

Philippines: Statement on the death and legacy of Joma Sison

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The Partido ng Manggagawang Pilipino (PMP) extends its condolences to the family and comrades of Joma Sison. We offer our sympathies out of solidarity to a fellow revolutionary despite the fundamental differences that the PMP has with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

This is the time for Joma Sison's family and comrades to grieve. But it is also a chance for Filipino activists and the class-conscious workers to re-examine the legacy that Joma Sison has left behind. Particularly since Joma Sison's death is in a sense the end of an era.

Joma Sison's enduring legacy as founder and ideologue of the CPP which led the movement to oust the Marcos dictatorship through its most difficult period cannot be erased from history. Still, the robustness of that ideological legacy and validity of Joma's Sison founding principles was put to the test in the crucible of the struggle against the Marcos dictatorship which ended in the liberal elite snatching leadership of the insurrectionary masses in 1986.

Since the transition from military dictatorship to trapo [1] democracy, the powerful mass movement built by the CPP amidst the terror of martial law has declined due to the disconnect between the primacy of armed struggle and the openings—however token and precarious—for political participation provided by the EDSA republic. That the mass movement has survived and persists is, on the one hand, an indictment of the rotten EDSA democracy, but on the other hand, an outcome of innovative revolutionary tactics. Key among these “heretical” innovations was the parliamentary struggle and inroads by the different left and revolutionary groups, including the CPP itself.

The role of parliamentary struggle within the revolutionary struggle was one of the central propositions of Popoy Lagman, even when he was in the CPP during the 1970s which resulted in his being disciplined. When the CPP split in the 1990's, Popoy Lagman developed his mature critique of the CPP's protracted war as an inappropriate strategy for victory, of the national democratic line that derogates the socialist alternative, and the semi-feudal thesis of a Philippine society whose dynamics is unquestionably capitalist.

Both Popoy Lagman and Joma Sison are now dead. The former fell from an assassin's bullet, the latter succumbed to sickness and old age. The different brand of revolutions that both imagined is still far from the victory that all revolutionaries dream of.

It is up to a younger generation of revolutionaries to continue the struggle and renew it under the concrete conditions that exist today.

Long live the Philippine revolution! Onward with the socialist struggle!

Executive Committee of the Central Committee Partido ng Manggagawang Pilipino
December 2022

Footnotes

[1] Trapo: traditional politicians.