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The Tortuous Road of Peace Negotiations

Through various means, the revolutionary movement maximizes all opportunities and circumstances to advance the people's aspirations. One example is the peace negotiations that has resulted in the Agreement on Respect for Human Rights, which depicts, to a certain degree, the history, situation and aspirations of the toiling masses.

On February 1989, Comrade Luis Jalandoni expressed to the Aquino regime the readiness the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) to start a new series of peace talks with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP). This was followed by a letter from Comrade Manuel Romero (then chairperson of the NDFP) to the Aquino regime dated September 20, 1990 which laid the proposed agenda for the formal talks.

From this initiative, preliminary talks were held by representatives of both panels in Singapore, Hongkong and The Netherlands. The series exploratory talks led to the signing of The Hague Joint Declaration of September 1, 1992. This basic document sets the objective, framework and substantive agenda for the formal peace negotiations. According to the Joint Declaration, the substantive agenda of the negotiations shall cover respect for human rights and international humanitarian law; socio-economic reforms; political and constitutional reforms; and cessation hostilities and disposition of forces.

Meanwhile, on June 14, 1994, the two panels signed the Breukelen Joint Statement which reiterated commitment to The Hague Joint Declaration and prescribed that the talks be held a neutral country. They also approved the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) which provided protection for NDFP representatives involved in the negotiations.

The formal peace negotiations began on June 26, 1995 in Brussels, Belgium. The talks went through many twists and turns due to the conflicting views of the NDFP and the GRP on fundamental social issues, the roots of the civil war and the methods resolving this. On several occasions, the GRP derailed the talks by demanding that the NDFP give up its revolutionary integrity. It violated the JASIG in arresting NDFP consultants Sotero Llamas and Danilo Borjal. Howard Dee himself, chairperson the GRP panel, is foremost among those who have been peddling the line of demanding the outright capitulation of the NDFP.

Last March 16--after 21 months of intensive and complicated negotiations--both panels signed the CARHRIHL. It was signed by Comrade Mariano Orosa, chairperson of the NDFP National Council, on April 10 and by President Estrada on August 7.

Along with signing the Agreement, Estrada reorganized the GRP panel. The pacificationists now obviously have a bigger say with Howard Dee's retention as panel chairperson and the appointment of Sens. Franklin Drilon and Rodolfo Biazon. Soon after, they moved to block the

implementation of the CARHRIHL and attempted anew to deceive the NDFP into subjecting itself to the political authority of the GRP.

The reactionary ruling classes are at odds regarding the continuation of the peace talks. In order for the negotiations to move on, the GRP must make a more significant show of sincerity and seriousness such as genuinely implementing the CARHRIHL. Opposed to this are the rabid counterrevolutionaries, especially the high command of the AFP and PNP, who are obsessed with intensifying their attacks on the NPA's guerrilla fronts and expanding surveillance operations against the people.

On the other hand, a section of the reactionary ruling class continues to view the peace talks as a means to assuage the anger of the acutely impoverished and suffering masses and soothe the anxieties of foreign investors. In any case, they face the people's growing resistance and the resurgence of revolutionary armed struggle consequent to the Second Great Rectification Movement.

With their all-out collaborationism and rapid disintegration, the counterrevolutionary revisionist renegades have been rendered completely irrelevant in the conduct and prospects of the peace talks. Nonetheless, they continue to sow intrigue against and attack the Party, NPA and NDF and express their bias for the reactionary government and the pacificationists against the armed revolutionary movement when it comes to the peace negotiations.

Their conspiracy with Imelda Marcos and Joseph Estrada to deprive the vast majority of the real victims of the Marcos dictatorship's fascist atrocity of indemnification and justice is utterly despicable.

The NDFP will never abandon its revolutionary initiative to uphold human rights and international humanitarian law for the fundamental benefit of the people and as an inevitable step in addressing the basic roots of the civil war. Whatever vilification or stratagem that may be thrown its way by the GRP and other counterrevolutionaries, the revolutionary movement will not be hindered from resolutely advancing the revolutionary agenda for a genuine, just and lasting peace. AB

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