

CPP founder Jose Maria Sison slanders historian Joseph Scalice for “red-tagging”

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The founder of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) Jose Maria Sison, who is responsible for repeated betrayals of the Philippine masses, launched an extraordinary tirade last week against historian Joseph Scalice who, in a lecture on August 26, documented the CPP’s treacherous record and explained that its roots lay in the nationalist ideology of Stalinism and Maoism.

The CPP devoted an entire special issue of its newspaper *Ang Bayan* to an interview with Sison attacking Scalice, which, among his other lies, branded the historian, without a shred of evidence, as a paid CIA agent. The interview, which was published on the day before the lecture, was aimed at intimidating those who had registered for the event. It is a clear sign of the deep crisis in the Maoist party.

A particularly sinister aspect of the interview was Sison’s accusation that Scalice and the “Trotskyites” were engaging in “red-tagging” by referring to the CPP in connection with its multitude of legal front organisations. According to Sison, associating organisations such as the electoral party-list Bayan Muna, the peasant-based KMP, and the trade union umbrella KMU with the CPP was “red-tagging” and opened their members up to the death squads of the military and fascist administration of President Duterte.

In the course of denying Scalice’s exposure of the CPP’s role in assisting Duterte into office, Sison lashed out at Scalice, declaring that he had exposed himself as “a red-tagger, communist-baiter and anti-communist agent by calling them front organisations of the CPP.” He continued his slanderous diatribe, branding the historian as “both a liar and incorrigible anti-communist agent of imperialism and reaction. Indeed, he is practically a wild informer for the benefit of the Duterte death squads.”

Sison uses the technique of the Big Lie pioneered by the Nazis, hoping that if the lie is colossal enough and repeated often enough then it will be believed. To suggest that Duterte and the Philippine armed forces are not aware that the CCP and its front organisations are connected is absurd. It is well known to anyone who is politically literate in the Philippines that organisations such as Bayan Muna, the KMP and KMU parrot every opportunist shift and turn in the CPP’s politics, and have done so for decades.

Extraordinarily, Sison in the very same interview boasts about the achievements of the CPP in establishing front organisations. “It has developed mass organisations of various classes and sectoral categories whose members total in the millions. It has built alliances of various types under the auspices of the National

Democratic Front of the Philippines,” he declares. In other words, while denouncing Scalice for “red-tagging,” in the next breath Sison admits what Scalice has said is true!

Sison’s accusation of “red-tagging” does nothing to protect the grassroots members of these organisations. The CPP uses this charge to silence anyone who might criticise their opportunist politics. Any attempt to connect the rotten alliances which the party has formed through its front organisations over the course of decades with the party itself is denounced as somehow assisting the assassination and murder of activists.

In reality it is the leadership of the CPP who are responsible for endangering the lives of grassroots organisers and activists, by facilitating the rise to power of figures like Duterte. Sison’s hue and cry over red-tagging serves to intimidate anyone who threatens to expose this fact.

In his attitude to the CPP, Scalice has taken a principled stance—denouncing the murders of members of its front organisations, while maintaining his criticism of the CPP and its Maoist politics. As Scalice explained in his lecture, he issued a statement on August 14 condemning the brutal killing of two members of the National Democratic movement and warning that it was “an attack on the working masses of the Philippines and marked a dramatic step toward police-state rule.”

This statement is in complete contrast to the utterly unprincipled methods of Sison who believes that he can brand his critics as “imperialist agents” and accuse them of “red-tagging” with impunity. He and the CPP have exploited this lie for decades in an effort to intimidate its political opponents. Moreover, to accuse an opponent of “red-tagging” is not simply a matter of verbal bullying but a very definite threat of physical violence and assassination.

Sison’s bald denial that the CPP has killed its own members is another of his lies. On multiple occasions in the 1980s, the party conducted internal purges against alleged military deep-penetration agents. Using torture and coerced testimonies, they executed over a thousand of their own cadre, burying them in mass graves in Mindanao, Laguna and elsewhere. In the 1990s and early 2000s, a number of political opponents, the majority of whom were former leaders of the party, were labeled by Sison as “Trotskyites” and assassinated. Many were gunned down in public.

The unprincipled methods and thuggery of the CPP are not simply a product of bad individuals but flow directly from the

unprincipled and reactionary politics of Stalinism and its Chinese variant, Maoism. Sison and the CPP rejected the fundamentals of Marxism from the outset: their program was nationalist not internationalist, and their orientation was never to the proletariat but to sections of the national bourgeoisie and layers of the peasantry, that is, the rural petty bourgeoisie. Their objective was summed up in the Stalinist two-stage theory, which seeks alliances with factions of the Philippine capitalist class to carry out the “national democratic revolution,” and relegates any struggle for socialism to the long distant future.

The two-stage theory is what underpinned Sison’s 1970 book *Philippine Society and Revolution*, the central text of the party, in which he asserted that Philippine society was “semi-colonial, semi-feudal.” This political line, which denied that what existed was capitalism, has had a poisonous influence in Philippine politics and justified the CPP’s opportunist alliances with bourgeois political figures.

It was Scalice’s detailed, definitive exposure of the role that Sison and the CPP played in hoisting into power the man now denounced by them as a fascist and a murderer—President Rodrigo Duterte—that prompted Sison’s vitriolic and libelous attack on the historian. It is Sison and the CPP leadership who bear political responsibility for the deaths of its supporters at the hands of the death squads, not Scalice who warned of the consequences of its opportunist politics.

In his accusations of “red-tagging,” Sison betrays his Stalinist pedigree. By slandering “Trotskyites” as agents of imperialism, he invents nothing new. This is the reactionary Stalinist politics of the Popular Front of the 1930s that branded the Trotskyist movement as “splitters” and reactionaries for refusing to support the bourgeois republican regime and fighting to mobilise the working class in the struggle for power. In the Spanish revolution, Stalinist thugs tortured and murdered thousands of their left opponents on that basis.

In the Soviet Union, Stalin and Moscow gangsters, facing a rising tide of working-class opposition, perpetrated the lie that Trotsky was an agent of Hitler to justify the mass murder of an entire generation of revolutionary fighters who had carried out the 1917 revolution, as well as scientists, artists and intellectuals. This culminated in the political crime of the century—the assassination of Trotsky in August 1940.

In his interview, Sison openly declares his admiration for Stalin “for building socialism in the Soviet Union,” while being critical “for mistakes in the handling of contradictions within socialist society.” The phrase taken from Mao is never spelled out and has never included a condemnation of Stalin’s murderous purges. Sison reserves his real venom for Trotsky, repeating the lies of Stalin that Trotsky “became brazenly counterrevolutionary and opposed the socialist revolution and construction in the Soviet Union because he had the crazy notion of having to attain first a permanent seamless world revolution.”

Trotsky defended the achievements of the Russian Revolution, which he co-led with Lenin, to his death at the hands of a Stalinist assassin. He warned the Stalinist bureaucracy and its program of “Socialism in One Country” would result in the restoration of capitalism unless it was overthrown by the working class. That

prognosis proved to be completely accurate when in 1991 Stalinist leadership presided over the dissolution of the Soviet Union—following in the tracks of the Maoist leadership in China that transformed it into a giant cheap labour platform for global corporations. Sison does not, and cannot, explain how and why the so-called achievements of Stalin resulted in the liquidation of the gains of the Russian and Chinese revolutions.

Sison’s denunciation of Trotsky’s Theory of Permanent Revolution as a “crazy notion” of “a permanent seamless revolution” simply repeats Stalinist caricatures. Trotsky’s insisted that in countries of a belated capitalist development such as the Philippines, the proletariat, leading the peasantry, was alone capable of carrying out the tasks of the democratic revolution, and in doing so would be compelled to make deep inroads into bourgeois private property—that is, to begin socialist tasks. The fate of the revolution in any one country would be completely bound up with the struggle of the international working class for socialism. It was not an argument for the working class to wait for simultaneous global revolution, but, in the epoch of imperialism, for workers to wage their struggles as part of the necessary global fight to overturn capitalism.

What is “crazy” is Sison’s notion that workers, youth and peasants should commit their lives to a “national democratic revolution” to assist the venal Philippine bourgeoisie establish its own national industries—in a world where production is globalised and the Philippines is integrated in global production chains. There is an intuitive recognition among many working people that today’s problems—savage attacks around the world on living standards and democratic rights, environmental disasters, and the rising danger of world war—are global issues and cannot be resolved within the nation state.

That recognition accounts for the interest and support shown for Scalice’s lecture, particularly in the Philippines, which Sison desperately sought to block. Furthermore, those who commented on the lecture, applauding the historian for exposing the truth about the CPP’s record and commending his courage, reveal that there is thirst among workers, youth and intellectuals for a genuinely revolutionary alternative to Stalinism.

Scalice’s lecture is an important contribution to the exposure of Stalinism and Maoism that has had such terrible consequences for the working class in Asia and around the world. We call on our readers to come to his defence with statements of support in opposition to oppose the litany of Stalinist lies recycled by Sison.

At the same time, we encourage workers and youth to go further and make a study of the works of Leon Trotsky and the International Committee of the Fourth International. There they will find the necessary theoretical and political weapons for the revolutionary struggles by the working class against capitalism, which above all requires the building of the ICFI throughout the Asia Pacific and internationally.



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