison meeting since November 2012 and became the subject of several meetings, with the participation of RNG special envoy Ture Lundt, before February 2013.

At the Amsterdam meeting of February 2013, it was enough for the GRP and NDFP delegations to draft the

communiqué for the projected Hanoi meeting. But the GRP delegation ignored the NDFP draft communiqué and insisted on limiting the discussion to the GRP draft declaration for "indefinite unilateral simultaneous ceasefires" and to the NDFP initial draft general declaration. The NDFP delegation immediately pointed out that the GRP demand for "indefinite unilateral simultaneous ceasefires" was somewhat confused and baseless and was diametrically opposed to the NDFP proposal for truce and alliance.

The NDFP delegation declared that the most the Amsterdam meeting could accomplish in two or three days was to agree on the draft communiqué for the Hanoi meeting and start discussing inputs for the general declaration for truce and alliance which would entail several months of negotiations after the Hanoi meeting. To demonstrate to the GRP delegation how much more work was to be done in forging a general declaration on truce and alliance (or national unity and a just peace), the NDFP delegation showed to the GRP delegation a more developed NDFP draft of the aforesaid declaration. At this point, the GRP delegation did not want the meeting to go any further and declared that it would have to go back to its principal first.

Rap: "Definitely we don't want to return to the so-called regular track and as far as government is concerned, they have killed the special track. So that's where we are right now," Padilla said.

JMS: The GRP cannot supplant the regular track of the peace negotiations with the special track, without violating The Hague Joint Declaration. The regular track is the sine qua non of the special track. The special track was merely a supplement to the regular track. It was meant to deal with the recurrent impertinent demands of the GRP or GRP for an indefinite ceasefire, which was properly an issue for consideration under the fourth and final item in the substantive agenda. The regular track can go on even without the special track.

The NDFP has always made it clear since 2005 that it is willing to have a truce and alliance with the Manila government anytime on the basis of a general declaration of common intent to realize full national independence, democracy, economic development through national industrialization and genuine land reform and social justice. This offer was reiterated to the Aquino regime in February 2011. The NDFP made it clear that the offer can be realized on a special track, while the regular track of negotiations continues in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration.

Rap: "The fact of the matter is, the NDF is an organization of around 17 revolutionary organizations. All of these revolutionary organizations are headed by communists. So, the question now is, should we be talking to the NDF that is merely their political front? Maybe we should be talking to the communists the CPP. It is actually the Communist Party of the Philippines which actually directs and steers the movement across," Padilla said.

JMS: The NDFP Negotiating Panel is duly authorized by the CPP, NPA and NDFP to negotiate with the GRP or GRP counterpart at the national level. It has been the negotiating entity on behalf the CPP, NPA and NDFP since even the time of the Cory Aquino regime.

Rap: Padilla is frustrated and admitted he wants out of the peace talks.

JMS: It must really be frustrating to Padilla that the NDFP Negotiating Panel has continued to exist against his wish.

Rap: "Actually my feeling now is that it was even practically arrogant on the part of government and the NDF to think that we could ever conclude an agreement.... Because we were trying to conclude an agreement that would resolve all conflicts-the roots of conflict, so to speak, you're really talking of Utopia," he added.

JMS: Alex Padilla himself thinks he is not fit for peace negotiations with the NDFP because he believes that achieving a just peace by addressing the roots of the armed conflict is utopian. He appears to be obsessed with seeking the capitulation and pacification of the CPP, NPA and the NDFP.

These revolutionary forces cannot make any peace agreement with any regime that cannot meet the demands of the Filipino people for full national independence, democracy, economic development through national industrialization and genuine land reform, social justice and international solidarity for peace against imperialism and war.

Rap: This is so unlike the peace process between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), he noted.

"The MILF is an equally armed group, very strong, but they themselves believe that the peace process is part of the modes of trying to achieve just peace. The communists don't," he explained.

"They have been very very consistent that the peace process is but a means to an end and that end is to overthrow government and establish a national democratic state leading to a communist state eventually," Padilla said.

JMS: The NDFP and MILF have their respective outlooks, methodology and programs of political action. The NDFP have the best wishes for the MILF in trying to achieve a just and honorable peace for the benefit of the Moro people through peace negotiations. But we have observed lately that the Aquino regime is allowing Deles and the military to upset the GRP-MILF peace negotiations.

The NDFP will continue to support the MILF if and when it decides to resume the armed struggle because the GRP does not comply with agreements. The MILF has been worried publicly by GRP turning its back on crucial points in their framework agreement. It still remains to be seen whether the Aquino regime can really make peace with the MILF.

Rap: Padilla maintained that a “new approach” is needed. “It should be addressed by good governance, practically modernization, better roads, communications,” he said.

JMS: The “new approach” of the US-directed Aquino regime is above all the combat, intelligence and psywar operations under the US-designed Oplan Bayanihan. The dole-out schemes and graft-ridden and delayed public works projects are futile attempts at psywar. In the absence of peace negotiations, the revolutionary forces and broad masses of the people expect from the Aquino regime more brutal campaigns of military suppression and more deception through false claims of good governance, peace and development.

Rap: But Padilla said he fears that the CPP’s next generation of leaders would become more violent.

“After the leadership of Joma Sison, Fidel Agcaoili....I think the [leaders] are in their 40s.... There is a constant fear on my part that the next echelon of leaders might not even be receptive to discussion or negotiations. Kung tatawagin ko—utak pulbura (war freak),” he said.

JMS: Padilla is correct in anticipating more resistance from the revolutionary forces and their leaders. If there are no more peace negotiations because the GRP does not want

them, then indeed the revolutionary leadership and the masses can concentrate on advancing the people's from the strategic defensive to the strategic stalemate.

The worsening crisis of global capitalism and the domestic ruling system of the big compradors and landlords like Aquino is inflicting terrible suffering on the people and inciting them to fight for their national and social liberation. The New People's Army has the critical mass to intensify and expand its tactical armed offensives. At the same time, the organs of political power, the mass organizations and the local branches of the CPP are growing fast.

On Oplan Bayanihan and the Prospects

of Peace and Environmental Justice

Presentation at the Media Forum on Oplan Bayanihan

and the Prospects of Peace and Environmental Justice,

sponsored by the Apo Sandawa Lumadnung Panaghiusa sa Cotabato (ASLPC) and Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas- Probinsya sa Kutabato (KMP-PK), Kidapawan City, North Cotabato December 9, 2013

Dear comrades and friends, Thank you for inviting me to be your speaker in this Media Forum on Oplan Bayanihan and the Prospects of Peace and Environmental Justice. I am mindful of your concern about the peace and order and environmental situation in Mindanao and I appreciate your desire to understand the root causes of the problems. It is a privilege for me to share information and views with the forum participants who come from leading media institutions, youth and student organizations, civil society groups, academe, and church people in various affiliations. I am confident that our forum can shed more light on the issues and that we shall be better able to take them up in our efforts at public education and mobilization.

A. Oplan Bayanihan

1. *Nature and purpose of the Oplan.* Like Oplan Bantay Laya, Oplan Bayanihan is a national military plan designed by the US and based on the US Counterinsurgency Guide for the vain purpose of destroying or reducing the New People's Army to inconsequentiality. But supposedly unlike Oplan Bantay Laya, which had become notorious for gross and systematic violations of human rights, Oplan Bayanihan is designed to be more emphatic on psywar and intelligence work, without lessening combat operations but making them more effective through psywar and intelligence work.

The basic premise of the US Counterinsurgency Guide and Oplan Bayanihan is that a regime can defeat a revolutionary movement by being credited for good governance, being clean on the straight path, and efficiently delivering services to the people. Even if untrue, claims of economic success are important in psywar and far more important than undertaking peace negotiations, which are considered dispensable and which may be undertaken only for the purpose of psywar.

2. *The key role for Aquino.* As campaign financiers in 2010, the biggest foreign and domestic businessmen chose Aquino to become the president and play the key role in Oplan Bayanihan. He enjoyed a honeymoon of more than three years with the bourgeois mass media, which touted him as the paragon of a clean, honest and efficient government and as the miracle maker of an economy growing fast and bubbling with hot money from abroad.

In coordination with the military, the key civilian agencies of Aquino in combining psywar and intelligence work against the revolutionary movement are the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Secretary, and the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) Chairman. They are in charge of deploying the dole outs under the Conditional Cash Transfer and the PAMANA funds in a futile attempt to undermine the mass base of the revolutionary forces and get intelligence at the community level about revolutionary fighters, mass activists and their families for the purpose of enticing them with payments, similar to those under the Amnesty and Rehabilitation Program under Cory Aquino and Ramos.

3. *Unraveling of the Aquino regime.* The false image of Aquino and his regime as clean, honest and efficient has unraveled. It began when the Napoles pork barrel scam related to the Priority Development Assistance Fund became exposed, uncovering Aquino as the pork barrel king who disburses for his personal gain and political advantage public funds in the Disbursement Acceleration Program and so many other lump-sum appropriations under his sole discretion. Causing the Aquino regime to further unravel has been the disappearance of calamity funds and the failure of the regime to make pre-disaster preparations and to provide prompt and adequate rescue and relief assistance to the millions of victims of super typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda). The OPAPP, DSWD and NAPC have become notorious for bureaucratic corruption rather than for promoting peace, aiding people in distress, and fighting poverty.

B. Prospects for peace

1. *Sabotage of the peace process.* At the very first formal meeting of the GPH and NDFP negotiating panels in Oslo in February 2011, the GPH attacked The Hague Joint Declaration as a document of perpetual division. The NDFP pointed out that said declaration had been the framework agreement making possible more than 10 major agreements, including the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). The GPH proceeded in 2012 to declare the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) as inoperative.

It has refused to release the political prisoners protected by the JASIG and the hundreds of political prisoners imprisoned by the Arroyo regime in violation of CARHRIHL. Absolutely ruthless and devoid of any human empathy, it has proceeded to imprison indefinitely more political prisoners. The NDFP cannot trust a regime that does not know how to respect agreements. When offered the possibility of truce and alliance or cooperation on the basis of a general declaration of common intent, the regime demanded surrender under the guise of “unilateral simultaneous indefinite ceasefires”, without reference to the agenda stipulated in The Hague Joint Declaration.

2. *NDFP commitment to peace process.* The NDFP remains committed to the peace negotiations in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration and further agreements, despite the bad experience of negotiating with the Estrada, Arroyo, and Aquino regimes. The most important reason of the NDFP for persevering in the peace negotiations is to seek the solution of the basic social, economic, and political problems that victimize the people in their millions.

There is no significant indication whatsoever that the Aquino regime is interested in resuming the formal talks in the peace negotiations with the NDFP. Therefore, what the people need to do is to hasten the removal of the Aquino ruling clique from power and demand the commitment of the next president to resume the formal peace talks.

3. *Crisis requires the peace process.* For the sake of the Filipino people, the peace negotiations must be resumed, especially in the face of the protracted and worsening crisis of the world capitalist system and the domestic ruling system. The people are already suffering a high rate of unemployment, soaring prices of basic goods and services, decreasing and deteriorating social services, widespread poverty and misery. The illusion of economic growth bloated by hot money will soon burst and the people will suffer far more than they do now.

The successful advance of the peace negotiations is not an impossibility. The peace process is a matter of building on what has been achieved. It has already succeeded in producing a substantive agreement, the CARHRIHL, within the framework of The Hague Joint Declaration. It is possible to have a comprehensive agreement on socioeconomic reforms, with land reform and national industrialization as the key provisions. It is also possible to have a comprehensive agreement on political and constitutional reforms, with national

independence and people's democracy as the key provisions. On the basis of these substantive agreements, then it is possible to agree comprehensively on the end of hostilities and disposition of forces. The people must be aroused, organized and mobilized to demand the resumption of peace negotiations.

C. Prospects of environment justice

1. *Environmental crisis in Mindanao.* Nationwide, we see the wanton plunder of the natural resources and the destruction of the environment. The Philippines now has the second-lowest forest cover in the whole of Southeast Asia. The deforestation had been going on since the Spanish era in Luzon and Visayas, but in the past century has been principally caused by the operations of logging, agribusiness, and mining companies especially in Mindanao.

As of 2003 (the latest year for which official forestry data are available), the total remaining forest cover nationwide has gone down to just below 21 percent. It is even worse in Mindanao where forest cover is only 15.2 percent. The resultant loss of forest cover has left rural and urban communities alike more vulnerable to typhoons, constant soil erosion, landslides, heavy silting of rivers and lakes, biodiversity loss and diminished wildlife, and urban overheating.

The use of open pit mining and large amounts of chemicals to accelerate extraction of minerals, including magnetite or black sand mining along the coasts, have aggravated soil erosion and the poisoning of the streams, rivers, lakes and coastal waters at the expense of the peasants and fishermen. The expansion of plantations for the production of bio-ethanol and such products for export like fruit, rubber and palm oil have involved excessive use of chemicals and grave imbalances in land use to the detriment of the environment and staple food production.

2. *Responsibility for the crisis.* The foreign multinational firms and their big comprador and high bureaucrat allies are mainly responsible for the destruction of the environment in the Philippines. The Aquino regime is reprehensible for emboldening illegal logging, unrestricted mining and the rapid expansion of plantations. It has consistently upheld the pro-foreign Mining Act of 1995, and has encouraged the influx of big foreign mining firms in Mindanao side by side with the militarization of mining areas. The regime made a show of declaring a so-called total log ban in natural forests. But in reality it has made numerous exemptions and even tolerates outright illegal logging by the AFP-CAFGU and local government units such as in the PICOP and Forest Research Institute areas.

The imperialist powers headed by the US are responsible, both historically and in current volumes, for the carbon emissions that are causing global warming. Natural disasters caused both by extreme weather events such as cyclones, and slow-onset hazards such as coastal flooding, have become more frequent and destructive because of the global warming.

Third world countries like the Philippines, which did not produce the bulk of greenhouse gases, are more vulnerable not only because they are directly in the path of tropical cyclone belts and overheated ocean currents but also because underdevelopment hinders their capacity to cope with disasters. The super typhoon Yolanda was definitely maximized by the warming of the Pacific Ocean.

As shown by the measly outcomes of the recent COP-19 climate talks in Warsaw, the imperialist powers stubbornly resist the Third World demand for them to compensate the victims of the natural disasters generated by global warming. They impose on the world the use of fossil fuel and retain the privilege of emitting carbon dioxide. For these reasons, it is but right for the oppressed peoples of the world to view the issue of climate change and its disastrous impacts as one of environmental injustice imposed by imperialism instead of being just a natural phenomenon that all countries face in equal measure. It is true that the people, especially the most impoverished sections of the workers and peasants, are desperate enough to eke out a living in the margins at the expense of ecological balance and safe and healthy living conditions. But it is the height of callousness for the Aquino regime to put the blame on them for environmental problems and for living in disaster-prone areas, and even forcibly demolish and relocate their communities on that alibi. The broad masses of the people are the victims, not the culprits, of environmental injustice aggravated by human rights violations.

3. *Attainment of environmental justice.* For so long as the Philippines remains semicolonial and semifeudal, the imperialist powers and the reactionary puppets will continue to subject the Filipino people to environmental injustice. The way for the people to attain environmental justice is to struggle for national independence, democracy, social justice, development and international solidarity with the people of the world. But even now, we should be conscious of the need to stop the ruin of the environment and the wanton outflow of our precious nonrenewable resources, especially mineral ores, and do whatever is possible in this regard.

By gaining national and social liberation, a truly empowered Filipino people can prevent the plunder of natural resources and destruction of the environment. We can ban the imperialist and big comprador-landlord firms from taking away the natural resources as fast as they can while leaving the country more underdeveloped and the masses more impoverished than ever before. It becomes possible to protect and manage our natural resources and use them wisely by processing them for national industrialization and to support agricultural and all-sided rural development on the basis of agrarian reform.

With national industrialization and agrarian reform generating local production and employment many more times greater than what the imperialist and comprador-landlord firms can offer, it also becomes feasible for our people to adopt more ecologically wise methods of production, implement environmental protection, avoid geohazards, and cope with disasters more effectively through mass mobilization.

There is a direct link between the struggle for peace and the struggle for environmental justice. In fact, we have always said that the only basis for a genuine and lasting peace is on the basis of justice brought about by substantial social, economic, and political reforms. Fighting for environmental justice means struggling for such comprehensive reforms, towards a just and lasting peace.

Interview on Turning 75, Peace

and Duterte as President

Interview by Davao Today, February 8, 2014

Turning 75 this February 8, Professor Jose Maria Sison, chief consultant of the National Democratic Front on the peace negotiations, answer questions from Davao Today on current issues ranging from peace talks to the possibility of Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte running as president.

DT: How does it feel to have lived three quarters of a century, especially with regard to how Philippine history has turned out since your move to re-establish the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in 1968?

JMS: I feel happy for having lived long enough to see how the CPP has grown nationwide and struck deep roots among the toiling masses of workers and peasants. The CPP has 150,000 members. It leads the thousands of Red fighters in the New People's Army and the millions of people in mass organizations. It is at the helm of the people's democratic government in 115 guerrilla fronts which cover large portions of 71 provinces.

DT: Do you have a secret to longevity?

JMS: My key to longevity: Fighting spirit in the service of the people and a sense of humor to provide relief for the hard work.

DT: Speaking of longevity, how do you look at President Benigno Aquino III, can he survive all these controversies?

JMS: Definitely, the controversies have exposed the fact that Aquino is running a treasonous, exploitative, corrupt, cruel and mendacious regime. The propaganda that his regime is clean and honest and is good at delivering services is practically dead. Thus, the broad masses of the people and the patriotic and progressive forces are now trying to oust Aquino from power. They will become strong through the struggle, whether they succeed or not in overthrowing Aquino before the end of his term in 2016.

DT: On the peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), what is the impact of this Bangsamoro Framework Agreement, and how different is this with the Tripoli Agreement and the 1996 peace accord signed by the government and Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) Chair Nur Misuari? Follow up : What is your assessment of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF)?

JMS: There are uncertainties surrounding the Bangsamoro Framework Agreement, the annexes and the Bangsamoro basic law. Constitutional issues will be raised in Congress and the Supreme Court against certain provisions. The MILF will have to consider how far it can submit itself to the state based in Manila and how other forces of the Bangsamoro like the MNLF and the BIFF will react. The BIFF is now trying to seize the political and military initiative in areas known to be MILF home ground.

The first provision of the Tripoli Agreement of 1976 stipulated that the Moro question was to be resolved within the framework of Philippine sovereignty and territorial integrity and the last provision stipulated that all agreements were subject to the constitutional processes of the Manila government. The MILF arose in opposition to such provisions. Now the BIFF is rebelling against the MILF for the same reasons that the MILF rebelled against the MNLF.

The MILF was previously critical of the 1996 peace accord between MNLF and the Manila government. Now, the MILF expresses the view that it can validate and take on board such accord in a new comprehensive peace agreement. But speaking on behalf of MNLF, Nur Misuari has denounced the Bangsamoro Framework Agreement as contrary to the peace accord of 1996.

DT: How attainable is peace? What are the prospects of GRP-NDFP peace negotiations?

JMS: Peace is not attainable in the Bangsamoro areas so long as there is no satisfaction of the Moro people's demand for respect of the right to self-determination, ancestral domain and their democratic aspirations and so long as the US and other foreign plunderers and the local big compradors and landlords continue to exploit and oppress the Moro people.

The Aquino regime and its US imperialist masters are extremely vicious against the revolutionary forces and people represented by the NDFP. They think that Oplan Bayanihan can destroy or cripple the revolutionary movement. The Aquino regime has attacked The Hague Joint Declaration as a document of perpetual division and the

Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) as inoperative and it has wantonly violated the Comprehensive Agreement of Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). Since April 2013, it has publicly terminated the JASIG and the peace negotiations without giving the required notice of termination to the NDFP.

The Aquino regime is responsible for blocking the peace negotiations. It has not shown any interest in its resumption. To keep alive the hope for peace negotiations, the NDFP has expressed its willingness to negotiate with the next regime.

DT: In relation to that, the CPP has declared that revolutionary forces are poised to leap to a higher level of struggle or what it terms as strategic stalemate. How viable is this call?

JMS: The call is viable. It is highly probable that within the next few years the CPP membership would rise from 150,000 to 250,000, the number of Red fighters of the New People's Army from around 10,000 to 25,000, the guerrilla fronts from 120 to 200 and the mass movement and the people's democratic government (local organs of political power) would involve many millions more of the people. The revolutionary forces and people of Mindanao are outstanding and are showing the way to grow in strength and to advance.

The worsening crisis of the world capitalist system and the domestic ruling system is favorable for the advance of the people's war from strategic defensive to strategic stalemate.

DT: What's your assessment of Davao City Mayor Duterte? Do you see him as a possible presidential candidate come 2016? Rights advocates, including agencies under the GPH tag him for the summary killings in Davao, what's your take to that?

JMS: The local revolutionary forces in Davao City consider Mayor Duterte as someone they can negotiate with and make reasonable agreements with. Perhaps, if he becomes president, he can act like a statesman and negotiate with the NDFP. But will the big financiers and media lords allow him to win the presidential elections? The Commission on Human Rights has repeatedly accused Duterte of violating human rights but refuses to take up Duterte's challenge to put up or shut up. The same commission has never said anything critical of the gross and systematic violation of human rights by the Aquino regime and its military, police and paramilitary forces.

DT: What is your take regarding the rice smuggling issue?

JMS: Rice smuggling is the consequence of the trade liberalization policy and the undermining of local rice production since the time of Cory Aquino. Currently, relatives and friends of BS Aquino are the biggest rice smugglers. Aquino is a liar for misrepresenting the rise of rice smuggling as the rise of local rice production.

DT: In this day and age, how valid is the philosophy of Marx to academics, students and political analysts?

JMS: The teachings of Marx in philosophy as well as in political economy and social science remain valid today. They are shining now in opposition to the capitalist and imperialist system of exploitation, ever worsening crisis, state terrorism and war. There is renewed interest in the teachings of Marx among the academics, students and political analysts because such teachings expose the root causes of exploitation and oppression and show us the revolutionary way out.

DT: Looking at the present crop of Filipino activists and revolutionaries, how do they fare with the activists of the First Quarter Storm and the activists of the 1960s?

JMS: There are definitely more competent and militant Filipino activists and revolutionaries now because of the long series of mass struggles since 1960s. They should fare better than those of the 1960s and the First Quarter Storm of 1970. They can arouse, organize and mobilize far more people now. There should be more proletarian revolutionaries who study Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and are ready to participate in the people's war.

DT: On lighter things, what are your favorite books and movies in the past ten years?

JMS: I have favored the books that show the recurrent and worsening crisis of monopoly capitalism and the resurgence of the people's anti-imperialist and socialist movements. I have also favored the documentary and feature films critical of neoliberal greed and imperialist wars.

DT: What would be your birthday wish?

JMS: To stay healthy and live longer in order to further serve the people.

Deles' Attack of The Hague Joint Declaration

Is an Outright and Gross Lie

April 8, 2014

OPAPP Secretary Teresita Q. Deles has repeatedly attacked The Hague Joint Declaration as a “document of perpetual division” and has obscured the fact that the declaration stipulates the 4-point substantive agenda, the first point of which has already resulted in the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). Deles has publicly dismissed this major agreement as a minor thing.

The NDFP has long insisted that the peace negotiations should now focus on the second point of the substantive agenda, social and economic reforms, in the face of the worsening social and economic crisis resulting from the unbridled neoliberal greed of the foreign monopoly capitalists and the local exploiting classes of big compradors and landlords like the Aquinos and Cojuangcos.

Basic reforms must be made to overcome the social and economic injustices, massive unemployment, widespread poverty, homelessness, landlessness, the soaring prices of basic goods and services, bureaucratic corruption, the mounting tax and debt burden, the deterioration and disappearance of social services and other social and economic ills.

At their signing of CARHRIHL in 1998 during the time of Ramos, the negotiating panels exchanged drafts of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms, with the NDFP giving a more serious and elaborate draft of 50 pages in comparison to the measly three-page draft of the other side. But the regimes succeeding that of Ramos have always found ways of avoiding or preventing the negotiation of social and economic reforms.

The Aquino regime has the obligation to release the imprisoned NDFP peace consultants in accordance with the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) and the hundreds of political prisoners in accordance with the CARHRIHL which prohibits the trumping up of charges of common crimes against suspected political offenders.

If these agreements are not respected by the Aquino regime, the people will not see the need for negotiating and making agreements with such reneging regime. The regime is obsessed with unjustly imprisoning fourteen NDFP consultants and hundreds of other political prisoners and disrupting the peace negotiations, which are supposed to promote and cause the social and national liberation of more than a hundred million Filipino people.

Deles' attack on the NDFP in the form of a pretended complaint that the peace talks have become more procedural than substantive and that the NDFP is merely demanding the release of its imprisoned peace consultants is an outright and gross lie. It is calculated to continue the attack on more than ten agreements solemnly made since the time of the Ramos regime.

GRP-MILF Peace Agreement

Will Not Necessarily Result

in Just and Lasting Peace

Interview by Roselle Valerio, *Liberation International*, April 17, 2014

1. *From a previous position of exercising the right to national self-determination, to the extent of fighting to secede from the Philippine state, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has surrendered itself to the sovereignty, constitution and constitutional processes of said state and has opted for regional autonomy under the Philippine state. Is that true?*

JMS: The leaders of the MILF themselves have confirmed the fact by their own words and deeds. The Bangsamoro Basic Law and all the agreements and annexes covered by the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) and Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) are subject to the 1987 Constitution and constitutional processes of the Philippine state. The Government of the Philippines (GRP) has publicly assured the MILF that the Philippine constitution can accommodate the Bangsamoro Basic Law and the Bangsamoro political entity without resorting to constitutional amendment. The MILF has allowed such GRP assurance to pass or has not objected to it, from the signing of the FAB in 2012 to the further signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) in 2014.

The MILF has agreed for the Bangsamoro Transition Commission to cease offering constitutional amendments upon the enactment of the Bangsamoro Basic Law. The GRP-MILF negotiations have ended upon the signing of the CAB.

2. *The Bangsamoro Transition Commission, which is tasked to draft the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), has already submitted the draft of the Bangsamoro Basic Law to the Aquino administration for processing and approval before submission to Congress for the process of legislation. Subsequently, it would still be possible for constitutional issues to be raised before the Supreme Court. Is the Aquino administration determined to push the enactment of the BBL? Why? What makes the Aquino administration and its agents in Congress and the Supreme Court so confident that they can keep the BBL within the four corners of the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines state and override constitutional issues that have been raised by certain political leaders, legal experts and media pundits?*

JMS: The Aquino administration is determined to push the enactment of the BBL and the establishment of the Bangsamoro political entity because behind him are the US, the European Community, Japan, Australia, Malaysia and other countries, which are interested in the exploitation of the natural resources of the Bangsamoro areas. The administration has enough time and numbers in both houses of Congress to ram through the BBL, not to mention the pork barrel, for persuading possible oppositionists. It is a bit of balderdash that Aquino wants to have a legacy of making peace in the Bangsamoro areas.

The GRP executive and legislative branches are obviously using the provision in the 1987 constitution that created the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in order to give a constitutional grounding to the Bangsamoro political entity and present this new entity as a replacement of the existing ARMM political organ, which shall be abolished upon the promulgation and ratification of the Bangsamoro Basic Law. In this connection, all other constitutional issues can be fixed by further language engineering by the GRP, with the MILF predisposed to consent.

It is reasonable to estimate that the Aquino regime is taking the MILF for a ride, if only to cause the dissolution of the MILF as a revolutionary organization. But most likely, the ride is not shorter than going all the way to the establishment of the Bangsamoro political entity. The US and GRP strategists are known to calculate that the MILF will go the way of the MNLF.

3. *Is not the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) or its Sema and Misuari factions still in a position to complain and raise a constitutional issue about the continuing validity of the ARMM Organic Law and the 1996 peace agreement? And would not the Misuari faction go back to armed struggle for the purpose of seceding from the Philippine state or demanding respect for the 1996 peace agreement?*

JMS: If the Bangsamoro Basic Law as envisioned would repeal and not merely amend Republic Act 9054 (which amended RA 6734, the original ARMM Organic Law, and which incorporated the provisions of the 1996

MNLF-GRP Final Peace Agreement), there is a high probability for the MNLF or any other interested party to raise a constitutional issue before the Supreme Court on the ground that the 1996 Final Peace Agreement, which is supposed to be the full implementation of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, has continuing validity and cannot be terminated or abrogated unilaterally by the GRP.

The Aquino administration is confident that it has enough numbers in the Sereno Supreme Court, including Marvic Leonen. Together with the MILF, the administration is also trying to appease the opposition of the MNLF and other groups with accommodation in the Bangsamoro political entity and threaten those who resist with fatwa under shariah law and condemnation as peace spoilers. But the resisting Moro organizations, like the Misuari faction of the MNLF and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), can also issue a counter-fatwa and appeal for support from the Moro people and the Organization of Islamic Countries, which gave its blessings to the 1996 Final Peace Agreement.

4. Aside from the contradictions in the application of the constitutional provision on the ARMM, what are the other constitutional issues that need to be fixed by the Aquino administration and Congress?

JMS: Senator Miriam Defensor, the chair of the Senate committee on constitutional amendments, has publicly complained that a Bangsamoro substate is being established and has raised a number of constitutional questions: a) Why should executive agreements with the MILF determine and diminish the powers of the central government in violation of the supremacy of the Philippine constitution by dividing the so-called reserved powers of the central government and the so-called exclusive powers of the Bangsamoro political entity. b) How can the ARMM provision in the 1987 constitution be practically dissolved by mere agreement with the MILF? c) Why should the powers exercised by the national government over local government units be yielded to or become the exclusive powers of the Bangsamoro political entity? d) Natural resources belong to the Philippine state, but how come they shall be under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Bangsamoro political entity? e) What exclusive powers can belong to the Bangsamoro political entity in a unitary state like the Philippines? f) How will the ministerial form of Bangsamoro government jibe with the presidential form of government for most of the country? and g) How can the Bangsamoro Transition Commission be tasked to work on proposals to amend the constitution for the purpose of amending and entrenching in the Constitution the agreements whenever necessary, without derogating from any prior peace agreement.

Other contentious issues have been raised by those who adhere to the 1987 constitution. They include the following: a) Why subject the people of the five provinces claimed by Bangsamoro to one more plebiscite when in fact they said yes to autonomy twice already in the past? b) Why should the Philippine state cede or concede a part of its internal waters and territorial sea to become Bangsamoro waters under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Bangsamoro political entity? c) Why the extraordinary high shares of Bangsamoro in the division of government revenues, which are discriminatory to other regions? and d) Why should there be a Bangsamoro police without a clear frame or line of subordination to the Philippine National Police, which is mandated by the 1987 constitution as the sole police force?

5. How are these constitutional issues possibly being addressed by the GRP and the MILF?

JMS: I presume that both the GRP and MILF are aware of these issues and they must have discussed these within the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, especially upon the initiative of the GRP agents. It is possible that the draft of the Bangsamoro Basic Law has been watered down and toned down by the commission and brought down to a level much lower than the earlier high expectations of the MILF.

To update ourselves on the constitutional issues, we have to get a copy of the draft basic law recently submitted to the GRP executive branch. After submission of the draft, the GRP executive branch can amend the draft. And this can be further amended by Congress. As soon as the draft of BBL reaches Congress, it should be available to the public for scrutiny and opposition to objectionable provisions.

6. Will the MILF be able to protest or withdraw from the entire deal if it gets far less than its expectations or if it considers itself swindled by the GRP?

JMS: The MILF has declared and agreed that it will decommission its weapons and dismantle its army only after the implementation of all the agreements. The implication of this is that the MILF can withdraw from the deal if it is swindled. But in the first place, it has submitted itself to the constitution and constitutional processes of the GRP. The MILF leaders seem to be satisfied with prospective appointments to the Bangsamoro Transition Authority, with elections to the Bangsamoro political organs and with the absorption of most of the MILF fighters in the

Bangsamoro police.

7. *Behind the scenes Aquino and his political agents are known to laugh at the MILF for believing that the Bangsamoro political entity will have exclusive powers, independent of the central or national government, and for supposedly expecting to have extraordinary shares of revenues and opportunities for bureaucratic corruption and personal enrichment, when more than US\$300 billion of US and other foreign investments are supposed to pour in to exploit the natural resources in Bangsamoro. Would imperial Manila actually allow the Bangsamoro bureaucrats to grab the lion's share from the opportunities of bureaucratic corruption?*

JMS: Despite all the promises that the Bangsamoro political entity will have far more powers and financial resources than the ARMM, I think that the GRP president and the central government in Manila will put in all the caveats and make sure that the Bangsamoro political entity will be something like the existing ARMM, a bureaucratic layer, between the presidential office and the local governments still operating according to the current code on local governments. The high bureaucrats and big compradors of Manila and the Moro political dynasties will still take the lions' share of whatever bureaucratic loot can arise from investments of the US and other multinational firms exploiting the natural resources in the Bangsamoro.

8. *Assuming that the Bangsamoro political entity will replace the ARMM, what will become of the MILF in the short term and long run? Will there really be a durable peace in the areas of the Bangsamoro?*

JMS: The MILF itself has indicated that it shall liquidate itself, become an Islamic movement and form a political party for electoral purposes. The highest MILF official Brother Ebrahim Murad is expected to become the Chief Minister. I presume that the other MILF officials will also assume high offices in the Bangsamoro political organs.

If we go by the MNLF historical example, the MILF has to be vigilant against ceaseless attempts of the Manila-based bureaucrats and the military officers of the reactionary government to subordinate, corrupt and split the MILF officials. The electoral process will also be a way to weaken the former cohesiveness of the MILF and will allow the traditional ruling families and favorites of any current president to take over the Bangsamoro political entity. Remember how the MNLF split and the ARMM eventually fell into the hands of the Ampatuan family.

The GRP-MILF peace agreement and establishment of the Bangsamoro political entity will not necessarily result in a just and lasting peace. There are armed clans and armed political forces like the MNLF of Misuari and the BIFF. It remains to be seen how they can be appeased or outraged.

The exploited masses of workers and peasants have a high potential for waging an armed revolution against their exploiters and oppressors in the Bangsamoro areas. The agreements made by the GRP and MILF are not concerned about national independence vis a vis the imperialist powers, democracy for the workers and peasants, social justice and development through land reform and national industrialization.

9. *What are the prospects of the Bangsamoro people and Moro Resistance and Liberation Organization in the Bangsamoro areas?*

JMS: The Moro people will continue to wage various forms of struggle in order to assert and realize their right to national self-determination and ancestral domain. The Moro Resistance and Liberation Organization (MRLO), the revolutionary masses and allies can take more initiative in carrying forward the people's democratic revolution through protracted people's war. The imperialists and the Manila puppet government will not satisfy the basic demands of the Moro people. The MRLO is in a position more than ever to arouse, organize and mobilize the Moro people to fight for national and social liberation.

10. *What is the consequence of the peace settlement between the MILF and the Manila government to the revolutionary movement led by the Communist Party of the Philippines? Will such peace settlement strengthen the reactionary government in waging a campaign of military suppression against the revolutionary? If not, why and how?*

JMS: The MNLF and MILF have had long ceasefire agreements with the Manila government since a long time ago. Meanwhile, the New People's Army, the people's militia and the self-defense units of the mass organizations have grown in strength nationwide, together with the Communist Party, the National Democratic Front, the mass organizations and the people's democratic government.

According to reports, sixty percent of the reactionary armed forces are now deployed in Mindanao. Most of them are tasked to attack the rapidly growing forces of the NPA. But some continue to be posted in the Bangsamoro areas in order to contain and attack the BIFF and the MNLF-Misuari, not to mention the infamous Abu Sayyaf. The concentration of the reactionary troops in NPA areas in Mindanao will give the NPA a chance to

seize more weapons and encourage the NPA to attack and seize arms from the weaker enemy forces in Luzon and the Visayas.

The CPP, NPA and NDFP are resolutely and militantly carrying out the plan to advance from the strategic defensive to the strategic stalemate in the people's war nationwide. For more information on the progress of the people's revolutionary struggle, I refer everyone to the www.philippinerevolution.info to read the long message of the CPP to the NPA on the latter's 45th founding anniversary and the latest battle reports of the NPA in various parts of the Philippines.

Aquino Lacks Sincerity in the Peace Negotiations and Has Wantonly Violated Existing Agreements

May 15, 2015

The recent statement of B. S. Aquino III to Radyo Bombo and published in the Philippine Daily Inquirer attacking the National Democratic Front of the Philippines and seeking to impose on the NDFP his one-sided views has upset efforts to pave the way for the resumption of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

It is Aquino who lacks sincerity in peace negotiations between the GRP and NDFP. He has wantonly violated the existing agreements, especially The Hague Joint Declaration, the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CAHRIHL), the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) and the Joint Agreement on the Formation, Sequence and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees.

He is out of his mind if he thinks that he can get an agreement on indefinite ceasefire without complying with the aforesaid existing agreements and without a Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms at the same time.

He shows his bad faith, selfishness and incorrigible penchant for cruelty by putting in advance of formal talks his precondition that he will continue to violate JASIG and CAHRIHL and further on by allowing the issuance of warrants of arrest against NDFP consultants in connection with the baseless and false Hilongos charge.

He seems to be obsessed with going down in history with a legacy of cruelty comparable to that of Marcos and Arroyo in collecting political prisoners and allowing the military, police and paramilitary in perpetrating forced disappearances, torture, mass dislocation, demolition of homes and landgrabbing under Oplan Bayanihan.

Aquino has allowed OPAPP secretary Deles to sabotage every step in the so-called special track from the time of Ronald Llamas to that of Hernani Braganza (who was brusquely laid aside by Deles only recently). Now, Deles wants to humiliate and insult the NDFP by putting forward the self-proclaimed designer of Oplan Bayanihan as the chief negotiator of the GRP.

By his callous and malicious statement, probably advised by Deles, Aquino has made it necessary for the NDFP to consider again whether or not it is useful at all to negotiate with a lameduck regime which is obsessed with violating existing agreements and which is predetermined to leave a legacy of ruining the peace negotiations with the NDFP and even messing up those with MILF by committing the Mamasapano fiasco.

Stop Harassing and Threatening Luis Jalandoni,

Chairperson of the NDFP Negotiating Panel

June 3, 2015

Since the 1990s, Luis Jalandoni the chairperson of the Negotiating Panel of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines has visited the Philippines a number of times for peace consultations and family visits under the protection of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG). He met and conversed with Presidents Ramos, Estrada and Arroyo.

Also, since the 1990s, Jalandoni has acted as the Chairperson of the NDFP Negotiating Panel and as authorized representative of the NDFP, including the CPP and NPA, in facilitating the safe and orderly release of personnel of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) in the custody of the NPA as prisoners of war.

In sharp contrast to previous regimes, the Aquino regime has emerged as the worst violator of the JASIG by harassing Jalandoni with an invalid and improperly served subpoena and threatening to arrest and imprison him on trumped up charges of nonbailable common crimes, such as “kidnapping and serious illegal detention of four named policemen (captured by the NPA on July 10, 2014 in Surigao del Norte and released on July 29, 2014) and violation of R.A. No. 9851 (Crime against Humanitarian Law and other Crimes against Humanity”.

The Aquino regime is the most malicious of all regimes by using its representatives (like DILG Secretary Mar Roxas and Nani Braganza) to seek the release of the aforesaid policemen with the help of Jalandoni on humanitarian grounds and now hurling against him false charges of common crimes as aforementioned. Defense Secretary Gazmin and OPAPP Secretary Deles were with Secretary Mar Roxas during the safe and orderly release of the aforesaid policemen.

It is reprehensible that the Aquino regime is acting viciously and maliciously by violating the safety and immunity guarantees that protect Luis Jalandoni and by misrepresenting as a crime his facilitation to help realize the humanitarian act and goodwill measure of the NDFP in causing the release of the four policemen and seeking to improve the atmosphere for the resumption of the formal talks in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

It is unfortunate that the Aquino regime is making a vicious and malicious attack on the NDFP and the person of Jalandoni exactly at a time that he and I have just recommended to the NDFP Executive Committee to give permission to the NDFP Negotiating Panel to undertake exploratory talks prior to formal talks, despite the recent outburst of Aquino against the NDFP and the undersigned.

In order for the GPH and NDFP to engage in exploratory talks, as urged by the Royal Norwegian Government as third-party facilitator and the many peace advocates, the Aquino regime should respect the JASIG and allow the safe passage of Jalandoni to his negotiating post and office in The Netherlands. Thus, the exploratory talks will proceed and not be disrupted by petty-minded and malicious obstructions.

***Aquino and Deles Are Preconditioning
the Peace Negotiations, Using the OPAPP
as Center of Military Psywar and Corruption***

August 10, 2015

The NDFP cannot trust any government that does not know how to comply with existing agreements like the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Agreement. The Aquino regime has unilaterally rendered this agreement inoperative by refusing to honor documents of identification issued under JASIG and by blocking the reconstitution of verification documents destroyed by the Dutch police as a result of the request of the Arroyo regime to arrest me and raid the NDF Information office and the private homes belonging to NDFP negotiators and consultants in 2007.

The same malicious person Teresita Q. Deles has occupied the position of OPAPP both under the regimes of Arroyo and Aquino and she is obsessed with nullifying all previous agreements, including The Hague Joint Declaration, the JASIG and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.

She keeps on preconditioning the peace talks by maliciously demanding the nullification of the aforesaid agreements. She is also claiming that Generals Fidel Ramos and Manuel Yan, then president and OPAPP secretary, were not “military” enough or tough enough for allowing then Rep. Jose V. Yap and Justice Secretary to make the said agreements with the NDFP.

Thanks to Deles, she has sabotaged the peace negotiations under the last two presidents, Arroyo and Aquino, and has unwittingly contributed to the continuance of the people’s war for national liberation and democracy. Indeed, truce and cooperation with the NDFP can be realized only if there were a president who can stand for national independence, people’s democracy, social justice, economic development through national industrialization and land reform and a patriotic, scientific and progressive culture.

The NDFP can wait patiently for the crisis of the world capitalist system and local ruling system to further worsen and prod the president of the puppet republic to become patriotic and intelligent enough to seek national unity, peace and cooperation with the revolutionary forces and people represented by the NDFP.

Young cadres of the revolutionary forces have been replenishing the ranks of their veteran comrades. They can continue the people’s democratic revolution and protracted people’s war indefinitely until a negotiated peace agreement becomes possible.

In the meantime, the OPAPP is nothing but a psywar agency of the reactionary armed forces and is a major center of military and bureaucratic corruption in the abuse and misuse of the scores of billions of pesos under the Conditional Cash Transfer Program. The corrupt practices and violent military and police actions are deceptively called peace and development operations.

On Duterte's Expressed Desire

to End the Armed Conflict

Interview by Sonny Mallari, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, August 10, 2015.

The questions arise from an earlier statement made by Prof. Jose Maria Sison in response to news reports that he had conversed with Mayor Rodrigo Duterte. The statement runs as follows:

The GRP-NDFP peace negotiations are a way to address the roots of the armed conflict and make the social, economic and political agreements for a just and lasting peace. In this connection, I appreciate the desire of Mayor Duterte to end the armed conflict as soon as possible, even before he runs for president.

But the peace process is two-sided. Aquino and Deles are still in control of the GRP side. Unlike Mayor Duterte, they are not eager to have any kind of ceasefire or truce on some substantive basis that is satisfactory and beneficial to the people.

I presume that if and when he becomes president my esteemed friend and former student Rodrigo Duterte will retain his desire to end the armed conflict, accelerate the peace process and give way to a just and lasting peace.

Sonny Mallari: Ka Joma, you describe Duterte as an "esteemed friend and former student". Could you please elaborate? What year was he your student, in UP?

Joma Sison: I describe Mayor Duterte as an esteemed friend because he has been cooperative with the NDFP in several instances of the safe and orderly release of prisoners of war in the custody of the NPA. He has kindly spoken of me as his teacher. He was a student of mine, possibly in the years of 1959 to 1968, when I was 20 to 29 years old. I taught so many students during that period. I had large classes in the Rizal course and political science.

Sonny Mallari: It seems that your statement is a tacit endorsement of Duterte as presidential candidate. How about the others? Binay, Poe, Roxas?

Joma Sison: The main purpose of my statement is to gently tell Mayor Duterte that I am not the sole key to the end of the armed conflict between the forces of the GRP and NDFP. There are two well-organized sides in the armed conflict. The civil war is a two-sided phenomenon. And the peace process to settle it is also two sided.

It is the Aquino regime that is blocking the way to a just and lasting peace through peace negotiations and comprehensive agreements on social, economic and political reforms. It keeps on violating existing agreements by wantonly killing suspected revolutionaries, collecting hundreds of political prisoners, preconditioning the peace negotiations with disrespect for and noncompliance with said agreements and arrogantly demanding the surrender of the revolutionary movement.

My statement reminds Mayor Duterte that Aquino and Deles are the obstruction to a just peace and that hypothetically he could end such obstruction if he would win the election. The assumption for the sake of argument does not mean an endorsement of his candidacy and a rejection of Binay, Poe and Roxas. I am in fact reminding Mayor Duterte that he should not sound like Aquino and Deles by demanding the surrender of the NPA even before his becoming president.

The people, including me, can evaluate the presidential candidates only after they present their comprehensive programs concerning the people's demands for full national independence, empowerment of the working people, social justice, economic development through genuine land reform and national industrialization, free education and a patriotic and progressive culture.

The Most Crucial Factor
for the Success of the Peace Process
Is the Exercise of Political Will by Both Sides

**Special Message to All Participants of Multisectoral Conversations on Peace at the Ateneo de Davao University,
June 8, 2016**

Warmest greetings of peace to all of you in this multisectoral gathering called “When Blue Meets Red”! I thank the officials of the University Community Engagement and Advocacy Council (UCEAC) and the University Research Council (URC) of the Ateneo de Davao University (AdDU) for inviting me to give this brief special message and for having Fidel Agcaoili as the lead discussant in representation of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

Like the rest of the NDFP, I commend the resolve of the AdDU to strengthen its platform on peace [Be Engaged and Embrace Peace] by providing spaces for continuing conversations to widen and deepen understanding of the historical, political, and philosophical ramifications of the formal peace talks between the incoming Duterte government and the NDFP.

It is definitely useful and timely for you to promote multisectoral conversations to raise the level of common understanding, support the peace negotiations and offer constructive proposals for making agreements in the interest of our people. Indeed, the peace negotiations can move forward if the common point of reference is what is just and beneficial to the people.

As far as the NDFP is concerned, the people are desirous of social, economic and political reforms that address the roots of the civil war and lay the basis for a just and lasting peace. We want the people to enjoy the benefits of full national independence, democracy, social justice, development through national industrialization and genuine land reform and a patriotic and progressive system of education and culture.

We in the NDFP appreciate highly your welcome and encouragement of the initiatives being undertaken by incoming President Duterte. He has offered no less than the Communist Party of the Philippines four cabinet posts that involve close relations with the people. The CPP and NDFP have thanked the President-elect for his act of goodwill and show of trust and confidence and encouraged the legal national and democratic forces to select their nominees for government positions.

President-elect Duterte has long demonstrated that he has the strength of character, the political will and determination to engage the revolutionary forces and do what is good for the people. He is not afraid of denouncing foreign interlopers and the oligarchs and describing himself as a socialist and as the first Left president of the Philippines. His statement some time ago that he was amenable to a coalition government has encouraged the NDFP to seriously study the possibility of a government of national unity, peace and development.

I am proud of having some part in the development of President Duterte as a political activist and leader. He was a student of mine in political thought and became a member of Kabataang Makabayan. There should never be any problem in the peace process that we cannot discuss and fix promptly, directly or through emissaries. We have the necessary degree of rapport to exchange views and come to an agreement quickly in order to bring the peace process to a successful and happy conclusion.

President Duterte is known to spontaneously make abrupt or sometimes tentative statements, especially in the economic field. But he is also known, especially by those who know him enough, to listen to what is just and reasonable and is capable of changing or adjusting a previous position. He is said to be never deliberately unjust and unreasonable.

I make these comments in the hope that his anti-imperialist, democratic and socialist intentions and reflexes will allow him to understand that even within the International Monetary Fund there is now growing criticism of neoliberal economic policy for exacerbating inequality and economic stagnation. I believe that as truce and alliance or cooperation advances in our relations he will grasp fully the requirements of national industrialization and genuine land reform.

The visits of Fidel Agcaoili to President Duterte in Davao City have been very fruitful and so have been Fidel's

conversations with the former Justice Secretary Silvestre Bello III who is the appointed chief negotiator of the Duterte government. The NDFP is ready to resume the peace negotiations in accordance with the existing agreements. We are now preparing for the preliminary talks in Oslo next week to agree on the agenda for the resumption of formal talks in July. We are also ready to agree on the drafts of important documents for finalization and signing by the negotiating panels and for approval by the principals in July.

We in the NDFP have been elated by the pledge of President Duterte to release all the political prisoners by general amnesty even before the start of formal talks if the preliminary talks prove to be successful. And we have expressed the willingness to achieve peace immediately in the form of a mutual interim ceasefire. We are ready to maintain the ceasefire and the peace while we carry out the plan to accelerate the peace negotiations.

The three remaining items in the substantive agenda of the peace negotiations are: 1) social and economic reforms, 2) political and constitutional reforms and 3) end of hostilities and disposition of the armed forces. The negotiating panels must produce the comprehensive agreements on each of these items. In 1998 they succeeded in producing the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CAHRIHL). But unfortunately, when the Ramos government came to an end it was succeeded by regimes obsessed with obtaining the capitulation of the NDFP and less interested in the success of the peace process through the satisfaction of the people's demands for reforms.

Now we have again the same leading negotiators of both sides who were responsible for the ten major agreements made during the Ramos government, ranging from The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992 as the framework agreement for the peace negotiations to the CARHRIHL of 1998. There is a far greater chance than ever before for producing the comprehensive agreements at a faster rate to the mutual satisfaction of both parties and most importantly to the satisfaction of the people who need and demand the reforms.

The most crucial factor for the success of the peace process is the mutual determination of the Duterte government and the NDFP to exercise the necessary political will to adopt the long overdue basic reforms, especially in the face of the worsening crisis of the world capitalist system and the domestic ruling system that is inflicting intolerable suffering on the Filipino people. Since President Duterte is a professed socialist, it should be easy for him to agree to the bourgeois democratic reforms that the NDFP is proposing for uplifting the social conditions and lives of the Filipino people.

The NDFP wishes your multisectoral conversations the utmost success. We eagerly await the results. We are ready to learn from the views and proposals expressed. May you support the peace process more than ever before.

Long life! Long life to us!

Long live the Filipino people!

Interview Regarding Homecoming

By Raymund B. Villanueva, *Kodao*, June 10, 2016

At the Ateneo de Davao forum where you (through video) and Ka Fidel spoke last June 8, he said that your homecoming is still a ticklish issue owing to the US relisting of you as terrorist. He was quoted to have said that there must be guarantees from the Dutch, Norwegian and US governments that you will not be arrested in transit (possibly Taiwan). He reportedly added that he is afraid the US may still order your arrest by the Interpol.

1. How do you feel that the US may spoil your homecoming?

JMS: It is disgusting that the US government has renewed its listing of the CPP, NPA and myself as terrorist. It is trying to spoil the common determination and current efforts of the incoming Duterte government and the NDFP to resume the peace negotiations in July. It is ironic that the biggest terrorist force in Philippine history and in the world today, US imperialism, is designating revolutionary forces and leaders as terrorist.

It is possible that the US will spoil my homecoming in one of several ways, including intercepting me while in transit or upon redirection of the plane carrying me or allowing me to land in Manila without interference and eventually subjecting me to “wet operations” (bloody attack) by its mercenary agents or by merely pummelling me with psywar to slander and discredit me or push me towards a direction against my rights and interest. I am quite used to considering all these possibilities and I also think of how to counter them.

2. How will this development affect the high level of confidence that the incoming Duterte government and the NDFP has reached for the resumption of the peace talks?

JMS: Any violent attempt to spoil my homecoming by any hostile force has the objective of spoiling the peace process and to discredit the Duterte government for failing to secure me. Thus, it is wise to continue the series of formal talks in Oslo in accordance with the existing agreements. Holding the formal talks either in the urban or rural areas in the Philippines will invite surprise attacks from the peace spoilers.

I can stay for two weeks to one month every time I visit the Philippines in order to do consultations with President Duterte and with the revolutionary forces and to promote the peace process. But it would be too risky for me to stay for more than one month or I would have to be placed under conditions of maximum security that practically make me a prisoner of whoever gives me the maximum security.

3. What are the possible remedies to this situation?

JMS: The formal talks of the negotiating panels must be carried out in Oslo in accordance with the established practice of peace negotiations and in accordance within the existing agreement between the Manila government and the NDFP. Because I have to be present as Chief Political Consultant during the formal talks in Oslo, I must enjoy the right and freedom to travel between Norway and The Netherlands where my wife and two children reside as well as the right and freedom to travel to Philippines from time to time.

4. Will you ask for guarantees from both the Dutch and Norwegian governments? How about the US?

JMS: I would like to have the Philippine passport and to have residence either in The Netherlands or Norway while the peace negotiations are going on. The Duterte government can do me a favor if it requests the Dutch government or Norwegian government for the purpose of the peace negotiations. Before I make a visit to the Philippines in July or August, I must have that residence permit and a return visum to a country in Europe priorly because the moment I step out of the European area of treaty protection I would be practically giving up the absolute protection that I enjoy as a recognized political refugee under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

I do not wish to put myself in a position of being stranded in the Philippines, becoming vulnerable to extreme risks and pressures and worst of all becoming unable to participate in the peace negotiations in Oslo. While the peace negotiations are still going on, I should have the freedom to travel to the Netherlands residence of my wife who is a member of the NDFP negotiating panel, whether I travel from Norway or from the Philippines.

The Duterte government should request the US government to stop the designation of the CPP, NPA and myself as terrorist. In the first place, it was the Arroyo government that requested the aforesaid designation. It would be a big boost to the peace process if the Duterte government demand that the US cease to slander the revolutionary forces as terrorist.

5. *What benefit will your homecoming be to the peace process and the hoped-for coalition with the Duterte government?*

JMS: The main benefit from my initial and further visits to the Philippines is to generate goodwill, trust and confidence in the peace process and in the hoped-for alliance and cooperation of the NDFP with the Duterte government. The many who believe in the peace process will be further convinced that it is the way to move forward. Those who have doubts, especially on the revolutionary side, will increase their confidence from the fact that I freely move in and out of the Philippines just like any Filipino, apart from the necessary but inconspicuous security precautions.

6. *If you've heard from Mayor Duterte about this, what did he tell you?*

JMS: I have not had the opportunity of telling him what I manage to say in this interview. It would be useful and helpful if President Duterte, Jess Dureza and Bebot Bello read in full this interview so that they can be informed of the considerations for my initial and further visits to the Philippines while peace negotiations are held in a neutral venue abroad.

IMKP: On Peace Talks under Duterte

June 19, 2016

Introduction: Good day to all the listeners of Ask Prof! We again have for our interviewee the founding chair of the Communist Party of the Philippines and Chief Political Consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines on the Peace Talks, none other than Prof. Jose Maria Sison.

Opening spiel by Prof. Sara: The Leftist forces in Philippine society have happily welcomed Mayor Rodrigo Duterte's progressive statements since it has become apparent that he was elected by millions of Filipinos in an electoral process that was widely participated in by people who voted for the candidates of their choice. President-elect Duterte is open to the Left, a stance far removed from that of President Noynoy Aquino who he is slated to replace, and who was likewise popularly elected by the people but is rabidly reactionary and anti-people.

Duterte's move to reach out to the Left can be considered a courageous one, since the Left is a force in Philippine society that has broad and deep links with the daily lives of the Filipino masses, especially the toiling masses.

For one, Duterte has decided to allow the CPP to recommend persons for two important cabinet posts, the DAR and the DSWD. Two renowned and veteran activists of the National Democratic Movement will be taking on these posts, Rep. Ka Paeng Mariano of Anakpawis Partylist and a well-known mass leader of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP or Philippine Peasant Movement). Also, Prof. Judy Taguiwalo of UP and the Alliance of Concerned Teachers, a Martial Law activist who went underground to organize the masses to stand up against the Marcos dictatorship, and became a political prisoner. Not unlike the Left's stance, Duterte has more than once expressed a lack of interest in being a puppet to the foreign imperialist US.

But most of all, Duterte has declared that there will be Peace Talks between the administration and the CPP-NPA-NDF. For the CPP-NPA-NDF and tens of thousands of people, this is seen as the most important evidence of Duterte's sincerity in proving his desire to implement change. "Change is coming" was his campaign slogan. Let us discuss the Peace Negotiations with Prof. Jose Maria Sison. Warm greetings, Prof. Jose Maria Sison!

JMS: Warm patriotic greetings to all our fellow Filipinos! Our interview topic on the peace talks is timely and apropos. We successfully held the preliminary talks in Oslo on June 14 and 15 to prepare for the resumption of formal talks on the third week of July.

Prof. Sison, before we delve into the peace talks, could you explain to our listeners what the peace talks are all about?

JMS: The peace talks involve negotiations between the Government of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) to forge agreements that will resolve the problems that lie at the root of the civil war between the two parties. Based on the agreements, the armed conflict will cease and there will be just and sustained peace in our country.

Why are the Government of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines doing this? What are these two parties discussing and why are our fellow Filipinos monitoring these talks?

JMS: The Government of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines engage in peace talks because the Filipino people demand it and out of the good sense that it would be better to address the problems that are causing the civil war, have peace and unite in realizing fundamental social, economic and political reforms. All our fellow Filipinos are monitoring the peace talks because of the worsening crisis and poverty and their desire to have significant changes through reforms. They want to be liberated from brazen oppression and exploitation. They want their national and democratic rights to be respected. They want to have economic development through national industrialization and genuine land reform aside from other reforms.

What do we mean by preliminary talks, such as the one held in Oslo, Norway on June 14 and 15 that was attended by the new GRP negotiators Jesus Dureza, Silvestre Bello III and Hernani Braganza to talk to the NDFP? JMS: Our talks in Oslo are called preliminary talks because there is a need to first clarify and prepare the agenda of the formal talks that will resume once President Duterte's administration is in place. The peace talks were suspended for a long period because Aquino and OPAPP secretary Deles sabotaged it. The formal talks can resume once the new administration begins governing.

Could you share with us the significant achievements of the preliminary talks between the GRP and NDFP last June 14 and 15? JMS: The results of the preliminary talks can be read in our Joint Statement. The preliminary talks set the

agenda for the formal talks in July. Among the agenda is the affirmation of previous agreements since The Hague Joint Declaration, plans to accelerate the peace talks, the release of political prisoners through general amnesty and the interim ceasefire or temporary cessation of hostilities. The Joint Statement also called for the immediate release of detained NDFP consultants so they could join the formal talks in accordance with the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG). Also to be released along with them are the ailing, elderly and women political prisoners.

Despite the sincerity shown by President Duterte on the issue of uniting with the Left and the initiation of peace talks, there are detractors who say that the peace talks will not succeed. What is your opinion on this, Prof. Sison?

JMS: There are bigger possibilities now for the peace talks to advance to the point of being successfully concluded because of Duterte's higher level of political will or determination compared to that of previous presidents, to do what must be done to advance the talks and the agreements. He greatly understands the revolution's just objectives because he was a former student of mine and was a member of the Kabataang Makabayan. He was an officer of the Nationalist Alliance for Justice, Freedom and Democracy in 1986 and Partido ng Bayan in 1987. He has nobly and creatively cooperated with the revolutionary movement in Davao City for three decades. He agreed to serve as NDFP resource person in 2012 until he was told by the DILG to withdraw. He has good will. It is he who volunteered to release all political prisoners through general amnesty. And he has also offered four cabinet posts to the NDFP.

Will there be a ceasefire between the AFP/PNP and the NPA during the formal peace talks? How will the GRP and NDFP agree on this and how long will it last? Will the armed forces of the CPP/NDFP be going home and what will they be doing during the ceasefire?

JMS: There will be a ceasefire between the AFP/PNP and the NPA during the formal peace talks. There have been initial talks on the mode of ceasefire: will there be a mutual interim ceasefire agreement or will there be independent but simultaneous declarations as an initial step? This matter will be discussed thoroughly during the formal talks in July. The Red commanders and fighters of the NPA will not be going home. To prevent them from being bored during the ceasefire: mass work, politico-military training, production, health programs, cultural work, keeping watch over our country's environment and natural resources, stamping out criminality (especially illegal drugs and theft) and putting a stop to oppression and exploitation will all continue. What will be stopped are purposive military campaigns and operations against the other party.

Prof. Sison, do you believe that human rights violations will be reduced now that President Duterte will be sitting in Malacanang? How does this relate to the peace talks?

JMS: There will be a great reduction in human rights violations if the AFP, PNP and their auxiliary forces will not be conducting military campaigns against the NPA and the toiling masses and minority communities. Thus, the atmosphere for peace talks will improve. As to President Duterte's anti-criminality campaign, there are those who say that this will give rise to many human rights violations.

In his campaign style, Duterte has shown a liking for hyperbole, such as when he said that he would be fattening the fish in Manila Bay in order to frighten the criminals and win over the sentiments of the mass of electorates. But remember that he is a lawyer and also intelligent. He knows that as President, national and international attention will be focused on him. He will shy away from the danger of being discredited for many accusations of human rights violations.

In the course of the peace talks and the development of ceasefire and cooperation, the NDFP will be in a position to remind the Duterte government to promote and respect human rights. At the stage of forming a national council and government of national unity, peace and development, the democratic forces within and outside government will have a bigger role.

About your plans of coming back to the Philippines, Prof. Sison, will the peace talks be adversely affected should your visit to our country fail to materialize? What do you think of those who sow intrigues that you are merely using President Duterte to advance your own interests?

JMS: I am still conferring with comrades and my lawyers regarding the legal precautions, security measures, when and how long I can visit the Philippines. Meanwhile, there will be no negative effect on the peace talks since the latter will be held in Oslo or in another neutral venue abroad, if necessary, in accordance with existing agreements.

It will be more dangerous to the peace talks should I come home and something bad befalls me. There are peace spoilers who are waiting for the chance to do violence in order to sow intrigues and discord. To avoid this,

President Duterte and I could still see each other in Europe when he comes for state visits to Norway, The Netherlands and The Vatican.

President Duterte and I both hold the view that we should endeavor to have major changes for the good of the Filipino people. He told me that he detests the oligarchs and foreign intervention so much and that he wants to have a revolution within government. He told me he is Leftist and socialist. It is his duty to prove his words through deeds. We will cooperate with each other so long as he does whatever is good for the country.

What is your message to our fellow Filipinos who are hoping for the good that will result from the peace talks between the GRP and NDFP?

JMS: Further advance the peace talks and ensure that agreements will be reached on the reforms that should be implemented against the imperialists and big compradors and landlords. Advance national and democratic rights and interests. There should be complete national independence, democracy, economic development through national industrialization and genuine land reform, social justice, expanded free public education and patriotic and progressive culture.

For the first time in the Philippines' entire history, there is a president who has proclaimed to the country that he is Leftist and socialist and offered four cabinet posts to the Left. Before this, he has expressed readiness to form a coalition government with the communists. Let us endeavor to have a government of national unity, peace and progress.

The Filipino people and the patriotic and progressive forces must seize the opportunity resulting from the crisis of the ruling system, the strengthening of the revolutionary movement and the emergence of a president like Duterte. President Duterte has a grasp of patriotic and progressive objectives because he used to be part of the Kabataang Makabayan, Nationalist Alliance, Partido ng Bayan and Bayan.

The Most Important Factor

Is Duterte's Political Will

Opening Statement for Davao Media Forum on Peace Talks

June 21, 2016

I thank the Exodus for Justice and Peace and BAYAN-SMR for inviting me to speak as well as the journalists for participating in this media forum.

It is appropriate and purposive for us to meet soon after the spread of the good news. This is spelled out in the Oslo Joint Statement, issued by the representatives of the incoming Duterte government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines to mark the success of their preliminary talks from June 14 to 15 in the Norwegian capital.

Success of the preliminary talks in setting the resumption of formal talks

The two Parties agreed to resume the formal talks in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations in the third week of July and to conduct them in accordance with previously signed agreements since The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992, which set the basic framework for peace negotiations.

During the resumption of the formal talks, the Parties shall discuss the following agenda items: 1) Affirmation of previously signed agreements; 2) Accelerated process for negotiations, including the timeline for the completion of the remaining substantive agenda for the talks: social and economic reforms; political and constitutional reforms; and end of hostilities and disposition of forces; 3) Reconstitution of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) list; 4) Amnesty Proclamation for the release of all detained political prisoners, subject to concurrence by Congress; and 5. Mode of interim ceasefire.

The two Parties agreed to recommend to President Duterte the following: 1) the immediate release of NDFP consultants and other JASIG protected persons in accordance with the JASIG to enable them to participate in the peace negotiations; and 2) the immediate release of prisoners/detainees based on humanitarian grounds.

Aquino regime's accountability for paralyzing the peace negotiations

During the Aquino regime, no less than the principal Benigno S. Aquino III apparently paid very superficial and casual attention to the peace negotiations, unless he himself gave an explicit order to paralyze and sabotage the peace negotiations. He allowed his peace adviser, OPAPP secretary Ging Deles, and his chief negotiator Alex Padilla, to do nothing else but to impugn and negate the agreements previously signed by the Parties and to simply demand the capitulation and pacification of the revolutionary forces and people. They have claimed mockingly that their predecessors in the peace process yielded too much to the NDFP.

From the very outset, Deles and Padilla harped on the lie that The Hague Joint Declaration was a document of "perpetual division" and denied the fact that this solemn document had made possible ten major agreements. They declared the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) as "inoperative" and blocked every attempt to reconstitute the list of JASIG-protected NDFP consultants. NDFP consultants have been extrajudicially killed like Sotero Llamas, forcibly disappeared like Leo Velasco or imprisoned on charges of common crimes.

They maliciously tried to discredit the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) by calling it "a mere propaganda document" of the NDFP. They also tried hard to cripple the NDFP section of the Joint Monitoring Committee by seeking to reduce drastically its funding from the Norwegian third party facilitator for its operations. The CARHRIHL has been wantonly violated with the imprisonment of suspected communists and NPA fighters as well as social activists and ordinary people on false charges of common crimes.

Under the Aquino regime, the OPAPP blocked the peace negotiations with the NDFP. It became a psywar agency of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and a center of corruption. The OPAPP secretary Deles spent most of her time attending fake surrender ceremonies and doing other psywar chores for the AFP and collaborating with her mates in the bureaucracy, military and Napoles-type yellow NGOs to privately siphon off funds from the large budgetary appropriations for the OPAPP and PAMANA.

Under the US-designed Oplan Bayanihan of the Aquino regime, gross and systematic human rights of violations were perpetrated, including abductions, torture, extrajudicial killings, evictions of the urban poor, displacement of peasants and indigenous people to make way for the expansion of mining, plantations, shopping malls and tourist facilities. The regime has cynically described the psywar, intelligence and combat operations of the AFP, PNP and their auxiliaries as peace and development operations.

The main thrust of Oplan Bayanihan has been to destroy, cripple or force the surrender of the revolutionary forces and people. Even the Aquino regime ´s hype about yielding to the demands of the MILF was merely a psywar scheme to deceive the MILF and to prolong its ceasefire agreement with the GRP in order to have more AFP troops for deployment in the areas of the NPA. But thanks to the stupidity of Aquino, he plunged into the Mamasapano fiasco and reignited the armed resistance of the Bangsamoro.

Prospects for peace negotiations during the Duterte administration

The resumption of formal talks in the peace negotiations within the first month of the Duterte administration is an auspicious start. It is premised on the previously signed agreements. The chief negotiator of the Philippine government, incoming Secretary of Labor and Employment Silvestre Bello III, has a record of negotiating diligently and working effectively with his own panel members and with the negotiators of the NDFP in making the aforesaid agreements.

Of course, the most important factor on the side of the GRP is President Duterte as the principal. By many indications, he has the political will or determination to pursue the peace negotiations to a successful and happy conclusion. He understands the national and democratic character of the revolutionary forces represented by the NDFP. He knows what it takes to forge mutually acceptable agreements on social, economic and political reforms in order to achieve a just and lasting peace.

President Duterte did not suddenly drop from the sky. He grew up intellectually and politically under conditions of ever-worsening conditions due to the chronic crisis of the semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system. Since his youth, he has been inclined to side with the oppressed and exploited. He was my student in political thought and joined the Kabataang Makabayan.

He became an official of the Nationalist Alliance for Justice, Freedom and Democracy in 1986 when he and his mother were in the forefront of challenging the Marcos fascist dictatorship. He also became an official of the Partido ng Bayan in 1987. As an elected public official in Davao City, he has actively and effectively cooperated with the legal progressive forces as well as with the revolutionary forces. At one time in 2012, he even agreed to become a resource person of the NDFP in peace negotiations until he was instructed by DILG Secretary Robredo to desist.

Coming from Davao, you know better than I do that President Duterte has often taken the initiative and heeded proposals to undertake reforms and programs that benefit the poor, the oppressed and exploited. He carries the spirit of serving the people and is ever willing to do what he can to serve them. The whole nation knows what statements and actions he has done to promote the peace negotiations and gain further the confidence of the NDFP. Without prodding from anyone, he has offered the release of all political prisoners by general amnesty and he offered cabinet posts to the CPP and the NDFP.

Duterte has declared that he is the first Left president of the Philippines. Let us give him a chance to prove it. Let us avail of the peace negotiations as one of several ways of clarifying what needs to be done and what can be done in order to bring about full national independence, democratic empowerment of the working people, economic development through national industrialization and land reform, social justice, expanded public education and advance of a patriotic and progressive culture.

Some matters related to the peace negotiations

I have said enough to start an open forum on the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. But I wish to take this opportunity to speak in honor of a comrade and close friend of President Duterte, Ka Parago or Comrade Leoncio Pitao. Preparations are now being made to commemorate the first anniversary of his death. He was martyred on June 28, 2015 in Paquibato District after serving the people and fighting for their rights and interests for a long period of time. Let us recall him as a hero of the people, whose undying spirit continues to inspire the growing revolutionary movement. Let us have a moment of silence.

It is encouraging to recall the indomitable courage of Ka Parago at a time that the forces of Oplan Bayanihan continue to rampage. We must fight them and stop the extrajudicial killings, illegal arrests and detention, occupation of schools and barangay halls and the displacement of people to make way for companies that engage in mining, logging, plantations and other activities that poison the soil, destroys the farms of ordinary people, damage the environment and bring about more serious natural and social disasters.

It is fitting and proper to celebrate the revolutionary principles and heroic deeds of Ka Parago during the concert on June 27 in order to enlighten the audience about the 12-point program of the NDFP, the people's war and the peace talks as well as during the mass mobilization and peace forum on June 28. We are hopeful that these activities will remind President Duterte of the need to withdraw the military forces to their barracks in Mindanao and elsewhere in consonance with the impending interim ceasefire agreement in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

The ceasefire between the armed forces of the GRP and the NDFP and the eventual conclusive success of the

peace negotiations should make more resources available for expanding industrial and agricultural production and education, health and other social services. Resources should not be wasted through the super profit remittances by the multinational firms, foreign debt servicing, bureaucratic corruption, luxury consumption by the oligarchy, excessive military spending and other forms of lopsided spending for schemes like K-12, which is meant to make education unpatriotic in content, more subservient to the needs of multinational firms, more expensive and more privatized.

Some people are worried that the ceasefire might be prolonged and that the New People's Army would disintegrate or be gravely weakened and yet the comprehensive agreements on social, economic and political reforms might not be satisfactory or might not be implemented at all. There is a plan to accelerate the peace negotiations and thereby to measure the seriousness of the Duterte government to make substantive progress in the peace negotiations.

The people's army will not be idle even if it is in a mode of self-defense and does not actively carry out offensive military campaigns and operations against the AFP and PNP. It can continue to engage in mass work, land reform, production, health care, cultural work, politico-military training, defense and protection of the environment and natural resources against illegal mining, logging and landgrabbing and it can continue to suppress drug dealing, cattle rustling, robbery, kidnapping and other criminal acts as well as despotic acts of local tyrants.

Unite for Just and Lasting Peace

Video Message to the Peace Forum, Davao City, June 28, 2016

We of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) convey our warmest greetings of solidarity and peace to the Exodus for Justice and Peace and BAYAN-SMR, Bishops Modesto D. Villasanta, Redeemer Yanez and Felixberto Calalang, all the officials of the Philippine government headed by the new President Rodrigo Duterte, the new OPAPP Secretary Hon. Jesus Dureza and the representatives of the Negotiating Panels of the GRP and NDFP and all the delegations presenting the Mindanao People's Agenda.

We are all deeply pleased in this Forum for Peace with the participation of people from various walks of life, including the workers, peasant, Lumad, Moro, women, children, urban poor, youth, business, academe, artists, health professionals, church people, transport, fisherfolk, athletes, LGBT, senior citizens and others. We are all grateful to the tens of thousands of people participating in the People's Concert and People's March for Peace on June 27 and 18.

We can be sure that the spirit of the patriot and revolutionary hero Ka Parago, Comrade Leoncio Pitao, whose martyrdom is commemorated today, is present in all our mass activities for peace inasmuch as we are inspired by his lifelong struggle for a just and lasting peace. He fought hard, made sacrifices and died for the just cause of seeking fundamental reforms to make a new and better Philippines that is truly independent, democratic, socially just, peaceful and progressive in an all-round way.

Let us all unite for a just and lasting peace. This can be attained by addressing the roots of the armed conflict and forging the comprehensive agreements on major social, economic and political reforms. Since The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992, the aim of the peace negotiations and methods of achieving it have been set forth. But the previous administrations of Estrada, Arroyo and Aquino lacked the political will to overcome their reactionary interests and use their power and resources to advance the peace process.

Let us take advantage of a new situation in which the worsening crisis of the ruling system, the growing strength of the people's revolutionary movement and the failures of previous administrations have brought about a president who is courageous and proud to say that he is the first Left president of the Philippines and is willing to adopt and implement the necessary reforms for a just and lasting peace. By all manifestations, he is open to the making of mutually satisfactory agreements that serve the best interests of the Filipino people.

We are all elated by the success of the preliminary talks of the teams of the incoming Duterte government and the NDFP in Oslo last June 14 and 15. The formal talks by the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels shall be resumed in the third week of July in Oslo. The agenda includes the affirmation of previously signed agreements, the plan to accelerate the peace negotiations on the three remaining items of the substantive agenda, the release of all political prisoners by general amnesty and the mode of ceasefire.

Let us congratulate the broad masses of the people and all the peace-loving organizations and leaders of various sectors who have campaigned for the resumption of formal talks. Let us look forward to the success of the first formal talks in the time of the Duterte government. The success of these will lead to further hard work by the principals, negotiators, consultants, ceasefire monitors and other focused personnel of the negotiating parties and to further inputs and support from all the peace-loving forces and people.

We welcome the movement for peace undertaken by the Exodus for Justice and Peace and BAYAN-SMR in Mindanao and all other forces on a nationwide scale. Campaigns must be waged for public participation in promoting and realizing the people's agenda for change. The various sectors of the people must be aroused, united and mobilized to submit proposals to the negotiating panels and support the peace process in as many ways as possible. The movement for peace can be energized by public meetings, informative and educational forums, multi-media publications and cultural activities.

Two days from now, the presidency of Rodrigo Roa Duterte shall be inaugurated. We wish him to succeed in all his efforts to serve the Filipino people, respond to the demands for full national independence, democracy, social justice and all-round development and perform his crucial role in achieving a just and lasting peace. Let this Forum for Peace be a celebration of Ka Parago's desire for justice and peace and be a happy and meaningful send off for President Duterte.

Long live the memory of the patriot and hero Ka Parago!

Long live President Duterte!

Best wishes to all who work for the advance and success of the peace process!

Long live the cause of a just and lasting peace!

Long live the Filipino people!

Solidarity with Supporters of President Duterte

June 30, 2016

I wholeheartedly greet and express solidarity with you. I join you in the victory for change celebration of the election and oath-taking today of Rodrigo Roa Duterte as President of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP). I have proudly acknowledged that he was my student in political science at the Lyceum of the Philippines. I am glad for his electoral victory because of your help and for his assumption of the highest government position.

As early as June 15, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and the GRP reached an agreement to continue and pursue the peace negotiations during the time of Duterte until these arrive at a just and durable peace for our country. The two sides will confront the major problems in the social, economic and political fields that is the cause of the civil war in our country. Agreements will be made to fulfil the national and democratic rights and welfare of the Filipino people.

Thus, we shall have a new Philippines that is independent, democratic, progressive, prosperous and peaceful. We all wish to have a country that has full national freedom, human rights, democratic rights, social justice, economic development through national industrialization and genuine land reform, extensive free education, patriotic and progressive culture, and international friendship, mutual support and peace.

Note:

Prior to Duterte's assumption to the presidency, preliminary talks were held in Oslo June 14-15, 2016 under the facilitation of the Royal Norwegian Government.

In this meeting the two parties issued a joint statement containing the following points regarding the formal meetings in the peace negotiations: 1. Formal peace talks will resume in the third week of July 2016 in Oslo, Norway and shall be conducted in accordance with previously signed agreements by the Parties. 2. The Parties will discuss the following agenda items during the resumption of the formal talks: (a) Affirmation of previously signed agreements; (b) Accelerated process for negotiations, including the timeline for the completion of the remaining substantive agenda for the talks: socio-economic reforms; political and constitutional reforms; and end of hostilities and disposition of forces; (c) Reconstitution of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) list; (d) Amnesty Proclamation for the release of all detained political prisoners, subject to concurrence by Congress; (e) Mode of interim ceasefire. 3. The GRP Panel will recommend to President Duterte the following: a) Immediate release of NDFP consultants and other JASIG protected persons in accordance with the JASIG to enable them to participate in the peace negotiations; b) Immediate release of prisoners/detainees based on humanitarian grounds.

Negotiations for a Just and Lasting Peace: Background, Current Status and Prospects

Speech at the College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Cordilleras, Baguio City

July 13, 2016

I thank the Political Science Society and its President Terso Araza, Jr. for inviting me to speak on the peace negotiations between the Government of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). I shall give you a basically informative presentation on the background, current status and prospects of said negotiations. I shall make my speech short to allow more time for the open forum and the other speakers.

I. Background

A. The armed conflict

A nationwide civil war exists between the US-dominated reactionary big comprador-landlord Government of the Philippines (GRP) and the people's democratic government of workers and peasants and all the revolutionary forces and people represented by the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). It has been going on since 1969.

Since 1992 upon the forging of The Hague Joint Declaration, the two conflicting sides, the GRP and NDFP, have agreed to engage in peace negotiations to address the roots of the armed conflict and to arrive at agreements to lay the basis for a just and lasting peace. Prior to the aforesaid declaration, there was the 60-day ceasefire agreement on November 27, 1986 to create the atmosphere for negotiating and agreeing on the agenda for peace negotiations.

But the ceasefire agreement broke down as a result of the Mendiola massacre of peasants and their supporters on January 22, 1987. Taking advantage of the intelligence gathered during the period of ceasefire negotiations and agreement, the Aquino regime launched a brutal military and police campaign against the revolutionary movement. In her own words, Cory Aquino unsheathed the "sword of war" and launched the US-designed Oplan Lam-bat Bitag.

In 1989 when the regime was besieged by worsening political and economic crisis, especially by coup threats from the Reform the Armed Forces Movement, Mrs. Aquino sent Rep. Jose V. Yap to the Netherlands to offer peace negotiations to the NDFP. The NDFP accepted the offer, with the proviso expressed in an aide memoir to Aquino that the negotiations must be held in a foreign neutral venue in order to avoid the risks and threats of holding the negotiations in the Philippines.

The exploratory talks that Rep. Yap had with the NDFP were moving towards formal talks in The Netherlands. But the military mutiny headed by Col. Noble in northern Mindanao in December 1990 had the effect of dissuading the Aquino regime from pursuing the peace negotiations.

B. Agreements made during Ramos regime

When Fidel V. Ramos became president in 1992, he sent to The Hague a delegation headed by Rep. Jose V. Yap to forge the framework agreement for the entire peace negotiations, The Hague Joint Declaration of September 1, 1992. The agreement was negotiated at a venue provided by the Netherlands Institute of International Relations at Clingendael.

The declaration sets forth the aim of the peace negotiations, which is to address the roots of the armed conflict through agreements that would lay the basis of a just and lasting peace. It states the mutually acceptable principles of national sovereignty, democracy and social justice as guide. It sets the substantive agenda and method of negotiations and agreement.

Soon after The Hague Joint Declaration on October 28, 1992, President Ramos released hundreds of political prisoners from both the revolutionary movement and the military mutineers through general amnesty. However, the formation of the National Unification Commission (NUC) that tried in vain to carry out so-called localized peace talks interfered with the implementation of The Hague Joint Declaration for nearly two years.

After the dissolution of the NUC and the formation of the GRP Negotiating Panel headed by Ambassador Howard Q. Dee in 1994, major agreements were forged by the negotiating parties in quick succession, such as the following: The Breukelen Joint Statement on June 14, 1994, the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) on February 24, 1995 and the Agreement on the Ground Rules of the Formal Meetings on February

26, 1995.

The Joint Agreement on the Formation, Sequence and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committee and the Additional Implementing Rules Pertaining to the Documents of Identification under JASIG were solemnly signed on June 26, 1995 at the formal opening of the peace negotiations in Brussels upon the facilitation of the Belgian government.

The Negotiating Panels of the GRP and the NDFP succeeded in forging the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) on March 16, 1998. This fulfils the first of the four items in the substantive agenda of the peace negotiations.

Other agreements signed on the same day were: the Additional Implementing Rules of JASIG Pertaining to the Security of Personnel and Consultations in Furtherance of the Peace Negotiations and the Joint Agreement in Support of Socioeconomic Projects of Private Development Organizations and Institutes.

C. Paralysis of the peace process in post-Ramos regimes

The GRP-NDFP peace negotiations became paralyzed most of the time during the regimes of Estrada, Arroyo and Aquino despite auspicious starts. In common these post-Ramos regimes were obsessed with seeking the capitulation and pacification of the revolutionary forces and people, instead of addressing the roots of the armed conflict and arriving at agreements to lay the basis for a just and lasting peace.

President Estrada made an auspicious start by signing and approving the CARHRIHL on August 11, 1998 (in accordance with Memorandum Order No. 9 dated August 7, 1998). But he resented the capture of General Obillo and Captain Montealto by the New People's Army and the criticisms and opposition of the NDFP to his approval of the Visiting Forces Agreement with the US. Thus, he ordered the termination of the JASIG and the entire peace negotiations on May 31, 1999.

President Arroyo also made an auspicious start by agreeing with the NDFP in the first half of 2001 to foil the assassination plots by the previous regime against the NDFP chief political consultant, the holding of the International Solidarity Conference in support of the Philippine peace process, having the Norwegian Royal Government as third party facilitator, resuming the formal talks and reaffirming all previous agreements, approving the Operating Guidelines for the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) under CARHRIHL and creating the offices of the Secretariats of the GRP and NDFP of the JMC.

But in June 2001 the negotiations broke down when the GRP took offense at the killing of the notorious human rights violator Rodolfo Aguinaldo who resisted the attempt of the NPA to arrest him. The GRP negotiating panel walked out of the peace negotiations despite the obvious absence of a ceasefire agreement with the NDFP. The GRP-NDFP peace negotiations were further paralyzed by the Arroyo regime's unlawful breach of the JASIG by "suspending" it rather than categorically terminating it.

The worst offenses committed by the Arroyo regime against the peace process were the adoption of the US policy of terror, the request to the US government for the designation of the CPP, NPA and the NDFP chief political consultant as "terrorists" and the gross and systematic human rights violations under Oplan Bantay Laya, which included the abduction, illegal detention, torture and extrajudicial killings of NDFP consultants in the peace process.

President Aquino hesitated to resume the peace negotiations with the NDFP. He believed the advice of the US, the military and the Akbayan that the NPA was already a spent force and became more obsessed with seeking to destroy or rendering the NPA inconsequential through the US-designed military Oplan Bayanihan, the cash dole outs under PAMANA of the OPAPP and deployment of more military forces against the NPA by prolonging the ceasefire with the MILF. Oplan Bayanihan has proven to be as vicious and brutal as Oplan Bantay Laya, if not more than so.

At the very resumption of talks on February 15-21, 2011, the OPAPP headed by Teresita Q. Deles and GRP negotiating panel headed by Alexander Padilla qualified their reaffirmation of previous agreements by calling The Hague Joint Declaration a document of "perpetual division." From the very beginning, they insisted on the capitulation and pacification of the revolutionary forces and people and refused to recognize the progress already made in the peace process towards the resolution of the armed conflict. They proceeded to declare the JASIG "inoperative" and refused to allow the reconstitution of the JASIG list of holders of documents of identification. They licensed the military and police to abduct, indefinitely detain, torture and murder NDFP consultants and other JASIG-protected NDFP personnel. They also attacked the CARHRIHL as an "NDFP propaganda document" and

caused the arrest and detention of people on trumped up charges of common crimes, despite allegations of being connected with the NPA. The Aquino regime more than doubled the number of political prisoners in violation of the CARHRIHL and in particular the Hernandez political offense doctrine.

II. Current status of the peace negotiations

A. Meeting between Fidel Agcaoili and President Duterte

The emissary of the NDFP Fidel V. Agcaoili was able to visit President Duterte four times in Davao City after his election and before his oathtaking as President. They were able to discuss many matters and agree to such an extent that their conversations opened wide the way to the resumption of formal talks in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

President Duterte has made public pronouncements that have generated goodwill and confidence in connection with the peace negotiations. He has declared that he wishes to consult with the NDFP chief political consultant and that he is willing to release NDFP consultants so that they can participate in the resumption of formal talks in Oslo. His chief negotiator Silvestre Bello III has repeatedly declared that previous agreements shall be respected.

President Duterte has offered four cabinet posts to no less than the CPP and the NDFP and has agreed to the counterproposal that in the meantime highly qualified persons who are patriotic and progressive can be appointed. Immediately after his oathtaking, even before convening his cabinet, he invited the leaders of the mass organizations demonstration on Mendiola to present to him the People's Agenda for Change. Quite a number of revolutionaries have expressed their concern that the key economic and finance posts in the Duterte government are exponents of the already unravelling and discredited neoliberal policy, which favors the foreign monopoly super profiteers, the big compradors and landgrabbers. But I have pointed out that the global and domestic crisis are worsening and that the NDFP must use the opportunities outside and inside the peace process to persuade the Duterte government to take a patriotic and progressive position on issues pertaining to national sovereignty, democracy, social justice, development, education and culture and international solidarity. The CPP, NPA and the NDFP have accepted President Duterte's offer of cooperation in cracking down on the manufacture and distribution of illegal drugs, which are ruining the health and lives of millions of people. They have asserted that the right to due process must be respected in the course of the anti-drugs campaign. The drug lords at the highest level and their political, military and police protectors are the most deserving of combat response when they resist arrest with deadly weapons. But the low-level addicts and small addict-pushers deserve to be treated and rehabilitated because they are sick.

B. Exploratory talks in Oslo

Let me just inform you of the content of the Joint Oslo Statement of representatives of the incoming GRP Panel and the NDFP Panel who held exploratory talks on June 14-15, 2016, in Oslo, Norway under the facilitation of the Royal Norwegian Government as Third-Party Facilitator for the talks.

They agreed on the following: 1) Formal peace talks will resume in the third week of July 2016 in Oslo, Norway and shall be conducted in accordance with previously signed agreements by the Parties; 2) The Parties will discuss the following agenda items during the resumption of the formal talks: a. Affirmation of previously signed agreements; b. Accelerated process for negotiations, including the timeline for the completion of the remaining substantive agenda for the talks: socioeconomic reforms; political and constitutional reforms; and end of hostilities and disposition of forces; c. Reconstitution of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) List d. Amnesty Proclamation for the release of all detained political prisoners, subject to concurrence by Congress. e. Mode of interim ceasefire. 3. The GRP Panel will recommend to President Duterte the following: a. Immediate release of NDFP consultants and other JASIG protected persons in accordance with the JASIG to enable them to participate in the peace negotiations. b. Immediate release of prisoners/detainees based on humanitarian grounds.

C. Resumption of formal talks

Let me update you on the preparations for the resumption of formal talks. The formal talks shall not be held in the third week of July as the Oslo Statement states but either from July 27 to August 2 or a later date to give ample time to the GRP side to cause the immediate release of NDFP consultants and other JASIG-protected persons in accordance with the JASIG to enable them to participate in the peace negotiations as well as the immediate release of prisoners/detainees based on humanitarian grounds because they are sickly, elderly, women and overly long in

prison.

The affirmation of previous agreements will be easily done in a formal joint declaration because both sides in the opening remarks of their respective chairpersons will already be affirming the agreements.

The reconstitution of the List of Holders of the Document of Identification under the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) will also be easily done. The NDFP Panel will simply provide to the GRP Panel for acknowledgment an updated list of the NDFP consultants and security personnel who are entitled to safety and immunity guarantees under JASIG.

It will be quite easy to lay out the accelerated process for negotiations, including the timeline for the completion of the remaining substantive agenda for the formal talks: socioeconomic reforms; political and constitutional reforms; and end of hostilities and disposition of forces. In accordance with the Joint Agreement on the Formation, Sequence and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees, the Reciprocal Working Committee on the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms shall begin work immediately after the first formal talks of the panel and Working Groups can also immediately work on the Comprehensive Agreements on Political and Constitutional Reforms and the End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces. The Negotiating Panels will discuss the content and language of the Amnesty Proclamation, which shall release from prison all the current political prisoners. The proclamation shall be issued by the President and shall be subject to the concurrence of a majority of each House of Congress. The Duterte party has already gained a majority in both houses of Congress. For the sake of the peace process, even the legislators outside of the Duterte camp can be persuaded to concur with the Amnesty Proclamation. The NDFP will not agree to an interim ceasefire with the GRP if the current political prisoners are not released through general amnesty. Should there be an interim ceasefire because of the release of the current political prisoners through general amnesty, the interim ceasefire agreement may be done in a single document or in the form of unilateral but simultaneous ceasefire declarations in order to avoid a prolonged negotiation on a single document.

III. Prospects

A. Prospects for a successful conclusion of the peace negotiations

The most optimistic estimates are that the three remaining comprehensive agreements shall be forged at the rate of one per three to six months. But it remains to be seen how willing is the Duterte government to accept the following: 1. a policy of national industrialization and genuine land reform to develop the Philippine social economy in the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms, 2. a policy of strong national independence by abrogating unequal treaties and agreements, building a government of national unity, peace and development and empowering the workers, peasants, women and indigenous peoples in the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms, and 3. a policy of truce and cooperation with the people's army and other revolutionary forces and a process integration in the socioeconomic, political and security system of an independent country in the Comprehensive Agreement on the End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces.

B. Prospects of implementing the agreements

It is one thing to make comprehensive agreements. It is another thing to implement them. But we cannot really go far in discussing the implementation of agreements because we need to make the agreements first in order to see whether the revolutionary forces and the people can accept them as greatly beneficial to them. It is fine if within the first two years of the Duterte government the remaining comprehensive agreements are forged so that in the subsequent four years there is plenty of leeway for implementation.

The US and local reactionary forces are chiefly and overwhelmingly interested in preserving their power and wealth and disarming and dismantling the revolutionary army of the people. Forewarned, the revolutionary forces and the people have to maintain their unity and strength and make sure that the agreements on social, economic and political reforms are implemented.

On the Peace Process

Interview by Inday Espina-Varona

July 14, 2016

IEV: Judge Santos in his book indicates it would be good for the NDF to allow a “community based” approach and that this be seen as “central” and “not just additional or augmentative to the panel-to-panel negotiations.” Is there space for this? What form of space would be viable? Conversely, what are the dangers in this track?

JMS: I hope that Santos is not trying to revive the old discredited “localized ceasefire negotiations” run by the local peace and order councils of the GRP and opposed by the NDFP. I also hope that Santos is not trying to pull the GRP-NDFP negotiations to Manila or to the Philippine countryside and put the NDFP at a grave disadvantage. It is not clear what Santos means by making the community-based approach as principal to the panel-to-panel negotiations. Where in the world or history has, he seen peace negotiations of warring parties done not by delegations or panels of representatives but by entire communities and masses?

I hope that Santos does not presume or insinuate that the NDFP has no community mass base or no popular constituency to consult with or if it has these it does not consult them for purposes of the peace negotiations. In fact, the NDFP negotiating panel gets its direction from the following: the people’s revolutionary government of workers and peasants, including local organs of democratic political power, mass organizations, a people’s army, an alliance of democratic forces and a leading revolutionary party of the working class based on the worker-peasant alliance.

Peace negotiations between two warring parties cannot be done without the principal and decisive use of delegations or panels to represent their respective constituencies. Peace negotiations cannot be conducted between the GRP and the NDFP in the form of mass gatherings in indoor or outdoor venues of whatever size controlled by the GRP authorities if in an urban area in the Philippines. Peace negotiations can neither be conducted somewhere in the Philippine countryside with both warring parties mobilizing their respective security forces. That would create a combustible situation in which enemy drones can surveil the area and armed peace spoilers can disrupt the negotiations.

Contrary to the notion of Santos and the like that the NDFP negotiators are divorced from the communities and masses, the NDFP negotiating panel is surrounded by other competent people to help it and it consults the leading organs and the mass base before, during and after formal meetings of the negotiating panels.

Representation by delegations or negotiating panels is democratic, orderly, efficient and productive. It is the way to negotiate and reach an agreement that is mutually satisfactory to both negotiating parties and above all to the Filipino people who express their needs and demands.

IEV: Santos and many of the panelists and reactors (only Fr. Chris from Karapatan was present from the other end) ... criticized what they described as the NDFP’s use of peace as a strategy and tactic amid the primacy of armed struggle.

JMS: What do Santos and the like expect from the NDFP? No guiding revolutionary principles, no policies, no program for the benefit of the people and no sense of strategy and tactics and no sense that the other side has its own set of ideas and plans of action to possibly deceive and defeat the NDFP at the least cost? Do they wish the NDFP to announce that it has lost the will and strength to fight for the people’s national and social liberation? Why put the burden of giving up the armed struggle on the oppressed and exploited who have had to take up arms against their priorly armed oppressors and exploiters? Frankly speaking, the NDFP has long noticed that the GRP and the likes of Santos are mainly or solely interested in obtaining the capitulation and pacification of the revolutionary movement and frustrating the demands of the people for national and social liberation.

IEV: They talked of a need for a “paradigm shift,” asking what is an acceptable level of change for the NDFP outside of the 12-point program? And what happens if one side – the government in this case – cannot immediately give the complete range of substantive change sought by the NDFP?

JMS: What paradigm does Santos demand from the NDFP? Announce a willingness or even a decision to surrender and have peace at any cost for the people or in favor of their exploiters and oppressors? Scrap or dilute the 12-point program of the NDFP in advance of any show of policy change by the GRP for the good of the people? The program of the NDFP is publicly known. Does the NDFP have to change its demand for full national

independence and abrogation of unequal treaties and agreements, the democratic empowerment of the workers, peasants and the petty and middle bourgeoisie, economic development through national industrialization and genuine land reform, a patriotic and progressive kind of education and culture, expansion of free public education, gender equality, self-determination of the indigenous peoples, etc? Why should the NDFP have the burden of scaling down its program of demands and actions prior to the test of negotiations and the discovery of the doable and undoable in given circumstances? Is it not the big compradors, caciques and the corrupt bureaucrats who ought to have the burden of scaling down the oppression and exploitation of the people? They serve their imperialist masters and are driven by their own appetites for power and wealth.

JMS: The NDFP has always proclaimed that its strategic line in the peace negotiations is no different from that in the people's war: to obtain national liberation and democracy for the benefit of the people. There would be no more point in waging people's war if through the peace negotiations such a patriotic and progressive aim is achieved. It is only by having national liberation and democracy that there is a basis for a just and lasting peace in the Philippines.

IEV: Santos also told me, since they were obviously going round and round the RA-RJ differences, "that even without the protagonists concerned speaking with each other, maybe they could harmonize their socio-political agenda ... as presumably all of them are coming from the left, that should not be as hard as harmonizing the agenda of the right and the left."

JMS: The struggle involving the Second Great Rectification Movement has long been settled since more than 20 years ago. The Rejectionists were defeated ideologically, politically and organizationally within the revolutionary movement. The pseudo-Left leaders have exposed themselves by becoming political agents of reactionaries like Estrada, Arroyo and Aquino.

Santos and the so-called RJs, have long become shamefaced agents of imperialist-funded NGOs as well as anticommunist constituents of the GRP. They have attacked the NDFP and supported the GRP in ways that the reasonable members of the GRP panelists would be ashamed of. The leaders of the RJs and dropouts from the revolutionary movement became uncritical factotums of the successive reactionary governments of Estrada, Arroyo and Aquino.

IEV: I have no idea how they think this can be done since the peace talks is between the GRP and the NDFP, but is it even possible to harmonize the different strains of the Left when it comes to, say, CASER?

JMS: The peace negotiations are between the GRP and NDFP. Constituents of the GRP should frankly admit that they belong to the GRP side. Honest third parties of whatever tendency and size can submit proposals for consideration by both sides or any side. However, they cannot be accommodated within the limited space of the negotiating room in Oslo or anywhere else. Not even the RNG as third party facilitator is allowed by both negotiating parties to sit at the negotiating table at all times. Sometimes they are politely advised to stay out of the negotiating room until they are called.

IEV: Joeven Reyes of Sulong CARHRIHL, who claims her group has consulted with both the GRP and NDFP representatives, mentioned that both sides are thinking of having third party "observers" in the peace talks. Can you elaborate on this?

JMS: As far as I know, the NDFP is not interested in having third party "observers" within the negotiating room. Neither have I heard of the GRP as being interested in such. It would complicate the peace process if the third party "observers" can be in the negotiating room and be in a position to make leaks or publicly broadcast, on the pretext of transparency, the zigs and zags and even momentary collisions in the peace negotiations.

IEV: She also said the NDF now seems more open towards civil society participation – what are the parameters of this participation from the end of the NDFP?

JMS: The NDFP has always welcomed and encouraged the efforts and movement of the peace advocates. But what kind of participation is meant? In what way and where? At the level of the negotiating panels? Civil society so-called or the NGOs and people's organizations can participate without them en masse or their representatives necessarily entering the negotiating room. The negotiating parties consult with their constituencies and other entities before, during and after the formal negotiations.

IEV: Also mentioned involving the military in the peace talks, citing the steps in the peace process in Colombia. What's your analysis here?

JMS: Third country governments like those of Norway and Cuba and international agencies like the Red Cross

have been involved in facilitating the negotiations between the Colombia government and FARC. As far as I know, the Colombian army is under their government's orders not to interfere with the movement of FARC officials in and out of the forest to be able to participate in the peace talks in Cuba.

If you refer to the ceasefire before the permanent end of hostilities, the GRP and NDFP are already considering an interim ceasefire and the release of all current political prisoners through general amnesty in order to generate goodwill and confidence in the peace negotiations. The permanent end of hostilities will be effected by the Comprehensive Agreement on the End of Hostilities after the forging of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms and Political and Constitutional Reforms.

IEV: Also cited was the need to resolve the "more than 10,000 cases filed with the joint monitoring committee, which 'has not been functioning' – and the need for both parties to approve the supplemental guidelines that should ensure the operationalization of the joint monitoring committee." Are there any conditions needed for this, or what would be the ideal situation for this?

JMS: The CARHRIHL and the operating guidelines encourage the filing of complaints by one side to the other and by victims, their families and others concerned to any side. But each side can investigate and apply disciplinary or punitive measure only on its personnel. There is no requirement that within a certain period a report is made on the action taken by the concerned party to the JMC. The peace negotiations were paralyzed so often and for long periods, during the time of Arroyo and Aquino that CARHRIHL as the pertinent agreement and the operating guidelines of JMC have not been developed properly in terms of amendments, supplements and implementation. The Aquino regime has even tried to close down the offices of the JMC in Cubao by declaring that it does not want any more funds from the RNG for the GRP side of the JMC and that therefore no RNG funds should go to the NDFP side of the JMC offices.

IEV: In discussing both sides' optimism for unilateral but simultaneous ceasefire with the JMC to monitor it, Joeven said mechanisms are very important and that there is need for an "independent" monitoring group from civil society groups that have been working on ground level. How does the NDFP look at this?

JMS: The operating guidelines of the JMC provide for the nomination of independent persons by each side to become part of its team, committee, secretariat or whatever formation. The appointment of ceasefire liaison officers and monitors to coordinate with their counterparts on the other side is being planned for the interim ceasefire.

IEV: Bobby Garcia stressed the need for accountability mechanisms as part of the peace process, referencing the "purge." While he says ideally it should come under the formal peace process, he said it could also be like the South African and El Salvador models (truth commissions) that came after completion of the peace process. Any reaction to this?

JMS: The hysterical anti-informer campaigns that occurred mainly from 1985 to 1988 in different parts of the country in varying degrees were stopped by localized rectification movements and finally by a comprehensive rectification movement that started in 1992 and completed in 1998.

The Second Great Rectification Movement was an educational campaign of identifying, criticizing and repudiating the errors that led to the hysterical campaigns and violations of due process. Those most responsible for the violations of due process fled the movement and joined the enemy side. Those less responsible were demoted, suspended or removed from the Party, according to their degree of offenses, after expressing remorse for these and criticizing themselves.

If and when a successful conclusion of the peace negotiations and the method of mutual amnesty between the warring parties shall have been adopted, the accumulated documentation and exchange of complaints can be used as a basis for both aggrieved and offenders to undertake further truth-telling and for the latter to express full remorse for their offenses committed. CARHRIHL covers all human rights violations from the date of its approval and effectivity in 1998 onwards. It does not cover the crimes and violations of due process committed in connection with the hysterical anti-informer campaigns from 1985 to 1988. Even the laws of the GRP have a 20-year prescription period for crimes of murder. It has been 20 to 31 years since then. I am citing the legal givens as they are.

IEV: How does the NDFP in general envision people's participation in the peace process? The 'people' of course, could mean the millions who look up to you and also those outside the ND umbrella. What space is available to both?

JMS: As I explained at the very beginning, the NDFP has to explain to the millions of people inside and outside the NDFP why peace negotiations are needed and what they can do to participate and support the peace process.

They are urged to attend meetings in order to discuss the issues and matters to be included in the comprehensive agreements to be made. They are encouraged to present written proposals. The NDFP arouses, organizes and mobilizes the people for the purpose. So do the multisectoral legal alliance like BAYAN in order to formulate the People's Agenda for Change. This is submitted to the negotiating panels of the GRP and NDFP.

July 23, 2016

Dear compatriots and friends, greetings of peace and solidarity! I thank the multisectoral organizations of Filipinos in Southern California for sponsoring this Forum and for inviting me to speak. Said organizations include the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines, BAYAN, NAFCON, Ecumenical Forum for Filipino Concerns and Simbayan, for inviting me to this Peace Forum.

I accept the task of discussing what peace and unity in Philippines means to the millions of Filipino migrants and their families. I am acutely aware of the fact that they are excited about the impending resumption of the formal talks in the peace negotiations between the Government of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

What peace and unity in the Philippines means

The US-dominated semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system of big compradors and landlords is oppressive and exploitative of the toiling masses of workers and peasants and even of the better educated middle social strata. It is in chronic crisis and engenders social injustice, high rate of unemployment, widespread poverty and underdevelopment.

These dire conditions have resulted in a protracted civil war and the migration of millions of Filipinos to many foreign lands, especially to the US.

If the peace negotiations between the GRP and NDFP will come to a happy and successful conclusion, we shall have a government of national unity, peace and development. We shall be able to assert full national independence and abrogate unequal treaties and agreements. We shall achieve greater democracy through the empowerment of the toiling masses and the middle social strata.

We shall uphold the civil and political and the social, economic and cultural rights of the Filipino people. We shall be able to develop our economy through national industrialization and genuine land reform. We shall expand free public education and promote a patriotic and progressive kind of education and culture. We shall foster international solidarity for peace and development.

The implications and consequences of the peace negotiations go far and beyond the conflicting forces and communities in what is a protracted civil war between the GRP and the NDFP. The achievement of a just and lasting peace will benefit the broad masses of the people and the millions of Filipinos who have taken jobs abroad but who continue to have their close relatives and friends in the Philippines and are always interested in the rights, welfare and destiny of the Filipino nation.

The Filipino migrants working abroad are estimated to be at least 10 per cent of the Philippine population and at least 20 per cent of the labor force. If there were a self-respecting government, independent and determined to develop the economy and generate sufficient jobs, they would rather work and stay in the Philippines with their families and contribute to the accelerated development of their country. They know that they have the knowledge and skills to process the rich natural resources of the country which today are being grabbed by foreign monopoly corporations with the collaboration of the local oligarchs.

So long as the peace process is progressing, even if it has not yet come to a successful conclusion, departments and agencies of the Duterte government can be made to uphold, defend and promote the rights and interests of the Filipino migrants and their families. Highly qualified patriotic, progressive and diligent persons can be placed in government positions to look after the rights and interests of the Filipino migrants and their families.

You have a crucial stake in the conduct and success of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. You can do a lot by way of encouraging and supporting the peace process in the direction of upholding, defending and advancing the national and democratic rights and interests of the Filipino people. These override the partisan interests of the conflicting and negotiating parties. The Manila government depends very much on your foreign remittances and it should heed your demands for favoring the public interest, especially that of the oppressed and exploited masses.

We hope for the success of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations so that the entire Filipino people can have a wide range of capabilities to develop the country and will have a wider range of options as an independent, democratic, prosperous and progressive country in relating the peoples and countries of the world. Thus, let me

discuss the background, current status and prospects of the peace negotiations and let you further draw whatever is significant or relevant to your present conditions and aspirations.

I. Background

A. The armed conflict

A nationwide civil war exists between the US-dominated reactionary big comprador-landlord Government of the Philippines (GRP) and the people's democratic government of workers and peasants and all the revolutionary forces and people represented by the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). It has been going on since 1969. Since 1992 upon the forging of The Hague Joint Declaration, the two conflicting sides, the GRP and NDFP, have agreed to engage in peace negotiations to address the roots of the armed conflict and to arrive at agreements to lay the basis for a just and lasting peace.

Prior to the aforesaid declaration, there was the 60-day ceasefire agreement on November 27, 1986 to create the atmosphere for negotiating and agreeing on the agenda for peace negotiations. But the ceasefire agreement broke down as a result of the Mendiola massacre of peasants and their supporters on January 22, 1987. Taking advantage of the intelligence gathered during the period of ceasefire negotiations and agreement, the Aquino regime launched a brutal military and police campaign against the revolutionary movement. In her own words, Cory Aquino unsheathed the "sword of war" and launched the US-designed Oplan Lambat Bitag.

In 1989 when the regime was besieged by worsening political and economic crisis, especially by coup threats from the Reform the Armed Forces Movement, Mrs. Aquino sent Rep. Jose V. Yap to the Netherlands to offer peace negotiations to the NDFP. The NDFP accepted the offer, with the proviso expressed in an aide memoir to Aquino that the negotiations must be held in a foreign neutral venue in order to avoid the risks and threats of holding the negotiations in the Philippines.

The exploratory talks that Rep. Yap had with the NDFP were moving towards formal talks in The Netherlands. But the failure of the military mutiny headed by Col. Noble in northern Mindanao in December, 1990 had the effect of dissuading the Aquino regime from pursuing the peace negotiations.

B. Agreements made during Ramos regime

When Fidel V. Ramos became president in 1992, he sent to The Hague a delegation headed by Rep. Jose V. Yap to forge the framework agreement for the entire peace negotiations, The Hague Joint Declaration of September 1, 1992. The meeting was facilitated by the Dutch Institute of Foreign Relations at Clingendael.

The declaration sets forth the aim of the peace negotiation, which is to address the roots of the armed conflict through comprehensive agreements that would lay the basis of a just and lasting peace. It states the mutually acceptable principles of national sovereignty, democracy and social justice as guide. It sets the substantive agenda and method of negotiations and agreement.

Soon after The Hague Joint Declaration on October 28, 1992, President Ramos released hundreds of political prisoners from both the revolutionary movement and the military mutineers through general amnesty. However, the formation of the National Unification Commission (NUC) that tried in vain to carry out so-called localized peace talks interfered with the implementation of The Hague Joint Declaration for nearly two years.

After the dissolution of the NUC and the formation of the GRP Negotiating Panel headed by Ambassador Howard Q. Dee in 1994, major agreements were forged by the negotiating parties in quick succession, such as the following: The Breukelen Joint Statement on June 14, 1994, the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) on February 24, 1995 and the Agreement on the Ground Rules of the Formal Meetings on February 26, 1995.

The Joint Agreement on the Formation, Sequence and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committee and the Additional implementing Rules Pertaining to the Documents of Identification under JASIG were solemnly signed on June 26, 1995 at the formal opening of the peace negotiations in Brussels upon the facilitation of the Belgian government.

The Negotiating Panels of the GRP and the NDFP succeeded in forging the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) on March 16, 1998. This fulfills the first of the four items in the substantive agenda of the peace negotiations.

Other agreements signed on the same day were: the Additional Implementing Rules of JASIG Pertaining to the Security of Personnel and Consultations in Furtherance of the Peace Negotiations and the Joint Agreement I Support of Socioeconomic Projects of Private Development Organizations and Institutes.

C. Paralysis of the peace process in post Ramos regimes

The GRP-NDFP peace negotiations became paralyzed most of the time during the regimes of Estrada, Arroyo and Aquino despite auspicious starts. In common these post-Ramos regimes were obsessed with seeking the capitulation and pacification of the revolutionary forces and people, instead of addressing the roots of the armed conflict and arriving at agreements to lay the basis for a just and lasting peace.

President Estrada made an auspicious start by signing and approving the CARHRIHL on August 11, 1998 (in accordance with Memorandum Order No. 9 dated August 7, 1998). But he resented the capture of General Obillo and Captain Montealto by the New People's Army and the criticisms and opposition of the NDFP to his approval of the Visiting Forces Agreement with the US. Thus, he ordered the termination of the JASIG and the entire peace negotiations on May 31, 1999.

President Arroyo also made an auspicious start by agreeing with the NDFP in the first half of 2001 to foil the assassination plots by the previous regime against the NDFP chief political consultant, the holding of the International Solidarity Conference in support of the Philippine peace process, having the Norwegian Royal Government as third party facilitator, resuming the formal talks and reaffirming all previous agreements, approving the Operating Guidelines for the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) under CARHRIHL and creating the offices of the Secretariats of the GRP and NDFP of the JMC.

But in June 2001 the negotiations broke down when the GRP took offense at the killing of the notorious human rights violator Rodolfo Aguinaldo who resisted the attempt of the NPA to arrest him. The GRP negotiating panel walked out of the peace negotiations despite the obvious absence of a ceasefire agreement with the NDFP. The GRP-NDFP peace negotiations were further paralyzed by the Arroyo regime's unlawful breach of the JASIG by "suspending" it rather than categorically terminating it.

The worst offenses committed by the Arroyo regime against the peace process were the adoption of the US policy of terror, the request to the US government for the designation of the CPP, NPA and the NDFP chief political consultant as "terrorists" and the gross and systematic human rights violations under Oplan Bantay Laya, which included the abduction, illegal detention, torture and extrajudicial killings of NDFP consultants in the peace process.

President Aquino hesitated to resume the peace negotiations with the NDFP. He believed the advice of the US, the military and Akbayan that the NPA was already a spent force and became more obsessed with seeking to destroy or rendering the NPA inconsequential through the US-designed military Oplan Bayanihan, the cash doleouts under PAMANA of the OPAPP and deployment of more military forces against the NPA by prolonging the ceasefire with the MILF. Oplan Bayanihan has proven to be as vicious and brutal as Oplan Bantay Laya, if not more than so.

At the very resumption of talks on February 15-21, 2011, the OPAPP headed by Teresita Q. Deles and GRP negotiating panel headed by Alexander Padilla qualified their reaffirmation of previous agreements by calling The Hague Joint Declaration a document of "perpetual division". From the very beginning, they insisted on the capitulation and pacification of the revolutionary forces and people and refused to recognize the progress already made in the peace process towards the resolution of the armed conflict.

They proceeded to declare the JASIG "inoperative" and refused to allow the reconstitution of the JASIG list of holders of documents of identification. They licensed the military and police to abduct, indefinitely detain, torture and murder NDFP consultants and other JASIG-protected NDFP personnel. They also attacked the CARHRIHL as an "NDFP propaganda document" and caused the arrest and detention of people on trumped up charges of common crimes, despite allegations of their being connected with the NPA. The Aquino regime more than doubled the number of political prisoners in violation of the CARHRIHL and in particular the Hernandez political offense doctrine.

II. Current status of the peace negotiations

A. The emissary of the NDFP Fidel V. Agcaoili was able to visit President Duterte four times in Davao City after his election and before his oath-taking as President. They were able to discuss many matters and agree to such an extent that their conversations opened wide the way to the resumption of formal talks in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

President Duterte has made public pronouncements that have generated goodwill and confidence in connection with the peace negotiations. He has declared that he wishes to consult with the NDFP chief political

consultant and that he is willing to release NDFP consultants so that they can participate in the resumption of formal talks in Oslo. His chief negotiators Silvestre Bello III has repeatedly declared that previous agreements shall be respected.

President Duterte has offered four cabinet posts to no less than the CPP and the NDFP and has agreed to the counterproposal that in the meantime highly qualified persons who are patriotic and progressive can be appointed. Immediately after his oath-taking, even before convening his cabinet, he invited the leaders of the mass organizations demonstrating on Mendiola to present to him the People's Agenda for Change.

Quite a number of revolutionaries have expressed their concern that the key economic and finance posts in the Duterte government are exponents of the already unraveling and discredited neoliberal policy which favors the foreign monopoly super profiteers, the big compradors and landgrabbers.

But I have pointed out that the global and domestic crisis are worsening and that the NDFP must use the opportunities outside and inside the peace process to persuade the Duterte government to take a patriotic and progressive position on issues pertaining to national sovereignty, democracy, social justice, development, education and culture and international solidarity.

The CPP, NPA and the NDFP have accepted President Duterte's offer of cooperation in cracking down on the manufacture and distribution of illegal drugs which are ruining the health and lives of millions of people. They have asserted that the right to due process must be respected in the course of the anti-drugs campaign. The drug lords at the highest level and their political, military and police protectors are the most deserving of combat response when they resist arrest by using deadly weapons. But the low-level addicts and small addict-pushers deserve to be treated and rehabilitated because they are sick.

B. Exploratory talks in Oslo

Let me just inform you of the content of the Joint Oslo Statement of representatives of the incoming Panel and the NDFP Panel who held exploratory talks on June 14-15, 2016, in Oslo, Norway under the facilitation of the Royal Norwegian Government as Third-Party Facilitator for the talks. They agreed on the following:

- 1) Formal peace talks will resume in the third week of July 2016 in Oslo, Norway and shall be conducted in accordance with previously signed agreements by the Parties;
- 2) The Parties will discuss the following agenda items during the resumption of the formal talks:
 - a. Affirmation of previously signed agreements;
 - b. Accelerated process for negotiations, including the timeline for the completion of the remaining substantive agenda for the talks: socio-economic reforms; political and constitutional reforms; and end of hostilities and disposition of forces;
 - c. Reconstitution of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) List
 - d. Amnesty Proclamation for the release of all detained political prisoners, subject to concurrence by Congress.
 - e. Mode of interim ceasefire.
- 3) The Panel will recommend to President Duterte the following:
 - a. Immediate release of NDFP consultants and other JASIG protected persons in accordance with the JASIG to enable them to participate in the peace negotiations.
 - b. Immediate release of prisoners/detainees based on humanitarian grounds.

C. Resumption of Formal Talks

Let me update you on the preparations for the resumption of formal talks. The formal talks shall not be held in the third week of July as the Oslo Statement states but either from July 27 to August 2 or a later date to give ample time to the side to cause the immediate release of NDFP consultants and other JASIG protected persons in accordance with the JASIG to enable them to participate in the peace negotiations as well as the immediate release of prisoners/detainees based on humanitarian grounds because they are sickly, elderly, women and overly long in prison.

The affirmation of previous agreements will be easily done in a formal joint declaration because both sides in the opening remarks of their respective chairpersons will already be affirming the agreements.

The reconstitution of the List of Holders of the Document of Identification under the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) will also be easily done. The NDFP Panel will simply provide to the Panel for acknowledgment an updated list of the NDFP consultants and security personnel who are entitled to safety and

immunity guarantees under JASIG.

It will be quite easy to lay out the accelerated process for negotiations, including the timeline for the completion of the remaining substantive agenda for the formal talks: socio-economic reforms; political and constitutional reforms; and end of hostilities and disposition of forces.

In accordance with the Joint Agreement on the Formation, Sequence and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees, the Reciprocal Working Committee on the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms shall begin work immediately after the first formal talks of the panel and Working Groups can also immediately work on the Comprehensive Agreements on Political and Constitutional Reforms and the End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces.

The Negotiating Panels will discuss the content and language of the Amnesty Proclamation which shall release from prison all the current political prisoners. The proclamation shall be issued by the President and shall be subject to the concurrence of a majority of each House of Congress. The Duterte camp has already gained a majority in both houses of Congress. For the sake of the peace process, even the legislators outside of the Duterte camp can be persuaded to concur with the Amnesty Proclamation.

The NDFP will not agree to an interim ceasefire with the if the current political prisoners are not released through general amnesty. Should there be an interim ceasefire because of the release of the current political prisoners through general amnesty, the interim ceasefire agreement may be done in a single document or in the form of unilateral but simultaneous ceasefire declarations in order to avoid a prolonged negotiation on a single document.

III. Prospects

A. Prospects for a successful conclusion of the peace negotiations

The most optimistic estimate is that the three remaining comprehensive agreements shall be forged at the rate of one per three to six months. But it remains to be seen how willing is the Duterte government to accept the following:

1. a policy of national industrialization and genuine land reform to develop the Philippine social economy in the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms,
2. a policy of strong national independence by abrogating unequal treaties and agreements, building a government of national unity, peace and development and empowering the workers, peasants, women and indigenous peoples in the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms, and
3. a policy of truce and cooperation with the people's army and other revolutionary forces and a process of integration in the socioeconomic, political and security system of an independent country in the Comprehensive Agreement on the End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces.

B. Prospects of Implementing the Agreements

It is one thing to make comprehensive agreements. It is another thing to implement them.

But we cannot really go far in discussing the implementation of agreements because we need to make the agreements first in order to see whether the revolutionary forces and the people can accept them as being greatly beneficial to them. It is fine if within the first two years of the Duterte government the remaining comprehensive agreements are forged so that the subsequent four years will be the leeway for implementation.

The US and local reactionary forces are chiefly and overwhelming interested in preserving their power and wealth and disarming and dismantling the revolutionary army of the people. Forewarned, the revolutionary forces and the people can maintain their unity and strength and make sure that the agreements on social, economic and political reforms are implemented.

IMKP: On the Unilateral Ceasefire

and Peace Talks

August 3, 2016

Introduction: Warm greetings to the listeners of Ask Prof. We will again have for our interviewee the NDFP Chief Consultant for the Peace Talks and chair of the International League of People's Struggles. There have been strong verbal clashes between the personalities who had called for peace talks. Recently, there was an exchange of commentaries between President Duterte and Prof. Jose Maria Sison, one of the key consultants of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines and founding chair of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Their statements culminated in each of them expressing the desire to advance the peace talks. But there is much that we have to understand about the peace process. What do we mean by unilateral ceasefire? When is it declared and can it be withdrawn? Is there such a thing as bilateral ceasefire? If so, how do we go about this and what does it mean? Now that we know that the peace talks will not be easy, and there are aspects of it that could not be readily understood by recent observers, we have Professor Jose Maria Sison again to answer questions that need immediate answers. Warm greetings to you, Professor Sison and long live your tireless work for just peace!

JMS greeting: Warm patriotic greetings to you, Prof. Sarah Raymundo and to all our listeners. Thank you again for this opportunity to have an exchange with you on the issue of ceasefire and peace talks.

1. Please explain to our listeners what unilateral ceasefire means. And what is a bilateral ceasefire?

JMS: A unilateral ceasefire involves the cessation of hostilities by one party based on orders by that party to its own armed force. The other party can declare its own ceasefire simultaneously or afterwards by issuing similar orders to its own armed force. Reciprocal ceasefires happen when there is a prior agreement which may be written or unwritten. In the Oslo Joint Statement of June 15, there was an agreement to discuss the mode of ceasefire in relation to the release of all political prisoners through an amnesty proclamation during the resumption of formal talks. But the Duterte government was in a hurry to declare its unilateral ceasefire.

In issuing his unilateral ceasefire order during the SONA on July 25, President Duterte used a single sentence in announcing his order to his armed forces. The day after, on July 26, the AFP issued operating guidelines called Suspension of Military Operations or SOMO. Then on July 27, the PNP issued a Suspension of Police Operations or SOPO. It would have been best if both the GRP and NDFP had exchanged copies of their unilateral ceasefire orders first so that the common date of effectivity could be set.

It is clear that there will be a bilateral ceasefire once this is agreed upon through a document duly signed by both parties and which will serve as basis for the cessation of hostilities by both parties. Separate or unilateral ceasefires are more easily written by each party and can also serve as preparation or basis for a bilateral ceasefire agreement contained in a single document agreed upon by both parties. There can be an initial exchange of unilateral ceasefire orders during the scheduled formal talks in Oslo on August 20 to 27, and then we could try, based on these, to come up with a single bilateral ceasefire agreement.

2. Whatever the mode of ceasefire, will the NDFP agree to have a ceasefire with the Duterte government without the latter fulfilling its promise to release the political prisoners through amnesty and without the withdrawal of AFP and PNP forces from the communities, schools, clinics and barangay halls they currently occupy? What is your take on the PNP's statement that it will continue its legal offensives?

JMS: The NDFP will not agree to any ceasefire if this is not preceded or accompanied by the release of all political prisoners through an honorable amnesty. Their incarceration is unjust. It violates the CARHRIHL and the Hernandez political offense doctrine. The rebel suspects have been charged by the military with trumped-up common crimes.

If there is no withdrawal by the AFP and PNP from the communities, schools, clinics and barangay halls they are occupying, the masses will say that the revolution is being extinguished without them deriving any benefit as victims of repression, oppression and exploitation. There will be no ceasefire if what the PNP calls the legal offensive will continue and it (PNP) fabricates charges of common crimes just to jail social activists and rebel suspects.

3. *Why is the issue of ceasefire so important to any party to a civil war? How will the government benefit from it? And what about the NDFP? How will the NPA benefit? How can both parties come to an agreement to declare a ceasefire?*

JMS: The reactionary government is always more interested in having a ceasefire because it wants to project that poverty is caused by the struggle of the toiling masses and not by the foreign monopoly capitalists, the big compradors and landlords. The reactionary government wants to lay the blame on the revolutionaries and the masses themselves and cover up the exploitation and oppression perpetrated by imperialism and the exploiting classes.

And once the NPA is into a ceasefire, it will no longer be able to fight for the rights and interests of the oppressed and exploited, it will no longer be able to accumulate arms through tactical offensives and there can even be a tendency for the Red fighters to be less vigilant and become civilianized due to the absence of fighting.

The NDFP will not just enter into a ceasefire agreement without good reason and without benefit to the masses and the revolutionaries, such as the release of all captives, the betterment of conditions through peace negotiations and preparations for peace, unity and cooperation to address other enemies or resolve problems that have to be resolved for the good of the people. The NDFP has agreed to a ceasefire because Duterte has promised to release all political prisoners.

The government is always maneuvering for a ceasefire to push the revolutionary movement to capitulation or create discord among the revolutionaries. It is an old tactic of the enemy to promise the release of captives and renege on this promise so that the revolutionaries will have regrets and conflicts among each other because they agreed to a ceasefire even if the government reneged on its promises.

4. *What is your take on President Duterte's reaction and decision on the issue of ceasefire? I refer in particular to his declaration of a unilateral ceasefire during the SONA on July 25, and his withdrawal of it on Saturday, July 30, at 7 in the evening.*

JMS: When the president announced a ceasefire during his SONA on July 25, he said it would take effect immediately. But there was no written order. It was only on July 26 and 27 that this began to have substance through the AFP's SOMO and the PNP's SOPO.

On the day of the SONA itself, both Ka Louie and I said we welcomed Duterte's announcement. Ka Louie immediately wrote Ka Bebot Bello as his counterpart negotiator in the Duterte government to request a copy of the ceasefire order and tell him that an exchange of official ceasefire orders can only take place on August 20 in an effort to forge a bilateral ceasefire agreement.

When the Army and CAGU encroached on Kapalong on July 27, they were ambushed by the NPA unit in the area. Duterte immediately claimed that the NPA had violated his ceasefire order and demanded an explanation from the CPP and NPA within 24 hours, when it was his government forces that violated his ceasefire order. His ceasefire order has no effectivity on the NPA because Duterte's ceasefire order was only addressed to his own forces—the AFP and PNP and should also have included the CAGU which he did not mention—who he should be demanding an explanation from or investigating before he talks about violation.

Duterte's ceasefire order does not cover the NPA forces and the latter have not violated any ceasefire because the CPP has not issued any order to that effect.

5. *How did the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) feel when it was given an ultimatum by President Duterte to explain the AFP-PNP encounter in Davao del Norte on July 27? Many people were surprised by his statement, which seemed to include a threat that could affect the peace talks.*

JMS: We can surmise what the CPP felt when it said that Duterte was being unreasonable and presumptuous in giving an ultimatum and threatening the revolutionary forces regarding the Kapalong incident. He should not act as if he were the master of the revolutionary forces.

In fact, it was his Army and CAGU that violated or failed to comply with his unilateral ceasefire order. When the NPA issued its report on the Army and CAGU encroachment into Kapalong, Duterte came up with another ultimatum to the NDFP to issue a unilateral ceasefire order before 5 p.m. of Saturday, July 30. On the afternoon of July 30, the CPP Media Bureau notified the public that the CPP would be issuing its unilateral ceasefire order at 8 p.m. But at 7 p.m., Duterte withdrew his unilateral ceasefire.

6. *There was only an hour's difference between President Duterte's ceasefire withdrawal and the CPP's attempt to issue its own ceasefire order. Why didn't the CPP issue it earlier?*

JMS: It's really such a pity that Duterte didn't have enough patience. What is one hour's wait when it involves a very sensitive issue regarding the resolution of the armed conflict? There was a delay in the issuance of the CPP's own ceasefire order because Duterte's party failed to provide copies of their SOMO and SOPO early enough and the CPP needed time to discuss these and write a reciprocal ceasefire order.

7. Prof. Sison, in your view, will the peace talks really be affected by these incidents between the Duterte government and the CPP/NPA/ NDF? What is the state of your revolutionary forces in the countryside? Aren't you confused with all these twists and turns?

JMS: Although there has been a heated exchange of words, both parties aver that the formal talks will push through on August 20 to 27 and they are trying to have an exchange of unilateral ceasefire orders. In my view, the formal talks in Oslo will push through as long as all of the 22 NDFP consultants who have been unjustly incarcerated and most or all of the 87 political prisoners who are ailing, elderly, long imprisoned and women are released. There will definitely be a ceasefire if all political prisoners are released through amnesty.

The revolutionary forces in the countryside are doing fine. The NPA is on active defense mode while it awaits the unilateral ceasefire order from the CPP Central Committee.

8. What will happen if the 22 NDFP consultants and 87 humanitarian cases of political prisoners are not released by August 20? Will the formal talks still push through this August?

JMS: If the number of political prisoners released by August 10 falls very short of the numbers you mentioned, the NDFP negotiating panel will tell the GRP negotiating panel that the latter needs more time to focus on the release of the pitiful political prisoners before the formal talks in Oslo. They are pitiful because it's as if they're on a roller coaster. They expect to be released, only to be disappointed.

9. Now that there is no ceasefire, what will happen to the revolutionary movement?

JMS: Based on its own statements, the revolutionary movement is fine, vibrant and advancing. The Party, the mass organizations, the NPA units and organs of political power in the localities are all working vigorously. The NPA will actually be in a more problematic state if there is a ceasefire. To maintain the Red fighters' unity and discipline, they must be kept occupied through politico-military training, mass work, production, cultural work, quelling the drug problem and other crimes and keeping even closer relations with the masses, among other tasks.

10. What is your message to the members of the CPP/NPA/NDF? And what is your message to the Filipino people?

JMS: My message to the comrades in the CPP, NPA and NDFP is for us all to remain firm in our adherence to the line of people's democratic revolution. This is the line of people's war. This is also the line of the peace negotiations. Up to now, we are endeavoring to win over President Duterte as a major ally in advancing the Filipino people's struggle for national and social liberation.

My message to the Filipino people: The advance and victory of the people's democratic revolution are in your hands. The revolutionary forces rely on you in their efforts to gain strength, advance and attain victory.

Prof. Sarah Raymundo: Thank you, Professor Sison! This is Sarah Raymundo, activist of the Congress of Teachers for Nationalism and Democracy (CONTENT) and teacher at the University of the Philippines. We just had another incisive and substantive interview with Prof. Sison. Let us all remember that the peace talks are a people's issue. The issue of peace involves the Filipino people's historic and loftiest expectations and aspirations for national liberation, democracy and social justice. It is our right to struggle for national liberation and democracy with the goal of just peace. It is our duty to win.

**Remarks at the Opening Ceremony
of the Formal Talks
in the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations**

**Oslo, Norway
August 22, 2016**

It is a great honor and privilege to speak at this solemn opening ceremony of the resumption of formal talks between the Negotiating Panels of the Government of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). The Filipino people rejoice over this signal event and the bright prospects of a just and lasting peace in the horizon.

I share with the Filipino people and the revolutionary forces a deep sense of gratitude to the Royal Norwegian Government (RNG) for having served as Third Party Facilitator of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations since 2001 and for having helped in a big way to keep the peace process alive. We have always appreciated highly the patience, kindness and wisdom of the Norwegian government and people in encouraging and supporting the process.

We in the NDFP are optimistic that objective conditions and subjective factors in the Philippines are more favorable than ever before for carrying forward the peace negotiations from one comprehensive agreement to another and reaching the ultimate goal of a just and lasting peace through basic social, economic and political reforms.

The chronic crisis of the semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system has aggravated and deepened. The big compradors, landlords and corrupt bureaucrats have become more oppressive and exploitative in the context of unbridled greed under the neoliberal regime of global capitalism. The broad masses of the people are fed up with the rotten system. They are desirous of revolutionary change. They look forward to the possibility of change through fundamental reforms through the peace negotiations.

President Duterte won the presidency of his government on the promise of fundamental changes. For the first time in the history of the Philippines, a president has emerged by denouncing the abuses of the oligarchy and the folly of servility to foreign powers and by using street language and methods of the mass movement. He is proud to describe himself as the first Left president and as a socialist, willing to seek common ground and cooperation with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines.

The CPP, NPA and NDFP are ever willing to cooperate with the Duterte government in pursuing the just cause of national and social liberation against foreign and feudal domination. They have an ever growing revolutionary strength, which can combine with a patriotic and progressive kind of government to fight for the national and democratic rights of the Filipino people. There are great possibilities for the benefit of the people, which can be charted and blueprinted by the comprehensive agreements on social, economic and political reforms.

Even as President Duterte has shifted from expressing a desire for a coalition government with the CPP to a preference for an inclusive government of the Left, Middle and Right, he offers more hope for the advance and success of the peace negotiations than previous presidents and regimes. After all, the people and the revolutionary forces can benefit from bourgeois democratic reforms in the next six years. The expressed socialist aspirations of President Duterte can be accomplished only if preceded by such reforms.

What do we mean by bourgeois democratic reforms? These involve the assertion of national sovereignty and territorial integrity and the abrogation of unequal treaties and agreements; the democratic empowerment of the working people, social justice, economic development through national industrialization and land reform; expanded free public education, a patriotic and progressive kind of culture; international solidarity of all peoples and trade and diplomatic relations with all countries.

Having mentioned all these as the essential content of reforms, we can say that it is necessary and possible for the negotiating parties to forge comprehensive agreements that lay the basis of a just and lasting peace. It is not enough to seek the end of hostilities. A just peace must be founded on and sustained by reforms that lift the people from the morass of underdevelopment, social injustice and poverty. In striving for such reforms, we can have

truce and cooperation and form a government of national unity, peace and development.

President Duterte has shown magnanimity and generosity by promising the amnesty and release of all political prisoners upon the start of ceasefire, by offering cabinet posts to the Communist Party and agreeing to give such posts to highly qualified progressives and by agreeing to release political prisoners in accordance with the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) as well as on humanitarian grounds.

We have in our midst today the NDFP consultants who were imprisoned in violation of the JASIG and CARHRIHL. They have been released in accordance with the JASIG to enable them to participate in the formal peace talks. They are deeply committed and highly qualified. They can contribute greatly to the advance of the peace process. Let us give them a round of applause.

I am proud to say that President Duterte was my student in political science at the Lyceum of the Philippines when I was still a young professorial lecturer. He became a member of the Kabataang Makabayan of which I was the national chairman. This youth organization vowed to continue the unfinished revolution that was started by Andres Bonifacio. This meant upholding, defending and advancing the national and democratic rights of the Filipino people.

As a public official in Davao City, he knew how to cooperate with the revolutionary forces and act as member or supporter of legal patriotic and patriotic forces like BAYAN and Partido ng Bayan. This is a president who can understand and appreciate the principles and program of the national democratic movement and knows how to forge a just and lasting peace by addressing the roots of the civil war and satisfying the just demands of the people.

Why do I talk so long in praise of the principal of Secretary Dureza and the GRP negotiating panel? It is to express goodwill, show rapport and indicate that the two negotiating panels have a good basis for making the current formal talks successful and for bringing the entire process to a successful conclusion.

In conclusion, I wish to point out that President Duterte has done well in choosing an experienced and capable peace advisor and in composing his negotiating panel with patriotic and capable persons who have played significant roles in the past in forging agreements with the NDFP and have participated in the people's struggle for national independence and democracy. I am confident that the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels will achieve significant success at this resumption of formal talks and will steadily proceed to the ultimate success of the entire peace negotiations.

Remarks at the Signing of the Joint Statement

of the GRP and NDFP Negotiating Panels

in Oslo, Norway

August 26, 2016

I feel both honored and delighted to have participated in the successful resumption of the formal talks in the peace negotiations between the GRP and NDFP. The Joint Statement that we are signing and issuing today manifests the historic significance of what has been accomplished.

The accumulated agreements have been reaffirmed. The participants in the peace negotiations are further assured of safety and immunity guarantees. The release of the NDFP consultants will lead to the amnesty and release of all those wrongly imprisoned in violation of their democratic rights and such agreements as the JASIG and CARHRIHL.

The plan of accelerated negotiations carries definite work schedules to produce comprehensive agreements on social and economic reforms, political and constitutional reforms and the end of hostilities and disposition of forces.

The current unilateral goodwill ceasefire of the NDFP will give way to a unilateral indefinite interim ceasefire in response to that of the GRP. The two unilateral ceasefire declarations are immediately effective and shall be reconciled in a single bilateral document.

I am sure that the Filipino people appreciate the work of the two negotiating panels and that they are elated by the results of the formal talks. These advance their struggle for national and social liberation and for a just and lasting peace.

The negotiating panels and their respective consultants and staff deserve all congratulations for their success and all encouragement for further advances on the long and difficult road of peace negotiations.

Of course, the success of both panels can be traced all the way to the political will and determination of their principals, President Duterte and the NDFP leadership, to pursue the peace negotiations and bring about substantial social, economic and political reforms for the benefit of the Filipino people.

We hope that the peace negotiations will continue to be carried out seriously and diligently in response to the worsening crisis of the semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system and the clamor of the people for revolutionary change.

We congratulate and thank the Royal Norwegian Government and in particular special envoy Ambassador Elisabeth Slattum for the warm, efficient and charming facilitation for the formal talks and the ensuing success.

The chief negotiator of the NDFP Luis Jalandoni shall express to all concerned the collective view and sense of gratitude of the NDFP panel and entire delegation. May the press and all those present convey the good news to the Philippine and international public. Thank you.

September 2, 2016

Introduction: Warm greetings to you Prof. Sison and to all our listeners. The peace negotiations are very important to our people. It would be good for us to discuss it.

JMS greeting: Warm patriotic greetings to you. Prof. Sarah Raymundo and to all our listeners. The peace negotiations indeed are very important to our people and it is good to discuss it.

1: Prof. Sison, why do people say that the recent peace talks held in Oslo, Norway between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) were a "success"?

JMS: The formal peace talks in Oslo on August 22 to 26 were successful because the agreements between the GRP and NDFP starting with The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992 were reaffirmed. The GRP panel received from the NDFP panel the updated list of NDFP consultants who should enjoy safety and immunity guarantees. They agreed on plans to accelerate the peace talks.

The released NDFP consultants arrived in Oslo and were able to join the talks. The GRP panel will recommend to President Duterte the release of all political prisoners through amnesty. There were reciprocal unilateral ceasefire declarations, and thus there is already an effective ceasefire. Within sixty days, talks will be held to agree on a bilateral ceasefire agreement.

2: Prof. Sison, you are aware that the recently held peace talks earned positive comments and statements, especially from the social media. What can the people expect, now that the formal peace talks are finished? Will there be others?

JMS: The next talks will be held on October 8 to 14. The GRP and NDFP panels will be supervising talks at the level of the Reciprocal Working Committees on social and economic reforms as well as on the level of the reciprocal working groups on political and constitutional reforms, and on end of hostilities.

3: What is the role of the Royal Norwegian Government (RNG) in the GRP-NDFP peace talks?

JMS: The Royal Norwegian Government serves as facilitator between the GRP and NDFP. It talks with both parties to facilitate agreements on meetings and discussions. They facilitate visas, arrange and shoulder the air fare of participants in the talks, as well as the cost of needed facilities, such as venues and equipment for meetings and accommodations. The Norwegian government does not interfere in the substance of the talks.

4: What can you say about the participation in the peace talks of the released political prisoners and NDFP consultants? It was very noticeable from the photographs that have come out from Oslo, Norway that many of them seem to be from the same age range. Does this mean that they have been members of the CPP/NDFP/NPA for a long time?

JMS: Their participation in the talks was great. As consultants, they have been assigned various tasks. They are highly knowledgeable on various subjects and highly skilled in various tasks. They have a wealth of experience. They are veteran cadres of the revolutionary movement of the CPP, NPA and NDFP and their participation in the peace talks is relevant.

5: There are more than 500 political detainees incarcerated nationwide. What will happen to them now? Will they be released through amnesty as the Duterte government had announced? What have you and the GRP agreed on regarding this matter?

JMS: The GRP panel has said that President Duterte intends to make good on his promise to grant amnesty to, and release all political prisoners. The Joint Statement of August 26 states that the GRP panel will be relaying to President Duterte the political prisoners' amnesty and release. This is related to the indefinite unilateral ceasefire that has already started.

6: The issue of indefinite ceasefire between the AFP/PNP and the NPA resounds, and a lot of people are happy with it. What should both parties implement with regard to the content of the ceasefire agreement?

JMS: To put it simply, the armed personnel of one party must not fire upon those of the other party. This is already being implemented through the reciprocal unilateral ceasefires. But the ceasefire will be firmed up and improved through a single bilateral ceasefire agreement.

7: Soldiers say that the evacuees in Mindanao can now go back to their homes. What do you think about this?

JMS: The AFP's announcement that it will be withdrawing from the communities and returning to barracks is a welcome one. Thus, the evacuees, like the Lumad from Eastern Mindanao will be able to return to their homes

and land.

8: What is your message to our listeners, Prof. Sison, and to the Filipino people?

JMS: I thank all my fellow Filipinos for supporting the peace talks, the amnesty and release of political prisoners and the forging of agreements on social, economic and political reforms in order to achieve just and enduring peace. Continue your support and actions for relevant change for the welfare of the toiling masses and the Filipino people. Thank you very much.

in Duterte's US Policy

October 25, 2016

A ceasefire agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) under President Rodrigo Duterte and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) led by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) has taken effect on August 26, 2016 since the end of the August 22-26 first round of formal peace talks between the GRP and the NDFP.

The ceasefire agreement has been carried out through simultaneous unilateral ceasefire orders by the GRP to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Philippine National Police (PNP) and paramilitary forces; and by the CPP Central Committee to the New People's Army and the people's militia.

So far, this is the longest running ceasefire between the GRP and the NDFP in the 47-year history of revolutionary civil war in the Philippines. The unilateral ceasefire orders are expected to be transformed into a more stable bilateral or joint ceasefire upon the fulfillment of certain requirements, chief of which is the amnesty and release of more than 500 political prisoners accumulated by the Arroyo and the Aquino regimes.

In the second round of formal talks, from October 6-10, the GRP negotiating panel assured its NDFP counterpart that the accomplished release of 22 political consultants of the NDFP from prison would be followed by the release of 200 more prisoners who are sickly, elderly, women and overly long in prison before the third round of formal talks in the third week of January 2017.

The NDFP negotiating panel firmly reminded its GRP counterpart that the release is in compliance with the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) that all political prisoners must be released immediately because they have been unjustly imprisoned on trumped up charges of common crimes.

The NDFP negotiating panel also reminded the GRP side that President Duterte promised to effect the release of political prisoners through an amnesty proclamation in order to avoid unnecessary delays in their release and let them benefit from a clean legal slate after a long period of unjust incarceration. The people's demand for the release of all the political prisoners has been resounding for several decades already.

In fact, President Duterte's promise to amnesty and release all the political prisoners has been a great incentive to the NDFP to agree to the resumption and acceleration of the peace negotiations and to a ceasefire through unilateral ceasefire orders that can lead to a more stable bilateral or joint ceasefire agreement.

The NDFP has become very open to forging a peace agreement with the GRP under President Duterte because of his avowals of opposing US imperialism and the domestic oligarchy of big compradors and landlords and standing up as the first Left president of the Philippines who is determined to uphold national independence, expand democracy for the people, carry out national industrialization and genuine land reform, and realize an independent foreign policy.

The NDFP is ready to cooperate with the Duterte government through the peace negotiations in adopting and implementing social, economic and political reforms and is ready to participate in an inclusive government of national unity, peace and development and in a system of national defense against any combination of US aggression and local reactionary threats.

The NDFP is well-forewarned by the example of Colombia's FARC, which accepted promises of concessions from the Santos government but which agreed to admit criminal liabilities and dissolve the people's army even before the implementation of reforms. Worst of all, it agreed to submit its peace agreement with the Santos government to a referendum, which was obviously a device of entrapment and frustration of everything promised as beneficial to the revolutionary people and forces.

While President Duterte himself has tried to inspire hope for change among the people, there are elements in his own government who wish to impose capitulation and pacification on the revolutionary people and forces and who wish to prolong the already discredited bankrupt US-dictated neoliberal economic policy and perpetuate foreign and feudal domination in the Philippines.

At the same time there are patriotic and progressive elements in positions in the government who oppose the pro-US puppets and reactionaries. Duterte himself is making sure that the mass movement continue to support him. Thus, he has organized the Kilusan sa Pagbabago (Movement for Change) that is ready to cooperate with the long-standing mass movement of patriotic and progressive forces.

A broad range of the Filipino people have applauded President Duterte's approaches to China, Russia and the rest of the BRICS bloc for diplomatic and economic relations in recognition of a multipolar world and veering away from US hegemonism and the US strategic pivot towards East Asia. Duterte has gone as far as castigating the United States for having never apologized for its mass murder of 1.4 million Filipinos from 1899 to 1914 and for continuing the same aggression and murderous policy in various countries to the present time.

The revolutionary forces and people within the broad alliance of the NDFP and under CPP leadership continue to support the patriotic and progressive pronouncements and acts of the Duterte government, make proposals for fundamental reforms and challenge Duterte to further prove and substantiate his general statements against US imperialism and the domestic oligarchs.

In Unity with the CPP's Call for People's Expression of Indignation over Duterte's Unfulfilled Promises

in Peace Negotiations

December 26, 2016

Dear Comrades and Friends, let me first give the Red salute and warmest revolutionary greetings to the Communist Party of the Philippines, the New People's Army, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, the local organs of people's democratic government and the broad masses of the people on the occasion of the 48th anniversary of the reestablishment of the CPP under theoretical guidance of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.

This is a day of celebrating the accumulated and recent victories of the Party, the people's army and the people in the new democratic revolution through protracted people's war. This is also the day for the people to manifest their indignation over the Duterte regime's failure to fulfil its promises in the peace negotiations, especially the amnesty and release of all political prisoners listed by the NDFP in compliance with the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law and in consonance with a possible bilateral interim ceasefire agreement and the plan to accelerate the peace negotiations.

This is the day for peace rallies nationwide to demonstrate the Filipino people's unity for a just and lasting peace. In this regard, a national assembly is held in a guerrilla zone somewhere in Davao City. All sectors of society that are desirous of a just and lasting peace are expected to join the peaceful actions under conditions of the reciprocal unilateral ceasefire declarations. Representatives of the Duterte regime have also been invited to attend in order to hear for themselves the people's outcry for justice. We make complaints and constructive criticism in the hope of obtaining positive results for the benefit of the people.

We have no other objective but to demand the amnesty and release all political prisoners and give way to a bilateral ceasefire agreement. These matters can be settled in a few number of hours. We should not get stuck on such matters by dealing with them piecemeal over a long period of time. We can make a stable bilateral ceasefire agreement by learning lessons from the period of unilateral ceasefire declarations. Oplan Bayanihan should be terminated and should not be replaced by another brutal oplan under General Año, who kidnapped Jonas Burgos. Safe distances must be kept between the armed forces and units of the GRP and the NDFP by restricting them to barracks at battalion or higher level in the case of the AFP or areas of encampment in the case of the NPA at company level.

The GRP and NDFP negotiating panels should finish and sign the comprehensive agreements on social and economic reforms, political and constitutional reforms and end of hostilities and disposition of forces within the first or second year of the Duterte regime and there will be at least three or four years to observe the implementation of the agreements on basic reforms and allow the cooperation of the cadres, Red fighters and revolutionary forces with the regime in the social, economic, cultural, political and security system of a truly independent, democratic, progressive and prosperous Philippines.

The main interest of the NDFP and the People's Revolutionary Government in social and economic reforms is economic development through national industrialization and genuine land reform. Also, their main interest in political and constitutional reforms is upholding national sovereignty and democratic principles. They are also willing to co-found the Federal Republic of the Philippines with the Duterte regime and make a new constitution that prevents fascist dictatorship, political dynasties, warlordism and dissipation of national resources.

We should welcome the third round of formal talks to be held between the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels in Rome from January 19 to 24, 2017. The Reciprocal Working Committee of the NDFP will be going to these talks with its 84-page proposed draft of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER). The Reciprocal Working Group of the NDFP on Political and Constitutional Reforms will be ready with a rough draft of at least 20 pages of the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms (CAPCR). The Reciprocal Working Group of the NDFP on End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces (RWG-EHDF) will be observing the talks to gain insight for drafting its assigned comprehensive agreement.

The prospects are still bright in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations if we consider that the rounds of talks are proceeding successfully. The discussion on CASER and on other matters can certainly progress during the third round of formal peace negotiations. It would be alright for the talks in Rome to schedule the fourth round in a neutral venue. The two sides can meet to talk whatever is the status of the talks on the bilateral ceasefire agreement; and even if the NDFP would end its unilateral interim ceasefire declaration due to the ruthless incursions on its territory of the enemy armed forces.

Even if the GRP remained unwilling to amnesty and release all political prisoners in compliance with the JASIG and CARHRIHL and in consonance with a bilateral ceasefire agreement, the NDFP would still be willing to negotiate peace while fighting in the battlefield. The delay in reaching the bilateral ceasefire agreement is the responsibility of the GRP, because of its refusal to fulfil its promise of amnesty and release of all political prisoners. The NDFP has no choice but to pursue the line of people's war in order to strengthen the people's army and other revolutionary forces as the means to avoid the pitfall of capitulation and pacification through an indefinite ceasefire that would certainly result in a lack of interest on the part of the GRP to negotiate the substantive agenda of the peace negotiations.

Message to Comrades and the Revolutionary Masses

of Southern Tagalog at the Forum

about the Peace Negotiations

December 26, 2016

I am immensely happy for the chance to be part of your celebration of the 48th anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines and acclaiming the struggles and victories of the Party and the revolutionary forces and masses in Southern Tagalog and the whole country.

I thank Comrade Diego Padilla, Regional Spokesperson of the Melito Glor Command of the New People's Army, for his invitation for me to give a short message for the forum on the peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

I will make a summary of where the peace negotiations have gone up to now and Comrade Ernesto Lorenzo can provide more details and additional explanations. I was with him during the first and second rounds of the formal talks in Oslo in August and October. I will also try to put the talks in the context and perspective of the people's democratic revolution through people's war.

President Duterte was my student at the Lyceum of the Philippines and became a member of Patriotic Youth in the mid-1970s. He sent word to me in July 2015 that he was running for the presidency if we could put an end to the armed struggle of the Party and the New People's Army. I answered him that it will happen if the national and social liberation of the Filipino people against imperialism and its local lackeys will be achieved.

On April 25, we had a Skype conversation. He said that he would become the first President of the Left in the Philippines, he despises the oligarchs and he will revolutionize the reactionary government. When he won the elections, I sent Fidel Agcaoili as my representative and that of the NDFP. They met in the middle of May. Here Duterte promised to release all political prisoners through amnesty.

The GRP and NDFP had a mutual understanding that the immediate amnesty and release of all political prisoners listed by the BDFP is in accordance with JASIG and CARHRIHL and a response to the consent of the NDFP on the plan to accelerate the peace negotiations. But when Duterte rose to position as President, he listened to his OPAPP and military advisers to release the political prisoners by instalment and amnesty would be given at the end of the peace negotiations.

It is only proper that there should be gatherings of the people in the whole Philippines including in a guerrilla zone in Davao in order to show the desire of the people for a just and lasting peace. It is also right to air the people's grievances and criticisms to call the attention of the Duterte regime on what should be done for the good of the people and for the advance of the peace negotiations. In the long run, what the people hate most is the non-fulfillment of promises.

The situation of the peace negotiations now is like that of the past regimes. What the GRP wants to get from the NDFP first is a long-term ceasefire. It is obvious that the only thing the enemy wants is the capitulation and pacification of the revolutionary forces and people so that they are paralyzed in the talks and the reactionary state can forget about the discussion on the agenda of the basic social, economic and political reforms in the peace negotiations.

Right now, we have to push Duterte to fulfil his promise to amnesty and release the political prisoners. If he does this, a bilateral ceasefire agreement can take effect that will possibly first be signed by the negotiating panels. It is easy to have a stable ceasefire agreement based on lessons learned from the enemy's violations during the period of the unilateral ceasefire declaration.

Oplan Bayanihan must be stopped immediately and should not be replaced by another brutal oplan under General Ano who abducted Jonas Burgos. There should be sufficient distance between the armed forces of the reactionary government and the people's government. The mobile brigades of the AFP and PNP must be confined to barracks and the people's army must have wide spaces for setting up camp at the company level.

The GRP and NDFP panels must finish and sign the comprehensive agreements on social and economic reforms and political and constitutional reforms and end of hostilities and disposition of forces within the first or

second year of the Duterte regime so that there will be more or less three to four years to oversee the implementation of the above-mentioned agreements on basic reforms and pave the way for the cooperation of the cadres, Red fighters and revolutionary forces with the Duterte regime in a social, economic, cultural, political; and security system in an independent, democratic, progressive and prosperous Philippines.

What the NDFP primarily wants with regard to social and economic reforms is the development of the economy through national industrialization and genuine land reform. What the NDFP wants with regard to political and constitutional reforms is the promotion of national sovereignty and democratic principles. The NDFP is open to go along with the Duterte regime in setting up the Federal Republic of the Philippines and frame a new constitution that ensures the planned development of the economy and bans political dynasties, warlordism and wastage of our national wealth.

We must be hopeful in going to the third round of formal talks between the GRP and NDFP panels. The Reciprocal Working Committee of the NDFP is going to the talks with an 84-page draft of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER). The NDFP Reciprocal Working Committee on Political and Constitutional Reforms has prepared an initial draft of the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms (CAPCR) that is not less than 20 pages. The Reciprocal Working Group of the NDFP on End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces (RWG-EHDF) shall observe the discussions in order to gather ideas for making the draft comprehensive agreement that has been assigned to it.

In fact, the future remains bright for the peace negotiations between the GRP and NDFP because the series of talks have continued to take place. There will surely be an advance in the discussions on CASER and other matters in the third round of formal talks. And it is right to set the fourth round in a neutral venue. The two sides should meet whatever the state of the discussions on the bilateral ceasefire agreement and even in a situation that there are actions by the people's army for self-defense against the intrusion of the enemy forces into the territory of the people's democratic government or even if the NDFP has ended its unilateral interim ceasefire declaration because of the violent intrusions of the enemy.

Even if the GRP insists on not granting amnesty and not releasing all the political prisoners based on JASIG and CARHRIHL and in accordance with the bilateral ceasefire agreement, the NDFP will remain open to peace negotiations while fighting. The GRP bears responsibility for the non-fulfillment of its promise to grant amnesty and to release all political prisoners. The NDFP is forced to follow line of people's war to strengthen the people's army and other revolutionary forces and avoid the trap of surrender and pacification through an indefinite ceasefire and the loss of interest by the GRP in negotiating for the substantive agenda of the peace negotiations.

Remarks at the Opening Ceremony of the Formal Talks in the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations in Rome, Italy

January 19, 2017

As Chief Political Consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, I reiterate to all of you the warmest greetings and best wishes of the NDFP for solidarity and peace in the new year and our deep gratitude to the Royal Government of Norway for consistently supporting the Philippine peace process and facilitating this third round of formal talks in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations and to the Government of Italy for cooperating and letting Rome be the venue of the current round.

As in the previous two rounds of formal talks in Oslo, I continue to declare that the two negotiating panels can negotiate in a nonadversarial way and overcome any obstacle by addressing the roots of the armed conflict and seeking to satisfy the demands of the people for basic social, economic and political reforms in order to lay the foundation of a just and lasting peace and build a Philippines that is truly independent, democratic, just, prosperous and progressive.

In my telephone conversation with President Duterte last month, we discussed in earnest how to make the GRP-NDFP negotiations successful. I am pleased that President Duterte has publicly expressed a few days ago the wish to meet with me at a certain point after the third round of formal talks and to take necessary measures to ensure the further advance of the peace negotiations.

It is important that at every round of formal talks, the GRP and NDFP review and require compliance with the already existing agreements. Each side has its own concerns regarding these. The NDFP is grateful for last year's release of the NDFP consultants detained in violation of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). The NDFP continues to expect the release of the hundreds of political prisoners in compliance with the CARHRIHL and JASIG.

The concurrent or reciprocal unilateral declarations of ceasefire by the GRP and NDFP can be easily turned into a more stable bilateral ceasefire if the GRP complies with the CARHRIHL by releasing all political prisoners listed by the NDFP who have been unjustly and wrongly imprisoned on trumped up charges of common crimes. The most effective remedy for such release is through general amnesty as President Duterte himself told the NDFP emissary in May 2016.

In view of the apparent political rehabilitation of the fascist dictator Marcos with his burial in the Libingan ng mga Bayani, the NDFP has been concerned about adverse consequences to the provisions in CARHRIHL for justice and indemnification of the victims of human rights and violations during the Marcos regime. It seeks an assurance from President Duterte and the GRP that said provisions will continue to be respected and complied with. At any rate, I am glad that in advance of the third round President Duterte assured the aforesaid victims that they would be indemnified promptly and properly.

The NDFP is seriously concerned with violations of the CARHRIHL and the unilateral ceasefire arising from Oplan Bayanihan and Oplan Kapayapaan and from the anti-drugs campaign Oplan Tokhang and Double Barrel. In this regard, we the NDFP expect the GRP to comply with CARHRIHL. The Joint Monitoring Committee received complaints for investigation and appropriate action.

Ahead of the third round of formal talks, the Filipino people are expecting the Reciprocal Working Committees on Social and Economic Reforms to make a significant advance. Both RWCs have already fleshed out the common outline of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) and can indeed make a significant headway in the current round in reconciling their respective draft and agree on how to accelerate the unification of the drafts by holding bilateral draft sessions by teams before the fourth round.

The prospect is in sight that within six months the CASER shall already be ready for signing by the panels and everyone will understand how genuine land reform, national industrialization and expansion of social services shall be realized. The GRP and NDFP should be truly interested in social, economic and political reforms. The Filipino people want to end the oppressive and exploitative ruling system dominated by foreign monopoly capitalists, domestic landlords and capitalist bureaucrats.

With regard to political and constitutional reforms, the NDFP holds the view that there are good and viable examples of both unitary and federal forms of state. A federal system of government is not necessarily good or better than a unitary form of state, especially when it carries over from an already rotten unitary form of state certain malignancies and does not have constitutional guarantees against the penchant of the oligarchy for puppetry, dictatorship, graft and corruption, dynasty building and warlordism.

The NDFP is willing to maintain its alliance with the GRP and the Duterte administration in particular by cooperating in the founding of the Federal Republic of the Philippines, creating a parliamentary system and making a new constitution that upholds, defends and promotes national independence, democracy, economic development, social justice, cultural progress, independent foreign policy and international solidarity with peoples and all countries for peace and development.

The Reciprocal Working Groups on Political and Constitutional Reforms of both panels have already finished and exchanged their drafts of the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms. They have advanced ahead of schedule. There is plenty of time to enrich and polish these drafts even while CASER is still being negotiated. It will not be surprising if after the signing of the CASER by the panels, it will take one or two rounds of talks or some three months after the forging of CASER to finish the CAPCR for signing by the panels.

The advantage of having the CASER and CAPCR signed and approved by the principals within the first two years of the Duterte government is that these agreements shall be implemented for at least two years before the end of said government. If implemented to the satisfaction of the Filipino people and the NDFP, these agreements shall lay the full basis of the Comprehensive Agreement on the End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces as early as 2020-21. The leaders, officers and troops of the warring parties can expect to benefit from a mutual general amnesty.

The Filipino people, the NDFP and its forces continue to hope that the peace negotiations will successfully pass through the following tests and phases: the amnesty and release of all political prisoners in compliance with CARHRIHL, the forging of CASER and CAPCR, the implementation of the three priorly cited agreements and the forging and finalization of the EHDF.

In various ways, President Duterte can prove in real and concrete terms that he is truly a patriotic and progressive president and fights against the imperialists and oligarchs for the benefit of the people. The GRP-NDFP peace process is one of the best ways to do so. And other ways follow easily, when the good agreements are implemented and the broad masses of the people are aroused, organized and mobilized to act for their own good along the national and democratic line.

***Remarks at the Closing Ceremony
of the Formal Talks
in the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations in Rome***

January 25, 2017

At this closing ceremony, the GRP and NDFP Negotiating Panels shall sign the Joint Statement, which sums up the successful work in the third round of formal negotiations and paves the way for further advance in the fourth round in April.

We of the NDFP express our highest sense of gratitude to the Royal Norwegian Government for consistently facilitating the Philippines peace process and the Italian government for enabling the third round in Rome.

The two Parties can congratulate each other for a successful round of talks, for pushing the further implementation of CARHRIHL, for effecting the exchange of complete drafts of CASER and the CAPCR and for starting the work to unify these drafts.

The period between rounds of formal negotiations is not rest but more intense work of subcommittees of the RWCs on CASER and the respective RWGs on PCR meeting in Manila. We can be confident that as soon as the RWCs on CASER will submit their final drafts for approval by the Negotiating Panels, the RWGs on PCR will become the RWCs on PCR and finish their work in a few months' time.

When the Fourth round of talks comes, the goal of finishing the unified drafts of the CASER and CAPCR shall be in sight. We hope that before the end of 2017, these comprehensive agreements will be ready for approval by the Panels, and soon thereafter by the principals. We can be ready for the founding of the Federal Republic of the Philippines in 2018.

We look forward to the implementation of CARHRIHL, CASER and CAPCR for at least two years before the signing of CAEHDF in 2020. In view of the implementation in full swing, the two Parties shall have the highest confidence in signing the CAEHDF.

The GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations

Must Continue to Fulfil

the People's Demand for a Just and Lasting Peace

February 9, 2017

The recent third round of formal talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) from January 19 to 25, 2017 has been successful and has scheduled the fourth round on April 2-6 in Oslo. What are the achievements of the third round?

There was a fair exchange of views and agreements on efforts to comply with the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) concerning the release of all political prisoners, justice for and indemnification of victims of human right violations under the Marcos regime, allegations of human rights violations under Oplans Bayanihan, Tokhang and Kapayapaan, and approval of the supplementary guidelines of the Joint Monitoring Committee. There was also an initial discussion of the bilateral ceasefire agreement to replace the unilateral ceasefire declarations.

The biggest achievements in moving forward the peace process are the exchange of full drafts of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) by the reciprocal working committees of the GRP and the NDFP, and the complete drafts of the CAPCR by the reciprocal working groups. I estimate that it is possible to unify these drafts within 2017. The NDFP has formally offered to GRP to co-found the Federal Republic of the Philippines on the basis of the CAPCR.

My opinion is that it is possible to implement the CASER and CAPCR through GRP executive actions, legislation and constitutional amendments before the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces (CAEHDF) in 2020-21. Before then, a bilateral ceasefire agreement is possible, especially after the signing of the CASER and the CAPCR by the negotiating panels in 2017.

However, the clear significant success of the third round of the formal talks has been overshadowed by the reaction of President Duterte to the announcement of the termination of the unilateral ceasefire by the CPP and NPA, effective on February 10, and to the self-defense actions already begun by the NPA in accordance with the terms of its unilateral ceasefire declaration. I can understand the role of President Duterte in reacting as GRP president and Commander-in-Chief. It is his duty to speak and act in the interest of the GRP and express concern for his troops. But there should have been a measure of restraint in his reaction in order to preserve the GRP-NDFP peace process.

President Duterte's announcements to consider the CPP, NPA and NDFP as terrorist organizations and to terminate the Joint Agreement on Security and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) have the effect of terminating the entire GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. I believe that President Duterte's reaction should not have gone this far.

I propose to him to consult thoroughly with his negotiating panel and the peace advocates in his own cabinet and others outside of his government, and encourage and allow back-channelling efforts to clarify misunderstandings and solve immediately the current problems. The third party facilitator deserves a briefing from each negotiating party and may also help to enable the continuance of the peace process.

Even if the armed conflict between the armed forces of the two Parties has resumed, peace negotiations can and must continue precisely to continue with the forging of the CASER, CAPCR and the bilateral ceasefire agreement and effecting the amnesty and release of all political prisoners within 2017. More than 10 major agreements were made during the Ramos regime while fighting went on.

The CPP, NPA and NDFP remain committed to the peace process in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration and further agreements. They wish to pursue with the GRP the bright prospects that started with the first round of formal talks in August 2016 and overcome the peace spoilers that run counter to the progress that has been achieved in the third round of formal talks.

We must respond to and strive to fulfil the Filipino people's demand for a just and lasting peace!

President Duterte Agrees

to Continue GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations

March 15, 2017

As founding chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and as Chief Political Consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) in the peace negotiations between the Government of the Philippines (GRP) and the NDFP, I wish to express deep appreciation to President Rodrigo Duterte for deciding to continue the peace negotiations and enabling the GRP to proceed with the scheduled 4th round of formal talks in April as agreed upon by the GRP and NDFP Negotiating Panels during the 3rd round in Rome on January 25, 2017.

It is in the people's interest for the GRP and the NDFP to pursue the forging of a peace agreement. The peace agreement should uphold the sovereignty and independence of the Filipino people, strengthen democracy for the exploited and oppressed people, create the conditions for economic development through land reform, national industrialization and expansion of social services and benefits, promotion of patriotic and scientific culture and peace and development in a multipolar world.

The foundations for these can be achieved within the current term of President Rodrigo Duterte.

I wish to inform the public that I have been hospitalized for some time and under the care of a team of medical specialists and other health workers. I am on the way to full recovery. I am presently helping in the preparations for the 4th round of the formal peace talks and hope to participate actively during the 4th round.

On Unilateral Ceasefire Violations

Interview by Sonny Trinidad Mallari, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*

March 25, 2017

With President Duterte's still standing order of an all-out war using all weapons in the arsenal including aerial bombings of rebel camps, the resumption of the peace talks is facing tough challenges. But with the CPP's declaration of unilateral ceasefire to be followed by the government as mutually agreed upon in the back-channel talks, it is expected for both parties to temporarily rest their weapons of war.

JMS: You are right. The unilateral declarations of ceasefire before March 31 should be reciprocal. This was agreed upon on March 11. This is stated in the agreement reached during the back-channel talks.

But in past ceasefires, the two sides exchange accusations of ceasefire violations. What basis do the CPP-NDFP-NPA have that the state forces would not violate the ceasefire?

JMS: Although the ceasefire declarations are unilateral, ceasefire violations can be discouraged. While this may happen or allegations are made, retaliation is discouraged and exchange of complaints between GRP at NDFP is encouraged within the framework of the Joint Monitoring Committee under CARHRIHL.

Do you fully believe that Digong is capable of reining in the AFP?

JMS: He is the AFP commander-in-chief. He would be shamed if he cannot rein in the AFP. It is reasonable to expect that he can do so. First rule of discipline in any army is obey all orders from higher command. Should Duterte allow peace spoilers in his own camp, he would not last in his position.

What assurance can the rebel forces give the government that they would abide by the ceasefire conditions? I ask this because based on previous experience in previous peace talks, ceasefire violations, the exchange of accusations cause the failure to proceed with the ceasefire and the failure to continue the talks. How can this again be avoided during the resumption of the talks? JMS: There is need to start having mutual trust through written commitments. The GRP and the NDFP have mutually agreed to start interim reciprocal unilateral ceasefire declarations. After this would be efforts to go into more durable bilateral ceasefire agreement simultaneous to the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms and amnesty and release of the political prisoners listed by the NDFP.

By percentage measure, how many percent do you think would be the success of the peace talks under Mr. Duterte? What is your basis? At the beginning of his term, everyone was full of hope that there would be tranquillity in the nation and the communist so-called "insurgency" would end. Digong took many good steps – total support for peace talks resumption, cabinet appointments of Leftists, his active participation and once even conversations between the two of you, the release of rebel leaders whom he even invited to the palace, etc. However, despite the positive start, such as the prior talks, this has also fallen. Aside from other questionable Duterte policies, particularly the drug war, he is the only president who has shown genuine desire that the war would end. We hope that indeed the talks between the two sides would succeed. Based on your long experience of struggle in the field and also in peace talks, what is the most important key for the full success of the peace talks under the Duterte administration?

JMS: The peace negotiations has a 50-50 chance to succeed. The Duterte government is still in the process of unfolding itself regarding the issue, whether or not it is interested in a just peace. Perhaps in the span of one year we would know clearly the answer to your question.

The key to having peace is solving the root of the problems that have given rise to the people's war and make the social, economic, political and constitutional reforms necessary and satisfactory for the people, especially the oppressed and exploited.

Due to Duterte's long period of cooperation with the revolutionary movement in Mindanao and the favors he showed for the peace talks in the beginning, like what you mentioned, the NDFP believed that a just and lasting peace would be achieved during his presidential term.

As a matter of fact, the peace negotiations are still advancing. In every round of formal talks, advances are significant. Efforts are being made that before the end of 2017, CASER and the bilateral ceasefire agreement would be finished and in 2018 the Duterte government could have the NDFP as co-founder in establishing the Federal Republic of the Philippines.

However, in Duterte's cabinet itself there are pro-US peace spoilers. Should they succeed in sabotaging the peace negotiations, this would disappear as the major saving grace or redeeming point for Duterte and he may not last in power when the opposition and the people's war intensify against his regime despite his promise of peace. Even now, protests against him are widespread and severe inside and outside the country regarding impunity and extrajudicial killings of thousands of poor drug suspects but not drug lords.

What was your sickness? Do you suppose that you are still physically and mentally capable (although I do not doubt this. I ask this only because I would like to make a story, if you permit this) of actively participating again in this intense peace talks and argumentatively collide with the government panel.

JMS: I am very well now. My health is no longer news nor an issue. I had skin-deep inflammations due to decreased auto-immunity defense when it is winter in Europe. Look, I am active at giving interviews and statements; and I am busy preparing for the 4th round of formal talks.

I brought this up because your sickness can again be the subject to intrigue by those opposed to peace talks. That due to your sickness you are sick those reported by the military as supposed opposing NPA faction not recognizing your leadership would further gain confidence not to recognize your leadership. However, the party has repeatedly denied that there are clashing factions in the rebel movement.

JMS: It is an AFP psywar lie that there is a faction against me in the CPP and the NPA. There is no contest for position within the CPP. CPP cadres and members are principled. They would only follow reason based on facts and they decide collectively. I am content with my current role as NDFP Chief Political Consultant and with the historical title as CPP Founding Chairman.

It seems that Digong this time is no longer the same Digong at the start of his administration who was gung-ho in the success of the peace talks. As revealed by the CPP in its latest statement, the Duterte government is obliged to also declare a ceasefire as mutually agreed upon the back-channel talks. But his declared intentions here indicate that the government ceasefire is not yet a sure thing.

JMS: Let us just await what he really wants, I will not guess. But do ask him also.

Remarks at the Opening Ceremony
of the Formal Talks in the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations in Rome

January 19, 2017

As Chief Political Consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, I reiterate to all of you the warmest greetings and best wishes of the NDFP for solidarity and peace in the new year and our deep gratitude to the Royal Government of Norway for consistently supporting the Philippine peace process and facilitating this third round of formal talks in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations and to the Government of Italy for cooperating and letting Rome be the venue of the current round.

As in the previous two rounds of formal talks in Oslo, I continue to declare that the two negotiating panels can negotiate in a non-adversarial way and overcome any obstacle by addressing the roots of the armed conflict and seeking to satisfy the demands of the people for basic social, economic and political reforms in order to lay the foundation of a just and lasting peace and build a Philippines that is truly independent, democratic, just, prosperous and progressive.

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It is important that at every round of formal talks, the GRP and NDFP review and require compliance with the already existing agreements. Each side has its own concerns regarding these. The NDFP is grateful for last year's release of the NDFP consultants detained in violation of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). The NDFP continues to expect the release of the hundreds of political prisoners in compliance with the CARHRIHL and JASIG.

The concurrent or reciprocal unilateral declarations of ceasefire by the GRP and NDFP can be easily turned into a more stable bilateral ceasefire if the GRP complies with the CARHRIHL by releasing all political prisoners listed by the NDFP who have been unjustly and wrongly imprisoned on trumped up charges of common crimes. The most effective remedy for such release is through general amnesty as President Duterte himself told the NDFP emissary in May 2016.

In view of the apparent political rehabilitation of the fascist dictator Marcos with his burial in the Libingan ng mga Bayani, the NDFP has been concerned about adverse consequences to the provisions in CARHRIHL for justice and indemnification of the victims of human rights and violations during the Marcos regime. It seeks an assurance from President Duterte and the GRP that said provisions will continue to be respected and complied with. At any rate, I am glad that in advance of the third round President Duterte assured the aforesaid victims that they would be indemnified promptly and properly.

The NDFP is seriously concerned with violations of the CARHRIHL and the unilateral ceasefire arising from Oplan Bayanihan and Oplan Kapayapaan and from the anti-drugs campaign Oplan Tokhang [Knock-Appeal] and Double Barrel. In this regard, we the NDFP expect the GRP to comply with CARHRIHL. The Joint Monitoring Committee received complaints for investigation and appropriate action.

Ahead of the third round of formal talks, the Filipino people are expecting the Reciprocal Working Committees on Social and Economic Reforms to make a significant advance. Both RWCs have already fleshed out the common outline of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) and can indeed make a significant headway in the current round in reconciling their respective draft and agree on how to accelerate the unification of the drafts by holding bilateral draft sessions by teams before the fourth round.

The prospect is in sight that within six months the CASER shall already be ready for signing by the panels and everyone will understand how genuine land reform, national industrialization and expansion of social services shall be realized. The GRP and NDFP should be truly interested in social, economic and political reforms. The Filipino people want to end the oppressive and exploitative ruling system dominated by foreign monopoly

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The NDFP is willing to maintain its alliance with the GRP and the Duterte administration in particular by cooperating in the founding of the Federal Republic of the Philippines, creating a parliamentary system and making a new constitution that upholds, defends and promotes national independence, democracy, economic development, social justice, cultural progress, independent foreign policy and international solidarity with peoples and all countries for peace and development.

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The advantage of having the CASER and CAPCR signed and approved by the principals within the first two years of the Duterte government is that these agreements shall be implemented for at least two years before the end of said government. If implemented to the satisfaction of the Filipino people and the NDFP, these agreements shall lay the full basis of the Comprehensive Agreement on the End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces as early as 2020-21. The leaders, officers and troops of the warring parties can expect to benefit from a mutual general amnesty.

The Filipino people, the NDFP and its forces continue to hope that the peace negotiations will successfully pass through the following tests and phases: the amnesty and release of all political prisoners in compliance with CARHRIHL, the forging of CASER and CAPCR, the implementation of the three priorly cited agreements and the forging and finalization of the EHDF.

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***Must Continue to Fulfil the People's Demand
for a Just and Lasting Peace***

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I wish to inform the public that I have been hospitalized for some time and is under the care of a team of medical specialists and other health workers. I am on the way to full recovery. I am presently helping in the preparations for the 4th round of the formal peace talks and hope to participate actively during the 4th round.

Remarks at the Opening Ceremony of the 4th Round of Formal Talks in the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations at Noordwijk, The Netherlands

April 3, 2017

As Chief Political Consultant of the National Democratic Front in the peace negotiations with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, I welcome you to this opening ceremony of the 4th round of peace talks as agreed upon in the 3rd round of talks in Rome on January 25, 2017. I thank you for your attendance and for your interest in the process to resolve the 48-year long civil war in the Philippines and establish a just and lasting peace.

We are all highly appreciative of both the GRP and NDFP principals and their respective negotiating panels in their determination to pursue the peace negotiations for the benefit of the Filipino people and in accordance with their own demand for peace, national unity and reconciliation. We have therefore been able to overcome some challenges, communication glitches and hitches.

President Duterte has been gracious to let the GRP negotiators go to the back-channel talks of March 10 and 11 in Utrecht and now to the fourth round of formal talks. The NDFP is most interested in the soonest possible forging of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms to respond to the people's demand for substantive reforms. By its own public pronouncement, the GRP is most interested in obtaining a bilateral ceasefire agreement with the NDFP.

This is possible soon if President Duterte can put forward the amnesty and release of all political prisoners listed by the NDFP. The GRP and NDFP Negotiating Panels can validate and bind declarations of unilateral ceasefire as the interim bilateral ceasefire agreement in the Joint Statement to be issued at the end of the fourth round, pending the forging of a single joint ceasefire agreement co-signed by the conflicting parties. This joint ceasefire agreement, more elaborate and more stable than the interim bilateral ceasefire agreement can be immediately consequent to the signing of CASER by the two Negotiating Panels.

We are desirous that through the peace negotiations we can create and develop the conditions to build a strong sovereign and independent nation, with expanded democracy and social justice for the oppressed and exploited people, enjoying the bounty of economic and social development through genuine land reform, national industrialization, ample social services and benefits, and solidarity with all peoples and countries.

The GRP-NDFP peace negotiations are necessary to address the roots of the armed conflict and to agree on the social, economic, political and constitutional reforms in order to lay the basis for a just and lasting peace. We are clearly advancing within the framework set by The Hague Joint Declaration on September 1, 1992. I mention the date to let you anticipate and prepare for the 25th anniversary of this historic document.

The GRP and NDFP have availed of and reaffirmed the major agreements that have been forged within the framework of The Hague Joint Declaration in order to overcome problems and even disruptions and impasses in the peace process.

So far, the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) as the first item in the substantive agenda had been approved and signed by the GRP and NDFP principals since 1998. It is within the broad framework of international law, especially the International Bill of Rights and the Geneva Conventions.

I continue to be optimistic that within this year, it is possible for the GRP and NDFP Negotiating Panels to forge and sign the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) and the consequent joint ceasefire agreement. I have read and studied the drafts of the proposed agreements from the GRP and NDFP and I have also examined the comparative matrices. I observe that there are enough concurrences and similar positions as common ground for forging the agreements. But I wish to stress as a matter of principle that the people demand that CASER be a step ahead of the joint ceasefire agreement, unless these agreements can be signed at the same time by the panels and then by the principals.

The Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms (CAPCR) can be forged and signed by the panels within three months after CASER because the drafting is already done in advance by the Reciprocal Working Groups on CAPCR. As I stated previously, the NDFP is willing to co-found the Federal Republic of the Philippines with the GRP and cooperate in making the necessary amendments in the 1987 GRP Constitution,

provided provisions are retained to prevent dictatorship, dynasties and corruption, uphold national sovereignty and territorial integrity, respect human rights, realize social justice and ban foreign military bases, forces and weapons of mass destruction.

The Reciprocal Working Committees on CASER can proceed to unify their respective drafts at an accelerated pace during rounds of formal talks and work meetings of bilateral teams between said rounds. After signing by the panels and principals, the ultimate common draft should be the guide and framework of executive orders and legislation to carry out genuine land reform, lay the foundation of national industrialization, ensure the protection of the environment and wise utilization of natural resources, uphold the people's rights, improve the wage and living conditions, expand the social services (especially free public education at all levels and free public hospitals and clinics) and develop international economic relations within the context of an independent foreign policy.

All previous land reform programs in the Philippines are bogus because the scope is limited and the landless tillers cannot pay for the redistribution price. It is necessary that this early the negotiating parties find out how much land has been grabbed under various pretexts for so many decades from the indigenous people and poor settlers, especially in logged over areas.

Such land can be returned for free to millions of rightful owners and their successors who also need to be provided with credit, technical assistance and infrastructure support to increase production and cooperation in agriculture and related occupations like handicraft, animal husbandry, poultry, fishing, forestry, horticulture, arbour-culture and food processing.

Idle or abandoned agricultural lands are almost always the result of violent conflict between the landgrabbers and the dispossessed tillers and must be returned to the latter as the rightful owners. In cases of land expropriation, landlords who did not acquire their lands through land-grabbing can be paid in cash to a certain extent and in larger part in industrial bonds for investing in the industries.

The backbone of feudalism and land-grabbing by bureaucrats and corporations must be broken. It is a matter of social justice that such principle of voluntary sale by the landlord under the 1987 GRP Constitution as well as the equivalence of just compensation to fair market value under EO 228 (July 17, 1987) must be nullified. The stock distribution option in the CARP law must be struck down as a device of corporate swindle, as we have seen in Hacienda Luisita and elsewhere.

With increased agricultural and related production and development in the rural areas, the domestic market for industrial production expands in a self-reliant economy. We can begin in earnest to break the vicious cycle and chronic crisis of underdevelopment, unemployment and poverty. The pattern of exporting raw materials, semi-manufactures and cheap labor, importing finished products and depending on foreign loans and portfolio investments from abroad to cover trade deficits must be broken. We must lay down the foundation for our national industry, process our own natural resources and prevent the extreme and rapid loss of these and the devastation of our environment.

We must reclaim our economic sovereignty, conserve our national patrimony and carry out an independent investment and trade policy, realize the substance of national sovereignty, put in the principal position the combination and cooperation of the public sector and the private sector of Filipino entrepreneurs and managers and put into full play the Filipino scientists, engineers, technologists and mass of workers. We resort to foreign suppliers of capital goods and a minority of foreign investors only to effect needed technology transfer within reasonable periods of time.

The GRP and NDFP must cooperate to achieve the social, economic, political and constitutional reforms that the people need. These require the agencies, documentation and public funding that the GRP can provide. They also require the GRP and NDFP to form a Joint Social and Economic Council to ensure the implementation of CASER. The most important role of the NDFP and its revolutionary components is to avail of their long intimate relations with the people and their ability to further arouse, organize and mobilize the people for the adoption and implementation of reforms, especially against the forces of imperialism and the local reactionaries.

I hope that my remarks can somehow help to illuminate and accelerate the forging of the CASER and CAPCR. If these are indeed signed by the principals soon enough, we might even be able to see their initial two years of implementation before the signing of the End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces by the principals.

Remarks at the Closing Ceremony of the 4th Round of Formal Talks in the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations at Noordwijk, The Netherlands

April 6, 2017

The fourth round of formal talks has come to a successful conclusion. As the NDFP Chief Political Consultant, I congratulate both the GRP and NDFP panels and their respective delegations. I thank the Royal Norwegian Government, specially the special envoy and her staff, for having patiently and efficiently facilitated this round.

The Reciprocal Working Committees on Social and Economic Reforms (RWCs-SER) have exchanged their respective comparative color-coded matrices identifying the contentious provisions and those that are acceptable in principle in the NDFP and GRP drafts in order to accelerate the process of concluding a Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER).

The RWCs-SER identified the contentious provisions in the NDFP and GRP draft under Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ARRD), clustered them into nine major topics and have held initial discussions regarding these. Consequently, the RWCs-SER agreed to form and convene Bilateral Teams composed of three members each and supervised by RWC-SER members to work on the sections on the ARRD and National Industrialization and Economic Development (NIED).

The bilateral teams are scheduled to hold work meetings in Metro Manila or elsewhere as may be mutually agreed upon in the Philippines. They have agreed on a progression of work meetings, involving discussions and common drafting. They have required themselves to submit reports to the RWCs on SER one week before the fifth round of formal talks.

I propose that the RWCs and bilateral teams to start drafting the executive orders and the legislative bills to be annexed to CASER and aimed at realizing the social and economic reforms required by CASER. In this connection, research has to be accelerated on what is to be done by the public and Filipino private sectors in cooperation to achieve ARRD and NIED. The Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill should be taken into account in making a new land reform law. The priority industries to be established in order to lay the industrial foundation of the Philippine economy should be listed up in consultation with the industrial experts and prospective Filipino investors.

In the forthcoming round, the RWCs-SER shall discuss and work on the remaining items under the Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (Part IV), National Industrialization and Economic Development (Part V), Environmental Protection, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Part VI), and the outputs of the bilateral teams.

After devoting so much time to the subject of ceasefire before and during the current round, the GRP and NDFP have agreed to formulate an interim joint ceasefire agreement that will boost trust and confidence in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. They have agreed to direct their respective Ceasefire Committees to meet in-between formal talks “to discuss, formulate, and finalize the guidelines and ground rules for the implementation” of the agreement.

The prospective ceasefire guidelines and ground rules shall govern the presence of armed units and elements of both parties in local communities, the creation of buffer zones, the definition of prohibited, hostile, and provocative acts. A ceasefire monitoring and verification mechanism is provided for to oversee the ceasefire’s implementation and handle complaints and alleged violations. The Interim Joint Ceasefire Agreement shall be signed immediately after the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER).

Matters concerning a single governmental authority and taxation shall be properly discussed in forging the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms (CAPCR). Such matters can be finally resolved by the GRP and NDFP co-founding the Federal Republic of the Philippines. Thus, the NDFP will not be capitulating to a pre-existing government but can assume responsibilities in the new government.

The Interim Joint Ceasefire Agreement shall be valid and effective until a permanent ceasefire or truce is forged as part of the Comprehensive Agreement on End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces (CAEHDF) or otherwise terminated by any of the two Parties for any reason we cannot foresee now. The ceasefire agreement is necessary and of high importance. But far more important and decisive in realizing a just and lasting peace is the adoption and implementation of basic social, economic and political reforms that are needed and demanded by the Filipino people.

We look forward to the fifth round of formal talks with high hopes. We all expect that before the forthcoming round a great deal of work shall have been accomplished by bilateral work meetings under the RWCs on SER and by the Ceasefire Committees of the GRP and NDFP. We also expect the Reciprocal Working Groups on CAPCR to work in preparation for participation in the fifth round.

May 9, 2017

A. From Isabel De Leon, MB News Editor

1. If you are given a chance to relive your life, would you choose the same path? And why?

JMS: I will continue to take the same path of fighting for the national and social liberation of the Filipino people. Since grade school, at the age of nine, I have always admired the revolutionary struggles of the Filipino people against Spanish colonialism, US imperialism and the Japanese fascist occupation. I have also always been sympathetic to the poor, exploited and oppressed people. I am committed to the continuation of the Philippine revolution of 1896 and to the attainment of full national independence, people's democracy and socialism.

2. What is your biggest regret in life?

JMS: The biggest setback I had was being captured in 1977 and being tortured and detained until 1986. But I do not regret it. It is part of the revolutionary struggle against the US-instigated Marcos fascist dictatorship to make sacrifices, get arrested and imprisoned or even killed. I have never felt any kind of regret that makes me abandon my principles and conviction.

3. Being (from the) Left, what is Right to you?

JMS: Being Right and reactionary is to oppose the following rights and interests of the Filipino people: national sovereignty and independence, democracy, social justice, economic development through land reform and national industrialization, a patriotic and progressive culture, international solidarity with other peoples and independent foreign policy for world peace and development.

B. From Tonyo Cruz, MB Digital Supervisor

Then President-elect Duterte asked the NDF to submit its nominees for his Cabinet. He named Taguiwalo, Mariano and Masa to Cabinet posts, but Duterte backtracked on also assigning an NDF nominee to the DENR portfolio. Has Duterte reached out again to the NDF for potential nominees to replace Gina Lopez? Or has the NDF taken the initiative to make recommendations for the next DENR Secretary?

JMS: Duterte publicly offered four cabinet posts to the Communist Party of the Philippines: DOLE, DAR, DENR and DSWD. But I advised him that the leaders of the CPP, NDFP and NPA cannot accept job offers from the GRP, while peace negotiations are still going on. I suggested to him to appoint those who have a legal status, highly qualified, competent and honest from the ranks of those who are patriotic and progressive. The NDFP emissary Fidel Agcaoili gave to Duterte the names and resumes of the recommendees of the NDFP to four cabinet posts. Two of the recommendees, Rafael Mariano and Judy Taguiwalo would be appointed to DAR and DSWD, respectively. Silvestre Bello showed interest in DOLE and the NDFP agreed to his appointment. Duterte took the initiative of offering DENR to Gina Lopez and the NDFP agreed that she was a good choice. As far as I know, Duterte has not asked the NDFP to give a recommendee for the DENR post vacated by Gina. And as of this moment, neither has the NDFP made a recommendation. If asked for this, the NDFP can give the name and resume.

C. From Ina Cabreza, a millennial from MB social media

With all the peace negotiations, do you think there will finally be a truce between the Communists and the government?

JMS: There may be a ceasefire or truce after the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) and the amnesty and release of the political prisoners listed by the NDFP. The NDFP cannot agree to any prolonged or indefinite ceasefire before the signing of CASER and the amnesty and release of the political prisoners. The GRP will no longer be interested in the accelerated negotiation of CASER after getting first a prolonged and indefinite kind of ceasefire.

D. From Sonny Valencia

What to you would be the minimum level of socioeconomic reforms the NDF will accept as a condition, sine quo non, to forge peace with the government? JMS: CASER should include agrarian reform and rural development, national industrialization and economic development, protection and wise utilization of the environment, people's rights pertaining to political and economic sovereignty, expansion of free social services (education, health and housing), indigenous people, and women, sources of funding for the reforms and equitable international

economic and financial relations. All these are in the draft of the NDFP.

E. From News Desk

1. *Why has there been an escalation of attacks by your ground forces despite ongoing peace talks? Have you any orders to restrain or advise them against launching such attacks, if only to fortify the goodwill that should be generated for the talks? Do you exercise some form of control over the ground forces?*

JMS: The NDFP Negotiating Panel and its consultants do not control the NPA in the same way that the GRP Negotiating Panel does not control the AFP, PNP and the paramilitary. In the first place, it is the GRP which is carrying out an all-out war policy against the revolutionary forces and the people. It is blindly and foolishly using aerial bombs and artillery fire at the expense of the civilian population. Duterte himself has a number of times raved about pulverizing the NPA, the forests and hills. Lorenzana has already declared that he is no longer interested in peace talks.

In the second place, the GRP backed out from the March 11 backchannel agreement for a simultaneous and reciprocal exchange of unilateral ceasefire declarations before the start of the fourth round of formal talks on April 2. In the face of the barbaric attacks of the AFP, PNP and its paramilitary auxiliaries, the NPA has no choice but to fight back and engage in self-defense and counter-offensives.

The collective leading organs of the CPP, NPA and NDFP, which are based in the Philippines, are the principal of the NDFP Negotiating Panel. They give orders and instructions to the NDFP Negotiating Panel and to the NPA in the battlefield. No one in Utrecht can give orders to the CPP, NPA and NDFP in the Philippines. Also, no one in Utrecht has ever claimed to control the revolutionary forces and people in the Philippines. And so far, the authorization and credentials of the NDFP Negotiating Panel from its principal in the Philippines stand and remains valid unless withdrawn by the principal.

It is the collective leading organs of the CPP, NPA and NDFP that decide whether to continue, accelerate, delay or exit from the peace negotiations being pursued by the NDFP Negotiating Panel, depending on the circumstances and reasons for whatever mode of action.

There is nothing the NDFP Negotiating Panel can do if the order from its principal in the Philippines is to disengage from the peace negotiations because the GRP, the peace spoilers and the ultrareactionaries wish nothing but a prolonged and indefinite ceasefire in order to effect the surrender and pacification of the revolutionary forces.

2. *If you really are the voice of the masses, why are you living in luxury (in Europe) while your followers are having a great deal of difficulty (here in the Philippines) trying to uphold your idealism?*

JMS: Your question carries a series of false judgmental premises. You cast aspersion on the validity and integrity of my advocacy. You presume that it has been my free choice that I am in exile as political refugee for the last 30 years. You do not take into account that my Philippine passport was cancelled by Cory Aquino in 1988. You do not mention the fact since I was put on the EU terrorist list in 2002 until now, despite my legal victory in having my name removed from the list in 2009, I have been deprived of living allowance, housing, health insurance and pension that refugees are entitled to. My wife and I have to support ourselves on her single account as permanent resident and with assistance from relatives and friends.

It is unfair and unjust to conjure an image of me living in luxury and compare me with the revolutionaries and people living in hardship, as if I did not have a share of hardship in fighting the Marcos dictatorship in the battlefield for nine years, enduring torture and imprisonment for another nine years and now undergoing already 30 years of exile. Consider finally that with my exploiting class origin, family political background and personal qualifications, I would have lived a life as comfortable as that of my wealthy relatives, classmates and friends had I taken the easy way within the ruling system. But no regrets. With modesty aside, I daresay that they have nothing like my wealth of revolutionary experience and more than 30 volumes of essays and poems.

F. From Rocky Nazareno

1. *Spokesperson Abella said yesterday that federalism will be Duterte's legacy to the Filipino people. How role do you see the CPP-NPA-NDF playing under the new government, how do you see it being in the mainstream of a federal form of government?*

JMS: The NDFP has already offered to co-found with the GRP the Federal Republic of the Philippines. This will resolve questions about a single government, territory, revolutionary taxation and other governmental functions. The CPP and NDFP may enter a coalition government. The NPA may be integrated in a national defense system.

All these matters will be negotiated and agreed upon in the forging of the Comprehensive Agreement of Political and Constitutional Reforms after CASER is signed and approved by the principals.

2. *What is your message to President Duterte at this point of the peace negotiations, which have been marred by encounters on the ground?*

JMS: In the following sequence, CASER, the amnesty and release of all political prisoners and the Joint Interim Ceasefire Agreement (JIFCA) must be finalized, signed and approved as soon as possible by the negotiating panels and then by their principals. In the meantime, there may be a transitory agreement for the GRP to cease and desist from its all-out war policy so that the NPA and the people's militia can also cease and desist from self-defense actions and counter-offensives.

The simultaneous and reciprocal unilateral ceasefire declarations can be a transitory measure. The GRP and NDFP negotiating panels should be directed and encouraged by their respective principals to do their negotiating work in this regard in the forthcoming fifth round of formal talks in Noordwijk aan Zee, The Netherlands, from May 29 to June 2.

Duterte Regime Is Mixed Up and Vulnerable

May 17, 2017

As he is about to finish the first year of his 6-year term of office in June, Philippine President Rodrigo Roa Duterte is being assessed and evaluated by a broad spectrum of commentators in terms of performance and fulfilment of promises. His trust rating in poll surveys is still relatively high but this has begun to erode noticeably from the 80 percent peak of his popularity upon his election by a plurality vote of 38 percent or 16 million of the electorate in May last year.

Those who continue to support him assert that performance in a year is not enough basis for a final judgment and that there is more than enough time ahead for him to accomplish promises that have most impressed them, such as the eradication of the drug problem, criminality, and corruption. In recent days, President Duterte has, in fact, pleaded that he needs three or four more years to bring about the significant changes that he previously thought would be done in six months' time. His promised campaign against the pork barrel and other forms of corruption of the defunct B. S. Aquino regime has not yet materialized.

Where he has been most successful at, projecting himself as a strong leader by calling on the police and the public to kill drug addict-pushers, he has attracted the most severe and sustained condemnation by institutions, the mass organizations, the human rights formations, various churches, major mass media and respected person-ages in the Philippines and abroad. These detractors allege on the basis of mass media reports and police records that 7,000 to 10,000 extrajudicial killings have been perpetrated in violation of human rights and with impunity by the police and by police-directed vigilantes. The victims are overwhelmingly poor people in urban slum areas. Thus, there is a growing complaint that the drug lords and the governors and generals involved in the drug trade have been spared.

A publicly-known group of retired and active military officers called the Magdalo has backed up the motion to impeach Duterte from office. Knowing that the motion would not prosper against Duterte's "supermajority" in Congress, the group claims to lay the ground for the eventual prosecution and trial of Duterte before the International Criminal Court under the Rome Statute. But most threatening to the Duterte regime is a secret movement among military and police officers who are probably linked to the "yellows" (pro-Aquino political opposition) and are complaining against the system of giving cash rewards to police officers and vigilantes for accomplishing murder missions. They aver that such reward system is corrupting the armed services and destroying their reputation and professional standards.

They are emboldened to wage an anti-Duterte campaign because US officials and the European Commission have criticized the Duterte regime and threatened to impose certain sanctions. Most recently, the representatives of 45 out of 47 governments in the UN Human Rights Commission universal periodic review of the human rights situation have urged the Philippine government to investigate the alleged extrajudicial killings. In turn, the Duterte regime has expressed fears that the dissenting military and police officers are engaged in a coup plot. To counter the coup threat, Duterte has appointed to his cabinet more retired military officers whom he considers personally loyal to him. But the United States is still the master of the coup through its Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency in the Philippines.

Aside from the vulnerability of the regime to charges of mass murder, the crisis of the Philippine ruling system and the world capitalist system is ever worsening to the detriment of the Filipino people. The deterioration of the economy is underway to undermine and isolate the regime in the forthcoming year. Foreign exchange remittances from overseas contract workers are slowing down. The export of raw material and semimanufactures has plunged amidst the global depression.

Credit from Western sources is tightening. The foreign exchange reserves are decreasing. The peso is being devalued in view of a large public debt. Portfolio investments have been flowing out since 2014. While the debt-driven and import-dependent service sector is growing, agriculture and manufacturing have declining shares in the gross domestic product. The prices of staple food and other basic commodities are rising, while regular employment and real wages are decreasing. Social services are becoming more expensive and the public utilities are breaking down.

But President Duterte cannot be underestimated. He describes his government as “inclusive” by mixing up cabinet members from different political and economic persuasions. He is known for his political skills at talking or acting in the style of the Left, Center and Right, whichever serves him best from moment to moment. He has appointed some patriotic and progressive elements to his Cabinet while surrounding them with an overwhelming majority of Rightists and an increasing number of retired military officers.

He has released political prisoners of high caliber, although he has held back from releasing all political prisoners who are being held in violation of the GRP-NDFP Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). When patriotic and progressive mass organizations hold protests in front of the presidential palace, he invites the leaders for discussion and expresses support and sympathy. In a recent symbolic act, he went out of the palace to meet and mingle with the peasant protesters who demanded land reform. He denounced the landed oligarchs and expressed support to the protests.

To gain support from the reactionary armed forces, he has used strong words against the New People’s Army whenever he visits military camps and casualties in funeral parlors and hospitals and he has arrived at an all-out war policy against the revolutionary movement. But keenly aware of the popular demand for a just and lasting peace, he has manifested willingness to continue the peace negotiations between the Government of Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

The NDFP, which represents the Communist Party of the Philippines, the New People’s Army and 16 other revolutionary organizations, continues to consider the peace negotiations as the way to test and find out what Duterte means by wishing to be the first Left president of the Philippines, agreeing to negotiate social, economic and political reforms to address the roots of the civil war and pursuing an independent foreign policy in a multi-polar world. The patriotic and progressive forces and the broad masses of the people support the peace negotiations.

Only a few but powerful who may be described as the pro-US, ultra-right wish to spoil the peace negotiations. They wish to precondition the peace negotiations with a ceasefire that is protracted and indefinite, push the revolutionary forces towards capitulation and pacification and lay aside the substantive agenda of social, economic and political reforms. They wish the Commission on Appointments of Congress to remove from the Duterte Cabinet the patriotic and progressive elements who are in positions to help in the implementation of agreed reforms in the peace negotiations.

The NDFP is observing whether Duterte has the political will and the leadership to direct the GRP Negotiating Panel to come to terms with its NDFP counterpart on social and economic reforms and then on political and constitutional reforms before the end of hostilities and the disposition of the armed forces of both sides can be negotiated. The Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) is the “meat” of the entire peace negotiations. The NDFP has demanded national industrialization and genuine land reform. The Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms determines what authority and how all the reforms shall be implemented. The NDFP has offered to co-found with the GRP the Federal Republic of the Philippines in order to override the current existence of two governments, one reactionary, and the other revolutionary, which are belligerent forces in the civil war that started in 1969.

So long as the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations are moving forward from one round of formal talks to another, we can watch unfold the positions of the Duterte government and NDFP and whether or not the two sides can make the necessary comprehensive agreements to put into effect the reforms that are necessary for a just and lasting peace. The fifth round of formal talks shall be held in Noordwijk aan Zee in The Netherlands from May 27 to June 2, 2017. The focus shall be on the demand for the release of nearly 400 political prisoners listed by the NDFP in accordance with CARHRIHL, the further negotiation of CASER and the question of a ceasefire.

***NDFP Negotiating Panel Recommends Reconsideration of Order to Intensify Attacks
against GRP Forces***

May 26, 2017

As chief political consultant of the NDFP, I deplore the reported statement of DND Secretary Lorenzana that the NPA is also a target of Mindanao-wide martial law.

The GRP side has clarified that the NPA is not a target. In fact President Duterte himself told Fidel Agcaoili in their recent meeting that the GRP and NDFP should unite against terrorist groups like the Maute group and Abu Sayyaf.

We in the NDFP are together with the GRP in opposing and fighting the ISIS-affiliated and CIA-supported groups like the Maute group and Abu Sayyaf. We in the NDFP condemn the attack by the Maute group on Marawi City. Earlier NDFP-Mindanao condemned this attack and expressed the deepest concern and solidarity for the people of Marawi city.

The terrorist act by the Maute group should not be an obstacle to the fifth round of formal talks but should be an incentive to the GRP and NDFP to meet and agree to fight groups that are terrorist because they target, terrorize and harm civilians solely or mainly.

The NDFP Negotiating Panel has recommended to the National Executive Committee of the NDFP and in effect the Central Committee of the CPP to reconsider the order to the NPA to intensify tactical offensives as response to the Lorenzana statement that the NPA is a target of martial law.

**Remarks at the Aborted 5th Round
of Formal Talks
in the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations**

May 27, 2017

We in the NDFP thank the Royal Norwegian Government and its special envoy for facilitating the Philippine peace process. We thank all of you who are present at this opening ceremony. We heartily welcome each other today with confidence that we shall continue to move forward towards a just and lasting peace in the Philippines.

We are riding on the momentum set by four successful rounds of talks and by unilateral meetings and bilateral consultations between rounds. We in the NDFP appreciate once more that President Duterte recently received and conversed with the Chairperson of the NDFP Negotiating Panel Fidel Agcaoili, Panel members Benito Tiamzon and Wilma Austria.

To stay on course in the peace process, we must firmly adhere to the major agreements that the GRP and NDFP have reaffirmed since the first round in August last year. We must follow the substantive agenda set by The Hague Joint Declaration and the Joint Agreement on the Sequence, Formation and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees.

We must assure all the openly known participants in the peace process of both sides and the holders of documents of identification that they are entitled to, protected by and enjoy safety and immunity guarantees under JASIG. It is highly desirable and necessary that all the participants in the peace process are not subjected to any kind or degree of duress, such as surveillance, harassment or threats of arrest or even worse.

We must resolutely comply with and diligently implement the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). The hundreds of political prisoners listed by the NDFP must be released in the most expeditious manner. Even while in the mode of carrying out its all-out war policy, the GRP and its armed forces, police and paramilitary auxiliaries must be guided and bound by CARHRIHL. Likewise the NPA and the people's militia must comply with CARHRIHL as they engage in self-defense and counter-offensives.

Frankly speaking, the NDFP is unwilling to engage in any kind of prolonged and indefinite ceasefire agreement before there are substantive agreements on social, economic, political and constitutional reforms, which are significantly beneficial to the people. The NDFP does not wish to fall into the trap of capitulation and pacification, betraying the trust of the oppressed and exploited masses of the people. It also does not wish to preoccupy the peace process with accusations and counter-accusations of ceasefire violations and put aside the people's demands for basic social, economic and political reforms.

The Filipino people and both the GRP and NDFP are aware of the fact that on February 5, 2017 GRP Secretary of National Defense Lorenzana declared an all-out war policy against the NPA. In this connection, President Duterte terminated the JASIG and in effect the entire peace negotiations. He also issued on March 7 the order to the AFP to use artillery fire and aerial bombing against the NPA on a nationwide scale. Despite the March 11 backchannel agreement for the GRP and NDFP to resume peace negotiations and to issue simultaneous and reciprocal unilateral ceasefire declarations, President Duterte did not order the issuance of the GRP declaration of unilateral ceasefire, according to a public statement of Lorenzana. The NPA has had no choice but to engage in self-defense and counter-offensives.

The cause of intensified fighting between the armed forces of the GRP and NDFP is the GRP all-out war policy and threat of martial law. It is wrong for anyone to blame the NPA and claim that it has gone out of the command and control of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the NDFP. The NPA maintains high fighting morale and iron discipline under the absolute leadership of the CPP. It is even more absurd to claim that the NDFP negotiating panel has lost its authorization from the NDFP to negotiate with the GRP negotiating panel and to make recommendations to the NDFP principal.

If the objective of the intrigue is to justify the GRP all-out war policy and extract a bilateral or joint ceasefire agreement ahead of any substantive comprehensive agreement on basic reforms, the GRP is practically

terminating the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations or daydreaming that it can destroy the NPA by force of arms in the course of the peace negotiations. The NDFP Executive Committee has already informed the NDFP Negotiating Panel that the NPA is intensifying the people's war under the absolute leadership of the CPP to resist and defeat the all-out war policy of the Duterte regime and the scourge of martial law for Mindanao and possibly for the entire Philippines.

However, in so many examples of successful peace negotiations in various countries, it is possible to negotiate while fighting goes on in the battlefield. We were able to forge the CARHRIHL in only six months in 1998, even as the civil war went on between the belligerent forces. It is possible to continue to accelerate the negotiations and forge the CASER within the current year and the CAPCR within the first quarter of the next year on time for the framing and ratification of a charter founding the Federal Republic of the Philippines.

It is preferable to accelerate the peace process rather than overburden or lay this aside with what the NDFP cannot accept: the negotiation of an interim Joint Ceasefire Agreement in violation of the substantive agenda set by The Hague Joint Declaration and the Joint Agreement on the Sequence, Formation and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees. While the civil war continues, the GRP and the NDFP can demonstrate their respective causes and fighting capabilities within the framework of CARHRIHL. The battles ought to prove that the peace negotiations are necessary.

A prolonged and indefinite interim joint or bilateral ceasefire agreement may be negotiated and drafted in advance but should not be signed and approved by the principals of the GRP and NDFP ahead of any of the substantive agreement even by a split second. We in the NDFP do not wish such a ceasefire agreement to preempt the substantive agreements, especially CASER. The NDFP also considers it desirable and necessary that the basic reforms are being implemented for at least two years before the permanent truce can be formalized in the Comprehensive Agreement on the End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces.

It might be relatively easy for the GRP and NDFP Negotiating Panels to forge the CASER as a policy agreement. But it might be more difficult to obtain from GRP as annexes to the agreement the executive orders, legislation and constitutional amendments needed to implement CASER in view of the predominance of pro-imperialist and reactionaries within the different branches of the GRP and in view of their priorities, which run counter to genuine land reform and national industrialization and which divert economic and financial resources from these.

The security cluster of the Duterte cabinet is interested only in the capitulation and pacification of the revolutionary movement through a combination of all-out war policy, martial law and a lopsided joint interim ceasefire agreement. The economic development cluster of the Duterte government is dominated by the neoliberals who oppose social and economic reforms. We refer to the problems in order to solve them.

If used by the Duterte regime to aggravate its all-out war policy against the revolutionary forces, martial law will increase the power of the pro-imperialists and reactionaries within the regime and will incite the revolutionary force and the broad masses of the people to intensify the people's war. The only conceivable instance when the NDFP can agree with the Duterte regime on the proper use of martial law is when there is an alliance to combat the armed collaboration between US imperialism and local reactionary forces. Otherwise, the regime has to reckon and contend with a broad united front against a Marcos-type martial rule.

They are peace spoilers within and outside the Duterte regime who wish to impugn the credentials of the NDFP Negotiating Panel and the NDFP Chief Political Consultant. The fact stands that the principal of the NDFP Negotiating Panel is the NDFP National Council and its Executive Committee. These include the representatives of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army, with the former having command and control over the latter. They make their consensus on whatever policy and course of action to take in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations by relying on the reports and recommendations of the NDFP Negotiating Panel to the NDFP National Council.

The major points that I have presented and stressed in these opening remarks come from the latest appraisal of the situation and the instructions that the National Executive Committee has given to the NDFP Negotiating Panel. The NDFP Negotiating Panel has no command and control over the NPA, just as the GRP Negotiating Panel has no such command and control over the AFP and PNP. But it provides to its principal the reports and recommendations as basis for decision-making.

The NDFP Negotiating Panel through its Chairperson will elucidate to its counterpart the latest instructions that it needs to know.

NDFP Negotiating Panel Recommends Reconsideration of Order to Intensify Attacks against GRP Forces

May 26, 2017

As chief political consultant of the NDFP, I deplore the reported statement of DND Secretary Lorenzana that the NPA is also a target of Mindanao-wide martial law.

The GRP side has clarified that the NPA is not a target. In fact President Duterte himself told Fidel Agcaoili in their recent meeting that the GRP and NDFP should unite against terrorist groups like the Maute group and Abu Sayyaf.

We in the NDFP are together with the GRP in opposing and fighting the ISIS-affiliated and CIA-supported groups like the Maute group and Abu Sayyaf.

We in the NDFP condemn the attack by the Maute group on Marawi City. Earlier NDFP-Mindanao condemned this attack and expressed the deepest concern and solidarity for the people of Marawi city.

The terrorist act by the Maute group should not be an obstacle to the fifth round of formal talks but should be an incentive to the GRP and NDFP to meet and agree to fight groups that are terrorist because they target, terrorize and harm civilians solely or mainly.

The NDFP Negotiating Panel has recommended to the National Executive Committee of the NDFP and in effect the Central Committee of the CPP to reconsider the order to the NPA to intensify tactical offensives as response to the Lorenzana statement that the NPA is a target of martial law.

CPP Justifies Order to Intensify Offensives

May 28, 2017

Ahead of any CPP action on the NDFP negotiating panel recommendation to reconsider its order to intensify offensives against martial law proclamation, the GRP must first explain the following:

1. Why is it adopting an all-out war policy against the CPP, NPA and NDFP despite previous unilateral ceasefire declarations and the peace talks?
2. And now why should there be martial law against them and the people, despite shallow denial by GRP negotiating panel?

The CPP has issued statements exposing and condemning human rights violations under the GRP all-out war policy and now martial law proclamation to justify the CPP order to intensify offensives.

Peace Negotiations between Duterte Regime and Revolutionary Forces Head for the Rocks

June 26, 2017

By all major indications, the peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) headed by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte and the revolutionary forces represented by the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) are heading for the rocks, despite the strong clamor for these negotiations by the public and a broad range of peace advocates and despite the patient and efficient third-party role of the Royal Norwegian Government (RNG) as facilitator.

For more than a year, since May 16, 2016, Duterte has not fulfilled his promise to release more than 400 NDFP-listed political prisoners through general amnesty or the prosecutors' withdrawal of the false charges of common crimes against them. The promise to release all political prisoners encouraged the NDFP to agree to an acceleration of the peace negotiations on social, economic, political and constitutional reforms in order to address the roots of the now 48 years of civil war between the GRP and NDFP.

But after four rounds of formal talks (two in Oslo in 2016, one in Rome in January 2017 and one in Noordwijk, Netherlands in April 2017), the GRP has steadily backed out of its promise to release all political prisoners and Duterte himself has publicly expressed regrets for having released from prison a mere 19 of them in August last year. These are NDFP political consultants who are protected by the GRP-NDFP Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) and should never have been arrested and imprisoned at all. Worst, President Duterte has twice threatened (in February and May 2017) these consultants with rearrest and shoot-to-kill orders while they were engaged in the peace negotiations abroad.

In the course of the four rounds of formal talks, the GRP negotiating panel has given the highest priority to discussions on a prolonged and indefinite bilateral ceasefire in a vain effort to obtain quickly the capitulation and pacification of the revolutionary forces and the people. The GRP has blatantly shown diminishing interest in the implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) and in the sequenced forging of comprehensive agreements on social and economic reforms, political and constitutional reforms and on the end of hostilities and disposition of forces.

Duterte retains in his cabinet rabid exponents of US-instigated neoliberal economic policy, like Director General Ernesto Pernia of the National Economic Development Authority, Secretary Carlos Dominguez III of the Finance Department and Secretary Benjamin Diokno of the Department of Budget and Management. He has allowed his "supermajority" in Congress to remove Gina Lopez from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources because of her opposition to the plundering and polluting operations of mining companies.

Duterte has shown a lack of sustained interest in genuine land reform and national industrialization proposed by the NDFP. He has demagogically used the slogan of change only to stick to the status quo and further entrench the interests of the United States and other foreign monopolies and the oligarchy of big compradors and landlords. He prefers continuing the export of raw materials, semimanufactures, and cheap labor and taking onerous foreign loans to sustain import-dependent consumption and infrastructure building and to cover the ever-growing chronic trade deficit and balance of payments.

The NDFP has offered to co-found the Federal Republic of the Philippines with the GRP, provided there are guarantees for political and economic sovereignty, people's democracy, respect for human rights, development, social justice, patriotic culture and independent foreign policy against foreign dominance, dynasticism, warlordism and other forms of local reaction. But the Duterte regime appears convinced that it alone can proceed to establish an authoritarian regime or even a fascist rule by capitalizing on its supposed "iron hand" success against illegal drugs and by shifting now to an "anti-terrorist" campaign that paves the way for a Marcos-type nationwide martial law, adoption of a new constitution and its ratification by local assemblies run by barangay [village] captains to be appointed by Duterte and controlled by his Kilusang Pagbabago (Movement for Change).

Despite Duterte's avowal of trying to develop an independent foreign policy in a multipolar world, by approaching China and Russia and reducing the overwhelming US hegemony over the Philippines, pro-US and

reactionary diehards like defense secretary Delfin Lorenzana, national security adviser Hermogenes Esperon and armed forces chief of staff Eduardo Año have their way in perpetuating US dominance over the Philippine military and in sabotaging GRP-NDFP peace negotiations by waging an all-out war policy under Oplan Kapayapaan against the revolutionary forces and people since February 2017 after deviously continuing Aquino's Oplan Bayanihan.

Lorenzana, Esperon and Año are hellbent on escalating offensive campaigns against the New People's Army and other revolutionary forces and using the peace negotiations to obtain the capitulation and pacification of these forces under the guise of a prolonged and indefinite bilateral ceasefire agreement, which puts aside substantive negotiations and comprehensive agreements on social, economic and constitutional reforms. Such ceasefire agreement is supposed to be coupled with socioeconomic dole outs from the GRP and foreign entities and prevent the basic socioeconomic reforms demanded by the people.

The so-called security cluster in the Duterte cabinet has Duterte practically on the cusp of its hands on national security issues. Longtime Washington resident Defense Secretary Lorenzana has been able to put US military forces at play in the air and ground surveillance and bombing of Marawi City, resulting in indiscriminate mass destruction of civilian lives and property and the displacement of more than 300,000 people in Marawi and nearby areas. The irony in the Marawi tragedy is that US military intervention has been justified at the highest level of the Duterte regime by the special operations of the CIA-directed and Islamic state (Daesh)-affiliated Maute and Abu Sayyaf groups.

Duterte himself has become insecure, despite his current obeisance to the United States and his own security cluster. He himself has acknowledged that he faces threats of assassination or coup. It seems to be beneficial to Duterte that the United States and his own security cluster are egging him on to include the revolutionary forces led by the Communist Party of the Philippines as among the "terrorist" targets of the reactionary state to rationalize a Mindanao-wide and then nationwide proclamation of martial law. But this will make Duterte even more vulnerable to a "soft" coup by the pro-US retired and active generals around him or to a popular broad united front against his regime. When he becomes more of a liability than an asset to the United States, even the pro-US officials around him are likely to turn against him and cooperate with anti-Duterte forces within and outside of the reactionary armed forces and police.

A newly-elected president in the Philippines usually obtains in his first year of office a high popularity and trust rating from the mercenary opinion poll survey firms. Subsequently, his reputation deteriorates as his promises remain unfulfilled, problems are aggravated and projects fall short of targets and are afflicted by corruption. The Duterte regime is already reeking with corruption even before it can fulfil its promise of punishing the big crooks in the previous Aquino regime. However, Duterte is now most liable for gross human rights violations for the thousands of extrajudicial killings in his Oplan Tokhang [Knock-Appeal] against illegal drugs and for the indiscriminate bombings and artillery fire on communities in his all-out war policy against the revolutionary forces and in his campaign against the Maute and Abu Sayyaf groups in Marawi and other Bangsamoro groups elsewhere.

The socioeconomic and political conditions in the Philippines and in the world are not favorable for the Duterte regime to abandon peace negotiations with the NDFP and to pursue authoritarian ambitions. Having a growth rate of the gross domestic product at around 7 percent or even higher is not a true measure of economic and social development. It merely obscures in vain how the exploiting classes appropriate for themselves the social wealth created by the working people. Poverty is widespread because of extreme forms of exploitation in an underdeveloped economy. Mass unemployment is actually rising, incomes of the working people are plunging and taxes and prices of basic commodities are soaring. The use of authoritarianism and state terrorism will only serve to inflame further the Filipino people's resistance.

The Communist Party of the Philippines, the New People's Army and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines have publicly expressed their readiness to fight and defeat the all-out war policy of the Duterte regime. At the same time, they are still willing to pursue the peace negotiations with the GRP even under conditions of the severest fighting in the civil war in order to rouse and rally the people along the patriotic and progressive line, explore further how to serve the interest of the people and forge the comprehensive agreements for a just and lasting peace against the oppressive and exploitative forces of foreign monopoly capitalism, domestic feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism.

***Military Rule Will Nullify and Destroy
the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations Instantly
and Completely***

July 9, 2017

President Rodrigo Duterte of the Republic of the Philippines is now emboldened by the Supreme Court decision last July 4, 2017, upholding his authority and discretion to proclaim martial law and suspend the writ of habeas corpus not only in Mindanao but nationwide and providing no caveats or safeguards whatsoever to protect human rights and the fundamental freedoms. As a result, he is repeatedly threatening to impose martial law on the entire Philippines and to carry it out in the same brutal manner that dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos did from 1972 to 1986.

To proclaim martial law nationwide and endorse it for an indefinite period of time, he will have to target the revolutionary forces and people represented by the National Democratic Front of the Philippines as his enemy and depend on the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police, which he himself describes as pro-US. Certainly, that martial rule will serve the vilest interests of the US and the local oligarchy of big compradors, landlords and corrupt government officials.

It cannot be the other way around, despite previous fears of certain pro-US reactionary groups that Duterte was seeking a truce and an alliance with the revolutionary movement represented by the NDFP in order to obtain solid support for his use of martial law as commander-in-chief. His first year in the presidential office has passed. Most major indications are that he will stay rightist and pro-US. He follows in the main US economic and security policies and has no abiding interest in adopting socioeconomic and political reforms through the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. Worst of all, he is preparing to impose a fascist dictatorship on the Filipino people.

The military rule over the whole country will serve to nullify and destroy the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations instantly and completely. It will incite the broad masses of the people to rise up and wage people's war as they did against the Marcos proclamation of martial law in 1972. The revolutionary forces and the people will have no choice but to wage the people's democratic revolution through people's war.

The GRP-NDFP peace negotiations are already in the process of being scuttled by the GRP because they have already been prejudiced by the following: 1. The failure of the Duterte regime to release all 400 political prisoners in compliance with the Hernandez political offense doctrine, the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law and Duterte's own promise of general amnesty; 2. In violation of The Hague Joint Declaration, which sets the framework for GRP-NDFP peace negotiations, the constant demand of the GRP for the surrender of the NDFP under the guise of a protracted and indefinite bilateral ceasefire agreement before any substantive agreement on socioeconomic and political reforms; 3. The continuing all-out war policy of the Duterte regime since February 5, 2017, against the New People's Army and other revolutionary forces and people represented by the NDFP; 4. The Mindanao-wide martial law proclamation, which targets not only the Bangsamoro armed groups, like Islamic Group-related Maute and Abu Sayyaf groups and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters but also the NPA, which exists and operates in most parts of Mindanao; and 5. The media campaign of the GRP and big business interests to end the peace negotiations and demand the surrender of the revolutionary forces and the people.

Military rule under the US-designed Oplan Kapayapaan will be combined with the mass murder methods of Oplan Tokhang [Knock Appeal] and Oplan Double Barrel and will surely make a far bigger catastrophe than the martial law regime under Marcos in terms of abductions, torture, extrajudicial killings, seizures of property and forced mass evacuations of many people through military, police and vigilante operations with impunity.

The Communist Party of the Philippines, the NPA and the NDFP are the main targets of the planned nationwide martial law regime. But their personnel and units are mostly unexposed to their enemy. They were battle-tested during the Marcos martial law regime for 14 years and by people's war for nearly 50 years. Duterte would have to engage in a wanton bloodbath, murdering far more innocent people than a small part of the revolutionary underground. He cannot repeat the massacre of suspected communists and sympathizers in Indonesia in

1965-66, without being stopped in his tracks by the broad united front and armed resistance.

The so-called high popularity rating of Duterte by the opinion poll survey firms, Social Weather Station and Pulse Asia, is based on a few thousands of respondents. It is a flimsy basis for Duterte to try his luck at Marcos-style authoritarianism. Remember that Estrada enjoyed a plurality win in the 1998 elections and a high opinion poll rating up to the early part of 2000. He attacked the Camp Abubakar of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and then he started to mimic his own generals and strut like Rambo in special forces uniform. By early 2001, he was driven out of office by the mass movement.

It takes a crazy guy with a really sick mind to think martial rule combined with the Tokhang methods of mass murder can finish off the armed revolutionary movement and solve all the basic long-standing problems of the Philippines. Oplan Tokhang has failed to eradicate even the problem of illegal drugs. This problem continues to thrive, together with the big drug lords and their protectors in the reactionary government, even at the cost of 8,000 to 12,000 lives of poor drug addicts and low-level pushers who are outside of the territory of the favored drug lords.

The people's democratic revolution through protracted people's war will continue to advance because the broad masses of the people detest the evil forces of foreign monopoly capitalism, domestic feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism. The ever-worsening economic and financial crisis of the semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system and of the global capitalist system are wreaking havoc on the Philippine economy and inflicting gross and acute suffering on the Filipino people. The looming nationwide military rule under Duterte will surely goad and incite the people to wage people's war and win victories at an accelerated rate

The only conceivable way by which a nationwide martial law proclamation is acceptable and justifiable to the people is to uphold and defend the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Philippines against the violent actions of the US and pro-US reactionary forces. But before that possibility becomes a reality, Duterte must first engage the NDFP in serious peace negotiations, make the comprehensive agreements on socioeconomic and political reforms, inculcate a patriotic and democratic orientation among his military and police forces and bring about the benefits of the reforms for the people in accordance with their national and democratic needs, demands and aspirations.

to Blame Revolutionaries for Martial Law

July 21, 2017

By his own public declarations and expressions of admiration for the fascist dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos, Philippine President Rodrigo R. Duterte has long been obsessed with his scheme to establish his own iron-fisted rule through martial law and extrajudicial killings by way of asserting “strong man” leadership and intimidating the opposition and the people under the pretext of solving not only the problem of illegal drugs but also far graver social, economic and political problems of the US-dominated ruling system of big compradors and landlords. At last, he has declared the end of peace negotiations with the NDFP. The revolutionary forces and people have no choice but to fight back and intensify the people’s war along the general line of people’s democratic revolution.

Duterte is not daunted by failures in his use of brute force. After 7,000 to 12,000 extrajudicial killings of poor drug addicts and low-level pushers, he has failed to solve the problem of illegal drugs within the first three to six months of being in office. He has also used up six months of extending his bloody campaign and has aroused suspicions that he has acted against certain drug lords only to favor those who keep the business thriving. He has directed the bombing of Marawi and victimized the people far more than the Maute and Abu Sayyaf groups could. But he wants to prolong the Mindanao-wide martial law proclamation up to the end of 2017. And he calculates that he can make martial rule nationwide by continuing to blame and target the revolutionary movement of the people as “terrorists.”

After pretending for a while to seek a negotiated peace between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP, representing the Communist Party of the Philippines, New People’s Army and sixteen other revolutionary organizations), he is flagrantly hellbent on making the armed revolutionary movement the scapegoat and pretext for the proclamation of martial law on the scale of the island of Mindanao and eventually nationwide. Since the time he assumed the presidency, Duterte has launched offensives against the New People’s Army (NPA) and has always threatened to scuttle the peace negotiations whenever the NPA takes defensive or counter-offensive actions even in the absence of a ceasefire.

He has obscured the barbarities being committed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Philippine National Police (PNP) and paramilitary forces (including private security agencies and vigilante groups) that have been acting under his orders in the name of the extended Oplan Bayanihan, Oplan Kapayapaan and the all-out war policy signaled by Duterte’s termination of the peace negotiations on February 4 and spelled out by his defense secretary Delfin Lorenzana on February 7, 2017. The atrocities include aerial bombings and artillery fire, abductions, torture, destruction of lives and property, occupation of community buildings and forced evacuations and evictions. These are documented by human rights organizations and presented to the Joint Monitoring Committee of the GRP and NDFP.

Duterte has completely ignored the proposals of the NDFP to have an alliance for realizing national independence, democratic rights, economic development through national industrialization and genuine land reform, social justice, a patriotic and scientific culture and independent foreign policy and to accelerate the peace negotiations on the substantive issues on social, economic, political and constitutional reforms, to make a bilateral ceasefire agreement after approval of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) and to co-found the Federal Republic of the Philippines on patriotic and democratic grounds defined by the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms (CAPCR).

That Duterte has been insincere and not really interested in the progress and ultimate success of the peace negotiations between the GRP and the NDFP is well proven by false promises that he has never had the intention of fulfilling. Even before he assumed his presidential office, he promised on May 16, 2016 that he would amnesty and release all political prisoners in compliance with the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). But he released on bail only 19 political consultants of NDFP, which also falls short of complying with the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG). Despite the breach of promise, the NDFP continued to hope that all the political prisoners would be released in

conjunction with the mutually agreed plan to accelerate the peace negotiations, to forge and approve the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) and make an interim bilateral ceasefire agreement. To stimulate the peace negotiations, the NDFP agreed with the GRP to issue reciprocal unilateral ceasefire declarations that lasted more than five months, from August 28, 2016 to February 10, 2017. But Duterte himself kept on saying publicly that he never had any intention of releasing all the political prisoners but wished to keep them as his trump card until the successful end of the peace negotiations. Worse, despite the unilateral ceasefire declarations, which lasted for more than five months, the GRP unleashed armed offensives against the revolutionary movement under the name of Aquino's Oplan Bayanihan (Community Spirit) and then under that of Oplan Kapayapaan (Peace). Since February 4, Duterte has caused the declaration of the all-out war policy against the NPA and the people and has never withdrawn it before and after his Mindanao-wide martial law proclamation on May 23, 2017.

Every round of formal talks has been used by the GRP to cut down the hope for the release of the political prisoners in accordance with CARHRIHL and to put at the top of the agenda the GRP demand for bilateral ceasefire at the expense of negotiations on CASER, despite the repeated reminders of the NDFP to the GRP that substantive negotiations and agreements must come ahead of any protracted and indefinite kind of ceasefire. At one point, in backchannel talks last March 11, the NDFP agreed with GRP to issue reciprocal and simultaneous unilateral ceasefire declarations. But the GRP backed out of the agreement despite Duterte's approval on March 11.

The Hague Joint Declaration and the Joint Agreement on the Sequence, Formation and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees have set forth the sequence of the items in the substantive agenda: respect for human rights and international humanitarian law (the subject of a comprehensive agreement approved by the GRP and NDFP principals since 1998), social and economic reforms, political and constitutional reforms and the end of hostilities and disposition of forces. The aim of sequencing properly the items is to address the roots of the armed conflict and lay the basis of a just and lasting peace.

For sincerely adhering to the agreements with the GRP and for refusing to surrender and pacify the revolutionary movement of the people under the guise of a premature prolonged and indefinite bilateral ceasefire, the NDFP is now being demagogically accused by the Duterte government of insincerity in the peace negotiations, being relentlessly blamed for the continuing revolutionary armed conflict, being targeted by propaganda aimed at preparing the public mind for the proclamation of martial law nationwide and using the CPP, NPA and the NDFP as scapegoat.

Cold-bloodedly, Duterte intends to rule the Philippines with a combination of martial rule, the use of the mass murder methods of Oplans Tokhang and Double Barrel and the bombing and shelling of entire communities as already seen in Marawi and in the territory of the people's democratic government and the NPA in the course of the extended Oplan Bayanihan, Oplan Kapayapaan and the all-out war policy issued last February 5 against the revolutionary movement.

Even without the license of martial law, the Duterte regime has become culpable for at least 10,000 extrajudicial killings, already outstripping in one year the 3,500 victims of murder under the 14-year Marcos fascist regime presented in the US court system. With the license of martial law, we can expect a far bigger catastrophe of extrajudicial killings and other atrocities from the AFP, PNP and paramilitary forces.

The Duterte regime has thoroughly exposed itself as an instrument of US imperialism, a creature of a certain overreaching group of big compradors and landlords and a bloody accomplice of pro-US military and police officers. Thus, the revolutionary movement has started to refer to the Duterte regime as a puppet of US imperialism. The chief objective of Duterte is to destroy the revolutionary movement of the people through deception and brute force and not to build national unity and peace on the basis of social, economic, political and constitutional reforms.

He daydreams about establishing a fascist dictatorship far stronger than that of Marcos. He is oblivious of the fact that his so-called high popularity rating has been bought by excessive amounts of money and has nowhere to go but down in the face of failures and promises proven false. The revolutionary forces and the people can avail of the strategy and tactics of the broad united front and armed struggle in order to pursue the people's democratic revolution with a socialist perspective.

Duterte Should Allow his Negotiating Panel

to Seriously Negotiate

July 29, 2017

I do not have to prove again that I have the revolutionary will and courage to wage armed struggle against oppression. I was an active part of the people's war against the Marcos regime for nine years, from 1969 to 1977 and then went to fascist prison for another 9 years. I surpass the field record of many reactionary military officers who are in the field for a few years until they are assigned desk jobs and then retire at the age of 56.

If deemed necessary by the revolutionary movement, I will return to the Philippines to fight the Duterte puppet regime of US imperialism. That means surmounting my being in the same old age bracket as Duterte and evading the constant surveillance by the US, Dutch, European and Philippine reactionary intelligence agencies.

At any rate, I choose the battlefield where I fight and the types of battles that I wage. These cannot be dictated by Duterte who hopes vainly that the US and European intelligence would tip him off as soon I leave The Netherlands for the Philippines. The way he continues to talk he really hates to engage in peace negotiations with the NDFP. At any rate, I must remind Duterte that we are well past the age of retirement in the NPA and AFP.

At his ripe old age of 72, he should not try to project an image of a strutting young fighter at my expense. He should sober up and allow his negotiating panel to seriously negotiate with the NDFP negotiating panel and make agreements on social, economic and political reforms that lay the basis for a just and lasting peace for the benefit of the Filipino people.

On Duterte and the Peace Negotiations

Interview by Dr. Rainer Werning, August 13, 2017

1. A year ago you and Digong [Duterte] exchanged niceties via Skype and expectations of political change were extremely high. How did Digong fare as a student under your tutelage at the Lyceum?

Jose Maria Sison (JMS): When I had a Skype conference with Duterte on April 25, 2016 before the presidential election, he declared that he wanted to become the first Left president of the Philippines and that he was a socialist although not a communist.

One week after he was elected president, I sent Fidel Agcaoili to confer with him and he promised to release all political prisoners listed by the NDFP. Soon thereafter, he offered to appoint to his cabinet four CPP representatives to be in charge of the departments of labor and employment, agrarian reform, environment and natural resources and social welfare and development.

But I told him that he could appoint on their own merits individuals who were patriotic and progressive, highly competent and diligent. I advised him that the NDFP, including the CPP, must first engage in peace negotiations successfully with GRP. CPP representatives in his cabinet would appear as a sell-out if appointed before the success of the peace negotiations.

Duterte did not have high academic grades. But he showed a high level of natural intelligence. He did not get high marks because he was not reading the textbook promptly. I think that he was fond of playing billiards or some other game. He was my student in political science.

2. There seemed to be much of euphoria surrounding the four rounds of talks between the government in Manila and the NDFP. What were the main reasons why the 5th round of talks finally failed?

JMS: The first four rounds of formal talks were indeed successful, even as the GRP dragged its feet in delaying the amnesty and release of the political prisoners in compliance with CARHRIHL as well as with Duterte's own promise and also even as the militarists in the GRP bugged the NDFP with the demand for a prolonged and indefinite bilateral ceasefire ahead of CASER. The GRP withdrew from what should have been the fifth round of formal talks because the NDFP refused to put the protracted and indefinite bilateral ceasefire ahead of the release of the political prisoners and the signing of CASER. The aim of the militarists (DND secretary Lorenzana, national security adviser Esperon and AFP chief of staff Año) is to affect the surrender of the NDFP and put aside the substantive negotiations on social, economic and political reforms.

3. Do you anticipate an extension of martial law nationwide?

JMS: Duterte himself has threatened several times to extend martial rule nationwide. He has said that the NPA is the next nationwide target after Marawi. The NPA has been a target of the Mindanao-wide martial rule since May 23. If you combine martial law with the Oplan Tokhang methods of mass murder, you can expect a far bigger catastrophe than the Marcos martial rule. In Oplan Tokhang, Duterte has already caused the extrajudicial killing of 10,000 to 12,000 suspected illegal drug users and pushers in urban slum areas in his first year of office. Compare this with the Marcos record of 3,500 extrajudicial killings of political opponents in 14 years of fascist dictatorship.

4. Some medical doctors in the Philippines describe Digong alternatively as a "sociopath" or "psychopath." Who is that man after all in your personal view and what explains his still high popularity ratings?

JMS: Duterte is indeed a nut case. He is both a sociopath and psychopath. His addiction to the opioid Fentanyl has made him crazy. His drug addiction combines with his love for killing as an exercise of political power. He has turned the police and military into death squads with the use of money and promotions. Without any inhibition whatsoever, he has publicly called on them to kill the poor drug users and low-level pushers.

The so-called popularity of Digong is the result of his alliance with the anti-Aquino big politicians like the Marcoses and the former presidents Arroyo and Estrada and the big businessmen who gave him campaign money. Now that he is president, he can use the government propaganda facilities and he has more money to commission poll survey firms, expand his troll army in the social media and bribe key print journalists, columnists and broadcasters.

But such fake popularity is eroding fast because crisis conditions in the Philippines are worsening. He cannot fulfil many of his big electoral campaign promises and he cannot solve the social problems because he sticks to a

neoliberal economic policy and a brutal security policy directed by pro-US military officers.

5. *If you were urged to take a look into the crystal ball, what will the Philippines look like at the end of the president's term?*

JMS: In five more years of Duterte rule, the Philippines will become more underdeveloped, impoverished and devastated by his policies that are servile to US imperialism and the big compradors and landlords. But can he finish his term in view of his physical and mental health problems, the growing discontent of the broad masses of the people and the possibility of a broad united front to remove him from his office?

***The Hague Joint Declaration
as Framework Agreement
and Continuing Validity
in the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations***

September 1, 2017

I thank the core organizing committee of representatives of the NDFP Secretariat of the Joint Monitoring Committee, BAYAN and its affiliates, lawmakers and legal luminaries, religious leaders and professionals in various fields for inviting me to address all of you, peace advocates on this occasion to celebrate the 25th anniversary of The Hague Joint Declaration.

Let me give you an overview of the major developments since the Declaration was forged on September 1, 1992 in The Hague, The Netherlands, with the facilitation of a Dutch solidarity friend Member of the European Parliament and the Clingendael Netherlands Institute of International Relations. I shall use as chronological guideposts the administrations of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) with which the NDFP has been negotiating on and off. Ultimately, I shall discuss the continuing relevance of The Hague Joint Declaration and the prospects of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

The Hague Joint Declaration as framework for peace negotiations

But before I discuss the history of the said peace negotiations, let me review with you this Declaration as the negotiating framework. The document is quite short and contains five highly important points: 1) Formal peace negotiations between the GRP and NDF shall be held to resolve the armed conflict. 2) The common goal of the aforesaid negotiations shall be the attainment of a just and lasting peace. 3) Such negotiations shall take place after the parties have reached tentative agreements on substantive issues in the agreed agenda through the reciprocal working committees to be separately organized by the GRP and NDF. 4) The holding of peace negotiations must be in accordance with mutually acceptable principles, including national sovereignty, democracy and social justice, and no precondition whatsoever shall be made to negate the inherent character and purpose of the peace negotiations. 5) Preparatory to the formal peace negotiations, we have agreed to recommend the following: a. Specific measures of goodwill and confidence building to create a favorable climate for peace negotiations; and b. The substantive agenda of the formal peace negotiations shall include human rights and international humanitarian law; social and economic reforms; political and constitutional reforms; and end of hostilities and disposition of forces.

The signatories of the Declaration were Rep Jose V. Yap as emissary of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and Luis Jalandoni as representative of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. Witnesses were Eric D. Singson and Teresita de Castro, State Counsel of the GRP, and Coni Ledesma, Byron Bocar and this speaker as Chief Political Consultant of the NDFP. Atty. Romeo T. Capulong, NDFP legal adviser, later NDFP General Counsel, played a key role. He was also a close friend of Rep. Jose V. Yap. He went back and forth bringing key proposals for the agreement.

Ramos Administration, 1992-1998

Despite the signing of the Hague Joint Declaration on September 1, 1992, GRP President Fidel V. Ramos did not form the GRP Negotiating Panel but proceeded to form the National Unification Commission (NUC) with the announced purpose of undertaking local peace negotiations in collaboration with the regional peace and order councils of the GRP. The charade in which military assets posed as commanders of the New People's Army (NPA) in sessions arranged by the NUC caused a delay for more than two years in the formation of the GRP and NDFP Negotiating Panels, as required by The Hague Joint Declaration.

Soon after the Ramos administration dissolved the NUC, the GRP and the NDFP Negotiating Panels respectively under the chairmanship of Ambassador Howard Q. Dee and Luis Jalandoni were formed by their respective principals and were able to forge the Ground Rules of Meetings and Consultations and the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) in 1994. They were also able to draft the Joint Agreement on the

Sequence, Formation and Operationalization of Reciprocal Working Committees for signing and approval by the panels at the formal opening of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations in 1995 in Brussels, Belgium with the facilitation of the Belgian government.

Immediately after the formal opening, the peace negotiations snagged because of the refusal of the Ramos administration to release from prison the NDFP political consultant Sotero Llamas. After his release, the negotiating panels succeeded in forging the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) in 1998. This is the first item in the substantive agenda of the peace negotiations. Ramos and House Speaker Jose de Venecia expressed the wish that the public signing and approval of the CARHRIHL could be done by the GRP and NDFP principals in Manila if the CPP Founding Chairman and NDFP Chief Political Consultant would attend the event. The wish did not materialize. Ramos finished his term without signing and approving CARHRIHL.

Estrada Administration, 1988-2001

NDFP Chairman Mariano Orosa approved and signed the CARHRIHL on April 10, 1998, followed by GRP President Joseph Estrada on August 7, 1998. But the peace negotiations never got off the ground because Estrada dilly-dallied in appointing a new GRP Negotiating Panel and took offense at the NPA capturing and holding General Obillo and his aide, Captain Montealto as prisoners of war. The NDFP offered the release of the two military officers as a goodwill and confidence-building measure, provided separate but simultaneous and reciprocal cease-fires would be declared for the safe and orderly release of the two military officers. After the Estrada administration refused to issue its own ceasefire declaration, the prisoners of war in the custody of the NPA were turned over to Senator Loren Legarda and other peace advocates.

In 1999, the NDFP admonished Estrada not to sign the Visiting Forces Agreement with the US. He took offense at this once more and formally terminated the peace negotiations with the NDFP on May 31, 1999 by giving a 30-day notice of termination in accordance with the JASIG. As he unleashed war on the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Bangsamoro, the NDFP intensified the people's war and rapidly weakened and isolated the Estrada administration. Estrada's movie star "popularity" evaporated quickly. When already in desperation in 2000, he sought to resume the peace negotiations upon the advice of Tarlac Governor Jose V. Yap. But it was too late. The broad united front against his regime was all set to oust him from power in January 2001.

Arroyo Administration, 2001-2010

Vice-President Gloria M. Arroyo took over the presidency upon the overthrow of Estrada by the mass movement. An international solidarity conference of peace advocates was held in April 2001 in Manila, co-sponsored by the Ecumenical Bishops Forum and by the GRP and NDFP. There was optimism that the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations would be resumed and would advance faster than before. Former officials of the Ramos administration cooperated with Arroyo. A high intelligence officer of the GRP even agreed to provide evidence for the assassination plot of the Estrada regime against the NDFP Chief Political Consultant. The GRP and NDFP agreed to accept the offer of the Royal Norwegian Government (RNG) to act as third-party facilitator.

The GRP and the NDFP negotiating panels reaffirmed the agreements that had been mutually signed and approved since 1992 and resumed the peace negotiations in earnest. However, the negotiations in June 2001 in Oslo, Norway were disrupted when the notorious human rights violator Colonel Rodolfo Aguinaldo resisted arrest and was killed by the New People's Army in Cagayan, and the GRP side used this incident as pretext for backing out of the peace negotiations. The Arroyo regime "suspended" formal talks from June 14 to September 1, 2001 in violation of the JASIG which does not provide for suspension but only either the continuity or termination of peace negotiations.

Within the last week of November and first week of December 2001, a backchannel team of the GRP headed by Speaker de Venecia came to The Netherlands to inform the NDFP that the GRP had requested the US government to put the CPP, NPA and the NDFP chief political consultant in its list of foreign "terrorists" and that the Anti-Money Laundering Committee would look into the bank accounts of the CPP, NPA and this speaker, unless the NPA engaged the AFP in ceasefire and surrender its arms. The NDFP rebuffed the brazen threats but proposed that the peace negotiations could be accelerated without violating The Hague Joint Declaration in order to reach the end of hostilities after agreements on social, economic, political and constitutional reforms.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita (a retired general), Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes (also a retired general) and National Security Adviser; and eventually Defense Secretary Norberto Gonzales, an ultra-reactionary from a

pseudo-socialist group, used the Security Cluster of the Arroyo Cabinet to direct the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) and to cause the ouster of less reactionary members of the GRP Negotiating Panel. During and shortly after the presidential elections of 2004, Arroyo sought the support of the NDFP and went through the motions of showing interest in the resumption of formal peace talks. In June 2004, the GRP and NDFP, with the support of the RNG as Third-Party Facilitator, agreed to the setting up of the offices of the Joint Secretariat in the Philippines. But the ultra-reactionaries or rabid anti-communists had already taken complete control of the GRP Negotiating Panel and were hell bent on sabotaging the peace process with the demand for NPA surrender and pacification in line with the Oplan Bantay Laya I and II.

Aquino Administration, 2010-2016

When Benigno Aquino III became GRP President in 2010, he showed no interest in the peace negotiations but in using these as a way of imposing the reactionary state on the NDFP and as a psywar means of the US-designed Oplan Bayanihan. He appointed the ultrareactionary and rabid anti-communist Teresita Deles as the head of OPAPP. He was late in forming the GRP Negotiating Panel. He seemed compelled to form it only because of the advice of former Sen. Wigberto Tañada and Rep. Erin Tañada. The formal talks during the Aquino II regime was resumed in 2011. At the very outset, Deles attempted to preside over both the GRP and NDFP, but the NDFP rebuffed her.

On the first day of the February 15-21, 2011 talks, GRP Panel Chair Alexander Padilla declared that they were reaffirming The Hague Joint Declaration and other past agreements but with reservation. Then he added that The Hague Joint Declaration was “a document of perpetual division.” The NDFP Panel issued a written response, repudiating the said GRP assertion. The NDFP panel chairperson pointed out that the Declaration had paved the way for twelve major agreements and that it would enable further agreements to reconcile and unite the two sides on reforms needed to address the roots of the armed conflict and lay the ground for a just and lasting peace. The GRP and the NDFP negotiating panels agreed to reaffirm The Hague Joint Declaration and all major agreements to which it had given risen. But with a forked tongue, the GRP panel inserted and included the qualification that the Declaration was a “document of perpetual division.”

At this point the NDFP NP deemed it necessary to revise and update the JASIG list to replace the members whom the GRP had either caused to be killed, involuntarily disappeared or who had died. The two panels agreed to open the safety deposit box containing copies of the documents of identification issued to personnel involved in the peace negotiations. However, the DI files had become unreadable because the diskettes containing the ciphers keys for opening them had been damaged. This was due to the fact that in 2007 upon the instance of the GRP, the diskettes among other documents and private papers had been seized in a Dutch intelligence police raids on the NDFP International Office and residences of NDFP panel members, consultants and staff members and were returned after more than a year.

The GRP side used the discovery to fend off the demand of the NDFP for the reconstitution of its list of consultants who were entitled to the protection of the JASIG and to paralyze the peace negotiations. Attempts were made to use backchannel talks with Aquino’s political adviser Ronald Llamas and then with a team headed by Hernani Braganza to overcome the obstacles put up by the Aquino II regime. But these proved futile because the ultra-reactionary Deles and military officers wanted nothing less than the immediate surrender and pacification of the revolutionary forces and people under the guise of a protracted ceasefire.

Before and soon after assuming the GRP presidency, Rodrigo R. Duterte described himself as a socialist wishing to become the first Left president of the Philippines and to negotiate a just and lasting peace with the NDFP and the revolutionary forces of the Bangsamoro. To the NDFP, through Fidel Agcaoili on May 16, 2016, he promised to amnesty and release all the political prisoners listed by the NDFP. On his own initiative, he appointed to his Cabinet four patriotic and progressive individuals, highly competent, clean and diligent. Everything looked rosy for the resumption of the GRP-NDFP negotiations on the substantive agenda.

But soon enough, Duterte exposed himself as a demagogue and master of deception when in his first State of the Nation Address (SONA) on July 25, 2016, he unilaterally declared in general terms a ceasefire with the NDFP without any prior information in sufficient detail to the NDFP and demanded that the NDFP reciprocate blindly and issue its own ceasefire declaration. It turned out his ceasefire declaration was nothing more than the Suspension of Military Operations Order (SOMO) and Suspension of Police Operations (SOPO), both of which allowed the reactionary military and police forces and their paramilitary auxiliaries to attack the revolutionary forces and

people under the pretext of law enforcement and merely continued Aquino's Oplan Bayanihan until the issuance of Duterte's own Oplan Kapayapaan.

At any rate, the GRP and the NDFP sides agreed to issue their respective unilateral but reciprocal ceasefire declarations in order to promote the formal rounds of talks. Thus, an unprecedented ceasefire of more than five months ran from August 2016 to February 4, 2017 when Duterte terminated the peace negotiations without even consulting his own negotiating panel on February 20 as previously scheduled and despite the success of the third round of formal talks in Rome on January 19-25, 2017. Under pressure from the Defense Secretary, the National Security Adviser and the AFP Chief of Staff, Duterte demanded a bilateral ceasefire from the NDFP and immediately declared an all-out war policy against the armed revolutionary forces, without ever withdrawing such policy even when the fourth round of formal talks was held in Noordwijk, The Netherlands on April 3-6, 2017.

The chicanery of Duterte was first exposed during the first and second rounds of formal talks in Oslo when he backtracked on his promise to amnesty and release all political prisoners in compliance with CARHRIHL. He released only 19 political prisoners on bail and subsequently ordered their rearrest whenever he terminated the peace negotiations or threatened to do so. He has remained adamant that he would not amnesty and release all the political prisoners, unless he first secures the surrender and pacification of the people's armed revolution under the guise of a protracted and indefinite bilateral ceasefire. He has shown no interest in the acceleration of the peace negotiations to arrive at the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) and the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms (CAPCR) before the Comprehensive Agreement on the End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces (CAEHDF).

Duterte is surrounded by neoliberal economic advisers and is obsessed with infrastructure building and importing manufactures by auctioning off the natural resources of the country, favoring foreign monopoly capitalism and raising taxes and foreign loans to cover budgetary and trade deficits. He is also surrounded by pro-US military advisers who embolden him to carry out a policy of killing people and bombing communities to suppress the armed revolution and preserve the rotten semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system. The regime has made impossible any substantial allocation of resources for national industrialization and genuine land reform under CASER. The Duterte plan of charter change for federalism ignores the forging of the CAPCR, which is necessary to prevent a pseudo-federal system of regional and provincial warlords under the highly centralized unitary presidential tyranny of Duterte.

Current circumstances of impasse caused by Duterte regime

Duterte has "terminated" the peace negotiations thrice. The first one was on February 4, 2017 in conjunction with the issuance of his all-out war policy against the revolutionary forces and the people. It was followed up by a formal termination of the peace negotiations in a letter to the NDFP Negotiating Panel from OPAPP Secretary Dureza. Through the NDFP Chief Political Consultant, the NDFP patiently reminded and prevailed upon the OPAPP secretary that it would be better to talk and that teams of the GRP and the NDFP negotiating panels could meet for back-channel talks. Thus, the teams met in Utrecht and agreed on March 11, 2017 that the GRP and NDFP engage in discussions for reciprocal unilateral ceasefire declarations be held before the fourth round of formal talks. But the GRP backed out of such a ceasefire agreement and insisted on a prolonged and indefinite bilateral ceasefire agreement ahead of negotiations on the reforms required by The Hague Joint Declaration. Even then, the fourth round of formal talks proceeded and the two sides agreed among others to work out an interim joint ceasefire agreement in conjunction with the signing and approval of CASER and the release of all political prisoners.

The second instance Duterte declared to the press the termination of peace negotiations was without a formal notice of termination. The "termination" was made in connection with the Duterte regime's cancellation of the 5th round of formal talks and its complaint that the CPP had ordered the NPA to intensify tactical offensives against the May 23 proclamation of martial law Mindanao-wide, which targeted not only the Maute and Abu Sayyaf groups in Marawi but also the revolutionary forces and people outside Bangsamoro areas. The NDFP pointed out that it was in fact the aggrieved party because the Duterte regime never withdrew its all-out war policy and its predecessor's Oplan Kapayapaan and were now aggravated by the Mindanao-wide martial rule and its threat to extend this nationwide. In the absence of any formal notice of termination, the NDFP consultants on bail who were stranded in The Netherlands were able to return home upon the facilitation of the RNG and on the assumption that the peace negotiations were still ongoing.

The third instance Duterte declared again to the press the termination of the peace negotiations was on July 19,

2017 immediately after the Arakan incident in which two vans of the Presidential Security Guards ran into an NPA checkpoint. He also stopped the GRP negotiating panel from meeting with its NDFP counterpart for backchannel talks to prepare the fifth round of formal talks. He made it appear that the NPA was out to ambush him. In fact, he was responsible for failing to avail of a mechanism by which he could have arranged his safe passage with officials of the people's revolutionary government in their territory. Further investigation showed that the most important passenger in one of the vans was not Duterte but a girlfriend of his.

Duterte and his partisans are making it appear that the NDFP is simply against an interim bilateral or joint ceasefire. In fact, the NDFP considers such a ceasefire possible after the GRP complies with CARHRIHL by an amnesty and release of all the political prisoners; and after the CASER is duly signed and approved by the respective principals of the GRP and the NDFP. In this regard, the NDFP has exercised flexibility without violating The Hague Joint Declaration and the Joint Agreement on the Sequence, Formation and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees. The NDFP has always made clear that short of any agreement to form a single national unity government under the CAPCR the people's democratic government exercises all its governmental functions among the people in its territory. In the current civil war in the Philippines, the revolutionary government and the reactionary government confront and fight each other as co-belligerents.

Continuing relevance of the Declaration and prospects of peace

The Hague Joint Declaration has continuing relevance. The five points therein are still needed to guide the peace negotiations. They give the two negotiating sides ample space to negotiate and make mutually satisfactory agreements for the benefit of the Filipino people. The root causes of the civil war that need to be addressed have persisted since the signing of the Declaration in 1992. The reactionary ruling system of big compradors and landlords under US hegemony continues to exist but is confronted by an ever-worsening social and political crises and the rise of the revolutionary forces, including the party of the proletariat, the new people's party, the mass organizations, the organs of political power and the alliances.

Whenever any reactionary administration of the GRP is willing to engage in peace negotiations with the NDFP or refuses to do so, the NDFP and the revolutionary forces and people that it represents have no choice but to continue further strengthening the revolutionary party of the proletariat, the people's army, the mass organizations, the local organs of political power and alliances. Those who oppose the armed revolution of the people assume the perpetuity of the reactionary state and ignore the growing strength and scope of the people's democratic government of workers and peasants, which is fighting the reactionary government of big compradors and landlords.

Right now, the balance of forces is such that the possible outcome of the negotiations for a just and lasting peace can only consist of social, economic, political and constitutional reforms that are mutually agreed upon by the GRP and NDFP. The mutually satisfactory agreements can raise the level of national independence, democracy, and economic development through national industrialization and genuine land reform, social justice, expansion of social services, a patriotic, scientific and mass culture and education, national self-defense and independent foreign policy. They satisfy the demands of the people now and open the way to a still higher level of development.

If the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations cannot succeed at this time, the revolutionary forces and the people have no choice but to increase their strength by all means. There is still the possibility that a better negotiating counterpart less reactionary than the current one can arise or the crisis of the ruling system becomes so aggravated that it produces a government that is more ready to come to agreement with the NDFP and the people's democratic government. But of course, the best circumstances for the peace negotiations with an adversary are when the revolutionary forces and the people are already in the stage of the strategic offensive, they are about to win power in the urban areas and on a nationwide scale, and the reactionary government is already collapsing and disintegrating.

On the Resumption of the Peace Negotiations

September 18, 2017

Despite Duterte's scuttling of the 5th round of formal talks in May 2017, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) has encouraged the NDFP Negotiating Panel, its Reciprocal Working Committee on Social and Economic Reforms (RWC-SER) and its Reciprocal Working Group on Political and Constitutional Reforms (RWG-PCR) to continue their drafting work with the assistance of many experts and consultants and on the basis of consultations with various classes, sectors, institutions and mass organizations.

Indeed, the NDFP Negotiating Panel, the RWC-SER and RWG-PCR have continued their drafting work with the same dedication and enthusiasm as before. They do not wish to throw away the work they have done and have further done towards completing the NDFP draft of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) and the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms (CAPCR).

They have anticipated two possibilities: the Duterte regime itself might in due time find it wise and necessary to resume formal peace talks or it cannot last long in power and it is replaced by a new leadership of the GRP that is willing to resume the peace negotiations.

In either case, the NDFP Negotiating Panel, its RWC-SER and its RWG-PCR cannot be disappointed with having worked so hard to do serious research, public consultations and deliberations in order to produce the drafts that they consider worthy of negotiations in the service of the Filipino people.

There is a third possibility: the Filipino people and their revolutionary forces simply pursue the new democratic revolution through protracted people's war, without being distracted by peace negotiations, because neither the Duterte regime nor the incoming post-Duterte regime is unwilling to engage in peace negotiations. The drafts of comprehensive agreements on social, economic and political reforms will still be useful as reference materials in building the people's democratic system.

How Duterte Sabotaged the GRP-NDFP Peace Process

November 24, 2017

After several months of hard work in unilateral and bilateral meetings, the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels were ready to do a little polishing of common drafts on November 22 and 23 in Utrecht, The Netherlands for finalization in the slated fifth round of formal talks in Oslo on November 25 to 27, 2017.

The common drafts were those pertaining to:

1. the general amnesty and release of all political prisoners in compliance with the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL),
2. the coordinated unilateral ceasefires (CUC) as the advance from a stand down type of ceasefire from the fifth to the sixth round of formal talks in January 2018; and
3. Part I Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ARRD) and Part II National Industrialization and Economic Development (NIED) of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER).

The GRP AND NDFP Negotiating Panels were so happy and confident that they would be able to initial the CASER and the agreements on the general amnesty and release of all political prisoners and the coordinated unilateral ceasefires at the closing session of the fifth round of formal talks and formally sign all of these at the closing ceremony of the sixth round in January 2018.

It was also expected that the negotiations on the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms (CAPCR) would begin in the sixth round and be completed anytime between March and May of 2018 on time for possible revisions of the 1987 Constitution of GRP.

Unfortunately, Duterte the principal of the GRP Negotiating Panel started on Nov. 18 to rant every day against the CPP, NPA and the NDFP in connection with recent incidents in the armed conflict. He also ranted against the entire peace process until Nov. 23 when he made his Proclamation No. 360 terminating the peace negotiations.

He violated the mutual agreement that talks would be discreet until there would be good news to announce at the end of the fifth or sixth round of formal talks. In the course of his rants, Duterte unwittingly exposed his scarce, shallow and defective knowledge of the peace process such as the following:

1. He cited alleged recent incidents in the armed conflict which he used as false basis for slandering the revolutionary forces and threatening the termination of the peace negotiations and the outlawing of the revolutionary forces and legal democratic forces as terrorists. In the absence of ceasefire between the GRP and NDFP, he through his Negotiating Panel should have submitted his complaints to the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) under CARHRIHL.

The NDFP has always submitted to the JMC its complaints of HR and IHL violations committed by the AFP and PNP under the ceaseless all-out war policy, Oplan Kapayapaan and martial law in Mindanao. These violations are far worse in scale and severity than those alleged by Duterte against the NPA. And yet NDFP never threatened to terminate the peace negotiations.

2. Duterte spouted lies like the NDFP ignored the GRP proposal for a stand down agreement prior to the adoption and implementation of the coordinated unilateral ceasefire. Showing gross ignorance of the peace process, he even referred to The Netherlands as the facilitator rather than the Royal Norwegian Government.

There are symptoms that Duterte is mentally unfit to handle the complexities of the affairs of his state and the peace process between the GRP and NDFP. GRP officials in his Cabinet and the reactionary armed forces should consider whether he is mentally fit for his office or needs to be replaced in accordance with their 1987 Constitution.

Among his lucid statements in the course of his rants are those pertaining to his voluntary admission as a fascist in the service of the US (Amboy), his overwhelming desire for killing and war and his advice to the NDFP to negotiate with his successor in due time.

December 19, 2017

The Negotiating Panels of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) were poised to hold the fifth round of formal peace talks in Oslo when GRP President Duterte went into a daily series of anticommunist rants from November 18, 2017 onwards and subsequently issued Proclamation 360 to terminate the peace negotiations with the NDFP and Proclamation 374 to designate the Communist of the Party of the Philippines (CPP), New People's Army (NPA), their suspected supporters and financiers as "terrorist."

Ironically, the two negotiating panels were about to make the biggest advance in the peace process by finalizing and initialing the drafts of the general amnesty to release all the political prisoners listed by the NDFP, Part I Agrarian Reform and Rural Development and Part II National Industrialization and Economic Development of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) and the Coordinated Unilateral Ceasefires (as prelude to a bilateral ceasefire agreement).

The panels expected that within the first quarter of 2018 CASER would be ready for signing by the principals and the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms (CAPCR) would be negotiated and forged in coordination with the processes of the GRP Congress in revising the 1987 Constitution and possibly arriving at a consensus of all major political forces on what ought to be a federal system of government. But obviously Duterte had all along wished to preempt and exclude the NDFP from what is now coming to light as his scheme of fascist dictatorship under the pretense of federalism.

Duterte had allowed his panel to engage the NDFP panel in backchannel consultations in October 2017 in Utrecht and in subpanel bilateral meetings in Manila from September to November 2017 to complete the afore-said drafts for panel-to-panel processing until he abruptly changed his mind and terminated the peace negotiations. The somersault followed his extended conversations with US President Trump who supposedly assured him of political and military support for a plan to crack down on the CPP and NPA and finish them off before the end of 2018.

Termination of peace negotiations necessary for Duterte fascist dictatorship

Although the plan is overambitious and quite impossible to achieve, it is necessary for Duterte to terminate the peace negotiations and slander the CPP and NPA by labeling them as "terrorists" to pave the way for further extension of martial law in Mindanao for the whole year of 2018 and the eventual nationwide expansion of martial law directed against the CPP and NPA. This is in line with Duterte's scheme of imposing his fascist dictatorship on the Philippines.

Even before the first extension of the proclamation of martial law in Mindanao could lapse at the end of 2017, Duterte boasted that he had defeated the Dawlah Islamiyah (Maute and Abu Sayyaf groups) in Marawi City and therefore he had basically no more need for martial law in Mindanao. But he found in the extension of the martial law proclamation a device for including the CPP and NPA as targets in a further extension to the whole of 2018 through the expediency of terminating the peace negotiations and accusing the CPP and NPA of escalating violence and endangering public safety.

Duterte was quite confident of getting the further extension of martial law in Mindanao because of his "supermajority" in his rubberstamp Congress. He also has a steady majority of at least eight of the justices in the Supreme Court (four are his own recent appointees and five are appointees of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo) to uphold his martial law proclamation in the same way that they have been able to dismiss the plunder case against Arroyo and allow the burial of Marcos in the Libingan ng mga Bayani due to Duterte's super-corrupt alliance with the Luzon-based dynasties of Marcos, Arroyo, Estrada and other notorious plunderers.

Duterte is hellbent on realizing his scheme to reimpose a fascist dictatorship on the Filipino people by revising and in effect scrapping the 1987 Constitution under the pretext of adopting a federal system of government. The trick is similar to that of Marcos in pretending to opt for a parliamentary form of government in order to scrap the 1935 Constitution and install a fascist dictatorship under the cover of transitory provisions.

Federalism as pretext for imposing Duterte fascist dictatorship on the people

Duterte is not really keen on establishing a federal system of government but on actually installing a highly centralized unitary kind of a presidential dictatorship on top of regional governments run by dynasties, including warlords and the most corrupt bureaucrat capitalists like himself. The big comprador-landlord state servile to foreign monopoly capitalism will remain intact under his scheme.

To satisfy his appetite for autocratic power, Duterte finds it absolutely necessary to use martial law nationwide in a hysterical and futile attempt to intimidate and suppress the armed revolutionary movement, dissent and opposition in general. The suspension of the writ of habeas corpus provides an effective cover and license for abducting, dispossessing, torturing and murdering revolutionaries and all people who oppose him. Even now, he cannot wait for a court to approve his designation of the CPP and NPA as “terrorists.” He has repeatedly called on his military minions to kill them upon sight.

The Bicameral Resolution No. 8 with the title “Constituting the Senate and the House of Representatives,” of the 17th Congress, into a “Constituent Assembly by Adopting a Federal Form of Government and for Other Purposes” is already on the rails and will be railroaded when congressional sessions resume in January 2018. Duterte and his cohorts will be the sole determinant of the content of the pseudofederal charter. The charter is already slated for ratification during the May 18 barangay elections. The Kilusang Pagbabago [Movement for Change], the Duterte troll army and the pro-Duterte hacks in print and electronic media are all arranged to rah-rah the ratification.

Even before Duterte is able to get a new constitution for his despotic purposes, the Filipino people have become familiar with his propensity for mass murder and deception in Oplan Tokhang. Combine this with the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus under martial law and you can expect a far bigger catastrophe than the Marcos fascist dictatorship in terms of murder and mayhem.

In the absence of any revolutionary social transformation, the country will be getting more of the same ruling families of big compradors, landlords and bureaucrat capitalists at all levels of government. Corruption will continue to run rampant on top of excessive expenditures for establishing and elaborating on the regional level of government. The US and other multinational firms will continue to plunder and ravage the human and natural resources of the Philippines.

To get the blessings of the US and other imperialist powers, the new pseudo-federal constitution will get rid of the nationality requirements or restrictions on foreign investments in violation of economic sovereignty and national patrimony by simply inserting the phrase, “unless otherwise provided by law.” Precious limited resources for economic development, at best through centralized and regional planning, will be dissipated by profit remittances and capital repatriation by foreign monopoly firms, bureaucratic corruption and rising bureaucratic and military and police personnel for the central and regional levels of government.

The ever-worsening crisis of the semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system will continue to result in the divisiveness of the reactionary classes, the intensification of the anti-imperialist and class struggle, the further rise of the armed revolutionary movement, dissatisfaction of indigenous peoples and national minorities and stronger currents of separatism among the Bangsamoro.

Surpassing Marcos as best recruiter and supplier of the armed revolution

Duterte is bound to surpass Marcos as the best recruiter and supply officer of the armed revolution, as the unwitting wrecker of his own regime and ruling system and as provider of an ever more fertile ground for the growth of the people's democratic revolution through people's war. However, Duterte does not have as many years left as Marcos had when he imposed fascist dictatorship in 1972. His aberrant speech and behavior reveal the state of his mental and physical health.

His propensity to monopolize political power and bureaucratic loot and his ability to run the reactionary government Mafia-style will eventually work against him due to his own personal and class infirmities and more importantly due to the systemic crisis and lethal blows from the revolutionary movement and the people. The adverse results of his broken promises will soon bear heavily upon him. The broad masses of the people are already taking him to task for failing to solve the problem of illegal drugs, for destroying the entire Marawi City and for terminating the peace negotiations with the NDFP.

By his pseudo-independent foreign policy, Duterte is trying to turn the Philippines into a condominium of the imperialist powers. He thinks as if he can freely get, without strings attached, military equipment from these powers and limitless loans for limitless infrastructure building to buoy up the economy and keep himself in power. He has in fact allowed China to trample on the sovereign rights of the Philippines over the West Philippine Sea under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

He is aggravating the semicolonial status of the Philippines as well as the underdeveloped, agrarian and semifeudal character of the economy. This kind of economy is ever-dependent on the export of cheap raw materials, semimanufactures and cheap labor, on the import of foreign manufactures for consumption and on an ever-desperate resort to increasing amounts of foreign loans and speculative capital and to higher taxation to cover trade and budgetary deficits.

The broad masses of the people are angered today by the recently railroaded Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN). This further raises the prices of basic goods and services and generates inflation by increasing indirect taxes (excise, sales and value-added taxes) just to cover tax cuts and tax holidays for the upper classes and fund the counterproductive spending and debt servicing by the state. The rates of unemployment and inflation, though understated in official statistics, are actually causing more poverty and misery on a wider scale.

Contrary to the assurances of his neoliberal economic advisers, Duterte cannot be saved by any increase in the GDP growth rate. The higher the growth rate, the bigger the take of the multinational firms, the big compradors and bureaucrat capitalists and the more severe the conditions of underdevelopment, mass unemployment and poverty afflicting the broad masses of the people. In the final analysis, the big problem for the US-directed Duterte regime is that the oppressed and exploited people have an armed revolutionary movement for undertaking meaningful change in terms of national and social liberation.

On the Publication of the NDFP Draft CASER

Introduction to The Draft Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines January 7, 2018

I commend the Reciprocal Working Committee on Social and Economic Reforms (RWCSER) of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), together with its consultants and staff, for polishing, preserving and publishing in book form what may be considered and titled The NDFP Draft Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER).

This book is highly significant and useful in demonstrating the readiness of the NDFP to negotiate with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and make a substantive agreement on social and economic reforms despite the tremendous obstacles up to the present time and in preparing for better circumstances when the highest GRP officials come to the realization that it is wise to resume the peace negotiations because of the urgent need and clamor of the people for a just and lasting peace.

It is regrettable that under Proclamation 360 of November 23, 2017 GRP President Duterte has terminated the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations; and under Proclamation 374 of December 5, 2017, he has gone so far as to consider the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army (two major components of the NDFP) as "terrorist." He issued these proclamations exactly at a time when the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels were ready to finalize and approve the drafts of three major documents: 1) General Amnesty to release all political prisoners designated by the NDFP in compliance with the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), and 2) Coordinated Unilateral Ceasefires Agreement (preparatory to a bilateral ceasefire agreement).

There is neither rhyme nor reason for the termination of the peace negotiations when in fact the complaints raised by Duterte could be properly presented to the Joint Monitoring Committee under CARHRIHL in the same manner that the NDFP Negotiating Panel has submitted far more serious complaints. The Duterte complaints made to the press and Proclamation 360, bypassing the peace process, have blocked the significant advance that was about to be made in the aborted fifth round of formal talks that had been scheduled for November 25 to 27, 2017 in Oslo, Norway.

It has become clear that Duterte has terminated the peace negotiations in order to scapegoat the CPP and NPA as targets of a martial law proclamation aimed at facilitating the adoption of a pseudo-federal system of government under his fascist dictatorship. He has preempted the previous offer of the NDFP to co-found the Federal Republic of the Philippines in order to override the coexistence of the revolutionary and reactionary governments by availing of the negotiations and agreement on political and constitutional reforms to define the common grounds for a federal form of government beneficial to the Filipino people. But alas, the Duterte regime is obsessed with establishing a fascist dictatorship.

It is not for any sheer malice that tyranny arises. The reign of terror is always impelled by a reign of greed in the face of the people's demand for national and social liberation. In the context of the ruling semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system in the Philippines, the highest officials in the reactionary government who function as bureaucrat capitalists are agents of foreign monopoly capitalism and the local ruling classes of big compradors and landlords. The bureaucrat capitalists are well compensated for continuing to serve the neoliberal economic policy.

Thus, the current scheme to junk the 1987 GRP Constitution in favor of a pseudo-federal constitution that gives free rein to foreign monopoly firms in a big comprador-landlord economy and removes provisions that uphold economic sovereignty, national patrimony, and restrain foreign investments. Even before taking his oath of office as GRP President, Duterte formed in May 2016 an economic team to set his neoliberal economic policy that works against the Filipino people's demand for national economic development through national industrialization and genuine land reform.

However, we the NDFP still tried in good faith to persuade the GRP to come to terms with us in forging

comprehensive agreements on social, economic and political reforms in order to lay the ground for a just and lasting peace. In the interest of the Filipino people, we wanted to probe and test Duterte's expressed wish to become the first "Left" and "socialist" president of the Philippines, to industrialize the Philippines and take advantage of the multipolar world to overcome US domination of the Philippines.

Eventually, the Duterte regime has exposed itself fully as having no interest in basic reforms to address the roots of the civil war in the Philippines. It regards the peace negotiations only as a narrow GRP scheme to obtain the surrender and pacification of the revolutionary forces and people through an indefinite bilateral ceasefire. Since the beginning, it has carried out an all-out war policy against the revolutionary movement and has never had any intention of fulfilling his promise to amnesty and release all political prisoners. Worst of all, it has pre-terminated to abruptly terminate the peace negotiations in order to turn the CPP and NPA into scapegoats as justification for imposing martial rule and fascist dictatorship on the people.

Regarding its economic policy, the Duterte regime conforms strictly to the neoliberal and anti-people line of reducing regular employment, wage incomes and social services, cutting back taxes on corporations and the wealthy while increasing the taxes on the poor and middle class consumers and raising prices of basic consumer goods and services, boosting the profitability of foreign corporations, big compradors and landlords through trade and investment liberalization, privatization of profitable public assets, antisocial and anti-environmental deregulation and denationalization of the Philippine economy for the sake of imperialist globalization.

The Duterte regime has absolutely no desire to carry out national industrialization and genuine land reform in order to overcome the underdeveloped, agrarian and semifeudal character of the economy. Instead, it wants to go on a spree of building infrastructure that depends on foreign borrowing, increased taxation at the expense of the masses of ordinary consumers and misuse of the foreign exchange earnings of overseas Filipino workers. The infrastructure projects are calculated to dissipate precious limited resources and favor the neocolonial exchange of raw materials, semimanufactures and cheap labor from the Philippines and finished products from abroad.

Regarding the possibility of taking advantage of the multipolar world, the Duterte regime has persisted in subservience to the US by perpetuating all the treaties, agreements and arrangements that allow the US to dominate the Philippines economically, politically, culturally and militarily. At the same time, the regime has tied itself to additional capitalist powers without due consideration of national sovereignty and territorial integrity, economic development and the social and cultural well-being of the people.

For instance, it is accepting loans at high commercial rates and defective but overpriced supplies and services from China, thus guaranteeing the country's sure debt bondage and putting in hock the rich natural resources of the Philippines, both in the hinterlands and under the West Philippine Sea. It is repeating the folly started by the Arroyo regime in going for overpriced projects and high-interest loan agreements that benefit most the big compradors and corrupt bureaucrats on both sides of the South China Sea to the long-term detriment of the Filipino people.

The crisis of global capitalism continues to worsen. There has been no recovery from the financial meltdown of 2008 despite the excessive abuse of credit at the level of governments, corporations and households. The global debt recorded at the end of the 3rd quarter of 2017 is USD 233 trillion which is more than three times the global GDP. This is unsustainable and it is about to explode and make a far worse economic and financial crisis. The global asset bubble is bound to burst. In the meantime, the rapid enrichment of a few countries and ruling class families and the rapid impoverishment of the more than 90 percent of humankind are causing social discontent and class polarization.

All basic contradictions in the world are intensifying: those between the working class and the monopoly bourgeoisie in the industrial capitalist countries, those between the imperialist powers and the oppressed peoples and nations and those among the imperialist powers. The strategic decline of the US to its post-primacy period and the rise of China as an industrial capitalist power on a mountain of bad debts are conspicuous factors in the escalation of the inter-imperialist struggle for economic territory and client-states and in the spread of proxy wars and direct wars of aggression.

The crisis of the world capitalist system is exacerbating the chronic crisis of the domestic ruling system. The Philippines is being pressed to export more raw materials and cheap labor at lower prices. Twenty percent of the labor force is already out of the country and face abroad the rising virulence of chauvinism, racism, fascism and war. Inside the country, the big compradors, landlords and corrupt bureaucrats grab most of the income in a GDP

bloated by private and public construction, counterproductive government spending for bureaucratic and military operations and mass consumption that is dependent on imports and foreign debt.

The actual rate of unemployment among workers, urban odd-jobbers from the rural areas and college graduates is extremely high. Far more than 60 percent of the employed workers are on short-term hire contracts at substandard wages. There is no industrialization to absorb the ever-expanding surplus population in both rural and urban areas. There is no genuine land reform. In fact, more and more stretches of the land are being grabbed by foreign corporations, big compradors, landlords and bureaucrat capitalists for real estate speculation, mining, logging, export-oriented plantations and bio-ethanol production. In this regard, the most victimized are the peasants and national minorities.

The concurrent crises of global capitalism and the domestic semicolonial and semifeudal system are rapidly worsening and generating conditions for the growth and advance of the legal democratic mass movement and the armed revolutionary movement of the people. The same conditions can cause the GRP to agree with the NDFP on the resumption of peace negotiations and on the soonest possible completion and mutual approval of CASER in response to the urgent demands of the people for social justice, economic development and basic reforms.

The publication of the NDFP Draft of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms is highly significant and useful in demonstrating that it is possible for the NDFP and the GRP to make a substantive agreement on social and economic reforms despite tremendous obstacles up to the present time and in preparing for better circumstances when the highest GRP officials come to the realization that it is wise to resume the peace negotiations because of the urgent need and clamor of the people.

In any case, the book can serve as a tool for arousing, organizing and mobilizing all the exploited and oppressed classes and sectors of Philippine society in moving towards a better and brighter future of genuine national independence, democracy, social justice, economic development, cultural progress and international solidarity and peace.

Effects of Duterte's Termination of the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations

Interview by April Chiang Rafales

January 19, 2018

Q1. Sir, do you maintain that the agreements on the peace negotiations are still binding?

JMS: The GRP under Duterte has decided to terminate the peace negotiations by issuing Presidential Proclamation 360 and has priorly and subsequently undertaken other acts to escalate a counterrevolutionary war against the people and the revolutionary forces.

Be that as it may, the GRP is obliged to respect the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) which requires a 30-day written notice in advance to the NDFP to give safety allowance to negotiators, consultants and staff and more importantly requires both the GRP and the NDFP to comply with the immunity guarantees for the aforesaid negotiating personnel of either side during and after the peace negotiations. Said personnel should not be targeted for any surveillance, harassment or any punitive action

By violating the JASIG, the GRP practically serves notice to the NDFP that it does not respect and comply with agreements, destroys the mutual trust and confidence needed in the peace process and has no more interest in seeking social, economic and political reforms as basis for a just peace.

Q2. What is the implication of the order to rearrest the Tiamzons and Silva on the peace negotiations?

JMS: The GRP violates the JASIG and does not respect its own signature on solemn agreements. It does not generate trust and confidence but the opposite. The Duterte regime relies too much on brute force and intimidation, and unwittingly incites the people and revolutionary forces to fight back.

Q3. What are the plans of the NDFP now that the government ordered the arrest of these leaders?

JMS: The NDFP has to underscore the fact that the GRP under Duterte is responsible for unjustly and improperly terminating the peace negotiations for as many as three times and in this connection, it has violated major provisions of The Hague Joint Declaration, the Joint Agreement on Reciprocal Working Committees and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.

The NDFP is working closely with peace advocates to campaign for the resumption of peace talks as soon as possible either during the term of Duterte or his successor. Thus, the NDFP panelists, the reciprocal working committee on social and economic reforms, the reciprocal working group on political and constitutional reforms and all the consultants continue doing research, writing papers and consultations. The NDFP will launch on February 8 the book on the NDFP Draft of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms.

I have learned that the CPP and the NPA are considering whether to ask the People's Court to issue warrants for the arrest of Duterte and his war hawk cohorts for their criminal acts in sabotaging the peace negotiations. But said sources are clear that the safety and immunity guarantees for GRP negotiating personnel are respected by the CPP, NPA, the NDFP and the People's Democratic Government in accordance with the JASIG.

Message on the Launch

of The NDFP Draft Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms

February 8, 2018

Warm greetings of peace and solidarity to all the distinguished guests and the comrades and friends of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. Congratulations to the entire NDFP, the NDFP Negotiating Panel, the Reciprocal Working Committee on Social and Economic Reforms, the economic and legal consultants and the staff for publishing the book, NDFP Draft of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER).

The book shows how well the NDFP responds to the Filipino people's demand for upholding, defending and advancing national sovereignty, economic independence and development through national industrialization and land reform and genuine land reform, the improvement of wage and living conditions, expansion of social services, conservation and wise utilization of the natural resources, social and environmental justice, a patriotic, scientific and pro-people culture and international economic cooperation.

Major agreements of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the NDFP have affirmed and reaffirmed that social and economic reforms, together with political reforms, are necessary to address the roots of the armed conflict and lay the basis for a just and lasting peace. It is to the credit of the GRP and NDFP Negotiating Panels and the Reciprocal Working Committees that they have arrived at mutual agreement on the text of the general principles of social and economic reforms, agrarian reform and rural development and national industrialization and land reform.

Unfortunately, the principal of the GRP has terminated the peace negotiations by issuing Proclamation 360. He has publicly made complaints which the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels should and could have discussed first and submitted to the Joint Monitoring Committee under the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law as well as to the Reciprocal Working Groups on political and constitutional reforms in order to allow the continuing progress of the peace negotiations.

The entire NDFP Draft of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms will remain a highly valuable basic material in future peace negotiations, whether these shall be resumed during the time of the current GRP president or after he ceases to be such. Consciously, we go by the law of the conservation of matter and energy. This NDFP Draft of CASER will not go to waste or forgotten. It is written in history and remains useful and relevant in the process of social transformation, particularly in the making of social and economic reforms as the meat or substance of a just and lasting peace.

CASER – The Core of the People's Demand

for a Just Society

Interview by JV Ayson

April 27, 2018

1. *How would you analyze for the NDFP the first four parts of the peace negotiations between the government and the NDFP with regard to the main problem of the Filipino nation and the agreement on simultaneous ceasefires?*

JMS: The first item of the agenda ensures the respect for human rights and adherence to international humanitarian law. The second item is focused on social and economic reforms such as land reform and national industrialization. This is the very meat of responding to the demand of the toiling masses to escape unemployment and disemployment, poverty and backward economy. The third item focuses on political and constitutional framework for implementing the reforms. The fourth item completes the end of the civil war between the two sides and the disposition of their armed forces.

2. *Many consider CASER as the most important part of the peace negotiations because here lies the solution of extreme poverty, hunger, absence of justice and hopelessness that drive many Filipinos to cling to sharp blades or join the CPP and NPA. Can you again specify the socioeconomic reforms being advanced by the NDFP to include in CASER if this is already being formulated? As the NDFP chief political consultant, how would you explain the importance of CASER in the peace negotiations at the continuing struggle of the Filipino people for genuine social change, genuine democracy and social justice?*

JMS: You are correct in saying that extreme poverty, hunger, absence of justice and hopelessness drive many Filipinos to join the CPP and NPA. I already cited land reform and national industrialization as the content of CASER. Included there are protection of the environment and wise use of natural resources for the Filipino people, upholding their rights and expanding and improving free public social services, especially education, health, housing and others.

3. *Please explain the view that genuine agrarian reform and free land distribution as the basic content of the national democratic struggle, as principal companion of social justice and as basic solution to extreme poverty and hunger of the Filipino nation, because we know that most urban poor are people who labor in plowing the fields but have nothing to eat due to not having their own farm and not having decent jobs. Free land distribution is a big possibility as the principal socioeconomic reform in CASER.*

JMS: Free land distribution to landless peasants is decisive in genuine agrarian reform. The former land reform was bogus because the peasant beneficiaries could not afford to pay the amortization and coverage was limited to rice and corn land. Eventually the peasants lose the land. If genuine land reform through free distribution, this can be said as the main content of the national democratic struggle because the peasantry constitutes the majority of our population. If their production and income increase, they will become the strong foundation of the entire economy and the national market would expand for the products of national industrialization. Genuine land reform and national industrialization are interrelated.

4. *Please summarize the long history of the continuing demand of the peasants for land, social justice and dignity.*

JMS: The peasant demand for land, social justice and dignity were the big cause of the 1896 revolution. The peasants were angered by the Spanish friar estates (hacienda) that were the fruit of land-grabbing. When the US imperialists prevailed over the Philippine revolution, they pretended to undertake land reform by buying the friar estates. But the redistribution price to the peasants was high. The peasants were unable to pay this so that the land ended up with people who were already rich. The land reform program of Macapagal, Marcos and Cory Aquino all failed also because the peasants could not afford to pay the amortization. The law was limited to rice and corn lands and provisions in the law could be bypassed by the landlords.

5. *How will CASER change Philippine society in general? How would you analyze the implications of the agreement amidst the possibility of the intensifying social crisis in this country?*

JMS: CASER can change Philippine society generally. This can be implemented if the GRP and the NDFP agree to uphold national sovereignty in the socioeconomic field, dismantle the feudal and semifeudal land relations and

industrialize the economy. In short, leave the semicolonial and semifeudal system and enlarge industries. In developing, the nation must follow the principle of self-reliance and protect the economy from crisis and interference and plunder by the monopoly capitalists. Production must respond to the needs of the nation.

6. Do you believe that CASER would test the political will and sincerity of President Duterte regarding the fulfilment of his promises to bring genuine change to the Filipino nation amidst the continuing economic policy of the past government, bloody “drug war” and even the day-to-day demand of the masses for decent shelter and jobs, free housing and land distribution, social justice, and dignity?

JMS: We have no control over President Duterte’s political will nor we know fully his real plan for CASER and other issues regarding the peace talks. It is up to him to unfold his desires and plans. He promised and made the nation expect reforms as basis for a just and lasting peace. We would know his intent as the peace talks proceed.

7. What possibly would be the consequences of the exacerbation of the social crisis for the Filipino masses and for the Duterte government this year and also in 2018?

JMS: Many economic and financial experts say that the Philippine economy is declining in 2017 and 2018. Should this happen and combine with the preceding protest against the extrajudicial killings under Tokhang and other issues against Duterte, the economic crisis would lead to a political crisis. According to Duterte and Secretary Dominguez, they would pour plenty of money on infrastructure projects to rev up the economy and give jobs to many jobless. Let us see whether this happens.

8. How would you analyze the future for the completion of CASER in the face of the intensifying social and political crisis, legal struggle, armed revolution, reaction, and peace negotiations? Do you see the completion of CASER this year? What is its relevance to the demand of the Filipino masses for genuine change at social justice?

JMS: CASER signed within 2017 would be a great victory and credit to the GRP and the NDFP. This would be the answer to those who claim that the Duterte government has nothing to say with regard to the backward economy and the intensifying crisis. CASER can be completed up to the signing before year-end 2017. I advise the NDFP panel and the Reciprocal Working Committee on Social and Economic Reforms to speed up the making of the common CASER draft. But they say that it is the GRP side that is slack. I would like the immediate completion of CASER to wave as an agreement for genuine change and the fulfilment of social justice. I am eager to focus on political and constitutional reforms in the first quarter of 2018 to start the campaign for charter change and the making of a new constitution and for the creation of the Federal Republic of the Philippines.

Political Implications of Current Impasse and Prospects of Peace Negotiations

Presentation to Forum on Peace Under Seige

June 28, 2019

I. Political implications of current impasse

1. Duterte's promise of Duterte on May 16, 2016 to amnesty and release all political prisoners even before the start of peace talks is a long and repeatedly proven lie.

2. His strategic obsession has always been to seek the capitulation and pacification of the revolutionary forces and people and has no interest in addressing the roots of the armed conflict through social, economic and political reforms.

3. His main objective is to obtain a bilateral ceasefire of protracted and indefinite duration without any preceding comprehensive agreement on basic reforms as required by The Hague Joint Declaration. He merely wants to paralyze the revolutionary movement and erode its strength through some dole-out schemes to the revolutionaries and communities in focus areas under his military control, surveillance and psywar operations.

4. He has no economic program different from that of his reactionary predecessors: retention of the semifeudal character of the economy along the neoliberal line. He emulates the Marcos line of build, build, build infrastructure, borrow, borrow, borrow and steal, steal, steal. The making of CASER would have supplied him with an economic program of national industrialization, genuine land reform and wise utilization of the rich natural resources of the Philippines but he has no real interest in these.

5. He has practically declined the offer to agree on a federal system of government that is not merely a vehicle of Duterte's scheme of fascist dictatorship emulative of Marcos. He wants an over costly and turbulent federal system of exploiting classes, regional dynasties and warlords.

6. He is not interested in an independent foreign policy. He retains the treaties, agreements and arrangements that make the Philippines subservient to US imperialism. At the same time, he is enamored of private gains for his family and cronies from the traitorous sell-out of the West Philippine Sea and its rich mineral and marine resources, from high interest loans from China and overpriced infrastructure projects with Chinese corporations and even from the China-based illegal drug trade.

7. Since May 2017, he has terminated the peace negotiations with the NDFP three times and fouled up every attempt to resume these through back-channel talks. At the third termination in November and December 2017, he issued Proclamation 360 to terminate the peace negotiations and Proclamation 374 to designate the CPP and NPA as terrorist organizations and filed a case before the Manila regional trial court (RTC) to seek the proscription of the CPP, NPA and 600 individuals as terrorists. These are definitely obstacles to the resumption of peace negotiations with Duterte regime.

8. The aforesaid actions of Duterte would have been enough basis for the NDFP to conclude that he is not at all interested in peace negotiations. But in response to the demands of peace advocates, the NDFP persevered and worked out a number of agreements with GRP representatives in back-channel talks from March to June 2018. The most important of these would have constituted the Interim Peace Agreement at the resumption of formal talks in Oslo from June 28 to 30.

9. The real reasons why Duterte has canceled the resumption of peace talks in Oslo are: a) the AFP and PNP wish to carry out to the end of 2018 their campaign plan to supposedly to finish off the NPA and b) to change the venue of peace talks to Manila so that these can come under the control, surveillance duress and manipulation by Duterte and the military.

10. By his pronouncements, Duterte pretends to review in three months the entire process and all agreements in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations since 1992. By all indications, he will try to change the entire peace process and waste previous agreements. At any rate, he will try to impose on the NDFP changes that the NDFP will certainly reject

II. Prospects of the GRP-NDFP peace talks

Based on the implications drawn from the current impasse, the NDFP can no longer negotiate with a GRP that is headed by Duterte. So long as he heads the GRP, the Filipino people, especially the oppressed and exploited,

cannot expect any benefit from negotiating with the Duterte regime.

1. It is relatively easier and more productive for the NDFP to participate in the Oust-Duterte movement and to prepare for peace negotiations with the prospective administration that replaces the Duterte regime.
2. The broad united front of patriotic and democratic forces has become strong enough to call for and cause the ouster of Duterte. While the urban-based Oust Duterte movement is growing, the CPP, NPA and the people have to fight and defeat the offensives of the AFP and PNP being unleashed by the Duterte regime.
3. Nothing goes to waste in the work and drafts of agreements already done by the NDFP. They can be carried over to the negotiation with GRP under a new administration. The room is open for the further improvement of the drafts in the meantime. The agreements and drafts already produced in the GRP-NDFP peace talks can be used by peace advocates and people's organizations for information and education campaigns among the people and for consultations with them. Many of the reforms can be promoted and developed even without peace negotiations,
4. In a desperate effort to retain power and establish his fascist dictatorship, Duterte will threaten or actually use bloody campaigns of suppression against the people in the urban and rural areas. The broad masses of the people and the revolutionary forces must be prepared to fight the Duterte regime in various forms of struggle.
5. Despite claims of everlasting popularity, the Duterte regime is already isolated and hated by the people because of its brutality, corruption, involvement in the drug traffic, the rising prices of basic goods and services, continuance of contractualization, rising unemployment and low/inadequate incomes the treasonous sell-out of Philippine territory and sovereign rights to China, disrespect for the religious beliefs of Catholics and Christians, and so on.
6. The Duterte regime is on record as having terminated the peace talks so many times. It is indubitably responsible for the termination of peace negotiations. It is therefore just for the revolutionary forces and the people to wage people's war for national liberation and democracy.
7. It is well and good if Duterte withdraws finally from the peace negotiations with the NDFP. Thus, he deprives himself of the opportunity of creating false illusions that he is for peace. He stands isolated and ripe for ouster by the broad united front of patriotic and democratic forces.
8. By trying to destroy the NPA in Mindanao, Visayas and Luzon all at once, the Duterte regime is practically debilitating and destroying itself. The deployment of his military and police forces for offensives are extremely costly, overextended and overstraining. His troops have been overworked and exhausted by fighting on the rough terrain of the indigenous peoples and the Bangsamoro. Many of his officers and troops curse him for their rising casualties and hardship.

On Duterte's Repetitive Termination of the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations

August 16, 2018

Duterte never gets tired of repetitively terminating the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. He terminated the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations on November 23, 2017 with his Proclamation 360, and then he followed it up in December 2017 with Proclamation 374 designating the CPP and NPA as terrorist” organizations with the malicious intent of making it doubly sure that he had killed the peace negotiations.

It was all a sham that Duterte was inviting me to the Philippines after he issued those two proclamations. He was in fact demanding all along the surrender and political suicide of the revolutionary movement of the people before any comprehensive agreement on social, economic and political reforms.

He will go down in history as a mass murderer and terminator of the peace negotiations. He is hell-bent on establishing a fascist dictatorship, with him monopolizing political power and plunder. To establish his fascist dictatorship, he has to terminate the peace negotiations to be able to scapegoat the CPP and NPA for the purpose of declaring martial law nationwide.

But thanks to Duterte, like Marcos, he has become the chief recruiter of the NPA by oppressing the people and goading them to join the NPA. He has also become the chief transport and supply officer of the NPA by sending his troops and police to the hinterlands for ambush by the NPA. The fascist dictatorship, like that of his idol Marcos, will generate the conditions for the growth in strength and advance of the revolutionary movement.

On the Mid-term Elections and the Peace Negotiations

Interview by Sonny Mallari. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*

October 18, 2018

1. Given the quality of the candidates for the Lower House and the Senate, can you expect their support for the resumption of the peace talks?

JMS: If you ask the candidates for the Lower House and the Senate, I am sure that almost all of them will be in favor of the peace negotiations. Those who are reactionary and less intelligent will precondition the talks with the surrender of the NPA and the more intelligent or progressive ones will say that the talks must address the roots of the armed conflict and lead to comprehensive agreements to lay the basis for a just and lasting peace.

2. Would you like to ask the candidates to declare their position on the peace talks as the people's basis for electing them?

JMS: Yes, definitely, we in the NDFP will certainly appreciate the candidates who support the resumption of the peace negotiations in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration in order to arrive at the needed agreements on social, economic and political reforms and lay the foundation for a just and durable peace under the guiding principles of national sovereignty, democracy and social justice. Thus, the people will know who among the candidates are for just peace.

3. Aside from the Congress and the Senate, which other institutions may have influence in getting the talks to resume?

JMS: The executive branch of GRP and no less than the president is crucial in agreeing or not to resume the peace negotiations. In the first place, it was Duterte who terminated the peace negotiations. Outside of the government, there are institutions, like the political parties, mass organizations, professional and civic organizations, and the Churches that are interested in a just and lasting peace in the country.

4. But first of all, on the basis of your analysis, is there still a chance for the peace talks to reopen in Duterte's time.

JMS: The NDFP is always open to peace negotiations. We can negotiate peace only with the party with which we are at war. It is up to Duterte to decide whether he is interested in peace negotiations. He is the one who terminated the peace negotiations with his Proclamation 360 as of November 23, 2017.

By all indications and by his own pronouncements and actions, he does not want peace negotiations for a vile purpose: so that he can easily blame the CPP and the NPA for the armed conflict and use this as basis for declaring martial law nationwide in order to ram through his chacha for federalism, actually a fascist dictatorship with all powers concentrated in his hands.

However, it is also possible that upon the further deterioration of his health and/or the failure of his all-out war campaign to destroy the revolutionary movement, Duterte would seriously consider negotiating again with the NDFP either to leave a legacy he can be proud of or simply to ease his way to the end of his term.

Otherwise, we simply have to wait for his successor to decide whether or not to resume of the peace negotiations. The NDFP is desirous of peace negotiations but is not afraid of the reactionaries who are fixed on waging a counterrevolutionary war against the people.

5. You say that the NDFP is ready at any time to resume the talks. But it would be a big impediment for the government to resume talks if NPA attacks continue while talking? Are you ready to accept nationwide ceasefire as precondition for resuming the talks?

JMS: Duterte and his sidekicks Lorenzana and Año are not telling the truth when they claim that the NPA attacked the AFP and the PNP during ceasefires. It is their side which never stopped to occupy and militarize the barrios and attack the NPA and the people.

The AFP continued Aquino's Oplan Bayanihan up to the end of 2016 and then launched Oplan Kapayapaan in early 2017. There was never any letup in AFP, PNP and paramilitary attacks against the revolutionary forces and the people. Complaints about these attacks were always submitted by the NDFP negotiating panel to the Joint Monitoring Committee under CARHRIHL to allow the peace negotiations to proceed.

But in the case of the GRP, upon the prompting of Lorenzana and Año, Duterte always went direct to the press to complain against the defensive actions of the NPA and worse to terminate the peace negotiations. He terminated the negotiations so many times, four times if we count the termination, he last made on June 15 to stop the Interim Peace Agreement from being signed in Oslo on June 28, 2017.

The NDFP is willing to negotiate under conditions of ceasefire or no ceasefire. It was Duterte and the AFP that launched attacks during the more than five months of ceasefire from August 2016 to January 2017. The NPA forces kept on evading the attacks unless they were compelled to fight back. As in the period of Ramos, it is possible to negotiate while fighting and make the agreements towards a just and lasting peace.

6. A personal question, i posed this to you before. Are you prepared to die in another country, meaning, are you not eager to return to the Philippines? As you say, you can come home only upon the successful end of the talks. And should this not happen, you must be ready to accept that you would not see the Philippines again. Sorry, Ka Joma for the emotional question.

JMS: I have always stood and fought for the Filipino people's national sovereignty and democracy in preparation for socialism. I am a patriot and against any imperialist power like the US wishing to perpetuate all-round dominance over the Philippines and China wishing to move in by turning our country into a debt colony through overpriced infrastructure projects and through takeover of the West Philippine Seam of the oil, gas and other natural resources of the Philippines.

I am also an internationalist, a proletarian internationalist. I do not mind dying in a foreign country if that is the only way to avoid submitting myself to those who oppress and exploit the Filipino people and who wish to bribe, imprison or kill me. I have done my share of fighting in the battlefield and defying hardship and threats to life in nine years and being imprisoned for another nine years in the fight against the Marcos fascist dictatorship. I do not mind being a political refugee for as long as necessary. I have the support of my compatriots and foreign friends in the spirit of proletarian internationalism and international peoples' solidarity.

What Is Duterte in Peace Negotiations;

Clown, Dolt or Dopehead?

November 23, 2018

Duterte is simply joking, stupid or crazy when he publicly proposes that the NDFP submit to him a draft peace agreement for him to approve, subject to the further approval of the AFP and PNP. He pretends not to know that there is a negotiating process or he is so drugged by fentanyl that he does not really know it.

Before he finally terminated the peace negotiations, both the NDFP and GRP negotiating panels had already made their respective drafts of the comprehensive agreements on social and economic reforms (CASER) and on political and constitutional reforms (CAPCR) and had made substantial progress in reconciling their drafts of CASER.

Duterte seems to imagine that the NDFP is like China which has enough money to bribe him to let it draft a major document for his consent and approval. But he exposes further his inane mind by admitting that he would still need the ultimate approval of the military and police.

He acknowledges that he stands in fear of coup d'état by the military and police and he actually claims that his supposed authority as political leader and commander-in-chief of the GRP and its armed services is inferior to the authority of the military and police. What kind of president does the GRP have? A clown, a dolt or a dopehead?

December 29, 2018

SR1: A liberating greeting to our audience. What is a more fitting topic to end the year but our most desired peace. Very important to the majority of Filipinos is to have a serene and simple life, with their family, a decent home and work to sustain their basic needs. We are being buttressed by disasters brought about by calamities as well as by the government with no plans of making our lives peaceful and joyful but instead bringing us relentless extrajudicial killing due to the war on drugs, arbitrary arrests, crackdown on progressive organizations, massacre of farmers, killings of activist leaders and human rights defenders.

The armed revolution being advanced by the New People's Army under the guidance of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) is the revolutionary answer of the working masses to the troubles and darkness brought about by the unprecedented oppression, plunder and destruction created by the powers that lord over the ruling system. Perhaps many of you are asking: Is it true that the Duterte regime approached Prof. Sison and the NDFP for peace talks. How did this happen? Is it true that the Founding Chairman of the CPP, Prof. Sison will return home for the peace talks? What are the issues related to this? Should the peace talks stall again what is bound to happen? We are joined by none other than the CPP founding Chairman, a major participant in the peace negotiations and Chairperson Emeritus of the International League of Peoples' Struggle. to share with us his views on the Duterte government and the peace negotiations.

JMS: Good day to you, Prof. Sarah Raymundo. And greetings to all our listeners, Happy and successful new year in all your efforts for family and country! Secretary Bello who came to the Netherlands upon President Duterte's order and I had back-channel talks on December 5. Our talks were completed through the exploratory teams of the GRP and the NDFP headed respectively by Hernani Braganza and Fidel Agcaoili .

An agreement was reached to have a reciprocal ceasefire agreement from December 23 to January 7 as a goodwill and confidence building measure to pave the way for a formal meeting to reopen the peace negotiations in the second or third week of January 2020.

SR2: Are there any conditions laid down between the GRP and the NDFP to continue such peace talks?

JMS: Exploratory teams have agreed to reaffirm all previous agreements made by the GRP and NDFP since The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992 and overcome or eliminate such barriers to negotiations as Proclamation 360 and 374, Executive Order No. 70 among others. They also agreed to set the negotiation agenda upon the reopening of the negotiations and include in the agenda the so-called Interim Peace Agreement containing three agreements: 1) general amnesty and release of political prisoners; 2) approval of major articles on agrarian reform and national industrialization in the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER); and 3) coordinated unilateral ceasefires.

SR3: Some say Prof Sison, that in order to continue the peace talks you need to go home where the peace talks would supposedly take place. What can you say about this?

JMS: In due time, after CASER has been approved by both sides, I can meet with President Duterte in Manila and we discuss how to improve and further speed up negotiations, the implementation of CASER and whether the talks about political and constitutional reforms, end of hostilities and disposition of forces could be held in Manila.

Before we meet in Manila, President Duterte and I can see each other earlier in a country near the Philippines after the two sides approved the so-called Interim Peace Agreement. With the help of the Royal Norwegian Government, the legal, political and security requirements for my trip to Asia could be easy to arrange.

It's not right that I just go back to Manila for the time being. If I do, it means that I accept and surrender to the status quo and the current character of the Duterte regime that is tyrannical, traitor, murderous, corrupt and deceitful. I do not wish and I am not capable of betraying what the revolutionary movement and the Filipino people are fighting for.

In addition, it is dangerous for anyone to trust the regime's death squads. I have received warnings from some of my friends within the AFP and the PNP itself about the dangers. But my personal safety is a small matter. Of utmost importance is making sure that the interests of the Filipino people, as well as the security of the process of

peace negotiations itself and the NDFP negotiating panel.

Everyone in the world knows that Duterte's military minions have been assassinating and arbitrarily arresting NDF peace negotiations personnel. They repeatedly violated the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees and CARHRIHL. Remember the killing of Randy Malayao and the arrests of Vic Ladlad, Rey Casambre, Rafael Baylosis, Adel Silva, Reynante Gamara and others.

SR4. The martial law in Mindanao is no longer legal. What are you looking at, Prof Sison?

JMS: It's good if true that martial law in Mindanao would not be extended. The proclamation of martial law in the whole of Mindanao is has been declared unjustifiable and bad from the very beginning. It was used by the regime, and its military and the police only as a license to violate human rights.

5. Lastly Prof Sison, what is your advice to our listeners who have great hopes on the peace talks.

JMS: The National Democratic Front will seek to have peace negotiations, according to the interests and wishes of the Filipino people and the organizations and institutions upholding just peace. But early on, the Duterte regime has precondition that the peace negotiations be conducted in Philippines. The NDF will not enter this obvious trap.

Should the peace negotiations not go through, it simply means that the Filipino people will continue waging all forms of struggle against the Duterte regime. And even with peace negotiations, the people do not lose the right to engage in all forms of struggle for national liberation, democracy, social justice and all-sided development. We always uphold and fight for a just peace!

Sarah: Extro JMS: Goodbye Prop. Sarah Raymundo and all our countrymen! Thank you very much to you and all of our listeners. And I wish you.

On Duterte's Openness to Peace Negotiations

January 5, 2019

Enemies need peace negotiations before they can become friends or partners for the sake of the Filipino people who desire social, economic and political reforms as basis for a just and lasting peace.

Thus, I welcome the statement of Duterte that he is still open to peace negotiations even as there is still an exchange of hostile words in the mass media and exchange of bullets in the battlefield.

It is the consistent policy of the NDFP to be open to peace negotiations with the Duterte regime despite the determination of the NDFP to seek the ouster of this regime.

It is for the benefit of the people that the peace negotiations to resume and to stop the Duterte regime from proclaiming martial law nationwide, from calling off or rigging the May 2016 elections and from pursuing its scheme to impose a fascist dictatorship on the Filipino people via charter change for a bogus kind of federalism.

The NDFP presumes that when peace negotiations can resume, the way is open to the negotiations and agreements on social, economic and political reforms that are desired and needed by the people.

Peace Agreement Is more Plausible

and Less Costly for the GRP

January 7, 2019

On the surface, Duterte's threat to arm mayors and civilians in a big way sounds very offensive to the revolutionary movement.

In that sense, the revolutionary movement can easily make a riposte that the arms put in the hands of so many people can be turned against the Duterte regime because of the policies and acts detrimental to the people.

But I also take note of Duterte's qualification of his threat that he would be willing to go back to peace negotiations on his premise that the revolutionary movement could tone down its offensives against the military and police.

There is some silver lining in his threatening statement. The NDFP is open to exploring whatever opening the GRP is willing to offer.

If peace negotiations between the GRP and the NDFP resume and reach a point where substantial agreements are made, ceasefire can be agreed upon by the two negotiating parties.

In the next three years, it is possible for the GRP and NDFP to make a peace agreement if the Duterte regime is serious and sincere about negotiating and ending its all-out war against the revolutionary forces and the people.

It is even more plausible and less costly for a peace agreement to be made by the two parties than for the GRP to seek in vain the destruction of the revolutionary forces in the next three years.

It Is Correct for NDFP to Be for Peace Negotiations and Expose Duterte's Scheme of Fascist Dictatorship

January 7, 2019

It is correct for NDFP to be ever willing to negotiate peace with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) in order to stress the fact that the Duterte regime has been responsible for the termination of the peace negotiations and has no real intention to engage in these because these would block the Duterte scheme of declaring martial law nationwide, rigging the May 2019 elections if at all held and imposing a fascist dictatorship on the people through charter change to a bogus kind of federalism.

The burden of proving that Duterte is willing to engage in peace negotiations belongs to him, not the NDFP. He is still engaged in self-contradictory statements like being willing to negotiate but dictating preconditions that render negotiations impossible. He has also to prove that he is in command of his own wits and his own subordinates like Lorenzana because they are increasingly exposing themselves as hypocrites combining a bit of peace pretense and obsession with all-out war against the people and the revolutionary forces. In any case, the crisis of the already rotten ruling system and the treasonous, tyrannical, brutal and corrupt Duterte regime are goading the people to rise up and generating the favorable conditions in the people's war for the people's democratic revolution. So long as the Duterte regime engages in all-out war against the national and democratic rights and interests, it is just for the Filipino people and their revolutionary forces to wage all forms of resistance.

The previous scheme of the Duterte regime to destroy the revolutionary movement before the end of 2018 has already proven to be a complete failure. The reactionary armed forces, police and auxiliary forces have failed to destroy even a single guerrilla front anywhere in the Philippines and not even in Mindanao where martial law has been imposed. They can keep on moving their goal for destroying the revolutionary movement but the Filipino people and the revolutionary forces will keep on advancing in struggle and celebrating their victories from month to month and from year to year until the tyrannical and corrupt Duterte regime is gone.

It is foolish and self-defeating for the Duterte regime to wage an all-out war against the people and all democratic forces, whether they are engaged in armed struggle or not. The people's war in the countryside is advancing while the broad united front and democratic mass movement in the urban areas are rising up to oust the Duterte regime. The Duterte regime needs the peace negotiations more than the NDFP does even if only as a futile tactic to confound the opposition and confuse the public. But the NDFP is highly principled and competent to stand firmly for the national and democratic rights and interests of the people in peace negotiations and otherwise.

***NDFP Reconsidering Policy of Openness
to Peace Negotiations Due to Cold-blooded Murder
of Malayao and other Duterte Crimes***

January 30, 2019

NDFP consultant Randy Malayao was not yet murdered by the armed minions of the Duterte regime when I reiterated yesterday the policy of the NDFP of being open to peace negotiations even with the regime. The heinous murder manifests the scheme of the Duterte regime to shun peace negotiations in the first place, escalate its attacks on the people and their leaders and use its all-out war on the revolutionary forces and people as the very excuse for imposing a fascist dictatorship on the people.

In view of the murder of NDFP consultant Randy Malayao, the NDFP and all revolutionary forces within its fold are now in the process of reconsidering its policy of being open to peace negotiations with the GRP under the Duterte regime and are more than ever determined to carry out the overthrow of the treasonous, tyrannical, murderous and corrupt Duterte regime.

It can be expected therefore that the murder of Randy Malayao and other criminal offenses of the Duterte regime will result in the intensification of revolutionary armed struggle nationwide against a regime hell-bent on going down in history as a butchering monster and enemy of the cause of just peace. The blood of martyrs is never shed in vain. It inspires the greater resistance of the people to tyranny.

Comment on Espino's Brazen Intrigue

January 31, 2019

The false claim of Chief Superintendent Mario Espino, the regional director of the Philippine National Police in Cagayan Valley, that the murder of Randy Malayao was done by the NPA is a brazen intrigue of the vilest kind.

It has two malicious and evil purposes: 1. to cover up the criminal responsibility of the murdering agents of the Duterte regime and 2. to set the stage for further murders of suspected revolutionaries, peace and human rights advocates and critics by the death squads of the Duterte regime in the PNP and AFP.

Espino is playing the role of intriguer for the benefit of Duterte and his death squads. Duterte and all his armed minions are digging their own graves because they are goading the NPA to launch more tactical offensives by way of demonstrating that they are targeting those responsible for the rising and expanding crimes of state terrorism.

In the face of the propaganda of the Duterte regime to cover up the murder of Randy Malaya and further crimes of state terrorism, there is no other effective way for the NPA to prove the falsity of intrigues and attain a measure of justice for the victims but to deliver more lethal blows on those perpetrating the crimes of state terrorism.

Traitor Duterte Cannot be Expected

to Stand for Territorial Integrity

and Sovereign Rights

February 1, 2019

We cannot expect the traitor Duterte to heed the call of Justice Carpio to stand up for the territorial integrity and sovereign rights of the Philippines and the Filipino people in connection with the Chinese occupation and construction on the Kagitingan Reef (Fiery Cross).

In his electoral campaign for the presidency in 2016, he was financed by the China lobby and the plunderers like the Marcoses, Arroyos, Estradas, Remullas and Enriles. The armed minions of Duterte are complicit with him in treason.

Aside from being a traitor, he is bound to bigger plunder in connection with Chinese loans and infrastructure projects and to use state terrorism to assure him of absolute power and limitless accumulation of ill-gotten wealth.

Everyday that Duterte is in power, he victimizes the people with his treason, plunder and the most violent human rights violations. At the rate he is making the people suffer his tyranny and the worsening socioeconomic crisis, he should not be allowed to stay long in power.

On the Malicious and Futile Attempt of Duterte Regime to Summon Me to Manila

13 February 2019

I pity Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra and Manila Judge Marlo Madoga-Malager for collaborating to have me summoned to Manila and for appearing stupid and grossly ignorant of international law pertaining to my status and my decades-long legal history just to comply with the truly stupid order of their boss Duterte to target me in the proscription case against the CPP and the NPA.

The summons to me from the Philippine authorities is worthless and ineffective in compelling me to appear before the Manila court. As a recognized political refugee in the Netherlands, I am protected by the Refugee Convention and by Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which prohibits my deportation to the Philippines or even to a third country.

The legal protection that I enjoy is well tested and proven valid and effective by the legal and judicial processes that I have undergone to have my name removed from the EU list of terrorists and to cause the dismissal of the false charge of committing the alleged murder of certain individuals in the Philippines by ordering from Dutch territory alleged accomplices to commit the crime directly.

The European Court of Justice ruled in 2009 that my rights had been violated by being listed as terrorist and subjected to sanctions without being informed of the charges, without the benefit of legal counsel and without availing of judicial review.

The ruling also established that I had not been culpable for any terrorist act and took note that, since I was detained by the Marcos fascist regime in 1977, it had been impossible for me to act as an operational leader of the Communist Party of the Philippines or the New People's Army

Earlier, the Dutch Appellate Court in The Hague had ruled in 2007 that I was not an operational leader of the CPP and that there was no proof that I gave orders to NPA personnel. Thus, the false charge of committing murder in the Philippines from my refuge in The Netherlands was dismissed.

The attempt to summon me to the Philippines is malicious and futile. It is a blatantly cheap political maneuver of the tyrannical Duterte regime which has become notorious for committing gross and systematic human rights violations for the purpose of terrorizing the people.

I enjoy not only the legal protection of the Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights but also the moral and political support and protection of the Dutch and all other peoples who are already well aware of the murderous and bloodthirsty character of the Duterte regime.

It is best that Duterte stop his policy and acts of state terrorism, cease and desist from violating the national and democratic rights of the Filipino people, remove all obstacles of his making and give way to the resumption of peace negotiations between the GRP and the NDFP in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration.

***On Duterte's Clownish Recycling
of Garbage Preconditions to Peace Negotiations***

March 13, 2019

Duterte must be crazy or clowning in reiterating the preconditions he made so many times before. My educated guess is that the CPP, NPA and the people would rather intensify their revolutionary armed struggle than submit themselves to such silly and humiliating preconditions. The preconditions amount to having the armed revolutionary movement commit political suicide before even going to the negotiation table and submit itself to surrender talks and possible slaughter in the venue offered by Duterte. He is practically mouthing the same rubbish by repeating preconditions that he dished out so many times before.

Duterte has no intention of engaging the NDFP in serious peace negotiations. He continues to be hell-bent on keeping the peace negotiations terminated and on imposing a fascist dictatorship on the Filipino people. He has been escalating the abduction, torture and murder of suspected revolutionaries and even mere critics of his treasonous, brutal, corrupt, misogynist, inflation-generating and mendacious regime.

It must be obvious to the people that the Duterte regime is spending huge amounts of public and private money in the billions of pesos to pay for all sorts of propaganda, including unbelievable poll surveys, fake news by official agencies and troll armies, TV-radio ads, ubiquitous tarpaulins, paid crowds and so on in order to misrepresent his losing candidates as winners.

At the same time, the regime is engaged in all kinds of mass intimidation, including red tagging of bishops, priests, social activists, teachers, journalists, lawyers, human rights advocates and legal oppositionists and the actual escalating of murders by the Duterte death squads in the dirty/outrageous style of Oplan Tokhang.

Duterte is conspicuously on the path of fraud and terrorism in the current electoral campaign period. He controls the Comelec and the military and he is openly boasting though in veiled terms that he will use these to get the number of senators needed to railroad the charter change for a bogus kind of federalism and to counter the possibility of his being prosecuted for genocide and other massive human rights violations before the International Criminal Court.

All people who stand for national sovereignty, democracy, social justice and real development must do their best to expose the evil character of the Duterte regime, to defeat its candidates in the May elections, to rise up against it when it undertakes its scheme of using fraud and terrorism against the parties and candidates of the opposition. Remember that the Marcos fascist regime in 1986 fell precisely because it used fraud and terrorism to fake the results of the 1986 elections.

Endlessly Terminating the Peace Negotiations

March 21, 2019

Duterte is like an old broken record repeating ad nauseam his termination of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. As far as the NDFP is concerned, Duterte formally killed the peace negotiations on November 23, 2017 with his Proclamation 360 terminating them.

Since then, what Duterte has been doing is merely driving more nails into the coffin of the peace negotiations under his regime. He needs the continuance of the armed conflict as the excuse to impose on the people a de facto martial law nationwide and eventually a fullblown fascist dictatorship through charter change to a bogus kind of federalism.

Instead of peace negotiations at the national level by the duly authorized panels of the GRP and the NDFP, what Duterte wants is fake localized peace negotiations staged and controlled by the military and military-occupied Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP). In these fake negotiations, people are gathered and misrepresented as surrenderers and the military officers collect the reward money for the fake surrenderers.

As far as the NDFP is concerned, the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations can be resurrected in the future by a new GRP administration. The Duterte regime is not eternal. It can be finished with the success of the oust movement, with the end of his term in 2022 or with his certain overthrow as he forces his way to a fascist dictatorship.

In the meantime, the revolutionary forces and the people need to defend themselves actively and advance their revolutionary cause by all possible forms of resistance. By terminating the peace negotiations and brutally carrying out an all-out war against the people, Duterte give them no other choice but to wage and intensify the people's war.

The conditions for waging the armed revolution are favorable because the broad masses of the people detest and want to get rid of a regime that is generating and unprecedented economic and financial crisis of the tyrannical, treasonous, murdering and corrupt rule of Duterte and the rapidly worsening economic crisis combine to constitute a perfect storm conducive to waging the people's war.

NDFP and the Filipino People Must Be Alert

to Duterte's Militarist Purposes

April 14, 2019

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and the Filipino people should be alert to Duterte's militarist purposes in announcing that he wishes to reopen the peace talks with the use of the militarized negotiating panel under the militarized office of the presidential adviser, General Galvez.

The NDFP does not want to be baited into accepting a war panel of the Duterte regime whose purpose is merely to seek the impossible, such as the surrender of the revolutionary forces, especially the New People's Army.

Duterte must first answer the following prejudicial questions:

1. Why did he terminate the peace negotiations and annul all agreements painstakingly made since the Hague Joint Declaration of 1992?
2. Why did he terminate and dismantle the GRP section of the Joint Monitoring Committee formed under the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Humans Rights and International Humanitarian Law?

The NDFP must remind Duterte that he cannot dictate the terms of whatever kind of negotiations he seeks from the revolutionary movement of the people. By all indications, Duterte is merely play-acting in the name of peace while carrying out an all-out war and scheming to rig the May 2019 elections in order to pave the way for a fascist dictatorship thorough charter change to a bogus federalism.

Futile and Stupid Psywar Campaign to Deceive and Divide the Revolutionary Movement through Fake Peace Talks

April 16, 2019

It is now clear that Duterte and his running dog Galvez are not at all interested in serious peace negotiations through panels duly authorized by the NDFP National Council and the GRP president as the principals at the national level. They are interested merely in a psywar campaign to stage fake localized peace talks between military officers and their military assets in a stupid and futile attempt to deceive and divide the armed revolutionary movement of the people.

Such psywar campaign is a mere minor adjunct of the all-out war campaign to attack the people through red-tagging, mass intimidation, bombing of communities, mass murder and other atrocities in order to perpetuate the oppressive and exploitative ruling system of compradors, landlords and corrupt bureaucrats headed by Duterte.

The Filipino people and the revolutionary forces have no choice but to intensify the armed revolution for national and social liberation on a nationwide scale against the tyrannical, treasonous, murderous, plundering and swindling Duterte regime.

The regime is about to rig the May 13 2019 elections in order to fake the victory of at least eight of its senatorial candidates and ram through charter change to a bogus federalism, which centralizes the powers of government in the hands of a fascist dictator.

The Filipino people and their revolutionary forces are confronted with the escalation of oppression and exploitation which at the same time drives them to resist and provides them with the opportunities to make advances and win victories in the people's democratic revolution.

Duterte Kills GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations, Prods the People to Intensify Armed Revolution

April 17, 2019

In the experience of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) in negotiating with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP), the reactionary pro-US military officers at the highest level have always interfered to stop the peace negotiations for the following reasons:

1. that the GRP negotiating panel cannot obtain the surrender of the armed revolutionary movement of the people through a protracted and indefinite ceasefire and 2. that the NDFP negotiating panel is gaining credit for pushing social, economic and political reforms to address the roots of the armed conflict.

Since The Hague Joint Declaration of September 1, 1992, the reactionary diehards in the military have always acted to shorten the peace negotiations under every GRP administration whenever the NDFP rebuffs their precondition for the surrender of the New People's Army and their maneuvers to block the negotiations of social and economic reforms.

The reactionaries facilely and deceptively say that the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations have been running for 27 years since 1992. But in fact, under every administration from the Ramos regime to the current Duterte regime, peace negotiations are held only for a few months before the reactionary military diehards intervene to pressure their commander-in-chief to slow down or to declare the suspension or termination of the peace negotiations.

Under the pressure of the military, Duterte has terminated and practically killed the peace negotiations since he issued Proclamation 360 on November 23, 2017. And he has proceeded to drive more nails into the coffin of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

He has rendered peace negotiations impossible between the official panels of the GRP and NDFP that are duly authorized by their respective principals. While Duterte is in power, there will be no peace negotiations between the GRP and the NDFP because of the following:

1. Duterte has formally terminated the peace negotiations with the NDFP with Proclamation 360.
2. He has designated the CPP and the NPA as terrorist.
3. He has rejected the substantive agenda of the peace negotiations stipulated by The Hague Joint Declaration and the Joint Agreement on the Sequence, Formation and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees.
4. He has wantonly violated the safety and immunity guarantees under the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) by ordering the arrest of NDFP consultants and their murder if there are no witnesses, as in the case of Randy Malayao.
5. He has unilaterally scrapped the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law and has dismantled the GRP section of the Joint Monitoring Committee.
6. He has unleashed his military and police dogs to red-tag, frame up and kill at will social activists and suspected revolutionaries in his all-out war and pursuit of fascist dictatorship.

In view of the foregoing, there can be no genuine peace negotiations between the GRP and the NDFP while Duterte remains in power.

The so-called localized peace negotiations are patently false. No one would ever be authorized by the NDFP National Council to negotiate with the GRP or its military under conditions completely under the control of the murderous Duterte regime. And no revolutionary in his right senses would ever surrender himself to the brutal brutal and corrupt enemy.

The CPP, NPA and NDFP are highly centralized and have a collective style of decision-making and working. No individual or part of these organizations would ever fall for a trap like the fake localized peace talks under the control and manipulation of a rapacious and bloodthirsty enemy.

It is obvious to the Filipino people and their revolutionary forces that they have no choice but to concentrate on intensifying the people's war for a people's democratic revolution. In fact, no reactionary regime after the Duterte regime would ever be interested in negotiating peace with them unless they intensify the people's war and win ever greater victories.

It is actually favorable to the Filipino people and their revolutionary forces to be confronted by a tyrannical, treasonous, murderous, corrupt, and swindling Duterte regime as in the time of the fascist dictator Marcos. It is far easier to fight and win victories against a regime that makes no pretenses about being patriotic and democratic than against previous regimes that had patriotic and democratic pretenses.

While there are no GRP-NDFP peace negotiations, for as long as Duterte is in power, I find it more useful and worthwhile to concentrate on exposing the crimes of Duterte and demanding the end of his regime without being distracted by back-channel talks and flip-flops by the mentally, politically and morally deranged Duterte.

As I indicated before, I am happy to have more time to do research on Philippine and global issues, write and publish my books and articles and engage in more study meetings with Filipinos and their solidarity friends in the anti-imperialist and democratic struggle.

There is a rising interest in the revolutionary resistance of the Filipino people for national and social liberation because of the flagrantly antipeople, antinational and antidemocratic character of the Duterte regime. The peoples and revolutionary forces of the world expect the Filipino people and their revolutionary forces to fight and defeat the tyrannical regime of Duterte.

Reply to Duterte and Panelo
on the Claim of “Small Window”
for Peace Negotiations

May 12, 2019

It is not true that the Duterte regime keeps any “small window” to peace negotiations with the NDFP, contrary to what Panelo claims. Duterte has completely shut the door and all windows to peace negotiations with the NDFP. He has terminated and killed the peace negotiations since November 23, 2017 with Proclamation 360 and has driven so many nails into the coffin of the peace negotiations.

It is also not true that Duterte has terminated the peace negotiations because of the tactical offensives of the NPA. Even under conditions of temporary ceasefire, the AFP and PNP did not cease strategic and tactical offensives, occupied rural communities suspected as mass base of the NPA and committed gross and systematic human rights violations.

The real reason why Duterte has killed the peace negotiations is that he has failed to obtain the surrender of the CPP and NPA and the people, refuses to negotiate social, economic and political reforms for the benefit of the people and wants to continue the armed conflict as an excuse for his tyrannical rule and scheme to establish a full-blown fascist dictatorship through charter change to bogus federalism.

It is Duterte and his armed minions who have killed the peace negotiations and refuse to resume them. They wish to preserve the oppressive and exploitative ruling system dominated by foreign monopoly capitalism, domestic feudalism and bureaucratic corruption. They are deluded by the notion that they can destroy the revolutionary movement of the people through military means of bombing and mass murder and psywar tricks like fake localized peace talks, fake surrenders and fake development through small palliative projects.

The revolutionary forces and the people do not hope that Duterte will reopen the peace negotiations within the framework of the Hague Joint Declaration. My estimate is that they will fight the Duterte regime to its bitter end. They do not expect the regime to engage in serious negotiations on social, economic and political reforms to address the roots of the armed conflict.

Comment on Report that Cardinal Tagle

Has Agreed to Collaborate with the PNP

Against the Revolutionary Movement

July 16, 2019

Because it quotes extensively from PNP chief Albayalde, the news story below, especially its title, tends to make it appear that Cardinal Tagle has agreed to collaborate with the tyrannical Duterte regime in staging sham localized peace talks and in carrying out a campaign of psywar and military suppression against the revolutionary movement of the people.

Cardinal Tagle is clear enough with his reported statement: “Any call for peace talks must come from the broad sector of society and not just a unilateral declaration from either government or underground movement.” The unilateral declaration of government or Albayalde is not enough to make peace talks with the revolutionary movement.

From the news story itself, I do not read anything which quotes Tagle directly as “joining hands with the police for localized peace talks.” The title of the news story is misleading. It merely reflects the one-sided presumption and talk of Albayalde that he has hoodwinked the cardinal into siding with the tyrannical Duterte government and becoming an endorser of the localized “peace talks” which are being staged by the military and police and which have been condemned by the leading political organs of the NDFP and CPP and commands of the NPA at every level, from the national to the local level.

I think that Cardinal Tagle is sufficiently informed that the sham localized “peace talks” are being staged by the military and police and have been condemned by the leading political organs of the NDFP and CPP and commands of the NPA at every level, from the national to the local level. To address the roots of the armed conflict and lay the basis for a just and lasting peace, the peace negotiations must be carried out at the national level in accordance with the framework set by The Hague Joint Declaration.

The CPP, NPA, NDFP and other revolutionary forces as well as the broad range of patriotic forces of the Filipino people have exposed and condemned localized “peace talks” as a mere psywar and red-tagging device of the military and police under National Task Force-ELCAC in a futile attempt to divide and destroy the revolutionary movement.

The military and police minions of Duterte pretend not to know that the revolutionary movement of the people continues to preserve itself and grow in strength because the conditions for armed revolution have become more favorable because of the tyranny, treason, brutality, corruption and mendacity of the Duterte regime.

***On Duterte's Claim that NDFP Insists
on Peace Negotiations and Agcaoili
and Jalandoni Want to Talk in Manila***

August 8, 2019

Duterte is completely wrong in presuming and implying that the NDFP will negotiate with his regime under his unilateral terms and that NDFP Negotiating Panel Chairperson Fidel Agcaoili and Senior Adviser Luis Jalandoni want to talk in Manila despite Duterte's Proclamation 360 terminating the peace negotiations, Proclamation 374 designating the CPP and NPA as "terrorist" organizations, Executive Order No. 70 and so many other despotic issuances and actions that are obstacles to GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

It is Duterte who is clearly culpable for the termination of the peace negotiations in contempt of the people's desire for these. He has terminated these negotiations in order to scapegoat the CPP, NPA and NDFP and gain the pretext to pursue his Marcos-style scheme of fascist dictatorship. There is yet no sign whatsoever that he is abandoning his scheme of fascist dictatorship, which is quite overreaching, especially because of his deteriorating health and the rapidly approaching end of his rule either by ouster or end of his legal term in less than three years.

GRP-NDFP peace negotiations and the Manila visit of Agcaoili and Jalandoni are impossible so long as Duterte is in power and does not remove the aforesaid obstacles that he himself is responsible for. The NDFP stands firmly against any scheme to undermine and destroy the revolutionary cause of the Filipino people. Duterte underestimates the revolutionary integrity, long experience and intelligence of the NDFP by presuming that Agcaoili and Jalandoni will walk into his trap and slaughterhouse in Manila.

Indeed, peace negotiations are a mode of talking to the enemy, addressing the roots of the armed conflict and possibly ending the long-running civil war in the Philippines. Thus, the NDFP is ever willing to negotiate peace with its enemy in order to serve and advance the national and democratic rights of the Filipino people.

GRP-NDFP peace negotiations are possible with the Duterte regime if it does away with the obstacles that it has made and mends its ways, and The Hague Joint Declaration and further agreements are reaffirmed. Otherwise, the NDFP cannot do anything else but to further strengthen the Filipino people and the broad united front in their resolve and movement to oust the tyrannical, traitorous, brutal, corrupt and mendacious Duterte regime.

Reflections and Perspective

on the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations

October 18, 2019

Let me discuss the achievements of the peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) as well as the adversities and obstacles since 1992. Consequently, I share with you my perspective on these negotiations.

Achievements in the peace process

The achievements in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations consist of a series of joint agreements that the GRP and the NDFP as negotiating parties have negotiated and mutually approved since 1992. Let me mention the most important ones. The limited time does not allow me to mention all agreements and all the goodwill and confidence-building measures like the ceasefire agreements of short duration and the releases of political prisoners and prisoners of war.

1. The Hague Joint Declaration was signed by the representatives of the GRP and NDFP on September 1, 1992. It sets forth the framework of the peace negotiations. This includes the aim of resolving the armed conflict through formal peace talks, the guiding principles of national sovereignty, democracy and social justice as well as the principle of non-capitulation by any of the negotiating parties, the method of negotiating and drafting the comprehensive agreements through reciprocal working committees and the substantive agenda for forging the comprehensive agreements on: a. respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, b. social and economic reforms, c. political and constitutional reforms and d. the end of hostilities and disposition of forces.

It is clear that the attainment of a just and lasting peace is by addressing the roots of the armed conflict through social, economic and political reforms.

2. The Breukelen Joint Statement was signed and approved on June 14, 1994. This is the product of the first exploratory meeting of the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels after their delayed formation and after the failure of the intervening National Unification Commission (NUC) to carry out so-called localized peace negotiations under the direction and control of the GRP and its military. The NUC was unilaterally created by the GRP on September 2, 1992. The NDFP objected to the NUC as running counter to The Hague Joint Declaration and criticized it as a scheme to sabotage the peace negotiations and to misrepresent military assets as surrendering NPA fighters and as a futile psywar attempt to divide and disintegrate the revolutionary movement.

3. The Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees was signed and approved on February 24, 1995. It guarantees the safety and immunity of the negotiating panelists, consultants, advisers and resource persons, staff and other negotiating personnel of the GRP and the NDFP during and after the peace negotiations, irrespective of their results. It stipulates the holding of peace negotiations in a foreign neutral venue. It firms up the consistent position of the NDFP that the formal peace talks be held abroad in order to avert the consequences of GRP military surveillance which were adverse to the NDFP negotiating personnel and staff during and after the ceasefire talks and the ceasefire agreement from 1986 to 1987 during the Aquino regime. Abductions and murders of NDFP negotiating personnel were done after the ceasefire agreement broke down as a result of the Mendiola massacre of peasants and their urban supporters on January 23, 1987.

4. The Joint Agreement on the Formation, Sequence and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees (RWCs) was signed and approved in the course of the formal opening of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations in Brussels on June 25, 1996. It guides how the comprehensive agreements are to be drafted by the reciprocal working committees for negotiations by the negotiating panels in accordance with the substantive agenda.

5. Additional Implementing Rules Pertaining to the Documents of Identification was signed on June 26, 1996. It reinforces the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees. It stipulates the exchange of lists and number of persons to be mutually agreed upon for coverage by the safety and immunity guarantees.

6. The Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) between the GRP and the NDFP was signed by the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels in The Hague on March 16, 1998. This is the most important agreement so far made by the GRP-NDFP negotiating panels and

mutually approved by their respective principals. It is the accomplishment of the first item of the four items in the substantive agenda of the peace negotiations. It was the product of a total of six months of continuous negotiations and drafting by the reciprocal working committees and the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels.

7. The Joint Agreement in Support of Socioeconomic Projects of Private Development Organizations and Institutes was signed on March 16, 1998. It is an agreement that allows and encourages socioeconomic initiatives by nongovernmental entities. It is valid and effective even before the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms is negotiated and mutually approved.

8. The Joint Statement of the GRP and NDFP Negotiating Panels on March 9, 2001. It has the signal importance of demonstrating how the peace negotiations can be resumed after a unilateral act of termination by a negotiating party. It reaffirmed The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992 and all other subsequent agreements of the two parties in order to override the act of termination made by the Estrada regime. It was during the time of the Arroyo regime that the GRP and the NDFP agreed to have the Royal Norwegian Government as the third-party facilitator responsible for providing the foreign neutral venue for the peace negotiations and the resources for the purpose. The GRP and the NDFP also agreed on the Operating Guidelines of the Joint Monitoring Committee under CARHRIHL. This mechanism is important for the recording and exchange of complaints under CARHRIHL in order to deal with said complaints and ensure the continuity of the peace negotiations. Through a GRP-NDFP joint statement, the GRP assured the NDFP that the victims of human rights violations under the Marcos fascist regime would receive indemnification from the Marcos loot recovered from Switzerland. During the first year of the Duterte regime, the prospects for accelerated peace negotiations and agreements were bright even as the new president reneged on his promise on May 16, 2016 to amnesty and release all political prisoners before the resumption of peace negotiations. The longest ceasefire between the armed forces of the GRP and peace negotiations and to misrepresent military assets as surrendering NPA fighters and as a futile psywar attempt to divide and disintegrate the revolutionary movement.

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During the first year of the Duterte regime, the prospects for accelerated peace negotiations and agreements were bright even as the new president reneged on his promise on May 16, 2016 to amnesty and release all political prisoners before the resumption of peace negotiations. The longest ceasefire between the armed forces of the GRP and the NDFP occurred from August 2016 to February 2017. There was an agreement to accelerate the negotiations of all three remaining items of the substantive agenda, without violating the intact agreement on the sequence of comprehensive agreements.

The GRP and NDFP reciprocal working committees have initialled the Guiding Principles and Sections on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development and National Industrialization and Economic Development of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER). Tentative agreements were made for a joint ceasefire in conjunction with the approval and implementation of the CASER.

The aforementioned agreements can be regarded as positive factors for resuming the peace negotiations at any time. They can be the base for forging the three remaining comprehensive agreements and for completing the peace process.

Since 2017 the NDFP has drafted its own full version of the CASER and has published this in 2018. For its own internal study and in readiness for the resumption of peace negotiations in the future, the NDFP also has tentative drafts of the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms and the Comprehensive Agreement on the End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces.

Adversities and obstacles to the peace process

It is a fact that the GRP and NDFP are two contending parties or belligerent forces in a civil war but have agreed to become negotiating parties open to addressing and resolving the root causes of the armed conflict. Accordingly, the NDFP has always made clear that it is open to comprehensive agreements on bourgeois democratic reforms under the guiding principles of national sovereignty, democracy and social justice. It has never prematurely made socialist or communist demands in the peace negotiations.

But the GRP has had difficulties deciding and acting independently of the traditional dictates of foreign monopoly capitalism, domestic feudalism, bureaucratic corruption and repression. Whenever peace negotiations were delayed, disrupted or terminated, certain reactionary motivations of the GRP became conspicuous, such as seeking the capitulation and destruction of the revolutionary movement of the NDFP and abandoning the substantive agenda for addressing the roots of the armed conflict to benefit the people and build a just and lasting peace.

Take note of the fact that every GRP regime has carried out strategic military plans to destroy the revolutionary movement while the peace process or even a ceasefire is going on. The Duterte regime has been the most violent and vociferous in seeking to destroy the revolutionary movement by purely military means under the slogan of rabid anti-communism. This is in contempt of the broad masses of the people who are conscious of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism as the biggest problems plaguing them.

Duterte and his military minions try to discredit the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations by claiming that these have achieved nothing in 25 years from 1992 to 2017. In fact, these have achieved a lot despite delays, disruptions and terminations, which have cut down the days of productive bilateral formal peace talks to less than a year despite the passage of more than 25 years since 1992. Far more time has been devoted to expensive but futile strategic operational plans of the military and to the sabotage of the peace negotiations.

Despite the fact that most of the aforesaid major agreements were negotiated and mutually approved during the Ramos administration, the peace process was disrupted almost immediately after the signing of the Hague

Joint Declaration, with Ramos creating the National Unification Commission (NUC) on September 2, 1992 to undertake the “localized peace talks”. The NDFP promptly denounced this as an attempt to divide and destroy the revolutionary movement and to scuttle the peace process. The NUC prevented the start of the formal peace talks until 1994 when it was clearly proven that the NUC could not realize the so-called localized peace talks.

Right after the formal opening of the peace negotiations in Brussels in 1995, Defense Secretary Renato de Villa insisted on detaining Sotero Llamas and disrespecting the agreement to release him as a consultant in the peace negotiations. However, as soon as Llamas was released, the peace talks proceeded and progressed relatively fast. Several major agreements were forged in quick succession.

The GRP-NDFP Negotiating Panels and their respective reciprocal working committees had the distinction of negotiating, finalizing and signing the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law within only six months in 1997 to 1998. But GRP President Ramos hedged from signing the agreement until his term ended in 1998.

President Estrada signed the CARHRIHL on August 7, 1998 but terminated the peace negotiations on May 29, 1999 as a reaction to the capture of General Obillo and Captain Montealto by the New People’s Army under conditions of no ceasefire agreement and despite the willingness of the NDFP to release the prisoners of war. He also took offense from the patriotic opposition of the NDFP to the US-RP Visiting Forces Agreement. No peace negotiations occurred for most of the years that Estrada was in power.

President Arroyo and the GRP Negotiating Panel agreed to resume the peace negotiations and reaffirm all previous agreements in early 2001. She also agreed to the Royal Norwegian Government becoming the third-party facilitator and to the Joint Agreement on the Operating Guidelines for the Joint Monitoring Committee which had been created under a provision of CARHRIHL.

But in April 2001, under increasing militarist influence of her national security advisers, Arroyo found cause to “suspend” the peace negotiations indefinitely over the death of Cagayan governor Rodolfo Aguinaldo who had resisted arrest by the New People’s Army on the basis of an arrest order long issued by the People’s Court for grave crimes of human rights violations during and after the Marcos fascist regime. For nine long years, during the time of the Arroyo regime, there were no peace negotiations.

The Aquino administration agreed to resume the peace negotiations and reaffirm all previous agreements. But the National Security Cluster of the Cabinet and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) repeatedly disrupted the peace negotiations by seeking to subordinate these immediately to the sole authority of the GRP and demanding an indefinitely prolonged ceasefire before the negotiations on the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER).

The OPAPP secretary also directed the Chairman of the GRP Negotiating Panel to pontificate that the Hague Joint Declaration was a document of perpetual division and the CARHRIHL was a propaganda document of the NDFP and to insult the NDFP as aiming for the moon by demanding social, economic and political reforms. Consequently, the peace negotiations broke down without making any significant progress. There was practically no advance whatsoever in taking up social and economic reforms during most of the six years of Aquino in power.

Before Duterte became president, he was harping on the line that he would immediately negotiate peace with the NDFP and form a coalition government with the CPP. On May 16, 2016, he promised to amnesty and release all political prisoners upon assumption of office. He did not fulfil this promise and thus caused the NDFP to doubt his further pronouncements.

Despite the ceasefire agreement from August 2016 to the first week of February 2017, the Duterte regime continued with its all-out war policy and operations against the revolutionary movement by continuing Aquino’s Oplan Bayanihan until he launched his own Oplan Kapayapaan in January 2017. Then he issued the proclamation of martial law in Mindanao on May 23, 2017, which openly made the revolutionary movement a target of all-out war.

Soon enough, Duterte issued Proclamation 360 to terminate the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations and Proclamation 374 to designate the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People’s Army as “terrorist” organizations. Further, he issued Executive Order No. 70 to create a national task force to end the revolutionary movement through a “whole nation” approach of militarizing the government and society along the line of rabid anti-communism. The repressive policies and actions continue to escalate.

Even as the Duterte regime has terminated the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations, the OPAPP now under the

complete control of the rabidly anti-communist military has sought to repeat the psywar scheme of the National Unification Commission in 1992 to 1994 to stage “localized peace talks” under the direction and control of the GRP military. Like the NDFP, the NPA at every level of command has publicly condemned the so-called localized peace talks. As in 1992 to 1994, the reactionary military and police forces have merely staged fake surrenders aside from concocting fake encounters and inflicting a wide range of human rights violations on the people.

The real purpose of the Duterte regime in ending the peace negotiations is to blame the revolutionary movement for the armed conflict and to realize Duterte’s scheme of fascist dictatorship. In the process, the regime has undertaken a series of measures by which the president as commander-in-chief has used the military and police forces to violate the civil and political rights of all deemed opposed to the regime.

The regime tries in vain to terrorize the people with the use of red-tagging, trumped up charges, planting of evidence, abductions, torture, assassinations, mass murders, bombings and forced mass eviction of urban poor dwellers, peasants and indigenous people in order to generate a climate of fear and facilitate the repression of all those opposed to the regime, including the legal opposition, critics, social activists and ordinary people.

Perspective on resuming the peace process

By knowing both the achievements of, as well as the adversities and obstacles, to the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations, we know what positive factors to develop and what negative factors to overcome.

The positive factors are the agreements, the experience and expertise that have arisen and accumulated over time. The support of the peace advocates and the broad masses of the people is certainly positive factor in favor of the peace negotiations. The negative factors involve mainly the rabid anticommunism and the presumption that the GRP can deliver services to the people and end the armed revolutionary movement through sheer military force and not through peace negotiations.

It is during the current Duterte regime that the negative factors are so overwhelming on the side of the GRP, as manifested by the series of presidential issuances to terminate the peace negotiations, designate the CPP and NPA as “terrorists” and create a national task force for the militarization and fascistization of government and society under the banner of anticommunism.

While Duterte and his ruling clique remain in power, there is no hope for the resumption of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations due to their obsession to escalate repressive measures and impose a fascist dictatorship on the Filipino people under the pretext of fighting and defeating “communism” and the armed revolution.

There is only a small chance that Duterte will be willing to resume peace negotiations if he is convinced of the futility of his enterprise to destroy the revolutionary movement by sheer armed force and if he is moved to recognize and respect the tremendous growth of the broad popular opposition as well as that of the armed revolutionary movement, resulting precisely from the current escalation of oppression and exploitation.

But the revolutionary movement most probably will not find it useful to engage in peace negotiations with the GRP under the Duterte regime when this is already on the verge of being ousted or is approaching the end of its term. If the ouster movement becomes imminent, the revolutionary movement would find it more reasonable, beneficial and necessary to help accelerate the regime’s downfall and negotiate with the next GRP administration.

It is advisable for all those honestly interested in peace negotiations, aside from the GRP and the NDFP, to continue working for the resumption of peace negotiations as soon as conditions permit. We look forward to the struggle of the Filipino people against tyranny, treason, plunder and deception generating better conditions for peace negotiations.

The antinational and antidemocratic character of the Duterte regime has aroused a broad range of patriotic and progressive forces and the broad masses of the people to demand the resumption of peace negotiations as the way for advancing and realizing full national independence, democracy, social justice, economic development, cultural progress and international solidarity.

***On the Resumption
of the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations***

December 8, 2019

I welcome President Duterte's publicly expressed desire to resume the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations and his instruction to Secretary Bello to visit me and consult with me in Utrecht in this regard. I am pleased that President Duterte has also acknowledged that he is "running out of time" and that he is determined to achieve peace before the end of his term.

It is timely for the GRP and NDFP to celebrate with the Filipino people the season of Christmas and the New Year and to create the favorable atmosphere for peace negotiations by undertaking such goodwill measures as reciprocal unilateral ceasefires and the release of political prisoners who are elderly and sickly on humanitarian grounds, especially those who shall participate in the peace negotiations.

It is my view that the peace negotiations can be resumed in a formal meeting to issue the declaration to reaffirm the agreements that have been forged since 1992, to overcome the presidential issuances and other obstacles that have arisen since 2017 preventing the peace negotiations, to set the agenda and schedule for these negotiations, and to fulfil political, legal and security requirements.

The GRP and NDFP negotiating panels can pursue further negotiations on the Interim Peace Agreement, with its three components pertaining to coordinated unilateral ceasefires, general amnesty and release of all political prisoners and the sections of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development and National Industrialization and Economic Development.

All the remaining sections of the CASER can be negotiated, completed and mutually approved by the GRP and NDFP in a relatively short period of time. Thereafter, the Comprehensive Agreements on Political and Constitutional Reforms and the End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces shall be negotiated, completed and mutually approved.

Military and Police Authorities Expose Bad Faith in Duterte's Offer of Peace Negotiations

December 10, 2019

In good faith, the NDFP has proposed goodwill measures, such as reciprocal unilateral ceasefires and the release of sickly and elderly political prisoners (especially the NDFP political prisoners detained in violation of JASIG), in order to create a favorable climate for peace negotiations.

By rebuffing the NDFP proposal of goodwill measures, the GRP military and police authorities expose Duterte's lack of sincerity in offering peace negotiations and the malicious scheme to attack the people and the revolutionary forces without any pause.

The NDFP and the revolutionary forces it represents are being challenged to fight against the escalation of military and police campaigns of suppression. They are being reminded by their own enemy to defend themselves and to intensify their own tactical offensives.

It is highly probable that Duterte's offer of peace negotiations, preconditioned by resuming them in the Philippines, is a prelude to the escalation of attacks against the people and the revolutionary forces. The NPA can see through the ruse and will not lay itself open to attacks by declaring a ceasefire that is not reciprocated by the AFP and PNP.

Both the precondition on the NDFP to negotiate in the Philippines and under the control and surveillance of the reactionary military and police and the rejection of the proposed goodwill measures are signs that the Duterte regime is not really interested in peace negotiations but is merely trying to find a further pretext for continuing and escalating its bloody attacks against the people and the revolutionary movement.

Safety and Immunity Guarantees
for NDFP Personnel and Necessary Conditions
for Peace Negotiations

December 12, 2019

If he is truly interested in peace negotiations with the NDFP, President Duterte as political leader and commander-in-chief of the GRP has to reorient his defense, military and police officials and order them to let the peace negotiations proceed and tackle the substantive agenda on social, economic and political reforms under safety and immunity guarantees for the negotiating personnel of both sides and under conditions that the NDFP is secure from the hostile conditions of militarization and fascisation in the Philippines under the current regime.

The most militarist-minded and brutal officers of the AFP and PNP must be reminded to stop pipe-dreaming about entrapping the NDFP negotiating personnel in Metro Manila at the very resumption of formal talks, putting them under their control and surveillance and thereby obtaining by sheer trickery the victory that they cannot obtain in the battlefield and through their use of psywar which consists of fake news, fake community support projects, fake surrenders and fake encounters.

The NDFP negotiating personnel (negotiators, consultants and technical staff) are highly principled and intelligent people, conscious of the dirty strategy and tactics of the reactionary military and police forces and always mindful of how Randy Malayao was murdered, several NDFP consultants have been arrested and detained on trumped up charges and with planted evidence and how all the consultants, resource persons and technical staff of the NDFP are being red-tagged and threatened with arrest and summary execution in violation of JASIG and CARHRIHL.

The peace negotiations cannot be resumed without a formal meeting in a foreign neutral venue abroad to reaffirm the bilateral agreements made since The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992 and to overcome all the repressive issuances that the Duterte regime has made since 2017 to terminate and prevent peace negotiations and to unleash campaigns of red-tagging, abductions, torture, mass murder, looting, arson, bombing and other atrocities against mere suspects and civilian communities.

In my particular case as chief political consultant of the NDFP, I cannot give up the legal protection that I enjoy under the Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights and practically surrender myself to a regime and its armed minions that are notorious for gross human rights violations. I cannot leave the Netherlands without first getting the political and legal guarantees of several pertinent governments to retain my rights to non-refoulement and Article 3 of the European Convention for the noble purpose of talking peace with Duterte in a country near the Philippines.

Certain high military officials have claimed that they are so sure of destroying the armed revolutionary movement of the people and have declared that they do not want any peace negotiations and ceasefire of any kind. Arrogantly, they boast that the NDFP has no choice but surrender in Manila ab initio. They go against the publicly expressed wish of Duterte himself for peace negotiations and a bilateral ceasefire.

In view of the mania of his military officers for war and the continuance of operational plans to destroy the people's revolutionary movement, there is compelling reason to hold the peace negotiations in a neutral venue abroad until such time that comprehensive agreements on social, economic and political reforms are mutually approved for the benefit of the people. Duterte can remind his own military and police officers that they have embarrassed him enough with their continuing failure to destroy the revolutionary movement with brute military force and psywar.

It is standard practice to hold peace negotiations between two warring parties in a neutral foreign venue to preclude the peace spoilers and saboteurs from having too many opportunities to spoil or sabotage the peace negotiations. Most of the major agreements in the GRP-NDFP peace process were made during the time of Ramos in a foreign neutral venue and under circumstances when the negotiations were carried out while fighting continued in the Philippines. If Duterte cannot yet stop his own military officers from waging war, it is possible to talk while fighting and this is still better than no talk at all, if I may quote some of the peace advocates.

But of course, it is even far better that Duterte’s military and police minions are restrained immediately from taking advantage of the repressive issuances he previously made and from further committing human rights violations against the people and suspected revolutionaries. The broad masses of the people benefit immediately from respect for their human rights, including their civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. Let CARHRIHL guide both the GRP and NDFP and generate favorable conditions for the comprehensive agreements on social, economic and political reforms.

Implications and Possible Consequences

of Resuming GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations

December 14, 2019

The GRP and NDFP principals definitely desire to resume the peace negotiations previously terminated by the Duterte regime and further encumbered by repressive measures, like Proclamation Nos. 360 and 374, Memorandum Order No. 32 and Executive Order No. 70.

Informal meetings can resolve issues and prepare the formal meeting to resume the peace negotiations by reaffirming bilateral agreements since The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992 and overcoming obstacles as well as the subsequent formal meeting to finalize the Interim Peace Agreement, which is a package of general amnesty for political prisoners, major articles of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) on agrarian reform and national industrialization and bilateral ceasefire.

But many people fear that in agreeing to resume the peace negotiations the NDFP might be compromised and set up by the Duterte regime for an inevitable termination of the peace negotiations and use the breakdown of peace negotiations as pretext for the further escalation of tyranny and repression and as the cover for railroading charter change that institutionalizes fascism and surrenders the national patrimony and sovereign rights to imperialist powers and foreign monopoly banks and firms.

Of course, the NDFP is taking big risks in agreeing to negotiate peace with the GRP to address the roots of the armed conflict and agree on social, economic and political reforms. The many people who are worried about the risks and who advice prudence on the part of the NDFP are justified because of previous bad experience and the continuing pro-imperialist and reactionary interests dominating the GRP and the Duterte regime.

In line with the national and democratic rights and interests of the Filipino people, the NDFP is determined to be alert to the risks and to be prudent in the peace negotiations. It holds revolutionary principles firmly while at the same time exercises flexibility in policy to try persuading the GRP to come to comprehensive agreements on social, economic and political reforms within the framework of national independence, democracy and social justice.

So long as there is yet no final peace agreement, the Filipino people and the revolutionary forces have all the right to wage all forms of revolutionary struggle against oppression and exploitation. The NDFP negotiating panel can withdraw from the peace negotiations if and when the GRP is merely using these to compromise and set up the NDFP and the revolutionary movement for the escalation of tyranny and repression and for charter change that violates the national patrimony and sovereign rights of the Filipino people.

While there is still adequate reason for carrying out peace negotiation, both the GRP and NDFP should strive to use these in undertaking goodwill and confidence-building measures and making comprehensive agreements on social, economic and political reforms for the benefit of the people. The CARHRIHL can be a guide for getting rid of tyranny and repression. As soon as possible, the CASER should be completed, finalized, mutually approved and implemented immediately. The GRP and NDFP reciprocal working committees should continue drafting the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reform (CAPCR) even now.

A great leap of trust and confidence will be achieved when the CASER is mutually approved and is implemented immediately. The Red fighters of the NPA and the soldiers of AFP who come mainly from the toiling masses of workers and peasants will be happy to see that their families will benefit from genuine land reform, rapid employment through national industrialization, higher incomes and expanded social services (education, health, relief and rehabilitation, etc.). Even the private entrepreneurs will be happy with the greatly expanded opportunities opened up by land reform and national industrialization.

Trip to Manila before CASER Is Premature

but One-On-One in Country

near the Philippines Is Possible

December 26, 2019

I thank President Duterte for the offer to meet one on one. But it is premature for me to go to the Philippines before the mutual approval of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms. Let the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels work this out first in a neutral venue abroad for the benefit of the people, especially with regard to genuine land reform and national industrialization.

Nevertheless, I am willing to meet with President Duterte in a country near the Philippines after the formal resumption of the peace negotiations and the mutual approval of the Interim Peace Agreement, provided the Royal Norwegian Government as third-party facilitator helps in securing the necessary political, legal and security guarantees from a number of pertinent countries.

I would be putting the prospect of peace negotiations at risk if I make myself available for any kind of attack by officers of the AFP and PNP who think that they can end the revolutionary movement by getting rid of me and who are increasingly disobedient to President Duterte and continue to make offensive movements despite the current ceasefire ordered by the CPP to the NPA.

The current basic problems of the Filipino people are imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism. I will work with anyone who notices these three elephants in the room and agrees with me that these problems must be solved in order to achieve full national independence, democracy and social justice which are the guiding principles of the peace negotiations as set forth by the Hague Joint Declaration of 1992.

On the Current Ceasefire and Further Steps Forward

January 5, 2020

The current reciprocal ceasefire agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), which was supposed to have started last December 23, 2010, will soon end on January 7, 2020.

By and large, the two parties have complied with the ceasefire agreement and allowed it to serve as a goodwill and confidence building measure for enhancing the environment for the resumption of the GRP-NDFP negotiations.

Since last December 26 when the GRP provided the NDFP with copies of the SOMO and SOMO, there has been no incident in which one side fired at the other side. The few allegations of ceasefire violations have not disrupted the nationwide implementation of the reciprocal unilateral ceasefire agreement.

Such allegations can be threshed out by the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels and the Joint Monitoring Committee under the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.

It is widely expected that in connection with the ceasefire agreement, the GRP ought to release on humanitarian grounds sickly and elderly political prisoners, especially eleven NDFP consultants who were previously arrested and detained in violation of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees.

The release of the aforementioned political prisoners on humanitarian grounds will ensure the success of the formal meeting to resume the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations within January. As regards to the rest of the political prisoners, they can look forward to the general amnesty that is already slated for proclamation upon the approval of the Interim Peace Agreement.

The formal meeting to resume the peace negotiations has the task of reaffirming all previous joint agreements since The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992, causing the presidential issuances terminating and preventing peace negotiations to be superseded and setting the agenda for negotiating and approving the Interim Peace Agreement (IPA).

The IPA has three components: 1. the general amnesty and release of all political prisoners; 2. approval of the articles of CASER on land reform and national industrialization; and 3. coordinated unilateral ceasefires.

I am happy about the recent press statement of Secretary Bello expressing considerateness to the general position of the NDFP and to the specific matter of political, legal and security requisites for my travels outside the Netherlands.

Indeed, it is highly desirable for me to meet President Duterte in order to accelerate the progress of the peace negotiations. I continue to agree that I meet him in a country near the Philippines after the approval and signing of the IPA; and that I return to the Philippines in connection with the mutual approval of the CASER.

The CASER will benefit the entire Filipino people, including families of adherents to the GRP and NDFP, through land reform and the generation of jobs under the program of national industrialization. These provide the economic and social substance for a just peace.

Duterte's Highest Military Subordinates Oppose Resumption of GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations

January 9, 2020

The highest military subordinates of Duterte (national security adviser Esperon, defense secretary Lorenzana, DILG secretary Año, OPAPP secretary Galvez and AFP chief of staff Santos) are opposed to the resumption of peace negotiations between duly-authorized panels of the GRP and NDFP and have made the following declarations:

1. They can destroy the CPP and NPA before the end of the Duterte regime despite the failure of all previous regimes to destroy the people's revolutionary movement and the repeated failure of the current Duterte regime to comply with its deadlines for destroying said movement.
2. They oppose peace negotiations in a neutral venue abroad but favor negotiations for the surrender of the CPP, the NPA and entire revolutionary movement in a Philippine venue under the control and manipulation of the regime and its armed minions.
3. They can stage fake localized peace talks despite the glaring fact that all organs of the CPP and commands of the NPA at all levels have publicly rejected and condemned such fakery.
4. They are happy with, and enjoy the escalating conditions of oppression and exploitation under the semi-colonial and semifeudal ruling system of big compradors, landlords and corrupt bureaucrats who are servile to the imperialist powers, their banks and monopoly firms.
5. They shun social, economic and political reforms to realize full independence, democracy, social justice and all-round development and they are most vehemently against genuine land reform and national industrialization.

In view of the foregoing, the Filipino people should not be surprised if the GRP-NDFP will not be resumed in the twilight years of the Duterte regime. Either Duterte has been pretending to be for peace negotiations all along or he fails as commander-in-chief to put in line his military subordinates for the resumption of the peace negotiations.

Even before the end of the reciprocal unilateral ceasefire agreement last January 7, the Duterte regime's military and police minions have been calling for war and blood and have been making offensive deployments against the Filipino people and revolutionary forces throughout the archipelago.

The Filipino people and their revolutionary movement are compelled by their enemy to defend themselves and carry out counter-offensives. Their enemy is fully responsible for sabotaging and preventing the resumption of the peace negotiations. They are justified to wage the new democratic revolution through protracted people's war.

***On the Prospect of Peace Negotiations
during the Time of Duterte or Thereafter***

**Assembly for Peace, Quezon City
January 17, 2020**

Dear Peace Advocates,

Thank you for inviting me to your assembly. I wish to discuss recent and current circumstances pertinent to the prospect of resuming the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations and then I shall try to estimate whether such a prospect will be realized before the end of the Duterte regime. I shall also make suggestions pertaining to the role of the peace advocates during and after the Duterte regime.

I. Recent circumstances pertinent to peace negotiations

Since November 23, 2017, President Duterte had issued proclamations and executive orders (especially Proclamations No. 360 and No. 374 and Executive Order No. 70) to terminate and further prevent peace negotiations between the authorized negotiating panels of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). But on December 5, 2019, he publicly ordered Secretary Bello to meet me in Utrecht in order to explore the resumption of peace negotiations.

As it is the consistent NDFP policy to be open to peace negotiations with the GRP, I readily agreed to meet Secretary Bello. Thus, from December 7 to 9, 2019, Secretary Bello and Nani Braganza held informal talks in Utrecht with a team of the NDFP, including panel chairperson, Fidel Agcaoili and senior adviser Luis Jalandoni, myself and a few others. Further informal talks occurred from December 19 to 21.

In the presence of a representative of the special envoy of the Royal Norwegian Government (RNG), Katrina Lie Revheim, the following agreements were made as a result of the informal talks:

First: The reciprocal unilateral ceasefire to run from December 23 to January 7 and the consensus on the desirability of the GRP President releasing the sick and elderly political prisoners, especially the NDFP consultants on humanitarian grounds;

Second: The informal meeting on the second or third week of January 2020 to pave the way for the first formal meeting to resume the peace negotiations with the following tasks, to reaffirm the joint agreements since 1992 and to supersede the presidential issuances terminating and preventing the peace negotiations and to set the agenda for further formal meetings for the finalization of the Interim Peace Agreement (IPA), previously drafted jointly by back channel teams of the GRP and NDFP.

The Interim Peace Agreement is a package of agreements on a) general amnesty and release of all political prisoners; b) approval of the articles of Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER), on 1) agrarian reform and rural development and 2) national industrialization and economic development; and c) co-ordinated unilateral ceasefire agreement.

Third: I agreed to meet Duterte in April in Hanoi after the mutual approval of the IPA and to meet him in the Philippines after the mutual approval of CASER.

On the whole, on a nationwide scale, the reciprocal unilateral ceasefire ran successfully from December 23, 2019 to January 7, 2020, despite a few incidents which became the subject of publicized complaints from the direction of the GRP and NDFP. These complaints ought to be submitted to the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) under the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL).

It should be noted that not a single political prisoner was released on humanitarian grounds in the spirit of Christmas and the New Year, contrary to expectations of the NDFP Negotiating Panel, the political prisoners and their families.

II. Current circumstances pertinent to peace negotiations

Even before the ceasefire ended, certain GRP officials (including national security adviser Esperon, Defense secretary Lorenzana, DILG secretary Año, OPAPP secretary Galvez and ultimately the newly appointed AFP chief of staff Santos) took turns in opposing the resumption of the peace negotiations between the duly authorized panels

of the GRP and the NDFP.

They harped on the following points:

1) They can destroy the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the New People's Army (NPA) before the end of the Duterte regime despite the failure of all previous regimes to destroy the people's revolutionary movement and the repeated failure of the current Duterte regime to comply with its deadlines for destroying said movement.

2) They oppose peace negotiations in a neutral venue abroad but favor negotiations for the surrender of the CPP, the NPA and entire revolutionary movement to the unchanged tyrannical regime in a Philippine venue under the control and manipulation of said regime and its armed minions.

3) They have rendered peace negotiations at the national level unnecessary and superfluous because they are already destroying the revolutionary movement and are successfully staging fake localized peace talks, despite the glaring fact that all organs of the CPP and commands of the NPA at all levels have publicly rejected and condemned such fakery.

4) They are supposedly making their own reforms and consider as unnecessary the social, economic and political reforms proposed by the NDFP and those already agreed upon by the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels in order to realize full independence, democracy, social justice and all-round development and they are most vehemently against genuine land reform and national industrialization.

5) They are satisfied with and enjoy the escalating conditions of oppression and exploitation under the semi-colonial and semifeudal ruling system of big compradors, landlords and corrupt bureaucrats who are servile to the imperialist powers, their banks and monopoly firms.

Esperon and Galvez have been the most vicious in opposing the CASER, which has long been considered by the broad masses of the people as the meat or even the heart and soul of the peace negotiations. They use disinformation and outright lies to deny the hard work and achievements of the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels and their reciprocal working committees on social and economic reforms in negotiating and jointly drafting provisions of CASER.

They misrepresent CASER as the sole product of the NDFP and accuse the NDFP of being one-sidedly responsible for formulating the provisions already agreed upon by the reciprocal working committees of the GRP and the NDFP. In effect, they are sabotaging the resumption of the peace negotiations and the prospect of formalizing the Interim Peace Agreement, which carries the mutual approval of the articles on land reform and national industrialization in CASER.

The statement of the NDFP Reciprocal Working Committee on Social and Economic Reforms (RWC SER) titled "Military Hawks Sabotage Peace Talks and Oppose Social and Economic Reforms", dated January 14, 2020 gives you an accurate picture of the process of negotiating and drafting the CASER and debunks the false claims of Esperon and Galvez who are hell-bent on sabotaging the peace negotiations and carrying an all-out war against the people and the revolutionary movement.

President Duterte has allowed his subordinates with militarist hawk mindset to speak publicly against the resumption of the peace negotiations and against the negotiations on CASER. He has so far disallowed his civilian peace emissaries, Bello and Braganza, from coming to Utrecht in the second or third week of January as promised in order to engage in informal meeting to prepare the formal meeting for the resumption of peace negotiations.

On Friday, January 10, 2020 Duterte spoke to the press on that he would like to have a one-on-one meeting with me in Manila before the resumption of the peace negotiations. I have refused the invitation in the following terms:

The repeated offer of Duterte for me to have a one-on-one meeting with him in Manila is done in bad faith. It is either a malicious scheme to put me in a lethal trap or an equally malicious maneuver to prevent peace negotiations upon rejection of his offer by me and the NDFP as an unacceptable precondition.

There are three reasons why Duterte is being malicious about his offer of a one-on-one meeting in Manila:

First, he wants me to drop the legal protection that I have under the Refugee Convention and Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights and to put myself under the control and disposition of his butcher regime upon my arrival in Manila.

Second, he wants me to violate my principles by submitting and surrendering myself to the tyrannical regime and to the actions that he has taken to terminate and prevent the peace negotiations between authorized panels of

the GRP and NDFP.

Third, he wants to preempt the absolutely necessary formal meeting that has to be held in a neutral venue abroad in order to resume the peace negotiations by reaffirming the joint GRP-NDFP agreements since 1992 and by superseding the presidential issuances that he has made to terminate and prevent peace negotiations.

Duterte is making the fake offer of one-on-one meeting in Manila as an unacceptable precondition which invites rejection by me and by the NDFP and thereby prevents the peace negotiations. I do not think that he actually believes that I would take his bait or he is unintelligent enough not to appreciate my ability to discern what is mere trickery from him and his military advisors.

III. Prospects of resuming the peace negotiations

In view of the foregoing circumstances, I do not think Duterte is serious about resuming the peace negotiations. The prospect of resuming the peace negotiations before the end of the Duterte regime is close to nil or already nil.

There is no sign from him whatsoever that peace negotiations are to be resumed by reaffirming the joint agreements made by the GRP and NDFP since 1992, by superseding the presidential issuance that have terminated and prevented peace negotiations and by taking up the Interim Peace Agreement.

Previously, when I responded positively to his offer of resuming the peace negotiations on December 5, 2019, I gave him the benefit of a doubt that he would be interested in leaving a legacy that is not as ignominious as it has already taken shape. So far, he has not done anything to assure the people that his regime is treasonous, tyrannical, genocidal, corrupt and mendacious.

It appears that he still overestimates his capabilities of clinging to power and that he does not need any peace negotiations with the NDFP. He continues to let his political agents in Congress to push charter change for installing a fascist dictatorship as Marcos did in the past or for choosing a successor that will protect him from possible prosecution for human rights violations, plunder and other grave crimes.

It is absolutely clear that Duterte is responsible for terminating and preventing the peace negotiations. To him belongs the responsibility for accepting or refusing the consistent openness of the NDFP for peace negotiations.

By refusing to negotiate with the NDFP, it is absolutely clear that he is fixed on pursuing his all-out war against the Filipino people and their revolutionary forces. It is therefore entirely just for the sovereign people and their revolutionary movement to defend themselves and wage all forms of struggle against the Duterte regime.

But despite the counterrevolutionary violence, arrogance and intransigence of the Duterte regime, the NDFP remains open to resuming the peace negotiations. It holds the view that peace negotiations might reduce or stop the human rights violations being perpetrated by the regime or might even lead to substantial reforms that contribute to laying the basis for a just peace.

But of course, time is fast running out for the Duterte regime to make agreements and implement these. It is now in its twilight years if the regime respects the 1987 Constitution of the GRP and does not amend it to install a fascist dictatorship. But I think that there is enough time to make CASER and implement it to a sufficient and dramatic extent before the Duterte regime ends if Duterte can give up his scheme of fascist dictatorship and can prevail upon his anti-peace and anti-CASER military subordinates from sabotaging the efforts to resume the peace negotiations.

What can the peace advocates do in the face of the current circumstances and what I estimate as the dismal prospect for resuming peace negotiations before the end of the Duterte regime? I think that it remains their moral duty to persevere in the noble task of peace advocacy and to try to persuade or prevail upon the Duterte regime to engage the NDFP in peace negotiations.

Most important of all, the peace advocates must work to unify the people on the necessity of addressing the roots of the armed conflict and laying the foundation for a just peace through economic, social and political reforms agreed upon in the peace process.

Like the NDFP, the peace advocates cannot do anything to persuade the Duterte regime to negotiate if for whatever reason it refuses all the way to its very end. But the work done and agreements made in previous negotiations since 1992 and the continuance and intensification of peace advocacy keep open the prospect of peace negotiations if not in the time of the Duterte regime, in the time of the next regime.

The previous achievements, in the form of agreements and accumulated experience and expertise in peace negotiations, remain on record and are not lost. In the future, they shall be the foundation for renewed peace

negotiations between the NDFP and a new regime that is truly determined to strive for a just peace through economic, social and political reforms that address the roots of the armed conflict. Thank you.

Are in the Substantive Agenda of Peace Negotiations

January 18, 2020

Political and constitutional reforms are part of the substantive agenda of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. This has long been established in The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992 which set forth the framework for the peace negotiations.

Any constitution that purports to be democratic is amendable and carries a provision for amendability. This democratic principle has long been agreed upon by the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels and their principals.

For instance, the militarists in OPAPP cannot consider Duterte as an outlaw and violator of the 1987 constitution of the GRP by proposing a shift to federalism by constitutional amendment. What is unlawful and unconstitutional is for Duterte and his political agents to use federalism as a cover for a highly centralized fascist dictatorship and for the benefit of selected dynasties in the various regions.

It is not true that a constitution is immutable and averse to amendments and reforms once it is written down at a certain time by the political agents of the exploiting classes. It accords with democratic principle and practice those amendments can be proposed and adopted and then finally ratified by the sovereign people in accordance with their fundamental rights and principles.

When two warring parties, like the GRP and NDFP, with their respective constitutions, decide to negotiate peace, they must be ready to amend these in order to allow the needed social, economic, political and constitutional reforms.

The GRP has its amendable 1987 constitution and the NDFP has its own amendable Guide for Establishing the People's Democratic Government. For the information of the public as well as the OPAPP secretary, the CPP, NPA, NDFP and the revolutionary mass organizations have established organs of political power or self-government in hundreds of municipalities and thousands of villages in the Philippines.

Duterte is merely joking or doing dopehead talk whenever he claims that the revolutionary movement does not have a single barangay as its own territory. In 73 provinces of the Philippines, there are more than 100 guerrilla fronts, with its guerrilla bases and zones, in which the people's democratic government exists. Despite the extremely violent and deceptive campaigns of the reactionary armed forces, they have not succeeded in destroying a single guerrilla front.

Of course, reactionary military officers often have the illusion that they own the whole country when in big superior force they invade a certain guerrilla front simply because the NPA as guerrilla army retreats and trades space for time to observe the enemy deployment and prepare for tactical counteroffensives. In fact, the ratio of the reactionary military and police forces to the population can never be enough against the people in the process of armed revolution.

By this time, all reactionaries should recognize that the armed revolutionary movement has preserved and enlarged its forces on a nationwide scale because they are fighting for the just cause of the people against oppression and exploitation by the imperialists and their puppets and have mastered the strategy and tactics of protracted people war, which involves a fluid war of movement that uses concentration, shifting and dispersal as the need arises.

The generals who control OPAPP are militarists and commandists. They think narrowly that peace negotiations are only a matter of preconditioning the negotiations with the surrender of the NDFP to the GRP or requiring the NDFP to surrender to their ready-made constitution and ruling system of big compradors, landlords and corrupt bureaucrats and military officers servile to US imperialism.

These militarists and commandists are now spreading the lie that the GRP and NDFP and their respective negotiating panels have been engaged in something unconstitutional and unlawful by negotiating and making agreements without the GRP first obtaining the surrender of the NDFP and laying aside the prior need to agree on social, economic and political reforms in order to address the roots of the armed conflict.

This is the latest lie of the OPAPP under the militarists, coming in the wake of its earlier lie that the level of

consensus and agreement reached by the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels on CASER are merely the sole handiwork of the NDFP. They try to make the public believe that both the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels have not been holding meetings to discuss and draft provisions of the CASER.

Whatever has been achieved in the drafting of CASER is the result of hard work by the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels, reciprocal working committees and bilateral teams doing policy studies, research and formulating mutually acceptable provisions on social and economic reforms in order to uphold and realize national independence, economic sovereignty, economic development through genuine land reform and national industrialization, social justice and expansion of social services.

The provisions already agreed upon by the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels are the result of negotiating and resolving contradictions between drafts of the GRP and NDFP. This is a process entirely different from generals giving orders to their subordinates. Generals who think that peace negotiations are a process of GRP dictating to the NDFP or vice versa are unfit for assignment to the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

These militarists and commandists are now in fact sabotaging and preventing the resumption of peace negotiations between the duly authorized negotiating panels of the GRP and NDFP. They are violently opposed to social, economic, political and constitutional reforms. They are benefiting privately and materially from the termination of the peace negotiations under Proclamation 360 and from the militarization and fascisation of government and society under Executive Order 70.

They are taking over civilian positions and are pocketing a lot of public money by faking NPA surrenders, encounters and all kinds of anti-people projects. Duterte has enlarged the intelligence and discretionary funds under his office and other agencies in order to bribe and corrupt military and police officers and embolden them to engage in criminal acts. This is Duterte's way of keeping their loyalty and allowing him to use the military and police forces as his private army for the benefit of his ruling clique and dynasty.

The Filipino people and their revolutionary forces are forewarned by their own enemies in power to prepare themselves for self-defense against the further escalation of armed counterrevolution and to intensify their struggle for just peace through the people's democratic revolution. The revolutionary slogan is now resounding: people's war for people's peace.

Fight for Land, Justice and Peace

Message on the 33rd Anniversary

of the Mendiola massacre

January 22, 2020

Dear Advocates of Land Justice and Peace!

I convey to you warmest greetings of peace and solidarity on the occasion of the 33rd anniversary of the Mendiola Massacre and the holding of a forum on land justice and peace to be followed by candle lighting in honor of the 13 peasants who were martyred and all others who were wounded, beaten up and abused by the reactionary military and police officers under the first Aquino regime.

I salute and congratulate the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), Tanggol Magsasaka, and Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, in cooperation with PATRIA and CLAMOR and the Movement Against Tyranny, for successfully organizing this commemorative event. You are among the most respected organizations concerned with land justice and peace.

The Mendiola Massacre and Its Aftermath

The Mendiola massacre of January 22, 1987 was a grievous crime perpetrated by the reactionary military and police officers in order to put the Aquino regime in violent opposition to the peasant masses and the land reform movement and in order to sabotage prospective peace negotiations between the Manila government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines.

At the time of the massacre, the negotiating panels that had earlier forged the agreement to hold ceasefire between the armed forces of the reactionary government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, starting from November 22, 1986, were already preparing the substantive agenda for the peace negotiations to follow the ceasefire.

The Aquino regime did not investigate and did not hold accountable the military and police officers responsible for the massacre. Instead, she used the massacre as pretext for unsheathing the sword of war and ending the prospect of peace negotiations. A strategic campaign plan was immediately unleashed, with more peasants being massacred.

Since then, the NDFP has been confronted with the phenomenon of a regime publicly wishing in its early months to have peace negotiations with the NDFP only to end these eventually upon the ruling clique's consolidation of power or upon the open resistance of military officials to peace negotiations.

As a result of the NDFP negotiating in Manila under the surveillance of the reactionary military and police, NDFP negotiators, staffers, technical assistants and CPP and NPA personnel exposed to their enemy subsequently became subject to abductions, torture, indefinite detention and death in the national capital region and other regions where ceasefire rallies were held.

When Aquino approached the NDFP again for possible peace negotiations in 1989, the NDFP had to insist that the peace negotiations had to be held in a foreign neutral venue, free from surveillance and punitive actions by the military and police of the regime. Eventually, the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees would require a foreign neutral venue for peace negotiations.

It is important for me to recall the circumstances and aftermath of the Mendiola massacre in connection with my task of discussing the prospects and challenges in the pursuit of a just and lasting peace. We must learn from history in order not to avoid the pitfalls of the past and to do what is possible and necessary as much as we can to achieve a just peace for the benefit of the people.

Current Challenges and Prospects

To discuss the current challenges and prospects in the pursuit of a just and lasting peace, I need not review the long history of peace negotiations from one regime to another since 1992. It suffices for me to say that in the 27 years since The Hague Joint Declaration, not more than two years have been used by the negotiating panels to meet and work in compliance with the substantive agenda of the peace negotiations.

The ruling politicians and their military subordinates have frequently delayed or stopped the peace

negotiations for long stretches of time in compliance with the interests of US imperialism and the local exploiting classes of big compradors and landlords. They have used the peace negotiations at the minimum as an occasional tool for propaganda and at the maximum as a device for seeking the fragmentation of the revolutionary movement and the surrender of the revolutionary forces.

Thus, they keep on staging sham localized peace talks as a substitute for real peace negotiations between duly authorized negotiators of the GRP and NDFP. These fake localized peace talks do not involve any duly-authorized representative of the CPP, NPA or NDFP. Military assets and fake surrenderers pose as NPA surrenderers and the corrupt military officers pocket the public money that is supposed to go to surrenderers.

Last December 5, 2019, Duterte publicly announced that he wanted the resumption of the peace negotiations and ordered Secretary Bello to meet me in Utrecht. I agreed to meet him because it is the consistent policy of the NDFP to be open to peace negotiations despite such previous bitter experiences as the ceaseless all-out war operations of the Duterte regime even during ceasefire periods and, of course, the continuing termination and prevention of peace negotiations by Duterte's own presidential issuances.

My meeting with Secretary and Nani Braganza in December was productive. We agreed on the reciprocal unilateral ceasefire from December 23, 2019 to January 7, 2020 as a goodwill and confidence building measure for the resumption of peace negotiations. We also agreed on the desirability of the release of the sick and elderly political prisoners, especially the political consultants, on humanitarian grounds and in the spirit of Christmas and the New Year.

We further agreed that Secretary Bello and Braganza would come again to Utrecht to prepare for the formal meeting in Oslo to resume the peace negotiations by reaffirming all joint agreements since 1992, by superseding the presidential issuances that have terminated and prevented the peace negotiations and by taking up the Interim Peace Agreement which includes the general amnesty and release of all political prisoners, the mutual approval of the articles on land reform and national industrialization in Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER), and the coordinated unilateral ceasefire agreement.

Even before the reciprocal unilateral agreement ended, a series of officials (national security adviser Esperon, defense secretary Lorenzana, DILG secretary Año and the peace process adviser Galvez) made public statements opposing the peace negotiations by the duly-authorized panels of the GRP and NDFP. They claimed that such negotiations are unnecessary because they are already succeeding with their fake localized peace negotiations, because the CASER was a violation of national sovereignty and that reforms, if still needed, can be done without peace negotiations with the NDFP.

The second and third weeks of January have passed. Secretary Bello and Braganza have not returned. Instead, Duterte earlier invited me to go to Manila to give up the legal protection that I enjoy as a political refugee, betray my principles and surrender myself to a butcher regime. The malicious intent of the invitation is to end the prospect of resuming the peace negotiations. Thus, I have said in a recent assembly for peace that prospects for peace negotiations during the Duterte regime are close to nil or already nil.

Continuing Openness of NDFP to Peace Negotiations

Notwithstanding the continuing termination and prevention of peace negotiations by the Duterte regime, the NDFP continues to be open to peace negotiations even with the Duterte regime. The crisis of the ruling system is rapidly worsening and the clamor of the people for peace negotiations is rising together with their call for the ouster of the Duterte regime. This power-crazed regime might still have a lucid moment before its end.

If the Duterte regime remains intransigent and refuses to negotiate with the NDFP, there is nothing that the NDFP and the peace advocates can do but to let the people do their best in ousting the regime or stopping it from staying in power beyond 2022 under its scheme of fascist dictatorship through charter change. It is understandable why the Duterte regime is averse to peace negotiations of social, economic and political reforms. These run counter to its traitorous, tyrannical, murderous, plundering and mendacious character.

We can look forward to a new administration of the Manila government that is willing to negotiate with the NDFP. All the work and agreements that have been accomplished in previous peace negotiations remain on record. They can be the foundation for the resumption of peace negotiations. Likewise, the peace advocacy now is not wasted because it continues to promote the people's desire for peace negotiations as the way to a just a lasting peace through social, economic and political reforms.

Peace negotiations are urgently needed in order to confront the feudal and semifeudal problems that afflict the

peasant masses and farm workers. There are the traditional landlords who exact high rent from tenants and the merchant-usurers who pay low prices for farm products and charge high for the commodities that they deliver. Even so-called land reform beneficiaries have been deprived of their allotted land through indebtedness and through bureaucratic reclassification of the land as outside of land reform.

There are modern corporate vultures, foreign and local, that grab land from the peasant masses and indigenous peoples in order to open or expand plantations, logging areas, mines and real estate projects. They give starvation wages to both agricultural and non-agricultural workers. Most of these corporations pollute and damage the rivers and streams and degrade the environment at the expense of the peasant masses and farm workers.

The National Food Authority is supposed to assure the farmers of a stable market for their produce and reliable income from their production of rice and other staples. But it is in cahoots with merchant cartels in manipulating prices in the local market and in facilitating the importation of food products at the expense of the peasant masses. At the same time, under the so-called TRAIN program, excise taxes on fuel and other basic commodities are raised to inflate prices and make these unaffordable to the peasant masses.

The Duterte regime is responsible for the aggravation of the feudal and semifeudal problems that the peasant masses suffer. Even if there were peace negotiations, the regime would block their demands. But while there are no peace negotiations, the peasants, indigenous people and farm workers need to wage various forms of struggle in order to demand and work for genuine land reform, free land distribution, and thereby strive for the peace and justice that they have long fought and died for.

Wherever possible, they can carry out land reform by themselves, combat exploitation by landlords and merchant-usurers, engage in various forms of cooperation and raise production in agriculture and sideline occupations. They can also fight the corporate landgrabbers, break up their land monopoly and assist the farm workers in obtaining higher wage as well as the small contract growers in getting better payments.

The time will certainly come when the national democratic movement shall have reached such a high level of strength that a new administration of the GRP would be willing to negotiate with the NDFP. In anticipation of this, the NDFP can continue to muster its own personnel and other organizations concerned to continue working and improving on the current draft of the CASER and making it more realizable than ever.

As it is, the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) can be the basis for genuine land reform and for mobilizing the support of the peasant masses and the entire Filipino people. It is a noble purpose that you aim to gather the broadest sectors of land reform and peasant rights advocates, Church-based and religious organizations, members of the academe, civil libertarians and multisectoral groups.

It is a moral imperative that the majority of the people who are poor peasants, lower middle peasants and farm workers must benefit from genuine land reform and thereby achieve economic and social liberation. The coupling and interaction of genuine land reform and national industrialization are necessary for achieving economic development and rising above the morass of gross underdevelopment, high unemployment, inequality and mass poverty.

So long as there is no genuine land reform, the ground will be exceedingly fertile for the people's democratic revolution through protracted people's war. The poor peasants, lower middle peasants, farm workers and the rapidly growing surplus rural and urban population will continue to be the main source of Red fighters for the New People's Army.

In the absence of both genuine land reform and national industrialization, the broad masses of the Filipino people have no choice but to wage a revolutionary struggle for national and social liberation against the semi-colonial and semifeudal ruling system.

Long live the peasant masses and farm workers!

Fight for land justice and peace!

Resume the peace negotiations!

Adopt and carry out social, economic and political reforms!

Long live the Filipino people and the national democratic movement!

Welcoming Duterte's Willingness to Talk Peace

and Allow Backchannel Talks

for Laying the Ground

March 6, 2020

I welcome the report that in his recent cabinet meeting President Duterte expressed his willingness to talk peace with me, depending on back channel or informal talks between representatives of his government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

My position is in accordance with the policy of the NDFP to be open to peace negotiations with the GRP on the basis of the joint agreements that have been accumulated and on the basis of drafts that have been previously worked out by the GRP and NDFP panels, reciprocal working committees and bilateral teams.

I think that formal peace talks can be resumed by reaffirming the aforesaid joint agreements, removing those obstacles that terminate and prejudice serious peace negotiations and setting forth the agenda, to include first of all the negotiation of the Interim Peace Agreement (IPA).

The IPA is a package of agreements: 1. general amnesty and the release of all political prisoners, 2. the articles on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development and National Industrialization and Economic Development in the Comprehensive Agreement of Social and Economic Reforms (CASER), and 3. coordinated unilateral ceasefires.

After the IPA is accomplished, then the rest of CASER can be negotiated easily. In quick succession, the negotiations on political and constitutional reforms and the end of hostilities and disposition of forces can follow.

At a certain point in the progress of the peace negotiations, I shall meet President Duterte face to face for the purpose of accelerating the progress of the peace negotiations and ensuring that the Filipino people will enjoy full national independence, democracy, social justice, economic development and cultural progress under conditions of a just peace.

The backchannel team of the NDFP negotiating panel is authorized to explore and recommend what are the legal, political and security requirements for my meeting with President Duterte. It is obvious that at the moment there are obstacles which prejudice and put at grave risk not only my personal safety but more importantly the safety and continuity of the entire peace process if I were to go immediately to the Philippines without the necessary precautions.

According to the NDFP negotiators and my lawyers, it would be legal, political and physical suicide for me to jump into a pit in which Proclamation Nos. 360 (terminating the peace negotiations) and 374 (designating the CPP and NPA as terrorist), EO No. 70 (militarizing government and society), the Anti-Terrorism Act, the case of walking skeletons, the false charge of terrorism before the Manila RTC and so many death squads are waiting for me. Thus, the war hawks would be successful in killing any hope of peace negotiations.

NDFP Will Seriously Study

Duterte's Ceasefire Offer

March 16, 2020

As Duterte admits, it is true that the redeployment of his military and police to urban areas would leave a vacuum and will allow the New People's Army to increase its tactical offensives in the countryside.

But the NDFP has gotten reports that the concentration of Duterte's military and police forces are meant not to help in the fight against Covid-19 but to suppress the people's democratic movement in the urban areas.

In fact Duterte himself gave recently the order to his armed minions to finish off the entire revolutionary movement before 2022.

But if he were really serious with his offer to have a ceasefire with the NDFP he must make a formal offer through the GRP negotiating panel to the NDFP negotiating panel.

The NDFP and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) will seriously study the offer and relate it not only to the common fight against Covid-19 but also to the resumption of the peace negotiations.

In my view, the NDFP will certainly demand that the GRP realign government spending from excessive military spending and from rampant corruption to the pursuit of genuine land reform and national industrialization and the expansion of social services, especially public health and education.

The NDFP will demand that public funds be poured into the effort to fight Covid-19 so that there will be adequate health workers, facilities, equipment and medicines for the purpose.

In the meantime, the revolutionary forces and the people themselves have to undertake collective efforts to the fight Covid-19 pandemic and at the same time defend themselves against the continuing military assaults under NTF-ELCAC and various operational plans of the Duterte regime.

Duterte has the obligation to rein in his armed minions immediately because they are the ones invading and assaulting the guerrilla fronts which are the territory of the people's democratic government of workers and peasants in the countryside.

Why NDFP Does Not Trust

Duterte's Ceasefire Declaration

March 21, 2020

The NDFP does not trust Duterte's unilateral ceasefire declaration and cannot instantly reciprocate it. It is obviously a malicious ploy of psychological warfare and is intended to cover up the continuing offensive operations of the AFP and PNP against the people and revolutionary forces in the guerrilla fronts of the people's democratic government and against the legal democratic forces and individuals considered as enemies of the regime in the urban areas.

The offensive operations of the AFP and PNP are continuing without any stop and include red-tagging, abductions and extrajudicial killings, compelling people to attend fake surrender meetings, staging fake encounters that kill and victimize ordinary peasants, bombing rural communities in certain regions and forcing the evacuation of the poor peasants and indigenous people and delivering the land and other natural resources to foreign and big comprador corporations.

Duterte has referred to Covid-19 as his motivation for declaring his bogus and malicious unilateral ceasefire but he is in fact criminally responsible for the following:

1. He let into the Philippines more than 500,000 travellers from China, including more than 14,000 from Wuhan, since January while the Covid-19 contagion was raging in China. As a result, Covid-19 has spread nationwide for more than two months.
2. He slashed the budget for the Department of Health by more than Php 10 billion in order to favor military overspending and corruption in his own office and other departments. And he made no efforts to prevent the spread of the highly contagious virus despite the strong admonitions of international health authorities and experts.
3. In his belated reaction to the Covid-19 pandemic, he has prioritized the setting up of military and police checkpoints in the national capital region and then in the whole of Luzon and the imposition of a lockdown by banning public transport and intimidating the people. He has thereby prevented the people from going to their places of work and even those in need of testing and treatment for Covid-19 and other illnesses from going to health centers, clinics and hospitals.
4. Until now, there are no provisions for free mass testing for Covid-19 at the community level and for treatment of people already afflicted by the virus at the public hospitals. The hospitals under the DOH have grossly inadequate health personnel, bed space, facilities, equipment, disinfectants and medicine for the rapidly growing number of Covid-19 patients. There are yet no hospitals dedicated to the testing and treatment of said patients.
5. Having become nationwide and communicable in communities, the Covid-19 plague has gone far beyond the stage of containment, thanks to the criminal negligence and incompetence of the Duterte regime. But the regime stubbornly insists on lockdowns, banning public transport, depriving the people of their means of livelihood and preventing even the sick from getting the necessary medical treatment.
6. Despite the clamor of the people, the NDFP and human rights advocates, Duterte refuses to release promptly the political prisoners and other prisoners who are vulnerable to mass infection by Covid-19 under the congested conditions of prison. Instead, the armed minions of Duterte have been rapidly increasing the number of prisoners through arbitrary arrests and planting of evidence.
7. Duterte has promised to provide food and compensation for those who are prevented by the lockdowns from going to work. He has also promised to provide the health personnel and resources for the free mass testing and treatment of people for Covid-19. But the promises have proven to be lies.

On their own account and to their credit, the health workers, the private hospitals, mass organizations, churches, charitable institutions and other nongovernmental entities have been the most active in looking after the health and welfare of the people, especially the impoverished ones, assisting them and fighting the Covid-19 pandemic and overcoming the harsh militarist impositions and damaging actions of the anti-people Duterte regime.

In the guerrilla fronts of the people's democratic government, the organs and units in charge of health work are based in the local communities and are embedded in the New People's Army and the revolutionary mass organizations. They are in the frontline fighting the Covid-19 pandemic. They provide to the people testing and treatment for this as well as other illnesses, despite the frequent offensive operations of the enemy.

In view of the foregoing, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines is constrained from reciprocating the ill-motivated and ill-founded unilateral ceasefire declaration of the Duterte regime. With or without NDFP reciprocation, the Duterte regime should at least recognize its criminal responsibilities for the entry, spread and aggravation of the Covid-19 plague in the Philippines and rectify immediately the wrongs and crimes it has committed against the people.

While the Duterte regime acts in the extreme against the Filipino people, the NDFP refrains from any action which would be construed as condoning and covering up the criminal acts and responsibilities of the regime and would run counter to the mounting outrage of the people and the rapid growth of the broad united front of patriotic and democratic forces now seeking the soonest possible end of the traitorous, tyrannical, genocidal, corrupt and deceptive regime.

NDFP Negotiating Panel Can Recommend Ceasefire to its Principal as a Response to the UN Secretary General's Call for Global Ceasefire

March 25, 2020

I am advising the Negotiating Panel of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) to recommend to its principal, the NDFP National Council, the issuance of a unilateral ceasefire declaration by the Communist Party of the Philippines to the New People's Army in order to respond to the call of UN secretary general Antonio Guterres for a global ceasefire between warring parties for the common purpose of fighting the Covid-19 pandemic.

The NDFP and the broad masses of the people themselves need to refrain from launching tactical offensives to gain more time and opportunity to fight the Covid-19 pandemic and to look after the health and over-all welfare of the people in both urban and rural areas. The world must know that long before the belated quarantine declarations and repressive measures of the GRP, the NDFP and the revolutionary forces have been informing, training and mobilizing the people on how to fight the pandemic.

While the New People's Army can cease and desist from launching tactical offensives against the military, police and paramilitary forces of the GRP, it must be vigilant and be ready to act in self-defense against any tactical offensive launched by any enemy force against the people and revolutionary forces in the guerrilla fronts of the people's democratic government.

Said enemy forces have persisted in launching tactical offensives and bombing of communities in the countryside as well as campaigns of red tagging, abductions and murder in the urban areas. It is therefore understandable why the NDFP has desisted from reciprocating the false unilateral ceasefire declared by the GRP last March 15, 2020.

The NDFP has also refused to reciprocate the bogus unilateral ceasefire declaration of the GRP in order to avoid appearing as directly condoning and becoming complicit in the criminal culpabilities of the Duterte regime for allowing the Covid-19 to spread nationwide since January, for making no preparations against the pandemic and for making lockdowns on communities and yet failing to provide mass testing and treatment of the sick, food assistance and compensation for those prevented from work.

Most recently the tyrant Duterte has used the pandemic as an excuse for grabbing unnecessary emergency powers and huge amounts of public money to carry out repressive measures and feed bureaucratic and military corruption. While committed to their unilateral ceasefire declaration, the NPA and revolutionary forces can remain vigilant and militant in arousing, organizing and mobilizing the people not only against the Covid-19 pandemic and the far deadlier Duterte virus of tyranny and corruption.

Duterte Needs Peace Negotiations More than Does Revolutionary Movement

April 28, 2020

The Communist Party of the Philippines is entirely correct in pointing out and proving that Duterte's declaration that his regime will no longer engage in peace talks with the NDFP is based on lies and is motivated by his desire and scheme to impose a full fascist dictatorship on the Filipino people by scapegoating the CPP and the NPA.

Duterte has never been interested in serious peace negotiations with the NDFP in the first place. He has always tried in vain to use the talks as a way of seeking the surrender of the revolutionary movement to his anti-national and anti-democratic regime instead of addressing the roots of the armed conflict through comprehensive agreements on social, economic and political reforms.

Duterte is mentally, politically and morally deranged. He needs the peace talks more than the revolutionary movement. He pretends not to know that his regime and the entire semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system are in rapidly worsening political and economic crisis because of the puppetry, brutality and corruption of his regime and the crisis of the world capitalist system, aggravated by the Covid-19.

By declaring that he is against peace talks, he makes it clear that he is scapegoating the revolutionary movement to advance his scheme of full-scale Marcos-type fascist dictatorship. Unwittingly, he makes it clear that the Filipino people and their revolutionary forces are justified to intensify their struggle for national liberation and democracy through the armed revolution.

Duterte himself has alerted the armed revolutionary movement in the countryside as well the legal democratic forces, the social activists and critics of the regime that he is in the process of using Covid-19 as a cover for advancing his scheme of fascist dictatorship. He is trying to cover up the success of his regime in plundering public funds and engaging in mass intimidation through brutal actions and its failure to provide necessary health measures and food assistance to the starving people.

It is of urgent necessity and importance for the broadest range of patriotic and progressive forces to unite against the regime and carry out all necessary measures to fight and remove it from power. This evil regime should not be allowed to go beyond 2022 so that it shall become possible for peace negotiations to be resumed. Duterte has made it utterly clear that while he is in power the people have no choice but to intensify the armed revolution.

Question of Peace Under the Fascist Duterte Regime

Tsikahan With Tito Jo

August 19, 2020

1. Tito, for the sake of our viewers can you explain what the peace talks are. Why are there peace negotiations between GRP and NDFP? Is it possible to hold the peace negotiations in the Philippines? Are there any countries that have the same negotiations?

JMS: There is an armed conflict in the Philippines, a civil war between the People's Democratic Government, which is represented by the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and the Philippine reactionary government (GRP) of big compradors, landlords and corrupt bureaucrats. It was during the Aquino regime in 1989 and then the Ramos regime in 1992 that the GRP approached the NDFP in The Netherlands for peace negotiations.

It was in 1992 that the GRP and NDFP signed the Hague Joint Declaration as the framework for the peace negotiations. They agreed that the peace negotiations must address the roots of the armed conflict and forge comprehensive agreements on social, economic, and political reforms in order to lay the basis for a just and lasting peace. The substantive agenda for the peace negotiations has four items: a) Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, b) Social and Economic Reforms, c) Political and Constitutional Reforms and d) End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces.

The GRP and NDFP also agreed to hold the peace negotiations in a neutral foreign venue until all the comprehensive agreements have been signed in order to prevent peace saboteurs from harming the NDFP negotiators, consultants and staff and sabotaging the peace negotiations. The NDFP personnel had a bad experience of being surveilled during the 1986 ceasefire negotiations between the GRP and NDFP and then when the ceasefire agreement broke down because of Mendiola massacre in early 1987 they were subjected to abductions and killings by the GRP military and intelligence agencies.

In the long history of mankind and in recent history, there have been many cases of peace negotiations between two warring parties that belong to one country but who agree to negotiate peace in a neutral venue abroad in order to preempt sabotage by elements who oppose the peace negotiations. Examples of such peace negotiations are too many to mention.

2. What are the JASIG and CASER? And why are they important or relevant?

JMS: The JASIG is the acronym of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees for the benefit and protection of the negotiators, consultants, advisors, resource persons and staff personnel of the negotiating panels both of the GRP and NDFP. The JASIG carries the provision that peace negotiations must be held in a neutral venue abroad by way of guaranteeing the safety of the negotiating panels and all related persons.

CASER is the acronym for Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms. This is supposed to be the second item in the substantive agenda in the peace negotiations. Its main content is agrarian reform and national industrialization and is supposed to be the meat or main substance for a just peace. The first item is the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). This was finished and approved by the GRP and NDFP principals in 1998.

3. How do the negotiations work?

JMS. The GRP and NDFP Negotiating Panels negotiate all the important issues and the comprehensive agreements as well as other important agreements to be made. With regard to the drafting and negotiation of the comprehensive agreements, the said panels have their respective working committees on each item of the substantive agenda. The meetings of the panels and their respective working committees are arranged by the third-party facilitator, the Royal Norwegian Government, represented by the special envoy to the Philippine peace process.

4. Neo-Marxists and some Western Marxists are critical of peace negotiations. Some even say that the CPP is turning revisionist because of this, but why are peace talks crucial in ending the poverty and armed conflict in the Philippines?

JMS: Those you mention as Neo-Marxists and Western Marxists who are critical of peace negotiations as revisionist are pseudo-Marxists and are completely ignorant of the history of revolutionary wars and peace negotiations. The Chinese Communist Party negotiated and made truce with the Guomindang several times in order to

fight the northern warlords and then the Japanese aggressors. Mao Zedong went to the Chungking peace negotiations with the Guomindang and as a result taught us a lot how to negotiate in favor of the people. The NDFP has also learned a lot from the negotiating principles and methods of the Vietnamese revolutionaries in negotiations with US imperialists in Paris.

Peace negotiations are a way of broadcasting to the Filipino people and the people of the world the NDFP program of people's democratic revolution. It is a way of showing that the revolutionary movement has gained so much strength that the enemy is suing for peace. It is a way of testing, proving and exposing how the enemy is incapable of meeting the demands of the people. It is a way of preventing the enemy from claiming unilaterally that it is a champion of peace and from misrepresenting the revolutionary forces of the people as warmongers.

Despite the long series of peace talks, the revolutionary movement led by the Communist Party of the Philippines has never capitulated nor stopped from waging the people's democratic revolution through protracted people's war. It has succeeded in exposing the reactionary character of one GRP regime after another. There is no naive or revisionist illusion that peace talks are the way to end poverty and armed conflict in the Philippines. And may I know where these pseudo-Marxist blabbers are waging a people's war to prove that they know what they are talking about.

5. The CPP and Left were hopeful when Duterte came to power especially with him advertising his relation to the Left and his openness to peace negotiations, now that Duterte is showing his true color, how do the CPP and peace-loving citizens see the negotiations with Duterte?

JMS: There is absolutely no more possibility of NDFP negotiating with the GRP while Duterte is the president. Before he could finish his first year as president, he was clearly manifesting his lack of interest in peace negotiations. The NDFP was not at all surprised when he terminated the peace negotiations on November 23, 2017 and designated as "terrorists" the CPP and NPA on December 5, 2017. Subsequently, he created the National Task Force-ELCAC. Recently he signed the law by which he gave himself and a council of fellow butchers the license to use state terrorism in order to obtain charter change and fascist dictatorship.

If the CPP and NDFP outrightly rejected and did not test Duterte's plea or offer of peace negotiations in the first year of his rule, the same pseudo-Marxists and Trotskyites would have exclaimed that the CPP and NDFP were dogmatists and were plain lovers of war. The fact is that the CPP and NDFP kept on scolding Duterte for failing to amnesty and release the political prisoners, rebuffed every attempt of Duterte to trick or put one over the revolutionary movement and never stopped the people's war, except for short periods of ceasefire for humanitarian reasons and purposes of goodwill. The CPP and NPA never gave up the people's war just because the NDFP engaged the GRP in peace negotiations.

6. In a span of 2 years, we lost three great warriors for peace and patriots, Ka Randy Malayao, Ka Fidel Agcaoili and Ka Randall Enchanis, to give tribute to their great contribution and hard work, can you introduce them briefly to our viewers?

JMS: Ka Fidel Agcaoili was the chairman of the NDFP Negotiating Panel at the time of his death on July 23. He was a long-time proletarian revolutionary since the 1960s. We developed together ideologically, politically and organizationally. He made significant contributions to the revolutionary movement. He died from the rupture of his pulmonary artery. I invite the listeners to read my long tribute to him and the tributes of other comrades who knew and loved him.

Ka Randy Malayao was murdered by state forces in January 2019. He was a consultant of the NDFP Negotiating Panel. He was the press officer and spokesperson of the NDFP panel in the peace negotiations. He was an outstanding leader from his student days, a UP campus writer and officer of the College Editors Guild of the Philippines. He was active in the national democratic movement as an advocate of a just peace for decades. He was shot to death by Duterte's undercover agents while he was asleep in a bus at a bus stop in Aritao Nueva Vizcaya. Ka Randy had no criminal charges against him before any government court and was campaigning for peace around the country. I invite our listeners to read my tribute to him. A book on peace is published in his honor.

Ka Randall Echanis was a senior consultant of the NDFP negotiating panel, member of the Reciprocal Working Committee on Social and Economic Reforms and head of its subcommittee on agrarian reform and rural development. He was Chairman of the Anakpawis Party List and deputy general secretary of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas. He was murdered recently in his own apartment by a death squad of the Duterte regime.

7. Duterte ordered the killings and arrests of the NDFP consultants and activists, in fact, there are more political

prisoners under his regime. How are these affecting the negotiations, especially with the recent killing of Ka Randall?

JMS: In the first place, the Duterte regime terminated the peace negotiations in 2017. Since then, the regime has been arresting and killing NDFP consultants and other people tagged as communists. The murders of Ka Randy Malayao and Ka Randall Echanis have made peace negotiations more impossible than ever before while Duterte is in power.

8. You mentioned a lot that there are peace saboteurs in the ranks of AFP-PNP, why is that? What are they doing to sabotage the peace talks?

JMS: The president and Negotiating Panel of the GRP always involve the so-called national security cluster of the Cabinet in peace negotiations because these are about the armed conflict. Thus, retired and active military and police officers who are extremely pro-US, anti-communist and reactionary have a say on the peace negotiations of the GRP.

Several times, they sabotage the peace negotiations by pushing demands that amount to making the revolutionary movement paralyze itself or surrender to the reactionary government, like protracted and indefinite ceasefire or repeated ceasefires and then making false accusations of ceasefire violations in order to stop the negotiations on substantive issues.

They themselves violate the JASIG or many other terms of the peace negotiations very often by arresting or killing people involved in the peace negotiations on the side of the NDFP. They are not interested in addressing the roots of the armed conflict. They think that the military solution is the sole or best solution to the basic problems of the people.

It also convenient for the president of the GRP to refer to the advice of the national security cluster when he or she decides to stop or delay the peace negotiations for pressure purposes or whatever other reason. They would suddenly make unreasonable demands which violate the terms of the peace negotiations. Duterte decided to terminate the peace negotiations in 2017 for the purpose of scapegoating the CPP and NPA and then justifying state terrorism and pushing his scheme of fascist dictatorship through charter change. He also pledged to Trump in 2017 to eliminate the revolutionary movement.

9. Why do you think the Duterte regime keeps on resorting to brutality, violence and murder? Why does he keep on ordering the arrests, killings and imprisonment of the activists and peace advocates? Does this show his strength and that the activists and dissents should now cower in fear?

JMS: Duterte is certified as a psychopath by psychiatrists. And he himself boasts of having murdered people, like killing a fellow teenager or showing to his police officers how to kill captives efficiently and with impunity while he was Davao City mayor. Several times he has publicly and shamelessly directed the police and military to frame up, arrest and kill suspects with impunity. His first acts in power were to order the listing and killing of drug suspects by the thousands up to more than 30,000 in only two years' time. Secretly he ordered an all-out war against the revolutionary movement under the cover of the military officers merely continuing the Oplan Bayanihan of Aquino. Now, he is in a frenzy to arrest and kill people under his law of state terrorism.

Duterte never had any idea or program of developing the Philippine economy outside of the neoliberal frame. His frame of mind is to rule like a bully mayor who is mostly or solely concerned with peace and order and killing street criminals and political opponents. His main or sole program is kill, kill, kill and intimidate people in order to subjugate or silence them. He has engaged in the mass murder of drug suspects so make himself the supreme drug lord and to make his own crime family dominant. And he now attacks the revolutionary movement and orders the arrests, killings and imprisonment of the activists and peace advocates in connection with his scheme to impose a full-blown fascist dictatorship on the people.

The tyrant's brutality is not only due to a sick mind but due to a desire for absolute power and absolute corruption. But due to his brutality, abuse of power and corruption, Duterte has already bankrupted the Philippine economy and his own government. He has channelled extremely large amounts of public funds to corruption and to excessive funding of the military and police at the expense of economic development and social services. He has allowed the smuggling in of illegal drugs and other goods to the Philippines as well as the smuggling out of mineral ores of precious metals to China.

So, Duterte has rendered his own regime extremely isolated and weak politically and financially. He is extremely weak now despite his constant efforts to show off as a bully and butcher. The Duterte regime is notorious for being traitorous in being a puppet to two imperialist powers and of course for being tyrannical, murderous,

corrupt and mendacious.

10. The armed revolution in the Philippines has been going on for 50 years, some say it has been going on for 5 decades because it is failing, the Left. But why does the CPP say that the 50 years is a success? Can you explain?

JMS: The CPP started with only some 80 cadres and members, with an organized mass following of only 20,000 in 1968 and then gaining another 80,000 by joining up with elements of the old revolutionary movement in Tarlac. Now, the CPP has tens of thousands of members, the New People's Army with thousands of Red fighters aside from the bigger numbers of local people's militia and self-defense units, revolutionary mass organizations with millions of members and organs of political power in charge of many more millions of people nationwide in more than 110 guerrilla fronts in 74 out of the 81 Philippine provinces.

It is not a meager achievement to have all the aforementioned. There has never been a bigger and stronger revolutionary movement in Philippine history. There are now two governments in the Philippines. The People's Democratic Government is now engaged in a civil war with the reactionary government of big compradors, landlords and corrupt officials, a puppet government that gets huge military assistance from US imperialism. If not the most outstanding, the Philippine revolutionary movement is now one of the most outstanding armed revolutionary movements in the world. And it is in the forefront of the rising anti-imperialist and democratic struggles and the resurgence of the world proletarian revolution.

11. Will we ever find peace under this regime? Will we actually achieve peace?

JMS: The Duterte regime has terminated the peace negotiations since 2017 and is now in a frenzy to impose state terrorism on the Filipino people and realize the scheme of fascist dictatorship. The regime is not for any peace negotiations or any just peace agreement. To win the just peace, the Filipino people have no choice but to wage a resolute revolutionary struggle against the traitorous, tyrannical, genocidal and plundering Duterte regime and against the rotten ruling system.

12. How can the youth carry forward the advocacies of Ka Fidel, Ka Randy and Ka Randall?

JMS: Ka Fidel, Ka Randy and Ka Randall wanted a just peace like the Filipino people. The Filipino youth must intensify their efforts to arouse, organize and mobilize the people for the ouster of the tyrant Duterte. Under the current circumstances, resumption of peace negotiations is possible only if the Duterte regime is ousted and his constitutional successor is willing to negotiate. The people's desire for a just peace can be realized if there are mutually satisfactory comprehensive agreements between the GRP and NDFP to address the roots of the armed conflict or the people's democratic revolution succeeds in overthrowing the rotten semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system.

Are in Substantive Agenda of Peace Negotiations

January 18, 2020

Political and constitutional reforms are part of the substantive agenda of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. This has long been established in the Hague Joint Declaration of 1992 which set forth the framework for the peace negotiations.

Any constitution that purports to be democratic is amendable and carries a provision for amendability. This democratic principle has long been agreed upon by the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels and their principals.

For instance, the militarists in OPAPP cannot consider Duterte as an outlaw and violator of the 1987 constitution of the GRP by proposing a shift to federalism by constitutional amendment. What is unlawful and unconstitutional is for Duterte and his political agents to use federalism as a cover for a highly centralized fascist dictatorship and for the benefit of selected dynasties in the various regions.

It is not true that a constitution is immutable and averse to amendments and reforms once it is written down at a certain time by the political agents of the exploiting classes. It accords with democratic principle and practice that amendments can be proposed and adopted and then finally ratified by the sovereign people in accordance with their fundamental rights and principles.

When two warring parties, like the GRP and NDFP, with their respective constitutions, decide to negotiate peace, they must be ready to amend these in order to allow the needed social, economic, political and constitutional reforms.

The GRP has its amendable 1987 constitution and the NDFP has its own amendable Guide for Establishing the People's Democratic Government. For the information of the public as well as the OPAPP secretary, the CPP, NPA, NDFP and the revolutionary mass organizations have established organs of political power or self-government in hundreds of municipalities and thousands of villages in the Philippines.

Duterte is merely joking or doing dopehead talk whenever he claims that the revolutionary movement does not have a single barangay as its own territory. In 73 provinces of the Philippines, there are more than 100 guerrilla fronts, with its guerrilla bases and zones, in which the people's democratic government exists. Despite the extremely violent and deceptive campaigns of the reactionary armed forces, they have not succeeded in destroying a single guerrilla front.

Of course, reactionary military officers often have the illusion that they own the whole country when in big superior force they invade a certain guerrilla front simply because the NPA as guerrilla army retreats and trades space for time to observe the enemy deployment and prepare for tactical counteroffensives. In fact, the ratio of the reactionary military and police forces to the population can never be enough against the people in the process of armed revolution.

By this time, all reactionaries should recognize that the armed revolutionary movement has preserved and enlarged its forces on a nationwide scale because they are fighting for the just cause of the people against oppression and exploitation by the imperialists and their puppets and have mastered the strategy and tactics of protracted people war, which involves a fluid war of movement that uses concentration, shifting and dispersal as the need arises.

The generals who control OPAPP are militarists and commandists. They think narrowly that peace negotiations are only a matter of preconditioning the negotiations with the surrender of the NDFP to the GRP or requiring the NDFP to surrender to their ready-made constitution and ruling system of big compradors, landlords and corrupt bureaucrats and military officers servile to US imperialism.

These militarists and commandists are now spreading the lie that the GRP and NDFP and their respective negotiating panels have been engaged in something unconstitutional and unlawful by negotiating and making agreements without the GRP first obtaining the surrender of the NDFP and laying aside the prior need to agree on social, economic and political reforms in order to address the roots of the armed conflict.

This is the latest lie of the OPAPP under the militarists, coming in the wake of its earlier lie that the level of

consensus and agreement reached by the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels on CASER are merely the sole handiwork of the NDFP. They try to make the public believe that both the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels have not been holding meetings to discuss and draft provisions of the CASER.

Whatever has been achieved in the drafting of CASER is the result of hard work by the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels, reciprocal working committees and bilateral teams doing policy studies, research and formulating mutually acceptable provisions on social and economic reforms in order to uphold and realize national independence, economic sovereignty, economic development through genuine land reform and national industrialization, social justice and expansion of social services.

The provisions already agreed upon by the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels are the result of negotiating and resolving contradictions between drafts of the GRP and NDFP. This is a process entirely different from generals giving orders to their subordinates. Generals who think that peace negotiations are a process of GRP dictating to the NDFP or vice versa are unfit for assignment to the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

These militarists and commandists are now in fact sabotaging and preventing the resumption of peace negotiations between the duly authorized negotiating panels of the GRP and NDFP. They are violently opposed to social, economic, political and constitutional reforms. They are benefiting privately and materially from the termination of the peace negotiations under Proclamation 360 and from the militarization and fascisation of government and society under Executive Order 70.

They are taking over civilian positions and are pocketing a lot of public money by faking NPA surrenders, encounters and all kinds of anti-people projects. Duterte has enlarged the intelligence and discretionary funds under his office and other agencies in order to bribe and corrupt military and police officers and embolden them to engage in criminal acts. This is Duterte's way of keeping their loyalty and allowing him to use the military and police forces as his private army for the benefit of his ruling clique and dynasty.

The Filipino people and their revolutionary forces are forewarned by their own enemies in power to prepare themselves for self-defense against the further escalation of armed counterrevolution and to intensify their struggle for just peace through the people's democratic revolution. The revolutionary slogan is now resounding: people's war for people's peace.

Peace in the Time of Pandemic:

Prospects for Social Justice and Reforms

Address to the Movement Against Tyranny (MAT) Cebu

December 5, 2020

Beloved compatriots,

First of all, let me thank the Movement Against Tyranny Cebu for inviting me to speak on theme of peace and the prospects for justice and reforms and to express warmest greetings of solidarity in the struggle for democracy against the tyranny of the Duterte regime.

I admire you and salute you for your firm commitment. I congratulate you for all the successes that you have achieved in arousing, organizing and mobilizing the broad masses of the people to fight for national and social liberation against tyranny.

1. Struggle for peace as key role of the united front against tyranny

As a broad united front, the Movement Against Tyranny seeks to fight for the national and democratic rights and interests of the toiling masses of workers and peasants, the middle strata such as the urban petty bourgeoisie and middle bourgeoisie and the anti-fascist sections and elements of the upper classes.

The MAT bases itself on the consensus of the various patriotic and democratic forces that strive to stop the anti-national and anti-democratic policies and actions of the Duterte tyranny and to end the reign of terror and greed that seeks to perpetuate imperialist domination and the ruling system of big compradors, landlords and bureaucrat capitalists.

The Duterte regime has sought to justify its tyranny, its ever-worsening use of state terrorism, as something necessary to end the armed revolution of the people, which it maligns as “communist terrorist”. On this false ground, it has terminated the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations and has proclaimed the nullification of all the agreements that have been made in these negotiations.

It completely obscures the fact that millions of the Filipino people and their revolutionary forces, including the CPP and NPA and other formations allied within the NDFP, have invoked the sovereign right of the people to rise up against the intolerable ruling system of exploitation and oppression and yet have agreed with the reactionary Government of Republic of the Philippines to engage in peace negotiations.

The GRP and NDFP mutually signed and approved The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992 as the framework agreement for peace negotiations. It declares the aim of the peace negotiations, which is to address the roots of the armed conflict and arrive at comprehensive agreements on social, economic and political reforms. It spells out national sovereignty, democracy and social justice as the basic guiding principles of the negotiations.

It sets forth the substantive agenda in the following sequence: respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, social and economic reforms, political and constitutional reforms and end of hostilities and disposition of forces. It provides the methods of arriving at comprehensive and related agreements through reciprocal working committees under the direction of the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels, respectively.

Since 1992, the Filipino people have nurtured the hope that the civil war between the revolutionary forces of the NDFP and the counterrevolutionary forces of the GRP be resolved through peace negotiations and that solutions of the social, economic and political problems that have caused the civil war be agreed upon in order to lay the basis for a just and lasting peace.

But there are forces behind and within the GRP that oppose serious peace negotiations with the NDFP in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration and consent to such negotiations only as a means of outwitting and steering the NDFP towards capitulation or at least paralyzing the armed revolution or even splitting it over time through protracted indefinite ceasefire agreements.

Because of disruptive actions and extremely prolonged delays by the GRP, less than two years have actually been devoted to peace negotiations since 1992. It is a lie for the Duterte regime to claim that more than 25 years of peace negotiations have passed and yet these have not resulted in a final peace agreement. To make the length of time for peace negotiations sound more ridiculous, the regime claims that the peace negotiations had run for 30

years since the ceasefire negotiations of 1986 during the time of Aquino.

We must recall that on the very first day after the signing of The Hague Joint Declaration on September 1, 1992, GRP President Ramos proclaimed the formation of the National Unification Commission (NUC) for the purpose of “localized peace negotiations” under the auspices of the commission and peace and order councils of the GRP between the reactionary military officers and their own military assets and a few renegades masquerading as “independent revolutionary” armed groups.

For two years, they tried to conjure the illusion that the revolutionary forces could be bought with paltry amounts and promises and were breaking up and surrendering in great number. Ramos agreed to allow the GRP representatives to engage in exploratory talks with the NDFP representatives only after he realized that the revolutionary forces have become more consolidated and stronger through the Second Great Rectification Movement.

The formal opening of the peace negotiations between the GRP and NDFP negotiating panels could be held only on June 26, 1995. On this occasion the Joint Agreement on the Formation, Sequence and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees was signed. But after the formal opening, the peace negotiations were disrupted for one whole year because of the GRP refusal to release the NDFP consultant Sotero Llamas.

There were still many more disruptions and delays which the GRP side was responsible for from 1996 to the end of the Ramos term in 1998. During their meetings, however, the GRP and NDFP panels were able to forge several important agreements. The most important of these agreements was the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) in compliance with the first item of the substantive agenda.

The CARHRIHL was forged by the negotiating panels in six months of concentrated work and was signed by the panels on March 16, 1998. The NDFP Chairman signed it promptly. But GRP President Ramos failed to sign it. The newly-elected GRP President Estrada signed it on August 7, 1998. But on May 31, 1999 the GRP issued its formal notice of termination of peace negotiations. The termination took effect on July 1, 1999 and did not resume while Estrada was in power up to January 2001.

The peace negotiations resumed on April 27, 2001 during the Arroyo regime. Both parties affirmed as valid and binding all bilateral agreements entered into since the 1992 Hague Joint Declaration. The Royal Norwegian Government (RNG) was accepted by both parties as Third-Party Facilitator in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. But the second round of formal talks in Oslo, Norway from June 10 to 13, 2001 was recessed by the GRP by citing as cause the death of a notorious Marcos-period torturer who resisted arrest by the NPA.

From then on, the Arroyo regime sought to make peace negotiations impossible by requesting the US government to designate as terrorist the CPP, NPA and myself as “terrorist”, use such designation as lever demanding the capitulation of the revolutionary movement of the people, and reduce negotiations to disarming and demobilizing the revolutionary forces while keeping the indefinite suspension of the peace negotiations until the surrender of the NDFP. For more than nine years, there were no peace negotiations while Arroyo was in power.

One year after assuming the GRP presidency, Benigno Aquino III agreed to the resumption of the peace negotiations in Oslo on June 18, 2011. No substantial agreement of any kind was made. The GRP side showed no interest in negotiating the substantive agenda. It focused on seeking to nullify The Hague Joint Declaration and described it as a document of perpetual division. It had the illusion that it could defeat the armed revolution through military operations or mere palliatives.

It also refused to allow the release of the NDFP consultants who remained in prison in violation of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees. Despite the progressive background of some of its members, the GRP negotiating panel was controlled by clerico-fascists and pro-US military officers, especially at the level of the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process.

If together with the US military officers the “soc-dem” Norberto Gonzales poisoned the peace negotiations during the time of Arroyo, so did the “soc-dem” Teresita Deles together with the pro-US military officers during the time of Aquino II. But the worst in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations would still come when someone like Duterte, who at first proclaimed himself as Left and socialist, shortly thereafter would undertake the most vicious and most violent actions intended to kill the peace negotiations once and for all time.

2. Why and how the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations have been terminated

Before Duterte became president, he boasted of being close to the CPP, NPA and NDFP. He shouted “Long live the CPP and NPA!” every time he went to a guerrilla front in Mindanao to ingratiate himself with the

revolutionary movement. And he wanted to be an NDFP consultant in peace negotiations. He was publicly advising the business entrepreneurs to pay their taxes to the people's revolutionary government. He proposed to release all political prisoners even before the resumption of peace negotiations. He pledged to make peace with the revolutionary movement of the people.

As soon as he visited the first military camp after he became president in 2016, he began to differentiate his past as mayor of Davao City, whose political life depended on alliance with the revolutionary movement, from his current office as chief executive of the entire ruling system, in charge of all its coercive apparatuses and all the opportunities for plunder. At the exploratory talks in June 2016 to prepare for the first round of formal talks, it was already clear that he would not release all the political prisoners before the first round of formal talks in August 2016.

Surreptitiously he started his all-out war against the revolutionary movement under the guise of his military minions continuing the Oplan Bayanihan of his predecessor Aquino. Like Estrada, Arroyo and Aquino, he gave himself six months to one year to pretend to be for serious peace negotiations in order to consolidate his position within the reactionary government and at the same time try to hoodwink the revolutionary movement. Despite these stumbling blocks, however, the NDFP negotiating panel persevered in pushing for the release of political prisoners in definite batches to facilitate the peace talks.

The GRP and NDFP negotiating panels held the first and second rounds of formal talks in Oslo in August and October 2016. These were devoted mainly to the issue of realizing the promise of Duterte to release all political prisoners and to holding the initial meetings of the reciprocal working committees. In the first formal talks, an agreement was made to carry out reciprocal unilateral ceasefire to demonstrate goodwill and promote the peace negotiations. This ran for almost five months from late September 2016 to the first week of February 2017. The revolutionary forces upheld this ceasefire, the longest in the history of the peace talks, despite continued military operations by the GRP. The Duterte regime however mistook the NDFP's principled desire to push the peace talks as a sign of weakness.

In the third round of talks in Rome in January-February 2017 and in the fourth round of talks in Noordwijk aan Zee in April 2017, Duterte demanded protracted indefinite ceasefire and in effect the end of the people's revolutionary government by giving up vital functions of governance in exchange for a renewed promise of releasing all the political prisoners. The NDFP was firm with its stand that all the political prisoners must be released and the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) must be forged before there can be any agreement on any extended mutual ceasefire.

To make credible his pretense at being serious in pursuing the substantive agenda of the peace negotiations, Duterte had appointed to the GRP negotiating panel persons respected by the NDFP as having an understanding of the national and democratic demands of the people. Thus, despite the maneuvers of Duterte and his pro-US security cluster to push the NDFP to a position of capitulation, there was substantial progress made in the negotiations of social and economic reforms.

But the fifth round of formal talks, already poised to commence in May 2017, was aborted because the GRP demanded that the CPP Central Committee withdraw its call for intensifying the armed resistance in response to Duterte's proclamation of martial law to cover the entirety of Mindanao despite the fact that those whom he assailed as Muslim terrorists, who launched a military operation in Marawi City, were located in just a few definite and limited areas.

The proclamation, which invoked the Marawi siege only as pretext, was directed mainly against the revolutionary movement led by the CPP. The NDFP negotiating panel stood firm that it would not recommend the withdrawal of the call of the CPP Central Committee unless Duterte would first amend his martial law proclamation. Duterte refused to make the necessary amendment of his proclamation even as GRP Defense Secretary Lorenzana made a press statement that the proclamation did not target the CPP and the NPA.

Despite the impasse in the holding of the formal peace talks, due mainly to "war hawks" in the security cluster of the Duterte Cabinet, the GRP negotiating panel was able to get permission from Duterte to engage in backchannel talks so that the negotiation and drafting of the CASER would proceed. Indeed, most of the CASER mutual draft, especially the most important sections on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development and National Industrialization and Economic Development were done by the reciprocal working committees and were ready for negotiation at the level of the negotiating panels.

The proposed reforms in the CASER draft agreed upon by the GRP and NDFP reciprocal working committees would have delivered immediate and concrete gains for the people. The Duterte regime however revealed its insincerity when militarist hawks Esperon and Galvez disowned this draft including the work of their own economic policy officials who helped produce this. Brazenly sabotaging the peace talks, they declared that a CASER would be “treasonous”.

Ultimately, Duterte and the pro-US retired and active military officers around him had their way. To discredit the peace negotiations in press statements, they harped on various lines like the peace negotiations had taken too long without any result, that the NPA was violating CARHRIHL as if there were no Joint Monitoring Committee to receive complaints, and that it was best to conduct “localized peace talks” ala NUC and at the same time escalate the all-out war against the CPP and NPA.

Withdrawal from the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations suited Duterte’s constant posture and image of being a strongman, ever willing to engage in extrajudicial killings as in the bogus war on drugs. Most important of all, it was consonant with the more cold-blooded aim of realizing his scheme of fascist dictatorship. The death of the peace negotiations was finally sealed on November 13, 2017 when Duterte pledged to US President Trump to annihilate the CPP and NPA.

Ten days after, on November 23, 2017, Duterte issued Proclamation 360 to terminate the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. And on December 3, 2017 he issued Proclamation 374 to designate the CPP and NPA as terrorist organizations. These proclamations were intended to end the peace negotiations once and for all. They were the preparation for the issuance of Memorandum Order 32 on November 22, 2018 which placed the Bicol region, and the Negros and Samar islands under a “state of emergency,” the formation of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) on December 4, 2018 and the enactment of the Anti-Terrorism Law on July 3, 2020 which has realized Duterte’s ambition of fascist dictatorship even without its formal proclamation.

I think that I have given you a full presentation of how Duterte has done more than enough to prove to all reasonable and peace-loving people that he premeditated the killing of the peace negotiations and that he has done more than enough to ensure that there can be no peace negotiations while he is in power. We cannot expect that the worsening crisis of the Philippine ruling system would persuade him to resume peace negotiations.

Duterte takes the one-sided view that the worsening crisis is his opportunity and justification to grab despotic power and the unlimited privilege of plunder in the style of his idol Marcos. He does not even know that by his own aggravation of the crisis with his reign of terror and greed, he has inflicted intolerable suffering on the people from the escalating conditions of oppression and exploitation and that the people and various patriotic and democratic forces are eager to oust him from power.

The only limitation to his power that Duterte seems to be aware of is his bad health condition which now limits his personal appearances before the public. But it is still important for him to project the image of being able to rule beyond 2022 through a fascist dictatorship and to keep in reserve his ability to rig the Comelec vote count, as he did in the 2019 mid-term elections, in order to install his daughter or some other stooge as his presidential proxy.

It is the duty of the Filipino people to assert their own sovereign power to catalyze the process of the disintegration and overthrow of the Duterte ruling clique. In this regard, it is important for the broad united front to rely mainly on the basic alliance of the working class and peasantry, win over the middle social strata and take advantage of the splits among the reactionary upper classes. The last two years of every incumbent president in the Philippines are normally his lameduck years, when centrifugal forces arise even within the ranks of the regime.

Duterte is in the worst situation as the public gets to know how much his crimes have devastated the Philippine economy and all other aspects of Philippine society, how extreme has been his greed for power and plunder, and how after all he is now physically debilitated and is mentally and morally deranged. The broad united front of the patriotic and democratic forces of the people has all the facts and all the political and moral advantage and resources to spotlight the reality that emperor is naked and has the ashen face of a dying tyrant—as was the situation in the waning years of Marcos’ dictatorial rule.

3. The significance of peace as the reign of justice and reforms in relation to the pandemic

The persistent character of the Philippines as a semicolonial and semifeudal country puts it in chronic crisis. As the continuing dominant economic power, US imperialism has kept it underdeveloped and limited to being a

cheap source of raw materials, semimanufactures and cheap labor and an importer of finished products of higher value from industrial capitalist countries. Thus, the Philippines has suffered widening trade deficits and has been made more dependent on foreign direct investments and loans that are designed to keep it underdeveloped.

The rich natural resources of the country can be considered a boon to the Filipino people but it has been turned into their bane by foreign monopoly capitalism and the local exploiting classes of big compradors and landlords and their political agents who play the role of bureaucrat comprador capitalists. These anti-national and anti-democratic forces are averse even to such bourgeois democratic reforms as genuine land reform and national industrialization.

Since the US nominal grant of national independence in 1946, the Philippines has been kept as a cheap source of mineral ores, timber and certain export crops, as Japan reconstructed and expanded its industry and then the East Asian tigers arose. In the international division of labor, the most that the Philippines could get as concession since the late 1970s has been a share in the semi-manufacture of garments and semiconductors and export of working men and women in addition to the production of raw materials for export.

Upon the ascendance of the neoliberal policy of imperialist globalization since the 1980s, the more the Filipino puppet leaders and technocrats have accepted as the comparative advantage of the Philippines the role of provider of raw materials and cheap labor and the status of underdevelopment in the Philippines. Their idea of development has not gone beyond giving priority to private construction, infrastructure building and the opportunities for pork barrel corruption and the perpetuation of the colonial pattern of production, consumption and trade and ever-increasing dependence on consumer imports, foreign investments and loans for the purpose.

Coming as the latest of the Filipino puppet presidents, Duterte has admitted since the beginning that he knew nothing about economics and has always depended on technocrats who follow the dictates of foreign monopoly capitalism and have disdain for the self-reliant development of the Philippines. Playing the role of the strongman, the cowardly weakling Duterte has poured increasing amounts of tax money to military overspending and to the corruption of the military officers on top of the ever-growing bureaucratic corruption.

The broad masses of the Filipino people have been deeply disappointed by Duterte's termination of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations and the abortion of the CASER exactly at the time that this was in an advanced stage of mutual drafting and negotiation. The abortion coincided with Duterte's stepped-up drive for fascist dictatorship and the escalating opposition of his pro-US technocrats and military and ex-military officials to genuine land reform and national industrialization, describing these as running counter to the neoliberal economic policy and allowing communists to gain credit for the reforms.

By the time that the Covid-19 pandemic came, the chronic crisis of the ruling system had become very serious, further aggravated by the crisis of overproduction and stagnation in the world capitalist economy and the misuse of public funds by the Duterte regime. At first, Duterte underestimated the potential of the pandemic as he allowed more than half a million Chinese tourists to flow into the Philippines even after the WHO gave the warning about the pandemic in January 2020.

But since adopting the lockdown policy in March 2020, Duterte has considered it as one big opportunity for plunder and grabbing and exercising emergency powers on a broad range of social concerns. He promised medical testing, sufficient health personnel and facilities and economic assistance for those losing their jobs and means of livelihood. But the promise has not been fulfilled and instead Duterte and his gang have pocketed public funds and shared these with their fast-rising crony business allies, while up to now there is no clear accounting of Php 590 billion.

Aside from the big plunder perpetrated by the Duterte clique, even just in accounting for the massive Bayanihan I funds reallocated for Covid-19 response, he has used the prolonged lockdown (the longest continuous lockdown in the world from March 16 to the present) to intimidate the people with the sweeping coercive measures and excessive display of force by the military and police, the escalation of the bogus war on drugs and the so-called focused operations in the countryside, the enactment of the Anti-Terrorism Law which practically realizes Duterte's scheme of fascist dictatorship, and tighter control over such institutions as mass media and churches. This is far worse than the Marcos fascist regime because it combines the undeclared martial rule with the methods of mass murder and mass arrests similar to those of Oplan Tokhang, which are justified by a combination of pretexts such as fighting terrorism, fighting drugs and criminality, and fighting Covid-19.

In the name of fighting terrorism, the Anti-Terrorism Law enables widespread state terrorism or fascism.

Under the direction of the Anti-Terrorism Council and the NTF-ELCAC, social activists, critics and political opponents of the regime are arbitrarily listed or tagged as “communist terrorists” or “enemies of the state”; publicly slandered and vilified; threatened with confiscation of bank accounts and property; and arrested and detained incommunicado without judicial warrant for a long period of time to allow the fascist criminals to torture and murder their victims and destroy the corpus delicti in the notorious style of the Duterte death squads.

By all indications, Duterte and his fascist gang have the illusion that, thanks to the pandemic and resulting lockdowns, they have further tightened their control over the people and have gained so much more power and wealth. They overlook the fact that the pandemic and lockdowns have exposed the rotten anti-people character of the ruling system; that they have further bankrupted the economy and their own government; and that they have further generated the conditions for the people to wage all forms of resistance.

As if the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns were not enough to expose the rottenness of the ruling system and rouse the people to resistance, a series of typhoons have struck the Philippines, causing landslides and massive floods that have destroyed food crops, homes and infrastructure, and paralyzing power, communications, transport and other essential services for many days. These have exposed the gross lack of resources for rescue, relief and rehabilitation and the criminal neglect of disaster preparations because of military overspending, bureaucratic corruption, and other mispriorities.

They have likewise exposed the serious damage to the environment by the logging interests (many now masquerading as agroforestry-based IFMAs), mining and quarrying and plantation corporations favored by foreign monopoly capitalists, the Filipino puppet leaders and the big compradors. The pointless construction of large dams has caused the inundation of farms, communities and nearby cities and yet the Duterte regime continues to promote the construction of these huge dams under its graft-laden infrastructure program.

The people are enraged by the heaps of abuse inflicted on them for a long period of time and by the immediate prospect of food scarcity, mass hunger, long-term loss of jobs and livelihood, and inflation. The understated negative growth rate of 11 per cent was recorded at the end of the third quarter of 2020 due mainly to the pandemic lockdown. This negative growth rate is certain to worsen as a consequence of the typhoons and floods, not to speak yet of the droughts, pestilence and disease outbreaks that will follow.

In view of the overwhelming crisis of the ruling system, aggravated by the pandemic lockdown and the floods, the Duterte regime if smart should now be playing once more the peace card if only to try appeasing and countering the rising wave of mass indignation and resistance. Instead, it continues to go berserk in unleashing state terrorism because of sheer arrogance and hubris as well as the realization that it has no more maneuver time, credibility and resources to make its peace pretense credible and effective to any extent. It is now in its lame duck period of less than two years and is unwilling to give up the act and instruments of state terrorism that it has already acquired.

In sharp contrast to the intransigent position of the Duterte regime against the resumption of peace negotiations, there are those within the broad united front of patriotic and democratic forces who advocate the resumption of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations—not to persuade Duterte to negotiate peace but to expose and condemn him as the enemy of peace and to rally the people to the call for peace against the state terrorism of his regime and to offer the prospect of resuming said negotiations after his ouster.

The newly-elected US President Biden has declared in a recent statement that he is critical of the trends of authoritarianism in Turkey, Hungary and the Philippines and that he is interested in the promotion of human rights and democracy in the countries which the US supports. This statement has perked up the conservative opposition, which has been nearly decimated and temporarily paralyzed by Duterte’s demagoguery and patronage during the last four years but which is now hoping that the Duterte regime will start to self-disintegrate in its lame-duck period of less than two years.

The conservative opposition is also banking on the Washington bipartisan consensus against Duterte’s sell-out of Philippine sovereign rights over the West Philippine Sea to China. It remains to be seen, however, whether the US can restrain Duterte from realizing his ambition of ruling beyond 2022 or from rigging the 2022 presidential elections to install his proxy. And yet as it is the US is already greatly increasing its support to the regime’s counterinsurgency program with military aid tripling from US\$76 million in 2017 to US\$216 million in 2019.

The US has the power to restrain Duterte and even to prevent him from carrying out false flag operations and other preemptive measures which are calculated to damage the broad united front and yet put the blame on any of

the opposition forces. But the US would probably embolden both the Duterte regime and the conservative opposition to stick to the line of suppressing the national democratic movement of the Filipino people under the guise of rabid anti-communism.

The broad masses of the Filipino people and the armed revolutionary movement have no choice but to be vigilant, stand firm in pursuing the people's democratic revolution through protracted people's war and avail of the favorable conditions generated by the rapidly worsening crisis of the world capitalist ruling system and the Philippine ruling system. At the same time, they are for a broad united front committed to the general line of struggle for national liberation, democracy, peace, justice and basic social, economic and political reforms.

4. The advancement of the principles of human rights by the peace negotiations

The tyrannical Duterte regime is arrogantly overconfident that like the Marcos fascist regime it can impose a fascist dictatorship on the Filipino people by vilifying the revolutionary forces of the Filipino people as “communist terrorists” and unleashing state terrorism not only against suspected revolutionaries but also against all social activists, critics and opponents of the Duterte regime.

We are witnessing now the license provided by the Anti-Terrorism Law for red-tagging, threatening, arresting, detaining and killing an increasing number of people who exercise their civil and political rights to uphold, defend and promote their legitimate interests and who make lawful criticism and demands. Among the victims are leaders and mass activists of workers and peasants, national minorities, women, professionals, religious people and others.

It is of crucial importance to expose and oppose the Anti-Terrorism Law, the termination of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations and the misrepresentation of the revolutionary forces, the legal democratic forces and all critics and opponents of the Duterte regime as “communist terrorists” and as “guilty by association” as they are arbitrarily listed by the NTF-ELCAC and the Anti-Terrorism Council.

It must be stressed first of all that the Hernandez political offense doctrine—that the charge of rebellion is political and cannot be complexed with common crimes or transmuted into the most heinous crime of terrorism—has not been overturned and therefore still applies. It must be likewise stressed that the Anti-Subversion Law of 1957 was repealed in 1992 because it was finally deemed a bill of attainder criminalizing the Communist Party, its officers and members without the benefit of trial and because legalization of the CPP was intended to create favorable conditions and atmosphere for the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

It must finally be stressed that the CPP and NPA cannot be misrepresented as terrorist, attacking the very people whose participation and support they seek for the revolution, and their officers and members can be held legally liable and chargeable for simple rebellion and cannot be subjected to the charge of terrorism in substitution of or in addition to rebellion. It has become even more unjust to make the charge of rebellion a nonbailable capital offense, discouraging the political solution of the ongoing civil war between the reactionary government and the people's revolutionary government.

Focusing further on the issue whether the CPP and NPA are terrorist or not, it is absolutely clear legally and politically that they uphold, defend and advance the rights and interests of the people, have absolutely no interest in harming the people whose support and participation they seek. They have committed themselves to the international law on human rights and humanitarian conduct in the armed conflict. They adhere to the international conventions on human rights and the Geneva Conventions.

In 1996 the NDFP promulgated its Declaration of Undertaking to Apply the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Protocol I of 1977 and submitted it to the Swiss Federal Council as the responsible depositary. This new declaration, in addition to the 1991 NDFP declaration of accession to Protocol II, further commits the NDFP, the CPP, NPA and other allied revolutionary organizations as well as the organs of political power to adhere to human rights and humanitarian conduct in war. Subsequently, the NDFP and the GRP mutually approved the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) in 1998. This agreement is of great historic and current significance.

Since the founding of the New People's Army on March 29, 1969 by the CPP, the Basic Rules of the NPA has bound all its commands, units, officers and fighters to follow the Three Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points of Attention. These have ensured respect for human rights and humanitarian conduct. The political, economic, social, educational and cultural mass work of the CPP, the NPA and the revolutionary mass organizations have endeared themselves to the people in all the guerrilla fronts and areas governed by the people's revolutionary

government.

The broad masses of the people and the broad united front must condemn the Duterte regime for making the false charge of terrorism against the CPP and NPA, for terminating the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations and for trying to impose state terrorism or fascist dictatorship on the people. For these negotiations to resume in the future, the GRP must nullify the false charge of terrorism against the revolutionary movement and reaffirm all the agreements that have been mutually approved by the GRP and NDFP.

The conservative opposition should be advised that it improves its position and chances by joining the consensus and struggle to render justice for all the victims of Duterte's reign of terror and greed and against all those who have committed crimes against them. Even right now, they are morally and politically obliged to join the people in demanding justice for all the victims of human rights violations, especially the victims of extrajudicial killings, and the immediate release of all political prisoners.

It is highly probable that Biden and the US imperialist "deep state" will promise to the conservative opposition to restrain Duterte and extract a pledge to continue the brutal anticommunist antipeople military campaign but will still use the Duterte terrorist regime to the hilt and allow it to control and rig the 2022 presidential elections if held. The regime has an overwhelming advantage over the conservative opposition because of its control of the Supreme Court and the Comelec through the Duterte appointees and its success in rigging the 2019 mid-term elections and having overwhelming control over the Senate and the Lower House.

It is obvious that Duterte has already acquired enough power to use the Comelec voting process either to ratify charter change to make him fascist dictator or allow him to install a stooge as his presidential successor as well as to suppress all his critics and opponents with the use of the Anti-Terrorism Act. However, the factors against the perpetuation of Duterte's power is the certain worsening of the crisis of the ruling system, the further rise of the armed revolutionary movement and the legal democratic movement, the growing US-China conflict and the conservative opposition to Duterte's serving two conflicting imperialist powers for his selfish interest.

The broad masses of the people and the broad united front must call for international solidarity for the struggle to end the Duterte regime of tyranny, treason, butchery, plunder and mass deception. This regime must be held accountable for its crimes, and overseas bank deposits of its gang leaders must be traced and returned to the Filipino people. Duterte himself and his criminal accomplices must be brought before the International Criminal Court or before a Philippine court of the GRP or the people's revolutionary government for prosecution and trial.

While Duterte is still in power with the contradictory support of two conflicting imperialist powers, the US and China, the Filipino people and their patriotic organizations abroad must cooperate with the host people and other minority peoples to condemn the crimes of the Duterte regime, isolate it and work for moral, political and economic sanctions.

They must call on the US, European Union and New Zealand governments to end their listing of the CPP and NPA as terrorist because this listing is baseless and unjust. Before and after the listing, the CPP and NPA have never engaged in any act of terrorism in any foreign country. This listing by foreign governments has been invoked by Duterte's regime to make its own terrorist listing and emboldened him to engage in state terrorism in the name of anti-terrorism.

The Filipino people and all forces of the Movement Against Tyranny must be thankful for all the successes of the Filipino compatriots abroad and the international solidarity movement in exposing, condemning and making demands to stop the Duterte regime from committing gross and systematic human rights violations. All these achievements inspire the Filipino people to fight ever more resolutely and militantly to fight for their national and social liberation against the Duterte regime and the semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system that this regime seeks to perpetuate.

Long live the Movement Against Tyranny Cebu!

Advance the struggle for national independence and democracy!

Long live the Filipino people!

July 3, 2021

Since becoming president in 2016, Duterte has manifested three different positions and attitudes towards the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations and towards me.

First, he claimed in 2016 to be “Left” and socialist, interested in the resumption in peace negotiations with the NDFP and willing to talk with me in Manila. I told him that we could meet in a third country and that I could return to the Philippines after the peace negotiations succeeded in producing the comprehensive agreements on social and economic reforms and on political and constitutional reforms.

I was wary that my premature return to Manila would prejudice the holding of the peace negotiations in a foreign neutral venue as mandated by The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992. Duterte agreed to let the peace negotiations proceed abroad. These went through four rounds from August 2016 to April 2017. Significant progress was made in the negotiation and drafting of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms.

But the fifth round of formal talks in May 2017 was aborted by the GRP side on the pretext that the NDFP could not immediately require the CPP to withdraw its call for the intensification of struggle against Duterte's proclamation of Mindanao-wide martial law targetting not only the Maute group but even the CPP and NPA. The solution was simply for Duterte to issue a supplement to his proclamation to clarify that this did not target the CPP and NPA. But he did not do so.

Then in the second half of 2017, it became increasingly clear that Duterte had a change of position and attitude. He was no longer interested in peace negotiations with the NDFP and was single-mindedly for an all-out war against the CPP and NPA to comply with Trump's order and to aim for fascist dictatorship. He issued Proclamation 360 terminating the peace negotiations on November 23, 2017 and Proclamation 374 designating the CPP and NPA as “terrorist” organizations on December 5, 2017. From then on, he was boasting that he could destroy the CPP and NPA before the end of 2018 or the middle of 2019.

He kept on ranting that the NDFP or I had no control or influence over the CPP and NPA and that the peace negotiations had to be “localized” in the Philippines under the auspices and control of his own Office of Presidential Adviser on Peace Process. It became clear that General Galvez and the national security cluster had designed a scheme of “localized” peace talks for the purpose of psywar, intelligence and surveillance, faking surrenders of CPP and NPA personnel and engaging in extrajudicial killings and pocketing tax money under the pretexts of E-CLIP and “community support program”.

It must be pointed out that Duterte and his political and military running dogs are absolutely correct when they say that the NDFP Negotiating Panel and I, merely the Chief Political Consultant, do not have the power to issue orders to the CPP and the NPA. The collective leading organs of the NDFP, CPP and NPA are indeed all in the Philippines. On behalf of all the NDFP allied organizations, the NDFP National Council has duly authorized the NDFP Negotiating Panel to negotiate with the GRP Negotiating Panel.

Duterte and his running dogs are therefore mendacious and malicious in taking the position and attitude and ranting that I make decisions and give orders to the CPP and NPA and that I am a “terrorist” who should be deported by the Dutch government to the Philippines for punishment by the Duterte regime under its draconian law of state terrorism. In fact, Duterte and his fellow butchers are the ones liable for extrajudicial killings of more than 33, 000 people before the International Criminal Court based in The Hague.

No amount of terrorist-tagging and lying by Duterte and his fellow butchers against me can deflect attention from their campaigns of mass murder in the Philippines in the bogus war on illegal drugs as well as in their counterrevolutionary actions of murdering mere rebel suspects, social activists, human rights defenders, peace advocates and NDFP peace consultants. It is utterly perverse of the Duterte regime to expect that the revolutionaries can be lured into peace negotiations in the Philippines after the murder of the NDFP consultants: Randy Felix Malayao, Randall Echanis, Julius Giron, the Topacio couple, the Cabanatan couple and Reynaldo Bocala.

Duterte and his fellow butchers have been staging small pickets before the Dutch embassy and making

statements to the effect that if I were to be deported to the Philippines for punishment there would be no one else to demand that the peace negotiations be held in a foreign neutral venue and that the peace negotiations would be held in the Philippines under the auspices and control of Duterte, the OPAPP and the NTF-ELCAC.

I assure these fascists that the CPP, NPA and NDFP have enough brains to think that even peace negotiations in a foreign neutral venue have become too risky and costly for the NDFP after the murder of so many NDFP peace consultants. There is the need for certain new guarantees to ensure the safety and immunity of NDFP negotiators, consultants and staff if ever peace negotiations would be held in cooperation with an administration, which is not as treacherous and murderous as the Duterte regime.

Finally, I wish to point out that Duterte and his fellow butchers are not only criminally brutal but also utterly stupid. They conveniently forget that I am a recognized political refugee under the absolute protection of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the principle of nonrefoulement in the Refugee Convention. They also forget that in 2009 I won my cases against the EU terrorist-listing before the European Court of Justice and against the false murder charges instigated by the Arroyo regime before the Dutch courts. It is totally stupid and preposterous that Duterte and his fellow butchers are asking the Dutch government to violate my rights under Dutch and international law.

***On the Prospect
of Resuming the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations***

Interview by Ma. Lourdes Barros
NDFP International Information Office
February 23, 2022

The Duterte regime and its military officials have declared so many times that they are out to finish off the armed revolutionary movement before the end of the Duterte term of office. The Marcos-Duterte tandem has also declared that it will continue the all-out war policy against the revolutionary movement. Can they really destroy the revolutionary movement in view of the root causes of the armed conflict, the worsening crisis of the ruling system and the escalating conditions of oppression and exploitation?

JMS: To conjure the illusion of success in their military campaigns of suppression, Duterte and his military running dogs use the media agencies and resources of the reactionary government, the corporate media and social media to spread false reports that they have already wiped out more than three times the estimated total strength of the NPA supposedly because NPA commanders and fighters are surrendering voluntarily or getting themselves killed in focused military operations.

Duterte and his armed minions and the Marcos-Sara tandem are daydreaming about destroying the entire revolutionary movement through intelligence, psywar and combat operations. They are using the policy of state terrorism, the Anti-Terror Law so-called and the campaigns of military suppression in order to accumulate power through militarization of civilian functions and to escalate bureaucratic and military corruption from the ever increasing military budget.

The root causes of the civil war are not being addressed by the regime through its own initiatives because of its ultra-reactionary character. And it has systematically prevented peace negotiations and comprehensive agreements with the NDFP on basic social, economic, political and constitutional reforms as required by The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992. So long as such root causes of the armed conflict as foreign monopoly capitalism, domestic feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism persist, the revolutionary forces of the people such as the CPP, NPA, NDFP, revolutionary mass organizations and organs of political power will continue to grow in strength and advance.

Duterte has completely terminated the peace negotiations since 2017 while aggravating the socioeconomic and political crisis of the semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system in the Philippines. The Philippine economy persists as an underdeveloped, agrarian and semi-feudal economy, dependent on the export of cheap raw materials and cheap labor. He has bankrupted the economy with huge budgetary and trade deficits and is sinking it with a mounting foreign and local foreign debt. Inflation and new taxes will bedevil the people in the months and year to come.

Duterte is driving the youth and the people to join the armed revolution because of the ever-worsening rule of open terror, high mass unemployment and widespread poverty. He is unwittingly helping the Philippine revolution. Thus, he is called the chief recruiting and supply officer of the New People's Army. He is expected to rig the 2022 elections in order to put in power Ferdinand Marcos, Jr and his own daughter Sara respectively as president and vice president and continue the brutal and corrupt rule of their respective parents and dynasties. The Philippine revolution is thus guaranteed to advance.

What do you see in the world situation that is favorable to the people's democratic revolution in the Philippines?

JMS: The fertile ground for armed revolution is in the Philippines. The intolerable conditions of exploitation and oppression are driving the broad masses of the Filipino people to join and support the armed revolution. And to say the least, any incoming regime in the Philippines this 2022 cannot find enough relief from the increasingly crisis-stricken world capitalist system.

The world capitalist system is in trouble and in conspicuous turmoil. It is beset by serious multiple crises in a perfect storm, such as the unravelling of the neoliberal policy regime, extreme income inequality, economic depression, unsustainable public debts, escalating inter-imperialist contradictions, spread of state terrorism and

imperialist aggression, threats of nuclear war, pandemic and the global heating.

In this global context, it is well recognized that underdeveloped countries like the Philippines will find themselves in much deeper economic and political trouble than ever before. There are now conditions that make the entire world capitalist system unstable and that generate anti-imperialist and democratic mass struggles in both developed and underdeveloped countries. I call the current period one of transition to the resurgence of the world proletarian-socialist revolution. The epochal struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie has never been ended by the revisionist betrayals of socialism in the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China.

The Duterte regime and the Marcos-Duterte tandem in the elections reject The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992, which was mutually agreed upon by the GRP and NDFP, as the framework for peace negotiations and comprehensive agreements, and insist on what they call “localized peace negotiations”. What is the difference between peace negotiations within the frame of The Hague Joint Declaration and “localized peace negotiations”?

JMS: The peace negotiations between the duly-authorized representatives and negotiating panels of the GRP and NDFP resulted in a series of important agreements towards a just peace. The agreements include The Hague Joint Declaration, the Joint Agreement on the Safety and Immunity Guarantees, Ground Rules in negotiating and drafting agreements, the Joint Agreement on the Sequence and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees, the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law and the Operating Guidelines for the Joint Monitoring Committee.

These agreements were made despite the short periods of attention given by the GRP to the peace negotiations with the NDFP. And when Duterte pretended to be in a hurry to complete the peace negotiations from 2016 to 2017, the NDFP accommodated him by accelerating the negotiations and drafting of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms and there were even meetings to draft in advance the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms and the Comprehensive Agreement for the End Hostilities and Disposition of Forces.

But Duterte was never really interested in serious peace negotiations with the NDFP but obsessed with accumulating power and bureaucratic loot and easily decided to terminate the peace negotiations and scrap all agreements made with previous regimes of the GRP. He has chosen the so-called localized peace negotiations as a mode of intelligence gathering, psywar and combat operations, seeking to split the revolutionary movement and entrapping individuals, families, groups and communities suspected of being connected to the revolutionary movement.

Anyone who falls for the trap of the fake localized peace negotiations because of the false promises of bribes from the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program, Community Support Program and Barangay Development Program is subjected to close surveillance, red-tagging and misrepresentation as surrenderers. Then the military agents of Duterte have the option to kill the “fake surrenderer” anytime because they get a bigger reward for enemy casualties. They usually claim that their victim went back to the NPA and became a battle casualty. No different from Oplan Tokhang of the police in dealing with suspected drug pushers and addicts.

Most of the major opposition presidential candidates like Leni Robredo, Manuel Pacquiao, Isko Moreno, Leody de Guzman and Panfilo Lacson are desirous of resuming peace negotiations. What is your response to them according to the common or different positions that they have expressed?

JMS: I wish that the major presidential candidates other than Bongbong Marcos were clearer about wanting to resume the peace negotiations if they were elected president. Panfilo Lacson is most clear about being for fake local peace negotiations in which the target individuals, families, groups and communities suspected of being associated with the NPA are entrapped by the military, become subject to control and close surveillance and subject to becoming surrenderers and battle casualties. His idea of localized peace negotiations is similar to that of Duterte.

Even Leni Robredo has muddled her own wish to resume the peace negotiations if she became president by accepting the National Task Force-Elcac and its “whole nation” approach. There is no clarity and certainty that she is not for the fake localized peace talks and that she is really for the resumption of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations within the framework of The Hague Joint Declaration.

Manuel Pacquiao sounds sincere about wishing to resume the peace negotiations and goes so far as to declare that had he not become a successful boxer he would have joined the NPA. In general terms, Isko Moreno has also declared the wish to resume the peace negotiations. Leody de Guzman has also declared the same

general wish in order to address the roots of the armed conflict. But no one among the rivals of Bongbong has dared to reaffirm The Hague Joint Declaration and all the further agreements done within its framework.

When the CPP, NPA and NDFP were far smaller and weaker than now, they never offered to negotiate peace with the Marcos regime and the latter never offered the same. When are peace negotiations necessary or acceptable to the NDFP? Is it always necessary for the NDFP to engage in peace negotiations? When are they not necessary or acceptable?

JMS: You are correct in stating the fact that when the CPP, NPA and NDFP were far smaller and weaker than now, they never offered to negotiate peace with the Marcos regime and the latter never offered the same. From the beginning of the armed revolution in early 1969 to the downfall of the Marcos fascist dictatorship in 1986, a long period of 17 years, there was never any offer of peace negotiations from either the side of the Marcos regime and the revolutionary movement.

The offer of “ceasefire talks” came from the first Aquino regime, with the avowed purpose of using a six-month ceasefire agreement to set the agenda for peace negotiations. But the ceasefire agreement was broken as a result of the Mendiola massacre on January 23, 1987 and by Cory’s unsheathing the sword of war on February 7, 1987. And lessons had to be learned by the NDFP from the exposure of NDFP personnel and associates to enemy surveillance during the ceasefire talks because of the arrests and killings by the enemy that followed the breakdown of the ceasefire agreement.

In subsequent years, the NDFP has found it necessary and acceptable to engage in peace negotiations for the following concrete reasons: when she was threatened by coup attempts from 1988 onwards Aquino delegated Rep. Jose Yap to offer peace negotiations with the NDFP but she backed out of her offer by 1990. Yap continued to approach the NDFP for peace negotiations when Ramos became president. The NDFP decided to engage the GRP under Ramos in peace negotiations in order to further propagate the program of new democratic revolution, prevent Ramos from claiming that the NDFP does not want peace and encourage Ramos to repeal the Anti-Subversion Law and release hundreds of political prisoners. Indeed, he repealed the Anti-Subversion Law but increased the penalty for rebellion.

It is not always necessary for the NDFP to engage in peace negotiations. It is not necessary if in the first place the GRP does not want peace negotiations. It takes two conflicting sides to mutually agree to negotiate peace. It is perfectly alright for the armed revolution to continue until complete victory if in the first place the enemy does not want peace negotiations. Thus, the revolutionary forces are not distracted by peace negotiations. It is fine when it is well known to the public that the enemy is the one that refuses to negotiate peace.

So-called localized peace negotiations under the control and surveillance by the GRP and its armed agencies are absolutely unacceptable. They resulted in many arrests and death of revolutionaries and sympathizers after the collapse of the 1986-87 ceasefire agreement. That’s why in the JASIG there is a provision for foreign neutral venue in order to enable the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. Despite this prudence, when Duterte decided to murder NDFP consultants and staff personnel from 2017 onward, there have been costs and lessons for the NDFP to learn from.

Is it not necessary for NDFP to consider seriously and arrive at some resolution about the killing of the 16 NDFP consultants and staff personnel by the Duterte regime in relation to resuming the peace talks and guaranteeing the immunity and safety of NDFP negotiating personnel, consultants, advisers and resource persons?

JMS: Definitely, it is necessary for NDFP to consider seriously and arrive at some resolution about the killing of the NDFP consultants and staff personnel by the Duterte regime in relation to resuming the peace talks and guaranteeing the immunity and safety of NDFP negotiating personnel, staff, consultants, advisers and resource persons.

Justice must be demanded for the victims of Duterte’s murder campaign against more than 16 NDFP consultants and related personnel in violation of JASIG. They are mostly in their seventies and out of the battlefield. But they were exposed by their travels from the Philippines to abroad and back during peace negotiations. A human rights campaign must be carried out in the Philippines and abroad to seek justice for these advocates of a just peace.

If ever there will be any resumption of GRP-NDFP peace negotiations in the future, the JASIG must be improved to widen further the immunity and safety guarantees for negotiators, staff, consultants, advisers and resource persons. Whenever any of them has a well-grounded fear of persecution or faces an imminent danger from the GRP, he or she should be able to apply for political asylum abroad. This point should be understood by the

third-party facilitator and host governments in peace negotiations abroad.

What do you think of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration framework of the UN on the basis of experience in peace negotiations abroad?

JMS: In most cases that I know about peace negotiations with the DDR framework of the UN, Final Agreements are finally signed and the disarming and dismantling the revolutionary side are carried out without any substantial implementation of the agreements on social, economic, political and constitutional reforms and guarantees for immunity and safety for the cadres, members, fighters and the constituencies of the revolutionary movement. These become vulnerable to abductions, torture and slaughter by the reactionaries who remain in power.

In peace negotiations done by Latin American revolutionary movements, we know that they resulted in the disarming and liquidation of those movements. Won't that happen to the revolutionary movement if it persists in peace negotiations in the Philippines or abroad?

JMS: The NDFP has been wise and prudent in engaging in peace negotiations with the GRP since the very start, whether this be the 1992 The Hague Joint Declaration or the formal opening of peace talks in Brussels in 1995. The Hague Joint Declaration correctly sets the aims and purposes, the principles, the substantive agenda and basic methods for negotiating and arriving at agreements. And the resultant agreements are solid, just and reasonable and mutually agreeable at every step for both NDFP and GRP.

The NDFP learns positive and negative lessons from its own negotiating experience and from the negotiating experiences of revolutionary movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America, the best time really for the NDFP negotiating panel to negotiate with the GRP is when this reactionary government and its armed forces are already losing in the civil war and agrees to surrender or exchange prisoners in advance of the final offensive of the NPA.

There are also examples of negotiating experiences for two conflicting sides in a civil war to agree on forging a truce and alliance against a common enemy. Take for example the Communists and the Guomindang forging their truce and alliance against Japan in 1937. This lasted until Japan was defeated in 1945. And the Communists and the Guomindang again resorted to peace negotiations in an attempt to avert the resumption of the civil war after the defeat of Japan.

Is there a difference between liberal democratic teachings about people's sovereignty and the US presumption of terrorism against revolutionary movements? What do you think of the presumption that the revolutionary forces of the people are nonstate actors and are chargeable for terrorism and all sorts of common crimes and that there is no longer need to charge them with a political offense like rebellion?

JMS: There is a fundamental difference between the liberal democratic teachings about people's sovereignty and the US imperialist presumption of terrorism against revolutionary movements. The US and its puppets have violated the principle of people's sovereignty and the established laws on co-belligerency in civil war. The irony of it all is that since Hitlerite Germany US imperialism has been the worst of terrorist powers under the Nuremberg principle for killing 25 to 30 million people in wars of aggression after World War II.

It is wrong and unjust for the US and its puppets to misconstrue that the revolutionary forces of the people are nonstate actors and are chargeable for terrorism and all sorts of common crimes and that there is no longer need to recognize the social roots of rebellion and to charge them with a political offense like rebellion. In fact, the revolutionary forces of the people in the Philippines have established their own government in the countryside. In any resumption of GRP-NDFP peace negotiations, Duterte's designations of the CPP, NPA and the NDFP as "terrorist" must be done away with.

How can the GRP-NDFP peace negotiation be resumed if there are these anti-terrorist presumptions against the liberal democratic principle that rebellion is socially-rooted problem and can be solved politically and that the people have the right to rebel or revolt against the state which even if duly-constituted by basic law and by periodic elections turns tyrannical and oppressive?

JMS: After the Estrada regime terminated the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations in 1999, these could be resumed upon the reaffirmation of the Hague Joint Declaration and subsequent agreements during the early months of the Arroyo regime. After the Arroyo suspended peace negotiations indefinitely in her own time, these could be resumed in 2016 in the time of Duterte upon the reaffirmation of the aforesaid declaration and subsequent agreements.

But I think that under current circumstances the resumption of GRP-NDFP peace negotiations can be done

only after the following: the nullification of the Anti-Terror Act which is actually a law of state terrorism, the dissolution of the NTF-Elcac and the explicit withdrawal of the designation of the CPP, NPA and NDFP as “terrorist” organizations.

The devil Duterte has done everything to render impossible the resumption of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations during his regime and even thereafter. But that may be a blessing in disguise because all that Duterte has done to prevent peace negotiations compels and drives the people to wage the people’s democratic revolution until complete victory.

Will you still be willing to personally participate in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations in the future?

JMS: Yes, so long as the NDFP asks me to perform a role that I can do competently. It is not the GRP or anyone on the GRP side who decides who works for a just peace on the NDFP side. It is quite absurd that the GRP and its military officials often prate that I am already disconnected from the Philippines, especially from the revolutionary forces, and yet they also abuse my name by putting it in their “terrorist list” or in every charge sheet against the NPA. At any rate, the focus of my work now is to consolidate my works in a series of books and make sure that my intellectual and political legacy is bequeathed to future generations of Filipino patriots and revolutionaries.

Have you ever regretted that you did not become a high GRP official or even GRP president and try to make the new democratic revolution from within the existing state?

JMS: Since I was 19 years old in 1958, I have dedicated myself to theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism and to the continuation of the Filipino people’s democratic revolution. Since my childhood, I knew what it would take to become a congressman, senator, governor and cabinet member because close relatives of mine have occupied such positions.

But I was never interested in attaining the level of corruption and demagoguery needed to become president. I think that becoming president in the current ruling system in the Philippines is not a sure sign of noble integrity, intelligence and competence for the benefit of the people. Crooks and butchers have become president in the Philippines.

On the 2022 Philippine Elections

Interview by Eunice Barbara C. Novio

May 4, 2022

1. *Why can't we have a Philippine President from the labour sector? Why the Philippine Left is not supporting Leody de Guzman?*

JMS: It is possible to have a Philippine president from the working class with more effective work at arousing, organizing and mobilizing the toiling masses of workers and peasants as the electoral base and winning over the urban petty bourgeoisie on a program of full national independence, democracy, social justice, economic development through genuine land reform and national industrial development, expansion of social services, cultural progress and international solidarity for peace and development.

As done in certain Latin American countries, the effective work has to be done on a daily basis from year to year and from decade to decade and not only during the electoral campaign period. It has to be done in the course of resolute and militant struggle against the overall dominance of US imperialism, the local exploiting classes of big compradors, landlords and bureaucrat capitalists, the reactionary state and the political dynasties.

The biggest of the patriotic and progressive organizations of workers, peasants and urban petty bourgeoisie that are in BAYAN and Makabayan Bloc of parties did not make any move in the year 2021 to prepare for fielding ambitiously a full slate of national and local candidates in the 2022 elections or for making such a slate as temporary base for the modest purpose of negotiating a winnable coalition with other relatively progressive parties and groups. They seemed to be unable to anticipate that the competing bourgeois parties would be small and improvised and headed by mediocre presidential and vice-presidential candidates.

Lakas ng Masa of Leody de Guzman has had the daring to present himself as the presidential candidate of the working class in 2022 but he belongs to Lakas ng Masa which is a minority part of the organized workers and has limited resources for nationwide campaign. Without their prior consent and support for Leody de Guzman, other working-class parties and progressive parties made their own commitments and plans other than supporting him. At any rate, Ka Leody is commendable for taking a patriotic and progressive stand on major issues.

2. *When we say, "mature" voters, do the Filipino voters reached that maturity already? What do you think?*

JMS: I consider the entire Filipino nation mature in view of the fact that the Filipinos have arisen as a nation since the Philippine revolution of 1896 and as the first nation in Asia to overthrow a Western colonial power (Spanish colonialism) and give a serious fight to the US imperialist war of aggression from 1899 onwards. Filipinos of various class interests have their respective serious interests. Those who use the term "mature" should explain themselves in concrete ways.

As far as I am concerned, the broad masses of voters in any society ruled by the exploiting classes can be divided into three general categories: the politically advanced, middling and backward sections. In the Philippines, the politically advanced are those who are anti-imperialist and truly democratic, those in the middle are mixed up and vacillate and those who are backward uncritically follow the dictates coming from the imperialists and exploiting classes through the reactionary state, the schools, media and other institutions and agencies.

The workers and peasants have their common rights, interests and aspirations in order to form their own political programs, parties and organizations. But it is a big task for them just to maintain and develop the unity of the working people in view of the accumulated power and wealth which enable the exploiting classes to use the state, the schools, the mass media, the churches and other institutions to mislead the exploited masses, manipulate the middle social strata and dish out as democratic the competitions and rivalries of ruling class factions in the form of the dominant political parties.

3. *What does the Philippine Left expect from the next president (Robredo or Marcos)?*

JMS: The anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and anti-fascist Philippine Left expects the worst to come from the presidency of Marcos Junior and vice presidency of Sara Duterte. These will continue the brutal and corrupt legacies of their parents. Marcos Junior is out to consolidate and expand the bureaucratic loot of his parents and use state power to do so. Sara is out to continue the reign of state terrorism and to prevent the prosecution and trial of her father for crimes against humanity before the International Criminal Court and for plunder and mass murder

before Philippine courts.

On the basis of the large mass rallies that have supported her, Robredo is certain to win the presidential elections because she is the credible opposition leader. But the incumbent president Duterte is hell-bent on rigging the electoral vote count. He controls the Comelec and all the civil and military personnel deputized for poll duty. The ballots can be pre-shaded, with cash incentives provided to voters, and then the Smartmatic merely reflects the pre-shading on the ballots.

If the Marcos-Duterte tandem and slate win, there will be gigantic mass uprisings in Metro Manila and nationwide. This is predictable because of the gigantic mass rallies that have supported the Robredo-Pangilinan tandem and slate and have overshadowed the small rallies of Marcos and Duterte. If Robredo somehow prevails over Marcos despite the electoral cheating by Duterte, the Filipino people will welcome her willingness to resume the peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines but will be wary over her neoliberal thinking in economic policy and over her discernible subservience to US imperialism in matters of national security.

4. What can we expect from the Philippine Left, whoever wins the presidency?

JMS: As a patriotic and democratic force against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism, the Philippine Left will continue to wage all possible and necessary forms of struggle for full national independence, democracy, social justice, economic development through genuine land reform and national industrial development, expansion of social services, cultural progress and international solidarity for peace and development.

Marcos Junior and Sara have already declared their plan to continue the anti-people, anti-national and anti-democratic policies of their respective parents. Thus, the Philippine Left is ready to fight them and to continue the just struggle of the Filipino people for national and social liberation. In the case of Robredo becoming president, the Philippines Left will welcome the resumption of peace negotiations as an opportunity worth taking for addressing the roots of the armed conflict with comprehensive agreements on social, economic and political reforms in order to achieve a just and lasting peace.