“First as tragedy, second as farce”: Marcos, Duterte, and the Communist Parties of the Philippines

Joseph Scalise
26 August 2020
“a pathologically rabid anti-communist and CIA psywar agent posing as an academic Trotskyite.”

“futile attempts of Trotskyites abroad (like Joseph Scalice) and in the Philippines to blame the legal democratic forces as well as the revolutionary forces for the rise to power and current criminal rule of the traitorous, tyrannical, genocidal, plundering and swindling Duterte regime.”
Critique of the Trotskyite attacks on the CPP and the Philippine revolution

Interview with
Jose Maria Sison, Founding Chairperson
Communist Party of the Philippines

1. It is well-known that Joseph Scalise has been attacking your writings and you personally in violent anti-communist and anti-Stalinist language since 2017. Why did you criticize him only this recently? If you were aware of him before, what has been your view of him?

Jose Maria Sison (JMS): My view of him is that he is an ineffective propagandist. He is a typical Trotskyite, a typical opportunist, a typical opportunist who is trying to make a career out of attacking and misrepresenting people. He has not been critical of me and my writings, but he has been critical of other people.

2. Scalise has been using violent language against you and the CPP. Why did you not reply to him?

JMS: I have been aware of the rabid anti-communist and anti-Stalinist writings of Scalise for quite some time, long before now. I have ignored him because American comrades and friends have told me that he was already well-exposed as a Trotskyite and as a paid agent of the Central Intelligence Agency, paid to focus on the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and my writings and make a career out of attacking and misrepresenting these.

3. You have mentioned that Scalise was butchery aimed at the poor people and intended to intimidate the broad masses of the people. On their own independent account, human rights organizations and legal democratic forces promptly addressed and denounced it. How do you respond to Scalise’s attacks?

JMS: I have not responded to Scalise because I have been aware of his tactics and his methods of attacking and misrepresenting people. I have not been concerned with Scalise’s attacks because they are not new and they are not effective.
A public declaration

Those who are acquainted with my scholarship … know that my historical work is trenchantly critical of the role played by the leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines and of the various organizations affiliated with its political line.

I would thus like to be explicitly clear on this point: I unreservedly defend the party and those associated with it from the attacks carried out against them by the state and by paramilitary and vigilante groups. The murder of Randall Echanis was an attack on the working masses of the Philippines and marked a dramatic step toward police state rule.

The defense against the danger of dictatorship requires the unity of the working class for its own independent interests. My opposition to the CPP and its allied groupings is based on the fact that they have consistently opposed the political independence of the working class and have forever sought to subordinate its interests to the formation of an alliance with a section of the ruling elite.

It was this perspective, the program of Stalinism, that led the leadership of the party to embrace Duterte, facilitating his rise to power and downplaying the danger of dictatorship. … My opposition to the leadership of the party and its political program is thus a defense of the interests of the working class. For the same fundamental reason that I oppose the party -- defense of the working class -- I publicly declare my defense of those associated with the party from attacks by the state and its paramilitary forces. – 14 August 2020
“War on drugs”

Jennilyn Olayres hugs her murdered partner, Michael Siaron. The placard reads "I'm a pusher." (23 July 2016)
“It is an outright lie that the CPP supported the Duterte regime”

JMS: Only a Trotskyite can interpret peace negotiations between two warring parties as support for Duterte and betrayal of the people. It is also an outright lie that the CPP supported the Duterte regime and his extrajudicial killings of poor people for two years. The peace negotiations practically came to an end in August 2016 when Duterte released only 19 political prisoners and reneged on his promise to amnesty and release all political prisoners.

As early as July 2016, the CPP and New People’s Army (NPA) condemned Duterte’s war on drugs when it became utterly clear that it was butchery aimed at the poor people and intended to intimidate the broad masses of the people. On their own independent account, human rights organizations and legal democratic forces promptly addressed and denounced the "kill, kill, kill" program of Duterte. It also became

JMS: The BAYAN and other patriotic and democratic organizations held rallies to ventilate and present what they called the People’s Agenda and the social, economic and political reforms that ought to be taken up in the peace negotiations. They were acting as peace advocates on behalf of the people. It is malicious and mendacious of Scalice to present their peace advocacy as supporting Duterte. At the same time, he exposes himself as a red-tagger, communist-baiter and anti-communist agent by calling them front organizations of the CPP. Scalice is as vociferously malicious as that tin can General Parlade.
The mayor of Davao

“summary execution of criminals remains the most effective way to curb kidnapping and illicit drugs.”
– Rodrigo Duterte, addressing President’s Arroyo’s anti-crime summit (2002)

“No one involved [in the vigilante murders] covers his face.”
– Philip Alston, UN Special Rapporteur

“The mayor deserves our support. Those from outside the city cannot appreciate what the mayor has done to maintain the order that we enjoy. Duterte’s brand of leadership has kept us safe and secure.”
– Cong. Luz Ilagan, Gabriela (Manila Times, 2009)
“Mayor Duterte should become President”

January 2015. Duterte staged a press conference in front of a hammer and sickle flag, and announced that if elected he would abolish congress, privatize government assets—including social security—and form a coalition government with the CPP. He promised that Sison would be made head of the newly privatized Social Welfare bureau.

Sison responded on Facebook, stating: “Mayor Duterte should become President.”
“that number will become 100,000”

May 25 2015. During a radio interview, Duterte was confronted with a Human Rights Watch report that over 1,000 people were killed during the late 1990s by death squads in his city.

Duterte responded that he was the head of the death squads. “If I become president … that number will become 100,000. I will feed the dead bodies to the fish of Manila Bay.”
Leoncio Pitao wake
Pitao-Duterte graffiti (July 2015)
Campaigning for Duterte, 1
Campaigning for Duterte, 2
#duterte
“Pledge our full support”
“You don’t just attack capitalists”

“You don’t just attack capitalists ... We can work with nationalist capitalists even as we talk to and persuade compradors ... Our honeymoon is just beginning. We’re talking to him. He’s offered us positions.”

– Sison, Facebook, May 2016
Duterte defends women - Sison

“While mayor of Davao City, Duterte has recognized and appreciated the role of women in public life, has created facilities for women and children in need and has demonstrated his abhorrence of violence to women.”

– Sison, Address to Youth Leaders, 10 June 2016
“What is in sight is kind of coalition government”-- Sison

“What is in sight is a kind of coalition government that involves the participation of the Communist Party amidst other patriotic and progressive forces. It is a government of national unity, peace and development. ... The question therefore arises whether the national democratic revolution can be completed in the absence of a people’s war. ...”

“Revolutionary armed units can become guards of the environment and the industries under conditions of peace and development. Integration of armed forces is permissible.”

– Sison, Address to Youth Leaders, 10 June 2016
A reign of terror begins

AFP June 12. "Armed police are detaining crying children, bewildered drunks, and shirtless men throughout the Philippine capital in a night-time blitz that is offering an authoritarian taste of life under incoming president Rodrigo Duterte."

"... parents of children found on the streets at night alone were jailed."
Raised fists and talk of peace
War on drugs a “boon for the poor”

“We believe that Duterte’s war on dangerous drugs and crime is a boon to the poor.” – Einstein Recedes, secretary general Anakbayan, 26 June 2016.

Renato Reyes, secretary general of BAYAN wrote on July 4, “To put it plainly, he is an ally.” While he admitted that BAYAN has “differences” with Duterte, he argued that “to be immediately confrontational ... every time the President said something disagreeable during the past month would have weakened the alliance.” He appealed to his readers, “We should at least give him a chance.”
“The Filipino people are elated”

“The Filipino people are elated over Duterte’s nationalist and pro-people policy pronouncements.” – Bayan, People’s 100 Day Agenda, 29 June 2016.
Sison began ending some of his addresses with the statement, “Long Live President Duterte!” He posted this image on Facebook a number of times.
Duterte’s SONA was a “breath of fresh air” – Anakbayan

“I have to slaughter these idiots who are destroying my country” and added “I told the military if you see any [criminal], shoot them. Even if they surrender with a white flag. That’s just for war, not criminals. Shoot them. Show no mercy to them.” – Duterte, State of the Nation Address.

The State of the Nation Address (SONA) was “a breath of fresh air.” – Anakbayan
NPA to join the “war on drugs”

“The people will completely support [puspusang susuportahan] the steps that Duterte will take to remove and punish the drug syndicates.” – Ang Bayan, June 21 2016.

“The CPP welcomes President Duterte's call of cooperation with the revolutionary forces against widespread drug trafficking.” – Ang Bayan, July 7 2016.

Luis Jalandoni: "the relationship between the revolutionary movement and President Duterte is excellent." (Ang Bayan, August 2016)
NPA to join the “war on drugs”

July 1. Duterte speaking to the heads of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, called on the NPA to “use your kangaroo courts to kill them [alleged drug pushers] to speed up the solution to our problem.”

The CPP responded on July 2 with a statement entitled “Response to President Duterte’s call for anti-drug cooperation,” which opened by declaring that the party “welcomes President Duterte’s call for cooperation with the revolutionary forces against widespread drug trafficking.” The CPP stated that they “share in President Duterte’s reprehension of the illegal drug trade.”
NPA to join “war on drugs”

“The NPA is ready to give battle to those who will resist arrest with armed violence.”

Sison spoke the next day in an interview on CNN, in which he announced that the party would be violently cracking down on alleged drug dealers. Asked how suspects would be accorded due process in the NPA’s courts, he stated that the “people’s prosecutor” would present prima facie evidence in the form of witness testimony before “revolutionary justice” was carried out.
“It is an outright lie that the CPP supported the Duterte regime”

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The class origins of Sison

Census of Property Belongings
of Mr. Celestino S. Sison
Burned in March, 1945

I. House assessed for P1870 under
Tax No. 26018

II. Bridge assessed for P300 under
Tax No. 26028

III. Government assessed for P700 under
Tax No. 2602 in the name of Mrs.
Florentina C. Sison

IV. a kitchen 7x6, valued for P300, and

1. Piano, grand, American make F1200

2. Wardrobe, refin, large — 400

Janet J. 5, 1949

My dear Uncle,

I have learned from reliable source that Secretary So-
tero Balagut is employing Secret Agents of the Department
of Interior in pursuance of the present campaign against dissi-
dents in Central Luzon and other parts of the Philippines.

Inasmuch as I have not known personally the Secretary
of the Interior, and I know that you are very close to him,
I am soliciting said position through your kind intervention,
and you can rest assured that I can tackle the job handily, be-
cause of my academic qualifications and wide experience in de-
aling with the peasants.

Univ. of Hawaii, Ramon Sison Collection
Claro M. Recto and the quest for a mass movement

“… industrialization of the country by Filipino capitalists, and not simply the prevention of industrialization by foreign capitalists; exploitation of our natural resources by Filipino capital; development and strengthening of Filipino capitalism, not foreign capitalism; increase of the national income, but not allowing it to go mostly for the benefit of non-Filipinos.” – Recto, Speech to the Cavite Jaycees, 24 Feb 1957

Philippine Collegian, Feb 1961
“We are siding with Filipino capitalists”

“In terms of class tendencies, material interests and ideology, the left wing would be occupied by the working class and the peasantry. The middle wing embraces three strata of the so-called middle class and these three strata can themselves be described as left, middle, and right within the middle wing, the left middle wing is occupied by the intelligentsia, and self-reliant small property owners whom we may call the petty bourgeoisie; the middle middle, the nationalist entrepreneurs, whom we may call the national or middle bourgeoisie; and the right middle, the merchants who are partially investors in local industry and who are also partially compradors. The right wing is composed of the anti-nationalist forces, such as the compradors, the landlords and their rabid intellectual and political agents”.

Sison, The Nationalist as Political Activist, 1966
Winning over the “middle forces”

“To tilt the balance for the purpose of isolating the right wing composed of the enemies of progress and democracy, it is necessary therefore for the main and massive forces of the workers and peasants to unite with the intelligentsia, small property owners and independent handicraftsmen, win over the nationalist entrepreneurs and at least, neutralize the right middle forces. The resulting unity is what we call nationalist or anti-imperialist and anti-feudal unity.”

Sison, The Nationalist as Political Activist (1966)
Stalinism: two stage revolution

Quoting Mao: “Some people fail to understand why, so far from fearing capitalism, Communists should advocate its development in certain given conditions. Our answer is simple. The substitution of a certain degree of capitalist development for the oppression of foreign imperialism and domestic feudalism is not only an advance but an unavoidable process. It benefits the proletariat as well as the bourgeoisie, and the former perhaps more. It is not domestic capitalism but foreign imperialism and domestic feudalism which are superfluous in China today; indeed, we have too little of capitalism.”

Sison continued, “It is a basic principle of Marxism that bourgeois-democratic conditions must first exist before a socialist society can be built up. What we need in the Philippines today is a conscious national unity strong enough to assert our own sovereignty and achieve Filipino democracy before we are divided on the issue of socialism.”

Sison, Socialism and Nationalism (1967)
Bloc of four classes

CPP, Drowing: Tulong sa Pagtuturo
The progressive national bourgeoisie, 1: Diosdado Macapagal

Ignacio Lacsina (APL 30 Apr 1971)

LM (Sison), Handbook on Land Reform (1963)
Port strike of 1963

“Aware of the epochal social and national reforms now being energetically carried out under the leadership of President Diosdado Macapagal; “Believing that nothing short of the unity of all forces for democratic change can assure the success of these reforms ...

“Realizing that the forces opposed to reform programmes have banded together under the banner of the Nacionalista Party; ...

“AGREE TO COALESCE THE PARTIES effective immediately …”

LP-LM Coalition Agreement, 6 Aug 1963
**Land reform**

“To further make itself appear progressive and to swindle the peasantry, the Macapagal puppet regime enacted the Agricultural Land Reform Code. Like all previous land reform laws, the code amounts to nothing when shorn of its littering generalities and when the provisions favorable to landlords are exposed. After a few token land reform projects, the bankruptcy of the code becomes conspicuous....”

Macapagal’s land reform was “a bombastic collection of words to cover the oft-repeated lies of the landlord class.”


Marcos “received greater American financial support [than Macapagal] and ... this proved to be one of the decisive factors in the outcome of the election....”

“Since the early 1950s, the nationalist bourgeoisie or Filipino industrialists have grown in size and strength. They now constitute an important force in Philippine politics.... the Filipino national bourgeoisie turned decisively against the Macapagal government....”

“Marcos himself will be forced to make a choice between his people and his financiers....”

“[The national democratic forces] must redouble their efforts to amass collective strength at the time when the President is performing his balancing at in domestic affairs. For it is only the strength of the national democratic forces that is capable of drawing the president to their side one the moment of decision is at hand.”

Kabataang Makabayan (KM)

“On the side of imperialism are the compradores and the big landlords. On the side of national democracy are the national bourgeoisie, composed of Filipino entrepreneurs and traders; the petty bourgeoisie, composed of small-property owners, students, intellectuals and professionals; and the broad masses of our people, composed of the working class and the peasantry to which the vast majority of the Filipino youth of today belong.”

Sison, Speech to KM Founding Congress (1964)
“It would be nearly impossible to overestimate the gravity of the problems with which our next ambassador to Manila must deal. It has become common-place for people knowledgeable on the Philippines to predict a vast social upheaval in the near future. There is widespread talk that the current president will be the last popularly elected Philippine chief executive. Many high-level American officials consider the Philippines to be the most serious and the most bleak threat that we face in Asia.”

Rising tide of global authoritarianism
Sino-Soviet split

Mao Tse-tung's Thought Lights Up the Whole World

Statement of the Communist Party of the Philippines

The Political Bureau of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in a statement on May 1 said that Mao Tse-tung's thought—the highest development of Marxism-Leninism in our era of world socialist revolution—has lighted up the whole world, according to a Manila report.

The statement reaffirms the CPP's commitment to fight U.S. imperialism and its reactionary allies in the Philippines; to fight modern revisionism and all forms of reaction; to unify with all Marxist-Leninist Parties and to pursue the policy of international united front.

The statement says that the CPP is committed to a life-and-death struggle against U.S. imperialism and its local reactionary allies, comprador capitalists and landlords. The CPP has long been a strong base of U.S. imperialism in Asia and its aggression against Filipino sovereignty in 1968. It has long been a stepping-stone for U.S. aggression against China and the whole of Southeast Asia and Asia. It is the inextricable duty of the Filipino people, under the leadership of the working class and its Party, to expel the imperialist power of the United States from the Philippines. In pursuing its anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggle, the Party undertakes nationalistic Party struggles, development of rural bases and armed struggle and a national united front under the leadership of the working class.

The CPP, the statement says, is committed to an unswerving struggle against modern revisionism with the Soviet revisionist ruling clique as its centre. There is no middle road between modern revisionism and the proletarian revolutionary line. The fateful situation of the Party dictates clearly that there is no path to national and social liberation except through armed struggle. The CPP is committed to the strongest frontal unity with all Marxist-Leninist Parties. In this regard, the thought of Comrade Mao Tse-tung lights up the whole world as the highest development of Marxism-Leninism in this era of world socialist revolution.

In conclusion, the CPP is committed to the policy of international united front led by the international proletariat, resolutely directing its struggle against U.S. imperialism. It rejects the slogan of "united action" raised by the Soviet revisionist ruling clique. This slogan is a hollow pose to trap the working class of the world into collusion with U.S. imperialism.
“To Lenin we owe the statement that there could not be revolution without a revolutionary theory. ... Lenin conceived of the revolution in two steps: the first the bourgeois, then the proletarian.”


Marcos’ book is “a brilliant analysis of the ills of Philippine society as well as a prescription for a ‘revolution’ from the center.”

Jesus Lava, 1971
“...it is all to the good.”

“There are certain reasons why the steps taken by Marcos would even be beneficial to us at present. Those who have been arrested from the Liberal Party and the Catholic groups and from the press are those who have had links (an alliance, actually) with the Maoists and have been publicizing and encouraging Maoist propaganda and action against the PKP as well as Marcos. … If the vicious Maoist propaganda can be stifled, it is all to the good.”

W. Pomeroy to J.S. Allen, 1 Oct 1972
“True, Marcos has taken steps of reconciliation toward the socialist countries (so did Franco) and the Maoists have been discomforted. (Remember when the CPUSA did not lift a finger when the Smith Act was first used against the Trotskyites, only to get it in the neck very soon?)”

J.S. Allen to W. Pomeroy, 6 Oct 1972
"Now that you are under attack, we, the first victims of the Smith Act offer you our aid. We are convinced that only a united struggle by the whole labor movement -- by all the tendencies within it -- can defeat this conspiracy to deprive you of your democratic rights....

“We ask you not to permit the profound political differences between your party and ours to stand in the way of a broad united front of the working class in defense of Civil Rights. While you did not come to the defense of the Trotskyists when we were persecuted under the Smith Act, we have already made public our opposition to your indictment and are fully prepared to further assist in your defense.”

Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party to the Central Committee of the CPUSA (1948)
The suppression of the MLG

THE PARTY'S STRUGGLE AGAINST ULTRA-"LEFTISM" UNDER MARTIAL LAW

During the period immediately following the proclamation of martial law, the PNP was confronted with the splittist challenge posed by a number of intellectual and lumpen elements who formed an anti-Party front called the "Marxist-Leninist Group". Failing to impose their adventurist policy of an all-out armed struggle through foco guerrilism, this grouping made elaborate plans to subvert the Party through splittist activities both from within and without, all of which were roundly repulsed.

This article reviews the highlights of the ideological struggle conducted by the Party against this group, and draws the practical lessons gained from this struggle.

From Trotsky to Marighella

The splittist activities of the so-called "Marxist-Leninist Group" took concrete forms during the first few months after the proclamation of martial law, and simmered down after their political and organizational rout during the first half of 1973.

A measure of the gravity of the problem posed by the splitting group was the fact that it was headed by no less than the then head of the Party's Education Department, and that it took place during the highly confusing period right after the proclamation of martial law.
“On the part of US imperialism, there are two complementary reasons for the imposition of fascist rule. The first is to suppress the national liberation movement, and the second is to pave the way for a more accelerated development of the capitalist system in the Philippines...

“The Marcos military-technocratic dictatorship is reforming the government by weeding out official corruption in response to the demand of foreign capital for an efficient administrative machinery.”

PKP, “New Situation, New Tasks” December 1972
“The Philippines is a neocolonial country of dynamic capitalist development. Its economy is in the main backward and deformed by colonial plunder. ... Under the hegemony of finance capital, spearheaded by US imperialism, the Philippines is vigorously being transformed from a predominantly feudal country into a modern capitalist economy. Today it is experiencing a tremendously rapid pace of capitalist buildup through the instrumentality of the martial-law dictatorship.”

Political Resolution, 6th PKP Congress (1973)
The CPP

KM, Kalayaan (1971)

GW 13 Mar 1968
He spoke of nationalist industrialization and the riddance of US imperialism but failed to see the necessity of agrarian revolution as the basis of a movement towards the achievement of a self-reliant economy which is in turn the basis of genuine political independence.

For more than ten years already, every administration has found it suitable to use such slogans as “Filipino First”, “Unfinished Revolution”, and “New Filipino”, with a seemingly national democratic content but actually devoid of any determination to achieve national democracy.
“[D]omestic feudalism is the social base of US imperialism. ... An agrarian revolution is needed to destroy the links between US imperialism and feudalism and deprive the former of its social base.”

“Aquino believes that martial law is the most likely means Marcos will use in order to stay in power. Aquino said that he would support Marcos if this is the course he adopts. Since the law and order and economic situation is deteriorating so rapidly, in Aquino's view, the good of the country requires strong measures on the part of the Central Government. The growing threat from the dissidents, the worsening law and order problem ... were cited by Aquino as reasons why stronger central government action is needed. Such action means martial law. Were he President, Aquino indicated that he would not hesitate to take such strong action and would, for example, execute several corrupt officials at the Luneta Park in Manila as a lesson to other officials that he meant business.” – Memorandum of confidential meeting of Aquino with US Embassy political officers, 12 September 1972
"[W]e consider the present situation far more favorable to the revolutionary movement than ever before. ..."

"The more the fascist dictator madly goes after all kinds of workers' organizations, the more it will aggravate its already isolated position. The more the workers' rights are suppressed, the more will the workers become fearless of the US-Marcos dictatorship. ... The violent suppression of workers' unions and strikes can only yield more determined fighters for the revolutionary cause, provided the Party does well its duty of arousing and mobilizing the workers."

Sison, *Ang Bayan*, October 1 1972
“win over members of the national bourgeoisie”

The Party should win over members of the national bourgeoisie, in the cities and in the countryside, to give political and material support to the revolutionary movement. Since they themselves cannot be expected to bear arms against the enemy, they can extend to the revolutionary movement support in cash or kind or allow use of their facilities. The Party should protect their legitimate interests against the wanton assaults of US imperialism and the puppet dictatorship. The national bourgeoisie can join the anti-imperialist and antifascist united front and it will be amply represented in the national coalition government to be set up in the future.

- Sison, *Ang Bayan*, October 1, 1972
Mao embraces Marcos

A DIPLOMATIC VICTORY OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
A VICTORY OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE

The following are excerpts from the October 20, 1974 special issue of Ang Bayan, the official publication of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Chapters will receive a copy of the complete text of this article for their reference.

The recent visit of Mrs. Imelda Marcos and her entourage to China, the cordial reception extended to them by their Chinese hosts (including Chairman Mao Tse-tung, Premier Chou En-lai and Comrade Chiang Ching) and the initial trade agreement made at a government-to-government level in the course of that visit comprise a significant step towards the establishment of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the Philippines.
The defense of human rights?

“Ang batang rebolusyonaryo” (1978)
"With every zig and zag they are compelled to revamp history all over again. ..."

"The lie serves, therefore, as the fundamental ideological cement of the bureaucracy. The more irreconcilable becomes the contradiction between the bureaucracy and the people, all the ruder becomes the lie, all the more brazenly is it converted into criminal falsification and judicial frame-up."

Leon Trotsky, The Stalin School of Falsification