

Philippines: The geopolitical alignments of diverging social interests: the Sino-Soviet split and the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas, 1966-1967

Wednesday 1 September 2021, by [SCALICE Joseph](#) (Date first published: 1 January 2021).

In April 1967, the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) broke in two. This article examines how a contradiction at the heart of the party's program, which sought to retain leadership over both a mass movement and an alliance with a section of the elite, fragmented the party along the lines of the Sino-Soviet dispute. The ideological expression of the rival national interests of the Soviet Union and People's Republic of China found congruent alignment with the diverging social forces in the PKP. The Soviet bureaucracy offered attractive terms of trade to countries of belated capitalist development. Sections of Filipino capitalists saw this as a means of developing national industry, and leading layers of the PKP allied themselves with the Marcos administration in support of these ends. In contrast, a cultural revolution and a protracted people's war expressed the geopolitically imperiled position of China. University-based youth were drawn to this perspective. Over the course of 1966, the PKP was torn apart along the fault-lines of the Sino-Soviet ideological split, as this global dispute gave political form to the diverging social interests within the party.

Introduction

In April 1967, a significant section of the leadership of the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) was expelled from the party. By the end of 1968, this expelled contingent, tied to a social layer of urban, university-based youth and headed by Jose Maria Sison, founded a new Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The PKP had established political ties with President Ferdinand Marcos during his 1965 election campaign. Looking to establish diplomatic and trade relations with Moscow as a means of carrying out national industrialization, the PKP facilitated Marcos' imposition of a military dictatorship in 1972, officially endorsed his rule, and served in the martial law administration. The CPP meanwhile established a network of connections with members of the ruling class who opposed Marcos. They used the language of cultural revolution and a strategy of a protracted people's war promoted by the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to bring the mass unrest of the times behind the interests of their elite allies.

Why did the PKP split in early 1967? I argue that mounting social tensions, expressed in 1966 in mass opposition to the American war in Vietnam, split the PKP along the geopolitical fault lines of the Soviet Union (SU) and the PRC. This division within the PKP was not the product of external machination, nor simply the result of the opportunism of individual leaders. It was fundamentally a manifestation of a contradiction at the heart of the party's program, Stalinism, a perspective shared by both factions.

Stalinism expressed the political interests of privileged layers of the party bureaucracy within the Soviet Union and, after 1949, the PRC. Seeking to defend and expand the social basis of their positions, bureaucrats put forward a nationalist program of building socialism in one country as the paramount political task rather than world socialist revolution. Looking to secure diplomatic and trade relations in service to the construction of their national economies, Stalinist bureaucrats sought political capital with which to negotiate with the ruling class in countries around the world. To this end they rehabilitated the old Menshevik line of a two-stage revolution. They instructed communist parties around the globe that the tasks of the revolution in which they were engaged were not yet socialist in character but national and democratic only. A section of the capitalist class, they argued, would play a progressive role in this necessary first stage. The goal of communist party leaders should thus be to secure an alliance with this progressive section of the national bourgeoisie, and to bring the pressure and support of a mass movement behind their elite allies.

Stalinism was first and foremost a political program that articulated the interests of the ruling party bureaucracies, before it was denounced by Nikita Khrushchev in his 1956 speech to the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) for its show trials, purges, and cult of the great leader. These were the mechanisms routinely employed by Stalinism to maintain a bureaucratic hold on power, but they were not the essence of what was disseminated around the globe. [1] The global strength of Stalinism rested on the appeal to a layer of nationalist intellectuals in countries of belated capitalist development of its key concepts – socialism in one country, a two-stage theory of revolution, and the bloc of four progressive classes (the working class, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie). Many communist party leaders outside of the Soviet Union were drawn to Stalinism because they saw this as a means of implementing national reforms. It allowed them to deploy the banner of Marxism and use it to win mass support for industrialization under native capitalist ownership, in opposition to foreign corporations. Loans from and trade with the Soviet bloc were an additional measure in furtherance of this end. The support which the PKP gave to Ferdinand Marcos in 1965 was an expression of this program. The party sought to bring about an alignment of interests between the emerging energy of mass social opposition and the sizeable section of native capitalists represented by the Marcos administration. A contradiction lay at the heart of this program, however, for it compelled the party to engage in a perilous political balancing act which in a context of mounting social unrest became increasingly difficult to sustain. By the end of 1966, the PKP's attempt to retain the support of protestors and strikers while preserving an alliance with the ruling class collapsed.

The SU and PRC, both committed to the construction of socialism within their own borders, never merged their economies. Their divergent national interests inevitably conflicted, giving rise to rivalry, then open split and armed conflict. The uneven economic development of the two countries and their starkly different geopolitical circumstances fueled tensions. Situated behind the buffer zone of Eastern Europe and with a fairly stable industrial base, the SU followed a policy of peaceful coexistence with the United States and established friendly ties with autocrats. The PRC, in contrast, found itself by the mid-1960s threatened on all sides, facing an imminent threat posed by the U.S. invasion of Vietnam and the loss of its largest international ally, the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), after a military coup in 1965 by General Suharto which saw hundreds of thousands of party cadres killed. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) sought to whip up armed struggle throughout the region to diffuse the threat of U.S. imperialism to China's immense imperiled borders. [2] While the Soviet government embraced Suharto, the CCP promoted protracted people's war and armed uprisings throughout the "countryside of the world" backed by China, "the Yan'an of world revolution." [3]

The pressures bearing down on China were the sharpest manifestations of a global crisis which rapidly engendered mass protests. By 1966 the ideas of protracted people's war, associated with Red Army leader Lin Biao, had combined in the popular imagination of a generation of youth

throughout the world with images of Mao's Little Red Book and Cultural Revolution. This amalgam was seen as the embodiment of true revolutionary politics, in contrast to the conservative bureaucratism of SU President Leonid Brezhnev. Communist parties around the world split along these ideological lines. Supporters of the CCP's political line did not oppose the Stalinist orientation to the formation of an alliance with a section of the capitalist class. They sought, however, to secure this alliance not with Soviet loans but with the radical cachet of Maoism, which gave them a grip on the imagination of a burgeoning protest movement. As social tensions mounted around the world in the late 1960s, the tide of global authoritarianism rose. Rival sections of the elite turned to conspiratorial plots to secure rule for themselves and an alliance with a party founded on the Maoist line was particularly useful.

This period of CCP radicalism, what was seen internationally as the Lin Biao phase of Maoism, was short-lived. The Sino-Soviet split turned into an armed conflict by 1969. Confronting an existential threat across its border, the CCP opened ties with the United States. Lin Biao was ostracized from political power in 1970. Mao put forward his "Three Worlds" theory, which lumped together the United States and the USSR as the enemies of Third World nations, and, in the name of an anti-Soviet alliance, led the PRC to establish friendly relations with Marcos in the Philippines and General Augusto Pinochet in Chile. The United States government secured its interests in this period by supporting autocrats and dictators throughout the world; the SU and PRC followed suit.

This article examines how the opening stages of the Sino-Soviet split played out in the Philippines. Mounting levels of social anger, initially expressed in response to the American War in Vietnam, split the PKP, with one faction maintaining ties with the Marcos administration and the other attempting to retain a hold on the protest movement. Neither faction sought a split, but the contradiction at the heart of Stalinism could not hold under the social pressure of the time.

My account is a significant departure from prior scholarship on this split. Most existing scholarly literature is based on interviews with cadres and former cadres of the PKP and CPP and focuses on the history of the parties. [4] These interview-based works provide valuable histories of the party, documenting internal discussions and organizational development, but largely miss how the party functioned as a critical public force, engaged in both following and shaping contemporary developments. Given that much of its activity took the form of alliances with sections of the elite and given that these alliances were subsequently abandoned, the interviewees generally did not speak of them. Thus, the party's relations with former President Diosdado Macapagal (in office 1961-1965) and with then-President Marcos, so critical to contemporary events, were left out of these interview accounts entirely. My research puts the party and its work at the center of Philippine political life. It is here that the written record is particularly valuable, for party speeches and publications grappled with the burning questions of the day. When these speeches were republished a few years later they were substantially redacted and often fundamentally altered by CPP leaders. Much prior scholarship treats the 1967 PKP split as a prelude to the founding of the CPP in 1969 and not the focus of intensive scrutiny. The most significant scholarly explanation of this split is by Francisco Nemenzo Jr. (1984), a former PKP member. Nemenzo saw the defeat of the Huk Rebellion and the suppression of the PKP in the 1950s as producing a fundamental generational divide in the party, arguing that

the schism was not a local expression of the international dispute between the Soviet and Chinese parties but the offshoot of a generational rift between the remnants of an aborted rebellion and the new elements who were spared the trauma of defeat. [5]

The PKP, he contended, split between older, more cautious veterans and younger, headstrong, and reckless members. However, the available evidence does not support Nemenzo's contention that the split was the product of a generational divide. A majority of the party's youth, including Nemenzo himself, remained in the PKP at the time of the split, while some of the old guard, among them

Simeon Rodriguez and Angel Baking, who had suffered the trauma of defeat, supported the new CPP. [6] The PKP's successful integration of youth was most clearly expressed by the role of Jose Maria Sison, the founder and head of the PKP youth wing. Sison joined the party's five-member Executive Committee in December 1962. Over the next five years, he played a more prominent public role than any other party member. He was instrumental in arranging the merger of the independent labor party, Lapiang Manggagawa, with the administration of President Macapagal in 1963. He wrote the official handbook for Macapagal's land reform, which Sison heralded as "revolutionary." In 1965, he oversaw the transfer of the support of the party's labor, peasant, and youth wings from Macapagal to Marcos, and delivered speeches in support of Marcos' Nacionalista Party. There was thus an underlying continuity of political perspectives between Sison and those who became his political rivals in the leadership of the PKP. [7] Nemenzo insisted that the split did not originate in the Sino-Soviet conflict, but since it

occurred at the height of the Sino-Soviet dispute, what was initially a domestic quarrel assumed an international dimension....neither the Communist Party of the Soviet Union nor the Communist Party of China were initially involved. Their interventions, which came later, aggravated rather than triggered the conflict. [8]

Nemenzo's explanation was a salutary rebuttal to anti-communist claims that the actors involved in the split were "agents" of foreign powers. [9] Despite this fact, both factions in the PKP had nonetheless begun establishing ties with either the SU or the PRC prior to the split.

I argue that the split was neither the product of domestic differences nor was it the result of external machinations. Rather, the same global social pressures that gave sharpened expression to the Sino-Soviet dispute in the mid-1960s produced unrest throughout the region that tore through the contradiction at the heart of Stalinism. PKP members who were responsible for retaining influence over the emerging social unrest were drawn to Maosim, while those engaged in securing ties with the progressive section of the capitalist class followed the line of the SU. [10] The two parties that emerged out of the split were thus neither tools of these competing bureaucracies nor autonomous from them. The divergent sets of social interests housed in the PKP and CPP found congruent alignment with the rival tendencies of global Stalinism. Using newspaper accounts of the period and the published speeches, statements, and leaflets of the PKP and associated political groups, I demonstrate that Sison attempted for most of 1966 to corral and retain control over a growing mass movement. He was compelled by U.S. President Lyndon Johnson's visit to Manila in October 1966 to place his organization at the head of the inevitable protest this visit triggered and events rapidly spiraled out of his control. Despite his best efforts to divert anger away from police brutality and to establish ties with the national bourgeoisie, he found himself and his allies the subject of a witch-hunt, while the youth movement that he sought to control defied the Marcos government with which he wished to maintain ties. By the beginning of 1967, the split in the PKP was inevitable.

Relations with Marcos

The U.S. government carefully monitored the seismic tremors of social unrest in the Philippines. A secret national intelligence estimate, completed on February 17, 1966, revealed the tensions on the fault lines of Philippine society, noting that "the key problem is a deep and growing economic cleavage between upper and lower classes" and should Marcos prove incapable of dealing with this in the next four years, "Philippine political stability and democratic institutions could be seriously undermined." [11] Glaring social inequality, poverty, and unemployment had built up a vast reservoir of social anger. The next half decade demonstrated this anger could erupt on the public stage over any number of possible causes. The first manifestation of this mounting social anger was opposition to the American war in Vietnam. The PKP channeled this outrage in the Philippines behind the presidential candidacy of Ferdinand Marcos. With the assistance of Bakri Ilyas, a member

of the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), who was based in the Philippines, the PKP had reemerged from dormancy in the early 1960s. Two new leaders, Sison and Ignacio Lacsina, who was the head of a major trade union umbrella organization, had built close relations with the administration of Marcos' predecessor, Diosdado Macapagal, who had briefly established friendly ties with President Sukarno of Indonesia in 1963. [12] As the Philippine government's connections to Sukarno's government soured in late 1964 and as Macapagal planned to send troops to Vietnam in support of U.S. President Johnson's impending invasion, the PKP moved to break with Macapagal and endorse Marcos. Over the course of 1965, Sison oversaw the complex reorientation of the party's front organizations away from Macapagal and behind the candidacy of Marcos. A key role in this process was played by the party's new youth wing, the Kabataang Makabayan (KM) [Nationalist Youth], which had been founded in November 1964. Marcos, then Senate President, blocked the passage of Macapagal's Philippine Civic Action Group (PHILCAG) legislation which would have deployed Filipino forces to Vietnam, decrying the bill as unconstitutional and inimical to national interests. On the basis of Marcos' claim that he would keep the Philippines out of America's war in Vietnam, Sison mobilized the KM and other PKP - allied groups behind him in the presidential election, and Marcos won the election handily. [13] Less than two weeks after his election, in an interview with Stanley Karnow of the *Washington Post*, Marcos declared that he was committed to sending two thousand Filipino troops to Vietnam. He covered his political reversal by telling Karnow, "many of us felt that the United States was preparing to withdraw from Vietnam. But now that the United States has demonstrated its resolute will to slug it out, we have been reassured." [14] By the beginning of 1966, the PKP was already profiting from its support for Marcos - salaried positions had opened and favorable diplomacy with the Soviet bloc was in the offing - yet their public statements voiced uncertainty and ambivalence. At the beginning of the year, Sison published an editorial in the eighth issue of the party-controlled political journal, the *Progressive Review*, in which he weighed the political significance for "the national democratic forces" - i.e. the PKP and its front organizations - of Marcos' election victory. [15] Sison made no mention of Marcos' election promise to keep Filipino troops out of Vietnam, nor of his post-election reversal. This had been the entire public justification for the party's support for his candidacy less than three months before, yet Sison passed over the question in silence. Instead, he depicted the incoming government as torn between progressive and reactionary elements. Half of Marcos cabinet, he claimed, was composed of pro-imperialist figures, but the other half were "strong exponents of economic nationalism." Marcos had installed the pro-imperialist wing because he had "received *greater* American financial support and...this proved to be one of the decisive factors in the outcome of the election." [16] In other words, the candidate endorsed by the PKP was in fact the preferred candidate of Washington, whose support had secured his victory. The party's political assessment of the newly elected president, however, was based on the fact that "the Filipino national bourgeoisie turned decisively against the Macapagal government." [17] This was heart of the matter. While Vietnam, the pretext for PKP support, had become an inconvenient topic, what Sison claimed was the decisive alignment of Filipino capitalists behind Marcos could not be ignored. A majority of the bourgeoisie had shifted its allegiances and the PKP lined up behind their decision. U.S. imperialists had backed Marcos; Filipino capitalists had followed suit. The logic of Stalinism depicted a fundamental contradiction rather than a subordinate alignment between these sets of interests. Sison argued that these rival forces were contending for the political soul of the administration:

Marcos himself will be forced to make a choice between his people and his financiers....[I]t is only the strength of the national democratic forces that is capable of drawing the president to their side once the moment of decision is at hand. [18]

Philcag

Marcos' commitment to deploy Filipino forces to Vietnam eclipsed all other political questions in

1966. Through the first half of the year, in keeping with the strategy outlined by Sison, Kabataang Makabayan remained on the political sidelines, unwilling to alienate Marcos, and maintained a studious silence regarding their ally in the presidential palace of Malacañang.

On February 11, the University of the Philippines (UP) Student Council staged the first protest of the year in front of the U.S. Embassy against the Vietnam War, but the KM was nowhere to be seen. [19] A week later, Marcos authorized sending two thousand Filipino troops to Vietnam, and in a live nationwide radio and television address declared, "We regard it as essential that the relentless pressure of communist aggression in Vietnam be stopped." [20] Still the KM was silent. The KM would only stage a protest, or intervene in politics at all, if social anger could be safely directed away from Marcos and his troop deployment. Four days after Marcos announced his PHILCAG appropriations bill, U.S. Vice President Hubert Humphrey arrived in Manila. The Vice President – the smiling liberal face of napalm and Agent Orange – was someone the KM could denounce, and five thousand students, peasants, workers, and unemployed gathered on February 21 outside the Philippine Congress and marched to the U.S. Embassy, around which sixty policemen stood guard. [21] March 25 marked the second International Day of Protest against the American war in Vietnam. [22] Two thousand workers and students rallied in front of the U.S. Embassy behind the banners of the KM, two affiliated youth groups – the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation (BRPF) and the Student Cultural Association of the University of the Philippines (SCAUP) – and the Lapiang Manggagawa (LM) [Workers' Party], a union organization headed by Lacsina and Sison. The speakers at the rally denounced everything but their ally in the Malacañang Palace: the U.S. Embassy, the Philippine legislature, even Filipinos generally and their colonial mentality. [23] On June 18, Marcos signed the PHILCAG bill into law. The KM remained silent. Matters reached a breaking point at the end of August when Marcos announced that he would be traveling to Washington within a month to confer with Johnson on the conflict in Vietnam. On September 9, the newly elected UP Student Council, closely allied to the KM, led a rally in front of Malacañang against the deployment of Filipino troops to Vietnam. [24] The protestors issued a manifesto signed by both SCAUP and BRPF, which stated, "We oppose this partisan involvement for the very reason than no less than the President of the Philippines, in contravention of his aggressive policies, has already recognized the obvious necessity of ending the Vietnam War." [25] They depicted their opposition to Marcos' deployment of troops as in support of positions articulated by the President himself. They were, they claimed, "the people" appealing to the professed better angels of his nature, in opposition to his "financiers." The youth and students gathered around the KM saw Marcos' state visit to the U.S. as a decisive moment for the policy of critical support and tactful pressure which they had been led to pursue. A leaflet that was circulated on the eve of the rally declared:

The BRPF (Philippine Council) wholeheartedly supports the mass rally to be staged before Malacañang on September 9 – an action initiated and led by the students of the UP. The foundation enjoins [*sic*] all peace-loving people to participate in this just and historic event. [26]

Yet among the peace-loving people who ignored this injunction was the KM. The youth organization of the PKP did not assist in organizing the event, nor did it attempt to sway the politics of the rally. The KM did not sign the manifesto, nor did they issue a counter-manifesto. UP KM Chair Ibarra Malonzo, conscious that the silence of the KM since Marcos took office had been much commented upon, issued a statement to the *Collegian* on September 21. The KM, he admitted, "had nothing to do with the coordination of the demonstration," but, he hastened to add, "...our members, who are also university students, quietly and modestly helped in certain steps towards the accomplishment of the rally." [27] Malonzo's brief note acknowledging that the KM, which prided itself on being the most militant of all youth organizations, had limited itself to the "quiet, modest" private acts of its individual members, evinced a sense of chagrin and constraint. While the BRPF and SCAUP circled

tightly within the orbit of the PKP, their origin and composition gave them a degree of organizational autonomy that the KM lacked.

The KM was in crisis, its fate at stake, and Sison, and the layers of urban, university-based youth around him, knew it. They did not seek a complete rupture with Marcos but they needed the muzzle removed. If mass protests erupted – and their rumblings were drawing rapidly near – while the KM remained silent, the organization would wither. A significant demonstration was needed and the KM needed to be at its head.

To China

It was not that the KM did not benefit from its relationship with Marcos, it was simply that as 1966 progressed KM leaders found the terms on which these benefits had been negotiated increasingly onerous. Youth and students, moving into the streets, were finding their voice, while the leadership of the PKP had bartered away that of the KM. Marcos sought to develop ties with the Soviet Union and opposed diplomatic relations with China, but he had opened travel to both countries, an action welcomed by all sections of the party, including its youth wing. A flurry of publicized trips followed, as reporters and politicians journeyed to these previously forbidden destinations and returned with accounts of life and politics behind the “Iron” or the “Bamboo Curtain.” The *Philippines Free Press*, the country’s leading newsweekly, summed up the impact of travel to China:

It is the success of Communist China that the beneficiaries of the present social order – the rich, the comfortable, the government officials that serve them, the Establishment – must fear. For if Communist China has succeeded in providing the Chinese people with the necessities of life, the question will be raised why the “democratic” Philippines has failed to serve the Filipino people likewise. [28]

The first wave of travel to China included journalists and political figures, but over the summer a handful of university students journeyed to Beijing, among whom was the KM’s new ally, E. Voltaire Garcia, who in August was elected chair of the UP Student Council. As one of the first official actions of his term, Garcia sent a request to the Chinese government for a group of UP students to be sponsored for travel to the country. [29] A month and half later, on October 18, he received a cable approving his request and extending a formal invitation for a group of sixty students and professors to receive a three week all-expenses paid tour of the PRC in late November. [30] With the assistance of the University of the Philippines President Carlos Romulo, Garcia received permission for the trip from Foreign Affairs Secretary Narciso Ramos, with the agreement that a list of the specific participants would be supplied to the Foreign Affairs office for final authorization. [31] Four days later, President Johnson arrived in the country and the most explosive protest in decades shook Manila on October 24. The Marcos administration responded by banning all youth and student travel to China. The same social unrest which was fueling travel to China was undermining relations with the government that had been authorizing it. The lightning unleashed by the visit of Johnson did not fall from a clear sky; popular anger had been growing over the preceding months. For Sison and his allies, to miss this moment would be to lose all influence over an emerging mass movement, but to embrace it would be an act of open defiance of the majority of the leadership of the PKP. October 24 marked an irrevocable decision: battle for control of the party or submit to its policy of supporting Marcos and ties with the Soviet Union.

Sison had quietly commenced preparations several months earlier, when he had traveled to China in late July. Unlike Garcia, Sison could not travel openly to Beijing; as the head of the KM, he needed to avoid both the red-baiting accusations of the House Committee on Anti-Filipino Activities (CAFA) and the suspicious eyes of the other members of the PKP leadership. Sison thus secretly slipped into China using as cover a conference staged in Hiroshima, the Twelfth Gensuikyo World Conference

against Atom and Hydrogen Bombs. The Japanese Communist Party (JCP), which was responsible for staging and hosting the conference, was moving rapidly toward a permanent break with the CCP. In the last week of July, the Japanese government banned the Chinese delegation to the conference, but the JCP kept silent. On August 1, the JCP voted to allow the Soviet delegation to attend, overriding a ban previously enacted by the party on Soviet participation in the annual Hiroshima conference. [32] Sixteen of the twenty foreign delegations, a total of thirty-two delegates, walked out of the conference in protest, including Sison. [33] These thirty-two delegates held a press conference in the early morning hours of August 3 and issued an official statement which declared their opposition to the “agents of imperialism, namely, collaborators controlled by the present rulers in Moscow.” [34] Sison traveled with the other delegates to Beijing, reaching the city on August 6, where the next evening a banquet was staged in their honor. [35] Mao had ordered the display of his provocative big character poster “Bombard the Headquarters” at Beijing University the day before, summoning China’s youth to a cultural revolution. Over the course of the next two weeks, as Sison met with leading representatives of the CCP, including Zhou Enlai, first hundreds of thousands and then millions of youths marched before the Chairman in Tiananmen Square. They ecstatically waved their red books; many wept openly. Sison, responsible over the past year for repressing and diverting the social anger of youth, saw the political force that Mao gained in unleashing its destructive capacity at his political enemies. On August 12, the CCP assembled ten thousand people to welcome the thirty-two delegates who had walked out in Hiroshima and hail their upholding the “correct and glorious line” of Mao. [36] Sison returned to the Philippines with a daunting task. He needed to seize control of the PKP and orient it to the political line of Beijing before the social explosion, or failing that, to wrest away as large a portion of its membership as possible and establish a new party. He used the rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution to secure and mobilize the support of urban, university-based youth, who were his core constituency. He quietly worked to build a network of support both within the party and among its broad periphery. To allay suspicion, the KM did not publicly change course; it remained silent until October 23, the eve of the protest in Manila. Looking to position himself at the head of the emerging struggle, Sison published an article in the *Collegian* on September 9 which strained the boundaries of the PKP’s dictates but never ruptured them. [37] It was the first time Sison had published a statement on PHILCAG since he had called for support for Marcos on the grounds that he would keep the Philippines out of Vietnam. The deployment of Filipino forces, Sison now wrote, was “mercenary in the sense that the Marcos administration had it organized with the expectations of aid from the United States in other projects,” and its “real nature” was “psy-war, intelligence, and combat.” He asked his readers, “Is President Marcos helping in the execution of the Pentagon’s ‘new design’?” but pointedly refrained from answering his own question. Sison concluded, “If he is, then expect the rise of fascism in our country.” The article did not directly denounce Marcos, but it raised unpleasant questions about his administration and cast PHILCAG in a hostile light. Without openly violating party discipline, Sison had positioned himself to emerge at the head of opposition and protest.

October 24, 1966

The American war in Vietnam required political cover. Lyndon Johnson cast this war as part of broad international support for a stable democratic government in South Vietnam, and to shore up this pretense turned to South Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines, cobbling together the best regional support that money could buy. On September 21, during the midst of Marcos’ state visit to Washington, the Johnson administration drafted a proposal to hold a summit in Manila in late October to present the multilateral character of the war on an Asian stage, an idea which was presented to journalists as having originated with Marcos. The *Philippines Free Press* accurately summed up the whole staged affair this way: “The entire firepower of the American delegation during the Summit was concentrated on changing the complexion of the war in Vietnam from an American war to a war of, by, and for Asians.” [38] On October 23, in the *grande dame* of American

colonialism, the Manila Hotel, the summit began. The gathered Asian leaders adopted a pose of regional concern. South Vietnam Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky, who had fascist sympathies and had led a military coup, Park Chung-hee, who had been installed as president of South Korea by a military junta in 1961, Thanom Kittikachorn, military dictator of Thailand, and Ferdinand Marcos, the only democratically elected figure in the bunch, all signed a joint declaration of support for South Vietnam which Johnson had drawn up for the occasion, committing themselves to "Peace and Progress in Asia." That evening, Johnson ordered the U.S. Navy to begin shelling North Vietnam's coastline. [39] Between late October and the end of 1966, the U.S. military launched more than 500,000 shells in Vietnam, a number which exceeded the total it had fired during the entirety of the Second World War. The joint declaration of peace in his pocket, Johnson departed the next morning for Cam Ranh Bay, where he reviewed the troops. [40] The Manila Summit was quickly forgotten, its posturing and declarations at best an historical footnote. The developments immediately outside the Manila Hotel were of far greater significance.

A week before Johnson arrived, Voltaire Garcia chaired a "tumultuous meeting" of the UP Student Council, securing by a narrow margin a resolution to stage a protest against the Manila Summit. [41] Manila's mayor Antonio Villegas issued a permit for a protest to be held in front of the U.S. Embassy, several blocks from the Manila Hotel. [42] Protestors demonstrated in front of the Embassy for an hour while a series of speakers stood on top of a jeep to address the crowd. Contemporary reports record that there were two thousand protestors present. [43] Some claim that the decision to move the protest to the Manila Hotel came spontaneously from the crowd while others say that it was an instruction from the leaders of the rally. [44] When protestors arrived at the hotel, police instructed them to disperse because their permit did not extend beyond the U.S. Embassy. [45] Tensions mounted as the protestors stood their ground in the face of the riot-gear clad police. A number of contemporary reports state that Americans in suits were standing behind and circulating among the Manila police; the police attacked the protestors when an American shouted "Go get 'em!" [46] The protestors fled as police beat students with rattan batons and fired shots in the air. At some point during the dispersal, a police officer aimed and fired at a fleeing student named Prudencio Tan, shooting him in the neck. [47] Rosca reported that "doctors had to open a hole at the base of his neck to enable him to breathe: his windpipe had been punctured." [48] As the police attacked the protestors, members of the foreign press were also injured and reporters and cameramen for United Press International (UPI), the *Washington Post*, the Canadian Broadcast Company (CBC), and the Australian Broadcast Company (ABC) were hurt. [49] The police arrested and filed charges against five people. The October 24 demonstration - the first of many spasmodic social eruptions which shook the country over the next half decade - would have occurred without Sison's leadership, but he had positioned himself at its head and retained control over the restive and growing youth movement. Now he sought to contain this social force. He was not yet prepared for a vast explosion; he needed to secure his sway over the PKP.

Stalinism measures the political strength of the rival forces vying for control of a party by their ability to negotiate ties with the bourgeoisie. In late 1966, the PKP focused its attention not on the war in Vietnam or the burgeoning police state apparatus at home, but on the formation of the broadest alliance with the bourgeoisie in the history of the party, the Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism (MAN). Over the course of the preceding year, the editorial and business pages of the major dailies and newsweeklies manifested a growing atmosphere of discontent in sections of the Philippine business community over the parity rights enjoyed by American business owners in the country and for securing new international sources of loans. [50] They did not seek economic independence from the U.S., but aspired to become semi-autonomous junior partners and no longer mere placeholders on corporate executive boards run by Americans. Toward the end of the year, Teofisto Guingona Jr., Governor of the Development Bank of the

Philippines and Chair of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce, quietly traveled to Moscow to survey the possibilities of economic ties with the Soviet bloc. [51] These developments did not express an ideological shift among the Philippine elite, who remained as anti-communist as ever. They did, however, seek by political and geopolitical maneuver to expand their portfolios. The enthusiasm in the business community for the formation of MAN was bound up with a December 1966 court ruling that subjected American firms to the Retail Trade Nationalization Act, a law from which American-owned businesses had been exempt. There was a flurry of interest in the first half of 1967 in the possibility that American firms would be forcibly nationalized and handed over to private Filipino ownership by the state. [52] MAN was to be the fulcrum of this endeavor, adding to the capitalists' effort the mass of workers, peasants, and youths the PKP brought to the organization. Economic ties with the Soviet bloc, which the PKP would negotiate, gave extended leverage. Victory in the struggle for the Communist Party would be won by the section of its leadership that emerged dominant in MAN. [53] Sison's party rivals had far more influence with Filipino capitalists in late 1966 than he did. They used their ties with the Soviet Union to promise trade deals and cash loans on competitive terms. They also had positions in the Marcos administration, while the protests of October 24 threatened to rupture the KM's relationship with the president it had backed less than a year before.

The one advantage that Sison had was his own energy and that of the youth movement behind him. If he could move quickly enough – organize, travel, network, and speak – it was possible he could build MAN while the remaining leadership of the PKP was still organizing its forces. In his view, any social movement not focused on this end was a wasteful expenditure of effort. Opposition to police brutality needed to be corralled and denunciations of the Marcos administration silenced. Every social layer which Sison could mobilize needed to be focused on one end: securing ties with Filipino capitalists through the formation of MAN.

Events, however, quickly spiraled out of control.

O24M and police brutality

Within days, popular outrage over the brutal suppression of demonstrators at the Manila Hotel took organizational shape as the October 24th Movement (O24M), and Voltaire Garcia was made chair of this ad hoc new group. [54] The O24M emerged independently of the PKP but was marked from its inception by the political confusion engendered by the party, all factions of which continued to support Marcos. The new organization simultaneously decried the emergence of “fascism” and appealed to the “liberal principles” of the Marcos administration. O24M included anarchistic elements, university students drawn to Mao's Cultural Revolution but generally opposed to political authority. The demonstration and its violent dispersal in front of the television cameras and newspaper reporters of the world had publicly humiliated Marcos and he immediately ordered an investigation into the protests, which he termed a riot. At the same time, he sought to contain popular anger by summoning a select group of UP student leaders to Malacañang Palace on October 30. Voltaire Garcia and his conservative campus rival, Violeta Calvo, met with the president, who announced that all charges against the five accused protestors would be dropped. [55] Marcos' commitment, however, did little to appease the growing outrage. The police had beaten and fired upon demonstrators, who now sought not clemency but redress. On November 3, over one thousand students marched to Malacañang to denounce police brutality. KM mainstays addressed the crowd, but the dwindling control of the organization's leadership found expression in anti-police slogans (such as “Down with the AID-controlled police”) demonstrators displayed on their placards. [56] Along with the entire leadership of the PKP, Sison held to the Stalinist perspective of the progressive character of a section of the capitalist class in the national democratic revolution. To carry out an alliance with this layer, sections of the military and police had to be won over with nationalist appeals. The O24M was a loose, spontaneous amalgam, the absence of a thought-through political program contained in its very name, which expressed nothing beyond an angry reaction to an

immediate grievance. Sison sought to control this outrage by redirecting it away from the repressive apparatus of the state and towards the program of national democracy. On December 6, on the quiet Loyola Heights campus of Ateneo de Manila, Sison addressed an assembly sponsored by the Ateneo Political Society. [57] The central thrust of Sison's speech was his depiction of the emerging youth movement as fundamentally a nationalist movement oriented to securing limited reforms through appeals to, and pressure brought to bear upon, the existing structures of political power:

The youth of today...have much to teach their elders...recalling them to the cause of nationalism...Our elders in the highest councils of the government today are bound by compromises with big vested interests which have made possible their elections and appointments. We wish to bind them with the tradition of the nationalist and the revolutionary youth who merge themselves with the masses under the red banner of the Philippine revolution. [58]

Youth were not oriented to a socialist revolution carried out by the working class, but to political continuity and reformist politics. Their task was to sway their conflicted elders away from imperialism and bind them in service to nationalism. However much he couched his argument in the language of youthful revolt, Sison offered the most tepid of reformism. The program of the KM, he stated, "merely affirms what every patriotic Filipino should adhere to," and he approvingly cited the slogans of the Garcia ("Filipino First"), Macapagal ("Unfinished Revolution"), and Marcos ("The nation can be great again") administrations as evidence of the continuity between the politics of the KM and that of their establishment elders. Their elders were conflicted, however, wavering between their imperialist benefactors and the needs of the people. Here the intervention of youth was needed, he argued, to remind the elders of their true allegiances, to expose the imperialists, and to win the elders back to the nation. Youth did not have access to the press, so they voiced this pressure politics through demonstrations.

Sison then turned to the question of police brutality. "Since we are interested in the free development of nationalism in this country," he said, "we need to consider the fact that foreign agencies maintain an undue amount of control and influence over our police forces and our armed forces." [59] Police brutality expressed not the fundamental character of the state but a distortion of its role under the pressure and control of imperialism. Political reforms would transform "our police" from brutal oppressors into national heroes, modern-day del Pilars [60] "in the ranks of the police and the military:"

There is the need to wage a nationalist education campaign. The events before, during and after the October 24th Incident reveal to us how much our government officials misunderstand the spirit of nationalism. Anti-nationalism has so much poisoned the minds of so many of our police officers and those higher executive officials who give them the orders. [61]

Anti-nationalism was the root cause of police brutality, according to Sison, but it was the product of an unfortunate misunderstanding which could be remedied by nationalist education. Sison called on the government to facilitate "seminars on nationalism and civil liberties among members of the police and armed forces so that a bridge of sympathy and understanding could be built for the prevention of fascism." [62] Sison argued that youth and workers could not independently resolve any of their problems and that the state, far from being their enemy, could be made their ally. They needed simply to pressure it with demonstrations and bind it to the "national interest." [63]

Witch hunt

Whereas Sison was looking to contain the energy of the demonstrating students and direct it into

safe channels while he worked to take control of the party, his PKP rivals sought to defuse this entirely, as they were reluctant to see anything endanger their relationship with the Marcos administration. Marcos' Executive Secretary Rafael Salas had brought over fifty "technopols" into the administration and directly oversaw their work. [64] A good many of these were members or close supporters of the PKP. Among them was Ruben Torres, who over the next half decade oversaw the party's efforts to establish ties between the Marcos government and the Soviet Union, and between the PKP and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). In early 1967, he traveled to Moscow to begin this process. [65] Political protests, however, threatened to jeopardize these relations and embarrass Marcos on the world stage. The Labor Department, under the leadership of undersecretary Raoul Inocentes, who had close ties to the PKP, set about to systematically discourage unions and labor organizations from participating in the October 24 demonstration. [66] As a result of this intervention, only the organizations directly tied to the still independent Lacsina joined the protest. In the wake of the October 24 demonstration, the rift which the PKP leadership had sought to prevent between the Marcos administration and their youth wing widened. The loose amalgam known as the O24M issued a leaflet denouncing Salas' "boys":

The Marcos administration has suffered its first significant defeat in the eyes of our people and is now desperately trying to deceive the students and the people through its paid agents out of a craven fear of the powerful anti-imperialist and anti-fascist October 24th Movement. [67]

Sensing Marcos' political vulnerability, former President Macapagal and several other leading figures of the elite opposition began denouncing Salas as a "red" for his ties to the same forces with whom Macapagal had allied the Liberal Party three years earlier. [68] Marcos hit back through Congressman Carmelo Barbero, Chair of the House Committee on National Defense, who launched a series of inquiries into the alleged support given by remnants of the Huk guerrilla movement to Macapagal in the 1965 election. [69] Barbero was a dubious political figure. A colonel in the army, he headed the Civil Affairs Office (CAO) in the 1950s, the psychological warfare arm of the Philippine Armed Forces. In 1955, he launched a lucrative career smuggling goods from Japan, working with Santiago Nuval, the military attaché to the Philippine Embassy in Tokyo. After Nuval was court-martialed for this activity, Marcos rehabilitated the political careers of both Nuval and Barbero. Nuval was appointed head of the Navy, while Barbero, now a Liberal Party politician, became Marcos' loyal ally in the House. Barbero played an instrumental role in both the opening of ties with the Soviet Union and the red-baiting of Sison and his cohort. In October 1966, just before he launched an anti-communist witch-hunt against the October 24 demonstrators, Barbero returned from Moscow, where he had quietly begun negotiations to secure ties with the Soviet Union. On November 9, he introduced legislation in Congress to establish trade relations with the Soviet bloc. Visiting Soviet dignitaries over the next six years would be housed in the home of Barbero. His daughter, Josefina, attended Lumumba University in Moscow on a full scholarship in 1970. After Marcos imposed martial law in 1972, he made Barbero his undersecretary of defense. [70] The violence of the police on October 24 shocked the nation and a congressional hearing was quickly called to investigate the suppression of the protest. Marcos arranged for the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) and the National Police Commission (NPC) to be brought in to investigate the student demonstrations, claiming that he suspected a "mastermind or financier" was behind the protest. [71] Having instigated what would become a massive witch-hunt against alleged communists on campuses, Marcos announced that he was pardoning the student demonstrators and handed the reins of the investigation over to the legislature. An inquiry that would occupy the rest of the year was formally launched by the House Committee on Education on October 28. Within twenty-four hours, however, the investigation had been handed over to Representative Alberto Ubay, who headed a subcommittee charged with investigating "communist infiltration of Philippine schools." [72] Ubay's investigation was then transformed into a joint hearing with Barbero's

investigation of ties between the Huks and Macapagal. [73] Barbero's role in the witch-hunting of the young demonstrators expressed a strong alignment of interests between anticommunists in the legislature and the leadership of the PKP. Barbero simultaneously sought to establish diplomatic and economic relations with the Soviet Union and to crackdown on Sison and the KM. At no point in his investigation did any of the PKP forces in the Marcos administration come under scrutiny. Ignacio Lacsina, whom the Moscow-oriented leadership regarded as a loose cannon, occasionally was the subject of denunciations, but this was done in a secondary and pro forma manner. Barbero focused on Sison and his supporters.

When Sison was called before the joint congressional committee on November 15, the witch-hunt intensified. A retired naval captain and government intelligence operative, Carlos Albert, led Sison's questioning. He charged Sison with having traveled to China, but Sison denied this, declaring that he had never been to the country. [74] Albert informed the House Committee that Sison was a communist. [75] Albert's accusations, under the terms of the 1957 Anti-Subversion Law (RA1700), carried the threat of a life sentence and possibly the death penalty. [76] On November 23, Albert presented thirty nine documents and four charts which he claimed demonstrated that the KM was a communist organization. Sison and his colleagues should be prosecuted, he argued, for "inciting to rebellion." Barbero concurred, stating that Albert had presented sufficient proof to warrant prosecution. The specter of RA1700 had been raised in the legislature. [77] On Friday, November 25, Ismael Lapuz, head of NICA, put before Barbero's committee the state's case for prosecuting Sison and other leading members of the KM on charges of subversion. Present at the hearing was Justice Department Chief Prosecutor Emilio Gancayco, who was said to be weighing issuing charges against Sison and the KM under RA1700. [78] Lapuz presented no evidence to substantiate his charges, stating that he would reveal the details in a closed door meeting in NICA headquarters on the following Monday. Communists, he claimed, had infiltrated university campuses, but the school "most infiltrated" was UP. In this process of infiltration, the KM served as "the instrument" of the PKP. Thirty to forty professors from various local colleges, he stated, had been placed on the NICA subversives list - a fact damning to NICA, not the professors. In closed door proceedings, Lapuz stated that Sison was linked to the communist parties of China and Indonesia, and that the KM was engaged in a "full-scale expansion program in the provinces and cities and in local universities and colleges." Barbero announced that he was seeking RA1700 prosecution of Sison. [79] Sison, who was effectively placed under house arrest, claimed that "government intelligence agents" were "surrounding his house twenty-four hours a day and trailing him wherever [sic] he goes." [80] The KM pushed back. Sison told the press that not he but Carlos Albert should be prosecuted, for his ties to the CIA. [81] On November 30, Senator Lorenzo Tañada announced that he was filing a libel suit against Ismael Lapuz and Carlos Albert on behalf of the KM. On December 2, the KM issued a press statement declaring its intent to file twenty charges of libel against Albert, for which they had the backing not only of Tañada but of Sen. Jose Diokno as well. [82]

Neither Lapuz nor Albert had produced any substantive evidence to back up their numerous accusations against Sison and the KM. Confronting the threat of a libel suit and with Congress going into its extended holiday break, the leaders of the witch-hunt regrouped. Barbero announced on December 10 that he would travel to Jakarta with a team of government investigators to "interview witnesses and examine documents seized by the Suharto government from the PKI" to substantiate their charges against Sison and the KM. [83] On Christmas Eve, Barbero staged a press conference in Saigon while en route home from Jakarta. He announced that his investigation had exposed a powerful "Indonesian lobby," tied to the PKI, in which Sison played a leading role. Suharto, he stated, had been "most cooperative" and had ordered "the most secret intelligence files of the government opened for us to examine" while subjecting "red prisoners to another interrogation with special emphasis on the Philippine angle." Barbero stated that Bakri Ilyas had confessed under

interrogation that the Filipino contacts of the “Indonesian lobby” had been “paid ‘fabulous sums’ as ‘secret employees’ of the Indonesian Embassy in Manila then.” [84] The *Manila Bulletin* ran an editorial stating that “The Indonesian spy...in prison awaiting trial for his part in the abortive October coup in 1965, Bakhri [sic] has incriminated his Filipino contacts during interrogation.” It emerged in the conference that at least “fifty ranking officials, including some of the President’s top advisers” had been implicated. This was the first mention in the entire affair of the PKP leadership now tied to Marcos, but this charge immediately disappeared from the press. [85] Sison and the KM remained the focus of all accusations. [86] On December 29, Sison delivered a speech entitled, “Rizal the ‘Subversive’” to the Conference Delegates Association (CONDA) congress held in Bacolod. In this speech he drew a line of historical continuity from his own political role and that of the KM of which he was head, to that of national hero Jose Rizal. Sison identified his own political opponents with the reactionary forces who seventy years earlier had tried and executed the Philippine national hero:

If Dr. Jose Rizal were alive today, he would be among those topping the list of subversives prepared by both the traditional and modern enemies of genuine Filipino nationhood and democracy...[Rizal] was first witch-hunted, subsequently exiled and finally murdered at Bagumbayan...the inquisitors of the nationalist youth and students today...are equivalent to the vile inquisitors of Rizal. [87]

It was an effective argument. Sison’s historical analogy drew apt connections between the reactionaries of the past and the present, but it could do no more than this. The passionate intensity of the O24M, which Sison sought to corral as he struggled to create MAN, had brought unwanted attention to the PKP and, in particular, to Sison. The witch-hunt that ensued threatened to alienate the party from its ruling class allies. That Barbero was following in the tradition of the reactionary forces that executed Rizal on Bagumbayan may have been true, but this did not alter the fact that what the majority of the party leadership sought was an end to the political scrutiny that threatened their growing influence. The legislative persecution of Sison’s faction rapidly came to center around the question of China.

Ban on China travel

Among those who had been summoned to testify before Barbero’s committee was UP Student Council member Jejomar Binay. [88] Under questioning on November 9, Binay informed the committee that a large contingent of students was preparing to travel to China. [89] This revelation was treated as a bombshell and legislators demanded that Foreign Affairs Secretary Narciso Ramos deny travel permits to the students. The *Manila Chronicle* characterized this as an “all-expense paid ‘first class’ tour of Communist China.” [90] From October 24 until November 18, UP President Romulo, who had approved the students’ travel and obtained authorization from Narciso Ramos and Marcos, had been in Paris at a UNESCO conference, but in mid-November he reiterated his support for the students’ travel, declaring “I cannot see how we can deprive intelligent students the right to travel and judge for themselves the advantages of our democratic way of life vis-a-vis the rigidity and repression in a totalitarian state.” [91] The trip, arranged by Voltaire Garcia, was scheduled to last from late November to mid-December. [92] Ramos, under intense public pressure from the legislature and doubtless private pressure from Marcos in the wake of the October 24 protest, reversed his decision to allow the fifty-eight person group to travel to China, and informed the press that he had decided that the students were not yet “mature enough” to visit the country, and might thus “pose a security problem upon their return from Red China.” [93] With the assistance of NICA, Ramos placed the names of these fifty-eight students and professors on a “lookout list,” warning that they were “suspected of planning to ‘force’ their way to Communist China.” [94] Not content with the effectiveness of this measure, Ramos canceled the passports of the intended travelers. Adopting the red-baiting language of Barbero, he warned a gathering at Union Church of a “possible

communist revival...induced by popular winds from Beijing...we would be a nation of dolts indeed, if we failed to see clearly the subversive implication of the Chinese communist technique of 'popular diplomacy.'" [95] While the furor over travel to Beijing played out on the front pages of the daily press, the *Manila Times* ran a series of articles over the course of the first two weeks of December called, "Life behind the Iron Curtain," describing in generally positive terms the possibilities of travel in the Soviet bloc. Yet no witch-hunt was launched in Congress, and no red-baiting accusations were raised in the pages of the *Manila Bulletin*, the most anti-Communist of all the major papers. Clearly a double standard was at play.

The excitement surrounding the possibility of diplomatic ties and trade relations with the Soviet bloc linked a seemingly disparate set of interest groups: the left-leaning Tonypet Araneta, editor-in-chief of *Graphic Weekly* 1966-1967; the President of the Chamber of Commerce, Teofisto Guingona Jr.; the smuggler turned witch-hunter, Carmelo Barbero; and the Marcos administration itself. The common orientation of these forces was to rewrite the former colony's imbalanced terms of trade with the United States, loosen the grip of U.S. finance capital, and secure a larger share of the profits. Success required access to new markets and an alternative source of loans and investment. Coming to terms with the Soviet bloc might supply the Philippines with sufficient economic weight to strike a better deal with the U.S. The PKP leaders involved in the Marcos administration stood at the center of this effort.

At the beginning of 1967, with the direct involvement of the PKP and its periphery, and at the instigation of the Marcos administration, the Philippine legislature created a Special Committee to Re-examine Philippine National Policy towards Communist Countries, which became known as the Enverga Committee. Its final report, which detailed the economic opportunities of trade relations with the Soviet bloc, pointedly excluded China. It laid the basis for the eventual establishment of ties between the Philippines and the Soviet Union in 1976. [96] While representatives of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce traveled to Moscow with government approval, the students tied to the O24M defied the government and began traveling to China. They returned with paraphernalia of the Cultural Revolution: copies of the Little Red Book, and Mao caps and pins, which carried extraordinary cachet on campuses in 1967. In May a group of prominent UP students wrote a letter to the editor of the *Philippine Collegian*, calling for a "purge" of the university and the "re-education" of its faculty. [97] Such language, even six months earlier, would have been utterly alien in the Philippines, but over the next five years, it became inescapable. The political landscape had been irrevocably altered.

Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism (MAN)

More than any other figure, Sison tried to hold these rapidly diverging political tendencies together but it proved an impossible task. Toward the end of 1966, he arranged for the KM to present "anti-imperialist awards" to Horacio Francisco, and Vicente Lava, members of the Lava family that dominated the Moscow faction of the PKP. [98] While the students returning to the Philippines from China identified with the Red Guard, Sison identified with Mao. The anger of these youth was politically useful only if directed to his chosen ends, which above all lay in securing an alliance with a section of the capitalist class. He delivered a speech on December 26, entitled "The Nationalist as a Political Activist," in which he presented all of the classes of Philippine society on a political spectrum, from workers and peasants on the left to the compradores on the right. The task was to isolate the right-wing, he announced, by winning over the "middle middle" of the spectrum, the national bourgeoisie:

To tilt the balance for the purpose of isolating the right wing composed of the enemies of progress and democracy, it is necessary therefore for the main and massive forces of the workers and peasants to unite with the intelligentsia, small property owners and

independent handicraftsmen, win over the nationalist entrepreneurs and at least, neutralize the right middle forces. [99]

But winning over the “middle middle” required tact. Sison delivered a speech in March 1967, “Socialism and Nationalism,” in which he repeatedly stated that the tasks of the revolution were not yet socialist: “it would be an error of dogmatism or sheer ignorance of the real conditions of our country if we insist on making socialism our immediate goal.” [100] Sison was instrumental in the formation of the Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism (MAN) in February 1967, which brought together the heads of major banks, the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Industries, the Chamber of Filipino Retailers, a nationwide franchise of pawnshops, and other leading capitalist interests, and pledged to them the loyalty of labor in a nationalist alliance. [101] Lacsina told the assembled delegates that “if labor will have to make a sacrifice for the national interest, it is willing to bear the hardship.” [102] Sison also addressed the founding congress, declaring that MAN

as it is now composed, directly represents the highest development of the nationalist movement for the last twenty years....To stress this fact, we say proudly that materially prosperous but patriotic Filipinos are here and now united with the representatives of the toiling masses. [103]

This state of affairs was not to last. In early April 1967 Sison and his colleagues were outmaneuvered by their rivals in the PKP and expelled from the party. Sison quickly lost influence with MAN, whose membership was above all interested in maintaining relations with the Marcos administration and establishing economic ties with the Soviet bloc. [104] Within a month of his expulsion from the PKP, Sison returned to China, where he met with Mao. [105] In January 1969, less than two years after his expulsion, building on the remnants of the KM, Sison and his handful of fellow thinkers founded a new communist party. [106]

Conclusion

Thus were the battle lines drawn in the face of an imminent social explosion. Within a month of the expulsion, the Philippine Constabulary opened fire on a mass peasant march in downtown Manila, killing thirty-three people and injuring forty-seven. [107] In August, Marshall Wright of the U.S. National Security Council wrote to National Security advisor Walt Rostow:

It would be nearly impossible to overestimate the gravity of the problems with which our next ambassador to Manila must deal. It has become common-place for people knowledgeable on the Philippines to predict a vast social upheaval in the near future. There is widespread talk that the current president will be the last popularly elected Philippine chief executive. Many high-level American officials consider the Philippines to be the most serious and the most bleak threat that we face in Asia. [108]

The political line of the SU gave to Sison’s rivals a set of choice economic incentives to offer Filipino capitalists: loans and trade relations which could serve as a form of capital in a renegotiation of relations with the country’s colonizer, the United States. The political line of the PRC, meanwhile, gave Sison credibility and sway over the growing social unrest. No longer seeking to gain control of the PKP, he gave full rein to the growing youth movement and began to promote the need for an armed struggle in the countryside.

A continuous increase in social tensions marked the period from the October 24 demonstration in 1966 to the imposition of martial law in September 1972. A series of protests occurred against U.S. military bases in 1968, and an unprecedented wave of student strikes shut down universities across the country in 1969. As the gravity of the social crisis increased, the specific weight of Sison’s youth

movement rose and tipped the scales of bourgeois politics. At the time that MAN was founded only the far-sighted anticipated this, while most inclined to the staid rivals of Sison and their immediately useful relations with the SU.

The threat of dictatorship grew in tandem with social unrest. As 1970 opened, and an explosion of protests known as the First Quarter Storm swept across the country, people began to openly discuss the possibility of martial law. A rival set of bourgeois interests emerged, those of the excluded opposition in a time of unrest. [109] They were not opposed to martial law, but they were opposed to Marcos, for it was they, not he, who should be in power. It was among these elements that the CPP at last found its “progressive section of the national bourgeoisie.”

Through the KM and a number of other organizations that came under its sway between 1970 and 1972, the CPP assisted elite opposition attempts to destabilize the Marcos administration. Their protests, marches, and publications focused not on capitalism, but on Marcos, whom they denounced as a fascist. Their elite allies supplied them with funding, free nationwide weekly television and radio broadcasting slots, and favorable coverage in major papers. The KM and its sibling organizations mobilized their base to campaign for the elite opposition Liberal Party in the 1971 midterm election. [110]

The ideological split in the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) was a concentrated political manifestation of a rapidly sharpening social crisis. The fragmentation of the party closely followed the fault lines of the Sino-Soviet split but this was not the expression of external machinations. The ideological shape of the rival national interests of the Stalinist bureaucracies in Moscow and Beijing in the mid-1960s to early 1970s found congruent alignment with emerging social divisions in the rapidly shifting political landscape of the Philippines. The anger of youthful dissent and the economic nationalism of sections of the elite had previously mingled in the party in a hierarchical but peaceable fashion. The social unrest in 1966 was a harbinger of an impending explosion of working class and peasant unrest. The contradiction at the heart of Stalinism, its quest to retain control over a mass movement and maintain ties with a section of the elite, tore through the party. In the final analysis, the split occurred not because of individual leaders but despite them.

Joseph Scalice

[Click here](#) to subscribe to ESSF newsletters in English and/or French.

P.S.

Research Gate

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348857224_The_geopolitical_alignments_of_diverging_social_interests_the_Sino-Soviet_split_and_the_Partido_Komunista_ng_Pilipinas_1966-1967

Footnotes

[1] Khrushchev himself demonstrated the inescapability of these measures when, but months after his speech, he put an end to the thaw and crushed the Hungarian revolution. On the historical origins of the mechanisms of Stalinism see Rogovin 2009.

[2] Lüthi 2008; Friedman 2015; Robinson 2018

[3] Lin 1967.

[4] Prominent among these works are Weekley 2001; Abinales 2001; Fuller 2011; and Caouette 2004.

[5] Nemenzo 1984, 84. Nemenzo's analysis is contained in an unpublished, but widely cited, manuscript. The Huk Rebellion, which lasted from 1949 until 1954, was a Luzon-based peasant uprising that was associated with the leadership of the PKP and built upon the organizations established by the armed resistance to the Japanese Occupation, see Kerkvliet 1977.

[6] Scalice 2017, 9, 311.

[7] Scalice 2021b. After the founding of the CPP, Sison attempted to blame his rivals, the Lava family, for all of the policies of the PKP during this period, see Sison 1971. The truth was that not only did Sison support these policies, but he also was the author of the majority of public statements involved in carrying them out. Sison's rivals, who interfaced more directly with the Marcos administration, produced far less written material than Sison, who, as a result of his leadership role in the various front organizations of the party, wrote a great many documents.

[8] Nemenzo 1984, 53-54.

[9] Among those promoting this claim was Simeon del Rosario 1977.

[10] MASAKA, the party's peasant wing, remained with the PKP. It had been built from the ground up on support for Macapagal's land reform program of 1963 and was a conservative organization oriented to appeals to the state for improved conditions. The majority of youth among the rank-and-file of the Kabataang Makabayan (KM) [Nationalist Youth], the party's youth organization, were of peasant background and they remained with the PKP as well.

[11] US Department of State 2001.

[12] I explore these developments in Scalice 2021b.

[13] Rosca 2004, 14.

[14] Karnow 1965. Marcos used his professed opposition to the deployment of troops not only to secure electoral support on the basis of his purported nationalist independence, but also to arrange lucrative payoffs from the Johnson administration, which he personally pocketed. A degree of the corruption surrounding PHILCAG came to light in 1969 in the investigation conducted by the US Congress' Symington Subcommittee on Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad. The Nixon administration delayed publication of the findings of the Symington subcommittee until after Marcos was re-elected in November 1969. See McFarland 2001; US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations 1969.

[15] Sison 1966a.

[16] Sison 1966a, 2-3, emphasis in the original.

[17] Sison 1966a, 2.

- [18] Sison 1966a, 3.
- [19] PC August 3, 1966–1967, 7; February 16, 1966.
- [20] Ingles 1966, 633.
- [21] PC February 23, 1966.
- [22] Zaroulis and Sullivan 1984, 69–80.
- [23] “Rallies and the ‘Red Taint’” 1966; PC, March 23, 1966; Van Der Kroef 1967.
- [24] PC, August 31, 1966.
- [25] PC, September 9, 1966.
- [26] BRPF 1966.
- [27] PC, September 21, 1966, 10.
- [28] “Moment of Truth” 1966, 1.
- [29] Manila 1966, 2.
- [30] Lacaba 2003, 12.
- [31] Romulo had had a distinguished career in foreign affairs, having served as President of the United Nations General Assembly in 1949 and 1950, then as Secretary of Foreign Affairs for multiple Philippines presidents. He was Marcos’ Minister of Foreign Affairs for the duration of martial law. Narciso Ramos was the father of Fidel V. Ramos, who led the first batch of PHILCAG troops to Vietnam and later headed the Philippine Constabulary during the martial law regime. Fidel Ramos served as president of the Philippines from 1992 until 1998.
- [32] Scalapino 1967, 278.
- [33] Writing in the *Collegian* in January 1967 in response to red-baiting charges from Carlos Albert, he stated “I walked out from the conference together with two Belgian priests and with the members of sixteen foreign delegates [sic]”, see Sison 1967b, 5.
- [34] *Peking Review* 1966–1967 9 (33), 4; 9 (34), 28.
- [35] *Peking Review* 9 (33), 4.
- [36] *Peking Review* 9 (34), 24–25.
- [37] Sison 1966b.
- [38] Rama 1966b, 69.
- [39] 39Rostow 1966.

[40] Rusk 1966, fn. 1.

[41] Manila 1966, 2; PC October 19, 1966.

[42] PC October 26, 1966; Lacaba 2003, 11.

[43] PC October 26, 1966, 2; Lacaba 2003, 11; Rosca 1966, 12.

[44] Rosca 1966, 12; Lacaba 2003, 11.

[45] Lacaba 2003, 5.

[46] Rosca 1966, 14.

[47] Lacaba 2003, 6.

[48] Rosca 1966, 16.

[49] Tutay 1966, 10.

[50] See for example, GW Mar 2 and Apr 20, 1966.

[51] Lansang 1999, 108. Guingona would later become Vice President of the Philippines, 2001-2004.

[52] The *Manila Bulletin* the morning after the ruling accurately summed up the decision, writing that it “gave the law a scope that went even beyond the hopes of Filipino nationalists”, see MB Dec 17, 1966-1967.

[53] The Jarencio ruling was reversed in August 1967 and American-owned businesses were again declared exempt. The enthusiasm in the business community for MAN dwindled. At its founding in February, however, MAN had the support of major banks and sections of industry, all of which saw the immediate possibility of profit in MAN’s economic nationalism. For a useful summary of the Jarencio decision, see “Philippine Decision on Retail Trade Nationalization Law,” 1967. Among the founding members of MAN were the heads of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Industries, and Chamber of Filipino Retailers. See MAN 1967, 149.

[54] Lacaba 2003, 10; Rosca 2004, 15.

[55] Lacaba 1966c, 71; Tutay 1966, 66.

[56] GW, November 16, 1966, 13.

[57] In the first edition of *Struggle for National Democracy* this speech was entitled “Nationalism and Youth.” See Sison 1967a, 19. In subsequent editions it was entitled “The October 24th Movement.”

[58] Sison 1967a, 20.

[59] Sison 1967a, 23.

[60] Gregorio del Pilar was a young Filipino General who fought courageously against the Americans during the early stages of the Philippine-American war. He was killed in the Battle of Tirad Pass, December 2, 1899.

[61] Sison 1967a, 23.

[62] Sison 1967a, 24.

[63] Sison 1967a, 24. When Sison reprinted this article in 1972, he removed the fatuous reference to police officers as modern del Pilars, as well as his campaign of seminars and sympathy, and simply concluded with the rise of fascism. Martial law was but months away.

[64] Joaquin 1987, 93.

[65] Joaquin 2003, 80, 83, 84. The party's behind-the-scenes orientation to Moscow, conducted in tandem with its relations with the Marcos administration, began in 1966. Its open hostility towards the PRC and the CPP began in early 1971 when, along with Moscow-aligned parties around the globe, it responded with pent-up fury to China's opening of ping-pong diplomacy, see Scalice 2017, 623-639.

[66] MC October 14, 1966, 13.

[67] Movement 1966.

[68] Joaquin 1987, 126.

[69] MC October 17, 1966, 2

[70] MC October 20, 1966; GW June 18, 1969, 28, 31; McCoy 2002, 147.

[71] MT October 28, 1966.

[72] MT October 27, 1966, 8-A.

[73] MT October 28, 1966, 19-A; MC Oct 29, 1966.

[74] Manila 1966, 43; Sison and Rosca 2004, 45.

[75] Manila 1966, 3.

[76] Sison published a response to Albert's charges in the January 4 *Collegian*, categorically denying that he had ever been to China and accusing Albert of lying. See Sison 1967b. When Sison reprinted this article in *SND* he redacted "I have never gone to Red China" to "If I have ever gone to Red China, it is perfectly my right to go there." See Sison 1967a, 229.

[77] MC November 24, 1966.

[78] MC November 26, 1966.

[79] MC November 28; November 29, 1966.

[80] 80MC November 27, 1966, 2.

[81] MT December 2, 1966, 14-A; MC November 24, 1966, 14.

[82] MT December 1; December 3, 1966, 8-A.

[83] MT December 11, 1966.

[84] MT December 25, 6-A; December 26, 1966.

[85] MB December 27, 1966, 6.

[86] Barbero's claims of having solid evidence against Sison seem to have been political grandstanding. As 1967 opened, the congressional witch-hunt receded from the public stage, cropping up occasionally in a speech or two but lacking the concerted might of the state that it had carried in December 1966.

[87] Sison 1967a, 1-8. When Sison republished this speech in 1972 he cut the first page and half, removing the material on Rizal from its original historical context: a defense against Barbero and company. He renamed the speech, "Rizal the Social Critic." See Sison 1972, 1-6.

[88] Binay would later become Vice-President of the Philippines from 2010 to 2016.

[89] Lacaba 2003, 10, 12.

[90] MC November 10, 1966-1967.

[91] PC November 16, 1966.

[92] Manila 1966, 2.

[93] MC November 17, 1966. The list of these "immature" travelers included a number of faculty members at the University of the Philippines, among them the chair of the Political Science department.

[94] MC November 25, 1966.

[95] MB December 10, 1966, 9.

[96] I examine the efforts at establishing trade and diplomatic ties with the Soviet bloc in Scalice 2021a.

[97] PC May 7, 1967, 4.

[98] MT December 1, 1966-1967, 20-A. After his expulsion from the party, Sison would denounce the "Lavaites" as "a black bourgeois gang" and claimed that he had always opposed them. See Sison 1971.

[99] Sison 1967a, 38.

[100] Sison 1967a, 119.

[101] The heads of the Philippine Chambers of Commerce, Industry, and Retail were all charter members of MAN, see MAN 1967, 149.

[102] MAN 1967, 135.

[103] MAN 1967, 6.

[104] Remaining in the camp of the PKP, MAN backed Marcos' re-election in 1969.

[105] Sison 2017.

[106] The founding of the CPP was backdated in party documents to December 1968 to coincide with Mao's birthday.

[107] They were organized in a religious cult known as the Lapiang Malaya [Free Party] and had come to Manila to demand Marcos' resignation.

[108] Wright 1967.

[109] At their core was a number of old ruling class families: Aquino, Lopez, Laurel, Osmeña, see Scalice 2017, 432.

[110] For a specific example of the functioning of this alliance, see Scalice 2018. For the broader details, see Scalice 2017