

What makes the Communist Party of the Philippines Stalinist?

Peter Symonds
29 May 1998

To: editor@wsws.org
Subject: Stalinist CPP

Pray tell me what makes the CPP and NDF Stalinist organisations?

Secondly, what would be the socialist version of a people's organisation that exists now in the Philippines?

Finally, where were the genuine 'socialist' forces during the People's Power Movement --- after all, this movement, no matter how flawed did get the dictator out, yes?

I look forward to your analysis. Thank you.

JG

Dear JG,

Thank you for your inquiry to the World Socialist Web Site regarding the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the National Democratic Front (NDF).

To answer your questions:

1. What makes the CPP and the NDF Stalinist?

The only reliable way of determining the orientation and outlook of any political party or tendency is through a class analysis of its origins and its program.

Stalinism is based on the the reactionary nationalist outlook of 'socialism in one country,' first elaborated in 1924 by Bukharin and Stalin in the struggle against the Marxist perspective of socialist internationalism defended by Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition.

The CPP was founded in 1968 on the basis of Mao's peculiar combination of Stalinism, Chinese nationalism and peasant radicalism, developed in the aftermath of the defeat of the Chinese revolution of 1925-27. Under Mao, the Chinese Communist Party tore itself away from its roots in the working class and turned to peasant guerillaism.

The CPP's chief ideologist and founding chairman, Jose Maria Sison, in his book *Philippine Society and*

Revolution, added nothing to the formulae of Stalinism other than a dose of Filipino nationalism. The consequences of Stalinism for the working class in the Philippines have been just as disastrous as elsewhere.

Fundamental to Stalinism is its opportunist adaptation to the national capitalist class, based on the so-called 'two stage theory'. In countries like the Philippines, the Stalinists assert that socialist demands cannot be advanced until the tasks of national independence, democracy and land reform are carried out by the bourgeoisie.

But the experiences of this century have revealed, over and over, the utterly servile character of the national bourgeoisie in the Philippines and other backward capitalist countries. The working class is the only force capable of resolving the outstanding democratic tasks by fighting to take power and establish a workers and peasants government to reorganise society on the basis of social need rather than profit.

Cory Aquino's 'peoples power' revolution in 1986 and the subsequent events in the Philippines demonstrated, once again, the incapacity of the bourgeoisie to carry out democratic or agrarian reforms. Aquino, like Marcos, was subservient to the interests of the US and other major powers, on the one hand, and inextricably tied to big landed interests in the countryside, on the other.

During 1986, Sison and the CPP leadership oscillated wildly between denouncing Aquino as 'a fascist' and attempting to form an alliance with her, on the grounds that there was a 'democratic' tendency in the new government.

What is common to these seemingly contradictory positions is the CPP's hostility to a patient political struggle to break the illusions among Filipino workers

that an Aquino government would fulfill their needs and aspirations for democratic rights and improved living standards.

By consciously fostering such illusions, the CPP enabled Aquino, backed by the US and sections of the military headed by Ramos, to exploit the extensive mass movement against Marcos for their own class purposes.

2. You ask: 'After all, this movement, no matter how flawed, did get the dictator out, yes?'

It is rather shortsighted to view the Marcos regime as simply the product of an individual dictator. Like the military dictatorships in South Korea, Thailand, Indonesia and elsewhere in the region, Marcos served the interests of big business -- both at home and abroad -- to brutally suppress any opposition to the exploitation of a rapidly expanding working class.

The installation of Aquino corresponded to the changing needs of international finance capital, which was why she received the backing of the US. As the global integration of production has developed over the last two decades, so the needs of capital have become more complex. Investors require not only cheap labour but access to banking, finance, insurance, telecommunications, transport -- areas of the economy rigidly controlled by Marcos and his cronies.

Marcos was ousted in 1986 but the profit system which spawned him remained intact. Under Aquino and then Ramos, the government implemented a series of economic 'reforms' aimed at opening up broad areas of the Filipino economy to international finance capital. At the same time, living standards of the Filipino masses have continued to deteriorate. The limited land reform initially proposed by Aquino was quickly ditched.

The latest national elections reveal that the same big business groupings and cliques dominate every aspect of economic and political life in the Philippines. The deep economic crisis throughout the region is having a devastating effect on the living standards of workers, peasants, the unemployed and the urban and rural poor.

The next president Joseph Estrada is pledged to continue the demands of big business for further 'economic restructuring' which will certainly lead to escalating unemployment and poverty.

3. Where were the genuine 'socialist' forces during the people's power movement?

As we are today, the international Trotskyist movement was fighting for the political independence of the working class in the Philippines from all sections of the bourgeoisie, and establishing the basis for a socialist alternative.

The Socialist Equality Party in Australia [then the Socialist Labour League] produced a series of articles exposing in detail the role of Sison and the CPP, warning of the dangers of the Aquino regime and elaborating a program for the formation of a socialist party of the working class in the Philippines.

The articles by Nick Beams, the SEP national secretary, are published in a pamphlet '*The way forward for the Philippine Revolution*'. If you wish to examine these political and theoretical issues, I would urge you to purchase a copy and study it carefully. It can be ordered online through the World Socialist Web Site or by writing to Mehring Books at PO Box 367, Bankstown, NSW, Australia, 2200.

Regards,

Peter Symonds

World Socialist Web Site Editorial Board



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact