

Joseph Scalice responds to Stalinist Sison's lies that he is a "CIA agent"

Joseph Scalice
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The barrage of Stalinist attacks on Philippine historian Dr. Joseph Scalice continues. Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founder Jose Maria Sison and his supporters are combining outrageous lies, puerile insults, slanders, falsifications and a total disregard for logical coherence, with thinly-veiled or not-so-veiled threats of violence against Dr. Scalice and "Trotskyites."

Sison is furious about Dr. Scalice's lecture, "First as Tragedy, Second as Farce: Marcos, Duterte and the Communist Parties of the Philippines," which is finding a growing audience in the Philippines and internationally among those seeking to understand the repeated political betrayals of the CPP. The lecture documents the Stalinist-Maoist party's support for the fascist president Rodrigo Duterte's election in 2016, placing this in the context of its long history of support for bourgeois politicians, including Sison's backing for Ferdinand Marcos in 1965.

Yesterday, Dr. Scalice responded on Facebook to the latest attacks on him by Sison in a Stalinist Facebook group. Below is Dr. Scalice's reply, which has been widely shared with hundreds of supportive comments. We encourage WSWs readers to send us letters defending Dr. Scalice.

Jose Maria Sison, founder and ideological leader of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), is a liar and a fool.

Unable to respond to any of the substantive historical points raised in my scholarship, he has taken to repeatedly slandering me as a "CIA agent," a claim for which he has not a shred of evidence.

Today he took to the pages of a Facebook group dedicated to sharing insipid political memes, which is headlined with a picture of Joseph Stalin as the Terminator, to repeat these allegations. Sison wrote that "Scalice admitted that he is a CIA agent by boasting that he saw the secret files of the CIA that revealed that Ignacio Lacsina was a CIA asset."

This is an absurd allegation. Sison is regurgitating a statement written by the so-called MLM [Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought] Study Group that first made this

claim. The authors of the MLM statement claimed to have read my entire dissertation and concluded by calling me "a prick." A trenchant political critique.

I dedicated an entire chapter of my dissertation to the origin and background of Ignacio Lacsina, head of the Lapiang Manggagawa and key political ally of Sison in their joint support for President Macapagal. While a member of the executive committee of the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP), Lacsina was regularly and secretly meeting with political attachés of the US Embassy and informing them of developments in the party and the labor movement. Among his political handlers was H.L.T. Koren, a CIA man responsible for counter-insurgency operations in Congo and Vietnam.

Anyone who read my dissertation would have easily been able to determine my source for this information. I copiously cited from the Confidential Papers of the US State Department – Philippine Republic (CUS DPR). These are 55 reels of microfilmed material, now declassified, and available at a number of major libraries, including UC Berkeley. I spent about five months reading through this material, and digitizing relevant documents. It was a great deal of work, but it did not involve any assistance from the CIA.

Sison is not stupid enough to be unaware of the fact that documents can be declassified. He is lying and he is counting on the ignorance of his audience.

Sison went on: "Scalice's Trotskyite anti-CPP research and publications were funded by the CIA. All Berkeley knows this."

This is another outright lie. I challenge Joma Sison to name a single Berkeley scholar who will substantiate his claim. He cannot.

The truth is, my scholarship was hardly funded at all, let alone by the CIA. I had to hold down a job and apply for food stamps to keep my family fed, while I worked for a decade to complete my research.

Sison is appealing to social dregs with his lies and doctored images. There is a commonality between his

political style and that of Duterte: vulgarity, outrageous falsehoods, and a cultivation of the most vicious social traits. He is appealing to the “worst angels of our nature,” to stand Lincoln’s phrase on its head.

Icepick memes were posted in the thread in response to Sison as “the only response to trots.” There is nothing funny about this. It is a reference to the assassination of Trotsky and the Stalinist mass murder of members of the Fourth International, the Left Opposition, and the old Bolsheviks, with literally hundreds of thousands of victims. While their historical origins are different, the function of icepick memes is politically analogous to that of swastikas.

Some of my academic colleagues around the world may perhaps wonder why I have chosen not to take the more decorous route and ignore this man who is so clearly a troll.

The weight of history has given Joma Sison significant ideological sway over the fate of mass struggles in the Philippines and over the lives of countless self-sacrificing Filipino youths who are looking to labor for a better world. His words and leadership thus have the power to orient and to disorient social struggles and to betray them. Sison’s enthusiasm for Duterte in 2016 is a clear example of this.

I decided, at some personal cost, that I would not back down. Sison’s attacks on me have provided me an opportunity to address, in a calm and principled fashion, the historical record of the party before an interested public.

While Sison’s perspective still exercises tremendous influence, he is a criminally unserious man. He has been at the pinnacle of the party and of academic social estimation for so long, as the beneficiary of the cult of the great leader, that he seems to believe that even his most flippant remarks and offhand lies will suffice to befuddle the public.

For no particular reason, he posts images of himself posing with attractive young women, listing them as his so-called “model friends.” He publicly shares his karaoke performances. Yesterday, he edified his audience with his recordings of “Just the Way You Are” and “Love is a Many-Splendored Zing” (sic). He posted his most recent denunciation of me in a thread that opened with a meme drawn from *Mean Girls*, #MeanTrots.

Joma Sison apparently has not only the fate of a mass movement in his hands, but a great deal of spare time as well.

And yet, while he has time to record pop songs and make what are technically known as “shitposts,” he has not dedicated a moment to the defense of the history of the CPP and his own political role. In my dissertation and my recent lecture, I documented a number of betrayals of the working class carried out by Sison and his fellow leaders of the party. He has responded to none of them.

Here are few of the points which Sison has refused to

address:

- Sison supported President Diosdado Macapagal in 1963 and wrote the official handbook of Macapagal’s land reform. Sison celebrated the president’s program as the continuation of the “unfinished revolution” of Andres Bonifacio. He did this while Macapagal ordered the military to violently break up the pickets of striking workers at the port and the airport.

- Sison backed Ferdinand Marcos and the Nacionalista Party in the 1965 election, and gave speeches in support of this policy to the Kabataang Makabayan (KM), Lapiang Manggagawa (LM), and Malayang Samahan ng mga Magsasaka (MASAKA).

- Sison allied the CPP and the KM with Aquino and the bourgeois opposition to Marcos in the early 1970s. Aquino and his elite cohort were not opposed to martial law, they supported it. They wanted to remove Marcos and install themselves in power first. Sison was assisting them in this, in the same way that he is now calling for “patriotic and pro-US sections of the military” to back Vice President Robredo.

- Sison enthusiastically backed Rodrigo Duterte in 2016. Sison has responded to this point only by dismissing it as “an outright lie,” but I presented copious evidence and he has not dealt with a shred of it.



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