

SEP (Sri Lanka) condemns Philippines Maoist party's slanders against historian Joseph Scalice

Statement of the Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka)
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Since historian Dr. Joseph Scalice delivered his lecture titled “First as Tragedy, Second as Farce; Marcos, Duterte and Communist Party of Philippines” on August 26, exposing the counter-revolutionary role of the Stalinist Communist Party of Philippines (CPP), its founder leader Jose Maria Sison has slandered Dr. Scalice as an agent of US imperialism and regurgitated Stalinist lies about Trotskyism.

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP), the Sri Lankan section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), condemns these slanders and is in full agreement with Dr. Scalice’s revelations and his critique of the Maoist party’s role in the Philippines and the consequences of Maoism internationally.

In Sri Lanka, as in the Philippines, organisations adhering to Maoism have brought one disaster after another for workers, young people and the rural poor. The SEP, like its predecessor the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL), is leading the political struggle against the treacherous role of such groups.

Dr. Scalice thoroughly exposed the role of Sison and CPP in supporting the rise to power of the Philippines’ fascist president Rodrigo Duterte in 2016. Sison seeks to rewrite history, denying that the CPP ever supported Duterte. At the same time, in an interview entitled, “On Trotskyites and other slanderers,” he admitted that Duterte offered his party cabinet posts. Sison declared: “I answered [Duterte] publicly that he could not appoint persons to the cabinet or other government positions as representatives of the CPP or NDFP” but “on the basis of individual merits.”

Sison has responded with a series of diatribes, including an online interview entitled “On Trotskyites and other slanderers,” where he heaped praise on Stalin and his anti-Marxist theories of “socialism in one country” and “two-stage revolution.”

The embrace of Duterte flowed from the anti-Marxist, Stalinist theories of “socialism in one country” and a “two-stage” revolution, which the CPP has upheld throughout its history. According to Sison, “the oppressed peoples and nations still fighting for national liberation and democracy against imperialism and the local exploiting classes” have “the necessity of the new-type bourgeois democratic and socialist stages of the revolution” and the need for “winning over the national bourgeoisie... to the anti-imperialist alliance.”

Socialist revolution, in other words, is off the agenda. The CPP and its predecessor the PKP (Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas) have instead pursued alliances with so-called progressive representatives of the bourgeoisie, including the dictator Ferdinand Marcos, with disastrous consequences for the working class and rural poor.

This line was imposed by Stalin on the Chinese Communist Party

(CCP) in mid-1920s: the party was politically subordinated to the capitalist Kuomintang led by Chiang Kai-shek, a move justified with references to a “bloc of four classes”—workers, peasantry, petty-bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie—against imperialism. Stalin’s subordination of CCP to the Kuomintang led to the bloody suppression of revolutionary uprisings of working class in 1925–1927, culminating in the massacre of workers in Shanghai.

The Stalinists rejected the fight waged by Lenin, in opposition to the Mensheviks, for the political independence of the working class and its revolutionary party—which prepared the Bolsheviks to lead the Russian Revolution in 1917. Leon Trotsky had arrived at the same basic political conclusion as Lenin in his theory of permanent revolution—which Sison vehemently denounces. Trotsky explained that in countries of belated capitalist development such as Russia and China, the national bourgeoisie was thoroughly hostile to the working class and therefore incapable of accomplishing democratic revolutionary tasks. These had to be achieved through an explicitly socialist revolution, led by the working class and supported by the peasantry, as part of the fight for international revolution.

Stalinist and Maoist parties slandered Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution so they could pursue opportunist alliances throughout the twentieth century with different factions of the bourgeoisie.

The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), which emerged in 1965 in Sri Lanka, provides a striking example of the catastrophic results of such a policy. It adopted a combination of Maoism, Castroism and Sinhala chauvinism. Like the CPP, the JVP rejected the Marxist insistence on the leading revolutionary role of the working class and instead glorified rural guerilla warfare, echoing Mao’s slogan that “political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.”

Preaching the “two stage” theory of revolution, the JVP promoted capitalist parties which it claimed were “anti-imperialist.” In the 1970 election it supported the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP)-led coalition with the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) and Stalinist Communist Party of Sri Lanka (CPSL) against the rival United National Party (UNP).

The JVP hailed the reactionary SLFP-LSSP-CPSL coalition regime as a “progressive government,” stating that “reactionaries... cannot attack the unity government until destroying the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna” (*Janatha Vimukthi*, September 5, 1970).

Faced with growing unrest, however, the coalition government soon launched a major crackdown against the rural poor, including the JVP and its supporters. In response, the JVP launched an adventurist

insurrection in 1971, which was crushed by government forces that killed about 15,000 rural youth. Two RCL members were also murdered by the security forces and party newspapers were banned.

The Beijing Maoist regime was among the foreign powers that supported the crushing of the 1971 JVP rebellion. This betrayal did not prevent Sison and the CPP from continuing to glorify Mao and hailing his establishment of diplomatic relations with the Marcos regime in 1972.

After a UNP government came to power in 1977 and released the JVP political prisoners, the JVP immediately switched to supporting the President J.R. Jayawardene's UNP regime, as it implemented "open market economic policies" to integrate Sri Lanka into the global operations of finance capital. The JVP opposed a 1980 general strike by public sector employees, helping the government to defeat the struggle and sack about 100,000 workers.

The JVP played a particularly sinister role in 1983, supporting the communal war against Tamils provoked by the Jayawardene government. This civil war was the culmination of anti-Tamil communal discrimination by the successive Sri Lankan regimes since 1948 to divide and weaken the working class. JVP leader Rohana Wijeweera sought to justify the war by falsely branding Tamil separatist groups including Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as "fascist organisations" seeking to divide the "motherland."

In the late 1980s, President Jayawardene sought Indian help to disarm the LTTE, granting some concessions to the Tamil elite parties with the Indo-Lanka Accord in 1987. The JVP turned to what it called the anti-Indian "progressive wing" of the UNP led by R. Premadasa and helped him come to power in the 1988 presidential election.

At the same time, the JVP launched fascistic provocations, killing scores of workers and political opponents including RCL members. The Premadasa regime used the JVP's provocations as a pretext for genocidal attacks on rural youth, killing about 60,000, and decimating the JVP itself.

In 1994, the JVP returned to the political stage with the help of then-SLFP leader Chandrika Kumaratunga. The JVP declared Kumaratunga a progressive bourgeois leader, and supported her rise to power.

By this point, the Soviet Union had been dissolved by the Stalinist bureaucracy and China was integrated into the world capitalist economy. The JVP, in line with Maoist and Stalinist parties throughout the world, turned sharply to the right and refashioned itself as a party of the bourgeois political establishment.

In 2001, the JVP publicly declared its support for US President George W. Bush's invasion of Afghanistan and "war on terror." In May 2005, when US Assistant Secretary to South and Central Asia Christina Rocca visited Colombo, JVP leaders met her and requested support to defeat the LTTE.

In 2004, the JVP had entered the government of President Kumaratunga, and helped it to implement IMF austerity measures. At the end of 2005, the JVP supported Mahinda Rajapakse to come to power as president on the condition that he resumed his racist war in the north and east. It called for repression against those who opposed the war, including the SEP. In May 2009 the JVP hailed the brutal conclusion of the war, including the killing of at least 40,000 Tamil civilians and the imprisonment of 300,000 in concentration camps.

As mass opposition developed to the Rajapakse government's attack on living standards, the JVP distanced itself, only to form another alliance with the UNP in 2010, supporting the presidential campaign of former army commander Sarath Fonseka, who had

presided over the final years of the war and was responsible for atrocities.

Since the end of 2014, the JVP has lined up with the UNP and Kumaratunga to bring Maithripala Sirisena to power in the January 2015 presidential election. Behind the election, Washington orchestrated a regime-change operation to oust Mahinda Rajapakse as he was developing close relations with China.

This JVP's political crimes are the logical outcome of its Maoist politics. Its evolution mirrors that of Joma Sison's CPP into the most ardent supporters of the fascist Duterte in 2016.

In the course of his Stalinist diatribe, Sison noted that Trotskyism had once been "relatively strong" in Sri Lanka but had disintegrated "because of their anti-communist ideology and political line."

This fleeting reference was to the LSSP, which in fact carried out a historic betrayal of Trotskyism when it embraced positions akin to the Stalinist and Maoist two stage theory. The LSSP joined the Pabloite revisionist current that emerged within the Fourth International in the 1950s. It rejected the Trotskyist struggle for the political independence of the working class, and attributed a progressive role to Stalinist bureaucracies and bourgeois nationalist movements throughout the world. The LSSP betrayed socialist internationalism when it joined a bourgeois coalition government with Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike in 1964.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically accelerated the crisis of world capitalism. Revolutionary struggles of the international working class are on the agenda. This situation necessitates drawing fundamental lessons about the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism and its Maoist variant, and the building of revolutionary parties based on Trotsky's program of permanent revolution. The ICFI and its sections are fighting to build those parties internationally.



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