

# Watch lecture video “Three Grenades in August: Fifty Years since the Bombing of Plaza Miranda in the Philippines”—another devastating exposure of Stalinism

Our reporter  
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Last Thursday, the University of California, Berkeley’s Center for Southeast Asia Studies hosted a well-attended online lecture by historian Dr. Joseph Scalice entitled “Three Grenades in August: Fifty Years since the Bombing of Plaza Miranda in the Philippines.”

Scalice is a Postdoctoral Fellow at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore and author of *The Drama of Dictatorship: Martial Law and the Communist Parties of the Philippines*, to be published next year.

The ground-breaking lecture reviewed the circumstances and political consequences of the August 1971 grenade bombing of an election rally by the then opposition Liberal Party in Plaza Miranda in central Manila. Scalice cited strong evidence that the Stalinist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) carried out for the attack, which killed nine people and injured 100 others.

President Ferdinand Marcos seized on the event to suspend habeas corpus and the following year imposed martial law. It was a turning point that saw “post-war democracy” abolished in the Philippines, the lecturer explained. Thousands of workers and peasants were killed and tens of thousands more were arrested during the next decade and a half.

Using contemporaneous statements from the CPP and its leader Jose Maria Sison, information from journalist Gregg Jones’s 1989 book *Red Revolution*, and other damning material, Scalice said the “overwhelming weight of evidence” suggested the CPP was responsible for the grenade attack.

The bombing, Scalice said, flowed from the CPP’s Stalinist and Maoist perspective and its party’s perpetual orientation toward so-called progressive sections of the Filipino bourgeoisie. It welcomed the bombing, the lecturer said, calculating that the Liberal Party would blame Marcos and move closer to the CPP; and that the predictable state crackdown on the population would increase mass resistance and increase CPP membership.

This bankrupt and reactionary agenda, Scalice said, was a constant for the CPP and its founder and “theoretician” Sison, who had routinely declared over decades that fascism and martial law were “good for revolution.”

This was seen in the CPP’s welcoming of Marcos’s declaration of martial law in 1972, as well as recently with the prospect of a dictatorship under the current fascistic President Rodrigo Duterte, who the CPP supported in the 2016 presidential election campaign.

Just as it did in response to his “First as tragedy, second as farce: Marcos, Duterte, and the Communist Parties of the Philippines” online lecture last August, the CPP continues to denounce Scalice as a US CIA agent, and did so just prior to Thursday’s event.

The same slanders were also hurled at journalist Gregg Jones after he published evidence of CPP involvement in the Miranda Plaza bombing, Scalice said. The CPP regularly denounces anyone who dares to expose its reactionary historical record as agents of the CIA.

Scalice referred to Sison’s statement last month that “the best thing that can happen for the benefit of

Philippine revolution is for Duterte to impose a fascist dictatorship.” The lecturer quoted Leon Trotsky’s urgent warnings to the German working class in December 1931 about the disastrous consequences of the Stalinist line of “after Hitler, us” that enabled the Nazis to come to power.

Scalice’s lecture concluded with a passionate appeal for workers and youth in the Philippines and internationally to study the political lessons of the Miranda Plaza bombing and the consequences of the CPP’s policies. “It is impossible to defend democracy through an organisation that welcomes and defends fascist dictatorship,” he said.

Over 130 people watched the lecture live, with significant numbers from the Philippines and other participants from the US and Canada, Europe, as well as Japan, Thailand, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. An animated question and answer session continued for 30 minutes after the lecture. Many of the questions focused on asking about the alternative to the CPP, indicating a growing revulsion towards its opportunism and an interest in genuine Marxist politics in the Philippines.

Appreciative comments from several Australian participants indicated the lecture’s powerful impact.

John, a hospitality worker from Newcastle, said the lecture, and Scalice’s work on the betrayals of the Stalinist and Maoist CPP and Sison were “outstanding.”

“CPP leader Sison has regurgitated Stalin’s Third Period line in the early 1930s when the German Communist Party proclaimed, ‘After Hitler, us!’ This resulted in devastating defeats for the working class in Germany and across Europe,” John commented.

“Dr. Scalice demonstrates that these policies are not just the product of bad individuals in the CPP leadership but the outcome of the very program and Stalinist perspective on which the CPP is based. I encourage everyone to watch and review this material. These are not simply lessons for the working class of the Philippines but of strategic importance for the international working class.”

Clay, a retired teacher, said, the lecture was an “important, revealing, and factual account of the CPP’s leadership’s role in the Miranda Plaza bombing. The detailed examination of the incident and the historical background constitutes a damning indictment of the

Maoist brand of Stalinism and its role not just in the Philippines and Asia but internationally...

“The lecture made clear why Sison is so sensitive to any exposure of the CPP’s role in the 1971 murders. Its involvement in the attack on the Liberal Party, the then main opposition party to the Marcos regime, must be purged from popular consciousness in order to eradicate any obstacles to the CPP’s current deals with the ruling class. Sison lies about this, just as he does about his support for Duterte in 2016.”

Erika, from Sydney said: “Dr. Scalice’s exposure of the filthy history of Sison and the Communist Party of the Philippines must be supported by people around the world. He has once again shone a light on the dirty secrets of Sison and laid bare the bankrupt perspective of Stalinism... Keep up this important work Joseph Scalice!

Margaret, from Melbourne, said: “It was really important that Joseph Scalice placed the Plaza Miranda bombing on August 21, 1971 in the international context of the ending of the Bretton Woods Agreement, the mass social unrest throughout the world and the growing crisis of Stalinism. He showed that it was a turning point in Philippine history.

“Joseph’s presentation was really compelling and he fielded the many interesting questions that followed his lecture with authority. This is an invaluable resource for the Philippine and international working class.”

We urge WWSWS readers to watch the lecture, study the issues raised and share the event widely through social media and other means. Understanding, and acting on, the political clarifications presented in the lecture are vital for the revolutionary struggles now emerging globally. We welcome comments about the lecture.

The International Committee of the Fourth International fights for Trotskyism, the only revolutionary alternative to Stalinism. We invite those who want to discuss these issues and to build our movement in the Philippines and elsewhere to contact us.



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