

4 Points of Principle on the Filipino Revolution & the Legacy of Jose

Maria Sison

RAIL Draft Resolution



REVOLUTIONARY ANTI-IMPERIALIST LEAGUE



Jose Maria Sison

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Preamble:

After undergoing a thorough investigation and extensive critical study of both Jose Maria Sison and the Communist Party of the Philippines (hereafter: CPP) in relation to the present movement, RAIL has authored the following document and presents it for internal review. This document is a resolution which forwards four fundamental principles on the legacy of the late revolutionary leader Jose Maria Sison (JMS), and the party he founded and led. RAIL's intention is that this resolution will generate greater internal study with the long-term objective of formulating a comprehensive line on this subject. (Until then this resolution serves as RAIL's ad hoc line.)

RAIL considers discourse surrounding the persons and organizations discussed in this draft resolution to be important, particularly in regard to the ongoing debate within the International Communist Movement (ICM), and of the often dangerous, unprincipled criticisms concerning this and similar topics by certain dogmato-revisionist sects working under the label of "Maoist". Additionally concerning is the seeming lack of interest in principled criticism by other parties involved, who disregard the very real errors of both JMS and the CPP.

Marx famously said that communism is the "*ruthless criticism of all that exists*". In the same vein, Mao outlined the following as a manifestation of liberalism; "*To hear incorrect views without rebutting them and even to hear counter-revolutionary remarks without reporting them, but instead to take them calmly as if nothing had happened*". RAIL believes in the importance of principled criticism, and the avoidance of criticism to be fundamentally wrong. We firmly believe that no person, least of all a revolutionary, is above criticism.

It is with full acknowledgement of the overall positive role of the above-mentioned persons and organizations that we present the criticisms outlined in the below resolution.

RAIL hopes that the presentation of this document will ultimately produce a positive contribution in connection to the current discourse surrounding these topics, and will help to channel discussion in a productive direction. It is by forwarding the criticisms detailed in the following resolution that we feel RAIL can best uphold the ideas advocated by the persons and organizations mentioned in the outline below.

4 Points of Principle

- 1) The CPP is a revolutionary party waging active armed struggle through its military wing, the New People's Army (NPA), against the U.S. dominated big comprador-landlord government of the Philippines. The party's primary objective is to initiate a New Democratic Revolution, guided by a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist (MLM) vanguard party, that will lead to socialism and the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat [1].
- 2) Throughout the party's history, the CPP has seriously waived in its ideological adherence to MLM on a series of occasions. Since the First Great Rectification Movement, the CPP have erred into revisionism on important questions pertaining to MLM, including recognition of the supposedly "socialist" nature of certain countries [2][3][4]; misidentification of allies and adversaries [5]; and contradicting both Mao's verdict and the MLM line on the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union [6].
- 3) JMS has vacillated on problems of fundamental importance to MLM, such as the question of actually existing socialism (AES) [7]; unprincipled alignment with revisionist entities [8][9]; the misappraisal of certain parties and or countries [10]; and the aforementioned subject of capitalist restoration in the formerly socialist Soviet Union [11]. Recent years have seen repeated attempts by JMS to broker a ceasefire between the NPA and Duterte, despite earlier appraisals of the latter's government as "fascist" [12]; risking potential harm to the Filipino revolution as a result. In addition to these errors of misleadership, JMS's former post as party leader, held from exile in a first world country

(directing the revolution via telegraph so to speak [13]) fundamentally impaired his ability to lead.

- 4) RAIL bases its evaluation of the individuals and groups discussed in the application of the dialectical materialist world outlook. Through appraisal of both the errors and success of the CPP/JMS, RAIL concludes, on the basis of the theory of dual aspects, that in the final analysis what is primary is the overall revolutionary aspect of the aforementioned parties in the struggle for national liberation and socialist revolution in the Philippines. It is RAIL's view that the errors detailed in this outline can be overcome through self-criticism and two-line struggle. For its part, the CPP has corrected some of the errors mentioned in this outline. However, RAIL advocates for more openness and transparency in acknowledging these errors so as to correct them more fully. Finally, RAIL reaffirms what we consider the chief task for communists in the first world as discussed in our November founding statement [14], and - preceding from a global class analysis - reiterates the importance of resisting imperialism through promoting solidarity with third world organizations currently waging revolutionary struggle. Following this, RAIL agrees completely with JMS's calls for solidarity and anti-imperialist resistance, which reflects the tasks of communists in the first world laid out in our founding statement:

“While proletarian revolutionaries are not yet immediately faced with the need to launch an armed revolution in any capitalist country, they can also consider in the spirit of proletarian internationalism and anti-imperialist solidarity to share their revolutionary ideas, experience and capabilities, including arms and their skills in making these, with the proletariat and people who are preparing for armed revolution or are already engaged in it in the underdeveloped countries. The spread and development of people's war in the underdeveloped countries or in the

countryside of the world can be helpful to the rise of armed revolution in the capitalist countries. At present, the imperialist powers headed by the USA are carrying out military intervention and wars of aggression on a wide scale in the underdeveloped countries. Thus, all concrete acts of proletarian internationalism and anti-imperialist solidarity are urgently needed.” [15]

Conclusion:

RAIL issues the above four points forwarded in this resolution out of intense solidarity with the Filipino revolution and the ongoing People's War; and with profound respect for the legacy and memory of the CPP's late founder and leader, JMS. Upholding the good, while criticizing and learning from the bad, is the best way to honor any revolutionary.

KA JOMA LIVES!

Footnotes:

[1]

The NPA has been engaged in armed struggle for over 50 years, following the First Great Rectification Movement in the CPP. JMS's analysis, "Philippine Society and Revolution", laid the theoretical basis for the CPP-NPA's struggle for New Democratic Revolution.

[2]

Reversing the earlier stand (see "Rectify Errors, Rebuild the Party!" & "Program for a People's Democratic Revolution"; CPP) of the CPP following the First Great Rectification Movement on the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union and its transformation into a social-imperialist state, JMS - writing under his pseudonym, Armando Liwanag - explains that: "[i]n 1986, the Executive Committee of the Central Committee [of the CPP] commissioned a study of the Soviet Union and East European countries. The study was superficial. It was done to support the predetermined conclusion that these countries were socialist because their economies were still dominated by state-owned enterprises and these enterprises were still growing and because the state still provided social guarantees to the people. The study overlooked the fact that the ruling party in command of the economy was no longer genuinely proletarian and that state-owned enterprises since the time of Khrushchov had already become milking cows of corrupt bureaucrats and private entrepreneurs who colluded under various pretexts to redirect the products to the 'free' (private) market." (Liwanag, 1998).

[3]

In connection to the above cited, the CPP's 2016 constitution exhibits revisionism on the question of AES, propagating a line which distinguishes certain capitalist countries as "anti-imperialist".

"Upon its establishment..., [t]he People's Democratic Republic of the Philippines shall develop the closest relations with the anti-imperialist and socialist countries, the neighboring countries in Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia and the Pacific...". (Communist Party of the Philippines, 2016, p. 85).

Forgoing a class analysis, the CPP distinguishes countries on the basis of their antagonistic relation to imperialist (US) geopolitical interests, and categorizes them under the reductive labeling of "anti-imperialist". Among those grouped into this category are the governments of "Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador". (Communist Party of the Philippines, 2018).

However, as communists, we understand that imperialism is not defined by a country's antagonism towards other imperialists, rather it is an economic system of capitalism in its monopoly stage. It does not follow that countries which happen to be opposed to one or another section of the imperialists, are anti-imperialist themselves. (For example: Russia is an imperialist country that is also a rival to the United States). Defining countries in such a way obscures their economic character and in effect undermines line struggle.

Rather than practicing real anti-imperialism, the CPP's "anti-imperialist country" line amounts to lending uncritical support to countries so long as they are opposed to one section of the imperialists. (Note: Supporting genuine anti-imperialist struggles around the world is of course an important task: one which RAIL affirms in our founding statement "Build The Movement!". However, the CPP's unprincipled approach would have the party lining up behind revisionist and reactionary countries led by the comprador bourgeoisie, and who are themselves controlled by rival imperialist or social-imperialist blocs.) (For further commentary see: Mass Proletariat Organization, 2018, p. 14-16).

On a similarly concerning note is the CPP's affirmation of AES. In the party's 2016 constitution, the CPP makes mention of "*socialist countries*", implying their current existence. However, as maintained by MLM, no socialist countries exist in the world at present. Refusal to recognize this reality does not serve the cause of socialism, rather it serves revisionism. At a time when all the former socialist states have globally collapsed into revisionism and openly into capitalism, analysis of these countries is necessary to apprehend the current world situation.

These problems present an urgent need for the CPP to re-examine their working definition of "anti-imperialist country" and rectify their current position regarding AES. Remaining imprecise to the present global situation and failure to correct the party's line on the question of AES, risk serious problems to the future course of the Filipino revolution:

"These views have concerning implications for the future direction of the revolution in the Philippines and relate to the larger question of the foreign policy of a socialist state which the CPP raises in their 2016 Constitution and Program. There is an underlying contradiction between the national interests of the socialist state and the interests of the international proletarian revolution. While this contradiction can be resolved through a principled revolutionary line, if handled incorrectly it can lead to the betrayal of revolutionary movements at home and abroad. There is also an intrinsic link between the foreign policy of a socialist state, the state's domestic policy, and the two-line struggle to stay on the road to communism." (Mass Proletariat Organization, 2018, p. 19).

[4]

Uncertainty over the question of the "socialist" nature of certain countries has led the CPP to abet the actions of certain parties at odds with the interests of the Filipino revolution. For example: The CPP has worked to form relations with revisionist parties and organizations outside of the Philippines; sending and receiving messages of professed "solidarity" with groups that are sympathetic to and or see China as a "socialist" state. (Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO), 2018).

This is particularly concerning in light of China's established record of social-imperialism around the world, including in the Philippines. *"The CPP has also issued a number of congratulatory statements to the U.S.- based revisionist group Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO). ... These politics are reflected in FRSO's work in the U.S. which is aimed at rallying people around a revisionist politics of toadying Chinese imperialism."* (Mass Proletariat Organization, 2018, p. 18-19).

[5]

During the 80's the CPP sought to obtain military aid from the Soviet Union (specifically heavy weaponry; "*antitank and laser-guided missiles*" in particular). (Liwanag, 1998).

In an interview published in 1989, JMS spoke of the CPP's attempts to establish and foster good relations with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and revisionist ruling parties of Eastern Bloc countries, with the aim of securing material aid for the Filipino armed struggle. (Sison, 1989, p. 186).

Later, in 2004, JMS spoke retrospectively about the party's overtures to the USSR; again confirming the CPP's attempts to establish relations with the Soviet social-imperialists in order to obtain military aid. (Sison, 2004, p. 150-151, 153).

This effort to procure military and material aid from the USSR necessitated the opportunistic revising of the CPP's official position on the social-imperialist nature of the Soviet Union: "*staff organ [CPP] in charge of international relations proceeded in 1984 to draft and circulate a policy paper, 'The Present World Situation and the CPP's General International Line and Policies' describing the CPSU as a Marxist-Leninist party, the Soviet Union as the most developed socialist country and as proletarian internationalist rather than social-imperialist, as having*

supported third world liberation movements and as having attained military parity with the United States.”. (Liwanag, 1998).

[6]

The MLM verdict on the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union is contained here: (The Polemic on the General Line of the International Communist Movement, 1965).

[7]

JMS’s ambiguity over the question of the AES in effect negates line struggle on a subject of profound relevance for the modern communist movement. Historically, debate on this matter has facilitated the continued enrichment of revolutionary theory, as critical analysis of the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat has been the source of recognition and demarcation of the limitations of past socialist revolutions; ultimately contributing to the further development of revolutionary science. (A general example can be seen during the Great Debate between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union under Khrushchev on the one hand and China and Albania on the other; more particular examples can be seen in Mao’s overall break with the limitations of Soviet socialism and advancement of Marxism-Leninism in the process)

At present, the current balance of global class forces reveals that socialism is in retreat. Further evidence of this fact is demonstrated by the collapse of the previous socialist camp. However, JMS effectively refuses to confront these important questions. For instance, in the 1989 “The Philippine Revolution: The Leader’s View” interview, when asked about parties seeking to develop relations with nominally (read; revisionist) or even non socialist governments, JMS stated that he could neither make appraisals of these countries nor assessments of the parties seeking relations with them (*“The CPP can never decide for other parties what external relations they should have and how they should conduct these”*), saying the CPP could *“only give information and advice on the status, character and activities”* of groups inside the Philippines, namely, the Lava-ite revisionists (Sison, 1989, p. 189). (JMS’s attitude amounts to a “stay in my own lane” position at the expense of two-line struggle, and is diametrically opposed to the approach of the Chinese and Albanian communist parties at the time of the Great Debate.)

As late as 2019, when asked directly to clarify his position on AES, JMS rejected the question on the ground that such definitive appraisals were *“counterproductive”* - in effect, negating line struggle on a question of far-reaching importance within the ICM. (Kites Editorial Commission, 2022).

[8]

JMS himself - under the oft repeated cover of promoting *“anti-imperialist solidarity”* (Sison, 2004 p. 150) - echoed the calls of the CPP to obtain military aid from the Soviet social-imperialists as well as other Eastern Bloc countries (erroneously describing both as “socialist”) in an interview published in Ang Bayan in 1987 (RIM, 1988, p. 10-11) as well as in an interview from 1989. (Sison, 1989, p. 187-190, 195-197).

In step with the CPP’s revisionist overtures to the USSR at the time, JMS wrote in a 1989 interview: *“The CPP has decided to regard the Soviet Union as a country in the process of building socialism and has ceased to call it social imperialist. The CPP has also ceased to call the CPSU revisionist. There is recognition of the fact that public ownership of the means of production and centralized economic planning are still dominant in the Soviet Union. On this basis, the Soviet Union is considered socialist.”.* (Sison, 1989, p. 183).

All of this comprehensively reveals JMS’s knowledge of, and by extension, shared responsibility, in the opportunistic maneuvers by the CPP to establish relations with revisionist countries.

[9]

When asked about the party’s reproaches to Eastern Bloc countries, formerly declared by the CPP as revisionist and social-imperialist, JMS stated:

“Those previous declarations belong to history in the same way that the declarations made against the CPP by other communist and workers parties belong to history. ... Since a few years ago, the CPP has voluntarily ceased to apply certain terms or labels [revisionist] to other parties...”. (Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM), 1988, p. 11).

In accordance with the reversal of the CPP’s original stand regarding Soviet revisionism, that was preempted by the party’s several attempts to obtain military and material aid from the USSR and other Eastern Bloc countries, JMS went on to state the following, blatantly undermining line struggle:

*“I see no insurmountable obstacle to the establishment of friendly and fraternal relations between the CPP and the parties in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. **There are no direct bones of contention between the CPP and any one of them.** The basis of friendly relations is the common struggle against U.S. imperialism. When friendly relations are established, fraternal or comradely relations can begin to grow. **The CPP considers as matters belonging to history those differences in the past arising from disputes between certain parties.** We cannot afford to engage in endless open ideological disputes which can only benefit U.S. imperialism, our common enemy”. (our emphasis) (Ibid, 1988, p. 11).*

This was in spite of acknowledgement by JMS that “...the CPSU had actively supported the Marcos fascist regime up to its end in 1986.”. (Sison, 2004, p. 153).

[10]

Regarding China, JMS put forward a confused perspective pertaining to the question of its social-imperialist nature. In a 2014 interview JMS stated that according to Lenin’s definition: “...China **may** qualify as imperialist.” (our emphasis). (Sison, 2014).

By maintaining a level of uncertainty, JMS essentially leaves the door open on the question of whether or not China properly fits the description of imperialism.

Of related concern is JMS’s embellishment of modern China. Ignoring the country’s well established record of social-imperialism in the Philippines (along with other countries of the third world), JMS noted China’s relatively modest military presence in global affairs: “China has not yet engaged in a war of aggression to acquire a colony, a semicolony, protectorate or dependent country. It is not yet very violent in the struggle for a redivision of the world among the big capitalist powers, like the US, Japan, Germany and Italy behaved in joining the ranks of imperialist powers.”. (Ibid, 2014).

Equally concerning is JMS’s preceding comments which attempt to portray China in a positive light, remarking on the country’s “outstanding role” through its intra-imperialist economic alliance, BRICS. (Ibid, 2014).

What’s more is JMS’s statements openly contradict the line held by the CPP regarding Chinese social-imperialism: “On the other side of the multipolar world, China is pushing for “economic integration” of ASEAN and APEC countries under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Like the US, China aims to push for all-out liberalization under its “one belt, one road” project to tighten the integration of these countries into its Factory Asia “global value chain” to take advantage of cheapest available labor. To facilitate rapid transportation of capital goods and consumption commodities, China aims to construct a network of rails and ports. This infrastructure binge, in turn, will help absorb its surplus steel. There is rivalry and intense contradictions between the leading capitalist powers especially amid the protracted crisis of the global capitalist system. While the US imperialists remain the biggest military power, China continues to strengthen its armed capability and is fast developing its capability to project power overseas.”. (Communist Party of the Philippines, 2017).

[11]

(JMS's "full restoration of capitalism" line:)

Efforts to obtain military aid from the revisionist USSR during the 1980's preempted the CPP to opportunistically reverse the party's previous position regarding the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union and its transformation into a social-imperialist country. (See footnotes: [2], [5]).

Following the precedent set by the CPP's capitulatory maneuvers towards the USSR during the 80's, JMS continued - albeit in a more disguised manner - to equivocate on the question of the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, by propagating a revisionist line of "full restoration". In contradiction to the MLM line - which states that capitalism was restored following the death of Stalin and the rise to power of Khrushchev - JMS had instead put forward his notion of "full restoration", which claims that capitalism was not restored completely until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

In corroboration with the CPP's repudiation of the MLM verdict on the post-Stalin USSR, JMS argued that: *"the Soviet Union went through stages of camouflaged counterrevolution in a period of 38 years, 1953 to 1991, and that Gorbachev "completed the process of capitalist restoration started by Khrushchev and presided over the destruction of the Soviet Union."* (Mass Proletariat Organization, 2018, p. 7).

Even in recent years, JMS continued to promote his "full restoration" line: *"Sison continues to hold and spread this position of providing political cover for the state capitalist (1957-1968) and social-imperialist [1968-1991] Soviet Union. As recently as September 2012 in Part 1 of "Prospects for Maoism in the Philippines," Sison claimed that "The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the full capitalist restoration in revisionist-ruled countries in the period of 1989-1991 have vindicated Mao's position on the crucial importance and necessity of the struggle against revisionism..."* (Marxist-Leninist to Revisionist, p. 16).

The above citations blatantly reveal JMS's revisionism in action.

[12]

JMS vacillated wildly over the years in his approach to the idea of negotiating a ceasefire with the Filipino government and towards the former President Rodrigo Duterte; likening him at one time to Hugo Chavez. However, on numerous occasions, JMS has, concerningly, called for and attempted to broker ceasefire agreements between the NPA and the Duterte government, despite evaluations of the latter's regime as fascist. All of this presents concerns for JMS's capacity as a leader. In RAIL's approximation, these moves amount to attempts at abandoning the armed struggle and at the least risk damaging repercussions for the Filipino revolution.

RAIL is not yet able to make any definitive assessment on the implications arising from this or other recent attempts by the CPP to arrange a cease fire. We will simply restate our concern, especially given the dangerous precedent set by the outcome of the Maoist's peace talks in Nepal, which resulted in the total selling out of the revolution by Prachanda and his party.

[13]

During the Chinese revolution, the Comintern attempted a backseat direction of the civil war - something criticized by Stalin in a later note on the issue. (Stalin, 1954, p. 338).

For its part, RAIL feels that no communists residing in a first world country should exercise leadership of any kind over third world based parties, beyond advice or developing relations of solidarity. Despite this however, JMS remained in the role of party leader until his death in 2022 .

[14]
(RAIL, 2023)

[15]
(Sison, 2019)

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