

Historian Joseph Scalice to deliver public lecture on 50th anniversary of Plaza Miranda bombing

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On March 3, 5.00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time (PST), historian Joseph Scalice will be delivering an online public lecture, hosted by the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at UC Berkeley, on the subject of the 1971 bombing of the Liberal Party election rally at Plaza Miranda in the Philippines. The bombing marked a critical step toward the imposition of martial law by President Ferdinand Marcos in 1972 and remains one of the most controversial events in the country's history.

Three grenades were thrown on stage in the midst of the crowded election rally of the bourgeois opposition Liberal Party (LP), killing nine and wounding over a hundred people. Marcos responded by suspending the writ of habeas corpus and carrying out mass arrests, conducting a dry-run for the establishment of military dictatorship a year later.

Dr. Scalice, in his 2017 UC Berkeley doctoral dissertation, *Crisis of Revolutionary Leadership: Martial Law and the Communist Parties of the Philippines, 1957 – 1974*, documented how the rival factions of the Philippine elite were engaged in a mad scramble for power prior to the announcement of martial law. There was agreement among all factions of the ruling class that dictatorship was necessary to prevent the mass social unrest of the times from becoming a revolutionary movement.

Scalice detailed for the first time how two rival Stalinist parties, the PKP and the CPP, which had split along the lines of the Sino-Soviet dispute, allied with the rival factions of the elite and subordinated the mass social unrest of the times to the interests of Marcos and the elite opposition.

The PKP, working with the military, staged bombings in Manila in an effort to provide pretexts for Marcos'

expanding dictatorial powers. The Plaza Miranda bombing, however, did not fit their modus operandi at all.

In a chapter carefully examining the subject of the Plaza Miranda bombing, Scalice established that the overwhelming weight of historical evidence reveals that the CPP was responsible for the bombing. They hailed the repression carried out by Marcos as hastening the onset of revolution, and channeled the mass sympathy occasioned by the bombing behind the Liberal Party ticket, campaigning for their allies in the LP.

The historical lessons of the political machinations of 1970–72 in the Philippines are of immediate relevance today, as the ruling class around the world responds to the crisis of global capitalism and the pandemic by turning again to authoritarian forms of rule. Scalice's lecture promises to be a critical exposure of the politics of Stalinism and the role it played in preventing the emergence of independent movement of the working class in opposition to the danger of dictatorship.

We encourage our readers to register to attend.



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