

CONSIDERATIONS ON FILIPINO MARXISM

A RESPONSE TO "QUESTIONING MARX, CRITIQUING MARXISM"

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A Left without power is familiar and perhaps a defining characteristic of its historical predicament; a Left without knowledge loses its excuse for being. -- John Patrick Diggins¹

Progressive loyalty and analytic clarity are...two different things.
-- Perry Anderson

Ignorance has never helped anybody yet.
-- Marx to Weilling

Francisco Nemenzo's December 1, 1992 lecture at the University of the Philippines (UP-Diliman) marked his 're-entry' into the academic and political 'center' after years of languishing at the fringes of UP Iloilo. The foremost Filipino Marxist presented before a large audience the outline of "Questioning Marx, Critiquing Marxism" (abbreviated henceforth as QMCM), a sweeping overview of the fundamental issues that confront Filipino Marxism today. In broad strokes, Nemenzo reminded his listeners of the basic analytical

¹ John Patrick Diggins. *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 1992. New York, p. 16.

tenets of Marxist analysis and then used these as warning signs against what he saw as a persistent slide towards dogmatism by Filipino radicals, especially those who belonged to the Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front (CPP-NDF) tradition.²

The problems of the Left have become a major concern of scholars of Philippine social movements and activists as far back as the 1980s. Unlike most other writing on the subject, Nemenzo's QMCM chooses to call attention to less obtrusive, but far more significant issues that bedevil the Left today. He mentions the failure of Filipino Marxism to fully 'indigenize' itself, especially in its interaction with 'popular cultures,' and its ignorance of new forms of politics, notably feminism. He also bewails the theoretical slips in its analysis of a changing class structure of society and, most important of all, in figuring out the singular source of resilience of Filipino *cacique* politics. Nemenzo finds it outrageous that a Left with a rich tradition of revolutionary praxis continues to be burdened by these issues. His outline carries with it an alarming message -- either Filipino leftists account for these issues or face the fate that befell their Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP, the old Communist Party of the Philippines) predecessors.

The timeliness of Nemenzo's outline is indisputable. Filipino Marxism today shares with other Marxist movements the onus of coping with a dual crisis. Internationally, the collapse of Eastern Europe and the loss of Marxism's appeal as a politico-social alternative has subjected it to relentless political and ideological attacks by its enemies. All have vowed to show that Marxism was not only the God that failed -- it is an enormous ideological failure.

Nationally, Filipino Marxism is perhaps in its worse state ever since the downfall of the Huks. The CPP-NDF -- the most powerful and, perhaps, only surviving revolutionary organization in Southeast Asia -- is on the verge of a major split [As of presstime, major blocks within the Party have broken away

"When breakthroughs appear to be within reach, the NDF found itself being undermined by its very own 'vanguard' -- a CPP fearful of losing control over its 'shield' should it allow other groups more leverage and meaningful participation..."

² Francisco Nemenzo Jr. "Questioning Marx, Critiquing Marxism: Hypotheses on the Ideological Crisis of the Left." mss. This outline has since been revised and published under the same title in *Kasarinlan: A Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies*, Vol. 8 No. 2, 4th Quarter 1992. I have opted to remain with the original which, albeit a draft essay, has more nerve compared to the amendment.

from the 'Central Committee' under Joma Sison -- Eds.], CPP Chairman Jose Maria Sison has insisted on a return to Maoism and has followed this up with a purge of cadres who disagreed with his policy. These twin moves created more rifts within an already besieged organization as these cadres were not without their own supporters inside the party.³ It remains to be seen whether a split will unfold although the popular inclination is that should the present trends continue, the CPP will be history by the end of the century.

The New People's Army (NPA) has suffered tremendous military and political setbacks. For the first time, the CPP has acknowledged a retreat from, if not abandonment of, major guerrilla bases in Negros, Southern Mindanao, and the Southern Tagalog region. According to one author, the NPA has lost about 40 per cent of its territory since 1990 while debates over the proper strategy and tactics appear to hamper its movement.⁴ The NPA may applaud itself for successes like the ambush and killing of over 40 soldiers in Agusan in mid-1992 and use these as indicators of its continuing resilience. The problem, however, is that after 13 years of existence, the NPA remains a guerrilla force, unable to expand itself into a potent army and still very much confined to 'military operations' that may yield some kills but scarcely able to make a dent at the inefficient Philippine military. The NDF is still a CPP-dominated and directed coalition body (after 20 years!). Its abilities to become a real united front has been constrained by a consistent record of losing its leaders, mediators, and brokers to the military. When breakthroughs appear to be within reach, the NDF found itself being undermined by its very own 'vanguard' -- a CPP fearful of losing control over its 'shield' should it allow other groups more leverage and meaningful participation in the planned coalition.⁵ The alliances that adhere to the NDF

³On the growing divergence of views within the CPP, see Armando Liwanag (Sison's pseudonym), "Reaffirm our Basic Principles and Rectify Errors," and the response of Ka Barry, "Resist Authoritarian Tendencies within the Party! Let a Thousand Schools of Thought Contend." Both were published in *Kasarinlan: A Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies*, Vol. 8 No. 1. Sison has subsequently attacked the purged cadres. See *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, December 11, 1992. What is notable about this purge is that most of those removed occupied high positions within the Party and were noted for their flexibility and open-mindedness. Among those removed are ex-secretary general Ricardo Reyes, Benjamin de Vera, former head of the Mindanao Commission, and the former head of the NPA Romulo Kintanar. The political head of one of the Mindanao committee's erudite ideologists, Marty Villalobos, was only put on the purging bloc.

⁴Walden Bello, "The Dual Crisis of the Philippine Progressive Movement," paper prepared for the Forum for Philippine Alternatives International Conference, San Francisco, April 1992, p. 11. A glimpse of the arguments on strategy can be seen in Omar Tupaz, "Toward a Revolutionary Strategy of the 90s," *Kasarinlan*, *Op. cit.*, Vol. 7 Nos. 2 & 3, 4th Quarter 1991 and 1st Quarter 1992, pp. 58-89.

⁵The May 1, 1985 Bagong Alyansang Makabayan Congress fiasco was the most notorious. But this had precedents that go as far back as 1975. See P.N. Abinales, "The Left and other Forces," *Marxism in the Philippines, Second Series*. Quezon City, Third World Studies Center, 1988. See also "Sectarianism is the Blight: An Exclusive Interview with a Filipino Revolutionary," *Longer View*, n.d. Vol. 2 No. 2. In 1985, the CPP leadership apparently decided that the NDF needs to be an alliance of CPP-run organizations.

position but operate legally have become nothing but a carapace of small organizations tormented by an inability to effectively function as coalitions. The much-vaunted Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN, New Patriotic Alliance) is virtually non-existent while the Partido ng Bayan (PnB, People's Party) is an empty shell. Other coalition-type initiatives like the movements formed during the 1991 elections were minuscule and ineffective (despite ingenious media projection and coverage). Even the resilient agrarian reform coalition, the Congress for a People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR), has ceased to become the force that it was in the early days of the Aquino regime; the fact that there is still no real land reform attests to the limits of its capacities.

The instabilities at the fringes of the CPP-NDF likewise suggest a far more widespread contagion. The so-called 'popular democrats' -- members of an erstwhile NDF current that became autonomous from the center after 1986 -- have turned out to be popular 'conjunctural' analysts but lousy strategic thinkers and poor organizers. Their main organization, the Volunteers for Popular Democracy, can only realistically claim to have a small influence among petit-bourgeois groups, particularly students -- active, permanent, and alumni. Yet, even with their supposed handicap -- analytical sophistication -- popular democrats have backslid away from strengthening the class-based, class-biased foundations of Filipino Marxism. Many of their analyses have exhibited slippage into liberal-functionalism and their best work, the continuing study on clan politics, is merely descriptive. Whatever Marxist interpretations they had at the beginning have become heavily diluted by borrowings from the liberal patron-clientilist school.⁶

There is very little to applaud even among the non-CPP left movements. The social democrats continue to -- quite characteristically -- split every time there are elections.⁷ The coalition that bring the factions together -- the Bansang Nagkakaisa sa Diwa at Layunin (BANDILA, Nation United in Spirit and Vision) -- is a parody of alliance-building. Their 'largest' group, the Partido Demokratiko Sosyalista ng Pilipinas (PDSP, Democratic Socialist Party of the Philippines) has reached the pinnacle of its long history of political opportunism -- selling its soul to the current administration under the pretext of shared

⁶ This is not to say that there had not been any effort to address this deficiency. See, for example, Isagani Serrano, "Re-examining, Re-imagining Revolution," *Conjuncture*, December 1992-January 1993, Vol. VI No. 1, pp. 4-5. While the Serrano piece is interesting, it still, alas, lacked the breadth and, yes, even depth of Sison's *Philippine Society and Revolution*.

⁷ On the recurrence of splits in the movement, see the informative dissertation of Mark Thompson. *Searching for Strategy: The Traditional Opposition to Marcos and the Transition to Democracy in the Philippines*, 1991. PhD Dissertation, Yale University, especially Chapters 4-6.

interpretations of the phrase 'popular empowerment.'⁸ The more 'reasonable' social democrats are still around (the most vocal being the youth-led Pandayan para sa Sosyalistang Pilipinas [Pandayan, Workshop for a Socialist Philippines]), but typical of social democratic atrophy, these activists have ceased to even be worthy of major political attention either by the regime or other Left groups.

Other groups like the Bukluran sa Ikaunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa (BISIG, Alliance for the Advancement of Socialist Thought and Action) share the same organizational fate as the social democrats. BISIG's coalitional base has hardly grown since its inception in 1985. In fact, cracks have appeared inside the socialist network, arising not only from disputes between the leadership and its members but also from tensions which reflect class differences between the many factions inside.⁹

QMCM has, therefore, sought to rein in the confusion within the Left by outlining the basic issues and problems that it must respond to. It appeals to Filipino Marxists to re-examine the context in which they operate, the experiences they have accumulated, and the importance of fusing theory and practice. Readers and listeners, however, must be cautioned by the nature of QMCM. Nemenzo's outline contains mostly questions and does not offer any categorical and concrete answers. While the essay's essentials lay in a synthesis of the issues behind Filipino Marxism's current crisis, it does not have the same prescriptive qualities that one may find in the exhortatory writings of authors like Sison. Nemenzo obviously considers the unraveling of the crisis of the Left as a collective endeavor, both in the theoretical and the practical level. Thus, for those interested in the resolution of the crisis of the left, QMCM functions as a guide of sorts.

What this engagement with Nemenzo's outline hopes to do is contribute to that collective effort. Its principal impulse is one of critical admiration not only of this specific project, but of its author. Nemenzo is the Philippines' most respected Marxist ideologue, admired for his experience and known for consistently popularizing the importance of critical reflection and constant reexamination of radical politics by radicals themselves.¹⁰ In presenting QMCM he has opened up pathways for students, comrades, and colleagues to enter into the debate.

⁸ This actually brings back echoes of 1972, when the reformist-social democrat organizations Federations of Free Farmers/Workers sold their souls to the dictatorship in exchange for a chance to remain legal. The Jesuit-trained 'social reformer' Jeremias Montemayor and his lackeys in the organization became the pawning defenders of repression.

⁹ On the stresses of BISIG because of class differences, see the dissertation of Vincent Boudreau. *At the Margins of the Movement: Grassroots Associations in the Philippine Socialist Network*. 1993. Ph.D. Cornell University.

¹⁰ But not necessarily the most sophisticated. By far, Rigoberto Tiglao remains the finest theoretician the 60s generation of Filipino Marxists have produced.

A final complaint before proceeding: one must take issue with Nemenzo on his Marx-like propensity of not completing any of his theoretical and empiro-historical works.¹¹ This habit has had repercussions that the author seems to have overlooked. It would be unfortunate, if not fatal, if the author of QMCM will just let this outline stay in its present form and not expand it into a substantive treatise on the ideological pitfalls of the Philippine Left. At this time when almost everything that Filipino Marxism has stood for is being questioned and attacked, especially harshly from some quarters, Nemenzo cannot afford to be content with his old habit of keeping things too general. If QMCM is an entreaty for Filipino Marxists to collectively and meaningfully deal with the crisis, it is not too much to demand the same from its author.

Filipino Marxist Theorizing: What QMCM Ignored

QMCM opens with a long-standing criticism of a recurrent dogmatist drift among Filipino Marxists, especially the CPP-NDF. As far as Nemenzo is concerned (although he is not openly stating his case), the CPP's capacity to be theoretically imaginative has suffered ever since the publication of Arnado Guerrero's *Philippine Society and Revolution* (PSR).¹² He writes:

Filipinos have a wealth of revolutionary experience dating back to the Katipunan, but Filipino Marxists have contributed nothing of significance to Marxist thought. Absorbed in practice, they have grown impatient with theorizing...What [therefore] passes for Marxist theoretical work in this country consists of embellishing pragmatic decisions with appropriate jargon and quotations.¹³

One will, indeed, find a grain of truth in his argument when one peruses over the major documents of groups like the CPP. The works that followed the recognized 'Bible' of the Party are documents that possess less theoretical rigor as

¹¹ After finishing the first draft of his work on the rise and fall of the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) in 1985 (1), Nemenzo remains unable to complete the long-awaited work. In 1984, a rough extended essay of his work did find print. See Francisco Nemenzo, "An Irrepressible Revolution: The Decline and Resurgence of the Philippine Communist Movement," Work-in-Progress Seminar, Department of Political and Social Change, The Australian National University, November 13, 1984.

¹² 1979. Oakland. Association of Filipino Patriots.

¹³ Nemenzo, "Questioning Marx, Critiquing Marxism," p. 1.

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they are essentially valued more for their strategic and tactical exegeses.¹⁴ While one cannot undermine their importance as works on strategy and tactics, QMCM is right in pointing out that time will come when strategy and tactics themselves will demand theoretical refinement as the Philippine political economy undergoes changes and as revolutionary strategy needs rethinking with changed conditions and accumulated experiences.¹⁵

Nemenzo's criticism, however, is not accurate. In its reprimand of the CPP, QMCM betrays a propensity to over-generalize its criticisms and for equating Filipino Marxism solely with the largest radical movement in the country. In suggesting that Filipino Marxism has become plagued by pragmatist, conjunctural, and tactical types of writings, QMCM

unwittingly reveals a surprising ignorance of other developments, mainly theoretical, within Filipino Marxism itself. Completely absorbed in dealing with the contemporary crisis, QMCM completely ignores rather substantial Marxist theorizing before the onset of the current crisis in the Left.

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Over the past 20 years, Filipino Marxists have produced works that could refute the main contention of QMCM. These works, which addressed a whole range of issues, concerned themselves with evaluating the ideological premises of the CPP, exploring aspects of Philippine society given minor import by the Left, and furnishing substantive explanations to new developments in Philippine

¹⁴ Notably, "Our Urgent Tasks." *Rebolusyon: Theoretical Organ of the Communist Party of the Philippines*, July 30, 1976, and Amado Guerrero, "Specific Characteristics of our People's War." As reprinted in *Philippine Society and Revolution*, *Ibid.* In the early 1980s, there were the controversial essays, "Mga Tala sa Estratehiya at Taktika ng Ating Digmaang Bayan" (1982) and "Batayan sa Pagpapaunlad at Papel ng Kilusan sa Pating Purok sa Buong Estratehiyang Digmaang Bayan sa Mindanao" (n.d.) put out by the CPP's Mindanao Commission. After 1986, one is, of course, introduced to the writings of Marty Villalobos, viz., "On the Insurrectionary Strategy" (mss. March 30, 1986), and "For a Politico-Military Framework" (mss. February 23, 1987).

¹⁵ One can, of course, invoke dialectics should questions arise as to the validity of this statement.

politics and society.¹⁶ Most of these came out during the authoritarian period, which explains the care and caution in which they were written. Yet, perhaps it was the presence of authoritarianism itself which inspired such theoretical contemplations. Polarized politics, in general, create conditions for active study and investigation. The major Marxist tracts were written during periods of intense or constant confrontation between bourgeois regimes and proletarian revolutionaries. A brief survey of these works is necessary at this point.¹⁷

The most dynamic, controversial, and popular 'zone of engagement' by these Filipino Marxist theorists was the nature of the country's mode of production.¹⁸ Provoked by the need to transcend the arguments of the PSR, academe-based Marxists built on the theoretical foundations of dependency theory to stimulate an intense debate centered on whether the Philippine mode was 'semi-feudal' (the CPP's basic position) or 'capitalist'.¹⁹ Notable among these theorists were Rigoberto Tiglao, Eugenio Demegillo, and Eduardo Tadem, whose studies on transnational corporations and the political economy of the Philippines argued for the primacy of capitalist production relations.²⁰ Their works merited an equally substantive response from proponents of the 'semi-feudal' mode who pointed to an irrepensible landlord class as the feudal 'social base' of imperial control of the country's political economy. The theoretical forays of Ricardo Ferrer and Temario Rivera belong to this genre of Marxist writings, with the former bringing this framework's position to a higher level with his controversial idea of the universal and timeless character of the feudalist

¹⁶ The timing of their publication alone ought to have been commended by Nemenzo for both their attempts to break the dogmatist drift of Filipino Marxism and for their fearlessness at coming out notwithstanding the presence of an authoritarian state.

¹⁷ I will confine myself to works written by Filipinos within the Philippines although conscious that theoretical reflections on the Philippines do emanate from outside, especially the United States, but given their limited reception in the Philippines, as well as my intention to look at Filipino Marxism within national boundaries, so to speak, I have excluded these works. However, a post-modernist-scholastic over-reading of the CPP-NDF may be worthy of radicals' curiosity. See Lester Edwin J. Ruiz, "After National Democracy: Radical Democratic Politics at the Edge of Modernity," *Alternatives*, Nov. 16, 1991, pp. 161-200.

¹⁸ The phrase is from Perry Anderson's latest book, 1993. London. Verso Press.

¹⁹ Of late, the issue has been resurrected after a long hiatus. See the critical review by Virgilio Rojas, "The Mode of Production Controversy in the Philippines: Anatomy of a Lingering Theoretical Stalemate." *Debate: Philippine Left Review*, 4 September 1992, pp. 3-43.

²⁰ See Rigoberto Tiglao, "Critique on Studies of Transnational Corporations." *Diliman Review*, January-March 1979; "Non-Progress in the Periphery." *Diliman Review*, April-June 1979.

feature of 'rent-seeking'.²¹ Both sides undertook empirical investigations to validate their theoretical frameworks.²² They also agreed to collaborate in elaborating their respective positions through a re-activated left-wing journal, the *New Progressive Review*, which, unfortunately, folded up after a few issues due to lack of funds.

Despite constraints, however, the signs that radicals and activists responded positively to this debate could be seen in the positive reception it received outside the academia. These forays into the field spurred non-academic investigations from radical centers like the Foundation for Nationalist Studies and Mindanao's Alternate Resource Center.²³ Initially thought of as not having any impact on the strategic visions of the CPP, these debates on the Philippine mode would make an indirect impact on shifts in revolutionary strategy in the 1980s. In Mindanao, for example, the now-purged leaders of the Mindanao Commission viewed the switch to insurrectionary postures as reflecting the predominance of capitalist relations in the southern island. In contrast to Guerrero and his inspiration, Mao, the debates influenced these cadres into considering the centrality of the cities, towns, and municipalities in any revolutionary endeavor.²⁴ Dependency theory also became the unstated ideological basis for the formation of fraternal, yet

²¹ Ricardo Ferrer, "On the Mode of Production in the Philippines: Some Old Fashioned Questions on Marxism," *Marxism in the Philippines*, 1984. Quezon City. Third World Studies Center, *Ibid*. "The Semi-Feudal, Semi-Colonial Mode of Production: The Goals of Political Practice," *New Philippine Review*, Vol. 1 No. 2, January 1985; Vol. 1 No. 3, pp. 28-36. See also Ternario Rivera, "On the Contradictions of Rural Development," *Diliman Review*, September-October 1982; and, *The Agrarian Question and its Political Implications: A Critique of Conceptual Approaches*, 1982. M.A. Thesis. University of the Philippines. In the piece "Theoretic and Programmatic Framework for the Development of Underdeveloped Countries," Ferrer openly states that even modern-day capitalism remains captive to rent-seeking activities, in effect, strangely extending 'semi-feudalism' into the capitalist phase. See *New Progressive Review*, Vol. 3 No. 2, 1987.

²² Rigoberto Tiglao, *The Philippine Coconut Industry: Looking into Coconuts*, 1981. Davao City. ARC Publications; E.C. Tadem, *Mindanao Report: A Preliminary Study on the Economic Origins of Social Unrest*, 1980. Davao City. AFRIM Resource Center. Ferrer did not do any empirical research, but his colleagues did. See Joseph Lim, "The Agricultural Sector: Stagnation and Change," *New Progressive Review*, Vol. 3 No. 2, 1987, pp. 35-42.

²³ See the essays in *The Feudalism-Capitalism Debate*. Renato Constantino (ed), 1980(?). Quezon City. For a late reply to Tiglao, see ARC Staff, "A Theoretical Framework for Analysis of the Mode of Production and Social Formation in the Philippines - A Synopsis"; "Initial Trends on the Analysis of the Mode of Production and Social Formation in Rural Mindanao"; "Steps in the Computation of the Mode of Exploitation and Determination of Social Classes," *Mindanao Focus*. Alternate Resource Center, 1990. Issue No. 22. ARC was gracious enough to provide the two sides an opportunity to debate in its publications. It is worth noting here that the ARC's participation attested to the popularity of the debate all over the Philippines.

²⁴ Villalobos. *Op. cit.* As one Mindanao cadre argued to me while taking advantage of the short 'democratic space' opened up in 1986. "While guerrillas could indeed wear away the state's armed capacities in the countryside, the handicap of protracted people's war is its very protractedness itself. No revolution has ever won because of protracted people's war. Even Vietnam's the success long 'tradition of resistance' owed much to the quick victories in Dien Bien Phu and later, Tet. It also had to do with the sudden collapse of the state apparatus, not its gradual weakening." Interview with a CPP Politburo member, April 1986.

critical 'grouplets' outside the CPP orbit. Dependency theory was in the back of the BISIG organizers' minds when they formulated their political program.²⁵

Coeval to the first works was Renato Constantino's re-interpretation of Philippine history, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited*, followed a few years later by the second volume, *The Philippines: A Continuing Past*.²⁶ While the accent of these revisionist works was 'mass' nationalism, Constantino's reference to the long-history of 'people's struggle' and the opportunism of the Filipino elite evidenced an effort to employ aspects of Marxist analysis in his reexamination of the past.²⁷ The reception to Constantino's work, especially by younger academics, was more than positive, in fact, both volumes surprised many with its near-instantaneous popularity.²⁸

That QMCM seems to have overlooked Constantino is quite puzzling. Granted that Constantino's objective was to use his work as a means of popularizing the nationalist position, does popularization then mean a work is less theoretical?²⁹ Assuming that popularization does not equal analytical sophistication, then it is doubly surprising that QMCM failed to account for the more theoretically-driven work of Constantino, *The Nationalist Alternative*, which not only presents an alternative analysis of the root causes of Philippine underdevelopment, but also suggests tracks through which the country can extract itself from the morass of a worsening crisis.³⁰ Finally, that the response pointed to the contrary can be seen in the way *A Past Revisited* has become a springboard for subsequent reflections on issues like popular consciousness and

²⁵ Bukluran sa Ikaunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa (BISIG). "The Socialist Vision." Reprinted in *Kasarinlan*, *Op. cit.*, Vol. 2 No. 3, 1st Quarter 1987, pp. 23-36.

²⁶ *The Philippines: A Past Revisited*, 1975. Quezon City. Tala Publication House; *The Philippines: A Continuing Past*, 1978. Quezon City. Foundation for Nationalist Studies.

²⁷ The importance given to nationalism by Constantino may be interpreted as his way of contributing to a broader anti-imperialist movement directed especially at the Americans and the Japanese. But it may also be surmised that in putting out nationalism as his agenda, Constantino was also able to dodge the authoritarian bullet. The dictatorship, after all, was proclaiming itself to be the embodiment of a Filipino nationalism re-born. By seemingly showing its agreement with the regime's delusions, Constantino's *A Past Revisited* successfully managed to give its own contribution to the erosion of the dictatorship's hold over society.

²⁸ Communist cadres undertaking "Basic Primary Course" training use *A Past Revisited* as sort of a supplementary reading to required readings like *PSR* and certain writings of Mao.

²⁹ Note that QMCM discusses national identity by restating the problem of the 'national bourgeoisie' but posing it along racial terms ('Filipino-Chinese bourgeoisie'). It does not consider Filipino nationalism, in general, as problematic thereby eliding the general perplexity of Marxist with the concept 'nation.' See Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities* (enlarged edition), 1991. London. Verso Press.

³⁰ Renato Constantino. *The Nationalist Alternative* (Revised Edition), 1986. Quezon City. Foundation for Nationalist Studies.

social movements from below. Notable among these new works is Reynaldo Ileto's *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910*, which, inspired by the writings of Marxist historians like E.P. Thompson, has renewed left-wing interest on the progressive potentials of peasant popular culture. It is most puzzling that in dealing with the failures of Filipino Marxism to confront the popular consciousness, QMCM makes no mention of Ileto's path-breaking piece.³¹

It was not only the Philippine mode, nationalist, or radical-populist history that have been subjected to intense theoretical scrutiny by Filipino Marxists. The Marcos dictatorship itself occasioned a number of writings seeking to decipher the foundations of Philippine authoritarianism. Some of these expounded on the CPP formulation of the fascist state while others derived theoretical inspirations from arguments on relative state autonomy.³² Nemenzo himself advanced the theory – albeit without further elaboration (an irritating habit of the author) – that the Marcos dictatorship was a 'Bonapartist' regime.³³

However, unlike the debates over the Philippine mode, the theoretical explorations did not elicit much response from activists and cadres at a time when the imperatives of resistance favored a more straight-forward perception of the dictatorship as 'fascist'.³⁴ With the EDSA uprising and the re-ascendance of *cacique* democracy, there is now an urgent need for a more far-reaching re-appraisal of the Philippine state, a feeling shared by theorists and activists alike.³⁵

Beyond these fundamental issues were the preliminary explorations on themes specific to the anti-dictatorship movement.³⁶ As the male and female

³¹ *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910*. 1979. Quezon City. Ateneo de Manila University Press.

³² Dependency-influenced theorizing on the state are suggested in the essays of Alexander R. Magno some of which were recently compiled in the book *Politics of Form*. 1991. Quezon City. Kalikasan Press. See also Magno's grand literature review, *The Relative Autonomy Formulation and the Philippine Authoritarian State: A Critical Review*, 1982, M.A. Thesis. University of the Philippines.

³³ Francisco Nemenzo, "Alternatives to Marcos." Paper delivered at the proceedings on Political Systems and Development. Indian Council for the Social Sciences. February 1980. Although undeveloped, this portrayal of the Marcos regime as a Third World latter-day counterpart of the regime described by Marx in his 'Eighteenth Brumaire' did generate some debate on appropriate tactics to be developed against the dictatorship.

³⁴ In a sense, QMCM was right in its appraisal of a stagnant theorizing on this aspect.

³⁵ Bello, *Op. cit.* pp. 24-28; Villalobos, *Op. cit.* See the call for re-examination by Rene Ciria Cruz. "Why the Philippine Left must take the Parliamentary Road," *Kasarinlan, Op. cit.*, Vol. 7 No. 4, 2nd Quarter 1992, pp. 51-61.

³⁶ My relative nascence of theoretical examinations by Marxists in the field of literature, drama, and other endeavors conflated under the rubric 'the humanities' forces me to exclude a discussion of works in this area. Apologies.

clergy became more politicized, Filipino Marxists began to concern themselves with religion and the Church. Animated by the writings of guerilla priest Gustavo Gutierrez and Belgian Francois Houtart, some progressives have turned out exceptional, albeit preliminary and still un-elaborated, works on Church and State relations.³⁷ Hints at a Gramscian dissection of Church politics are explicitly seen in Bolasco's exploration of the relationship between Marxism and Christianity.³⁸ The earlier essay of Edicio De La Torre on the synthesis of Maoism and Christianity found able successors in the Dominican Salgado and the Columbans Lovett and Kline. While the latter slant more heavily towards the theological side, the influence of writings by Filipino Marxists on poverty, exploitation, political repression, and resistance are evident in the works of these two missionaries.³⁹

The student movement, the original lifeblood of the first generations of post-Huk Marxist activists and cadres, drew the attention of exceptional leaders like the late Leandro Alejandro, who, at the time of his death, was in the midst of refining his arguments on the dialectics between ideological state apparatuses like the universities and the development or decline of student movements. His investigations later led him to argue that Marxists should attend to the task of developing what he called a 'radical middle class' that would contribute to the revolution in the different 'combat zones' within urban centers -- from the insides of the corporate world to the ideological arenas of academia and the media.⁴⁰

³⁷ See for example, Mario Bolasco and Rolando Yu. *Church-State Relations*, 1981. Manila. St. Scholastica's College. For reasons of time and what I see as profoundly anti-Marxist underpinnings, I have excluded here the explorations of social democrats and Jesuits on theology, politics, and revolution. Those interested in pre-martial law social democratic theorizing can peruse over Lakasdiwa. *Towards a Filipino Social Revolution*. 1972. Quezon City, Tambuli Press. Parts of the program appeared to have been lifted from the PSR, attesting to a lack of imagination among social democrats.

³⁸ Mario Bolasco, "Marxism and Christianity in the Philippines, 1930-83." *Marxism in the Philippines*, 1984, *Op. cit.* Bolasco proved to be the exception among those interested in theological-radical synthesis. In a later essay, the late Bolasco would bring in the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu in looking at his choice topic, Mario Bolasco, "Harmony and Contradiction: The Marxist-Christian Dialogue Since the Christians for National Liberation," *Marxism in the Philippines: Second Series*, 1988. Quezon City, Third World Studies Center, pp. 56-70.

³⁹ Pedro Salgado. *Christianity is Revolutionary*, 1976. ____; Brendan Lovett, *Life before Death: Inculcating Hope*, 1986. Quezon City. Claretian Publications; and, Warren Kinne. *The Splintered Staff: Structural Deadlock in the Mindanao Church*, 1990. Quezon City. Claretian Publications. Salgado later on wrote a crude but petularly Marxist critique of the Philippine social sciences. See Pedro V. Salgado, *Social Science for Filipinos*, 1988, Quezon City. R.P. Garcia Printing, De La Torre's more important writings are compiled in the book, *Touching Ground, Taking Root*, 1986. London. Catholic Institute of International Relations.

⁴⁰ Alejandro had written a tentative treatise on this topic. The manuscript which is now in the possession of his immediate family is badly in need of an editor, some additional but marginal research, and cries out for publication.

Alejandro, in effect, advanced the idea of developing radical cadres who would not necessarily become guerrillas or workers but rather professionals whose skills, ideological sophistication, and radical commitment would help undermine the regime from the ramparts of schools, businesses, media, etc.⁴¹

The question then is not what forms radical dogmatism took that led Filipino Marxism into its current malaise. Rather, what ought to have pre-occupied Nemenzo and his readers/listeners was the more profound issue of disengagement of Marxist praxis from Marxist theory, a process which I believe helped bring about the rise and persistence of dogmatism and all other failings of Filipino Marxism. In the following section, I will try to venture some tentative explanations.

The Disengagement of Theory and Practice: The Authoritarian and Institutional Settings

There is, first, the general condition of authoritarian rule. It was, in fact, the singular structural reason that prevented the full re-flowering of Filipino Marxism. The Marcos dictatorship's toll on human and intellectual capital, especially among the ranks of a resurgent Left, framed the process of this disengagement. By forcing activists and Marxists to go underground, become guerrillas or full-time labor or urban poor organizers, or be simply terrorized into submission, the dictatorship derailed the process of radical re-awakening that began with the First Quarter Storm (FQS).

Militarization of social life also predisposed a more simplified, pragmatic response from Marxists. The 'demands of the struggle' involved producing more cadres and activists, organizational revival, consolidation and expansion, and the search for material (including military) resources. Given that the dictatorship was perceived to have polarized politics, and that an effective resistance to it was immediate and urgent, there was really very little room for expanding or broadening Filipino Marxist theory among activists and cadres.

Specific to the CPP network, the dictatorship hastened the universalization of the principal strategy of a rural-based guerilla resistance, even as the NPA's foundations were still brittle in the countryside. But this was not all. The changing of the 'rules of the political game' demanded a parallel change in the politico-educational program of the Party. Martial law validated Amado Guerrero,

⁴¹ Alejandro brought out these ideas in the early 1980s but they fell on deaf ears within the revolutionary movement and even earned him a 'disciplinary action' by an intolerant UP movement. He was left in limbo until he singlehandedly won, without his 'dark lords' assistance, the 1981 and 1982 University Student Council. Three years later, Makati exploded after the Aquino assassination confirming the political capability of the middle class.

his analysis of the political directions of Philippine society, and his prediction of an eventual dictatorship of a Filipino ruling class unable to stem the revolutionary tide. Given all these 'correct appraisals,' the CPP deemed it opportune to shift to the more urgent popular political education of the 'masses' – a program notable for the simplification of Marxist praxis. Thus, instead of encouraging cadres to deepen their ideological understanding, or pursuing Marxist-driven supplementary investigations on Philippine political economy, the CPP switched to the 'basic mass course' training for cadres and supporters.⁴² In the eyes of its leadership, the Party – content with the validation of Guerrero – must now turn to the more tedious job of building the movement.⁴³

Bello is thus right in suggesting that martial law shaped the form the revolutionary movement took in its infancy and growth.⁴⁴ The dictatorship did not only close the customary venues for political articulation by a largely student radical movement (demonstrations, etc.); it introduced a new arena that was politically constricted but conducive to a CPP seeking to affirm the primacy of its armed revolutionary framework. The dictatorship also brought in a condition of political polarization where analysis and understanding were a matter of simply, and un-complicatedly, interpreting the positions of two diametrically opposed camps. 'Constitutional authoritarianism' hardly merited a more complicated, more nuanced, radical inquiry. The enemy was clear; what became essential was action.

"[T]he CPP deemed it opportune to shift to the more urgent popular political education of the 'masses' – a program notable for the simplification of Marxist praxis. [I]nstead of encouraging cadres to deepen their ideological understanding..., the CPP switched to the 'basic mass course' training..."

⁴² Thus the popularity of the multi-translated CPP *Basic Mass Course*, which first found print circa mid-1970s.

⁴³ Thus the most significant documents during the period were prescriptive in nature. Within the CPP, two major writings clearly stood out: Amado Guerrero, "Our Urgent Task," *Rebolusyon*, *Op. cit.*, July 30, 1976; and Amado Guerrero, "Specific Characteristics of our People's War," *Op. cit.*

⁴⁴ Bello, *Op. cit.*, pp. 6-7. An interesting insight which Bello and others could develop further by bringing in substantive comparative cases. The full implication of this contention, of course, is whether the Stalinist universalization of Lenin's concept of a 'vanguard party' is apt for the Philippines (I disagree with Bello's conflation of the vanguard as a universal idea in Lenin's mind; alas, a historical relapse on his part).

However, the quest for legitimacy, especially from the international community, obliged the Marcos dictatorship to tolerate, if not allow, certain 'niches' of dissent to survive.⁴⁵ One of these 'democratic spaces' was in academia where a certain amount of critical thinking was allowed. In centers of higher learning like UP, activists 'who stayed behind' took advantage of the regime's formal respect of 'academic freedom' to rekindle radical thinking and, rather surprisingly, re-establish the influence of progressive analysis in most social science courses. Alongside these resurrecting intelligentsia, the first cells of a re-organized CPP- youth and student underground movement were taking shape and playing instrumental roles in fighting for the legal right of students to organize. These cells became the pivotal organizational forms for a student movement re-born.

The other nook was inside the lower levels of the Catholic and Protestant Churches where politicized religious personnel (trained or inspired by the likes of De La Torre and the Mindanao activist Karl Gaspar) adeptly used their 'holiness' to elude restrictions, organize groups defending human rights, and, keep tabs on political detainees, expose torture, etc. The opportunism of the Catholic Church in particular, blended well with the regime's hesitance to crack down on respected nuns and priests (the country being nominally 85% Catholic, plus the watchful eyes of Rome) and gave religious radicals enough leg room to oppose the regime.⁴⁶

These regime-tolerated 'democratic spaces' partly accounted for the emergence of Marxist and other radical theorizing discussed above. It would also explain the inordinate emphasis given to political economy (dependency, semi-feudalism, etc.) as against politics, and philosophy over conjunctural and propaganda-education types of analyses. Within the first eight years of martial law, Filipino Marxist theorizing operating in these 'gaps' in authoritarian society was astute enough to ingeniously push the limit. All those involved were aware that as long as their critiques did not directly hit at the dictator or his hirelings, the Sword of Damocles would not fall. They were also perceptive enough to realize that a shift to an all-out radical attack of the regime depended on the capacities of the anti-Marcos opposition to recover and congeal. Their hope was that their writings would reach radicals and help nurture their theoretical appetites, and at the same time engage in ideological struggle with those who intellectually defended the regime.

Yet, at the same time as they were encouraging radicals, these spaces imposed limits to their future development. Without necessarily intending to do so, the authoritarian atmosphere made sure that the radical blends of academic

⁴⁵ The Ghandist scholastic Edmundo Garcia is not, therefore, the first to conceive of the idea of a 'democratic space' as he claims. His predecessors who braved the first years of martial law by staying inside the country were.

⁴⁶ See Bolaso and Yu, *Op. cit.*

and church theorizing would remain within their 'stretches of land.' Transgressions into open opposition or to other spheres in society were met with instant repression.⁴⁷

Notwithstanding the allowances given to these critics, the de-politicization process transpiring in erstwhile radical centers like the universities would exact a heavy toll on the capacity to sustain this mini-revival of radical analysis. The re-mapping of Philippine education by the regime towards more 'technical-oriented,' professional, and 'applied' training greatly undermined the student -- and intellectual -- base of these theorists. This was complemented by the rise of the so-called 'martial law babies,' students with very little exposure to non- and anti-authoritarian politics, leading to further deterioration of the already-narrowed open bases of radicals.

The resurgence of a 'student movement' in the middle and later part of the 1970s did forestall the drift. But not for long. The changed student base, the decline of the social sciences amidst the shift to 'marketable' degrees, and the financial crisis of schools, all balanced out the 'gains' in the academic front. The insistence by the CPP-NDF that universities be transshipment points to the countryside and factories all but destroyed any significant attempt to re-define the pathways of the student movement under the new conditions. The subsequent breakdown of the movement into a polemical and an anti-theoretical sect only eroded further the possibilities of a radical continuity in the universities.⁴⁸

The organizations inside the Church proved to be better survivors than those in the academe. As the regime became more hostile to the Catholic clergy, and as the hierarchy began to sense the importance of a broad number of anti-Marcos personnel, Church radicalization took exceptional turns. The occasional witch-hunt by bishops and military men failed to make a dent on religious radicalism.⁴⁹ Neither did ideological differences among those influenced by the CPP and those under the wings of the social democrats really split Church radicals. Both sides remained hostile and untrusting of each other but these ill-feelings were mitigated by an exceptional effort to protect each other from the dictatorship. It was, ironically, only after 1986 -- with the dictatorship not

⁴⁷This would explain why the theoretical production of the period was uneven, an observable fact that easily convinced authors like Nemenzo to bemoan, albeit mistakenly, the paucity of Filipino Marxist reflections.

⁴⁸Thus Alejandro's classic dilemma was how to deal with the mindsets of the 'martial law generation' as well as to halt the decline of the academe from a center of learning to a mere technological and vocational training school before even envisioning a 1980s re-make of the First Quarter Storm.

⁴⁹With the exception of the Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference (MSPC). See Kinne, *Op. cit.*

around, the CPP marginalized, and the social democrats suddenly swept as an after-thought into Aquino's 'rainbow coalition' – that radicalism among clerics and nuns began to unravel. The two factions went after each other's throats with the Jesuits leading a witch-hunt inside Church institutions controlled by CPP and NDF cadres, and the latter, 'leaving' the Church and shifting to non-governmental organization (NGO) work amidst pervasive confusion within their ranks.

Before these post-Marcos splits, however, Church radicals enjoyed an unusual protective mantle for their synthetic explorations on nationalist theology and Marxism.⁵⁰ The hierarchy's formal support for Vatican II-inspired Basic Christian Community (BCC) programs unwittingly allowed its radicals some steady sources of largesse, mass bases, and other support – something which their academic counterparts were steadily deprived of. The arrests of leaders like De La Torre, therefore, did not create a void; able and perhaps more sophisticated clerics took over where the SVD priest left off.

This relatively 'rosier' picture of the 'democratic space' within the Church was mitigated by increasing regime repression when Church groups began to be more vocal against the regime and supportive of the CPP's armed revolution. With more nuns and priests staking their lives for the 'national democratic revolution,' the CPP unexpectedly found itself with an avalanche of resources. The prestige of religiosity also gave the Party a pool of 'legal personalities' that could work in the united front side-by-side with lawyers, academics, etc. While these became effective organizational weapons, they were not averse in transforming radical theology into a mere organizational instrument of the revolution. With the simplification of politics – at least in the eyes of the CPP – what became imperative was for resources to be pooled to aid the armed struggle. Inside the Church, the clergy became the 'gold vein' of the revolution and as conditions prospered, the reflective and philosophical quest for a liberative 'Filipino theology' was shunted aside in favor of the guerilla priest.⁵¹ Theology of liberation was pushed to the sidelines in favor of a radical version of rentier extraction while the religious ceased to be teachers and became 'security blankets' to demonstrators (in the false premise that fascists do not attack religious practitioners and clergymen).

All these obstructions, therefore, provided the structural edifice that interfered with and placed a limit on the possible growth of Marxist works. Yet,

⁵⁰ Church censors tolerated theological explications of structural Marxism, allowing even the Maoist Houtart to go around the country preaching about 'structural analysis.'

⁵¹ Thus the moniker for Church people as sources of "pera, bahay at prents." At the University, budding radical theorists were disparaged and in their stead the 'task-oriented bastard' (TOB) extolled.

martial law alone cannot explain this asymmetry. It had much to do with the changing nature of these institutions themselves. Tight financial control over resources needed by academia complemented declining incomes to force (or alternatively convince) some of those who participated in the debate to deal with the vicissitudes of poverty. This particularly hurt theorists critical of the CPP orthodoxy; some left academia and went to journalism; others who shifted from non-academic research to academic careers found out that teaching was as much a hindrance to theorizing as money. Still others stayed within academia but devoted most of their time to odd jobs like column-writing or churning out policy papers sans the theoretical rigor found in their forays into the Philippine mode.⁵²

Yet, the structures themselves were not the only determinants for perceived deficiencies of Filipino Marxism. To limit oneself to the structures would obscure the other side of the coin -- the role played by the movements and actors themselves, which as Nemenzo and others have rightfully alluded to as having a hand in the crisis of Filipino Marxism.

The Legacy of PSR

The other decisive factor behind the disengagement of theory and practice in Filipino Marxism has to do with the towering presence of the CPP itself. While mainly indigenous in its beginnings, the CPP soon grew into one of the more successful revolutionary organizations in Southeast Asia.⁵³ Its adoption of the Maoist world-view proved to be a positive force in its early growth -- internationally, Mao and China were, together with Vietnam, the new revolutionary icons; nationally, Maoist armed guerrilla warfare became a potent model by which the CPP could re-define itself in relation to both the Philippine state and the older, decrepit PKP.⁵⁴

⁵²Others stayed within congenial institutions like the UP's Third World Studies Center, but the lack of resources limited their explorations. The lure of money made potential Marxist historians sell their souls to the dictatorship. Others sought employment abroad. Marx's bane also became the curse of radical academics.

⁵³ See Francisco Nemenzo, "Rectification Process and the Philippine Communist Movement," *Armed Communist Movements in Southeast Asia*. Lim Joo Jock and Vani S. (eds.), 1984. Singapore. Institute for Southeast Asian Studies. On the intermeshing between nationalism and Maoism, see Arturo G. Corpuz, "De-Maoization and Nationalist Trends in the Communist Party of the Philippines," mss. 1985.

⁵⁴ For an exploration of Maoism and Filipino Marxism, see Armando S. Malay, Jr. "Random Reflections on Marxism and Maoism in the Philippines," *Marxism in the Philippines*. Quezon City. Third World Studies Center; and "On Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought," *Diliman Review*, 1987, Vol. 35 No. 4. A defense of the CPP's Maoism against criticisms by authors like Nemenzo is Luis Teodoro, "Nemenzo's Myth of the 'Polycentric Movement'," *The New Philippine Review*, Vol. 1 No. 1, April 1985, pp. 3-5. In the light of current developments, it would be interesting to know Teodoro's views.

"Maoism, however, also had a powerful anti-intellectual strain, and thus played a considerable role in frustrating a marriage between Filipino Marxist theory and practice..."

One of Maoism's popular tenets centers on the cardinal principle of the 'mass line,' the notion that revolutionary action could only succeed through a synthetic union between cadres (purveyors of and experts on Marxism) and the masses (less intellectual, but imbued with the proper experiences of being oppressed and resistant). The mass line became one of the CPP's cardinal principles, to be applied wherever cadres were expanding the Party's organizations. The application of this populist concept proved extremely useful for CPP cadres when building mass bases in the

countryside and the cities. As Nemenzo astutely observed:

In fact, the 'bourgeois education' of some NPA soldiers enabled them to play a role that the Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan (HMB) never performed. NPA units were welcomed by the peasants because they were not there only to fight. They also taught the peasants new agricultural skills, herbal medicine, acupuncture, makeshift irrigation, and so forth. More effective than the local governments and field agencies of national minorities, the NPA administered justice, maintained peace and order, organized small economic projects, ran adult education classes and, in the stable guerilla fronts, even implemented a 'revolutionary land reform program.' [The] NPA thus projected a more positive image; they were not seen as parasites who fed on the meagre products of the farmers.⁵⁵

Alongside the 'mass line,' the CPP held another sacred precept: Mao's insistence on the primacy of political practice as the ultimate judge of the efficacy (or non-efficacy) of any political theory and ideology. By insisting that this principle was hallowed, the CPP ensured that its cadres were performing with their senses firmly glued to the ground. It also made sure that any theoretical deviation was prevented from becoming attractive since it had to prove itself in the CPP's 'Plaza Miranda' which was the countryside and the urban underground.⁵⁶

The third Maoist principle that the CPP had adopted as its own (and actually improvised upon) was the idea that differing analyses and action

⁵⁵ "Rectification Process..." *Op. cit.*

⁵⁶ It was this policy that provided the backdrop of the now-famous Executive Committee-Manila-Rizal Regional (KT-MR) Committee debate over revolutionary strategy in the mid-1970s. In a move characteristic of the CPP in its inception, the central leadership allowed the regional body - its largest and most endowed - to experiment with its "rebolusyonaryong bugso" even as it defended Guerrero's strategy in meetings. It only stepped in once the strategy "went too far" and the alliance between the anti-Marcos elites, the social democrats and the Manila cadres proved to be 'diluting' of Party positions. But then was the KT-MR completely wrong? How about 1986? See Malay, "Dialectics of Kaluwagan," *Marxism in the Philippines, Second Series, Op. cit.*, pp. 1-25. On how the debate unfolded, see the chapter on the controversy in Gregg Jones, *Red Revolution: Inside the Philippine Guerilla Movement*, 1989. London and Colorado, Westview Press.

within the revolutionary process ultimately reflect fundamental and irreconcilable disputes between 'political lines.' Framing contending interpretations and analyses within this Mao-popularized dichotomy helped clarify, simplify, and draw the distinction of the CPP's principles, strategies, and tactics with other groups and provided its cadres with some sort of measuring stick by which to judge the 'correctness' of their performance. During the pre-martial law days, when the CPP's hegemony was still uncertain, framing its relationship with other groups along the 'two line struggle' framework helped the CPP sharpen its identity as the new vanguard of the revolution. With the advent of martial law, the Party saw the validity of its position confirmed, especially in relation to the questions of line of reform versus the revolutionary line that it fought against the social democrats, and the struggle between 'revisionism' and 'Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung-Thought' that pitted the two communist parties against each other.

All three principles, in my view, were beneficial to a fledgling party and the concrete proof of their efficacy lay in the dramatic expansion of the revolutionary movement from the late 1970s onwards. Maoism, however, also had a powerful anti-intellectual strain, and thus played a considerable role in frustrating a purposeful marriage between Filipino Marxist theory and practice in the authoritarian period.

The application of the 'mass line' implied a breaking down and simplification of radical theory so as to render it accessible to peasants and workers as well as to change the type of radical discourse familiar to petit-bourgeois cadres. Thus what was always important for the CPP was that ideology and theory do not overtake or overwhelm its proletarian and peasant supporters. Elaborations in radical theorizing needed to be perpetually secondary to basic mass education given that the CPP was running against time trying to widen the net among a primarily illiterate population.

Through these policies, the CPP inadvertently created barriers to the development of theory inside 'democratic niches' like academia and the church,

"Elaborations in radical theorizing needed to be perpetually secondary to basic mass education given that the CPP was running against time trying to widen the net among a primarily illiterate population."

and the growing wealth of practical experience in revolutionary work. By subordinating Marxist theorizing to popular education, the CPP functioned as a semi-censor that prevented any meaningful interaction between its cadres and the works of Marxists and radical theorists mentioned above.⁵⁷ While there were indeed debates between the defenders of the CPP's 'semi-feudal' analysis and the *dependistas*, the CPP leadership made sure that its cadres, and more importantly its 'constituents,' were fairly insulated from the ramifications of the debates.

What was popularized were caricatures of people, a practice which is still in vogue today, in these days of confusion. Where the debates were acknowledged, the CPP made sure that these were 'simplified' for the benefit of cadres and the masses. The simplification, however, had a different result: they elided all the different nuances even as the two sides portrayed the debates as essentially a trivial enterprise by ivory-tower intellectuals. The end-result was a misrepresentation of the dependency theorists; and, likewise, a confused understanding of the 'semi-feudal' argument.⁵⁸

The CPP's insistence that practice was the ultimate validation of theory also narrowed down the options for dialogue.⁵⁹ With the definition of practice as being limited to 'organizing among the basic masses' (or 'revolutionary action', i.e., becoming a member of the NPA or an underground cadre), those within and outside of the CPP who sought to enrich Filipino Marxist theory but who would not necessarily ascribed to this narrowed definition of practice felt constricted. A gap was thereby created between radical activists and the radical intellectuals, with the cadres seeing little worth in the latter because of their being "teoretistang toreng-garing" (ivory tower intellectuals), while the intelligentsia regarded cadres as 'unthinking empiricists.'

Finally, the framing of the theoretical debates as actual reflections of a profound struggle of 'two lines' likewise caused problems for Filipino Marxism in general, and for the CPP, in particular. The simplified arguments of the debate were reinforced by a peculiarly essentialist demand on participants

⁵⁷ Except for purposes of popularization. Thus the positive response to Constanlino's two volume historical work; but a profound skepticism to the utility of and purpose of his *Nationalist Alternative*.

⁵⁸ Thus popularity of a Tagalog and simplistic 'critique' of Tiglao reflects the perceptions of the CPP on radical theorizing in academia as exemplified by Roland Simbulan, "Yaong Pagsamba sa mga Teoretistang Toreng-Garing," *Diliman Review*, April-June 1979, pp. 46-67.

⁵⁹ Again, a concept borrowed from (and applied ingeniously) Mao.

and witnesses to take a black-or-white commitment to a side.⁶⁰ It looked at organizational success as the result of a faithful compliance with the 'true line.' Those that sought to question the 'correct line' in effect were judged as pushing for another line, which, in the final analysis, could be a false one.⁶¹ In framing the debate in these terms, the CPP closed itself to the beneficial effects of radical theoretical exchanges even as it paid lip service to the dialectical integration of theory and experience in the revolution. Instead of incorporating some of the arguments raised by the works that came out of the 'democratic niches' (especially the academia), the CPP opted to reject them for fear that the 'line' would be diluted.

This perception effectively kept the radical intelligentsia outside of the CPP network, while within the organization, the possible repercussions of deviations kept most cadres in line.⁶² Cadre attempts at enriching revolutionary theory were discouraged for fear of re-creating two line struggles of yore (1968, 1975) even as the structural conditions of society had dramatically changed since the publication of PSR. With the constant reiteration to simplify, it was likewise easy to caricature the intelligentsia inside the Church and academe while demanding from these same people to be more 'useful' by supplying largesse or less theoretical, more propaganda-basic education-type of works to assist in the 'arousal and mobilization of the masses.'⁶³

Thus, this principle became the fitting excuse to forget theory, or to forget PSR's caveat that its findings were preliminary and just the first step towards a collaborative effort at a radical analyses of Philippine society, economy, and politics. It also, perhaps unconsciously, pushed the CPP to repeatedly postpone a major summing-up of experiences of its lengthening revolutionary history. By 1986, it was too late.

⁶⁰ This was not peculiar of an organization like the CPP. The "struggle of two lines" idea was not only of Maoist origins, the CPP itself imagines its birth as the product of a conflict between "Lavaite revisionism" and the "universal theory of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought." As the CPP emerged from its cocoon, it saw the social democrats as a new threat to its radical hegemony. Its response was to look at the rivalry, again, in terms of this particular Maoist concept.

⁶¹ The attempt to resurrect this paradigm can be seen in Liwanag, *Op. cit.*

⁶² This is actually an interesting point. In the current debates inside the CPP, a reliable source pointed out that while the CPP's Mindanao Committee agreed with Sison's 'Reaffirmist' position, its cadres apparently accepted it, "tatal hindi naman nasusunod yan [sa implementation]." ["...because it will not be implemented anyway."] If the deaths of two NPA leaders in Mindanao who refused to disband their companies is true, then the "Reaffirmationists" are forcing their Mindanao comrades to transcend this seemingly apathetic posture.

⁶³ Thus the popularity of the Maoist slogan, "Bureaucrats must plant corn" when describing the intelligentsia.

The militarization of the revolution and its everyday organizational demands were, of course, important factors to consider.⁶⁴ Cadres and activists were not only constantly immersed in expanding the movement, but were also tied down to replenishing manpower and other resources lost to the dictatorship. Running a growing organization took its toll on a cadre's time and ability to deal with issues like radical theory-building. Thus, culpability for this disengagement could not be solely attributed to the CPP's interpretation and use of Maoist concepts.

Radical intellectuals, however, felt that the replacement of meaningful exchange by the type of personalistic recriminations reminiscent of the FQS was going nowhere. Most eventually withdrew from the debates while those who continued to participate did so only in the margins of the movement. With no dialogue, there was no beneficial development of theory and practice. There was no meaningful synthesis; instead, the disengagement worsened.⁶⁵

The cooptation of liberalist thought by authoritarian discourse in a way facilitated the decline of interest in radical theorizing.⁶⁶ Among radical academics, the anticipated ideological battle against conservatism and authoritarian neo-liberalism on Philippine political economy did not materialize. Both sides ended up tolerating each other -- conservatives and liberals enjoying the comforts of being the dictatorship's intellectual mercenaries, joined in by a fair number of ex-radicals, while those who clung to their radicalism underwent an intellectual involution of sorts, re-adjusting their critical lenses towards their own tradition.⁶⁷ However, without ideological opponents and being consistently shut out from the internal discourses of the CPP, radical intellectuals were becoming a dying breed.

A parallel phenomenon appeared to have happened in the Church where ideological divisions led to non-contact coexistence between national democrats and social democrats, although the occasional sniping continued. The religious sector's growing slant in favor of organizational tasks, aided by the constant mobility of most priests and nuns, precluded the replication of

⁶⁴Bello, *op. cit.*

⁶⁵Add to all these the sudden need for conjunctural explanations after 1983 which consumed the attention of most theorists to the neglect of theory.

⁶⁶On this, see the exceptional piece of Alexander Magno. "Developmentalism and the New Society: The Repressive Ideology of Underdevelopment," *Politics without Form, Op. cit.*, pp. 7-25.

⁶⁷Radicals-turned-regime intellectual lapdogs were some of those involved in the grand myth-making project of the dictatorship, the *Tadhana* project to rewrite Philippine history.

debates that happened in academia. The dynamics within the Church changed towards more immediate problems, like the defense of human rights or BCC organizing, although theological reflections continued albeit on a lesser scale.⁶⁸

All these took their toll on the progress of the theoretical side of Filipino Marxism. Within the revolutionary movement, among the more serious aftermaths included its failure to conceive of an appropriate strategy for urban resistance, an atrophied analysis of classes and 'sectors,' and the failure to fully understand, much less appreciate, the importance of spheres of struggles that were outside the ambit of the countryside and underground. By treating debates as potential cleavages, by looking at revolutionary praxis as mainly practical, by regarding theoretical differences as ideological threats, and by adopting a utilitarian view and/or contempt towards radical theory, the CPP aggravated the disengagement between theory and practice.⁶⁹

By the 1980s, the CPP leadership had become aware of 'ideological' problems within the movement, caused mainly by an inadequate political education of cadres. It witnessed the devolution of its most important cultural sector -- the student movement. Without the benefit of serious strategic summations, and having adopted a supercilious attitude towards 'arm-chair revolutionaries,' it was also having problems coming out with a substantive and comprehensive explanation and, more importantly, solutions to the problem.⁷⁰ Finally, when the 1983 protests exploded, the CPP found itself suddenly confronted by a perplexing situation with the myriad of new anti-Marcos groups that emerged. These attested to the new sense of importance that the urban centers and urban-focussed struggles had to the revolution. The failure to meaningfully reflect on the 1975 debates did not, in any way, help. As 1975 preceded 1983, so would the latter later on become an antecedent for the restoration of liberal bourgeois rule in 1986. By this third conjuncture, the CPP and the Left had lost the political ascendancy which they earned -- with blood, sweat, and tears -- a few years back.

⁶⁸ This also accounted for the steadiness of the religious personnel as, say, compared to the intellectuals.

⁶⁹ The CPP's insularity did not help. Its refusal to debate and update itself with theoretical developments in the international Left affected its ability to cope with and adjust to changes.

⁷⁰ The CPP was beginning to constantly complain of the lack of ideological training of its cadres and warned that the ideological lag would affect progress made in the military and organizational spheres. See "Our Party has completed 15 years of Leadership," *Ang Bayan*, December 1983.

"I would suggest that had the mutual dissociation of theory and practice been prevented or kept at controlled levels, Filipino Marxism...would have had a more fascile time entering into a dialogue with issues that do not deal directly with the question of power, yet could animate a broad spectrum of people."

New Issues and the Old Paradigm

The other themes raised by QMCM, especially Filipino Marxism's failure to anticipate, dialogue, and incorporate new issues and themes that developed in struggles outside the orbit of the revolution, could be better understood within the context of the above issue of disengagement between theory and practice.

One can situate the late importance given by Marxists to feminism and environmentalism by looking at the above-concerns which in a sense seriously 'distracted' radicals from contributing to and enriching a resurgent Filipino Marxist tradition.

For to recognize them as 'serious' issues from the perspective of the CPP meant incorporating them and transforming them into assets for the armed revolution, akin to the '*pera, bahay, prente*' (money, shelter, and united front) design that eventually constricted theologizing.⁷¹ Among radical clerics and academics, at least those that remained concerned with theory, an ironically similar attitude developed -- looking at these issues as the outcome of the failure of Marxists to deal with the 'fundamental' problems of class, state, and revolutionary strategy.⁷²

Feminists and environmentalists who are critical of Filipino Marxists have rightfully criticized the latter for their lack of concern for the issues that have become the most popular, if not the most urgent, these days. Yet, in their meaningful criticisms, they overlooked the fact that a part of this left-

⁷¹One easily recalls in Mindanao the practice of the NPA, before the advent of environmentalism, to participate in the exploitation of timber resources by collecting revolutionary 'tong' [taxes] from loggers, legal and illegal. Of course, with the extreme popularity of the "Save the Earth" cause, the revolution has become pro-environment going by the reportage of NPA units burning illegal loggers' equipment.

⁷²Of late, sans the radicalism, see A.R. Magno. "The Death of Radical Discourse," *The Sunday Chronicle*, April 25, 1993, pp. 1 and 4.

wing *faux pas* was very much the outcome of the disengagement discussed above. I would suggest that had the mutual disassociation of theory and practice been prevented or kept at controlled levels, Filipino Marxism -- enriched by the dialectical exchange between theory and practice not only within organizations but between groups and forces committed in variant ways to Marxist praxis -- would have had a more facile time entering into a dialogue with issues that do not deal directly with the question of power, yet could animate a broad spectrum of people. Instead, the divergent development of theory and practice closed the possibilities for a more active, more expansive radical praxis.⁷³

Finally, one cannot ignore the impact of the changing international climate on Filipino Marxism which QMCM had especially warned about. Here, I would just like to add to Nemenzo's comment the following discussion points. For one, the insularity of Filipino Marxism is very much a factor in keeping radicals relatively ignorant of changes in bureaucratized 'socialist' states as well as of global changes in economy and politics. Insularity helped in the indigenization process and made the Philippine revolution one of the most sustained in the world today. Had the CPP, in particular, not adopted its revolutionary politics to local conditions, one doubts whether it could have withstood the hardships it underwent.

Yet, indigenization also became the convenient excuse for Marxists to refuse to comment on controversial issues affecting the international Left, or even probe deeper into the nuances of the world economy. Admittedly, access to information was an obstacle, but both sides -- the practitioners and theorists of Filipino Marxism -- tended to exaggerate this problem by questioning the ideological bases of information resources and being uncritically biased in their choices.

The CPP further rationalized *a la Mao* its lack of 'internationalism' by saying that indigenous factors must be given first priority over international changes. While the rationalization is indeed correct, it had also become a convenient excuse for the CPP to be quiet about changes. The occasional instance it ventured into international commentaries, the CPP was left badly singled by criticisms for being ill-informed. Thus, instead of putting its foot in its mouth once again, the Party, at least up to the mid-80s and today in the 'anti-revisionist' polemics of Sison, had desisted from performing its responsibility as a party of the (international) proletariat.⁷⁴

⁷³Has one ever wondered why certain radicals have to leave the revolutionary organizations to form 'NGOs'?

⁷⁴Aspects of this issue I raised in "Jose Ma. Sison and the Philippine Revolution: A Critique of an Interface," *Kasarinlan*, *Op. cit.*, Vol. 8 No. 1, 3rd Quarter 1992, pp. 71-73.

Radical intellectuals appear to be infected by this 'ethnocentric' slide hiding behind a 'nationalist' mask, especially after the honeymoon with dependency theory gave way to more direct political and conjunctural writings. Partly because of the seething political atmosphere in the early 80s, because the Left debates appeared to be going nowhere, and because of growing interest in nationalist literature, the radical intelligentsia switched their attention to the national scene, to the detriment of their once intense involvement with international issues and themes.

This problem was not as serious in the religious sector. An international institutional linkage brought about by the imperial and extra-national character of the Church and its policies allowed radical clerics to keep in touch, as it were, with world developments albeit confined mainly to areas where Church people were active political actors. Thus, the narrowed nationalism that one found inside the revolution, and among radical intellectuals, was hardly noticeable in the writings of radical Church people.⁷⁵

Ultimately, however, the problem of Filipino Marxism's *probinsyano* complex lies in the separation of theory and practice. And it is only when such disengagement is ruptured and a return to a dialectical dialogue is preferred by Filipino Marxists will this habit of radical isolation (sometimes exploding into unintelligible ethnocentrism) be broken. The preference for the polemical when dealing with international issues is of no help; what becomes imperative is for Filipino Marxists to be competent internationalist scholars.⁷⁶

Where to Go?

If we were to discern the tonal message of QMCM, it is that these days are times of retreat for Filipino Marxists. It is also a time for reflection -- to look back critically on a rich history and assess what happened -- and charting new conclusions and pathways for revival.⁷⁷ No wonder, as Nemenzo observed, Gramsci had become a most sought-after Marxist writer among those serious about this effort. There is agreement with Nemenzo that one

⁷⁵There are exceptions, Fr. Salgado, for one.

⁷⁶Sison's polemical attack on 'Soviet revisionism,' for example, is no help for it simply glossed the complicated transformation in the Soviet Union that led to its dissolution. It is badly written, lacking in research, and definitely -- with Sison's unfamiliarity with the languages and culture of the Soviet Union -- chooses to gloss over and censor significant events in the dissolved empire. A more thoughtful discussion, albeit still empirically inadequate piece, is A.M. Mendoza, "Democracy, Socialism and Post-Revolutionary States: Problems in Theory and Reality," *Kasarinlan, Op. cit.*, Vol. 4 No. 2, 2nd Quarter 1989.

⁷⁷Without, of course, neglecting the day-to-day responsibilities in the different spheres where Marxists are involved in.

cannot deify Gramsci; but I would argue that one must give more credit to Filipino Marxists today -- seasoned as they are -- that they are perfectly aware of not doing a Gramscian version of their Maoist past. Where Gramsci appears significant is in the inspiration that his writings give as guides for analyzing periods where Marxists have lost and are trying to regain an ideological hegemony in these altered times. Gramsci's popularity also lies in his efforts at re-engaging theory and practice in the Italian revolution and going beyond the mere informational-propaganda-education types of revolutionary writings -- surely a feat that sends echoes to Filipino Marxists.

Without meaning to do so, QMCM and Francisco Nemenzo have made an important contribution to 'Gramscize' Filipino Marxism. The first step has been taken and from the grapevine are positive news of similar steps

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being made. One awaits in guarded anticipation the outcomes of these efforts, and the next level that radicals would aim for to resurrect and reinvigorate Filipino Marxism. There is very little choice but to struggle and aspire for this next phase. The only other alternative is to languish in a period where, in the words of Perry Anderson, "[d]aring ideals, high sacrifices, heroic strivings will pass away, amidst the humdrum routines of shopping and voting; [where] art and philosophy wither, as culture is reduced to the curation of the past; [where] technical calculations replace moral or political imagination. [And where] the owl is mournful in the night."⁷⁸

⁷⁸Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 283.