

**Jose Maria Sison**  
**Talks on Parliamentary Struggle, Revisionism, Inner Party**  
**Rectification, Peace Talks, Gorbachevism in the Philippines,**  
**and the Future of the National Democratic Movement**

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Kathleen Weekley (KW): On the boycott debate between the Executive Committee of the Central Committee and the Executive Committee-Manila-Rizal during the 1978 elections, you said that the boycott was a mistake and had a divisive effect on the Party. Did you mean that the Central Committee should not have intervened?

Jose Maria Sison (JMS): In a society like the Philippines, the issue does not have to be divided between electoral boycott and participation all the time. The boycott position will always win within the Party, but you have to watch out whether the issue as defined inside the Party will be similarly defined and understood outside the Party. Within the party, if you say boycott and the pro-participation side accepts the term 'boycott, the pro-participation side will always lose in formal terms because, in the first place, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) is not allowed to participate in the electoral process! So, there should be no debate about that. In a party like the CPP, it would be enough to say that the elections held by the class enemy are farcical.

The use of the term 'boycott' is permissible only when it is generally accepted inside as well as outside the Party. The boycott policies in 1981 and 1984 were not problematic, but you know, some people read Bolshevik history dogmatically and insist on the dichotomy between boycott and participation. Those who insist on that get beaten in debates inside the Party. But that doesn't make both sides intelligent because the debate is a false kind of debate; everyone should be able to agree that electoral exercise is farcical.

Now, in certain places the Party might be able to do something to determine the results because there are portions of the country not under the control of the enemy. But Philippine electoral exercises are still the instruments of the class enemy. The class enemy determines the results so you can comfortably and reasonably describe the whole electoral process as farcical. It does not mean, however, that you're not going to do anything about such exercises even in an indirect way. Like with regard to the legal progressive forces and the legal democratic movement you do not go around imposing on these legal democratic forces what the Party in its purity sees in the class enemy. It's enough to let the legal progressive forces have a portion of the ruling system so that at least it will be able to expose and criticize the ruling system and the ruling faction from the inside. That is the logic.

Even where the party is strong it does not necessarily mean that the Party can determine election results. On the whole, if you have 70% or 75% of Philippine territory and population, you can determine the results. But by 25%? No. You better let the other legal democratic forces do what they can and not dictate on them what they should do as if they were communists. How much can they do in areas that are communist over which the communists themselves have no control?

The enemy always concentrates in places where the CPP and the New People's Army (NPA) are strong and these places are marked during election time. 'That's a complexity of life and revolution.

KW: In relation to the debate in 1978 you said that "the gigantic resurgence of the urban mass actions in the region as well as all over the country could be started and could have been sustained had it not been for the divisive effect of the boycott-participation debate, which adversely affected the strength of the revolutionary fames In the national capital region." It occurs to me that that statement could easily apply to the 1986-1986 situation.

JMS: Yes, there are similarities in both situations. After the wave of labor strikes started at La Tondeña in 1974, there was already a strong indication that the later part of the 1970s will be ours in terms of resurging the mass movement By this time the proletariat would be more active and greater in number than during the First Quarter Storm. So, 1978 came and the noise barrage was a sure sign, but then the Party went into this debate,

and there were disciplinary actions taken. Certain elements distributed position papers horizontally. As a result of the disciplinary actions Manila-Rizal (MR) was weakened. And, you know, if you want nationwide mass movement you have to make sure that MR performs its crucial role. But if your organization is in shambles, as was the Party as a result of the debate, how can you go on?

It was a big thing if there would be a demonstration of 200 to 2000 people. I was irked when I heard in prison that 'small was beautiful'. Of course, there maybe cuties who are beautiful! But in terms of mass movement the bigger, the better.

Was 1986 similar to 1978? There are certain imprecisions. Up to election day in 1986, you might say that the line of boycott was an error in the sense that there was not even an adjustment in the meaning of the term 'boycott (that is, 'boycott' could be expressed as minimum boycott) But the bier thing missed was the opportunity to have an alliance with those who were in critical participation (participating critically but to rise up against MARCOS if there would be cheating.) Practically, Marcos could be put in pincer, but it had to be a were boycott as against critical participation for the Party. While the boycott move meat had a steady 50,000 people, the anti-fascist mainstream was going by the hundreds of thousands.

It is not true that the party leadership did not in a manner of speaking, at least adjust After the election the Party was the first ahead of then presidential candidate Corazon Aquino and the Catholic Church, to call for a people's strike. The call for civil disobedience by Aquino and the Catholic Church's call for non-violent resistance only came later. They just used varied terms but the objective was to fight Marcos.

Now, there is the myth that the masses led by the Party were not in EDSA. The masses led by the Party were there! In EDSA when there was a call for the bravest splits to take over Channel 4, 500 Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) members were there, and when I refer to BAYAN, I mean that the influence of the Party extends; I don't mean that BAYAN is not an independent organization. But the myth that the Party obstructed or was a block, that's not true. Die most progressive people, 500 of them from BAYAN, went over to seize Channel 4. But the highest concentration of progressive forces was at Malacañang. During the days of the downfall of Marcos, from February 22 to 25, probably 80% of the people in EDSA

went there spontaneously, or came from the unorganized sector. If you are going to look at their source of inspiration, maybe you can point to Radio Veritas and Cardinal Sin. Or you don't even give all the credit to Cardinal Sin because in the first place, there were brave spirits who were already there. But anyhow, the most powerful and influential radio broadcast was that of Radio Verbs and the voice of Sin. 20% of the people were, you might say, progressive, and most of that 20% came from the progressive mass organizations. Around Malacañang, the percentage was higher, even up to 90%. Kilusang Mayo Uno, KADENA, and the league of Filipino Students concentrated there. Chapters of BAYAN and other progressive organizations in the provinces composed the bulk of people rising up there and this fact is not acknowledged. Provincial and regional commanders sympathetic to the Enrile-Ramos side would even approach BAYAN.

KW: Do you think the boycott error in 1966 indicates that the Party, or certain people in the Party, did not learn enough from the 1978 experience, about how to manage the legal struggle to advantage? It seemed to me that the 1992 elections also indicated some confusion in the ranks of the left.

JMS: Boycott was an error alright but there are exaggerations that proceed from the consideration of that error.

There are those who practically say that the movement must make the legal struggle as the main struggle and that, as a consequence of the boycott error, the Party or the revolutionary movement was marginalized. Now, the question is, since when was the revolutionary movement or the CPP at the center of the legal frame of the class enemy? Never! In the first place, the CPP is banned. But when you talk about the fundamental confrontation between the revolutionary forces and the counterrevolutionary forces, including the bourgeois reformists, you can say that the revolutionary forces are still at the center-stage and the reformists are just watchers at the side of the counter-revolutionaries. There is a misconception that the CPP and other revolutionary forces were relegated to the sidelines.

Another exaggeration is that the boycott error was the biggest error of the movement. You know, there are still bigger errors! And I heard that the CPP is trying to rectify these bigger errors. You see, the CPP has already rectified its errors about reactionary elections. It no longer goes around saying 'boycott' when nobody will follow that line. Now it just says that the

whole thing is farcical. We don't block progressive forces from doing what they can in that kind of arena. Its an arena that is secondary to the battlefield where you can cause the transfer of real power through armed struggle.

What is happening with the reactionary elections is that, despite the exaggerated hopes of some people that you can make basic reforms through elections and that you can field certain progressive candidates, the class enemy still has the capacity to manipulate the elections. In the 1992 presidential elections, hypothetically you might say it would have been very easy for the progressive movement to have pushed up someone to become president because the field had a divisor of seven. But no, it's still the money, the capacity to manipulate the physical means, and the capacity to bribe the electoral personnel that would make a president, that made Ramos president. So, if you look at the 1992 elections, it puts to shame those who attributed to former President Aquino the democratic space and not to the people; shame on those who would think that the elections staged by the class enemy would pave the way for any significant change in society. In fact there is an increased militarization of the political system. There's now a correspondence between the pinnacle of power and the basic forces of the total war policy, and Ramos is the thread that runs through from the Marcos regime to the present. So, the class enemy can manipulate electoral outcomes.

KW: Walden Bello says "I think that the National Democratic Front has ceased to be a key political actor in the last two years. It is, I hate to say the word, 'temporarily marginalized' from the mainstream of political life and I think the reason is the re-establishment of elite democratic processes in the Philippines. There's a new political framework, seen as legitimate no matter how flawed it is, by the masses. The Cory Aquino constitutional government is seen by most people as the legitimate framework for political activity In the Philippines." Can you comment on this?

JMS: Since when was the NDF a factor within the legal system, within be electoral system, or even within the entire political system of the class enemy? The NDF was never in the picture. How do you put into the reactionary political system, let's say, the organs of power being created in the countryside? The NDF was never a legal factor anyway. So, he's mixing up frameworks. Never was the NDF at the center of the stage to be

marginalized. Never in that frame involving conformity to the laws of the system. Never! Never, never was the NDF at the center of any electoral exercise conducted by the class enemy. The NDF has always been outlawed. The statement is a string of sophisticated words but at the same time expresses inanity.

The next question is, is there any other revolutionary force? None. None of these unremoulded petty bourgeois elements taunting the revolutionary forces amount to anything. It's a pity now, whereas Aquino could be referred to by them as someone who ran away with the banner of democracy, someone to whom you can attribute the democratic space; may they say the same things now of Ramos, who is the legitimate' continuer of that process of democratization that has 'marginalized' the revolutionary forces? There is a failure in categorizing things in the way Bello speaks; there is a failure of recognizing what frame there is.

KW: On the subject of ceasefires, Bello says that in "1987 there was a ceasefire called and I think that again there was ambivalence towards the ceasefire. As we saw on the government side, the military wanted out of the ceasefire process, they didn't like it at all and several people who were of a more liberal stripe in the Aquino government were trying to hang in for a ceasefire. On the NDF side, the civilians of the NDF wanted to continue that process, but there was also a significant number of people, mainly in the NPA, who felt that the ceasefire process was deteriorating the overall political position of the left. I would just like, therefore, to throw out this suggestion, that the ceasefire process saw the civilians, in a broad sense, being squeezed out on both ends." Can you comment on this?

JMS: You see, he again presumes that he speaks for the civilians and there is the notion that the NDF does not carry the interest of the people to the extent that it can. Not to mention that a revolutionary force may not be able to make the most in an electoral process. Revolutionary forces are revolutionary in that they stand for the rights and interests of the people. Going back in Philippine history, if Andres Bonifacio had asked for elections and the Spanish colonials were smart enough to CIA for elections, do you think the Katipunan would win the seats?

There was something wrong with the 1986 ceasefire agreement. It was made even before there was an agreed substantive agenda for discussion. There never was any substantive agenda nor any substantive

discussions. You see, when a ceasefire agreement is made without any substantive agenda, or without any substantive arena, it is the revolutionary forces that lose. The other side never gives up the notion that it is in charge of peace and order. I think the revolutionary movement will not repeat the same error.

The pre-ceasefire talks were all done in Manila, in special consideration to Pepe Diokno who could not go to the countryside. And there were costs: NDF personnel and their closest supporters were exposed to enemy surveillance, and there were wrong impressions created among some people that there would really be a movement towards a just and lasting peace. You know, there is unevenness in the consciousness of the people so the revolutionary movement or the NDF in particular, is trying to make sure that the class enemy – Ramos in particular now – will not make people believe that his demand for surrender of the revolutionary forces is a willingness to engage in peace negotiations. Anyway, there is this reformist preference of Bello in the passage – that a ceasefire is for the benefit of the civilians and the people.

The revolutionary movement would not be an armed revolutionary movement if it were not fighting. The moment it ceases to fight not only will the arms become rusty, the personnel holding the guns will become rusty also. In other words, the truly more powerful side, in military terms, would be the winner. It would be silly to start fighting in the first place if the result would only be a greater machine of violence against the people.

KW: That brings me to the strategy debate: do you completely reject the analysis by Marty Villalobos in “Where the Party Faltered,” that a situation existed in 1906-1987 where the national democratic force could have taken decisive political advantage of the popular discontent and led a national insurrection if alterations in strategy had been made earlier?

JMS: It would have been the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) that would have gotten all the power and they probably would have given the Presidency and the Prime Ministership to then Defense Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile and then AFP Vice-Chief of Staff Fidel Ramos. The notion that the movement could have gotten power, or a big share of it comes from someone who does not know his arithmetic. Between the RAM and the NPA, the RAM had more armed forces and yet they could not even control the events because the US was there to say that it was Mrs. Aquino who

should sit as president. I refer to arithmetic because we can count the strength the NPA had. As a matter of fact, there were personnel of the NPA in Manila during the EDSA events who were just on the side-line and could not even be accommodated in houses of the people. In other words, one should not overrate the revolutionary forces and underrate the capacity of the United States and the big compradors and landlords as well as the total of more than 300,000 armed personnel of the government – regular services, police, plus para-military forces.

Let us say that had the NPA had so many planes and so many boats to allow it to concentrate its few thousands in Manila they still would have been wiped out within hours! Or, let us say that they distributed themselves to various cities in the Philippines. That still would not amount to much. The revolutionary forces did not even have a radio broadcasting station that would issue the calls in a way louder than Radio Veritas, or the shifting radio station used by June Keithley and the other Radio Veritas people. In other words, one has to do arithmetic; revolution is not a matter of wishful thinking.

KW: Are you referring to this petty bourgeois tendency?

JMS: Yes. One can be misled that theory is a matter of wishful thinking. Even the most serious people fall into that error. Leonid Brezhnev even said that the military could be the dependable fore for revolution, as in Africa and the Middle East even if they are the most educated and enlightened petty bourgeois. In other words, what is easier than making a popular uprising? Make a coup!

You can really do it but it takes some doing. If the CPP would invest itself in making an insurrection without a hard-core and well-organized army, or without counter-intelligence within the armed forces, it will not succeed.

The first Red Army came from the Czarist army and the Bolsheviks invested cadres in the Czarist army. But there was World War I where many Russian troops were sent to the Western front without sufficient clothing and food. Then you can have a situation where the Japanese, having moved out of most places in the Philippines, moved to the Cordilleras and concentrated there to convert the Cordilleras into a fort against the expected invasion by the US where you have a people's army, with the



people, rising up and seizing the municipal buildings and the provincial buildings in late 1944. In Vietnam, the core of the well-organized armed personnel to which the people rallied to in uprising numbered to only about 500. That is possible, but you have to have those conditions. You have to have conditions of rapid disintegration in the system.

In 1986, there were no conditions of rapid disintegration. On the other hand, in a matter of days, the intact army under the US influence was shifting from the Marcos-Ver camp to the Enrile-Ramos camp. And if one has in mind the exact figure of NPA personnel, whether they concentrated themselves in Manila by some miracle or distributed themselves to some cities which they could seize, there could be a number of cities which could be seized for a few days. But wait until the intact Regional Unified Commands act. They would be wiped out in a matter of days. Revolution is not a matter of wishful thinking.

KW: A paper by a certain Tales Duhaylungsod says: "...by far the most damaging disagreement within our ranks is that on strategy. It has divided the top leadership and is clearly one of the major reasons for our leaders' problems in the last few years... I believe that the improper handling of this debate has also affected morale within our ranks." Can you comment on this? Is the debate on strategy satisfactorily concluded?

JMS: That paper is an anti-communist paper being circulated by a certain Colonel Delfin. An illusion is being created that the difference of opinions among party members is a kind of a split that prevails upon its unity. There is a misrepresentation. When you say there is unity in the Party, they say "oh, there is no debate, no democracy." But when you have democracy, inner-party democracy, they would say "oh! there is a split on top of the unity. The Party's going to pot" That's the logic of the anti-communists which would place the Party nowhere but into self-destruction.

The point is that a rectification movement is going on and I think those who have been in grave error would have to leave or they would have to say and accept honestly that they have put themselves out.

KW: Of the party?

JMS: Yes. There is a rectification movement which is basically an educational movement. Even those in error have the chance to rectify.

Would Mr. Ross Perot still be able to remain Republican if he went on running for President? [Mr. Ross Perot re-entered and lost the 1992 US Presidential election as an independent candidate.— Ed.] So, you know, whether bourgeois or proletarian, a party has certain principles, certain accumulated knowledge and experience which it will protect to maintain its integrity. Any party has a democratic right to exist according to its principles. Principles have guided the progress of the Party, but at the same time, there are errors or deviations from those principles, and for any party to progress it must rectify. Have you listened to Mr. Bush trying to admit mistakes and trying to rectify those mistakes? Every party tries to rectify in its own way, whatever its principles. The CPP is no exception.

As a matter of fact, criticism and self-criticism is an old tradition. Inner-party democracy goes along with discipline. Mr. Ramos will have a bigger problem after this rectification movement when all the damaging impulses are done away with: the impulse to bureaucratize, under the slogan of 'regularization' (regularize meaning to have top heavy staffing even in legal formations), and the impulse to build up companies in the people's army which will soon have logistical problems and draw away cadres from mass work. When all these problems are solved, when more cadres are doing mass work in the urban areas as well as in the rural areas, when you really have guerilla warfare with a strong mass base, well, the situation for the revolutionary movement will be greatly improved. When a party has problems that have been going on for a number of years, and despite that the party remains intact that party must be strong. And when that party solves those problems which have destroyed and damaged more than enough, then you're going to have a stronger party. That is how I see it.

KW: This rectification process you described obviously involves discussion within certain frameworks of the problems in the last few years, and I presume it means people either leaving voluntarily because they've been convinced that the majority are not with them, or they're asked to leave or whatever. Does the situation call for a congress of the Party?

JMS: A congress is something demanded by the Constitution but the Constitution also makes qualifications. Central Committee plenary sessions have been held and often they have made decisions that would amount to what a congress would make. The CPP has not been able to hold congresses as fast or often as the Vietnamese Communist Party. And if you know the history of the Bolshevik party, they were not holding congresses

frequently, but when their history was written a decision was taken to consider certain Central Committee plenary conferences as congresses.

ICW: Retrospectively?

JMS: Retrospectively, because the weight of the decisions amounted to being that of congress'.

There are those who are Upping off the other side that there should be a congress; this is practically a sabotage of the preparations that may be underway. Secondly, you cannot hold a very big congress. In other words, you're not going to have a congress like the Republican party – open and with hundreds or thousands of participants. I think the CPP will not get Araneta Coliseum as a venue. There are certain elements who think that the leading organs would be discredited and their authority unrecognized unless there is a congress. And yet, such elements will not be satisfied by a congress because there are ideological, political, and organizational standards & criteria that would be followed in determining the delegates. In other words, there are certain elements who would say even after a congress that they are not satisfied and this is due to the to that in the first place, upon entering the party, they may not have grasped the basic principles of the Party.

You see, in every anti-fascist struggle there is a certain amount of broadness which allows the entry of the unremoulded petty bourgeoisie into the proletarian party. There is in every communist party, whether it's Philippine, or Chinese, or Soviet during its time, a certain portion which espouses anti-proletarian idea In the Philippines today, you have certain petty bourgeois trends inside and outside the Party. There is bourgeois liberalism, the official ideology of the state; the best of the universities, for instance my alma mater, are liberal. And in the face of the more conservative institutions that have their background in the colonial and feudal period, bourgeois liberalism really shines. In other words, it's a force.

There is also bourgeois populism and it goes by the name of 'popular democracy.' These are the elements who think that what is more important than the representative structure of any organization is to invoke the masses directly; any lime you invoke the people below, whoever you are,

you are the more democratic element They are like the populist in Russian history, the Narodniks.

Then you have the Bukluran sa Ikaunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa (BISIG). BISIG would even before socialist than the CPP but it's just funny that their socialism was hitched to the Aquino regime. Some of them got appointments in the Aquino regime and they were happy with that. They were more uppity because they differentiated themselves from those marxists who preferred to be 'marginalized.'

Then you have Gorbachevism. Gorbachev was able to swindle a lot of people. Despite the fact that he was found out to be an anti-communist at the end of his regime, he was still celebrated for his glasnost and his democracy. But what do you have now? There's the restoration of the bourgeois class dictatorship. And he's well-rewarded; The Gorbachev Foundation took over the Academy of Social Sciences and he expects to make money out of the 500-room hotel of the Academy of Social Sciences. He receives \$25 million a year from Exxon as consultancy fee and has been collecting money from the US and Japan.

W: But then, who are the Gorbachevites in the Philippines?

JMS: Anti-communism has become more effective because it rides on and uses the vehicle of the petty bourgeoisie. Unremoulded petty bourgeois elements in communist parties have become the most effective anti-communists. Then you have the traditional anti-communists who are paid by the US government as ideologues or publicists, and you can point to private and public institutions backing up these traditional anti-communists.

For a certain time, the anti-revisionist critique became hazy because there were certain points in the propaganda of Gorbachev which were attractive. So, people overlooked Gorbachev's anti-communist mission in life. His mission in life became clear only at the end. Gorbachev has been a more effective swindler than Khrushchev. Khrushchev could not have been an effective swindler and the US was not ready to believe him anyway. The bipolar confrontation dictated upon the ineffectivity of Khrushchev.

In the euphoria that followed after the first 5-year plan of socialist construction, there was a declaration that there were no more exploiting classes and no more class struggle except the one between the Soviet

people and the external enemy. It looked correct by socioeconomic definition you could no longer point to anyone as a capitalist or landlord.

One result of this formulation was the facility with which people would~ be accused as agents of the external enemy. There was no rigorous application of due process, there was no narrowing down of the target. The masses were there making reports, the security services would be acting on these reports so you had a widening of the target with no due process to really narrow down the target. In Soviet history, this is the most crucial error in ideological terms; this is the biggest error of Stalin from which would proceed all other errors. Stalin's administration was effective in identifying who could be a counterrevolutionary, but there was something beyond that too.

Another important point should be recognized: when you declare that there are no more exploiting classes and that the working class has accomplished its historic task - and this was spoken the loudest from Krushchev's time to Gorbachev - the new intelligentsia, even if they were children of workers and peasants, would automatically become a big mass of petty bourgeois and they speak in universalistic, humanistic, and ahistorical terms.

Of course, any proletarian advancement is a contribution to the general advancement of human civilization. But you can always keep on saying that and still lose sight of your proletarian footing. You can keep on raising your arms as if that is all, and then you forget your proletarian feet. The ones doing that are the big mass petty bourgeois because the revolutionaries are dying off or the veterans themselves are getting muddled. But anyway, the new intelligentsia have become the bureaucrats and economic managers as they move their feet towards petty bourgeois too flag. You will not even know because everybody's looking at the arms outstretched to the sky, in the largest of terms.

By the time Kruschev came to power, the petty bourgeois were already so well-entrenched and so widespread that it became the social base for the highest bureaucrats. At that time, after long ideological revision it was easy to change the political and economic policies. So, bourgeois populism was adopted by Kruschev. Then came Brezhnev who adopted social-fascist methods to recentralize even the small amount of decentralization achieved by Kruschev. He's called neo-Stalinist but, in fact he was

essentially a Khrushchevite still. He was practicing Khrushchevism without Khrushchev because the economic policies – the so-called economic reforms – were enlarged. There was recentralization in the economy, for instance, to make sure that there was funding for the central bureaucracy and the arms race. But the private entrepreneurs increased, the free market grew, the propensity to milk the state enterprises for the benefit of the corrupt bureaucrats and the private entrepreneurs increased and the so-called mafia syndicates emerged all over the Soviet Union. By the time Gorbachev came, well, he already had a good basis for accelerating at break-neck speed the restoration of capitalism without any kind of disguise. By 1988, after all those references to socialist renewal from 1985 to 1987, he was already talking in perfect undisguised capitalist terms.

Anyway, the CPP itself had some amount of deviation. You know, there's nothing wrong with the NDF trying to have friendly relations with other forces in the world. The Palestine Liberation Organization and the African National Congress do that. But for a communist party to entertain the idea of having fraternal relations and ideological kinship with the revisionist Soviet party and the revisionist parties of Eastern Europe that never had much of a chance to develop anything more than bureaucratic capitalism, it is a deviation. Of course, the motivation of the CPP for entertaining the idea of having fraternal relations was the support that could be had for the struggle in the Philippines. But the CPP was never able to go around the obstacle that the Lava group was the one recognized as the 'Marxist-Leninist' counterpart of those revisionist panics. But there was that period from 1982 until the rectification when the thought of having fraternal relationships with these revisionist groups was being considered. But there was a cost there: people thought that Gorbachev was out to renew socialism, and that glasnost and perestroika were good things, and this late, a few elements are still influenced by that line of thinking.

Somehow, there is a warping of the mind. The regimes from Khrushchev to Gorbachev were all anti-Stalin regimes. But who gets the most blame? Not Khrushchev, not Brezhnev, not Gorbachev, it's still Stalin! You cannot say Stalin was perfect but please look into the faults of Mr. Gorbachev within his own period.

KW: So, do you think all these things are linked up – the questions of mistakes or errors made in certain arenas (regularization, for example) and the approaches to the so-called socialist regime? This rectification period

you're talking about, is dealing with all these problems at once? Is there a link between the insurrectionary strategy and the regularization, and the 'too-hazy' view on anti-revisionism?

JMS: There is in every person, even the best of Marxist-Leninists, a portion where subjectivism could come in. Let's consider my own person. Big bourgeois or feudal thinking is something so gross to me that it's difficult for me to fall into that line of thinking. I have contempt for relatives who are still landlord. But I'm not saying that I'm always 100% objective. In society, the petty bourgeois is a progressive force and you cannot wake the new democratic revolution or even the socialist revolution work without them. Within the Party it cannot be helped if there is a certain amount of penetration by the petty bourgeois mentality or even by petty bourgeois elements. You may try as hard as you can to have a purely proletarian Party but even the best of revolutionary proletarians, the best of Marxist-Leninists, would be impinged upon by some amount of subjectivism. Every person has to choose. Everyone has to make choices. In society at large, well, let them be. You're not going to purify society, otherwise, you're going to throw away so many professional and technical people.

In philosophical terms, those in error within a Marxist-Leninist party would have some kind of social basing in the petty bourgeoisie. For instance, in my case, when did I become a Marxist-Leninist? At the age of 19, and just before I became a Marxist I reached the peak of bourgeois thinking, the best there was - progressive liberal, anti-imperialist and progressive liberal. How many years were in that background? My previous exposure to schooling in Catholic institutions have had their impact, but no feudal idea, no big bourgeois idea can directly move me. I can easily spot it I can easily cancel it out of my frame of thinking. In society at large or even in the Party there should be no illusion that you can have a perfect 100% proletarian party. So, the petty bourgeois is the class basis of subjectivism, one-sidedness, narrow-mindedness and short-sightedness. Those are the characteristics in philosophical terms. And no one can say that he is 100% secure from subjectivism because the facts don't come completely all the time. You can have an accumulation of facts which gives you a base for stable thinking, but there are certain judgements which are made based on the existing facts but then more facts could change your judgement. So there is a vulnerability, even of the best proletarian Marxist-Leninist mind.

I've already pointed to certain petty bourgeois trends (petty bourgeois liberalism) and the small groups which are vehicles of these trends. You have 'popdem-ism'. You have BISIG which tries to put forward the idea of democratic socialism: peoples socialism as against state socialism, and that's having socialism even ahead of the completion of the national democratic revolution. 'lien you have Gorbachevism. Then you have insurrectionism, and there are as many as five kinds within the history of the party during the last ten years.

Coming from scratch and taking a long time ~ trees, the Party had to operate with a great deal of irregularity. For instance, guerilla warfare is irregular warfare. You can carry to extremes the irregularity of guerilla struggle and guerilla life. That is what you call 'guerilla-ism' which we have been criticizing since a long time ago as roving rebel bands'. But we were able to overcome that. So, a point came when people thought that, "oh, we have done enough mass work, we have covered all strategic points in the country, we should start regularizing!" In the urban areas, regularizing means having a staff. You know, there are many ways of regularizing but what all these mean is taking away cadres from work at the grassroots. There are legal institutions. One can be a revolutionary and at the same time still receive a regular salary. There can be a proliferation on of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), a proliferation of coordinating bodies, and, of course, there are the layerings, staffing at various levels. Before you know it, there's no one working at the grassroots level.

Then, in the countryside there is the formation of unsustainable companies. The staffing there may not be as elaborate as in the urban awn, but when you have companies just trying to fill up the positions of C.O. and P.O., you could be getting the best cadres from the territory. When you have a company, you can attack larger and more units of the enemy. Then, when the truly big enemy comes, it wipes out whatever remains of your mass work. When the situation becomes purely military, the truly regularized forces which are better sustained by the US and by tax collections of the state could win and put the small irregular forces in big trouble. Even in a high stage of development the people's army can create regular units (regular relative to far smaller guerrillas), but, those bigger units should never drop their guerilla character. That's why they're regular mobile forces - regular forces with guerilla characteristics.



When you want to have larger units which you can immediately mobilize to hit the enemy, you can go through what is called 'relative concentration.' Even when you are on the eve of the final offensive, never absolutely concentrate your forces and hold a city. You have to keep on moving. After all, you have the people with you. You leave some tested troops, the militia, plus the general population to hold that city after you have already destroyed the backbone of the enemy force. Then you move to another city. In other words, you keep on moving. It is only at the very last moment if there's any hold-out, that you will really have to use some positional warfare. The trick is relative concentration; absolute concentration is tantamount to the death of any revolutionary force in the Philippines, But I will say this: because NPA guerilla fighters pay with their lives for the error of absolute concentration, even if such errors have already taken effect and caused damage, a point is reached when there is spontaneous correction, a sudden recollection of the long history of guerilla warfare.

KW: And do you think that is what happened?

JMS: That has happened. 1992 is the year of the most conscious and best criticism of regularization, or so-called absolute concentration of fighters within a limited radius. The spontaneous corrections started in some places in late 1988 and picked up in 1989. But the party is not satisfied with so-called 'adjustments'; there must be a conscious recognition of the errors because you can make adjustments and later go back to previous errors when the adjustments sort of superficially patch up the problem.

KW: Is it similar to the Deep Penetration Agent (CPA) problem In 1986 and 1966, when people thought the problem had been dealt with?

JMS: Yet. There was no full scale rectification of acts in 1985 so there was a repetition of errors in 1988. Now, the good thing that came about in 1988 was the systematization of the principles and methods of investigation, trial, and evaluation of evidence. AHOS must be seen as a consequence of a wrong line which seemed to be correct and productive.

In 1981 to 1983, there was a rapid increase in the armed strength and effectiveness of the companies. Then, the truly larger regular forces of the enemy came and inflicted severe setbacks on the smaller regular forces.

As a result of the setbacks, there was panic in late 1984. By the middle of 1985, panic transformed into suspicion against members.

People got promoted because they rode high on reputations drawn from 1981 to 1983; so, some people started to be promoted in 1984. By 1985, they were well in place and were pushing the same idea of regularization and so they were able to compel all regions to build companies by 1987. By 1987, there was already the so-called national coordinated offensive. The nationally coordinated offensive was counter-productive. There was an element of arrogance, of trying to hit hard points and destroying some bridges. But that was a waste of ammunition! The radio signals probably even became tracers for those giving the commands. In March 1988, there was a blow on the highest command level. By 1988, there was already a spontaneous reconsideration among various units. And by late 1989, 50% of the companies formed were already redeployed in smaller units, guerilla style.

The strongly written criticisms in the 1992 document ["Reaffirm Our Basic Principles and Carry the Revolution Forward", Rebolusyon, No.1, Series 1992 January-March.] were already present by late 1988 [in "Brief Review of the History of the CPP", 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary statement, December 26, 1988. - Eds] There were still deficiencies. For instance, there are portions there praising the formation of companies, and liars a weakness. But basically, the correlation of mass base and armed force was already stressed in 1988.

KW: In recent years there have been some fairly optimistic statements about when the strategic stalemate would be reached, and then clearly it didn't happen in the time period projected. Do you think now that when this rectification process is completed, the Party can go back to a more optimistic projection of when the stalemate will be reached?

JMS: The main thing now is rectifying and working hard. Talk of the strategic stalemate could be contemplated if you have a certain number of NM fighters, for instance 25,000. That is derived from Philippine historical experience and current circumstances. The Japanese were able to control the Philippines with an average of a platoon per municipality. The reactionary government controls the Philippines by having around a platoon of policemen per municipality. So, if the NPA would have 25,000 that gives the NPA, on the average, something like 1000 of the 1,500 municipalities.

So, if you have 25,000, you're very much into the strategic stalemate, although of course, in actual fighting you don't practice egalitarianism, assigning 25 per municipality.

That kind of talk about stalemate requiring 25,000 was actually a counter to the idea or notion in the early 1980s that there can be a strategic counteroffensive as the final phase of the strategic defensive. In semantical terms, there is an absurdity there, considering something strategic and at the same time strategic counter-offensive. It carries an element of let opportunism —there was the notion that the system might go down with Marcos, and again, there was a failure at arithmetic. The number of weapons of the NPA were so small! Of course, there was a big increase in 1981 to 1983. In 1981, well, you would be shocked if you knew the exact number. So, there was a rhetorical advance and it was giving the wrong impression to everyone, even in the ranks of the revolutionary movement. Up to 1985, I think any Regional Unified Command of the other side could have easily crushed the number. The enemy keeps on saying, "Oh! the NPA is already 25,000 but we have managed to bring this down now to something like 13,000!" Actually, the strength of the NPA's high-powered weapons never went beyond 8,000. But that's significant if you use it well; and the system is in trouble when you have a force of about 25,000.

KW: So when do you expect this rectification process to be finalized so that you can get on with the work?

JMS: It's moving on, it's moving on. Maybe it will be fully accomplished by the middle of next year. In the countryside rectification is faster.

KW: Why is that?

JMS: Because they put their lives on the line there. The continuity of an error is life-threatening, so they're more receptive and cautious. Even in the urban areas, the rectification movement looks slower simply because the few elements who have actually put themselves out of the movement are so vociferous that an illusion of resistance is created.

KW: Do you expect that the rectification process itself will create any problems or weaken the movement, even momentarily?

JMS: Rectification involves three approaches; the ideological-political aspects are more important than the organizational. The most ideal is the ideological method by which there is a reasonable period of time to let people come to terms with the rectification movement. The organizational method looks as if it is the most simple. Let us say that there is a unit where errant elements still prevail; if that unit is dependent on, or has a life-line to a higher organ, you could just cut that lifeline. Then that unit will have its members looking for jobs elsewhere. They're kept out. But that's not a good method. The worst form of the organizational method is something we have learned from the Lava experience, something that should not be done.

KW: Liquidating people?

JMS: Yes. Like in the so-called Marxist-Leninist group which opposed the line of capitulation to Marcos in 1973 to 1974, 29 of them were killed off by the Lavas. And that has been a practice since then. I sometimes make jokes that Vicente Lava must have learned both the revisionism of Earl Browder and the nastiness of the Mafia in New York (because he learned his Marxism in New York.)

The CPP has always been gentle. The re-established Party did not do anything physical against the Lavas even when they were easy picks in Manila. And, you know, these Lava agents would even take the initiative at hitting the NPA. And the NPA, in such a situation, would even patiently study the situation so it wouldn't commit mistakes in going after these culprits.

The NPA had always been gentle until a certain situation of foolishness came due to the panic in Mindanao and Luzon. There was a similar experience in the old movement in 1950, there were supposed to be two coordinated offensives, from the Huk bases in the Sierra Madre and the Central Luzon plains. The morale was so high that patting cadres would say to each other, "goodbye, see you in Malacañang!" But then the US had just supplied the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) with enough weapons and had just trained 30 combat battalions. So, the AFP combat battalions went, attacked the mountain bases of the Hukbong Magpapalaya sa Bayan (HMB) and then proceeded to Manila where the Politburo was seated. The arrests came in October. Because of the attacks on the mountain bases and the round-up of the entire Politburo and related personnel, pessimism started to set in. Suspicion followed. The most trusted guides to the

mountain camps would be distrusted. Tempers were very short. Any infraction of discipline would be subjected to the gravest penalty - the death penalty - even when not commensurate with the infraction. For instance, a commander allowed

dancing in the camp because the units were bored. They were isolated but relatively secure. And then somebody who had just carried a heavy load and was therefore tired was assigned to guard duty. Because of exhaustion he fell asleep. Because of this, because of allegedly endangering the entire camp by sleeping on duty, he was executed.

Under conditions of serious set-backs and panic the absurdest actions are taken.

KW: There have been reports lately in Manila newspapers that the NPA (and/or NDF) may be willing to accommodate, discussions for cooperation with, for example, the Young Officer's Union (YOU). Do you know what the Party or the NPA's position is, in relation to any kind of cooperation?

JMS: As far as I know, there is no officially recognized or publicly admitted contact between the NPA and YOU.

ICW: Do you think it is within the realms of possibility or within its bounds of reason to discuss such relations of cooperation with the YOU?

JMS: From its pronouncements, the YOU is a relatively new phenomenon. The YOU is anti-imperialist although it is still anti-communist. This is similar to the well-known phenomenon in Latin America where members of the armed forces became anti-imperialist after some time. It is entirely possible that they're anti-imperialist and that's better than if they are purely anti-communist. This is a manifestation of the growing split within the armed forces this comes in the train of previous splits. Splits before were between Marcos and Aquino, and they were comfortably stilted under the wings of the US but now this one is against the US. The RAM itself went through a series of disappointments. They thought they already had American approval but there was always intervention by the US to save then President Aquino. Ramos, it turned out, was the one holding the main American line.

KW: Could it be that the Americans find it more advantageous not to hold on to blatant dictators, and instead have Presidents or Prime Ministers who look more like civilians?

JMS: Yes. The US is clever. Neo-colonialism, as a dimension of imperialism, operates in a new trend where client states, or the particular political and military clients operate as best as they can without the US showing its hand. But running parallel to this is the use of neo-colonial economic and financial manipulation of increasing or decreasing military support to create certain effects. Marcos was allowed to have a singular hold on the armed forces, US was responsible for Marcos. Then to drop Marcos, the armed forces had to be split. The split proceeded from the regional split of the Marcos-Ver and Enrile-Ramos camps, and other further splits. Now, I don't think it was something wished for by the US, that there would be a new kind of split. YOU was part of RAM, it's the younger part of RAM.

With regard to the character of presidential leadership, there is a development. Marcos the civilian was a fake, he was a fake guerilla. He was a civilian political manipulator with some invented military background. He was the civilian manipulating the armed forces. Then, you had a lady President. She was the one being manipulated by the military. Now, you have a straight military man, corresponding to the military organization. But of course, the development doesn't happen in a very neat fashion; according to some people, even military men did not vote for Ramos. But there is now a correspondence and a military man would be able to, at first, at least for a certain period keep his military roots. Even if Ramos had quarrels with other factions, the US still expects that among military brethren, there can be reconciliation, especially if they were friends before.

KW: It seems everybody is trying to make peace with Ramos at the moment...

JMS: Yes; Ramos has already issued guidelines for military detainees to be released. But so as not to appear as too one-sided, such guidelines are also extended to political detainees.

But then, does it mean that the regime becomes more and more military? Well, if it does, the system deteriorates more and more. Ramos already represents a new level of deterioration. ❁