

**PROFESSOR JOSE MARIA SISON:  
ON PEOPLE'S WAR AND PEACE NEGOTIATIONS**

Interview of Prof. Jose Maria Sison  
by Roselle Valerio, Liberation International

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' 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 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.