

## Critical Juncture For The Left

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ALEXANDER R. MAGNO

Much has happened since *Kasarinlan* came out with its special issue on the crisis of the Filipino Left (Third Quarter, 1992).

In that issue, the journal tried to encapsulate the many currents and perspectives which, when taken together, may serve either to re-invigorate the community of left-wing movements or fracture that community to the point of collective political paralysis. Included in that issue were a scholarly appraisal of the political thought of Jose Ma. Sison, two papers representing the emerging poles of internal debate within the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP-ML), a summing-up of the political practice and direction of the democratic socialist formation Bukluran sa Ikauunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa (BISIG, Alliance for the Advancement of Socialist Thought and Practice), and an independent assessment of the ideological implications of the bloody purges conducted among the ranks of the radical left insurgent movement.

As expected, that special issue was received in radically contrasting ways by various sections of the broad left community. Beyond the intense approval or disdain evoked by that edition among left-wing partisans and activists, the staff of *Kasarinlan* felt that the collection was extremely successful in achieving its primary purpose of contributing an understanding of the contending viewpoints animating the discourse among the various left-wing groups.

Because of the enthusiastic response generated by the prior issue of this journal, the Third World Studies Center decided to temporarily shelve the academic papers lined up for publication in order to follow through the special issue on the left with an issue devoted to the emerging discourse on alternative left politics in the new situation. This new situation has the collapse of existing authoritarian socialist orders in the background and an emerging consensus for democratic political practice at center stage.

*Kasarinlan* finds itself at the crossroads of left-wing dialogue at a critical historical juncture for the Filipino progressive movements. It is

a location enforced by the lack of adequate channels for a blossoming debate. It is a role enforced by context rather than design. It is a task that dictates its own precedence over our preference to moving back to the mainstream of research and scholarship. A journal committed to the documentation of contemporary Filipino society could not possibly shirk from this challenge.

In order to prepare to this issue, the Third World Studies Center organized two well-attended public seminars. The first one, held last November, brought together representatives from the main left-wing political formations to dialogue on the dimensions and possibilities of the current crisis of left-wing politics. The second one featured a discussion paper prepared by a leading Marxist scholar with involved theoreticians from the different political tendencies as discussants.

Through the fourth quarter of 1992, the simmering internal debates within the CPP-NDF-NPA formation broke into the open. an ideological purification campaign precipitated resistance from leading communist cadres demanding that the outstanding issues be resolved through principled debated rather than inner-party suppression. A CPP "plenum" held July last year was denounced as "bogus" by a number of major territorial organs of the Party. Dissident CPP organs demanded greater inner-party democracy and the scheduling of a party congress. Jose Ma. Sison, reported to have been reinstated as CPP Chairman by the July "plenum," responded to internal resistance by publicly discrediting a nube of rival community leaders. In what the media eventually described as "fax attacks," Sison painted his rivals as "renegades" and "enemy agents" out to "decapitate" the revolutionary party.

In the meantime, the Ramos government continued with its policy of attraction. The main leaders of the failed military rebellions of the late eighties emerged from the underground to begin formal negotiations. The government's National Unification Commission (NUC) vigorously pursued exploratory talks with remnant of Muslim secessionist armed groups as well as the CPP-NDF-NAP. There have been a number of positive indicators raising the possibility of a political settlement with the Moro national Liberation Front (MNLF). On the other hand, Sison, from his self-exile in the Netherlands, condemned the NUC as a "psy-war" tactic. Other left-wing groups, while careful to distance themselves from what appears to be an increasingly antagonistic internal struggle in the CPP,

have indicated their preference for democratic modes of political intervention.

This dramatic unfolding forms the context for this edition of *Kasarinlan*.

Included in this edition is a paper prepared by Marxist scholar Francisco Nemenzo, Jr. based on his public seminar. The paper argues for the recovery of the democratic ethos in marxist theory and practice.

The three succeeding papers are from the forum organized last November. These were prepared by: Loretta Rosales, representing the national democratic coalition Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN, New Nationalist Alliance); Ronald Llamas, representing the independent socialist coalition BISIG; and, J. Clark Soriano, representing the Movement for Popular Democracy. Two other participants in the exchange, representatives of the social democratic wing Pandayan para sa Sosyalistang Pilipinas (PANDAYAN, Workshop for a Socialist Philippines) and the Partido Demokratiko Sosyalista ng Pilipinas (PDSP, Democratic Socialist Party of the Philippines), failed to submit written versions of their presentations.

This issue also includes, in the document section, a memorandum emanating from the Executive Committee of the CPP advising cadres how to view the peace negotiations. The document is an indicator of the disposition of the "official" party leadership.

The staff decided to include in this collection excerpts from an interview with Jose Ma. Sison conducted by Australian scholar Kathleen Weekley. For reasons of space, we found it necessary to leave out sections of the interview touching on the early days of the CPP and the reasons for its break from the Lava-led Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP, old Communist Party of the Philippines). We decided to include in full Sison's criticism of "Gorbachevism" because of what it bears on the current intra-party debate.

This second collection, like the first one, intends primarily to inform a broader public. ❁