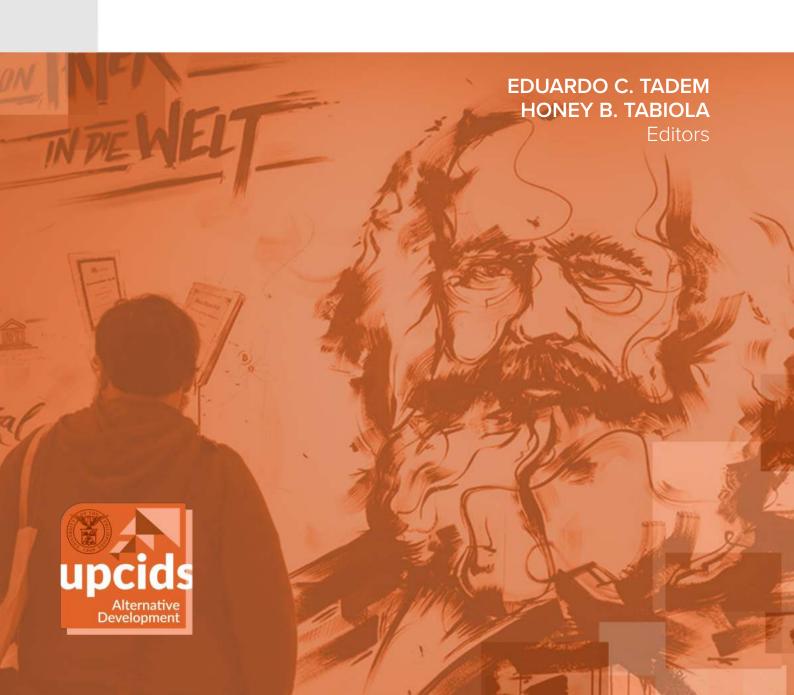
### Thinking With and Beyond Marx

Critical Essays on Politics, History, and Art

Published in Commemoration of the 200th Birth Anniversary of Karl Marx (1818–2018)

**VOLUME 1** 





## Thinking With and Beyond Marx

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**VOLUME 1** 

EDUARDO C. TADEM HONEY B. TABIOLA Editors



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## Marx, the revolutionary thinker whose time has come ... again<sup>1</sup>

**EDUARDO C. TADEM** 

Karl Marx (1818–1883) was the German philosopher whose ideas exercised a profound influence on the world and inspired countless revolutionary movements in the twentieth century. Yet, after the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, Marx was considered irrelevant and was thus consigned to the margins of popular discourse.

Then came the series of economic crises beginning with East Asia in the 1990s and culminating in the United States (US)-induced global economic meltdown in 2008–2009. In the aftermath, there was renewed interest in and discussions of the works of Karl Marx. In 2014, Sean McElwee of *Rolling Stone* magazine noted that Marx accurately predicted that capitalism would regularly experience crisis as a result of "the inherently chaotic, crisis-prone nature of capitalism ... [a] cycle that is still playing out before our eyes." Also noted was Marx's foretelling the phenomenon of "globalization" due to capital's "relentless search for new markets and cheap labor ... and more natural resources" (ibid.).

In a 2016 article in *The New Yorker* magazine, Louis Menand argued that Marx's ideas, though formulated in the later 19th century, "may help us to understand the economic and political inequality of our time" as well as the "bubble of ferment in the advanced economies." In other words, as Menand (2016) put it, "you can put Marx back in the nineteenth century, but you can't keep him there."

The celebrated French economist Thomas Pikkety (2014, 7) had this to say of Marx: "Economists of today would do well to take inspiration from his example."



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> This was delivered as opening remarks during the launch of the Marx Bicentennial Lecture Series on May 5, 2018 at the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS), UP Diliman, Quezon City.

As the second millennium neared its end in 1999, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) conducted a poll among its online readers on who they thought was the greatest thinker in the last 1,000 years. The winner: Karl Marx. Second and third place went to Albert Einstein and Isaac Newton, respectively.

In an article in the British newspaper *The Guardian*, the Greek economist Yanis Varoufakis (2018), who served briefly as Finance Minister in the left-wing Syriza-led government, wrote that Marx "foresaw the predatory and polarized global capitalism of the 21st century... [and together with Engels] also showed us that we have the power to create a better world." Varoufakis (2018) added that "to succeed as Marx and Engels did in accurately describing an era that would arrive a century-and-a-half in the future, as well as to analyse the contradictions and choices we face today, is truly astounding."

In an article in *The New York Times*, philosophy professor Jason Barker (2018) wrote that Marx's "legacy would appear to be alive and well." For Barker (2018), Marx's achievement was "his self-styled materialist thought" which provides "the critical weapons for undermining capitalism's ideological claim to be the only game in town." Thus, Barker (2018) noted, "we are destined to keep citing him and testing his ideas until the kind of society that he struggled to bring about, and that increasing numbers of us now desire, is finally realized."

The conservative *The Economist* (2018), in an article entitled "Rulers of the World: Read Karl Marx!," grudgingly noted that "on his bicentenary Marx's diagnosis of capitalism's flaws is surprisingly relevant" and advised that "liberal reformers should use the 200th anniversary of Marx's birth to reacquaint themselves with the great man—not only to understand the serious faults that he brilliantly identified in the system, but to remind themselves of the disaster that awaits if they fail to confront them."

The Dalai Lama, as quoted in *The Guardian* (Halliwell 2011), stated that:

The economic system of Marxism is founded on moral principles, while capitalism is concerned only with gain and profitability. Marxism is concerned with the distribution of wealth on an equal basis... as well as the fate of those who are underprivileged and in need, and [it] cares about the victims of minority-imposed exploitation. For those reasons, the system appeals to me, and it seems fair.

The Huffington Post reported the following remarks by Pope Francis in response to "allegations that he is a Marxist, after he criticized *unfettered capitalism*" (Raushenbush 2013):

Marxist ideology is wrong. But I have met many Marxists in my life who are good people, so I don't feel offended.... there is nothing in the exhortation that cannot be found in the social doctrine of the church.

In his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela (1995, 103) had this to say about Marxism:

I found myself strongly drawn to the idea of a classless society which, to my mind, was similar to traditional African culture where life was shared and communal. I subscribed to Marx's basic dictum, which has the simplicity and generosity of the Golden Rule: "From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs."

Albert Einstein, in a 1949 essay, *Why Socialism*?, published in *Monthly Review*, explains his political and economic standpoint:

The economic anarchy of capitalist society as it exists today is, in my opinion, the real source of the evil.... This crippling of individuals I consider the worst evil of capitalism. Our whole educational system suffers from this evil.... I am convinced there is only *one* way to eliminate these grave evils, namely, through the establishment of a socialist economy, accompanied by an educational system which would be oriented toward social goals [emphasis in original].

The year 2018 marked the 200th anniversary of Karl Marx's birth. In many parts of the world, commemorative and celebratory events were organized. The Marx 200 International Conference on May 5, 2018, was organized by the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London), "celebrating Marx's work and exploring the significance of Marxism in the world today." The Carnegie Mellon University Humanities Center in Pittsburgh, USA, held a series of lecture forums on Marx which began in January 2018 and lasted until September 2018.

In Madrid, Spain, a major international conference "dedicated to the study of the work of Marx and his influence on science and pragmatic contemporary politics" was held in October 2018. In Hamburg, Germany, the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies (MPIfG) and the Hamburg Institute for Social Research jointly organized a series of livestream lectures on May 3–5, 2018, entitled "The Dynamics of Capitalism: Inquiries to Marx on the Occasion of his 200th birthday," and headlined by Thomas Pikkety's address on "Rising Inequality." In Beijing, the 2nd World Congress on Marxism convened on May 5–6 and was expected to attract 300 participants. Earlier, in February 2018, the University of Texas at Austin organized a "Marx at 200" panel discussion. These were just a few of the events that were organized; there were many more.

At the same time, books and reader-friendly literature on Marx piled up. Exhibitions and walking tours of places where Marx lived and worked were also held. On the lighter side, the municipal government of Trier, Germany (Marx's birthplace), installed Marx-themed pedestrian traffic lights ("German city installs Karl Marx traffic lights," BBC News, 20 March 2018) and erected a 20-foot statue of Marx donated by the Chinese government. Marx souvenir bank notes issued by the city with a face value of zero sold like hot cakes at 3 euros each—with 25,000 sold in a short time. On the whole, according to Meirian Jump, archivist at the Marx Memorial Library, "interest had increased in Marxism in the past couple of years, while numbers attending lectures on Marxism and conducting research ... have risen in recent months" (Quinn 2018).

In the Philippines, several events were organized. The Socialist Circle launched a month-long series of lectures, discussions, and film showings under the banner "Marx200 Festival." On May 5, Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) and affiliate groups held the "Marx 200 Change the World" event at the UP Biology Auditorium, followed by a march to the UP Carillon, whose bells tolled the familiar strains of the Internationale. On May 26, the Congress of Teachers/ Educators for Nationalism and Democracy (CONTEND) held a one-day Marx at 200 Conference in UP Diliman.

Under the auspices of the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies Program on Alternative Development (UP CIDS AltDev) and with the cooperation of The Socialist Circle, a group of academics and social movement activists gathered to plan for a series of events to commemorate Marx at 200. Fifty individuals expressed interest in participating in the project, with 40 of them submitting their lecture topics. Coming from academe or from independent research institutes, these social movement activists covered the entire range of the country's current Left spectrum, as well as students of Marxism. The objective of the project was to situate the works of Marx and Marxist theory and practice within the context of the Philippine political, economic, social, cultural, and scientific situation. The lecture forums will seek to:

- Interrogate the diverse intellectual, political, and historical legacies of Marx and Marxism;
- Revisit Marxist theory and practice in light of changing social, political, and economic contexts, such as technological development, the rise of social media, and the erosion of democracy across countries;
- Assess the complex relationship of Marxism with other intellectual currents and disciplines, from gender, science, and biopolitics to literature, historiography, and political practice;
- Determine how and to what extent Marxist theory and practice can inform, impede, and enrich questions of political and economic praxis.

Let me end by acknowledging that, historically, the pioneering institutional attempts at introducing Marx to the community started in the early 1980s, with the UP Third World Studies Center launching the Karl Marx Centennial Lecture Series that produced three volumes—in 1984, 1988, and 2010—with an additional volume, a compilation from Volumes One and Two, also in 2010.

Those who contributed to these volumes were: Randolf S. David, Francisco "Dodong" Nemenzo, Armando "Badi" Malay, Jr., Mario Bolasco, Cynthia Banzon-Bautista, Ricardo Ferrer, Patricio N. Abinales, Alexander Magno, Teresa S. Encarnacion Tadem, Laura L. Samson, Alice Guillermo, Aurora Roxas-Lim, Ramon "Bomen" Guillermo, Kathleen Weekley, Caroline S. Hau, Eduardo C. Tadem, Aida F. Santos, Aileen S.P. Baviera, Joseph Scalice, Ed de la Torre, and Rene Nachura.

Lastly, a message from UP Vice President for Academic Affairs Maria Cynthia Rose Banzon-Bautista, who sent an email from Kuala Lumpur saying: "I am with you in spirit. I'm proud that you guys are taking this on."

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# Universal

# Karl Marx: An Appreciation and Reflection on His Contribution to Development Theory<sup>1</sup>

**ROLAND G. SIMBULAN** 



#### **Abstract**

This lecture is a survey of Karl Marx's writings, examining not only their depth but also how extensively he contributed to economic, political, social, and philosophical thought, topics which will be dealt with by other speakers in the lecture series. How did Marx contribute to development theory, and is his theory also a liberating theory that rejects the idea that any one oppression is primary while all others are secondary? Has Marxism evolved new oppressions, or are these deviations from his writings? How has Marxism developed into an intellectual tool, with visionary aims and practical strategies, and providing a framework for understanding the complex, integrated character of modern oppressions?

Marxism as a revolutionary theory and practice is a relevant topic to discuss this year (2018) as we celebrate the bicentennial or 200th birth year of one of the greatest intellectuals and philosophers who dreamt of a better world.

It is truly fitting that we commemorate, through this lecture, our resolve to create a socialist society worthy of the working people.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Inaugural keynote address at the opening of the Marx Bicentennial Lecture Series (organized by the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) Program on Alternative Development and the Socialist Circle) on May 5, 2018 at the UP CIDS, UP Diliman, Quezon City.

My life has had a personal affinity with and attachment to Karl Marx. His initials, "KM," were also the initials of *Kabataang Makabayan*, an organization of the Filipino youth and students who started my organized political activism in the early 1970s. In 1987, during the Cold War, after speaking at a Conference of the European Nuclear Disarmament in a member country of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), I took the effort to visit Marx's birthplace in the city of Trier, then a part of East Germany, or the German Democratic Republic. In 1994, I had the opportunity to visit, in London, the Reading Room (now an Exhibition Room) of the British Museum Library, where Marx, using British government reports and official records, researched and painstakingly drafted for years, in his written notebooks, his book *Das Kapital*. In the limited time I had back then, rather than see Buckingham Palace, I decided it was more important to visit Marx's final resting place, where members of his family are likewise buried, at Highgate Cemetery, located in the suburbs outside London. I am not embarrassed to tell you that I collected a few pebble stones around Marx's grave, and gave them away as *pasalubongs* to some comrades in the Philippines.

Last May 4, 2018, during the opening of the 2nd World Congress on Marxism organized by Peking University's School of Marxism, Xi Jinping, head of the largest Communist Party in the world, with approximately 89 million Party members, and president of the country with the largest population on earth, hailed Karl Marx as "the greatest thinker of Modern Times" and called on the 300 Marxist researchers and academics from all over the world who attended the World Congress on Marxism "to continuously improve the ability to use Marxism to analyze and solve practical problems." In other words, to apply and engage in the creative application of Marxism.

In his time, Marx was a great intellectual giant who struck fear in the hearts of oppressors and shook the core foundations of capitalist oppression. Today, his work as a philosopher, social activist, historian, and revolutionary is highly respected not only by academics. On the eve of the 21st century millennium, October 1, 1999, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) conducted a global survey on the world's greatest thinkers. Karl Marx was voted "The Greatest Thinker of the Millennium" in the BBC global survey. Marx bested (in this order) Albert Einstein, Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, Thomas Aquinas, Stephen Hawking, Immanuel Kant, Rene Descartes, and Friedrich Nietzsche as the "greatest thinker of the millennium." Then again, in October 2005, in another global survey conducted by the BBC, a sample of 30,000 scholars and researchers voted him "The Greatest Philosopher of all Time," ahead of David Hume, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Friedrich Nietzsche, Plato, Immanuel Kant, St. Thomas Aquinas, Socrates, and Aristotle. After the U.S. economic fallout in 2008, Marx has become even more popular, with the *New York Times* noting in an article that "countless books have appeared, from scholarly works to popular biographies, broadly endorsing Marx's reading of capitalism, and Marx's enduring relevance to our neoliberal age." Is this surprising when, according to Oxfam, 82 percent of global wealth generated in 2017 went to the world's richest one percent?

Ironically, Marx was first introduced to me at the Ateneo de Manila High School by a rabidly anti-Marxist, anti-communist Jesuit teacher in English Literature. He always warned us, his students, of "the poison of Communism" bred by a certain German called Karl Marx. We then concocted a joke among ourselves that if you were a communist, you would definitely fail in the teacher's class, not because you did not study hard enough, *but because you got bad Marx*. Frankly, I was so curious about why our Jesuit teacher spoke so un-Christianly about Marx that I began to read Marx's writings, starting with *The Communist Manifesto*. I followed this up with reading Friedrich Engels' *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, which for me is still the best introduction to Marxism for a beginner.

I then asked myself, how can this man Marx deserve all this venom from this Jesuit priest if he encouraged the working class and oppressed peoples to achieve their own liberation through collective action? And then to establish a new state ruled not by a few oligarchs, but on behalf of workers and peasants? Further reading of his works made me understand why he is one of the privileged few's

most hated and reviled figures in history, because of his economic theory that seeks to eliminate class oppression. How could Marx be a "poison" when he believes that "There must be something rotten in the very core of a social system which increases its wealth without diminishing its misery."

The story about my Jesuit teacher did not end there. Soon, his nightmare became a material force when "KM" made its appearance on the Ateneo high school campus—in the form of the first chapter of the *Kabataang Makabayan* at Loyola Heights.

Marx, I was soon to discover, inspired threads of social and political movements seeking an end to capitalist exploitation and oppression. Marxism also inspired socialist revolutions and socialist states, and his writings guided leaders of Marxist-led national liberation movements throughout the 20th century and into the 21st.

Likewise, his writings changed modern economic and political thinking. Marxism is very much alive among both practicing and even armchair revolutionaries, socialists and people around the world. Social movements perpetuate his theoretical foundations to verify and advance his doctrine in their revolutionary practice.

Karl Marx, whom we honor this year, was a brilliant and passionate philosopher and revolutionary during his time, and his family endured both physical and mental sacrifices in being threatened and hounded by the Prussian, Belgian, and French authorities. Even later, while in exile in England, one of Prussia's top police spies and undercover agents was sent to monitor his activities there. This Prussian spy's reports to his superiors impressed one with his unintentional admiration of Marx. Here's an excerpt from the spy's 174-page dossier on Marx:

The creative and active spirit, the real soul of the party is Marx; therefore I want to acquaint you with his personality. At first glance one sees in him a man of genius and energy; his intellectual superiority exerts irresistible power on his surroundings. He leads a gypsy experience... often he loafs all day long, but if he has work to do, he works day and night tirelessly. He does not have a fixed time for sleeping and staying up; very often he stays up all night, and at noon he lies down on the sofa fully dressed and sleeps until evening... Marx lives in one of the worst, and thus cheapest, quarters in London (Padover 1980, 105).

The spy concluded that once accustomed to the milieu, a person finds Marx's conversation so interesting and original that he longs for more. "This," the spy concluded in his report, after giving a very vivid description of the Marx domicile, "is a faithful picture of the family life of the communist chief Marx."

The leader of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, in his short biography of Karl Marx, described Marx as a human being who dedicated his life, genius, and works "to the struggle, not only for land and freedom, but also against all exploitation of man by man, the struggle against the poverty of the masses of the people, against the rule of Capital.... Marx's teachings arose as a direct and immediate continuation of teachings of the greatest representatives of philosophy, political economy and socialism" (Lenin 1974, 49).

Marx's philosophy, according to Lenin, is materialism, and he deepened and developed materialism by means of the conception of dialectics. He carried materialism to its conclusion in historical materialism, by wedding it to the understanding of human society, showing that the economic order of society is the basis on which the whole political and ideological superstructure of society arises.

Lenin wrote that Marx then studied the economic order of modern capitalist society. The doctrine of surplus value is the cornerstone of his economic theory. He traced the development of capitalism

from the first germs of commodity economy and simple exchange to its highest forms, to large-scale production, showing that the capitalist system creates the great power of combined labor. Finally, Marx elaborated the doctrine of the class struggle, showing that the working class was the social force which was capable of becoming the creator of a new social system.

Since his death on March 14, 1883, at the age of 65, Marx and his writings have inspired committed leaders and social movement activists in struggles against fascism, dictatorships, imperialism and neocolonialism, inequality, capitalism and the imperialist wars that it creates.

The teacher, as they say, is measured by his students. In the 20th century, the students who read Marx's writings included Vladimir Lenin, Antonio Gramsci, Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, Mao Zedong of China, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara of Cuba, Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap of Vietnam, Kim Il Sung of North Korea, Joe Slovo of South Africa, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Patrice Lumumba of Zaire, Amilcar Cabral of Guinea-Bissau, Malcolm X of the U.S., and Salvador Allende of Chile. These are just some of the socialist leaders who headed revolutionary movements and Marxist parties in their respective countries. Locally, Marx's students included Crisanto Evangelista, Pedro Abad Santos, and Jose Ma. Sison. All of these were Marxists not just in theory but by their deeds, by the life-and-death struggles they led. Yet, even some scientists like Albert Einstein and artists like Pablo Picasso considered themselves Marxists. Two hundred years after his birth, Marx's popularity persists today, so that even the Dalai Lama, as reported by *Newsweek* magazine, in a speech before the students and faculty of Mumbai University on February 18, 2011, proclaimed himself a Marxist!

Marxism-Leninism today, enriched by the works of Mao Zedong and others, is the scientific summing up of the experience of the international struggle against exploitation and oppression. It provides the answer to many of the fundamental questions of our epoch, as well as a guide to action to liberate the working class and the oppressed peoples. Marx and Engels, and the revolutionary leaders and educators who followed them, wrote on a wide variety of subjects—dealing with economic and political problems, as well as questions of philosophy, military affairs, culture, natural science, history and the international situation, to mention just a few. They established and enriched revolutionary theory on a solid, scientific basis.

Marx, along with Engels, was the founder of scientific socialism. His teachings showed that socialism was not the invention of dreamers but the inevitable outcome of the development of modern capitalist society. He showed that capitalism was creating its own gravedigger in the person of the proletariat, the working class. Only the class struggle of the proletariat and its victory over the bourgeoisie, the capitalists, would rid humanity of exploitation of man by man. Marx and Engels taught the working class to be conscious of its own strength, of its own class interests, and to unite in a determined struggle against the capitalist class. Together, they discovered the laws of development of capitalist society, and proved scientifically that the development of the class struggle must inevitably lead to the fall of capitalism, towards the victory of the working class.

#### Significant writings

Marx's most significant writings are the following:

The Communist Manifesto, whose title was originally The Manifesto of the Communist Party (written jointly by Marx and Engels in 1848), is regarded as the call to action and provides the framework of scientific socialism. It contains the first and most complete summarized statement of the theoretical principles of Marxism and of the strategy and tactics of Communism. The manifesto ended with Marx's now famous call to arms: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!"

The Manifesto was an epoch-making document. Up to that time, socialists had been putting forward utopian schemes (imaginary projects for an ideal society) or were engaging in secret conspiracies, while the rising working class movement lacked a revolutionary theory. The manifesto signified the union of scientific socialism with the mass working-class movement.

The fundamental ideas of the Manifesto may be summed up under five main headings:

- (1) The Theory of the Class Struggle. The history of all societies since the breakup of the primitive communes has been the history of class struggles.
  - In capitalist society, a stage has been reached when the victory of the exploited class, the proletariat, over the ruling exploiting class, the bourgeoisie, will once and for all emancipate society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinctions, and class struggles. The conception of the working class struggle set forth in the Manifesto follows Marx's materialist conception of history.
- (2) The Development of Capitalist Society. Capitalism itself developed out of feudalism, and the capitalist class is itself the product of a long course of development, of a series of revolutions in the mode of production and exchange.
  - The capitalist class has conquered exclusive political sway in the modern parliamentary state. In its development, it has played a most revolutionary role. It has brought into being the great new productive forces of modern industry. But in creating modern industry, it has created its own gravediggers, the proletariat.
- (3) *The Development of the Proletariat.* The growth of the proletariat as a class is accompanied by the growth of its organization, both economic and political.
  - At first, the proletariat is incoherent and scattered. It is originally dragged into the political arena by the bourgeoisie, which must appeal to the proletariat to help fight the remnants of feudalism. The Manifesto deals with the stages of political development through which the proletariat becomes organized into a class, and consequently into a political party, combined against the bourgeoisie.
  - While the proletariat fights against all relics of feudalism and for the fullest extension of democracy, it leads the struggle for socialism against the capitalists, a struggle which must terminate in the proletariat conquering power and becoming itself the ruling class.
- (4) From Socialism to a Classless Society. With power in its hands, the proletariat makes drastic inroads into the power of the capitalists and into capitalist property relations.
  - From the rule of the proletariat will come classless society, in which will arise new people, new human relations—"an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."
- (5) The Aims of the Communist Party. The Manifesto contains a trenchant defense of the aims of Communism, and it exposes various brands of "socialism" as expressions, not of the working-class standpoint, but of the reactionary standpoints of other classes—of the decaying aristocracy, the petty bourgeoisie, or the bourgeoisie itself. The ideas of Communism, on the other hand, are not inventions of any would-be reformers, but spring from the existing class struggle.

Communists have no interests apart from those of the working class as a whole. Their policy is to fight for the immediate aims of the class, to form an alliance with every movement opposed to the existing social order, and in the movement of the present always to take care of the future, striving to unite the class for the overthrow of capitalist class rule and for the conquest of power.

The German Ideology, by Marx and Engels, is a polemical book in form and style, restating his theory of history, the "materialist conception of history," and presenting its basic concepts. In this work, Marx registered his break with the "Young Hegelian" school to which Marx and Engels formerly belonged, as they adopted the standpoint of historical materialism. Marx wrote that, carrying on social production, men institute social relations and forms of property. On this basis are produced definite modes of consciousness. In every epoch the ruling ideas are the ideas of the ruling class, and these are challenged by the new revolutionary ideas of the rising revolutionary class.

The Poverty of Philosophy was Marx's polemical critique of the economic and philosophical arguments of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's work titled The Philosophy of Poverty. In Marx's book, the ideas of historical materialism and scientific socialism are sharply formulated for the first time. Marx deals with the economic nature of the capitalist exploitation of the worker (at the time the book was published, however, Marx had not yet formulated the distinction between labor and labor power) and shows that economic relations are historically constituted and are not expressions of "eternal economic categories," and formulates the doctrine of the class struggle. Dealing with the role of the trade union struggle and of the strike movement, Marx shows that scientific socialism must be united with the mass working-class movement.

Critique of the Gotha Programme dealt with fundamental questions of the program of the workingclass party. It consists of a series of comments on points contained in the draft programme prepared for a unity conference of the German working-class movement held at Gotha in 1875. Marx's comments were suppressed by the opportunist leadership of the German Social Democratic Party, and were subsequently published by Engels in 1891, against the wishes of the leadership.

The intention of the draft programme—the "Gotha Programme"—was to provide a platform behind which the whole German working-class movement could unite. But for the sake of "unity," it made a number of concessions on points of principle to the followers of the splinter group led by Ferdinand Lassalle.

What are the principal points clarified in Marx's critique?

He showed that the capitalist mode of production has created the material conditions for advancing to socialism, and deals with the way in which the social product will be distributed in socialist society.

Socialism is only the first phase of communism, and is guided by the principle "From each according to his ability, to each according to his labor." It will lead to full communist society, the principle of which is "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need."

Marx attacked the reformist slogan of "a fair distribution of the products of labor" and exposes the theoretical confusion behind this slogan. For the distribution of the products of labor must always be a consequence of the mode of production. He likewise attacked the reformist slogan of "state aid under democratic control," and showed that the aim of the working class must be "to revolutionize the present conditions of production."

He attacked the conception that, relatively to the working class, all other classes are only one reactionary mass. It is necessary to examine concretely the actual position of each class at each stage of history, and not lump them all together as "reactionary." Thus, the workers may fight together with

sections of the capitalists against feudal survivals, together with the lower middle class, for certain democratic demands and so on.

He affirmed the international character of the working-class struggle in opposition to the narrowly national aims of the Gotha Programme.

He refuted the conception of an "iron law of wages," according to which the worker's real wages can never be raised above a minimum subsistence level.

Marx attacked the reformist slogan of a "free state" and showed that "between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. There corresponds to this also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat."

The Civil War in France is Marx's history of the short-lived Paris Commune, an important event in working-class history, when the working people led an uprising and took control of Paris, establishing a workers' government.

Three published works by Marx—Grundrisse, The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, and A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy—were outlines of chapters of a future work, Capital, and contained in advance the main theoretical themes of Capital from a philosophical perspective, thus bridging Marx's economic ideas and philosophical thinking. They served as Marx's indictment of capitalism, focusing on the alienation of labor under capitalist conditions of private ownership of the means of production.

Theories of Surplus Value is taken from manuscripts which Marx left for the last volume of Capital. Engels planned to edit and publish them as Volume 4 of Capital, but Engels did not live long enough to see them published, a task which Karl Kautsky took upon himself. Theories of Surplus Value consists of a series of studies of economists who preceded Marx, including Adam Smith and David Ricardo. Marx's reaffirmation of his own analysis of surplus value came in the form of a critique of the errors of the Physiocrats, the inconsistencies of Adam Smith in confusing "unpaid labor" and "the value of labor." Marx also critiqued David Ricardo's works because Ricardo failed to distinguish surplus value from profit, and mixed up price of production with value.

#### Political economy

*Capital* (*Das Kapital* in German) is really Marx's major work. Its original subtitle was *A Critical Analysis* of *Capitalist Production*.

In its three volumes, though they may be hard to comprehend because of their technical style, *Capital* is considered one of the most influential books ever written. A work of theory, *Capital* was intended to provide the basis for a "dialectical materialist" analysis of a capitalist economy (Brewer 1984).

From its historical materialist standpoint, Marxism investigates the laws of development of capitalist society, and discovers in the production of surplus value the key to understanding the capitalist economic system.

Marxism thus exposes the essential nature of the exploitation of the working class by the capitalist class, and by so doing it arms the working class with an economic theory which enables us to understand the laws of development of capitalism, to see where capitalism comes from and where it is leading, to realize the nature of the class struggle of the working class against the capitalist class, and the historic mission of the working class to take power, expropriate the capitalists, and build socialism.

To understand *Capital*, one must understand the meaning of Marx's fundamental discovery of surplus value, which he introduced in *The Communist Manifesto*. In addition, there are two pamphlets by Marx in which the basic idea of surplus value is explained in popular form: "Wages, Price and Profit" and "Wage-Labour and Capital."

To study *Capital* is a major undertaking. Marx himself, in a letter to the editor of the first French translation, warned about the difficulties: "Science has no royal road, and only those who are not afraid of tiring themselves by climbing its steep pathways have a chance of attaining the clear light of its summits."

For those who did not have the time to read right through the first volume of *Capital*, however, Marx himself gave some excellent advice in a letter to Dr. Ludwig Kugelmann (November 30, 1867). His advice was to read the chapters on "The Working Day," "Co-operation," "The Division of Labour and Manufacture," "Machinery," and finally, "Primitive Accumulation." The reading of the short introductory works mentioned above can, if necessary, be followed not at once by reading the whole of *Capital*, but by reading these particular chapters.

But for a person who wishes to master the content and method of *Capital*, it is necessary to read right through from the beginning, despite the difficulty of the early chapters. Only thus can one grasp the logical and scientific development of Marx's exposition, which on the basis of the analysis of commodity production and then on the formation of capital and surplus value goes on to reveal the economic law of motion of capitalist society (Cornforth 1954).

There are three volumes of *Capital*, and it is the first volume which is most essential. Engels pointed out in a letter to Victor Adler (March 16, 1895) that the most important chapters in Volume 2 are Chapters 1, 4, 7, 8, and 9; and in Volume 3, Chapters 1, 4, 8, 9, 13–27, 37, 38, and 44–47.

Marx originally intended to publish a fourth volume, parts of which have been published in English under the title *Theories of Surplus Value*. In it will be found a very useful exposition of the basic economic ideas of Marxism. Here also will be found Marx's fullest treatment of the nature of the cyclical economic crisis of capitalism.

The aim of Marx's *Capital* is "to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society." Engels wrote in reviewing *Capital*: "As long as there are capitalists and workers on earth, no book has appeared which is of as much importance for the workers. The relation between capital and labor, the hinge on which our entire present system of society turns, is here treated scientifically for the first time."

In *Capital* are embodied and worked out Marx's two great discoveries—the laws of development of human society (historical materialism) and surplus value, which is the key to the special law of motion governing the capitalist mode of production. By means of these discoveries, Marx in *Capital* shows the origins of capitalism, its development, and how on that basis arise and develop the institutions and ideas of capitalist society.

Marx exposes the innermost nature of the exploitation of the working class by the capitalist class, of the class struggle in capitalist society, and consequently the historical mission of the working class, which is to take power, to expropriate the capitalists, and to build socialism.

*Capital* is a vast work, uncompleted by Marx at the time of his death. He completed and finished only the first volume, which was published in 1867. After Marx's death, Engels devoted himself to the editing of the second and third volumes, which appeared in 1885 and 1894 respectively (Cornforth 1954; Villegas 2003).

There are three other significant writings by Marx: *The Class Struggles in France 1848–50*; *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*; and *The Civil War in France*. These works exposed the nature

of the bourgeois state, as the organ of capitalist class rule. The only hope, Marx said, was for workers to win the masses of peasants as allies.

If we survey the depth of Marx's contributions to economic, political, social, and philosophical thought, we will realize how extensive and comprehensive their coverage is (Padover 1978).

Covered by forthcoming lectures in various countries of the world to commemorate his bicentennial are Marx's impact and influence on literature, feminism and gender, institutional economics, globalization, media and social media, technology, democracy and authoritarianism, human rights, modes of production, philosophy and psychology, community development, elections, history, federalism, social movements, mathematics, nation and class structures, environment, agrarian transformations, technocracy, the social sciences, etc. Indeed, Marx's contribution to knowledge and the social sciences is awesome (Shaw 1975). Even covered by some of the lectures is perhaps an analysis of Marx's writings on Guerrilla Warfare—yes.

Marx did write about Guerrilla Warfare in Spain and the Lessons of the Urban Uprising in the Paris Commune!

#### The philosophy of Marxism

The philosophy of Marxism is dialectical materialism, and its application to the study of society is historical materialism.

Dialectical materialism holds that we cannot understand things rightly unless we understand how they are connected together and how they are developing and changing. For nothing exists unconnected with other things; nor is there anything fixed and changeless, but everything is in continual change and motion.

Dialectical materialism, according to Marx, teaches us to pay attention to the opposite, conflicting tendencies which arise throughout nature and society, whose struggle results in change and development. In all development, gradual processes of growth (quantitative changes) lead to the emergence of something new, of a new stage of development (qualitative changes).

Dialectical materialism holds that the cause of all the motion and change in the world does not lie in any "higher" spiritual reality, but in the material world itself. For the world is by its very nature material. Matter is primary, and spirit-mind, thought, etc., are secondary.

Applying these ideas to human society, historical materialism is the discovery that the determining force of all social development is always to be found in the material life of society, i.e., in the mode of production, and that this provides the basis for the development of men's ideas and political institutions. From the development of the mode of production arises the class struggle, and the class struggle is the driving force of history. In this development, all ideas and institutions play either a reactionary or a revolutionary role—either helping to maintain and defend the old system of society, or mobilizing people to struggle against the old system.

Marxist scholarship inevitably brings with it critical thought. Over the past 20th century, the theory and practice of Marxism have brought about issues that have caused the advance and retreat of social struggles. These issues have raised fundamental questions like:

(1) How did Marx contribute to development theory, and is his theory also a liberating theory that rejects the idea that any one oppression is primary while all others are secondary? Class relations often ignore racial and sexual dynamics. If so, must we go beyond Marxism to understand the economy and the rest of society, just as class concepts alone cannot adequately

explain factory life? Also, in the 20th-century experience, many forms of oppressions from the Right and the Left have become variants of state-based authoritarianism.

- (2) Has Marxism evolved new oppressions (Stalin, Pol Pot, Nicolae Ceausescu, etc.) or are these deviations from his writings? How can solidarity and political diversity (like cultural diversity) thrive in the attempt to politically homogenize social and political movements? Can we eliminate the scourge of political and ideological intolerance? Often, the notion of the "correct line" or "common good" becomes an essential tool for legitimizing authoritarian rule.
- (3) How does Marxism explain one of the strongest and largest challenges and attacks on Capitalism and Imperialism in Modern Times—in the form of radical Islamic movements and Islamic States?
- (4) How has Marxism developed into an intellectual tool, with visionary aims and practical strategies, in providing a framework for understanding the complex, integrated character of modern oppressions, many of which are non-economic in nature?

In Marx's time, the defeat of the 1848 Revolutions in Europe, the dissolution of the Communist League, and the destruction of the Paris Commune were not occasions for Marx and Engels to forsake revolutionary struggle. Theirs was the long view, for they were not what we call "summer warriors." Defeats and setbacks, for Marx, had to be studied and analyzed to prepare a path for renewed struggle.

I hope that the scheduled forthcoming Marx Bicentennial Lectures and discussions on the various specialized topics can elaborate on these emergent questions and issues of our times. This Marx Bicentennial Conference is a good and important time to reflect on these issues for all those of us who concern ourselves with social change and with formulating a vision of a liberated future.

#### Marx's contribution to development theory

Marx has provided an elaborate alternative economic form and system to capitalism, suited to organizing production, consumption and allocation of resources where surplus value (new wealth created) is managed for the public good through basic services, etc. But are these alternative forms consistent with humanist goals, where workers and consumers are allowed to self-manage their own economic activities instead of centralized decision-making under an authoritarian socialist state? Is participatory democracy in decision-making not better to strengthen solidarity?

#### Marx's continuing relevance to Philippine social movements

It was through the founders and leaders of the Philippine labor movement led by Isabelo de los Reyes and Lope K. Santos that Marx was introduced to the Philippines. Economic issues as well as the issue of independence became the prominent organizing calls of an anti-imperialist labor movement (Richardson 2011).

In the Philippines, the U.S. Empire and its subservient state, which has failed to serve anything but elite and foreign interests, has long subjected non-elite and counter-elite social movements led by Marxists since the 1920s and 1930s, up to the present, to violent attacks, harassments, and repression. In my U.P. Centennial Essay, "The Future of the Philippine Left" (2008, 10), I wrote: "even with the sheer strength of the magnitude of their organizations, the organized power of the Left especially of farmers and workers, are most vulnerable to the violence of the coercive forces of the Philippine state and the oligarchy's private armies trying to decimate these organizations. The revolutionary means to defend unarmed peoples organizations will still figure prominently in deterring the violence of private,

armies, goons, paramilitary units and the armed forces of the state. But the emphasis has always been in practice, on the assertion that this is largely a political struggle—not a military one—and the objective is to empower the people."

The social movement in the Philippines has survived and withstood internal conflicts, CIA-backed U.S. counterinsurgency campaigns whose timetables are always reset, martial law, and counter-terror OPLANS, and has survived. Despite nitpicking by some on the geriatric problems of the Left's leaders and their unwavering commitment, social activists and revolutionaries in the Philippines are still engaged in a life-and-death struggle as they continue to face the challenge of an oligarchy and a state that consider even the legal empowerment of the people as a threat to national security and as acts of terrorism.

To the disenfranchised masses, the Philippine Left—plural and dynamic as it is now—is still the only hope for their social liberation that provides an alternative development program. The rabidness of state-sponsored propaganda against the Left is reinforced by a variety of authors that include disenchanted activists who have made academic or journalistic careers out of being professional hit men against the Left and social movements. Notwithstanding so-called experts on the Philippine Left who nitpick on what they call the geriatric problems and even the organized sex practices of the mainstream Philippine Left, the struggle continues, with the Left empowering and organizing the masses in a sustained manner.

Fortunately, many of us still maintain our unshaken belief in the collective power of the people and constructively help build their organized peoples power. Just as we have outlived the various counterinsurgency OPLANS, we will outlive these calumnies by reactionaries, just as Marx's works have outlived many of the reactionary apologists who, during his time, vilified him and his writings. Marx remains a powerful guide to the Left vision, strategy, and solidarity. We can only succeed if we work together. We have worked many times together to succeed in some of our most successful tactical struggles—against the U.S.-backed Marcos dictatorship, against the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant, and against the U.S. military bases in 1991.

I should not fail to mention that, in the *Biographical Dictionary of Marxism*, edited by Robert A. Gorman (London: Mansell, Publishing Ltd., 1986), one of the most vilified Marxists (by reactionaries) in the country, Mr. Jose Ma. Sison, founding Chair of the re-established Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), and leader of perhaps the most resilient armed revolutionary force in the world, is included and recognized as "one of the outstanding 200 Marxist theoreticians and revolutionary leaders since 1848."

Marx did not live to see the global impact of his writings. He practiced his own famous quotation, because not only did he interpret the world, he helped change it. He was a frontline fighter in his time, participating in arousing, organizing, and advancing the working class movement in different parts of Europe. Marx showed that the crisis in the social sciences and philosophy are not simply one of intellectual direction. The crisis of the social sciences is rooted in the industrial, educational, and ideological systems of capitalist society. And the solutions are not just theoretical. Marx correctly pointed out that theory must be related to practice, within academic institutions, as well as in the wider class struggle in society.

The earlier versions of *Das Kapital* in German and French are said to have sold badly at first. But the translation of *Das Kapital* in Russian was a hit and soon became the bible of Lenin's Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Even the first official English translation in 1887 sold badly, but a pirated English-language edition which appeared in New York in 1890 was an immediate bestseller even among Wall Street bankers because the NY publisher wisely circulated a flier claiming that the book, *Capital*, was a guide on "how to accumulate capital." It was only after Marx passed away that his works really shook the world by storm through social upheavals in the most populated countries of the world. Soviet Russia and Red China reprinted countless editions of his writings (Wheen 2002).

Key leaders of national liberation movements fighting for independence against European colonialists and later against Japanese imperialists were schooled in Marxism. These Marxist leaders built from scratch and unified all forces to fight national and class oppression.

Marx left us a legacy which will continue to guide our struggles to build a better life for all. Marxism is not a dogmatic be-all to society's problems. But it can be a valuable guide to be enriched with our own revolutionary practice (praxis).

The way Marx died in exile in England, stateless and almost penniless, reminded me of the socialist couple from the Philippines whom I met and had tea with, in 1994—the American William "Bill" Pomeroy and his Filipina wife Celia Pomeroy. This is where Marx's life in England also intersects with the story of the Pomeroys and the Philippines. The Pomeroy couple who were part of the PKP-led Huk rebellion, after being arrested and imprisoned for almost a decade, were also deported and forced into exile in England because the U.S. government would not allow Celia, a Filipina PKP leader, to enter the United States. But they were Marxists up to the very end, doing international solidarity work and helping organize migrant and women's organizations. When Marx died, he left behind 250 British pounds—the assessed value of his furniture and books. The Pomeroy couple, who passed away in 2009, also left behind their few furniture and books, worth less than 300 pounds. But up to the very end, their ideals and spirit were true to the socialist cause.

Marx himself reflected on his own life:

If we have chosen the position in life in which we can most of all work for mankind, no burdens can bow us down, because they are sacrifices for the benefit of all; then we shall experience no petty, limited, selfish joy, but on our happiness will belong to millions, our deeds will live on quietly but perpetually at work, and over our ashes will be shed the hot tears of noble people (Gabriel 2011, 145).

Engels, Marx's best friend, perhaps gave the most moving tribute to his long-time comrade:

Karl Marx was one of those outstanding men few of whom are produced in any century. Charles Darwin discovered the laws of evolution of organic nature on our planet. Marx is the discoverer of the fundamental law that determines the course and development of human history.... The struggle for the emancipation of the wage-earning class from the fetters of the modern capitalist system of exploitation was his true mission (cited in Lenin, 1974, 57)

Surveying Marx's theoretical work, Engels singled out as his two most important discoveries: (1) the materialist conception of history; and (2) the final elucidation of the relation between capital and labor, through the discovery of the nature of surplus value.

According to Engels, "Marx will live on through the centuries, and so will his work." And that is why we are all here to honor Marx 200 years hence, to transform, like Marx, our knowledge in the fields that we have mastered as scholars and academicians, and to transform this into a force for social change, a revolutionary force.

Maraming salamat, at mabuhay ang sosyalismo sa Pilipinas!



#### **Open Forum**

The Open Forum featured **Prof. Roland Simbulan** and **Dr. Herbert Docena**, who also delivered another lecture as part of the launching of the lecture series. The forum was moderated by **Dr. Teresita Maceda**, Professor Emeritus, Department of Filipino and Philippine Literature, University of the Philippines Diliman.

Yuen Abana (Partido Manggagawa) pointed out that one of the cardinal points of Marxism is class struggle. She expressed her discomfort with one assumption that seems latent in Dr. Docena's lecture, which is the idea that class struggle has not only failed but is also wrong. For Abana, despite the tremendous data, graphics, and statistics, Docena's lecture failed to highlight other factors (e.g., the role of political parties) which possibly contributed to the weakening of the labor movement. While it is true that the labor movement has suffered from setbacks, Abana believes it showed dynamism in 1986, given the 500 strikes it conducted despite fascism enveloping the country. During EDSA, the workers, especially the women, started union organizing and confronted problems that were beyond the factory, such as the analysis of a broken political system and the exposing of the role of capitalists in maneuvering labor policies to continually oppress the workers.

**Dr. Docena** clarified that he does not belittle or deny the importance of class struggle. He is not saying that class struggle is wrong or that Marx was wrong about the class struggle. On the contrary, Dr. Docena believes in it; he supports it; and he wants it to succeed. His main concern is the puzzle that during the Marcos dictatorship, there were 500 strikes, but at present, there is none. In other words, his main concern is examining the present social conditions to explain what is currently happening. For him, it is not because the workers are not anymore courageous or not anymore radical. One of his main questions was: Why were the conditions changed which possibly hinder the strengthening of the class struggle?

**Mike Alunan (columnist)** asked how to analyze the changing concrete conditions of the workers using Marxist ideas, principles, and philosophies. He said that one of the key insights of Marxism is the importance of the "concrete analysis of concrete conditions." He expressed his belief that "things have totally changed from his [Marx's] time." He asked whether the changing concrete conditions are

facilitated and generated by a total shift in the mode of production, which was a key concept of Marx. As shown in the speakers' presentations, the growth that is taking place in the Philippines is more in the financial rather than in the "physical economy," which has been collapsing. As shown in the data, agriculture and industry have been declining while services are now close to 60 percent of our gross domestic product (GDP). This has important implications, as it is in the realm of production where the alienation of the worker is experienced. With today's scenario, the worker seems dislocated from the sphere of production, as growth is concentrated in the services sector—such as telecom, transport, trade, retail, banking, security, among others—a sector that has questionable contribution to the economy in terms of its ability to create wealth. This factor about the current contours of the economy is compounded by other factors, such as the contractualization of labor, and "subjective factors," such as the role of the movement in organizing and uniting the workers and catalyzing change.

James Miraflor (University of the Philippines) raised three points. First, he expressed his belief that it is unfair to say Marx is wrong on the basis of The Communist Manifesto alone, which was just a propaganda piece. He said it is important not to ignore Marx's arguments in Das Kapital, which was Marx's magnum opus. Miraflor suggested that while The Communist Manifesto articulated that the workers would be more militant or more exploited as capitalism develops, Marx revised this and added more nuance. Marx said that while the rate of exploitation of people, the rate of surplus value being extracted from the workers, is increasing, there are countervailing circumstances, such as the cost of reproducing the workers, which means the prices enable the workers to buy more, which in turn reduces their militancy, their ability, and their willingness to fight capital. Second, he suggested that Das Kapital itself contains most of the answers to the questions that Dr. Docena raised. The first line of Das Kapital itself points to the availability and presence of commodities, which is already an indication of the development of capital. In this regard, it is not so much the structure of the economy that indicates the development of capital, but rather the presence of commodities. Miraflor's third point was on the argument that Philippine capital is backward. He stressed that Das Kapital already said that capitalism is a global phenomenon and that there is no such thing as local capitalism. For Miraflor, the demand for ending the backwardness of Philippine capitalism has to do with the fact that the Philippine workers wanted to move up the chain of the division of labor in terms of production so they could capture value, which would be used to raise the workers' welfare. But he said Marx also articulated that the workers' welfare is actually correlated to the ability of the workers to organize and to educate themselves.

Prof. Roland Simbulan emphasized that "we should not look at Marx and his writings dogmatically." Marx's observations and insights were shaped by the specific conditions of his time. Two hundred years have passed and a lot has changed. One of these changes is in the realm of technology, where robotics and automation have really altered the workplace. Related to this is globalization, which has turned out to be a process of adjustment of capitalism to transfer the burden of the impact and consequences of capitalism (e.g., environmental problems) to other countries. Prof. Simbulan also noted that we witnessed how capitalism's engagement with flexibilization of labor is an effort to crush the militancy of the unions in more developed countries. Further, he suggested that although Marxism is known to have core ideas, it has already branched out into different locales. As an example, he said that Marx could not have predicted what happened in the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, or in China and Cuba, where successful revolutions took place, countries which were backward or not as fully developed as capitalist countries in their mode of production. In these contexts, revolutionary movements led by leaders who were oriented to Marxism were at the forefront of many liberation movements and antidictatorship movements. Appropriated into various local conditions, Marxism has branched out into Maoism, Leninism, Kim Il Sungism, and many other strands. Finally, Prof. Simbulan pointed out that Dr. Docena's lecture amply demonstrated the sophistication of capitalism and imperialism to adapt, despite periodic setbacks.

**Dr. Docena** did not necessarily disagree with Miraflor's comment that Marx corrected in *Das Kapital* his erroneous formulation of class struggle and class formation in *The Communist Manifesto*. But he expressed his interest to discuss further in the future to what extent Marx was correct in his reformulation in *Das Kapital*. Second, Dr. Docena also agreed with Miraflor's comment on Philippine capitalism being backward owing to the workers being relegated to lower positions in the production chain. But he wanted to explore "to what extent has it remained the same since the '60s?" The case of manufacturing in the Philippines shows that the Philippines is in a very low, very subordinate position in the global division of labor. Overall, for Dr. Docena, this suggests that the global division of labor has changed and we are no longer confined to agricultural, raw materials relative to the 1960s, when 25 percent of our exports were made up of agricultural raw materials.

**Louie Lanuza** wanted a clarification on the difference (if any) between the labels "Marxist" and "Marxian." Also, aside from democratization, the expansion of liberal space, and the dissolution of symbols of repression and imperialism, Lanuza drew attention to the hero worship and messiah complex prominent in contemporary Philippines. He offered as an example the decision of *Kilusang Mayo Uno* (KMU) to forge a tactical alliance with the Duterte administration. On one hand, it was "tactical" in the sense that it was just pretense. On the other hand, some members of KMU tend to believe that Duterte would actually be the hero who would end contractualization and poverty.

Tina Ebro (Asia Europe People's Forum) asked how we should explain the "perversion" of the ideas of Marx by the so-called socialist regimes established in the last century. These regimes, especially the ones led by Stalin and Pol Pot, were inspired by the ideas of Marx and decided to have a common blueprint: a monolithic vanguardist party that is fused with the state and is used for the suppression of individual freedom and civil liberties, even to the point of committing genocide. For Ebro, this is contrary to the ideals of Marx, who was a humanist who fought for the dignity of the working individual and for the emancipation not only of the proletariat but also of the precariat—the new face of labor today. After all, Marx did not advocate for a party apart from the party of the working people organizations.

In response, **Prof. Simbulan** said that it is true that there were deviations from Marxism in practice, especially in the 20th century. There were a few Marxist leaders who waged revolutions and upheavals which defined the direction of their respective countries, but eventually used state power to violently quell opposition—internally and externally. This was very much complicated by the Cold War because the United States, in trying to expand its imperial reach and influence, or to defend its realm, really engaged in sabotage and counterrevolutionary actions. This was to try to dismantle not only the revolutionary or national liberation movements that were Marxist-led but also the new socialist states. For Prof. Simbulan, there were indeed excesses, but they do not depreciate the works and contributions of Marx. There were deviations even by Mao Zedong in China and Kim Il Sung in Korea, but one cannot underrate, generally, their contributions to their own countries in the theory and practice of Marxism. They made huge contributions by integrating the basic principles of Marxism to their local conditions not just to win state power but also to try and construct a Socialist society the way Marx dreamt of it. Prof. Simbulan offered Christianity as a parallel; there were deviations from the teachings of Jesus Christ, when those who claimed to use the Bible became dogmatic in their application of its teachings, to the point of attacking all forms of opposition, including reformers.

In his understanding, **Dr. Docena** stated that the basic difference between being a Marxist and a Marxian lies in their belief in socialism. The former believes in socialism and in revolution, while the latter uses Marxist concepts but ultimately does not believe in socialism. On the "perversion" of Marxist ideas, Dr. Docena expressed the belief that "we have to be Marxist about it," which means "we have to look at the material, ideological, and cultural conditions of each of the particular countries." He cited the example of Marxist theorist Rosa Luxemburg, who ultimately blamed the failure of the revolution in

the West in Europe on her comrades in the German Social Democratic Party at that time. She was very critical of the abolition of elections, of the constituent assembly. In other words, she was able to explain the perversion by being a Marxist about it, by referring to the actual political conditions at that time.

Jose Mario De Vega (Polytechnic University of the Philippines) emphasized the importance of continuous scrutiny of and reflexivity with core Marxist ideas, especially with the proliferation of selfproclaimed Marxist intellectuals who actually worship Mao Zedong and Stalin. For De Vega, "to be a complete Marxist, [one has to] read his works, his corpus" which means reading and studying beyond The Communist Manifesto and Das Kapital. Second, with reference to the Philippine left, De Vega asked which among the diverse left groups in the Philippines are the "genuine" Marxists, given the highly fragmented left movement in the country and the splits that took place in 1978, in 1987, and in 1992, since the founding of the Communist Party of the Philippines in 1931.

Contributing to the discussion on the factors that determine class consciousness, Ricardo Reyes (Laban ng Masa) highlighted the role of the state and the people's "practices from below" that could have facilitated or impeded the shaping of class consciousness. First, invoking the critique of Paul B.C.'s critique on Das Kapital, Reyes said that it is the emergence of crisis that usually triggers the working class to be active in politics. But the role of the state is immense in intervening to prevent a crisis from exploding. For Reyes, when we are undergoing a long period of relative stability, it means that the state is effective in doing something to temporarily lull the working class. And here, Reyes reminded the audience that the state is not to be confused with government; widely understood, the former is a homestead of cultural ideas, practices, and institutions. Related to this capacity of the state is the mix of social welfare network and patronage politics, a mix that is prominent in local politics, where people just approach traditional politicians or trapos for need-provisioning, which in turn impedes the development of the people's class consciousness. Second, Reyes also highlighted the role of "other forms" of engagement often reduced as reformism, such as the work performed by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the struggles of engagement by farm workers other than strikes. The problem, for Reyes, is that these engagements were never accumulated and consolidated in order to form a sharper class consciousness.

Erwin Rafael (Department of Sociology, UP Diliman) stressed the contribution of the overseas Filipino workers (OFW) phenomenon in shaping the Philippine economy and class formation. Rafael opined that OFWs might have contributed to the ballooning of the service sector to 70 percent, and the remittances generated from them fueled industries which are driven by consumption. The remittances are also larger than foreign direct investment. Speaking from his experience in Samar, Rafael observed that workers find it easier to seek employment in Manila or abroad rather than to fight the capitalists. As such, Rafael argued for taking the role of OFWs seriously in contributing to the changing contours of the Philippine economy.

Dr. Docena completely agreed with Mr. Reyes on the tremendous role of the state to manage the economy and the crisis of capitalism in ways that would dampen class consciousness. Docena expressed his belief that the role of the state was underdeveloped in Marx's earlier writings, especially in The Communist Manifesto, where the state is viewed as the executive committee of the bourgeoisie. Marx was not really able to see to what extent and in what ways the state can intervene and save capitalism from itself, a task which would be up to the later Marxists to pursue. More generally, Dr. Docena said that this talk about political factors such as the state drives home an important appeal of his lecture: while the economy matters, we need to look at the totality of the economic, the political, and the ideological culture of the working class. On the OFW phenomenon, Dr. Docena agreed with Mr. Rafael on the major role of OFWs in shaping the economy, but he situated this phenomenon as far back as the Marcos administration's efforts to address the economic crisis in the 1970s by promoting labor export policy to avoid land reform.

Benjamin Velasco (UP SOLAIR and Partidong Manggagawa) stressed the importance of analyzing the problem on the conjunctural level. According to him, just one generation away, the workers had the ability to conduct general strikes and even competed with the petty bourgeoisie in leading the anti-dictatorship struggle. It is true that globalization happened, but it was not a determining factor because it weakened the labor struggle in some countries while it strengthened the struggle in others. Further, he asserted the importance of political factors for the weakening of the labor struggle in the country, such as the failure of the two EDSA People Power uprisings and the perennial defeat of most of the workers' struggles, weighing down the morale and motivations of the workers to fight further.

**Dr. Eduardo Tadem (UP CIDS Program on Alternative Development)** suggested that one possible answer for the weakening of the workers' movement is the granting of the demands of the workers by the capitalists. At least in the context of advanced capitalist countries, capitalism gives in to the demands of the workers, such as the case in Germany of Volkswagen, Porsche, Mercedes Benz, etc., granting 23-hour work week to three million metal workers who conducted a strike. As long as workers have the political power, Dr. Tadem expressed the belief that the capitalists would grant the demands of the workers (reformism). But in the context of backward capitalist countries such as the Philippines, the objective conditions—specifically, the quality of the leadership of the revolutionary or social movements. In other words, the leadership does not inspire, does not offer alternatives, and does not have the capacity to secure even the simplest of reforms such as ending contractualization.

**Mike Alunan (Columnist)** pressed the speakers to consider the role of the big state and its apparatus, i.e., the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), in the equation of the problem under discussion. He invoked the case of the revolution in the British Empire where there was a penetration of the big state, of the British Intelligence Officers (Agencies).

Dr. Docena said he thinks we should pay attention to the big state and its apparatus, but cautioned against overestimating the capacity of the big state to orchestrate things. In Dr. Docena's view, we should not lose sight of the balance of forces, which is beyond the control of even the most powerful CIA or spy agency. In response to Mr. Velasco, he pointed out that the point of his lecture was precisely to give more stress to the conjunctural path, but he said he would not go so far to say that the structural factors are not significant. He said that he thinks a lot of what is behind the conjunctural has a lot to do with the structural. As a case in point, the social democratic states fumbled in the 1980s in large part because they could not sustain the huge deficits that were financing the social welfare states. A lot of the crisis had to do with the crisis of overproduction, the long-term decline of profits in the world economy that was experienced after the 1960s. For Dr. Docena, the challenge was to look at the conjunctural dialectically with the structural. Finally, Dr. Docena expressed agreement with Dr. Tadem's comments on the objective factors in advanced capitalist countries and the subjective factors at play in countries like the Philippines in shaping the consciousness of the working class. Specifically, Dr. Docena said that, in terms of the subjective factors at work in the Philippines, the issue is not just the leadership in the social movements but is more on "our very analysis, our very understanding of Philippine society," which is part of the subjective reasons for why it is hard to strengthen the working class. He asked: "What if our very analysis no longer connects with the actual lived experience of the people we are trying to organize?"

**Prof. Simbulan** stressed the analysis and the role of "non-economic factors that affect class consciousness and class formation." One of these factors is the role of the big state, which for him has only improved with high technology. Although the big state can be defended and secured by the National Security Agency of the United States, Prof. Simbulan said that it will also be within people like Ed Snowden to undermine the big state. While surveillance has become centralized and globalized, it also has its weaknesses and vulnerabilities from within. Ultimately, Prof. Simbulan thinks that the lectures delivered for the day just served as an opening salvo to many more lectures by various academics and

social movement activists on their theoretical reflections and practical experiences related to the ideas and insights of Marx.

By way of closing the forum, Dr. Teresita Maceda invoked Marx: "Man is also capable of change. Man has the power to change—its environment, its history, himself." What remains to be Marx's greatest political offering is his "laying out a process of thinking and interrogating to raise our class consciousness."

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### Panitikan Bilang Armas Pandigma (Literature as a Weapon of War)

MARIA IMA CARMELA L. ARIATE



Proletarian literature has progressed from being a classification of creative output based on the immersion into society's objective realities in the 1940s to the emergence of its notable revolutionary features after the 1970s. This lecture surveys the state of proletarian literary production based on what can be accessed without dwelling on the mechanical correlation between historical conditions and the actual literary texts. In integrating Marxism with literary theory, Terry Eagleton (1975, 134) asserts that "[N]o one expects modes of literary production and 'literary superstructures' to form a symmetrical relationship." Rather, proletarian literary production can be studied within the standpoint of its material disparity and historically determined contradictions which produced them "and which often appear as unevenly resolved conflicts in the text" (Balibar and Macherey 1981, 87).



Raising the level of criticalness on what is acceptable and unacceptable when we talk of language and subverting the norms of conventional society, I choose the title *Panitikan bilang Armas Pandigma* or "Literature as a Weapon of War." While it is tempting to wrangle with the "meta" aspect of the matter, such as how Marxists would analyze a literary text, it is more useful to provide a more grounded discussion of how literature is being utilized to forward revolutionary ideals. The aim is to



highlight the continuing relevance of Marxism on humanities, particularly literature, in keeping with the general theme of this lecture series.

The paper is divided into four parts. First, we need to level off on the definition of literature. Second, we will cursorily talk about how we are taught to read literature in order to maintain the status quo. Third, we will discuss how we can supplant the normative ways with which we are taught to read and interpret literature. In relation to all this, the last part is about the persistent and continuing presence of proletarian literature.

#### Defining "literature"

What is literature? Is it "imaginative" writing? If so, is literature then just limited to works of fiction? Is literature just about poetry or the use of figures of speech and poetic language?

When is a piece of work qualified as literature? How about historical work or autobiographies that are considered novels? Does this indicate that literature is not just purely imaginative but can also cross the border and include historical material? Let us consider English literature in the 17th century. William Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, John Webster's tragedies, Andrew Marvell's satire and poetry, and John Milton's metaphysics and poetry fall within the broad range of the prescribed literary canon. This range also accommodates the philosophical essays of Francis Bacon and the sermons of John Donne. It is safe to assume at this point that literature is not only limited to what is "imaginative" but also accommodates the "historical."

Is literature the use of language in unusual ways? Terry Eagleton (1996) raised the popular notion of literature as "organized violence committed on ordinary speech." If I create a series of questions along the tenor of "Doth thou perspire in the sweltering heat of the solar globe from afar?" in this day and age, would I be creating a literary piece? Russian formalists note that literature, as a particular organization of language, has materiality whose functions can be analyzed.

When we look at a simple metaphor such as "I am the daughter of the sun," it doesn't mean that the sun is the father of the narratorial "I." Rather, it can connote preference for warmth over frigidity. Is literary language a statement of reality? Or is it the relationship between how one conveys reality and what reality itself is? Or is it even appropriate to place limitations based on the realm of reality, since there are moments when literary language transgresses reality and vice versa?

With the screening practices of the gatekeepers of literary canon in academe and elsewhere, we have come to learn that literature is "highly valued writing." This "highly valued writing" is what society should produce and reproduce. These productions and reproductions, however, are contingent upon the standards of the dominant. Suppose we accept that these are "high value" texts. Then we have to inquire further: are these any good? We cannot assure ourselves of the direct correlation between the text's "high value" and quality. As readers, we have value judgments, too.

As we tread contrasting and even contradictory value judgments, then we realize that literature can never be objective. Eagleton (1996, 9) even goes on to declare "that we can drop once and for all the illusion that the category 'literature' is 'objective,' in the sense of being eternally given and immutable. Anything can be literature, and anything which is regarded as unalterably and unquestionably literature—Shakespeare, for example—can cease to be literature. Some kinds of fiction are literature and some are not; some literature is fictional and some is not; some literature is verbally self-regarding, while some highly-wrought rhetoric is not literature. Literature, in the sense of a set of works of assured and unalterable value, distinguished by certain shared inherent properties, does not exist."

Following these parameters, literature can be interpreted through value judgments. The value judgments with which we scrutinize literature are historically variable and informed by social ideologies. These judgments are not merely based on individual tastes but are assumptions wherein certain groups exercise dominance and authority over the others. This premise can be tested in the case of proletarian literature later on. This also intersects with Professor Rolando Tolentino's discussion on how certain groups exercise dominance over the production of meaning in films and even how we, the hapless audience, are influenced to interpret the films that have been chosen by the market for us to see.

#### The normative ways of reading literature

So if there is no objective definition of literature, how do we read it? How do we interpret what we read? How are we conditioned to interpret what we read?

There is literary criticism that aims at a "wholly" immanent reading of the text. Nothing outside the text affects the text itself, not even the author's background. The text is reduced to a pure embodiment of the author's consciousness. To know this mind, we have to analyze the aspects of his/her consciousness that manifests itself in the text. Once caught up with investigating the correlations between the author's consciousness and its revelations in the text, we lose sight of the position of the text in human history. The text as part of human knowledge reflective of action and experience remains a text devoid of any connection to the world.

Some of us were taught to read literature as the "mental object" the author had in mind or his "intent" at the time of writing.

It does not follow for E. Hirsch, Jr. (1960) that because the meaning of work is the same as what the author meant at the time of writing, there can only be one possible interpretation of the text. There may, however, be a number of different valid interpretations, but all of them must be within the space of 'typical expectations and probabilities' (Husserl 1948, quoted in Hirsch 1960, 468) permitted by the author. Literary work may mean several things to different people at different times but the "significance" matters more than the meaning. "Significance" varies through history, but meanings are constant. In this mode of interpretation, the author is relegated to the responsibility for meaning but cannot hinder the readers from assigning significances. Further, the author shapes the absoluteness of literary meaning, which is resistant to historical change.

The problem with this kind of reading is its arbitrariness and the protection of exclusivity and, essentially, of private property. The meaning of the text is highly restricted and cannot be socialized or made public. It is solely the possession of the author.

Demystification of literature was done by emphasizing the "constructedness" of human meaning. It was neither a private experience nor a product of the divine. It was the product of a shared system of signification.

Saussure's (1983) argument was that the relation between the sign and the referent was an arbitrary one. So how we carve up the world is not dependent on the sign-systems we thought we had at our command, but these sign-systems were more of theirs and not ours.

For Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin, the sign was to be seen less as a fixed unit (like a signal) than as an active component of speech, modified and transformed into meaning by the variable social tones, valuations, and connotations it condensed within itself in specific social conditions (quoted in Voloshinov 1929/1973). Such valuations and connotations were actually shifting. Since the "linguistic community" was a heterogenous society composed of many conflicting interests, the sign for Bakhtin was less of a neutral element in a given structure but more of a focus on struggle and contradiction.

Language, in short, was a field of ideological contention, not a monolithic system; indeed, signs were the very material medium of ideology, since without them no values or ideas could exist.

Bakhtin respected what might be called the "relative autonomy" of language, the fact that it could not be reduced to a mere reflex of social interests; but he insisted that there was no language that was not caught up in definite social relationships. These social relationships were part of broader political, economic, and ideological systems.

Meaning is a spin-off of a potentially endless play of signifiers rather than a concept tied firmly to the tail of a particular signifier. Out of this play of signifiers, certain meanings are elevated to positions of privilege and made centers around which other meanings are forced to turn. Terry Eagleton (1996, 124) writes:

In one of its developments, post-structuralism became a convenient way of evading...political questions....If meaning, the signified, was the passing product of words and signifiers, always shifting and unstable, part-present, part-absent, how could there be any determinate truth or meaning at all? If reality was constructed by discourse, how could we know reality itself? Does it make sense to claim that one interpretation of reality or history is better than another?

Paul de Man (1984), on the other hand, notes that all language is metaphorical, working by means of tropes and figures. In this regard, language should not be taken *literally*. Metaphors are also central to disciplines such as philosophy, law, and political theory, in the same way as they are to poetry, so if we work along the same line of logic, we can assume that all metaphors are on the same level of being fictional. Thus, there is a need to deconstruct what we are reading.

Terry Eagleton points out that Derrida wanted to do more than "develop new techniques of reading: deconstruction was a *political practice*, an attempt to dismantle the logic by which a particular system of thought—and behind that, a whole system of political structures and social institutions—maintains its force" (1996, 128). His practice of deconstruction does not seek "to deny the existence of relatively indeterminate truths, meanings, identities, intentions, historical continuities; he is seeking rather to see such things as the effects of a wider and deeper history, of language of the unconscious, of social institutions and practices" (Eagleton 1996, 128).

#### What is the best way to read/interpret literature?

Literature, as we are told, is vitally engaged with the living situations of men and women: it is concrete rather than abstract, displays life in all its rich variousness, and rejects barren conceptual inquiry for the feel and taste of what it is to be alive.

The story of modern literary theory, paradoxically, is the narrative of a flight from such realities into a seemingly endless range of alternatives: the poem, the organic society, eternal verities, the imagination, the structure of the human mind, representation of language, and so on. (This is natural in light of the historically reductionist critical tradition of the 19th century.)

The use of "aesthetic" and "unpolitical" language in literary texts reveals complicity with the elitism, individualism, and sexism brought about by modern ideologies. The assumption is that the center of the world is the burdened and contemplative individual striving to get a grip of experience, truth, reality, history, and tradition.

The notion of the annihilation of the depth model arose from the critique of representation (form-content; signifier-signified). In effect, literary and even art production becomes a very depthless field. We really don't feel what we feel, and the fluctuating emotions that we have in reaction to what we see and read are measured in intensities. Furthermore, there is a hollowing out (or even fragmentation) of subjectivity. Depth loses its existence and everything becomes mediocre.

There are other factors that should be taken into account as well. The individual is embedded in a web of personal relations because, more than readers, we are persons. This, however, is not given due credit. We have been conditioned to distance ourselves from the rich inwardness of personal life, of which literature is supposed to be a supreme exemplar, towards the drabber, more mechanical, and more impersonal existence.

In the social realm, literature's equivalent is possessive individualism. It reflects the values of a political system that relegates the sociality of human life in a subordinate position and upholds the primacy of individual enterprise.

Because of lack of depth, it is common to dislike the idea of method. Literary critics prefer to work by what Eagleton (1996, 172–73) refers to as "glimmers and hunches, intuitions, and sudden perceptions." This type of criticism, however, fails to intuit the presence of deep undercurrents that inform values and value judgments in literature.

Some point out that there is an array of methods that can be used to investigate literature. Sure, let's free ourselves from the tyranny of one procedure. Should we combine phenomenology and post-structuralism? Should we combine deconstruction and hermeneutics? Elitist as it sounds, there are times when this pluralism is just an excuse for those who do not know the real praxis of literary theory or for those who do not want to undergo the stringent discipline of literary analysis. If we scrutinize how we are taught to read literature, then we realize that some methods acknowledge human history but only as a peripheral consideration, as in phenomenology. Hermeneutics, on the other hand, places primacy on the author's hand in meaning-making and the protection of his/her claim on the text as private property. Structuralism is focused on the rules between the individual and the sign-systems but does not fully take into account social relationships. Let us not forget post-structuralism, the notion of the annihilation of depth.

So where does Karl Marx figure in all of these theories? Marxism fills in the gap by offering authentic historicity; collective meaning-making by virtue of acknowledging social conditions and social relationships; and the dismantling of the force that drives the hegemonic political rule, as in the case of Derrida's deconstruction. So, when we see a piece of literature, it is not something that the individual should only ponder on. Neither is it sterile or in a vacuum. Literature is a celebration of vitality. Its emphasis is on the sociality of human life in the face of the hegemony that accords unabated primacy to the individual.

Marxist literary theory is a discipline in itself. It is self-reflexive. When we speak of self-reflexivity—for example, when there is a piece of literature—it is almost always common for people to juxtapose literature with history, and it ends there. Marxist literary theory seeks to analyze a piece of text deeper than its juxtaposition with history because the text itself could be taken as a unit. If the text is appreciated as a unit, we can analyze the contradictions within the text itself. This is just one facet of how Marxism can sharpen the practice of literary analysis.

Another facet is intertextuality, with its claim that there is no such thing as an original text. All text produced currently has undercurrents of literary works produced earlier.

Moreover, Marxism in literary theory offers readers a framework that is oppositional and not merely an alternative. Marxism in literary theory is oppositional to the system that polices the acceptable ways that we use language. Of course, we are conditioned to use language in a particular manner or to accept the interpretations that follow dominant paradigms. Marxism is oppositional to how we are policed by the hegemony or what is dominant in our society.

When we talk about literary production that is oppositional in the Philippines, we refer to proletarian literature. These are not in stock at National Bookstore or Fully Booked. There are no online order forms to fill out for these. Below are some examples.

This is *Ulos*, the cultural journal of the national democratic movement. This publication is managed by Artista at Manunulat ng Sambayanan (ARMAS) under the guidance of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).



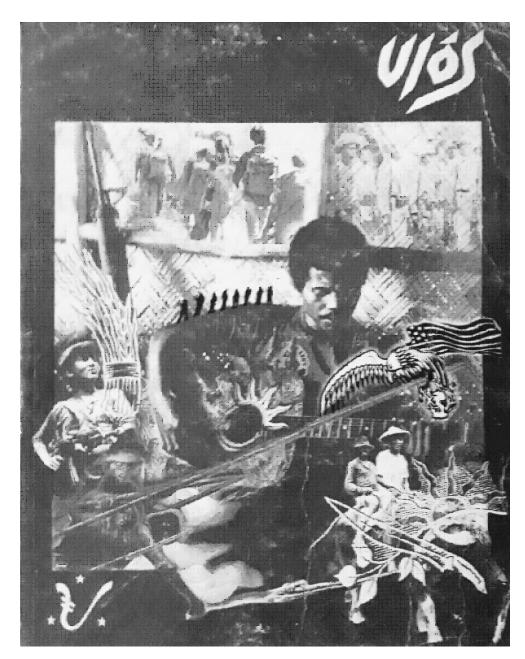


FIGURE 2 Cover of the September 2000 issue of *Ulos* 

The September 2000 issue of *Ulos* (see Figure 2 above) contains compilation of works from Eastern Visayas. There are songs in Waray as well as short stories that are full of local color. According to the front cover: "All work in this issue of Ulos can be distributed in any manner or form; excerpts to illustrate analyses can be derived from all songs, poems, stories, essays, visual art. These can also be used in mass meetings and gatherings of revolutionary forces; translated to other languages; and published in other materials of the national democratic movement."

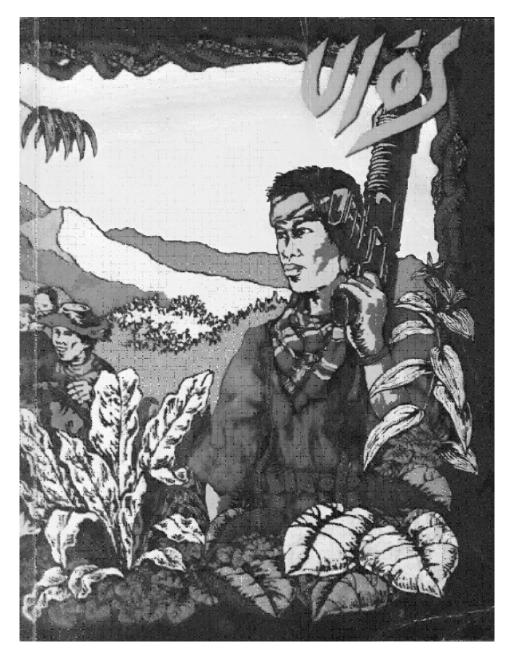


FIGURE 3 Cover of the September 2001 issue of *Ulos* 

The September 2001 issue of *Ulos* (see Figure 3 above) showcases works from Mindanao. The richness of Mindanao's cultural diversity is reflected in the short stories and poems.

The May 2001 issue of *Ulos* (see Figure 4 on next page) is the commemorative issue of the centennial celebration of the labor movement in the Philippines. It contains life stories of labor leaders such as Crisanto Evangelista and Carlos Bulosan. It also has literary works centered on the workers' struggles.

# The development of proletarian literature in the Philippines

Salvador P. Lopez explains that proletarian literature is a comparatively new category in the history of Philippine literary criticism (1995). It is also an attempt to classify creative output based on the writer's immersion in society's objective realities. He goes on to enumerate the characteristics of proletarian

literature: (a) that it is "definitely a literature of hope and growth" with "[c]lean, wholesome, and vigorous intent"; (b) that it is "revolutionary"; (c) that the proletarian writer works with the unity of the aesthetic quality and functional value of literature in mind; and (d) that proletarian literature is "realistic" (1995, 177-98).

Elmer A. Ordoñez (1995) notes that the significance of Lopez's essay was that it showed the possibilities of committed literature to the writers of his generation and the generations that came after. While Lopez sowed the seeds, the discernible emergence of committed literature can be ascribed to Senator Claro M. Recto's Second Propaganda Movement, whose lessons were eventually picked up by radicals like Jose Maria Sison (Ordoñez 1995).

After the 1970s, proletarian literature's revolutionary character finds its sharpest articulation in Gelacio Guillermo's "The New Mass Art and Literature" (1995, 358). He states that the general aim of this



FIGURE 4 Cover of the May 2001 issue of Ulos

type of writing was to push the armed struggle and the agrarian revolution in the countryside forward; to advance the urban strike movement; and to expand as well as consolidate the national front.

As Mao Zedong says in *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Art and Literature*, "literature and art fit well into the whole revolutionary machine as a component part, that they operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy, and that they help people fight the enemy with one heart and mind."

Mao articulated not only to integrate literary and art production into the entire revolutionary machinery but also to combat the liberal humanist tradition of a society that projects itself as "free, classless, and urbane" but in essence is a society that ascribes to middle-class values.

### Aesthetic standards of proletarian literature

Alice Guillermo (1993, 67) expounds on the aesthetic standards of this type of literature: it is nationalist, scientific, and mass-oriented:

- (a) National, as a political value, asserts the sovereignty of the people and the independence in the context of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle. It promotes the dignity of the broad masses of Filipino people—the peasants, the workers, the petty bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie—who gain their national consciousness as they engage in active struggle against imperialism and its local agents.
  - Likewise, the concept of national binds the regional ethnicities and unites all progressive forces from all parts of the nation with their respective cultural and religious traditions. This also addresses the problems of the indigenous peoples and other victims of colonial and neocolonial prejudice, exploitation and neglect without failing to respect their culture and expressions. As these are phased in to the revolutionary discourse, it is also important to preserve their identity and guard various ethnic interpellations in their specificity.
- (b) The scientific character of new culture rejects the metaphysical and idealist worldview and its mystifications on human nature as well as the economic and political structures and the historical process that perpetuate exploitation. It opposes superstition which makes man think uncritically since he is blinded by unfounded beliefs, values, practices, and prejudices. Superstition teaches man to resist change. Superstition and folk traditions are not to be confused with each other. Folk traditions contain usable grassroots technologies developed and suited for local conditions and resources. These traditions also find their form in art and literature. (A. Guillermo 1993, 70)

The mass character of new culture signifies the embrace of the genuine interests and aspirations of the people, particularly the exploited and oppressed classes of Philippine society. The enrichment of literature, art, and culture come from the contributions and efforts of the broad alliance of progressive forces, led and organized by the revolutionary masses (A. Guillermo 1993, 71).

Sample works include the following:

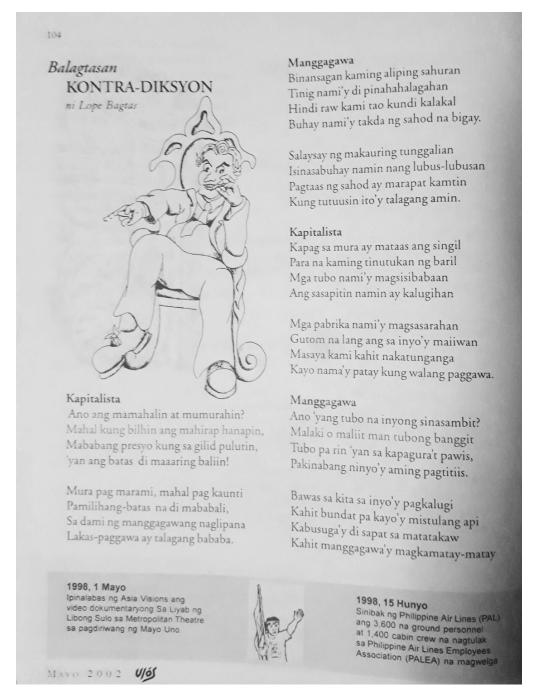


FIGURE 5 A balagtasan between a worker and a capitalist in the May 2002 issue of Ulos

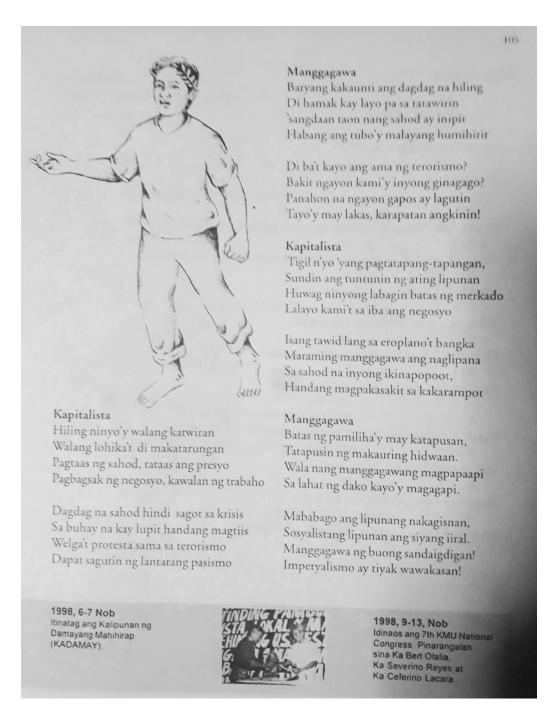


FIGURE 6 A balagtasan between a worker and a capitalist in the May 2002 issue of Ulos

In the commemorative issue of Ulos on the centennial celebration of the labor movement in the Philippines, a balagtasan, a popular poetry form, is utilized to discuss the exchange between a worker negotiating for higher compensation and explaining the bases for this demand and a capitalist saying that the worker's demands are illogical and unjust (see Figures 5 and 6 above). There is unity of form and content in that the worker describes capitalist exploitation while keeping to the prescribed balagtasan form:

Ano kaya ang tubo na iyong sinasambit? Malaki o maliit man ang tubong banggit tubo pa rin iyan, kapagura't pawis pakinabang ninyo'y aming pagtitiis



ng mga gwardya. Kasama na rito ang mga tablang gagamitin sana ng KTO para sa itatayong upisina at tindahan ng kooperatiba, na mahalaga sa pagpapasigla ng mga komunal na kailangan ng mga organisasyong masa.

Marami nang masa ang kinumpiskahan ng mga pedidos at tabla na gagawing bahay. Binabaklas at sinusunog pati dingding na nakakabit na sa bahay. Kinukumpiska pati kalabaw at *chainsaw*. At kung merong papalag ay bugbog-sarado. Meron na ngang pinatay. Kay daming bawal! Bawal kumuha ng kahoy sa konsesyon ng Philwoods. Bawal magsaka. Kahit lupa mo ito. Kahit lupang minana ng mga katutubo sa kanilang mga ninuno.

ALAS 4:50. "Nakapwesto na ba ang mga yunit milisya sa bawat iskwad?" tanong ni Ka Jaco, ang CO. "Tiyakin na nakapasok na ang

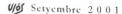


FIGURE 7 Excerpt of a story from the September 2001 issue of *Ulos* 

Figure 7 above is a page from *Ulos*, an excerpt from a short story set in Mindanao about a tactical offensive carried out by the New People's Army (NPA) to penalize a big logging company. This particular company was responsible for burning houses, confiscating the peoples' tools for production, and preventing farmers from cultivating land. With its private army, the big logging company perpetrated killings and took over the ancestral land of the indigenous peoples. The NPA decided to put a stop to these atrocities, especially after the community lodged its grievance.

# Production of Filipino proletarian literature

All comrades and mass activists are encouraged to write, share, critique, and develop literary forms. These literary contributions help in dismantling the entire system that perpetrates the passive and individualistic way of appreciating the written word.

For instance, Figure 8 (on next page) is a poem written by an NPA member to his comrade. As close friends, they decided to join the armed struggle at the same time. As individuals, they shared the same internal contradictions which they tried to overcome as they firmly grasped their commitment to carry out their revolutionary tasks.

There have been efforts to anthologize such works, as in *Akdang Pandigmang Bayan: Listahan ng Publikasyong Pampanitikan at Pansining sa Bagong-Demokratiking Rebolusyon 1968 to 1999*, published by the Instityut sa Panitikan at Sining ng Sambayanan (IPASA):

...inihanda bilang pantulong sa pag-aaral sa larangang pampanitikan at sining batay sa Programa, palisiya, at gabay ng Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas—Pambansa Demokratikong Prente kaugnay sa pagsulong ng gawaing sining at pampanitikan.

Anthologizing, however, is not without problems:

Ang problema ay hindi lamang sa pangangalap ng materyal na lumabas sa loob ng nakaraang tatlumpo't isang taon. Problema rin ang ebalwasyon ng mga akda, laluna yaong mula sa mga panggitnang pwersa at nakalimbag sa hayag o legal na daluyan ...

ARMAS publishes *Ulos*. ARMAS was founded on January 11, 1987. This is a revolutionary organization of artists, writers, and cultural workers from different classes and sectors of our society. ARMAS is a member of the National Democratic Front that recognizes the leadership and guidance of the Communist Party of the Philippines in the fight for genuine democracy and social freedom.

The organization was formally established in a guerrilla zone in the Bicol Region when all the progressive and revolutionary artists, writers, and cultural workers united against the US-Marcos regime were convinced that the gains of the people's uprising in EDSA were not maximized.

ARMAS frequently looks back to the revolutionary cultural processes of the past two decades of revolutionary cultural work in the heat of revolutionary organizing in the 1970s.

In the many years of ARMAS's existence, its work has been highly significant, whether in urban centers or in the countryside. ARMAS has continued to create, publish, and popularize revolutionary poetry, plays, visual arts, murals, songs, and other cultural presentations. The organization is also active in national protests including sectoral and multisectoral mobilizations against feudalism, fascism, and imperialism. ARMAS consistently launches cultural workshops in many of the sectors. Its cultural production has helped in international relations and in the national democratic movement.

*Muog*: Ang Naratibo ng Kanayunan sa Matagalang Digmang Bayan sa Pilipinas is probably the most popular compendium of proletarian literature to date. This was published by the UP Press in 1998.

In the Foreword by Jose Maria Sison, *Muog* is described as an anthology of literary works that evoke the spirit of the new-democratic revolution and, at the same time, a way of celebrating the old-democratic revolution. Through literature, the decisiveness and importance of the countryside in the people's struggle for revolutionary change against the oppressive semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system are manifested.

KAY KA RUBEN (Oktobre 28, 200 total mo vin also. kabataang riamalat sa labulukan ng kairolang pantipunen. Tolad mo rin ako. iskolar na nais idlay ang talino talakas bases he badlade ad zempada Tujad me rin ako. ittiwan and mga minahal epang tahakin ang mapanganib ha landas no digmaan, Boong tratong na himatrap and lahat no hirap, guloin at paged sa piling ng masat kasama Sapoakat Tolad morin ako, nauhawann ang kawastuhan at kahalagahan my itions panahons psykilos dito so jamayunan. At leastit thow ay nabiting ing becausely, kahit laya no ay kanilang kinoha, Behas na bakal ng neaksyonanyo ay di kayang ikatolong ang diwa mong rebolusyonaryo. Donating din ang panahon na tayo ay muling magkasama Upang isolong ang ating dakilang rimulaing: Wakasan ang buktot na paghahari ng mga mapagsamarthala 1 mapang-api, Wang makamtan ng sambayanan ang games na pagimpa !!!

FIGURE 8 A poem written by an NPA member

According to Sison, this anthology inspires and encourages the toiling masses to continue the revolutionary struggle in their wholistic advance and development, including the cultural and the literary. Furthermore, this also calls on the current creative writers and the future generation of creative writers to avail themselves of the rich material and essence of the people's protracted war (Foreword, xii).

Gelacio Guillermo, one of the members of the editorial group, explains the process in selecting the works for the anthology in *Paliwanag at Pasasalamat*. Initial efforts to make this anthology started as early as 1995. This was a project of the newly established Instityut sa Panitikan at Sining ng Sambayanan (IPASA). *Muog's* first group of editors included Gelacio Guillermo, June Rodriguez, Jimmy Domingo, Jasper Almirante, and Romulo Sandoval.

Some works in the first tentative compilation were removed because they did not fit the theme of the anthology. Many other works were added. There were no available materials for the years 1974, 1976, and 1977. It is certain that many other works deserve to be part of this anthology, but they went unnoticed by the editorial group. The editorial group extends their apologies for this (G. Guillermo, *Paliwanag at Pasasalamat*, xiii).

Guillermo shares the task in the classification and the editing of the texts. As much as possible, the works are classified according to the year of production instead of the year of publication. Anthologizing from year to year allows for the reflection of the phases of revolutionary struggle, the sacrifices made and the triumphs of the heroic masses, Party cadres and members, the Red fighters and mass activists all over the country (Sison, Foreword, xii).

The editorial group also tried to identify the authors of the published works when they were not named or when a *nom de guerre* was used. Alterations in the texts were made only when necessary for clarity. Standardization and simplification of spelling of the movement's terms were discontinued. This was meant to preserve the originality of the texts, since some readers might be interested in studying the use of language, especially the Filipino language in the national democratic movement (*Paliwanag at Pasasalamat*, xiii).

## Questions faced by proletarian literature

## Consider this poem:

#### The Time Shall Come

The slim hands of the clock are turning Apace with every passing moment, unrelenting Witnesses to moments of struggle, of victory Seeing every drop of perspiration from the workers arms; every season that comes and goes as the farmer is pushed deeper in his throes; every voice clamoring for what is right; every gunshot that pierces through the air, through the woods, through the flesh, through the heart, Mocking and nagging the seemingly timeless routine Facing the growing unrest with a façade of apathy, of complacency the façade of the reactionary

But even as the clock looks on The people's countdown has begun Alive, fierce, unyielding; Rising, surging, wave upon wave as hundreds and thousands refuse to be enslaved as hundreds and thousands deny the tyranny masked by the culture of apathy, of complacency

And as the people's countdown continues with the volley of gunshots with the roar of voices in the streets the clock's tick-tock will be drowned by the sounds invoking, seeking, calling, reaching out

> for everyone to break free to open their eyes to the reality drowning the clocks simple rhythm The time shall come

This poem has been critiqued as very typical and formulaic: there are social problems and the solution is joining the peoples' war. At the end of it all, the people shall be victorious.

This issue is being addressed by developing the form without sacrificing the content, as that is essential in terms of standards.

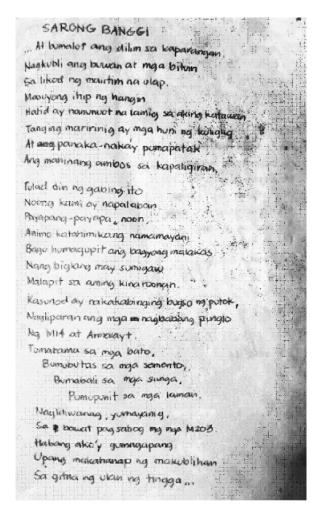
There are more innovative forms, such as:

# www.bakitandamingproblemasadaigdig isalangangsolusyon.com

The power of this poem is not only in its brevity but also in its message. www pertains to the questions asked by people, for instance: Why is there exploitation? Why are there only a handful of wealthy people who live in opulence? Why are there so many living in poverty? .com, or communism, is the solution.

Critics would say that this is very cryptic, and the uninitiated would not be able to grasp, much less, appreciate the nuance of .com. Consequently, literary works like this would only find socialization in particular segments or social classes, such as the petty bourgeoisie.

Many literary works produced in the countryside and in depressed areas are described as "crude" (See Figure 9 below). This is within the context of writers who exert efforts at writing despite not receiving formal education.



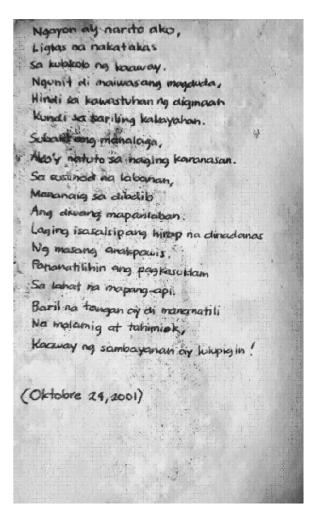


FIGURE 9 A free verse poem

Those who have more experience in using Marxist literary theory as a framework of analysis, however, would prioritize the content rather than the form. More developed aesthetics, on the other hand, pushes for unity of form and content. This means to say that while the form is not as refined as we would have wanted it to be, it cannot remain stagnant. There has to be progress in terms of form.

Popularization is an issue that has beset the proliferation of Philippine proletarian literature because of the current dispensation. Its content can never find acceptance in a society led by bourgeois elites subservient to competing imperialist powers.

As the national democratic movement advances and as the armed struggle in the countryside gains strength, proletarian literature will have more raw materials to work with, thus enabling the crafting of literary pieces that will fit into the entire machinery that will push the revolution forward.

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# Marx, ang Pelikulang Filipino, at Commodity Fetishism

**ROLANDO B. TOLENTINO** 

#### **Abstrak**

Itinalaga ni Marx ang commodity fetishism bilang ang tunay na panlipunang relasyon sa hanay ng mga indibidwal, komoditi, at salapi. Sa sanaysay na ito, tinatalakay ko ang diskuro ng commodity fetishism sa pelikulang Filipino at sa mga kontraryong permutasyon nito sa independent (indie) at dokumentaryong sinema. Bagama't ang industriyang pelikula ay patunay sa nosyon ni Marx ng commodity fetishism, ang argumentasyon ko ay ang independent sinema ang nakakapaglahad ng alternatibong diskurso sa dominanteng modalidad ng commodity fetishism sa pelikula dahil sa kapasidad ng indie cinema na makapagbaybay sa pagitan ng kritik at komplisidad. Ang mga dokumentaryong pelikula ang nakakapaglahad naman ng oposisyonal na diskurso, nakakapagbadya ng dekonstruksyon ng commodity fetishism sa relasyong media.

Marx denotes commodity fetishism as the real social relations among people, commodities, and money. In this essay, I tackle the discourse of commodity fetishism in Philippine cinema and its permutation into independent (indie) and documentary cinemas. While Philippine mainstream studio films reify Marx's notion of commodity fetishism, I will argue that independent cinema provides an alternative discourse to this dominant modality as it oscillates between critique and complicity. Documentary films, however, poses as an oppositional discourse, providing the deconstruction of commodity fetishism in media relations.

# Panimula

Para kay Karl Marx, ang *commodity fetishism* ay patungkol sa alienasyon ng paggawa na siyang lumilikha ng halaga sa mga produkto, na siya ring



nagtatalaga ng mga panlipunang relasyon ng indibidwal na manggagawa sa kapwa manggagawa, at bilang konsekwens, ang siya ring naglalatag ng panlipunang relasyon ng mga tao, produkto, at pera. Kinuha ng mga Marxistang teorya sa pelikula at media ang konsepto ng commodity fetishism para tukuyin ang mahikang transpormasyon ng produkto sa pagpasok sa pamilihan, nagiging komoditi na may sobrang palitang halaga (*exchange value*) sa pamilihan, at ang pagyao ng pangunahing salik sa produksiyon—ang paggawa ng komoditi.

Ibig sabihin nito, ang mga komoditi, tulad ng lata ng Ligo Sardines o Century Tuna—sa pagpasok sa advertising at kultural na industriya, tinatampukan ng product endorser o korolaryong kaganapan (event) para sa produkto—ay nagiging kumbinyente kundi man malusog na instant na pagkain. Nawawala ang paggawa—ang peligro sa karagatan sa paghuli ng isda, ang catch-to-can na klase ng produksiyon, ang serye ng transportasyon para mailagay ang lata sa shelves sa convenience stores o groseriya. Nagiging mahika ang sardinas—kung paano nasisiksik ang limang isda sa bilog na lata ng Ligo, o kung paanong ang tuna ay tinapyas at pati buto ay nalulusaw sa bibig pagkain nito.

Kung matagumpay ang komodifikasyon—naging isang *brand* na ang naratibo ay matagumpay na napatangkilik bilang kapani-paniwala—maibebenta ang produkto nang higit sa aktuwal na halaga, tulad ng Mac computer, iPhone, *smartphone*, *designer burger*, Levi's, *coffee* sa *coffee shops*, artista at pelikula, bilang ilang halimbawa. Ang *commodity fetishism* ni Marx ay integral sa ideolohikal na pormasyon at transpormasyon ng tao bilang (kung gagamitin ang idea ni Michel Foucault) *docile* na nilalang o minamangmang para maging kapani-paniwala ang pagiging sunud-sunuran sa kapangyarihan sa pamamagitan (kay Foucault ulit) ng *biopolitics* o ang rehimentasyon ng katawan at isip para sa serbisyo ng kapangyarihan.

Ang pelikula ang tampok na industriyal na sining (na isa ring komoditi na pinakatinatangkilik sa mga sining ng mamimili), at binibigyang-diin ng operasyon ng sine ang *commodity fetishism*.

Una, sa hanay ng mga manggagawa ng pelikula, ang isang technician ay hindi kayang gumawa, sa madalas na pagkakataon, ng gawain ng ibang technician—ang editor ay malamang hindi aktor, na hindi production designer, cinematographer, at iba pa. Bawat larangan ng pre-production, production, at post-production ay nakatoka sa mga espesyalistang manggagawa, na kahit pa sila nagtutulung-tulungan sa paggawa ng pelikula ay alienado sa mundo ng paggawa ng iba pang nauna't sumunod sa kanila, na ang matutunghayan nilang pelikula ay gawa at hindi nila gawa. At ang panlipunang relasyon sa kabuuang hanay ng gumawa ng pelikula ay hayag at hindi hayag na naisasaad, lalo pa kung isasaalang-alang, gaya ng sabi ni Marx, ang panlipunang relasyon sa lahat ng manggagawa sa pelikula at hanay ng manggagawa sa mundo. Ito ang tinatawag ni Marx na fetishismo—"which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities" (Tucker 1978, 321).

Ikalawa, nagiging integral ang produksiyon ng pelikula bilang komoditi dahil sa ilang operasyong pampelikula na nagpapabuyangyang—kahit pa hindi naman ito lubos na nakikita ng manonood. Ang pagiging sentral ng bituin (star) sa pelikula ay hindi lamang sa matingkad na kaibahan ng kanyang talent fee sa suweldo ng mga technician at ekstra, kundi sa kapangyarihan ng bituin na himukin ang manonood na bumili ng tiket at tangkilikin ang kanyang pelikula—na ang kuwento ay nakatuon sa kanyang pagiging bida batay sa kanyang personalidad (si Nora na kayumangging superstar bilang api-apihang manlalaban sa melodrama; si FPJ bilang action king na hindi dapat namamatay sa kanyang mga pelikula; si Vice Ganda bilang trans comedian na pinakasikat at matagumpay sa box office sa mga pelikulang fantasy comedy; at iba pa), at kung gayon, ang script ay nakakawing sa optimisasyon ng kanyang pagiging bida, na lalo pang paiigtingin ng cinematography, musika at tunog, disenyong pamproduksiyon, at iba pa.

Ang makeup at disenyong pamproduksiyon ay nakalapat sa realismo sa pelikula: na ang maganda ay lalong gumaganda, na ang pangit ay magandang pangit, na ang hindi magandang kaganapan tulad

ng kamatayan ay nagiging magandang kamatayan. Ang continuity editing naman ay nagsasaad na ang mga nag-uusap na karakter ay nasa iisang tagpo kahit hindi naman sila sabay na shinoot; napapaniwala ang manonood na ang tatlong siglong panahon ng kuwento, halimbawa, ay maaring maganap sa loob ng dalawang oras ng pelikula; na ang naratibong pag-unlad ay iigting sa climax para tahiin ang lahat ng detalye ng kuwento—na wala ring maaring ipagtapos ang pelikula kundi ang isinaad na pagtatapos—at ilang minutong denouement para unti-unting ibalik ang manonood sa kanyang sariling sandali at lunan. Ang musika at tunog ay kalkuladong ipinapasok o tinatanggal para sa nilalayong epekto sa manonood: love song kapag ang magsing-irog ay magtatalik na, fast-paced music kapag car chase scene, dahan-dahang tunog ng mga yapak at pagbubukas ng kalawanging pinto sa horror films.

Lahat ng elemento ng pelikula ay kinakasangkapan para itransporma ang pelikula sa simpleng produktong media lamang tungo sa pagiging komoditi na ang panuntunan ay pagiging box-office hit nito. Ang mahika sa yugto ng produksiyon ng pelikula ay naipapatupad sa pamamagitan ng mayoryang pagkalapat sa mga formularyo ng bawat elemento at bawat yugto ng produksiyon na hindi nagpapahintulot ng malakihang baryasyon. Ang *final* na produkto—kahit hiwa-hiwalay ang mga elemento at yugto na nakatuon sa komersiyal na tagumpay nito—ang mahikang magiging buo, at mahikang mawawala ang mga paggawa sa pagtangkilik nito.

At ang pelikula para maging komoditi sa pinapatangkilik na manonood ay kinakailangang lumikha ng overdeterminadong kondisyon ng panonood. Ito ang ikatlong aspekto ng commodity fetishism sa pelikula. Ang sinehan ay tinaguriang dream factory dahil nailalatag nito ang pisikal na kaligiran para ang mahika ay mangyari sa akto ng pagbabayad at pagtangkilik: komportable ang mga upuan, proscenium ang disenyo, malamig ang aircon, hindi lubos na maliwanag habang nag-aantay sa pagsisimula. Mula sa projector sa gitna o likuran, ang mahika ay magsisimula na, ihinuhudyat ng pagdilim ng sinehan; pagpapalabas ng mga anunsiyo hinggil sa piracy sa sinehan, rating ng Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB), at mga proyekto ng pamahalaan at ng real estate developer ng mall; sunod ay trailers, matapos ang main feature. Sa pagsimula ng sine, may antisipasyon sa mangyayari, kahit pa alam na ng manonoood dahil may prior knowledge naman siya sa pamamagitan ng trailers at word of mouth o social media buzz kung ano ang kanyang papanoorin; kahit pa alam naman niya na kung ito ay romantic comedy film, ito, kahit may mamamatay sa star-crossed lovers, ay may feel-good ending; kahit pa alam naman niya na batay sa pagiging bida ng artista—na nagsasanib ang personalidad sa aktuwal na buhay at karakter nito sa pelikula—ang kaganapan ay magiging hapit sa panuntunan ng pangunahing aktor o draw ng pelikula.

Ang pinaka-substantial na kaganapan sa panonood ng pelikula ay ang relief ng indibidwal na sarili (na may ispesipikong pinanggagalingan at patutunguhan) para i-take-on—sa pamamagitan ng identipikasyon sa pangunahing tauhan—ng narrative quest nito sa pelikula. Nagpapaubaya ang self ng manonood—take a back seat, pahinga mode muna, kahit siya naman ay mental na nagtratrabaho rin para bigyan-kahulugan ang mga kaganapan sa pelikula—para papaniwalain sa mundo at panahon ng diegesis o naratibo. Ni hindi natin naaalaala ang ating kasama habang nanonood tayo ng sine dahil lahat ng manonood ay nakapokus sa direksiyon ng pinagmumulan ng mga higanteng imahen ng pinapanood. Ang nangyayari sa loob ng sinehan ay mahikang itransporma ang indibidwal na mundo ng manonood sa iisang mundo ng pinapanood. Pinagpapahinga lamang ang sarili kahit pa aktibo nga itong mental na nagtratrabaho sa pag-unawa ng pelikula—na kahit sabay-sabay tumawa, matakot, umibig, at mamuhi ang manonood, gaya ng orkestrasyon ng kaganapan sa pelikula, kanya-kanya pa ring hugot ang bawat manonood sa sariling sikolohiya at pagkatao. At sa pagtatapos ng pelikula, sa pagbubukas ng ilaw, hudyat na para muling ibalik ang mga manonood sa kani-kanilang sarili.

Ang ikaapat na aspekto ay katumbas ng una sa hanay ng paggawa. Ito ay sa hanay ng manonood. Mahika na nagkakaroon ng *mediatized* na *imagined community* batay sa panonood o hindi ng pelikula.

Sa edad ng global cinema, lalo na ng Hollywood summer blockbusters, halos sabay-sabay ang release ng pelikula sa buong mundo. Sa madaling salita, ang buzz hinggil sa pelikula ay global. Kaya nga ang The Avengers na ipinalabas kamakailan ay nangailangan ng karagdagang umaga at hatinggabing screenings para matapatan ang demand sa pelikula. Ang balik-komersiyal na pelikulang ipapalabas sa taunang Metro Manila Film Festival na may pambansang karakter ay panghihikayat sa mas maraming bilang ng mamamayan na maglaan ng kanilang savings sa kapaskuhan para manood ng sine. Ang alitan ng comebacking direktor na si Mike de Leon at ng kanyang artistang si Atom Araullo ng Citizen Jake ay naihatid sa atin sa pamamagitan ng interaktibong social media. Sa ating bansa, sa limang independent film festivals, kalakhang dinudumog ang maikling panahon ng exhibition ng mga suki at bagong tangkilik na manonood, lalo na ang Cinemalaya. May karagdagang pogi at ganda points kasi ang panonood ng pelikula, lalo na sa sinehan: ipinapakilala ang komunidad ng manonood sa pinakabago, pinakauso, pinakasikat, pinakamoderno, pinakakosmopolitanisado, pinakaglobal. At kung hindi ka mahilig manood, may malaking bahagi allegedly ang mawawala sa iyo at sa kapasidad ng sarili mo na umugnay sa pinakakontemporaryong komoditi—parang iPhone 3 ka pa rin kahit na ang mundo ay nasa iPhone 200 na. Sa mga millennial, malaking kahinaan ito dahil magiging salat ang batayan ng pag-like, pag-repost, at pag-comment kung wala kang access sa pinakabagong pelikula, artista, mga produktong sinasambit ng pelikula, mga produktong natunghayan sa display windows ng shops habang umaakyat sa pinakamataas na palapag ng mall para sa cinemaplexes.

Ang pelikula, sa pamamagitan ng commodity fetishism, ay naghuhudyat ng alternatibong direksiyon sa panunuring pampelikula at midya. Ang paghiram sa mga ideya ni Marx ay hindi naman bago sa film studies. Sa katunayan, ito nga ang naghudyat ng sustenidong pag-unlad ng film studies sa bansa. Taong 1970s, matapos ang Filipinization movement noong 1960s hanggang ideklara ang batas militar ng 1972, nang maglayon ang maraming kabataan ng pambansang demokratikong pagbabago sa bansa bilang radikal na pagtataguyod ng pambansang kasarinlan at soberanya, nagsimulang umusbong ang kritisismong pampelikula. Naitaguyod ang mga kasaysayang pansining ng bansa bilang patunay na mayroon tayong pinagmulan, at kahit pa dumanas ng kolonisasyon, may pinaninindigang ugat sa pinagsasangahan. Sa pelikula, ang pormasyon ng Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino noong 1976 ang isa sa mga resultang aksiyon—para paigtingin hindi lamang ang sining ng pelikula kundi pati ang sentimyentong anti-komersiyalisasyon ng ibang award-giving bodies. Sina Bienvenido Lumbera, Nicanor Tiongson, at Behn Cervantes ay lumikha ng mga unang pagsusuri at kritisismong pampelikula na halaw sa Marxistang balangkas, pinagdalawang-landas ang panunuri sa kulturang popular na noon ay sumusuhay din sa pangunahing sosyolohikal na perspektiba. Ang unang film degree ay itinaguyod noong 1976 sa UP College of Mass Communication na may diin din sa pagpapayaman ng wika at panunuring pampelikula sa bansa. Hanggang sa kasalukuyan, hindi maitatatwa ang Marxistang balangkas bilang pangunahing gulugod ng araling pampelikula sa bansa.

Ang nais kong pagtuunan ng pansin bilang karagdagang pagbabalangkas sa Marxistang perspektiba sa araling pampelikula ay ang commodity fetishism bilang tampok na operasyon sa gitnang-uring ideolohikal na pormasyon at transpormasyon ng manggagawa-manonood-mamimili-mamamayan. Kung ang dati ay ang nosyon ng seamless production at viewing sa pamamagitan ng ideolohikal na operasyon ng suturing, o ang masinop na pagtatahi sa manonood sa naratibo ng pelikula, kailangan nang palawakin ang pagtatahing ito ng pelikula sa gitnang-uring ideolohiya na pormasyon at transpormasyon ng manggagawa-manonood-mamimili-mamamayan. Hindi na national pastime ang panonood ng sine; naging gitnang-uring panuntunan na ito dahil sa mahal na halaga ng tiket at ang korolaryong aktibidad sa panonood ng sine. Kung gayon, ang panonood ng sine ay hindi lamang pang-engganyo sa wanna-be gitnang-uri para maipasilip ang gitnang-uring lifestyle sa loob ng pelikula at ang gitnang-uring mundo sa lohistika ng panonood at pagtungo sa mall; ito rin ay aktuwal na konsolidasyon ng naabsorba nang gitnang-uri.

Gayunpaman, hindi naman iisa lang ang pagmaniobrang ideolohikal sa panonood ng sine.

Sa susunod na bahagi, imamapa ko ang ilang tereyn ng tunggalian sa iba't ibang uri ng sine at pelikula na higit na nagpapayaman at nagpapatingkad sa kontradiksiyon sa pampelikulang kultura at *literacy*.

#### Studio cinema

Ang una ay ang dominanteng *studio* pelikula na dahil dumaan sa kalibrasyon sa iba't ibang yugto ng produksiyon bilang pagtitiyak sa komersiyal na tagumpay—ang pagkamit ng pelikula na hindi lamang produkto kundi komoditi, ang seryalidad ng tagumpay ng *studio* sa bawat pelikulang inilalabas—ay higit na isinasaalang-alang ang komersiyal na interes, at kung gayon, ang *reliance* sa formularyo at *genre*. Sa kasalukuyan, ang Star Cinema, na konektado sa ABS-CBN *media conglomerate*, ay pangunahing naglalabas ng *romantic comedy* bilang *genre-of-choice* sa kasalukuyang panahon.

Simula sa *That Thing Called Tadhana* (Balbuena and Villegas 2014), nagpapatuloy ang inobasyong nakakapanghikayat sa manonood na manood at manatiling nanonood ng *genre* nito. Bagamat ibinuyangyang ang pangunahing kasangkapang pampelikula at emotibo—ang 'hugot'—natransporma ng pelikula ang susunod pang *romance* at *romantic comedy films* tungo sa mas bigating hugot at hugutan.

Ang pelikula na dinirek ni Antoinette Jadaone ay tungkol sa pag-agapay ni Mace (Angelica Panganiban) sa pagkalaglag sa kanya ng kasintahan at ang pag-agapay ni Anthony (JM De Guzman) sa hindi magkandaagapay na si Mace. *Road trip* ang pelikula matapos mag-*landing* ng kanilang sinasakyang eroplano mula sa Rome. At sa akto ay na-*in-love* si Anthony kay Mace, at medyo na-*in-love* si Mace kay Anthony; pero bumalik ang nanlaglag na kasintahan ni Mace, at nagkabalikan sila. Mabigat kay Anthony, pero makakapag-*move-on* ito dahil nakita niya ang kapasidad ni Mace na umagapay sa buhay, at sa huling bahagi ng pelikula, ang *reward* sa sarili sa pagpalit ng *career*: ang pagiging *book designer* ng libro ni Mace. Sa huli, *true love never dies* sa dalawang karakter.

Ang nakapaloob din sa ideolohikal na pormasyon ng pelikula ay ang *road trip*, at ang mga luma at bagong destinasyong naging *hip* sa henerasyon ng manggagawa-manonood-mamimili-mamamayan. Para sa manggagawa, ito ang hindi nila makakamit batay sa kanilang suweldo, kaya *at best*, hanggang sine o *pirated DVD* na lamang ang pagdanas sa dinanas sa pelikula. Para sa manonood na kinabibilangan ng maraming kabataan, ito ang hugot *film* ng sandali, ang *ethos for being* kung bakit kahit hindi pa sila nai-*in-love* ay mabuting ma-*in-love*, kahit hindi pa sila nalalaglag ay mabuti ring malaglag para makapag*move on*, at mabuting magmahal kahit hindi ka mamahaling pabalik, mabuting ma-*in-love* kaysa hindi man lang na-*in-love* sa buhay. Pero gaya ng isinaad sa artikulo ni Vaughn Alviar (2015) sa *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, ang kabuuang halaga ng *taxi*, pagkain sa Nishigo, *karaoke, trip to* Baguio, *stopover snacks, trip* at tiket sa Bencab Museum, pagkain ng *strawberry* taho at sa Café by the Ruins, *full-body massage*, pagtambay sa Bohemian Café, *trip* sa Sagada, *stopover* sa Gaia Café, *ride to* Mt. Kiltepan, *breakfast, trip* pabalik ng Baguio, at pabalik sa kanilang buhay ay Php 11,141. Ito ang itinatalaga ng pelikula na mga *hip* na lugar na bisitahin, kainin, at gawin minsan sa buhay lang naman. Ito ang konsumeristang isinasaad ng pelikula, bukod pa sa paghalaw sa hugot sa mismong Star Cinema sa *romance* at *romantic films* at sa kanilang bidang John Lloyd Cruz, ang *film therapy* ni Mace.

Ang isinasaad naman hinggil sa pagkamamamayan ng pelikula ay ang pagiging gitnang-uring kosmopolitanismo—kapag may pinagdadaanan, travel, meet people, see a new perspective in life, move on. Ang sinasabi rito sa sinasabi ay narsisismo na ikaw lang ang mapagpasiya, ikaw ang mahalaga, ikaw lang ang makakapag-move-on—ito ang indibidwalismo sa neoliberalismo na tugma sa diin sa pagiging episyente ng private transportation at services, at iba pang pribatisadong entidad. Walang politikal at historikal sa pelikula; tanging pang-araw-araw at pansandali ang dulog. Samakatwid, walang political killings ng aktibista at peryodista, walang napipintong pangangailangan ng pagbabago at napipintong pambansang eleksiyon na pipihit sa kahilingang pagbabagong ito, walang kontraktuwalisasyon o

militarisasyon ng mga Lumad at ng kanilang eskuwelahan, at iba pang pahaging o patama man lang sa aktuwal na historikal at politikal na kaganapan. Ang natira sa pelikula ay indibidwal at pribatisasyon ng historikal at politikal na kaganapan. Epektibong na-makeover ng pelikula ang ideolohikal na pormasyon at transpormasyon sa ipinakilalang inobasyon nito sa romance at romantic comedy films—ang hugot na sa kalaunan ay naging SOP (standard operating procedure) sa susunod na mga pelikula. At kung hugot ng indibidwal at pribatisasyon ang diin, higit itong epektibong gitnang-uring ideolohikal na pormasyon at transpormasyon ng manggagawa-manonood-mamimili-mamamayan.

#### Indie cinema

Ang Ma' Rosa (Castillo 2016) ay isang *indie film* na tungkol sa pagkaaresto ni Rosa at ng kanyang asawa sa isang *raid* sa kanilang bahay. Bahagi ng paghahanapbuhay ng mag-asawa ay maging *small-time* na tagabenta ng shabu. Binigyan sila ng taning ng pulis, maglagay ng Php 200,000 kapalit ng kanilang paglaya. Napilitan ang apat na anak na dumiskarte para makabuo ng panlagay. Sa huling eksena, nakalabas si Rosa sa presinto, mag-isa itong naglakad pauwi, at bago tumungo sa bahay ay bumili ng isaw at *barbecue* muna, at makikitang umiiyak ito.

Iba ang paggamit ng *indie cinema* sa mga elemento ng pelikula, pawang halaw sa *new cinema movements* sa buong mundo: sa *French new wave*, ang *jagged camera movement*, *tracking shots* na parang dokumentaryo ang pinapanood; sa *Italian neorealism*, ang paggamit sa aktuwal na lokasyon at hindi sa *studio*, ng *real time*, at *a-day-in-the-life-of* sa buhay ng karakter, kawalan ng masinop sa resolusyon; sa *American* at *British new cinema*, ang brutal na karahasan at madugong pang-araw-araw na realidad; sa *new German cinema*, ang mapagnilay na sandali sa karakter para gawin ang kanyang gagawin; at sa naunang *new Philippine cinema* ng 1970s at 1980s, ang politikal na *indictment* ng sistema.

Sa manggagawa sa pelikula, ang kawalan ng lubos ng ipinagkaiba ng patayang work schedule at little pay sa indie at studio production, at ang iluminasyon ng kanilang realidad bilang ang sityo at sandali na nais malampasan, at kung gayon, ang rekurso pa rin sa gitnang-uring ideolohikal na pormasyon at transpormasyon. Negative dialectics ang gumagana sa gitnang-uring manonood—na sa isang banda, ay abang kondisyon talaga ang pang-araw-araw na pinagdadaanan ng abang uri o ng representatibo nito sa mga karakter ng pelikula, at kung gayon, may comfort o relief na hindi sila lubos nakabahagi nitong abang uri. Isterilisasyon ng gitnang-uring posisyon ang nalilikha ng Ma' Rosa sa manonood, mula sa isang ligtas na posisyonalidad ng panonood, totoo at hindi sumasang-ayon sa realidad ang karakter at manonood bilang rasyonalisasyon kung bakit mabuti pa rin ang maging gitnang-uri. Sa mamimili, minundo ng pelikula ang underground economy bilang kabahagi at integral sa kanyang realidad pero ang pelikula ay matagumpay rin na ideological state apparatus dahil inaalarma ang trinatranspormang gitnang-uring manggagawa at pinopormang gitnang-uring manonood tungo sa aberya kapag nawala sa ganitong posisyonalidad—ang aktwal na panganib ng paglabag at mobilisasyon ng aparato ng taliwas na pulisya.

Kung gayon, ang indibidwal at pribatisasyon pa rin ang sentral na diin ng pelikula sa pagkamamamayan, kahit pa tila may hayagan itong kritika sa taliwas na pulisya na nagdudulot ng walang-katapusang pagkapit sa patalim ng mahihirap. Kanya-kanyang rekurso sa bigat ng historikal, politikal at panlipunang pinagdadaanan—kanya-kanyang diskarte, matira ang may kakayanan, pasensiyahan na lang kapag hindi nakaalinsabay. Bagamat may kritika sa taliwas na pulisya, wala namang kalinawan sa pelikula kung ito ay normatibo o natatangi, kung ito ay tama o mali. Walang etikang kinukuwestiyon ang pelikula sa hanay ng maykapangyarihan; inilagak ang bigat nito sa hanay na naman ng abang uri.

Ang lumalabas na progresibong sityo ng pelikula na may kapasidad na ibuyangyang ang *commodity fetishism* ay ang dokumentaryo na masigla rin sa edad ng *indie cinema*. Ang *Yield* (Enouye et al. 2017) ay ilang taong paghahabi ng mga kuwento ng mga buhay ng *child laborer*: sina April, Ariel, at Rommel

sa quarrying at graba, si Jomar na naninisid at nagmimina ng ginto sa dagat, sina Edralen at Jason na nagbubuhat sa bundok ng mabibigat na gulay na pagkatapos ay ibinabangka papunta sa pamilihan, at sina Alex at Glady Mae na parehong may hydrocephalus. Ang matutunghayan sa pelikula ay ang kondisyon ng paggawa ng mga child laborer, at kung bakit sila nasadlak na sa ganitong kalagayan, katulad ng kanilang mga magulang at maging ng kanilang magiging mga anak. Inilalantad ng pelikula ang kritika sa commodity fetishism na mapanupil, marahas, at nakamamatay ang mga produkto sa pamilihan dahil mapanupil, marahas, at nakamamatay ang kondisyon sa produksiyon ng mga nagtratrabahong musmos at bata.

Ang mga batang manggagawa ay nangangarap makapag-aral, mabuhay nang walang iniindang sakit, makapaglaro kahit pa nagtratrabaho sa mga peligrosong kondisyon. Ang peligrosong kondisyon sa kanilang paggawa sa produksiyon ay simptomatiko ng pangkalahatang peligrosong kondisyon ng estado—na tulad ng mga nauna at susunod sa kanila, walang ganitong pagluwag sa kondisyon ng buhay at kamatayan. Mababagabag ang manonood dahil ang kanyang ligtas na gitnang-uring posisyon ay hindi lubos na makakaagapay para matulungan ang mga batang manggagawa. Matatanto naman ng mamimili na ang akto ng kanyang konsumerismo, maging ng batayang mga bagay, ay nakasalalay pa rin sa mapanupil ng kondisyon ng paggawa at ng manggagawa, lalo na sa batang manggagawa. At maghahanap ang mamamayan ng rekurso sa iba pang posibilidad o alternatibo sa realidad.

Sa pamamagitan ng pagpasok sa commodity fetishism sa Marxistang balangkas sa araling midya at pelikula, matutunghayan ang mas matalas na pagbasa sa mga akda at ang realidad na ipinapaloob pinapapasok o kinukuwestiyon na mga institusyon ng kapangyarihan—ang manggagawa-manonoodmamimili-mamamayan. Nalilinaw rin ang etikang pagpili at pagpanig ng kritiko dahil mas nagiging imperatibo, gaya ng diin ng dokumentaryo, ng masinop na paglalatag sa historikal, politikal, at panlipunang kondisyon ng posibilidad ng mga karakter at tao sa loob at labas ng pelikula, maging ang kaangkupang tugon, kritika, at pangangailangan sa pagbabago lampas sa individual at pribatisasyon sa loob ng pelikula at sa mas malawak na labas nito.

#### Open Forum

(Talâ mula sa patnugot: Ang open forum sa ibaba ay para sa ikaapat na bahagi ng Marx Bicentennial Lecture Series na ginanap noong Hunyo 28, 2018 at tampok ang mga lektura nina Prop. Rolando B. Tolentino at ni Bb. Maria Ima Carmela L. Ariate (tingnan ang naunang bahagi)).

Bagama't sumasang-ayon siya sa mga batayan ng pagsusuri (standards) sa panitikan na maging "scientific, realist, at mass-oriented," nais malaman ni G. Janus Nolasco (UP Asian Center) kung dapat ba nating asahan ang popular cinema, sining, at panitikan na laging maging "politically progressive," lalo na kung ang mga popular sa mga produktong ito ay hindi naman talaga ginawa upang maging politikal. Gayundin, tinanong niya kung ano ang dapat na pagtingin ng mga radikal na kritiko sa reaksiyonaryo at di-rebolusyonaryong sining at panitikan. Ano ang mangyayari sa ibang anyo ng panitikan na hindi itinuturing na "politically progressive?" Nangangamba siya na mabansagan agad na 'burgis' ang mga ito at mabalewala dahil lang sa tumatalakay sila sa emotion, happiness, at beauty at iba pang "swads of human experience."

Ilang mga tanong mula kay G. Lorenzo De Vera (hindi natukoy ang organisasyong kinabibilangan) ay kung paano maibubukod ang sining sa propaganda at kung paano masisiguro na ang tinatawag na proletarian literature ay tunay talagang mula sa proletaryado. Nagtanong naman si Bb. Shane (hindi



natukoy ang buong pangalan at organisasyon) kung ano ang mga proposisyon sa sining Pilipino upang mas mapanood ng mas nakararami ang mga pelikulang sumasalungat sa *commodity fetishism*. Napansin niya na iba-iba ang moda ng produksyon (o moda ng *funding*) ng tatlong pelikulang natalakay: *mainstream* na para sa malawakang distribusyon at *indie* na mas madalas mapanood sa ibang bansa kaysa sa loob ng bansa. Ayon sa kanyang obserbasyon, kung ano ang mas *commodified*, iyon pa ang mas naibebenta at naipapamahagi sa mas maraming sinehan at panooran.

Ayon kay **Bb. Maria Ima Carmela Ariate**, mayroon talagang elementong politikal ang panitikan at sining. Kung kritikal ang mambabasa at manonood, matutuklasan niya kung paano naihabi ang politika sa loob ng teksto o sa loob ng pelikula. Bilang manonood, hindi tayo ang nagpapasya o nagtatakda kung kailangan bang maging *politically progressive* ang mga gumagawa ng pelikula, dahil sila mismo ay mayroon ding pinapadaloy na pera at *standards*, *storylines*, o *formula* na kailangang sundin. Dagdag niya na marahil ay magiging *politically progressive* ang teksto o pelikula kung, halimbawa, sa balangkas ng Pambansang Demokratikong Rebolusyon, ay magbabago ang timbangan ng mga puwersa sa lipunan.

Sa usapin ng pagkakaiba ng sining at propaganda, ipinahayag ni Bb. Ariate na kadalasan ay hindi hiwalay ang dalawa. Ayon sa kanya, ang mga pabalat ng Ulos, halimbawa, ay mayroon ding sinusunod na aesthetic standards. Dagdag pa niya, katulad ng sa Vietnam, ang revolutionary art sa Pilipinas ay mayroon ding sariling standards. Ang sining at panitikan, ayon kay Mao Tse-tung, ay bahagi ng buong makinaryang pang-rebolusyon, kung kaya ang proletaryadong pakikibaka ay hindi hinihiwalay sa proletarian literature. Sa tanong na kung paano masisiguro na ang isang akdang pampanitikan ay matitiyak na isang proletarian literature, ipinahayag ni Bb. Ariate na dapat ay sumunod ito sa mga itinakdang panuntunan. Halimbawa, sa librong Akdang Pandigmang Bayan: Listahan ng Publikasyon Pampanitikan at Sining (2000), may disclaimer sa panimulang bahagi. Ayon sa disclaimer na ito, hindi kaya ng aklat na komprehensibong ipunin ang lahat ng literary work na 'proletarian' na naisulat sa loob ng tatlumpung taon. Ikalawa, mayroon ding masinsin na ebalwasyon ang mga akda bago ilimbag ang mga ito bilang bahagi ng isang compilation. Ikatlo, mayroong mga akdang pumapasa bilang proletarian literature ngunit nakalimbag sa mga hayag na pahayagan. Bagaman may byline ang ilan sa mga ito, malaking konsiderasyon pa rin ang seguridad ng mga manunulat. Sa usapin ng "swads of human experience" sa panitikan, sinabi ni Bb. Ariate na may mga tula din naman na proletarian literature na maituturing na celebratory, contemplative, at siyempre, galit. Meron ding mga tulang malungkot at may 'hugot' (dahil nagkakaroon din naman ang mga rebolusyonaryong manunulat ng mga kasintahan). Dagdag ni Bb. Ariate, ang kagandahan ng pagsusuri sa isang teksto, halimbawa, sa paglalapat ng Marxismo ay makikita ang proseso ng unraveling ng imagery at ng mga bagay-bagay.

Bilang tugon sa tanong ni G. Nolasco sa lugar ng popular cinema, sinabi ni Dr. Rolando Tolentino na ang paggamit ng mga analytical framework gaya ng Marxismo, feminismo, queer studies, at poststructuralism ay nagsasaad ng moral judgment batay sa 'allowables' nito. Wika ni Dr. Tolentino, "Marxism is really the need for that kind of transformation. May socialist perspective ba sa The Avengers? Siyempre, may malalaglag kasi may itinakda kang standard, lalo na sa idea of something like commemorating Marx 200 years after, then you become more stringent. Sa pagbabalik-tanaw, marami na tayong natutunan na ginawa dati na hindi na gumagana sa ngayon. Mayroon talagang malalaglag dahil ginawa naman iyan para kumita at hindi naman magbago ng kamalayan ng tao. Cultural studies ang pwedeng gamitin para doon sa sites of negotiation."

Sa isyu ng relasyon ng radikal at reaksiyonaryong panitikan, sinabi ni Dr. Tolentino na antithesis ang dalawa. Aniya, "[t]hose are oppositional positionalities and obviously, they will not relate. They need to fragment a synthesis to move to the next level." Bilang tugon sa tanong ni Bb. Shane tungkol sa kung paano papanuorin ang mga pelikulang ito, sinabi ni Dr. Tolentino na mayroon namang mga tinatawag na micro-cinema. "Kung taga-UP ka," ayon sa kanya, "merong Film Center [kung saan] pinapalabas ito at maraming beses na libre naman ang pagpapalabas nito. Kailangan nating kumalap ng supporta para sa micro-cinemas, lalo na 'yung sa Maginhawa (Quezon City) dahil medyo iba 'yung mga programming na ginagawa nila. Binibigyan nila tayo ng access sa mga pelikulang hindi kadalasan natin napapanood. Kaya ngayon, kung nasa Metro Manila ka, hindi ka na pwedeng magreklamo na wala kang access sa alternative films."

Sa usapin ng non-political criteria, "precisely, what Marxism heralds is that the more pleasurable the experience is, the more we lose our grip of certain kinds of realities, and the more ideologically loaded the literary work is," ani Dr. Tolentino. Ayon pa sa kanya, "tulad ng sa pelikula, nakakalimutan natin kung sino tayo for an hour and a half. Forewarning lang iyon sa isyu na pleasure is really a bourgeoisie kind of pleasure." "Masaya paminsan-minsan manood ng Yield, siyempre buti rin na hindi ganyan ka-prolific ang ganyang klaseng pelikula, kundi tatalon na lang din tayo sa Quezon Hall sa pagiging miserable ng nagaganap sa bansa natin. At nanonood din naman tayo ng Hollywood *blockbusters* kasi sa daming *down* sa ngayon, wala kang gagawin dito lalo na kung nasa 4D ka, parang fun ride lang literally at figuratively. You just put a kind of perspective into that kind of film experience we take and that defines our film literacy. It cannot just be this or that. It is all of these with a lot of contradictions," susog niya.

Nagtanong si Prop. Maureen Pagaduan (UP College of Social Work and Community Development) kung sa paanong praktikal na pamamaraan ang tao mismo ang magiging akda o prodyuser ng kaalaman. Ang kontekstong pinanggagalingan niya ay ang proyekto niya sa Program on Alternative Development (AltDev) ng UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS), kung saan sinusubukan na itampok ang mismong boses ng mga taong nasa laylayan ng lipunan at huwag hayaang ibang tao ang magsulat at magbigay ng kahulugan sa kanilang mga karanasan. Bagama't ito ay isang mahirap na proseso, aniya, makakatulong ang laging pagpapaalala sa mga mananaliksik na iwasan ang pagiging middle-class interpreter sa sinusulat o binabasa nila at palaging maging pro-marginalized at pro-poor upang maging sensitibo sa prosesong dinodominahan nila.

Idinagdag ni Dr. Ma. Victoria R. Raquiza (Moderator ng lektura; UP National College of Public **Administration and Governance**) na sa Marxismo ay mayroong tinatawag na *false consciousness*. Ayon sa kanya, maaring sabihin na napaka-popular ni Duterte sa hanay ng masa, ngunit hindi ito proletarian culture dahil hindi ito aral at gising. "Pero may gray area din doon kaya dapat magkaroon din ng dayalogo sa kanila. How do we capture popular culture? The issue of how do we say who is right or wrong is something that must be discussed and problematized," dagdag niya.

Tanong ni **Bb. Lisa (UP College of Fine Arts)**: "What is the importance of proletarian, Marxist standpoint in affirming the value of art in speaking to the world?" Para sa kanya, binigyang-diin ng parehong presentasyon ang kahalagahan ng pagbabasa bilang ideolohikal na gawain sa pamamagitan ng paggamit ng proletarian standpoint. Idinagdag rin niya na merong false dichotomy sa pagitan ng art at propaganda dahil "somebody's art is propaganda for someone else."

Bilang tugon kay Prof. Pagaduan, naniniwala si Bb. Ariate na mahalagang usapin ang disiplina, praktika, at etika ng pananaliksik sa *field* at kung paano pagsusulatin ang mga tao ng sarili nilang kwento. Kadalasan, hindi talaga magsusulat ang masa dahil na-ookupa ang oras nila sa paghahanap ng makakain. Sa karanasan ng mga kasamahan ni Bb. Ariate, una, sinisimulan nila ang proseso sa pagpapakwento (*oral sharing*). Ikalawa, mahirap ding matiyak kung sila rin ba ay nagsusulat, kaya kapag nasa mga komunidad, may *literacy and numeracy tests* na isinasagawa. Kung mahihirapan silang magbasa ay hindi na sila pinagsusulat. Pagkatapos magkwento, marami rin ang kalauna'y nagsusulat ng *incident report* ng mga problemang kanilang dinadanas. Kailangan din ng *rapport* sa pagitan ng mananaliksik at komunidad na pinagsasaliksikan.

Ayon naman kay Dr. Tolentino, ang pokus ng mga lekturang tulad nito ay ang makipagtalastasan sa mga kasamahan sa akademya. Ani Dr. Tolentino, "We need a kind of engagement that is more of a conversation that is happening among the middle class that can stir up, to a large extent, as it did in the past, a critical mass of people towards social transformation. Mahirap asahan na kailangan ang masa mismo ang magbago o mag-transform sa sarili nila—darating iyon." Dagdag niya, "Pero dahil tayo naman ay nasa UP, kailangan din nating pag-isipan [ito]: What is the role of the intellectuals at this time? How come after nearly two years of Duterte ay walang engagement sa ibang arts? Ngayon lang sa independent cinema na merong apat na pelikula na tumatalakay sa extrajudicial killings. Sa visual arts, nagsisimula na dahil meron nang gallery sa Ateneo tungkol sa extrajudicial killings. Sa panitikan, parang nag-abdicate na lang ang mga manunulat sa engagement sa Facebook rather than coming up with something at the very core of their existence, which is to produce art that defies, art that challenges, art that questions and interrogates authority. Walang lumalabas."

"Maging sa pananaliksik," ayon kay Dr. Tolentino, "parang belated lahat ang lumalabas na scholarly engagement sa Duterte administration, samantalang malinaw na ang administrasyong ito ay napakamarahas kung pag-uusapan ang dami ng patayan. Maaaring meron ding comfort blanket o seguridad na binibigay ang UP. We grew out of our ways and not really come up with the core of our labor, which is to be able to come up with scholarly works or artistic works. . . We talk about it a lot but no one really does what one does best: which is to write scholarly or creative outputs about the present predicament."

Ayon naman kay Bb. Ariate, sa usapin ng ambag ng proletarian at Marxist framework sa pagpapayaman ng sining at panitikan, ipinapakita ng Ulos at ng iba't ibang likhang-sining na maaring pagyamanin ang sining sa pamamagitan ng pag-accomodate sa mga wika at dayalek sa bansa. Halimbawa, sa Sinirayang Bisaya, may mga tula sa Waray na may salin sa Filipino. Ayon din sa kanya, napapayaman din ng mga katutubong tradisyon ang proletarian literature dahil bahagi ito ng ekspresyon ng dignidad at kapangyarihan ng mamamayan. Ganito rin ang makikita sa konteksto ng sining. Binanggit ni Bb. Ariate ang isang poster para sa Mayo Uno na iba sa karaniwang poster na may mga karaniwang elemento tulad ng nakataas ang kamao, mobilisasyon, at mga banner. Tampok sa nasabing poster ang isang mandala na mayroong social realist na peg dahil binigyang-diin ang mga manggagawa. Para sa kanya, ito ay sobrang nakaka-engganyo dahil bago ang atake. Ganito din sa panitikan kung saan ina-accomodate ng proletarian literature ang ganoong mga anyo upang lalo itong mapagyaman.

Inihayag ni **Bb. Ananeza Aban (UP CIDS Program on Alternative Development)** na matingkad ang pagkakahati ng Kaliwa sa Pilipinas—mayroong mga Marxista at mayroon ding mga sosyalista.

Malaki at malalim ang pinagmulan at ang mga dahilan ng pagkakahating ito. Ngayon, malinaw na maraming nasusulputang *political blocs* o organisasyon na parehong may perspektibang Marxist. Tinanong niya kung ano ang maaaring maging ambag ng mga manunulat ng kasalukuyan sa ganitong konteksto.

Ayon kay Dr. Tolentino, "I wouldn't dismiss that this divide is really just an imagined divide. There are actual principle divides, too. No one would claim that their left practices are not principled. It will not unite at this time. . . Those were contradictions of those times and it is not just in the Philippines; it is everywhere in the world where the left assumed a kind of faction or role. Do what you do best. Mag-organize kayo. Kung hindi kayo pwede sa Left, mag-organize kayo ng colleagues niyo to stir up more action or consciousness raising to various kind of spaces na hindi natatagusan."

Bilang pagsang-ayon kay Dr. Raquiza, kailangang suriin at tibagin ang popular na suporta sa ground level para sa administrasyong Duterte. Kumausap sa ground level at hindi lamang sa mga kapwa intelektwal at manghikayat sa mas marami pa. Mula sa anekdota ni Dr. Raquiza, halimbawa, malinaw na marami sa mga tsuper ng taxi ay sumusuporta kay Duterte, ngunit sa ngayon, mas malinaw na may kontradiksiyon na rin sila. Dagdag ni Dr. Tolentino, naniniwala na sila na hindi naman dapat ipapatay ang mga sangkot sa iligal na droga dahil maaari naman silang ikulong. Dagdag niya, "[s]iguro, mas malinaw na ngayon tungkol doon sa 'stupid God' na tirada ni Duterte at iyung isyu sa mga tambay na anti-poor pa rin. Mahalaga ang pagkausap sa critical mass."

Ayon pa rin kay Dr. Tolentino, kahit sa hanay ng elit o sa uring intelekwal ay mayroon ding pagkakahati. Binanggit niya na sa panitikan ay mayroon ding mga tinatawag na 'ka-DDS (*Duterte Die-hard Supporters*),' ngunit hati rin sila. Bukod pa sa ideya na mapanghati ang mismong presidente, malaking hamon ang paglaban sa kanya. Malinaw na nagkakaroon na ng *snowball effect* na kahit siya mismo ay mahihirapang makalabas o maaaring hindi gumana ang binabalak niya para sa pipiliin niyang mga oligarko dahil mayroon na ring pagdududa sa bangkarote niyang paghahari. "We move forward to organize using the same tools that have been tested over time sa historical kinds of grounds. We arouse, organize, mobilize people to various kinds of causes and actions," pagtatapos niya.

Sa tingin naman ni Bb. Ariate, may mga pagkakataon na kayang pagkaisahin ang mga paksiyon ng Kaliwa. Isang halimbawa ay ang kampanya na bumuo ng isang *all-worker alliance*. Sa Mayo Uno, iisa ang malawakang panawagan na "*No to Contractualization*." May mga mithiin kung saan sinusubukang pagkaisahin ang iba't ibang mga organisasyon ng Kaliwa.

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# Marx and the Modern Working Class

BENJAMIN B. VELASCO

#### **Abstract**

In Marx's time, the industrial proletariat was the mass of workers who toiled in the mills, mines, and factories of that era. Today, of course, "industrial workers" are a minority in the totality of all wage laborers, the modern working class, which encompasses labor in sectors such as services and agriculture, and broadly includes informal workers. But the industrial regime of division of labor and mechanized production extends beyond manufacturing to large sections of agriculture and services. Moreover, all workers in the supply and value chains of companies—such as engineers, transport/logistics workers, and retail workers—contribute to the creation of value and surplus value. The changing and essential characteristics of the working class are bound up with the dynamics of capitalism. The proletariat will remain despite predictions of Industry 4.0 automation and despite the rise of the precariat.



"There will certainly be job disruption. Because what's going to happen is robots will be able to do everything better than us. ... I mean all of us." So quipped Elon Musk about the impact of automation and artificial intelligence on the world of work (Clifford 2017). Elon Musk is of course known as a "technology leader" who is the CEO of Spacex, which is planning to send a mission to Mars, and also of Tesla, which is building electric vehicles. Musk is not alone, as Industry 4.0 became a buzzword in the last couple of years.

An oft-quoted research on the impact of automation on employment was a 2013 University of Oxford study that concluded that 47% of jobs in the US were at risk of being automated in the next 20 years (Frey and Osborne 2013). Despite the hype, these projections of the end of work are not without salient critiques.

If the "end of work" under capitalism is near, then that puts into question Marx's idea that the working class is the agent of revolutionary change for socialism.

There are also proponents of the analysis that the "end of traditional work" is at hand. Meaning, the gig economy is replacing the established employee-employer relationship. A study by the software company Intuit projects that some 43% of jobs in the US will be freelancers or contingent by 2020 (Gillespie 2017). The book by Guy Standing, The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class (2011), has popularized the idea that an emerging precariat class is displacing the proletariat as we know it.

Again, if that is correct, then the atomized individuals comprising the precariat make problematic the conception that the proletariat's collective experience of exploitation and power at the point of production will be the basis of the struggle for socialism.

Interesting as the questions of "end of work" and "end of traditional work" are, I will not directly talk about them today. I propose to discuss a more modest topic—the changes in the character and composition of the working class.

That, of course, is very much related to the transformation today and tomorrow of the workers as a class. And finally, it has a direct bearing on the validity of Marx's assertion that there is such a class as the proletariat that is the revolutionary agent for socialism.

How have the character and composition of the working class changed over the past decades? Can we make sense of the transformations using the categories used by Marx some 200 years ago—like proletarianization, value, and surplus value?

Let us analyze this on an empirical basis. Looking at the labor force statistics in the Philippines (PSA 2018) and the US (US Bureau of Labor Statistics 2018), we see some interesting but maybe not surprising patterns. We use the Philippines and the US as representative of backward and advanced capitalist countries.

TABLE 4	Campariaan batusaan	tha labar faraa atatiatiaa in	the Dhilippines and the LIC
TABLE 1	Companson between	the labor force statistics in	the Philippines and the US

By class of worker and sector	Philippines (January 2018)	USA (2017)
Wage and salary workers (Formal sector)	25.8 million	143.7 million
Self-employed (Informal sector)	11.6 million	9.5 million
Unpaid family workers (Informal sector)	2.9 million	0.08 million

By sector	Philippines (January 2018)	USA (2017)
Agriculture	13%	1.6%
Industry	26%	22.8%
Services	60%	75.8%

The informal workers, or workers in the informal economy, are a large and significant section in the Philippines. The total of self-employed and unpaid family workers comes up to some 14.5 million. This is a little more than half of the formal sector, which is made up of the wage and salary workers who total 25.8 million.

In comparison, the wage and salary workers in the US constitute a whopping 143.7 million, dwarfing the number of workers in the informal economy, who constitute a minuscule 9.58 million.

This is illustrative of the advanced level of development of capitalism in the US, on one hand, and on the other hand, the utter backwardness of the economy of the Philippines.

Now shifting from "class of worker" to "industry employed," we see another pattern. In the Philippines, 13% of the wage and salary workers are in agriculture, 26% are in industry, and 60% are in services. In comparison, in the US, 1.6% of employed people are in agriculture, 23% are in industry, and 76% are in services.

The comparatively large section of the workers in agriculture in the Philippines is again an expression of the low level of capitalist development, in contrast to the high level in advanced capitalist countries like the US.

Yet, despite all the differences in the level of capitalist development, the services sector in both the Philippines and the US dominates the industry sector. The workers in the services sector are more than double the number of those in industry.

So, first, how do we conceive of the very significant number of workers in the informal economy in underdeveloped countries like the Philippines? Can they be considered part of the proletariat?

And second, how do we make sense of the dominance of service over industry in all capitalist countries, advanced or not?

If we go back to Marx's conception of the proletariat, it is that class of people who have been dispossessed of the means of production. Having no means of livelihood, the workers have to sell their labor power to the capitalists in return for wages.

Historically, the mass of workers came from the peasants who were made landless and migrated to the cities, and the artisans who were destroyed by the advent of manufacturing.

Now the workers in the informal economy—the urban and rural poor—earn a living and an income without working for a boss. The most visible of them are people who vend in the streets. They obviously do not receive a wage from an employer. Strictly then, they are not part of the working class.

Still, they are property-less, without ownership of any means of production. Furthermore, most of them would have experienced being traditional workers for part of their lives—that is, working as wage laborers for an employer for a period of their lives. If not, they are members of working-class families. Members of their immediate families would be living as workers laboring for an employer in return for wage.

For many political groups in the Philippines, organizing of the urban and rural poor is done around issues of livelihood and welfare, not employment in recognition of their particularity. Such organizing represents demands for social protection and expresses the desire of informal workers to be formal through coverage by social security and work standards.

While workers in the informal economy strive for formal protection, the formal sector workers are increasingly subject to informality through labor flexibility and precarious work. It can be seen that the boundary distinguishing the formal from the informal is getting blurred because of globalization.

Taking all these into consideration, the urban and rural poor or the workers in the informal economy can be broadly considered part of the working class. They can be categorized as the semi-proletariat. They are an important segment of the working class as a whole.

Now let us turn to the second question about the dominance of the services sector in the economy. In Marx's time, the traditional working class was clearly the mass of industrial workers laboring in the factories, mills, and mines.

Even during that early period of industrial capitalism, the workers were not just characterized by both being property-less and being wage-slaves. Aside from this fundamental nature of the proletariat, the industrial workers even during the time of Marx were defined by a regime of division of labor and mechanized production.

Thus, the industrial workers were a collective mass that was both an exploited class and a productive force. This gave the proletariat the power to paralyze capitalist production by withdrawing their labor at the point of production. This gave them the potential to be revolutionary agents for the struggle against capitalism. The potential became real with the rise of labor struggles, the growth of unionization, and the explosion of socialist revolutions.

Today, of course, the manufacturing or industrial workers constitute just a minority of the whole mass of workers. The vast majority are workers in the services sector.

Service workers are undoubtedly property-less wage earners laboring for a boss. Moreover, the trend is for service workers to be also working under the regime of both the division of labor and mechanized production.

Call center agents labor under a system of social division of labor that is organized on a global scale. They use high-end communications and computer devices in their routine work. Their work is heavily supervised. The metrics in the business process outsourcing (BPO) industry are the exact equivalent of the quota in the factories.

Retail workers in malls, department stores, and supermarkets likewise toil on a regimen of division of labor and mechanized production. Similarly, the crew in fast-food restaurants works under the same system of division of labor and mechanized production. McDonald's is known as the pioneer in using the assembly-line system used in factories for the restaurant industry.

Thus, similar to the position of industrial workers a hundred or so years ago, service workers comprise a collectivity with shared experiences of exploitation and the potential power to paralyze production.

If one takes a long view of capitalist development and the changes this has wrought on the working class, it is clear that the industrial system—the regime of division of labor and mechanized production—first conquered manufacturing. Then it moved on to agriculture. And since then, it has increasingly put services into the regime of mechanization and socialization.

Capitalism has developed mechanization and socialization in manufacturing or industry for the longest time, and so it has managed to increase productivity in this sector hugely. As a result, with a comparatively smaller number of workers, a bigger mass of goods is produced.

In contrast, labor productivity is not yet on the same level in services due to the comparatively lower level of mechanization. Thus, there is a much bigger number of workers in services compared to those in industry or manufacturing.

It is clear then that as capitalism evolves and develops, it creates, destroys, and re-creates sections of the working class.

Now a related issue about service workers is the question of the creation of value and surplus value. When Marx was writing *Das Kapital*, capitalism was manufacturing, agriculture was still feudal, and services were provided by artisans or professionals. Necessarily, he used the example

of workers producing thread from cotton, using spindles, to illustrate his concept of value and surplus value.

The value of commodities, Marx explained, came from the labor time embodied in the material goods produced by workers. Part of the value of commodities was dead labor or constant capital in the form of raw materials and machines. The other part was living labor. Living, breathing, toiling workers created new value. And out of the new wealth that was produced came the wages that they received and the surplus value or profit appropriated by the capitalists. In other words, out of the spring of living labor, or variable capital, flowed both wage and profit.

During Marx's time, the proletariat was basically composed of workers in the factories, mills, and mines producing material goods. But today, production of material goods is a comprehensive process that involves steps such as design and engineering; transport of raw materials, spare parts, and finished products; marketing of these commodities; and finally the wholesale and retail trade so that they finally end up in the hands of consumers.

Manufacturing is still an essential part. It must be said that manufacturing is not just done in factories but, as a consequence of the growth of informality and precarity, it includes to a significant extent the labor of home workers. The global supply chain extends to small shops and even to poor households where home workers suffer from the worst working conditions.

Manufacturing, in all its various forms, is just one step in a long value and supply chain in a mostly global system of production. The production chain incorporates the services sector.

In every step of the modern production process, value is created. Costs are incurred in the various stages of pre-production, production, and post-production. Workers in pre-production, like engineers, technicians, and scientists, impart value in the products. Transport workers add value to commodities as these commodities travel the length and breadth of the production chain. And wholesale and retail workers likewise increase the value through their labor-time. Without the labor of the post-production workers, commodities will not be sold and bought. Only when consumers finally buy the commodities can the value embodied in them be realized.

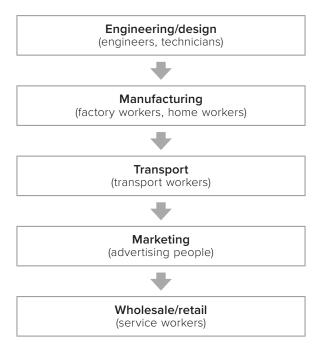


FIGURE 10 The modern production process

During Marx's time, there were no service workers, and products did not have to be designed. Commodities were simple goods that people had been making for thousands of years but then were manufactured in capitalist factories instead of artisanal workshops. These manufactured commodities were then sold by middle-class shopkeepers who did not usually employ workers in their enterprises, except for unpaid family workers. In modern-day capitalism, of course, shoes are not just shoes. They are designed for certain market segments and niches. And they are sold half away around the world from where they are manufactured. Finally, through the magic of advertising, shoes are marketed not as simple necessities but as a lifestyle choice!

In all these steps, productivity is highest in manufacturing, since this is the most mechanized, and is even automated with the use of robots. But capital seeks to increase productivity and tightly control workers all through the value chain, and so the factory system of division of labor and mechanized production is used more and more in all segments of the value chain, including services.

Different capitalists are engaged in the different steps of the modern production process. It is the rate of profit that mediates the relationship between the different capitals. More or less the same profit rate must be realized by the different capitalists. Except for those that exercise a monopoly power—global brands like Apple or Nike—over the supply-and-value chain. They extract a monopoly profit that is above the average rate of profit.

I assert then that a section of the service workers—not just workers in agriculture and industry—create value and surplus value because they are part of the modern production chain.

This implies, however, that another section of the service workers—those engaged in the reproduction of society, not in the production of commodities—does not participate in the creation of value and surplus value. Among such service workers would be workers in the education and health sectors. Work in these occupations is outside of the realm of the production process.

Yet work in education and health is undoubtedly useful and necessary to sustain life and society. Such is work at the point of reproduction. As is apparent from experience, workers in education and health are increasing labor under the factory system of mechanization and division of labor. Thus, organizing themselves into unions and for industrial struggles is becoming a prevalent phenomenon among education and health workers, together with other service workers and public sector workers. Even if their work does not create value and surplus value—because it is in the realm of reproduction, not production—workers in these sectors are no less part of the proletariat and increasingly engage in unionization and strikes.

To reiterate an earlier point, capitalism creates, annihilates, and reconstitutes the working class as it develops. It makes and remakes the proletariat. Sections of formerly independent professions or occupations—such as those in services—are proletarianized and become part of the working class. Despite the structural changes wrought by capitalist development, the working class retains its position as a collective mass with the objective and subjective potential to be the revolutionary agency for social change.

This, of course, is just one part—but a crucial element—of the debate about the proletariat as an agent for revolution. That bigger discourse about revolutionary agency deserves a longer discussion on another day.



# **Open Forum**

Rosalinda Pineda Ofreneo, Ph.D. (Retired Professor and former Dean, UP College of Social Work and Community Development) suggested to Mr. Benjamin Velasco that he should update the literature on informal sectors and the informal economy as it has been found out that there are more workers than ever who would fall under the category of informal employment. Even in the formal sector, there is informal employment. Strictly speaking, informal workers are those who are unregistered and/or have no social protection. Dr. Ofreneo further suggested that there should be inclusivity in organizing, an important lesson we should learn from other places such as Latin America and South Asia. Despite the different groups within the working class, any segment within the working class—from the workers of the garments industry who are at the bottom of the subcontracting ladder, to home workers, to store vendors, etc.—should be deemed "organizable" when it comes to forming unions. Finally, she stressed the need to create jobs in the light of the 4th industrial revolution, where 50% of the formal sector is projected to disappear, massively displacing workers.

**Mr. Benjamin Velasco** accepted the suggestions, although he insisted on the difference between formal and informal employment. He justified that when we speak of "wage" and "salary," these terms indicate the presence of an employer. Nonetheless, contractual work is a form of disguised employment that obscures the direct link of employment. He said there is still a lot that can be studied regarding this type of disguised employment.

TJ (family name and affiliation unidentified) believes that the proliferation of the precariat indicates a narrow definition of the proletariat based on the classical Marxist view. The definition of workers should not be confined to those who are under an employer-employee relationship. As a consequence of this, we might be constraining or limiting the scope of organizing among workers. For TJ, the solution is for all informal economy workers to build solidarity with other sectors—peasants, factory workers, service workers, etc.

**Mr. Velasco** clarified that, in a broad sense, those without employer-employee relationship can still be considered workers as long as they need to work to survive. However, we also need to distinguish the semi-proletariat from the proletariat. The latter have clear experience of capitalist exploitation because they are formally subordinated to the capitalists.

Although Mr. Velasco acknowledged the differences in the experiences of workers in various sectors, he noted that workers in the service sector are also subject to the same factory system in place in the

industrial sector. In the service sector, we can actually see the incidence of industrial struggles. He pointed out that, at present, there have been waves of strikes conducted by public school teachers—a strategy of industrial workers and a sign of the traditional struggle often attributed to these workers.

Michelle Licudine, who used to be part of the Philippine labor movement, suggested that we should appropriate Marx's insights to explain the nature of work in Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) in the service sector. For her, instead of explaining the said sector using classical Marxist theory in *Das Kapital* (e.g., surplus value), we should conceive of the whole Industrial Revolution as one industrial line that continuously develops and exploits all workers. Whether one works in the formal or the informal sector is secondary. The process will inevitably produce the informal sector because capitalists want to abdicate responsibility as much as possible. Secondly, there is a need to recognize that informal labor is evolving. There are now about one million home-based online workers—highly professional computer scientists, English tutors to foreigners, etc., that are now, arguably, the new face of employment. In a study in 2007, there were only about 1,000 people registered in Upwork, an online global freelancing platform. Today, there are over 200,000 people already registered in Upwork, which makes it harder for others to get in. Our mindset should be to organize all workers who are part of the entire industrial line, not just the formal workers.

Mr. Velasco conjectured that the situation may be different in the Philippine context. Recently, in the US, the Bureau of Labor Statistics released data that said the proportion of contingent workers (precariat) in the economy decreased from 10.7 to 8.1%, albeit the absolute number of contingent workers and the total number of employed increased. This contradicts the thesis of Guy Standing. There are also articles using such data that contest the possible hype about the precariat because there are visible forms of contingent workers in Uber and TaskRabbit, among others.

An Instructor from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines asked for Mr. Velasco's insights into contemporary organizing, particularly the changing landscape in relation to legalization, the globalization of production, and their practical implications for the labor movement. The instructor asked further: What should be the relation of the working class to the peasantry, especially in the Philippine context? For example, in the data presented, some segments of the semi-proletariat are in the countryside, not necessarily part of wage relations. Even among workers who have wage and salary, there is a significant number working in plantations who are not necessarily subjected to modern corporate capitalist relations. Even if one does not believe that the majority of Filipinos are peasants, it is still true that the peasantry constitutes a big portion of the exploited and oppressed in our society.

In response, Mr. Velasco stressed that it would be difficult for workers to win against the capitalist class without forging alliances with other oppressed classes in other sectors. There are, however, different kinds of alliances which we should be critical of. On the question of organizing, he cited the case of eco-zone workers in a Korean company in Cavite and how difficult it is to organize against Korean capitalists. As such, he believes that we need to explore a combination of traditional forms of organizing and the leveraging with global brands. For example, labor groups call out global brands for working with subcontractors who have been found to crush unions. This tactic is promising because global brands do not want to tarnish their multimillion reputation.

Matthew Ordoñez (Graduate Student, Shanghai Jiao Tong University) asked Mr. Velasco how he would situate his work in the light of conditions such as flexibilization in Asia or post-Fordism. As mentioned, the working class is not solely found in the factory or in industries. There are now informal economies producing different types of working class.

**Mr. Velasco** explained that the Fordist stage of capitalist development was precisely the period when the industrial workers dominated the working class as a whole—in factories, car manufacturing, steel

production, monopolies operating on the Fordist model inside and outside the US. The post-Fordist period accounts for the changing conditions where there is now a steady shrinking of industrial workers and an increase in the number of service workers.

One proposal is to treat the service workers as still part of the proletariat because they are subjected to the same factory system. And that same oppressive system will lead them to industrial struggles. Mr. Velasco said that he is critical of the emerging point of view that under post-Fordism the proletariat no longer have the power to resist, struggle, and transform capitalism because they have been transformed into either a precariat or freelancers in a gig economy who are atomized and uninterested in forming unions.

**An unidentified member of the audience** asked Mr. Velasco about the relevance of the labor theory of value in relation to full automation and Artificial Intelligence. In response, Mr. Velasco explained that robots are basically machines (dead labor) which also depreciate over use. Depreciation translates as production cost or value, which is transferred to or embodied in the commodities being produced.

What remains contested is the possibility of full automation under capitalism where human labor is superfluous and robots produce robots. Theoretically, this can happen. But when it does, there will be no more workers and no more buyers of the commodities. Because of this contradiction, full automation cannot happen under capitalism, but may unfold under socialism. This problem is something Elon Musk is aware of, and so he is an advocate of universal basic income. Since people would no longer have wages, then the government could provide their income.

Wilson Fortaleza (Member, Partido Manggagawa) shared that even Marx recognized the limitations of the labor theory of value due to the development of technology. Marx analyzed the economy and separated it into two departments—Department I, which is production, and Department II, which is consumption. If the products of Department I are not consumed, then capitalism will fall. The basis of surplus value is the speed at which goods are produced and how quickly they are bought by consumers in Department II. Capitalism is really bound to change; what workers and progressives should do is come up with new demands. The development of technology is not necessarily a problem as it can relieve people of labor-intensive jobs. What should be pushed for is the creation of jobs that are social in character, such as jobs in housing, health, environment, etc., to address the problem of workers being displaced by technology. If the demands do not come from the people, then capitalism will continue to produce technology that does not benefit the people and renders human labor superfluous. Hence, progressives should press for new demands because the old ones no longer suffice.

Mr. Velasco agreed that new demands must be crafted, such as the shortening of time of work, among others. He remained unsure whether full automation can happen under capitalism, because capitalists fear the loss of profit and surplus value the moment workers lose the capacity to buy commodities due to displacement by machines.

An unidentified male member of the audience asked: If full automation is at the same time the superfluousness of human labor, can we think of this stage as the end of capitalism, which is also the beginning of socialism?

In response, Mr. Velasco said he believes full automation cannot happen under capitalism; thus, people are not relieved of heavy jobs, and human labor is not spent on work that is social in character. In an article, the American information technology company IBM stated that it created Artificial Intelligence (AI), which was able to defeat a Jeopardy player, but that it did not continue developing AI afterwards. AI was not a profitable business model and was therefore not productive under capitalism. Full automation, because of its contradictions, will not be realized under capitalism, under an economic system where profit and surplus value are paramount.

Hansley Juliano (Lecturer, Ateneo de Manila University) pointed out that the model and maintenance of the technology are still subject to social relations. If the technology is still under the guise of private property—intellectual property rights as narrowly and as selfishly understood by technocorporations—it will really be used for the benefit and sustenance of capitalism, and we cannot achieve the social good that is possible for us.

Drawing from the discussion on informal workers and AI, Gerry Rivera (PAL Employees Association) asked the audience to imagine a pilotless airline flight and was curious if people would be willing to ride such a plane. Also, reflecting on his personal experience of losing his job and being bound to join the informal sector, he believes he is still part of the proletarian movement. For Rivera, the discussion should identify and focus on the supposed center of the struggle—the principles and ideology of the movement. In the end, it is the proletariat who will liberate themselves from their chains.

In response, **Mr. Velasco** argued that categories such as proletariat and semi-proletariat serve as boxes to describe reality. While these boxes can never fully capture the complexity of reality, they are still useful devices in any attempt at understanding society. In the end, we are one united workers' movement, hopefully one that is for socialism. Understanding the segments, differences, and categories within the movement makes it easier for us to build the united workers' front.

Citing driverless cars as an example, Mr. Hansley Juliano (Lecturer, Ateneo de Manila University) agreed that the development of AI has profound effects on society and brings a new set of philosophical and moral questions that have not yet been answered. On the question of forging solidarities and building alliances, Juliano believes that democracy might be the aspiration that will serve as the center and baseline of the struggle. As early as the 1980s, Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau already advanced a theory stating that, perhaps, there is a need to change the basis of alliances. The alliance should not be based on economic position in society but on political positioning. If the baseline is democracy, there are many people one can talk to and eventually convince to join the movement. The movement may be more effective if the basis is politics, representation, and people power, rather than busily drawing lines of distinctions, classifications, and categorizations.

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# Marxism and Religion: Experiences of Filipino Christians

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#### **Abstract**

In the mid-'60s, groups of Filipino Christians responded to the challenge of social reform and eventually of political revolution. In that process, how did they grapple with their understanding of their Christian faith in their encounters with Marxism as interpreted and practiced by Filipino Marxists? What were the similarities and differences in their experiences in two historical-political contexts: from the mid-'60s to EDSA 1986, and after EDSA 1986?



## Introduction: Marx on religion

"Religion is the opium of the people." This statement of Marx on religion is bound to be cited in any lecture on Marxism and religion. Marxists use it as their harshest criticism of religion: because it offers consolation, religion enables the oppressed to bear suffering passively instead of struggling actively to end their oppression.

But if we read that statement within the longer passages where it occurs, we get a more nuanced sense of Marx's view about religion. Marxist scholars note that the phrase "opium of the people" does not appear again in his other writings on religion.

Actually, Marx did not devote too much attention to criticizing religion. He believed that through Hegel, the criticism of religion, which for Marx was the prerequisite of all criticism, had been essentially completed in Germany. The religion he was referring to was Protestant Christianity, which, through the Reformation, was itself a critique of Roman Catholicism.

This is what Marx wrote on religion in his introduction to *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1994):

Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual *point d'honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, and its universal basis of consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realization of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality...

Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.

The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions. The criticism of religion is therefore, in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo.

I will let this longer passage of Marx's critique of religion speak for itself, since my talk is not about using Marx's ideas for an ideological critique of Christianity in the Philippines. The conservative role of Christianity, particularly Catholicism, is a fair target for a Marxist critique of religion, and I do not want to belabor an obvious topic.

Instead, my focus is on understanding the unexpected but established fact: During the martial law years under the Marcos dictatorship, tens of thousands of Filipino Christians took part in a revolutionary movement that was Marxist-led. To be precise, Maoist-led.

#### My focus and hypothesis

They came from different sectors—farmers and fisherfolk, workers and urban poor, student and community youth, professionals, even business. They had their personal and sectoral reasons for taking part in the struggle, but they also invoked their Christian faith. There were also people of the institutional church—priests and nuns, pastors and seminary students, parish pastoral workers, and leaders of basic Christian communities.

How do we interpret this phenomenon in the light of Marx's ideas on religion? Marx accepted the possibility that religion can be a moving spirit for protest. But he continued to be critical of it as an ineffective form of protest, judging it as neither realistic nor scientific.

How do we treat the testimonies of Filipino Christians that they involved themselves in the revolution because of their Christian faith? Shall we call them victims of self-deception?

Were they revolutionaries because they were Christians, or despite the fact that they were Christians?

#### An interplay of internal and external factors

My hypothesis is that Filipino Christians who got socially involved started with a social-reform orientation. Their eventual commitment to political revolution developed through an interplay of internal and external factors.

The internal factors were the thinking and the praxis (action-reflection) among them and within them, during the long process of deepening their initial "reform" orientation and praxis to a more radical orientation and praxis.

That radicalization process was hastened by a combination of two external factors. The first was repression under the Marcos martial law regime, which blocked the prospects of peaceful reform. I call this the "push factor" toward radicalization. This combined with a second, the "pull factor"—the strategy pursued by the Maoist-led revolutionary movement, which included the building of a mass movement and a broad united front that welcomed the participation of Christians.

We can apply the metaphor used by Mao Tsetung in his essay "On Contradiction" (1937). He wrote that the reason for change is internal. A stone will never hatch into a chick, no matter how long we place it in an incubator. But there are external conditions that are needed for change, conditio sine qua non. An egg will not hatch into a chick either unless a mother hen sits on it.

Mang Amading, a Cavite farmer leader, adds a humorous comment: "If we break the eggshell from the outside, the chick may not yet be ready to get out. Or it may have to get out at the wrong place, lalabas nang paurong. But if the chick itself breaks the eggshell from the inside, it will break at the right time and the right place."

Would that the processes were as neat and simple as the metaphor implies. But the historical interplay of the internal factors and external factors in the experiences of Filipino Christians was quite complicated.

## The long journey from reform to revolution

Let me tell the story of that process, using a framework based on what I personally experienced and observed. This approach has its limitations, but it follows the advice of Nicholas Taleb in Skin in the Game (2019). He says we should give less weight to formulations by those who have no stake in their stated positions, nor accountability for the consequences of their advocacies.

I divide the story roughly into three chapters.

The first chapter from 1964 to 1974 is the longest, because I want to trace in detail the complicated journey of Filipino Christians from an initial orientation to social reform to an eventual commitment to political revolution, in the form of resistance to martial law and repression by the Marcos regime.

The second chapter, from 1975 to 1985, is a shorter account about unity and struggle among Filipino Christians and Filipino Marxists within the revolutionary resistance: how their thinking about political and social transformation deepened, and how they took into account the expansion of the anti-Marcos movement beyond the revolutionary forces, including the competing orientations that these new forces brought with them.

The third chapter, about EDSA 1986 and its immediate aftermath, is the shortest: How did Filipino Christian and Filipino Marxist revolutionaries come to terms with what happened and how it happened, which was different from what they had imagined and expected?

Beyond the immediate aftermath of EDSA, there is a longer and more complex story that needs a separate paper to do it justice. And the story is still unfolding. If we use the same hypothesis of an interplay of internal and external factors, what are the significant changes in the external "push and pull factors," and how do they impact on the changes in the thinking and praxis of Filipino Christians?

## 1964-1974: The thinking and praxis of Filipino Christians

Why do I keep referring to "Filipino Christians" instead of Christian Filipinos? I think that many Christians in the Philippines consider being Christians, or Catholic, as their primary identity compared to their being Filipino. They see themselves as part of a global community of believers—even as part of a cosmic community, called the communion of saints, including their identity beyond life on this earth.

Using "Filipino" to modify Christian refers to the Filipinization and indigenization that Christianity has to undergo in the Philippines. In theological language, the Incarnation. In my younger days, I expressed this with the slogan: "Christ must become Filipino so that Filipinos can become truly Christians."

Historically, Christianity came to the Philippines with Spanish colonialism. It was the Spanish variety of Roman Catholicism, with its historical experiences of the Inquisition, the Reconquista that was completed in 1492, and the later Counter-Reformation. Those remote roots of anti-Islam and antiliberal attitudes cannot be ignored, even if we acknowledge that there have been welcome changes in Philippine Christianity.

The indigenization and Filipinization of Christianity is a distinct story, and it intersects with our main story—the journey taken by Filipino Christians from social reform to political revolution.

In search of a Filipino theology

After finishing my Masters in Philosophy in 1964, I was assigned as a regent to the St. Joseph Seminary in Abra. That year was the eve of the 400th anniversary of the Christianization of the Philippines in 1565. Hence, I shared the mood of critical self-reflection.

An article on "split-level Christianity" in the Philippines inspired and challenged me. It was written by Fr. Jaime Bulatao, and his analysis and proposed response argued in favor of the need for a genuine Filipino incarnation of Christianity, in place of what he criticized as dominantly colonial and clerical Christianity.

Around that time, other writings about Filipino identity and culture fed my inchoate intellectual passion. I identified with the nationalist ferment among the Filipino intelligentsia in their search for what is authentically Filipino in their specific fields of interest, in contrast to what is colonial. For us, Filipino was both a positive aspirational idea and a gegenüber (opposite) idea.

That idea was in my mind when I politely declined the offer for me to study theology in Rome. I wrote my superiors that I wanted to write a Filipino theology, and that I believed it would be better to do this by staying in the Philippines.

My theology studies started as the Second Vatican Council was ending. The winds and spirit of change could be felt in the seminary. I remember the opening message of Gaudium et Spes (1965): "The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts."

Grounding theology in the struggle for land and justice

During the 1960s, there were theological explorations that addressed the need to incarnate Christianity in Filipino culture and psychology. But what does it mean to be Filipino? "Filipino" was a contested concept. But while the concept was interesting, Marx would have criticized such an approach as idealist.

Fortunately, we found our grounding, literally, in land. We met the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF), a national organization of small farmers who were fighting for land reform. Its leader, Jeremias Montemayor, was a Catholic lawyer born into a landed family, who had taken up the cause of the farmers.

He made us see that the Filipino farmers and their struggle for justice and land reform were not peripheral or optional, but a central imperative of our faith as Filipino Christians. He argued that unless justice on the land issue is achieved, the Philippines cannot claim to be a Christian nation, no matter how full the churches are in Sunday masses, and no matter how long our religious processions are. I could add: no matter how many books we publish about Filipino theology.

Through our involvement with the farmers and their struggles, the social teachings of the church became alive in our hearts and minds. Jeremias Montemayor also had the gift of articulating a lay popular theology that gave us new insights into the biblical texts.

One example was his interpretation of Matthew 25:35-36: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

This is not simply a list of "corporal works of mercy" or humanitarian acts. No, they are salvific acts. In the gospel, they are the decisive grounds for judging if someone goes to heaven or to hell.

From personal to social to political

But individual acts are not enough, once we realize that hunger is a social phenomenon and that we need to address its structural causes. Hence, the imperative is to engage in social action, which includes needed political action.

We learned from the FFF that political action, to be both moral and effective, must "combine the power of principle with the principle of power." The power of principle gives us the confidence that what we are fighting for is not only legitimate self-interest, but serves a larger cause like social justice. This strengthens our resolve and courage, because we are confident that what we are fighting for is morally right and for a greater good.

But if the power of principle is to prevail, we must combine it with the principle of power. Since the farmers have no military or monetary power, they need to harness what power they have—their numbers. But they must be organized and led effectively. They also need to develop alliances with other sectors of society.

Although we did not think of it in those terms, Marx would consider that what we were doing was closer to a materialist approach.

Radical seeds within social reform

In hindsight, what we took to heart were the more radical principles in the social encyclicals. The FFF made those radical principles come alive, even if its own politics was quite reformist, not oppositionist, and even if it was ambivalent about revolution. But its practice was more radical than its rhetoric, unlike other Catholic-inspired initiatives. The FFF consistently emphasized the role of organizations of farmers as the main force for achieving social justice on the land issue.

The hostile resistance of landlords, plus inaction or negative action by government, would nurture those seeds of radicalism among those who took them to heart. This was true especially among the youth. The Khi Rho Movement had started at the University of the Philippines Los Baños as a campus cursillo renewal program, but after linking with the FFF, the members of Khi Rho took up the cause of the farmers. They had an immersion program for students to get them involved in DAO—documentation, articulation, organization.

In 1969, the members of Khi Rho proposed a more militant action to solve hundreds of land cases unacted upon by government. Together with the FFF, they organized a marathon picket at the Luneta's Agrifina Circle for over 50 days to pressure government to act on those land cases.

The government initially ignored them. I joined the group of students and farmers who barged their way into the Malacañang presidential palace. I can recall sitting on the floor carpet during the dialogue that followed, wondering what would happen next. Whatever their reason was, the government officials agreed to set up a panel to hear and act on the land cases.

We went around different colleges to mobilize the support of students. Some of them decided to work full time at Agrifina. I recall one funny and awkward moment. A student who dropped out of her classes was visited by her mother, a professional psychologist. She told her daughter: "Look at those priests and nuns. Do you think that they are motivated by theology and social justice? They are celibates sublimating their repressed sexual energies!" I wondered if the disciples of Herbert Marcuse would agree.

#### Liwanag at dilim

As the midterm elections drew near, we decided to end the picket. Many land cases had been resolved; many more were not. Public and political attention was shifting to the elections. We were running out of resources, and frankly quite fatigued.

Instead of going home silently and separately, our group decided to have a dramatic departure liturgy. We took some torches from a nearby political rally and marched around Agrifina Circle, bravely singing our songs of struggle, while inside us was a sinking feeling that we were ending that particular struggle with limited gains.

The rallyists asked me to give the short closing talk. As I looked at them, around 200 huddled together, their group looked so small against the vast dark night sky. It was not a time for easy words of hope.

I don't remember the exact words, but the gist of my message was this:

Why are we here, a small group holding our torches? Do we think that we can dispel the darkness of the night? No, that would take millions of torches. The massive problems we face will not be overcome by a few. We need many, many more.

Why do we hold our torches here in the night? So that there is enough light to see our companions beside us, and reassure ourselves that we are not alone in the dark. Because what we fear is not so much the dark, but being alone in the dark.

And from afar, others will see our small brave group, and will be inspired to join. For it is easier for others to join a group that has taken a stand, instead of starting by themselves. So let us believe and imagine in our mind's eye that there are many other groups who are holding their torches in the dark. The time will come when our scattered lights will merge and be powerful enough to dispel the darkness.

## 1970: Encountering Marxism through a storm

There is enough Philippine literature on the First Quarter Storm (FQS) and its impact. Little has been written about another storm that the FQS generated, within Christians like us who were already involved in struggles for reform.

From the point of view of conservative Christians, we were already considered radical. But from the point of view of radicals, we were considered reformists, and self-admittedly so. The following text from the 1967 papal encyclical *Populorum Progressio* reflects our ambivalence about revolution:

There are certainly situations whose injustice cries to heaven. When whole populations destitute of necessities live in a state of dependence barring them from all initiative and responsibility, and all opportunity to advance culturally and share in social and political life, recourse to violence, as a means to right these wrongs to human dignity, is a grave temptation.

We know, however, that a revolutionary uprising—save where there is manifest, longstanding tyranny which would do great damage to fundamental personal rights and dangerous harm to the common good of the country-produces new injustices, throws more elements out of balance and brings on new disasters. A real evil should not be fought against at the cost of greater misery.

Yet by the eve of the FQS, our frustrations with the limitations of reform opened many of us to consider more radical options. This was reinforced by reflections on readings, like Paolo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Saul Alinsky's Rules for Radicals. But the process was still organic and internal to our Christian activist circles.

The First Quarter Storm unleashed from outside our circles a challenge that we could not ignore. The message—about the futility of reforms and the need for revolution—was sharp and uncompromising. It was delivered in language that was secular, angry, and Marxist. The FQS activists' forms of public protests were more confrontational.

Those of us who focused on farmers and spent more time in rural areas were initially shielded from the full impact of the FQS. According to the national democratic line, farmers are the main force, and agrarian reform is the main democratic content of the revolution, but the visible FQS activities happened mainly in cities and mobilized mostly students and urban sectors.

The greater and more immediate impact of the FQS was on the Christian youth in the cities, especially those who were just starting to ask themselves what kind of witness their faith was asking of them in response to the call for revolution.

## Christian responses to the First Quarter Storm

One group of young Christians requested my help for them to decide on their Christian response. They couldn't ignore the FQS call, but they couldn't identify with it either. They were like the disciples gathered in an upper room, wondering about people on the streets who were speaking in strange tongues. Could they even think that the Holy Spirit was there?

Other groups of more seasoned Christian activists had a different request. They had no problem with adopting the national democratic line, its analysis, strategy, and vision. Some had even joined militant secular organizations. But they wanted to maintain their Christian identity, and felt they needed help to reconcile their radical political choice with their religious faith.

I was not their chaplain and not yet part of the national democratic movement, but felt a responsibility to help them, since they had already made their choice with prospective risks. It would be unfair to let them face those risks while remaining conflicted within.

Their fellow national democratic activists were not helpful, even dismissing their concern for their Christian faith as a reactionary residue. They were told that sooner or later they would become fully Marxist anyway, and join the Communist Party of the Philippines.

They knew that the movement they had joined was led by Marxists who formulated the national democratic political line by "applying the universal principle of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought to the concrete analysis of the concrete situation of the Philippines." There was no way Christians should baptize that *post factum*. They read available theological literature about taking radical options, but in the abstract. This national democratic political line was existential and concrete, and urgent.

In that conjuncture, the political theology of Johannes Baptiste Metz proved helpful. I used his framework to guide those who had already taken the radical political option and yet wanted to justify it as a legitimate moral choice for Christians.

I summarized the ideas of Metz in three steps.

First, we should not identify Christianity with particular sociopolitical systems or strategies, even if they claim to be Christian. Historically this has happened with varieties of conservatism and reformism.

Second, we can't swing to an ultraliberal attitude that considers all proposed strategies and visions as equally imperfect and sinful in the light of the utopian reign of God. We cannot just say: "Choose whichever, and respect each other's choice."

Third, we need to discern together and arrive at what we judge as closer to the values of the reign of God at this particular historical moment. Our choice should neither be absolute nor arbitrary. In Metz's words, we must make a "provisional but not arbitrary choice." For Christians in the Philippines in 1971, that was the national democratic political line.

The members of the Student Christian Movement (SCM) renamed themselves *Kilusang Kristiyano ng Kabataang Pilipino* and chose a slogan that reflected the resolution in their minds: "Love your neighbor. Serve the people. Struggle for national liberation and democracy."

#### Christian Natdems, Socdems, Letdems

Other Christian activists reacted to the FQS and national democracy by formulating a rival political line, which they called social democracy or "socdem." They invoked Christian and church support for their choice, which led Marxist national democrats to denounce them as "clerico-fascists." Neither term was really accurate. But for the purpose of this paper, we need not discuss this response further.

What I will discuss is the response of Christian activists with whom I worked more closely, in the FFF and Khi Rho. We were not hostile to Marxist national democrats and had dialogues with them, but we also wanted to develop our own radical response autonomously, even if we could not articulate it comprehensively. For us, the important Christian-Marxist dialogue was the one within us, between our own understanding of Christianity and our own understanding of Marxism. Our primary concern was neither theology or ideology. Our focus was on strategy and tactics. Our dialogue was not really systematic, but eclectic.

After the FQS, we studied whatever Marxist literature we got. We even printed and distributed our own pamphlet of selected articles from Mao: "On Contradiction." "On Practice." "The Chinese Revolution." "Combat Liberalism." We also read the Little Red Book.

Paolo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed introduced us not only to a critique of the traditional "banking" education, but also to a critique of radical political education practices that are top-down and prescriptive, instead of being dialogical. That may have reinforced the populist tendencies among our ranks, expressed as: "Let the people decide." Hence, we were called "letdem."

Historically, our focus was on rural issues and our work was mainly with the Catholic churches. We were introduced to urban issues and to ecumenism through the community organizing program in Tondo sponsored by PECCO, the Philippine Ecumenical Council for Community Organization. We were introduced to the ideas of Saul Alinsky and his conflict-confrontation method of organizing people for power. I think that there were populist and anarchist elements in his thinking in Rules for Radicals and Reveille for Radicals.

In the 1971 midterm elections, nontraditional parties like the Kamayan Party in Davao and the Partido Kabus in Bais, Negros Oriental, fielded farmer leaders as candidates. Their electoral failures reinforced our disaffection about the prospects of peaceful change through elections.

#### Christians for National Liberation

By 1972, the majority of Filipino Christians we worked with had arrived at a decision to adopt the national democratic political line. I don't recall when we decided to form an alliance which we called Christians for National Liberation (CNL), but I remember that we deliberately chose "national liberation" rather than "national democracy" for our name, in reference to the theology of liberation. On February 17, the feast of Gomburza (Mariano Gomez, Jose Burgos, and Jacinto Zamora, the three Filipino Catholic priests who were executed in 1872 by Spanish colonial authorities), we held our first public march to their monument in Plaza Roma, in Intramuros, Manila.

In late August 1972, we had our CNL founding congress. Caloy Tayag led the rousing ritual cheer as we ended the congress. That was his Benedictine sense of liturgy. From that founding congress, we marched to join the protest action on the Plaza Miranda bombing and the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus.

Many national democrat activists saw CNL as a potential Christian counterpart of the secular, Marxist-led Movement for Democratic Philippines (MDP). But the possibilities for pursuing that plan were scuttled when martial law was declared in September, much sooner than most of us anticipated.

Instead, the unintended effect of martial law was to accelerate the full integration of Filipino Christian activists, politically and organizationally, into the structures of the national democratic movement.

#### Martial law: Christian-Marxist unity in the resistance

Martial law and repression focused the dialogue among Marxists and Christians on the more urgent political question—resistance or collaboration, including critical collaboration. For the majority of the population, the initial option was to "wait and see."

Among Marxists, the CPP immediately called for organizing an anti-fascist united front against the "US-Marcos dictatorship." The older Marxist party, the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP), eventually entered into a compromise with the Marcos regime. The majority of Christian church leaders, as expected, called for collaboration, but a minority took a critical stand.

The national democratic movement had the advantage of having a general strategy that provided orientation and organization for possible repression: Go to the countryside to join the armed struggle. Avoid immediate urban armed action. Build an urban underground and a broad anti-fascist alliance. Generate an open protest movement.

In the early months, I worked on CNL's fledgling publication *Pilipinas*. Our team drew hope from the role of the *Kalayaan* newspaper, which was judged responsible for the rapid expansion of the Katipunan. That may explain a "mystical moment" I experienced while I was doing research for an article. I saw an old photograph of Filipino revolutionaries posing before going to battle. Then I saw another photograph from that era—American occupation soldiers posing proudly like hunters with trophies from a safari hunt, a pile of dead bodies of Filipino revolutionaries.

At that moment, I felt a deep connection to those Filipino revolutionaries, alive and dead. I thought, "They had no way of knowing that I would be among those continuing their unfinished struggle 70 years later. Let us also believe that there will be Filipinos whom we do not know, who will continue whatever we leave unfinished." For me, it was a moment of faith, a secular faith, but a source of hope during those uncertain times.

Joining the armed struggle was an option to all who accepted the national democratic strategy of "surrounding the cities from the countryside." I considered returning to my home province of Mindoro. But some party cadres from Southern Tagalog instructed me to stay in Metro Manila, to work with the Preparatory Committee of the National Democratic Front.

Without that assignment, I could have been part of former KASAPI (Kapulungan ng mga Sandigan ng Pilipinas) Christian activists who went on their own to Mindoro. Within a few months, many of them were killed during the test mission of a graduation class of Scout Rangers.

Their deaths inspired Caloy Tayag to write one of his more memorable lines of poetry. He combined a Maoist saying about death with the Filipino expression for grieving, "*mabigat sa loob*," while alluding to Calvary: "Your deaths weigh heavy on us, like a mountain."

#### Struggles within unity in the resistance

Christian faith and the Party

In the Visayas, a priest-friend joined the NPA to expand the guerrilla zone in his home province. At the stage of consolidation, his political officer asked him to join the CPP. He was open to accept such a leadership responsibility, but asked about the requirements. When he was questioned about his religious beliefs, he admitted to having them, and asked: "Is that a problem?" The party cadre explained that religious beliefs impede their organizing work, since those beliefs make people depend on a power outside them rather than on their own power. The priest argued back: "But compared to the other units, I have mobilized more people."

The party leadership eventually resolved that having religious beliefs did not disqualify him from being a candidate, or even a regular party member. After all, the law of contradiction applies also to religious ideas. But the party expected that his religious ideas would eventually "wither away."

When we had a chance to meet and talk about his experience, I speculated that his political officer could be a former seminarian who was himself conflicted about his religious beliefs. But he posed a question about something we both studied academically: "Did Christ really rise again from the dead?" We both accepted this article of faith, but our exposure to Marxism made us ask for acceptable proof. For him the question was more existential, since in his assigned work, the risk of losing his life was constant.

We did not seek or need an easy answer. But he expressed the need to pursue such questions, in a space that couldn't be provided by his party collective. Some activist priests who heard his story proposed to set up an independent organization. They called it Christian Revolutionary Forces. They asked for help to establish coordination with the NPA, but the initiative did not survive the arrest of its proponents.

## Christian faith and armed struggle

An Anglican priest told me that he posed another question about armed struggle to Fr. Conrado Balweg, SVD (Society of the Divine Word), when the latter was with the NPA, before he left to set up the Cordillera People's Liberation Army (CPLA). "Don't you think that armed struggle is a sin?" the Anglican priest asked. He said that Balweg's answer was: "It may be a sin. But I believe that it is a sin that can be forgiven."

I recalled that answer when I heard what happened to Nilo Valerio, an SVD priest who joined the NPA. The village where his unit was staying was attacked by the military and he was killed in the firefight. When the soldiers found out that they had killed a priest, they cut off his head, chopped his body, and scattered the chopped parts in different areas. We still don't know where.

Thinking of Nilo, I appropriated a phrase that Martin Luther used in a different context: Simul justus et peccator, "simultaneously just and sinful." As Nilo fought to defend the people in the village against the military, his act was just, because he sought to save lives. But the same act would also have taken the life of a soldier. Unless we take a partisan approach to the value of life, and consider an enemy's life worthless, the same act can be both just and sinful.

When I shared these reflections with Christians who had experience fighting in the field, their simple response was: We don't worry too much about such questions. Once the shooting starts, our minds concentrate on fighting well and staying alive.

## 1975–1985: The thinking and praxis of Filipino Christians

I was arrested in December 1974, so my knowledge of later developments depended on news from visitors and newly arrested prisoners. One highlight was the 1975 La Tondeña strike, which would be followed by others, defying the strike ban of the martial law regime. Another was the noise barrage to protest the manipulated 1978 election results for the Interim Batasang Pambansa.

The debate about boycott or participation in the 1978 elections presaged future inner party debates about the proper place of electoral participation and legal mass movements in the national democratic strategy of a protracted people's war. From another starting point, Filipino Christians who were not national democrats started to consider the place of armed actions in their strategy of nonviolent resistance.

After more than five years in prison, I was released in 1980 on condition that I should go to Rome to study theology. The irony was not lost on me. My superiors wanted to know if I was still a Christian or had become a Marxist. I answered that the influence of Marxism on me was such that if there was no historical experience of Christ, I would find it difficult to talk about God. We had a long and searching discussion, but they finally conceded that I was still a Christian, although not very orthodox.

In 1981, after one year in Rome, I asked to be allowed to return to the Philippines. This was after the formal lifting of martial law and after the Pope's visit to my home country. Reconnecting with the movement, I learned about the increased participation of Filipino Christians, both in the steadily growing open legal mass movements and in the national underground organizations that were at their core.

## Second CNL congress

The increased participation of Filipino Christians in the movement became very evident in the church sector when the CNL held its second national congress in 1981. At our first CNL congress in 1972, we represented hundreds. At the second CNL congress, the delegates represented thousands. The founding congress was an initiative by Christian national democrats working in legal organizations. At the second congress, all the delegates were Christian activists who were fully integrated into the national democratic underground under party leadership.

Given the composition, we did not need to dwell on the general tasks we shared as part of the national democratic movement. Our more interesting discussion was on what were our specific tasks as Filipino Christians, especially as church people.

Related to that, we asked ourselves: What is the legitimate interest of Christians that will be served by the revolution and its hope for victory? The farmers expect to own the land they till, and the workers expect that they will eventually own the factories. What do Christians expect to gain as Christians? It would be arrogant to say that unlike these sectors, we have no interest for ourselves except to serve the people.

The proposition we discussed was that our specific interest was the transformation of our churches along national democratic principles. This meant that churches should become more authentically Filipino, and their governance should be more democratic and participatory, especially for lay members and women.

How would this interest be served by the victory of the national democratic revolution? The experience of the Aglipayan Philippine Independent Church (PIC) was instructive. Although it took over the Catholic churches after the Spanish friars left, claiming that those churches had been built by Filipinos, the US colonial government returned the properties to the Roman Catholic Church as their legal owner. Aglipay's appeal to be recognized as in communion with Rome was refused by the Vatican. Hence, the PIC became a schismatic Catholic church.

I said that if the revolution were to win, there was a better chance that the Vatican would recognize our transformed church. I was thinking of the Catholic church. The Protestant delegates had a different ecclesiology, and they teased us: Why worry about being recognized by Rome? Just form a new church. Then you can make celibacy optional.

## Transforming the churches

The CNL congress adopted a resolution on "the national democratic transformation of the churches." I was curious about what the CPP's reaction would be. I can't recall how we sent the query and how we got the response. But the gist of what we were told was this:

After the revolution, there are only three options about the churches. First, deal with the churches as they are, without changes. That is not acceptable. Second, try to eliminate the churches. That is impossible. So, only the third option makes sense transform the churches. But that is not the task of communists. That is the task of Christians.

However, many CNL members were "on special assignment." Instead of working with the church sector, they accepted tasks in fields and sectors outside the churches. Only those CNL members who worked in the church sector were able to pursue the path opened by the CNL congress for the transformation of theology, liturgy, pastoral work, and ecclesiology.

I think that the idea of developing a Philippine "theology of struggle" was favorably influenced by the CNL discussions. The other favorable factor was the expansion of open legal work with its own dynamism, not tied only to the priorities determined by the underground. This growth of the open legal movement, and the expanding space for open struggles, also stimulated new thinking about the strategy and tactics of the national democratic struggle and the relationship of the underground and the open legal movement.

## 1975–1985: The thinking and praxis of Filipino Marxists

Filipino Christians in the national democratic movement accepted the leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines over the armed and underground struggle. But they also looked to Filipino Marxists as better positioned to lead in the overall development of the strategy and tactics of the whole national democratic movement, including the open legal struggle.

My understanding of the developments in this period is limited by my being arrested again in 1982, only one year after my return to the Philippines from Europe. Again, our group of political prisoners depended on those who were allowed to visit us in prison. But compared to my first detention, our visitors had more access to political developments as the open legal movement expanded, together with alternative media.

The advance of the rural armed struggle and the growth of the urban underground was also accompanied by the growth of the open legal struggles, and the expansion of the anti-Marcos alliance. These positive developments posed questions regarding the previous formulation about principal and secondary forms of struggle and organization.

I was still in Europe when I first heard the news of a proposed reformulation of the national democratic strategy as three strategic combinations of struggles: rural and urban struggle, armed and legal struggle, homeland and international struggle.

After coming back home, I attended an informal briefing about what was tentatively called "Ten Theses." I remember some of those theses: There is greater capitalist development compared to what was implied in the term "semi-feudal." There is a much greater extent of urbanization visà-vis the rural. There is a more significant number and a bigger role of the middle class. Electoral politics continues to have a significant role and appeal. The same is true of the influence and role of organized religion.

The key word is "more." In Marxist terms, the question is whether such quantitative changes would eventually lead to qualitative changes that would need adjustments of the national democratic strategy and tactics.

Before my arrest, among my special assignments was to work with Horacio "Boy" Morales on two major initiatives. One was to redesign the National Democratic Front so that the other independent underground and armed forces would find it acceptable to join. Another was to build the broadest legal alliance of all who were actively opposing the Marcos regime.

Our work was cut short by our arrest and detention in 1982. But even from prison, we could sense the growing momentum of the open legal mass movement. This escalated after the assassination of Ninoy Aquino. Those developments posed a new challenge to the national democratic movement and the party leadership. While it was the biggest and most organized force against the Marcos regime, its orientation was for the long haul. Its goal was not just to overthrow Marcos but to do it in a way that would lead to a radical transformation of Philippine politics and society.

But the broadening of the opposition ranks also brought other competing perspectives, with limited goals and shorter time frames. While the revolutionary movement had expanded its leadership in the broad opposition movement, the unity of the broad movement was based primarily on removing Marcos from power.

From inside prison, we tried to contribute to the discussions and debates about the direction and perspective of the broad movement, proposing "new politics" and "popular democracy" as possible articulations.

Who could have predicted that Marcos would be deposed in the way that it happened, with credit and corresponding political benefits being attributed to different participants, while marginalizing the national democratic forces?

Some Filipino sayings, neither Christian nor Marxist, capture the anxiety and the sad truth about what happened: *Iba ang nagsaing at naghain; iba ang kumain. Daig ng maagap ang masipag.* 

#### EDSA 1986 and its aftermath

We can appropriate the term First Quarter Storm from 1970 to describe the events immediately leading to EDSA 1986.

In rapid sequence from January to March, we had snap elections, massive nonviolent protests against the election results, an aborted military action against Marcos, military rebels making a stand inside two military camps, and thousands of people from all walks of life filling EDSA to protect the military rebels and express the people's rejection of Marcos. Negotiations led to the US government flying Marcos out of the country to Hawaii. Corazon Aquino took over as the new President.

I was among the many political prisoners who were released, much earlier than we had hoped for. As soon as I walked out of the military camp, journalists asked me: "How do you feel about what has happened?" My answer was: "Obviously, I am happy to be free."

They followed up with more difficult questions: "You are an activist. You do not judge an event simply because you personally benefited from it. What about land reform? Will it happen under the new President who is from a landed family? What about the rebels being bombed in Mindanao? Will democracy lead to a peace agreement? What about the elite who were with the Marcos dictatorship and quickly shifted to the restored democratic government? Should they not be held accountable?"

Is it a people power revolution, or mainly a restoration of pre-martial democracy?

#### The Magnificat and EDSA

"Deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles. Esurientes implevit bonis at divites dimisit inanes." He has put down the mighty from their throne and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things and has sent the rich away empty.

I have used those biblical lines from the *Magnificat* to interpret EDSA in religious and popular language: what happened, what we hoped would happen, and what did not happen. Like Filipino sayings, they speak their own truth, though they may fall short of the articulation in analytic and scientific language associated with Marxism.

For Filipino Christians who held on internally to their national democratic orientation, the two external factors that helped them in their journey toward radical politics underwent significant changes. The outright authoritarianism of martial law as the "push factor" was not there anymore. In its place was

what Latin Americans would describe as "democradura"—an uneasy alliance of anti-Marcos conservative democrats, those who switched sides whom we baptized as "born-again democrats," and a few liberal democrats.

Without the sharp edge of an anti-Marcos struggle, the national democratic movement faced the challenge of repositioning itself in a post-Marcos democracy. The continuing debates within the movement and party also weakened the "pull factor" for Filipino Christians, most of whom were in the open legal movement.

The effort to reposition the national democratic project and movement was short-lived. After the failed peace talks, the CPP called for an overthrow of the "US-Aquino regime." On its part, the government escalated its counter-insurgency campaign, targeting not just the NPA and the underground, but even legal progressive leaders. This put the legal mass movements in a bind, especially those who wanted to continue exploring possible "critical collaboration" with those whom they considered as reformers in the coalition government.

Not so well known were the dynamics internal to Filipino Christians. The conservative church leaders, who tolerated activist members during the struggle against Marcos, pressured them to return to regular pastoral work, on the grounds that the extraordinary circumstances that justified extraordinary involvement were not present anymore.

An alternative direction was offered by the Second Pastoral Council of the Philippines (PCP II) to Filipino Catholics: Pursue reforms through programs that are integrated into church institutions, and not through secular and radical movements. An example of this was renaming basic Christian communities (BCC) as basic ecclesial communities (BEC).

The developments after 1986 were complex and fast changing. We can appreciate the difficulty faced by Marxist efforts to do a concrete analysis of the concrete situation, an analysis that could chart an alternative path for those who did not want to limit themselves to defending the gains of a liberalconservative democracy that was pursuing a neoliberal economic strategy.

Such a difficult task becomes more difficult if the debates over analysis and strategy are accompanied by diminished trust in one another, due to unresolved issues and mistakes that are unacknowledged.

Debates and divisions among Filipino Marxists have an impact also on those Filipino Christians who remain committed to a radical transformation of society, and who believe that Christian-Marxist cooperation is integral to this task.

#### Kairos International

In 1989, I co-anchored an international process of reflection by Christians who were involved in some form of partnership with liberation and progressive movements—in South Africa and Namibia, in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador, in South Korea and the Philippines.

All their respective Marxist partners were engaged in reviewing their strategies, to take into account the changing situation in their countries and in the world, symbolized by the Berlin Wall and Tiananmen Square.

We called this the Kairos International project. One of my conclusions was that our task as Christians was "Renewing our spirituality and strategy for justice." To renew included revisiting the original sources of our spirituality and strategy, to draw what resources we could still draw from them. To renew also called on us to tap new sources for inspiration and new directions.

"Life can only be understood backwards. But it must be lived forwards."

This aphorism from Søren Kierkegaard applies to my closing reflections.

Thank you for the invitation to share my understanding of our experience as Filipino Christians about Marxism and religion in our journey from reform to revolution. This came after an earlier invitation from the SVD Verbum journal to do something similar, but from a Christian point of view. This is more challenging because I have to include also a Marxist point of view. I hope this encourages others to join the continuing conversation about the lessons we can learn from the life we lived back then.

But life must be lived forwards. We need to enrich and expand our vocabulary, both Christian and Marxist, for navigating our course in the current situation characterized by the trendy acronym VUCA volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.

What are some items for our dialogue of life, forwards?

Drink from our own wells

A Christian-Marxist dialogue for our times can borrow an insight from interfaith dialogue, about the equal need for intra-faith dialogue. Oftentimes, those who reach out to other groups can lose touch with their own base community. While Christian-Marxist dialogue is needed, there is also a need for dialogue internal to Filipino Marxist activists, and internal to Filipino Christian activists. There is also such a thing as a Christian-Marxist dialogue within each one of us. And there are other dialogue partners.

Christian activists have benefited from Marxist sources and tools, but this does not excuse us from the task of developing our own tools and insights. This is not an advocacy for separation or competition. This is a call for autonomy and initiative, which will also improve communication with fellow Christians, e.g., use of the Pastoral Circle.

Activists from both the Christian and the Marxist tradition give a premium to agency, and an actor-centered approach to development and change. The Marxist tradition seeks to ground our action through an analysis of structural limits and possibilities. This can temper tendencies to voluntarism. But an emphasis on structures, which may take too long to analyze and which may appear intractable, can result in inaction. A conjunctural analysis and a conjunctural approach offer a useful corrective.

The Christian principle of "a preferential option for the poor" can benefit from using the Marxist tool of class analysis. During martial law, the acronym PDOE was an approximation—the poor, deprived, oppressed, exploited. Compassion for the poor as helpless may reinforce a paternalistic attitude. Understanding the meaning of "exploited," as those who can produce surplus that is appropriated by others, provides the logic for a strategy of empowerment.

Marxism is heir to the Enlightenment, which emphasized the scientific at the expense of the religious, and even at the expense of the artistic and the emotional. But science in psychology and motivation have advanced beyond the reductionist understanding of how consciousness and decisions are related to material and social conditions.

Justice, peace, and sustainability

Justice usually involves partisan struggle, including different forms of armed struggle. The exhibit on Nelson Mandela's 100th anniversary explained that, from the start, the strategy of the African National Congress (ANC) was to use armed struggle to pressure the apartheid regime to a negotiated outcome, with international pressure as an integral factor. I do not know if the tactical call for peace negotiations will lead to a strategic rethinking of armed revolution.

Christians who are strategically committed to peace-building challenge us to deepen our understanding of justice in relation to peace. Our guiding mantra, and the truth it bears, has traditionally been "Peace is the fruit of justice." Friends from Balay Mindanaw have posed to me the question: How do we explore, in theory and practice, another mantra, "Peace as a path to justice"?

There is widening and deepening awareness of the importance and urgency of issues related to ecology and climate change. From the Johannesburg formulation about climate and ecological justice that it is a "common but differentiated responsibility"—the discussion has advanced to discussing what system change is needed to address climate change. For Catholics, Pope Francis's Laudato Si has brought together the issues of justice and ecology as both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. If the color of the struggle for justice is red, and the color of environmental activism is green, what is our color? Are we like watermelons, green on the outside, but still red on the inside?

#### A spirituality for the long revolution

Raymond Williams has described the aspirations for the desired transformation of politics, economy, and culture as "the long revolution." I don't recall his answer when he was asked how this relates to "the short revolution" that still occupies the imagination of radical political activists.

The varieties of Marxist strategies include capture of state power as key to social transformation. Hence the tendency to prefer central command of any political struggle. As I reflect on the theory and practice of Filipino Christians, then and now, with our bias for local community empowerment and people's participation, I wonder about the truth of what Ka Dodong Nemenzo was supposed to have said, that the Philippines and Filipinos have an affinity for anarchist tendencies. Not in the sense of direct violent action against the elite and the system (as symbolized by Simoun in El Filibusterismo), but as favoring diffused initiatives that are horizontally connected, rather than vertically—or, using the architecture of the web, coordinating these diverse initiatives around different hubs.

How do we eat an elephant? Bit by bit. Gandhi had a related idea of transforming the huge nationstate of India, village by village. Are the many local practices searching for an overall strategy and theory? In Galing Pook, we recognize many examples of good participatory local governance as "islands of hope." How do we scale up toward a whole "archipelago of hope"?

I cannot end without acknowledging the buzzwords of the moment, the dangers of populism, especially of the authoritarian variety. Chantal Mouffe explores the possibility of "left populism." I still owe friends a paper on revisiting our ideas after EDSA 1986 about "popular democracy" and how to relate it to the anxious conversations on populism.

Fifty years ago, in December 1968, I was ordained to the priesthood. I was not aware that the same month and year marked the official reestablishment of the CPP. The same year in Medellin, the theology of liberation was disseminated in a message under the title "Between Honesty and Hope."

I have adopted this as the framework for my life and work. Hope is what continues to drive me forward, but hope must be tempered with the discipline of an honest recognition of limitations, including our own. But hope, nonetheless.

In 1987, I was laicized after 19 years of priesthood of which nine years were spent in various prisons. I have often been asked: What did you learn after all those years in prison? I have distilled it as "patient impatience."

Hope tempered by honesty. Impatience tempered by patience. This is the spirituality that sustains me for the long revolution.



## **Open Forum**

**Fox Ventura** expressed a reflection and a question. He sensed that, in the past, religion was not relativist, either black or white. As such, it was not so difficult for people to decide whether they were Christian, activist, or Marxist. Unlike today, it is more difficult, especially for young people and middle-aged people, to engage in social transformation. Is it because religion now is more "relativist," more loose?

In response, **Mr. Edicio dela Torre** stressed that there is an interplay of the internal and external, as his talk demonstrated. An important issue, perhaps, is the proliferation of choices for doing meaningful work today. It is no surprise then that so many young people do translate their concern or their criticism into activism. Why? There are options. There are many outlets for engagement which must not be reduced to consumerism. The bigger challenge, then, is how to reinvent the Left to develop an appropriate form of engagement, especially since most people start activism by asking, "Which one can we join?"

As Mr. dela Torre put it, "Maybe, there is not enough discussion among the Left to emphasize its common responsibility to offer to others, rather than prioritizing differences among ourselves." That is easier said than done. If the Left does not orient itself to reaching out and influencing those who are already open, and just moves in an inner circle talking to each other, then that's going to be a dead-end. Based on Mr. dela Torre's exposure to them, young people and their families say, "We want something more, we want to get rich, etc., but we also want to do something socially." Mr. dela Torre thinks that a lot of people do not start with the politics narrowly defined by the government. Rather, they look for not just small issues but also groups and communities where they can do meaningful work, of a kind which is not just individualistic.

Mr. dela Torre observed that, these past two years, there has been a revival of energies of people wanting to do something, whether against human rights violations, or extrajudicial killings (EJK), or environmental destruction, etc. It would be a weakness to look back and say "sana ganun" (I wish it were like that). It's a different time, and we shouldn't try to rush or force the pace of crystallization of—if not unified—a dominant Left. We shouldn't underestimate the role of secular and Marxist Left in Christian radicals. Christian radicals don't set up to create completely autonomous movement; they really want to relate to others.

For Mr. dela Torre, what happened to the Christians for National Liberation is illustrative. CNL became overdependent on the Party, which was a strength to a certain point, but he thinks it became a

weakness in the long term. What happened is that CNL tried to maintain integrity with the Marcos split, but its members were told that could not be. So, CNL, as it exists right now, is completely dependent on the Party. Mr. dela Torre thinks that is a legitimate choice, but it is not the main expression of the Christian radicals who even want to align with the Party.

Julkipli Wadi (UP Institute of Islamic Studies) partly agreed with Ventura's observations that there is complacency among the youth today. For him, to some extent, it is not just complacency; it is a contradiction. In Muslim societies, for instance, there is a complacent sector, but there is also a trend of fundamentalism and radicalization.

For Prof. Wadi, Muslims in society are in a state of conundrum. There is the complacency, and there is a small group that is willing to engage in violence. And the big segment resorts to expediency, being pragmatic in their day-to-day experiences, finding opportunity to find work in the country or abroad. But in the meantime, the social contradiction is increasing. Political dynasty and warlordism continue to reign, so on and so forth. Society is fossilized because we are not able to precisely provide the kind of protection in the formation of the protests in society. Prof. Wadi said he still continues to figure out where the pitfalls are in this unique time where there is no amount of ideology that can salvage the situation or galvanize the people as National Democratic Front, the Moro Front, and so on and so forth. For him, "We end up embracing the status quo as we age, but just a conversation like this is a good start; at least, we can envision the progressive society."

A member of the audience asked if we can say that Marxism is no longer "sexy" or appealing to the youth. Back then, concepts of Marxism helped Christians in the Philippines to engage in social change, as well as the Muslims in Mindanao in advancing their struggle. Further, he also observed that there is recruitment of young Muslims and Christians into violent extremism. He asked what appeal these violent extremist groups have that enable them to attract membership.

Drawing from her experiences in teaching Psychology to undergraduate students, a retired professor begged to disagree with the observations that the youth today are complacent and that progressive ideas are no longer appealing to the youth. As she put it, the youth today are tired of hearing "it was like that before" and "do you know, when it was our time ..." In fact, the youth think, listen, and find ways to be more engaged. In 2016, during the Marcos burial, some of her students rallied for the very first time and were amazed by their experience. They were so empowered by this first rally that it moved them to participate in other rallies. They, however, need more direction, which can be provided by the older generation.

One important concern is that the older generation does not talk in the young generation's language. This is now the IT (information technology) world, in which the older generation is not savvy. She believes that today there is a "new spirituality" that moves young people—Star Wars, Harry Potter, etc. We have to understand that it is no longer the Martial Law stories or World War stories that animate the young generation's consciousness. Thus, the question is not whether Marxism is still sexy, but to start to reflect on the following questions: What is the Spirit that moves this generation now? What is the Spirit that brings them to action? What are the discourses that make them move forward? It is not simply ideology or religion. If one goes to the internet, to Facebook, the discourse now is not that the youth are complacent, but that they are much more into the specific directions of the movement. They are not boxed into simple dichotomies, but they recognize multiple identities now such as LGBTQ, indigenous peoples, etc. There are a lot of discourses in their higher consciousness. She said that if the older generation continues to just look at the past and not move forward by being cognizant of these developments, then they are just about to miss the boat.

Dr. Francisco Nemenzo Jr. (Professor Emeritus and former President, University of the Philippines) clarified the often misunderstood statement of Marx on religion as the opium of the masses. He said that Marx ascribed this to the young Hegelians who wanted to destroy religion and refute Christianity. Further, he asked the speaker how the missionaries and priest workers fit into the history of liberation theology.

Contributing to the discussion, Fr. Eliseo "Jun" Mercado, OMI, Ph.D. (Notre Dame University Graduate School) said that throughout the 1960s in Europe there were communities of priests living together and priest-workers who were left-thinking and Marxists, yet they remained strong believers in their religion. They were not only priests; they also worked in factories, in hospitals, and in different areas. They are together and shared whatever they had. It was living of the faith of the Acts of the Apostles. They were advanced because they predated liberation theology and its introduction in Europe. This was outside of the institutional church. But something happened with the death of Pope Paul VI and the assumption of John Paul II. Liberation theology provided a meaning for an expression of Christianity in a world that was becoming secular. The early socialism of the Church was diverse, composed of communists, atheists, men and women. Fr. Jun was not sure if this was part of the whole process of unity between Marxism and Christianity, but liberation theology was the other way of living Christianity in the age of protest and anti-establishment.

In response to the questions raised, Mr. dela Torre thinks that to use theology of liberation as the label for progressive or radical faith would be wrong because the liberation discourse is very closely related to national liberation. Theology of liberation has a specific location. What is common to all, even in the Protestant religion, is the idea of the Church as missionary: "Rather than preaching and bringing the people to the church, you go where the people are." Sometimes, people confuse this sympathy with partisanship for the poor, the deprived. But Marx looked at the groups of the poor and oppressed as agents of transformation, not as objects of assistance and welfare. The idea of Church as missionary does not just look at anyone who is miserable but it is looking at someone who really has capacities, except if he or she is suppressed, not recognized.

Mr. dela Torre thinks that perhaps there is a need for a larger, more inclusive concept. It is really thinking outside the Church institution and living in community which is a really difficult task. In the industrial capitalist society, this need coincided with the privileged role Marxism gave to the working class. That is also why when the priest-worker movement got translated to the south, it became priestfarmer movements, not priest-worker. We have to recognize that theology of liberation (or however you want to call it) was born in developed capitalist struggle. Within that context, Marx articulated important questions: Who will be the agents of transformation? Who are the members of this class that fights for the interests of everyone? That's a philosophical concept, not a sociological analysis. This yearning remains powerful even if we continue to discuss who is the worker now and what counts as work. In the end, there is a strong, humanitarian, sympathetic passion within Marxism that is often misinterpreted as paternalism or patronage ("kasi mahirap sila"). At its core, Marxism champions solidarity with the poor, the productive and exploited classes. They have capacities, but they are trapped in a system which not only exploits them but distorts and disfigures their own internal, psychological makeup because of the need for survival by fighting each other.

Even with theology of liberation, there is a bias for dramatic oppression and repression; that is why it flourishes in dictatorships. But Mr. dela Torre invoked Fr. Albert Nolan, who once said, "Hey, we have to rethink the Bible. Before, we always look at oppression, oppression; we have to look at the economics in the Bible." In the Philippines, there was a trade-off. The Communist Party became more effective in its overall leadership, but at the same time, its members had to do this on an anti-fascist line. The socialist and social transformative agenda got lost somewhere there. "You don't renew strategy simply, you best renew spirituality. Spirituality is the energy, the meaning, and the purpose. And then strategy gives it more specific shape."

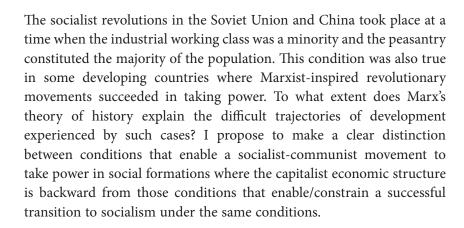
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## Marx's Theory of History: A Rereading from the Soviet and Chinese Experience

TEMARIO C. RIVERA





Marx is arguably the most influential thinker of the 20th century. When I started to review my Marx, I realized that the passage of years has brought about different interpretations of Marxist thought that has also been enriched by practice. What I would like to do now is to revisit Marx's theory of history. How did Marx try to explain his theory of history? How do we understand and explain it?

We should not try to hope for any kind of conclusive understanding because there will always be differences in interpreting what Marx actually said and how it has been used as a guide to revolutionary practice. Towards the end, I will try to relate some of the assumptions of his theory with two successful socialist revolutions that were consciously inspired by Marx: the Russian revolution and its collapse



sometime in 1991 and the Chinese Revolution and its further development under the post-Mao leadership.

## Making sense of history: Some key assumptions

This talk is not a comprehensive review of Marx's theory of history. We do not have time for that. But his major works could serve as our guide in understanding his theory of history. The earliest statement would be from *The German Ideology* (1846/1998, 49), "Men have history because they must *produce* their life". We already find a master thesis there that has been the consistent assumption of Marx and of most, if not all, Marxists I suppose. As I will try to point out, there seems to be a tension between the Marx and Engels of *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848) (henceforth *Manifesto*) and the Marx of the *Preface* to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) (henceforth *Preface* or *Critique*). If you will recall in the *Manifesto*, the concept of class struggle as the primary motor of historical change served as an overall guiding frame. Remember the opening statement itself: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Marx and Engels 1970, 31). But you must also recall that the *Manifesto* was written as a response to a request by a German communist association. So, in effect, the *Manifesto* is both a theoretical and practical program drafted by Marx and Engels in 1847–48 for a fledgling communist organization.

Engels, in his preface to the *Manifesto* in the 1888 English edition written five years after the death of Marx, provides a very concise explanation of their key assumption in explaining historical change. Also, consistent with *The German Ideology* and with the *Manifesto* is the following claim:

in every historical epoch the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange and the social organization necessarily following from it form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained, the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently the whole history of mankind has been a history of class struggles ... (Engels in his Preface to the Manifesto, English edition, 1888, 14)

Many studies of Marx argue that the most mature expression of Marx's theory is actually found in the *Preface* to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* published in 1859. Remember that the *Critique* also served as the initial draft outline for the writing of *Das Kapital* which came out in three volumes. So, in that sense, many scholars of Marx say that if we want to really get an understanding, an appreciation of what the more mature Marx argued, the *Preface* would make a good starting point.

Marx wrote several books each worthy of its own study. But in terms of the appreciation of his theory of history or historical change, let us review the key arguments from the Preface. "In the social production of their existence, men enter into definite relations mainly relations of production corresponding to a definite state of development of their material forces of production" (Marx 1976, 3). Here, we need to clarify three key concepts. What exactly are "relations of production"? What are "forces of production"? And what does he mean when he says "correspond"? We will try to clarify these concepts a little later.

You are most likely familiar with the "base and superstructure" assumptions of Marx, as well as the concept of an "economic structure." Marx says that the totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society which is the real foundation on which there arises a legal and political superstructure. At any given point in time, there exists a level of development of the forces of production which in turn gives rise to an economic structure which is the totality of the relations of production. And then out of that will arise the superstructure. This is a very important assumption because, in effect, it gives us the critical point at which we could expect a revolutionary transformation.

As further argued in the *Preface*: "At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or—what is merely a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within the framework of which they have hitherto operated" (Marx 1976, 3). As the forces of production develop, these come into conflict with the relations of production, at some point. It is at this moment when the existing relations of production become fetters, meaning they begin to serve as obstacles to the further development of the productive forces. When that happens, as pointed out in the *Preface*, an epoch of social revolution begins.

Moreover, Marx also introduces another important argument. He argues that "a social order never perishes before all the productive forces for which it is broadly sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the wombs of the old society" (Marx 1976, 4). There are many issues that need to be clarified here. When do we actually say that the productive forces for any given social order have already been exhausted? Marx's argument is that, at some point in time, there will be a collision between the development of productive forces and the relations of production because the latter begins to fetter the further development of the former (productive forces).

## Clarifying some key concepts

Let us start to unpack and clarify these key concepts. Marx speaks of the "productive forces." We can say that productive forces include a combination of basically two things of material forces that are part of the production of life in any society. First, it necessarily has to include the level of your means of production comprising of the instruments of production such as tools, machinery, raw materials, and spaces. Second, the productive forces also comprise labor power. When Marx speaks of the level of quality of labor power, the concept necessarily includes dimensions such as the skills, the knowledge, the inventiveness, etc. of producing agents. In short, productive forces include all objects, physical things including the use of labor power involved in the material forces of production. Science, for instance, to the extent that it is part of the material of production, also becomes part of the means of production.

How is the concept of "productive forces" different from the "relations of production?" Relations of production, in contrast, are relations of ownership and effective control by persons over the productive forces. Let us say a capitalist has, if not formal ownership, effective control by persons over the productive forces. The capitalist has, if not formal ownership, effective control over the labor power of the worker. By definition, the proletariat in a capitalist society no longer has control over any means of production except for his labor power. When we speak of relations of production, in effect, this would be the relations of ownership. The concept does not only refer to legal ownership but also to any kind of effective control. You may not have legal ownership, but you can have effective control over a means of production. You may not own the land, for example, but for the last 30 years you have had effective control over the use of that land, let us say, through a long-term lease arrangement. Thus, even if you do not legally own the land, in effect, you own the land. You have effective control over the land.

Now, the concept of "the economic structure of society" is really nothing more but "the whole set of its production relations." Production relations are "relations of effective power over persons and productive forces." Production relations are power relationships in society because these basically involve forms of ownership and/or effective control over any kind of productive force. For instance, in a slave society, slaves are literally owned and controlled by the slave owners, so you can also own or

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The clarification of key Marxian concepts on the theory of history in this section draws heavily from Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence by G.A. Cohen (1978), especially Chapters 2 and 3.

control a person. In a functioning capitalist society, does the capitalist own or have effective control over the worker? Capitalists do not own the worker but as pointed out by Marx, in a capitalist society the worker has lost all means of production, except for her/his labor power. Workers do not have a choice. If they do not enter into a working relationship with the capitalists, they die or starve to death. Thus, while the capitalists do not own the workers in the strict sense, they can exercise effective control over the workers.

Next, we need to clarify the concepts of "economic structure" and the "superstructure." Marx points out also in the *Preface* that "the totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which there arises a legal and political superstructure and to which there correspond definite forms of social consciousness" (Marx 1976, 3). The "superstructure" is usually identified with the "non-economic institutions" but others extend its definition to include all kinds of elements including religion, art, and even ideology. But the clearest example would be the non-economic institutions such as legal relationships or property relationships because according to Marx the superstructure exists because it is needed by the base in order to stabilize production relations in the base. It is like saying that in a capitalist society the concept of private property is dominant because the practice of private property is one which stabilizes the capitalist order and makes possible the further development of its productive forces.

## Some key theoretical assertions

Now, let us examine some of the theoretical assumptions that we can draw from the works of Marx, especially the Preface.<sup>2</sup> First is the so-called "Primacy of Productive Forces Thesis." This is the thesis that maintains that the nature of production relations that became dominant at a certain stage of development is explained by the level of development of its productive forces. To a large extent, the nature of relations of production and the superstructure are conditioned by the level of development of the productive forces. The classic examples of Marx on this would be that the hand mill gave us the feudal lord, the steam mill gave us the capitalist. Those are short-hand images to dramatize this relationship.

A corollary thesis to that is the assumption that productive forces tend to develop throughout history (The Development Thesis). For Marx the nature of the productive forces is really the controlling element because if you examine historical growth and development, he says, there is always a tendency that productive forces will develop further. For instance, can you think of a society where there is a drastic reversal of the level of development of the productive forces? Perhaps, none. Probably, you would have that society in a situation approximating a nuclear holocaust where much of your productive forces were wiped out. But on the whole, there is a tendency for the productive forces to develop progressively. As you know, from the more primitive implements of basic agriculture, we now have computers, smart phones, and artificial intelligence, just to mention the latest developments in how the productive forces have developed through the decades, through the centuries.

But in this account, the concept of class struggle seems to have vanished or underplayed. How then do we situate the class struggle in all of these? One way to deal with that is to relate the class struggle with the development of productive forces which also determines the nature of the production relations dominant at a given point in time. The social classes will emerge in any kind of society which has produced some kind of a surplus. As the productive forces develop (the Development thesis), a society reaches a stage where it is now able to create a surplus of material goods. Such a surplus becomes the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The two seminal theses rooted in the nature of the productive forces, the "Primacy of the Productive Forces" and the "Development Thesis" discussed in this section are also based on the systematic exposition of these Marxian premises by G.A. Cohen in *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (1978), especially in Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

material basis for the emergence and maintenance of a non-productive ruling class but also provokes social divisions and class conflict.

Thus, social divisions between a ruling class (slave owners, landlords, a dynastic monarchy, a feudalmilitary elite, etc.) that is able to appropriate for its own use the increasing surplus and the productive classes (slaves, tenants and peasants, small traders, industrial workers, etc.) denied effective control of this surplus invariably provoke class conflict. In Marx's broad trajectory of historical change, there comes a point when the dominant production relations become fetters to the further development of the productive forces. His classic example for this historical transformation is the change from feudal to capitalist societies. There came a point in time when the feudal mode of production was no longer productive. There emerged a new social class (the manufacturing capitalist class) invested in a more progressive mode of developing the productive forces but whose development was fettered by the continuing dominance of the landlord or the feudal classes. That kind of conflict led to a crisis that was resolved historically through a revolutionary armed conflict (the French, Russian, and Chinese social revolutions). In some cases, the resolution of that conflict can take place through an initial revolutionary rupture combined with negotiated political compromises between the state and social classes such as in the English and German experiences.

Finally, the correspondence of the base and the superstructure in the Marxian sense of the Preface means that the superstructure exists because it needs to support the base. It needs to support the development of the productive forces. For instance, legal structures rise and fall according as they promote or frustrate forms of economy favored by the productive forces. We will try to provide examples from the Russian and Chinese revolutions.

In Figure 11, the class struggle is shown to be not just unidirectional. This means that the level of development of productive forces, the production relations, and the superstructure also affect the class struggle. But the class struggle as shown in this figure can also influence the level of development of each of the three. Is that a fair and accurate understanding of Marx? Some would say that a stricter understanding of Marx in the Preface tends to be largely unidirectional because of the primacy of the productive forces. However, Figure 11 is also consistent with the "Development Thesis" as depicted by the unidirectional upward arrow on the left which argues that the development of the productive forces is continuous. Such a continuous development of the productive forces takes place until a time is reached when the existing relations of production become fetters to the development of the productive forces. It is at this point in time when the class struggle also reaches its most intense and explicit forms. Once the more progressive class becomes ascendant, the further development of the productive forces is also brought to a higher stage.

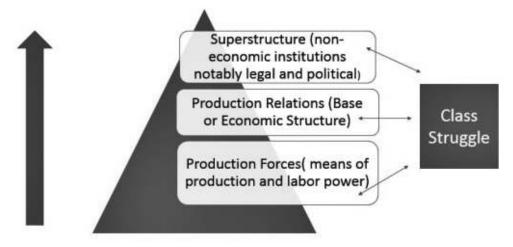


FIGURE 11 Dynamics of historical social change and transformation

The interpretation that I offer (Figure 11) departs somewhat from the explanation identified with Cohen (1978) which is closer to the primacy of the productive forces thesis and where the class struggle appears to be largely derivative of developments in the productive forces and relations of production. In my framework, one can argue that a class struggle led by a progressive social class or a coalition of such classes may in fact hasten the development of the productive forces and alter existing production relations even before the theorized crisis point is reached between the production relations and productive forces. But even if such a class struggle succeeds in winning political power, it may be severely constrained to adopt and harness the unexhausted potentials of the existing mode of production (capitalist practices) before a successful shift to a new mode of production and economic structure (socialism) is assured. The concrete historical experiences of revolutionary upheavals that ushered into power a socialist-communist political party (Russia in 1917 and China in 1949) when the capitalist social formation was still relatively backward are instructive in this regard.

## Marx's theory of history and actual socialist revolutions: The Russian and Chinese experiences

Let us illustrate some of the implications of Marx's theory of history with actual developments in history. I suppose we are all familiar with the broad outlines of what happened in the Russian and Chinese revolution. No doubt, the most consequential revolutions in the twentieth century took place in both societies. Let us relate the two communist-led revolutions to the key assumption of Marx that a revolutionary crisis takes place when the further development of the productive forces is hindered or fettered by the existing relations of production. We can only briefly review here the main outlines of the development of a revolutionary crisis in both societies that eventually culminated in successful revolutions led by socialist parties with the support of the lower classes.

At the onset of the twentieth century, Russia and China were still predominantly agrarian economies with long histories of peasant rebellions. In both societies, the peasantry constituted about 80 percent of the working population and Russia was a serf-based agrarian society as late as 1861. In the interim period between the 1905 and the 1917 revolutions in Russia, E.H. Carr (1966, 32) noted the "contrasts of an advanced capitalist industry (in the major urban centers such as St. Petersburg and Moscow) functioning in a primitive peasant environment. . ." On the other hand, the Chinese agrarian economy was made up mainly of relatively small, localized, fragmented units. By the 19th century in China, as Skocpol (1979, 74) points out: "The traditional economy was reaching the limits of its possible expansion without creating the conditions for any spontaneous emergence of industrialism."

In understanding the conditions that accentuated the revolutionary crises in both societies, two major interrelated developments need to be further stressed. First, the international inter-state relations in the 18th century increasingly proved detrimental to the interests of Russia and China as more powerful Western and Asian states (Japan) expanded their geo-political goals at the expense of these two countries. Second, these international debacles combined with serious internal crises in both Russia and China that increasingly weakened their proto-bureaucratic Imperial states and undermined central governmental efforts at reforming the system.<sup>3</sup>

In pre-revolutionary Russia, a momentous issue commanded the attention of the Russian socialist intellectuals and parties in the context of their political and organizing work. One socialist militant of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> A systematic historical-sociological comparative discussion of these issues including Russia and China (and France) is provided by Theda Skocpol in *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Cambridge University Press, 1979.

the period, Vera Zasulich, actually corresponded with Marx asking his position about this issue.<sup>4</sup> In broad terms, the issue was this: In Russia, a pre-capitalist or non-capitalist peasant commune survived as the main form of agricultural production. Is it bound to perish as in the Western path described by Marx or perhaps serve as a starting point for a modern form of development? One can see here the strategic ramifications of this question not only on Russia but on all kinds of social formations where capitalist forms of production are still backward or undeveloped and the peasantry is the most numerous class. This question addressed to Marx directly brings to light concrete issues on revolutionary strategy and tactics affecting socialist parties doing revolutionary work in societies where capitalist productive forces and production relations are not yet dominant and where the industrial proletariat remains the minority as was the case in both Russia and China at the turn of the 20th century. Similar conditions obtained in the former colonies of Asia and Africa when revolutionary upheavals also occurred in the 20th century.

Addressing these issues in his 1881 draft letters to Vera Zasulich, Marx advanced the following major propositions (Shanin 2018): First, Marx clarified that the transformation of feudal to capitalist relations he analyzed in Capital had its most "radical" form in Western Europe and notes that this process need not be the same in other social formations. Second, Marx showed openness to the possibility that the rural commune can serve as "a starting point of the economic system towards which modern society is tending . . ." Third, the rural commune and related forms of pre-capitalist formations now co-exist in the context of an expanding global capitalism that provides openings for the possible appropriation of the material and technological capitalist advances for the further development of the backward productive forces, especially if the revolution succeeds. As aptly summarized by Shanin, these propositions advanced by the "late Marx" as he analyzes the particularity of the Russian formation in the 1880s shows a "future multiplicity of roads of societal transformation within the global framework of mutual and differential impact" (Shanin 2018, 5).5

In the immediate aftermath of the failed 1905 revolution in Russia, Lenin realized the need to mobilize the full support of the peasantry if the revolution had to succeed. Not only did the peasantry constitute the most numerous class; it also had natural linkages with the industrial proletariat, recently drawn from the peasant economy and concentrated in the major urban manufacturing centers. Moreover, the soldiers of the Tsarist army were also drawn largely from peasant recruits. Not surprisingly the successful 1917 Russian revolution was made possible by the mobilization and support of the combined masses of workers, soldiers, and peasants under the leadership of the socialist Bolshevik party.

The Chinese revolution that climaxed in 1949 under the leadership of Mao and the Communist Party dramatized the far more pronounced role of the peasantry in the struggle. Learning from the failed experience of concentrating its political and organizing work in the urban centers in the 1920s, the Chinese revolutionary leadership under Mao decided to build a rural base and mobilize the peasant masses in the struggle against the Kuomintang party and other provincial warlords. With its more backward productive forces at the time of its revolutionary triumph, the Chinese Communist Party faced an even more daunting task of constructing the desired socialist society.

As shown by the Russian and Chinese experiences, socialist-led revolutions can win power even in social formations with relatively backward levels of capitalist development and where the peasantry and not the industrial proletariat are the dominant classes. But this is only the start of the revolution because

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> See Teodor Shanin (2018): "1881 Letters of Vera Zasulich and Karl Marx," *The Journal of Peasant Studi*es, DOI: 10.1080/03066150.2018.1536370.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Teodor Shanin (2018): Late Marx and Russian Peasants: an aside concerning 'deviations'. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/03066150.2018.1524957.

the next difficult challenge is seeing to it that the material and cultural foundations for the construction of socialism are also laid down.

After the revolutionary takeovers in Russia (1917) and China (1949) by socialist-led movements, Marx's overall schema for successful transformation into a higher stage of social formation is most instructive. Much as they wanted to industrialize and socialize rapidly their backward economy, the Bolsheviks were forced as early as 1921 to reintroduce capitalist/market relations in trade and industry and especially in agriculture, through the New Economic Policy (NEP). However, after a few years, the party leadership repudiated the NEP in favor of a program of rapid industrialization and centralization of economic activities to hasten the desired transformation to a socialist society.

Facing equally difficult challenges of modernizing a largely backward peasant economy, the Chinese leadership after 1949 embarked on programs to rapidly industrialize and centralize the economy through such ambitious but costly policies such as the "Big Leap Forward", and the "Cultural Revolution." These projects not only sought to modernize the productive forces but also to start developing socialist values and identities even under conditions of pervasive material backwardness. Reacting to the excesses of these earlier policies, the post-Mao leadership under Deng Xiaoping, eventually pursued policies that sought to combine elements of the NEP especially in agriculture while undertaking comprehensive industrialization policies that welcomed foreign investment and global trade under a strong state direction.

If we relate all of these developments to Marx's theory of history, arguably one lesson is that a working class party can win power even in social formations where capitalist relations remain backward and where the industrial working class is a minority such as in Russia in 1917 and China in 1949. Yet once in power, the backwardness of the productive forces compels the revolutionary party/coalition to engage in policies that may result in embracing capitalist practices to further develop the productive forces. Once this is accepted, however, the next challenge lies in ensuring that the goal of constructing the material and cultural foundations of a socialist society is not undermined or destroyed. After more than seven decades of socialist construction in the USSR, the project collapsed, ironically under conditions of comprehensive reforms led by Gorbachev (*perestroika and glastnost*) presumably meant to reinvigorate the socialist project and bring it to a higher stage of development. In China, the current leadership has sought to pursue a socialist project that has increasingly sought to stress its "Chinese" character. Whether this constitutes a deviation from Marx's theory of history is open to debate. But perhaps, the reflections of the "late Marx" about the possible multiplicity of routes to socialism may prove quite relevant in this regard.

#### **Open Forum**

Bella Lucas (UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies) asked whether Marx's theory of history can indeed be used as effective guide for particular societies with different conditions.

In response, **Professor Temario Rivera** said that Marx conceded that his theory is a very broad framework for understanding historical change. Marx also accepted the possibility of certain historical uniqueness in different parts of the world like in Russia. Marx actually went out of his way to study Russia, so that he can read basic documents relevant to the debate. Marx expressed that Russia was primarily a peasant society, but it does not mean it cannot wage a socialist revolution. It just needs to contend with severe constraints obviously. That is why one of Marx's pieces of advice was to have socialist revolution with the support of other countries near Russia. This was also the thesis of some of the Bolsheviks



who were hoping that the working classes in the more advanced capitalist countries during that time particularly Germany would come to their aid. The need to examine concrete realities in a given society is further buttressed by the fact that the Asian experience shows that the peasantry actually proved to be a very revolutionary social class in Asia such as in China, Vietnam, and in the Philippines.

An unidentified member of the audience asked for clarification on whether Marx really corresponded with the Russian revolutionaries. Prof. Rivera conjectured that it is possible that some of the exiles might have visited him in London, but that the established fact is the correspondence that took place.

To further clarify the idea that the communal ownership in Russia can be a springboard to hasten the transition to socialism, Prof. Rivera reminded the audience that Marx also wrote on the so-called Asiatic mode of production. Marx said that the self-sufficiency of the village, combined with a despotic rule, has perpetuated a very slow development of productive forces leading to a situation of oppression and poverty. To address this, Marx argued that capitalism needs to penetrate there so that the productive forces can be further developed. For Prof. Rivera, this is not really surprising as it is consistent with the Marx who also argued that capitalism plays a progressive revolutionary role in transforming the productive forces at a certain stage. It needs to be said, however, that Marx was unlike the bourgeois economists who tend to believe that capitalism can no longer be transformed.

Melba De Guzman-Marginson (UP Alumna) brought up the debate in the National Democratic Movement in the late 80s and 90s on whether the Philippines has reached the capitalist stage. There is also the view that the peasant class has not even gotten to the level of mechanized farming and instead became small business operators because of the remittances of Filipino workers overseas.

Prof. Rivera responded that a very slow development of the productive forces is typical of many developing poorer societies and economies like the Philippines. This is because of many factors such as landlordism. Further, most of the capitalists in the Philippines are not really into manufacturing industrial activities. Many of them are in trade which, of course, can also develop the productive forces. For a stronger, more stable development, the country still has to establish its industries, strengthen its manufacturing, and implement a successful land reform. These are the classic ingredients that we have seen in the case of other countries.

This is not to say that some of these developments have not taken place in the Philippines in some form, but the country's land reform, for example, is still being debated up until today. A lot still needs to be fixed in the agrarian reform which is nothing comparable to that experienced by Japan, Taiwan, or South Korea, for example. The development of our manufacturing is stagnant. What emerged instead is this OFW (overseas Filipino worker) phenomenon, something that could not have been anticipated by Marx. Up to now what is driving much of the Philippine economy is not really industrial development but remittances from OFWs and partly the Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO) sector which is engaged in a very low level of technology.

Julkipli M. Wadi (UP Institute of Islamic Studies) sensed a dilemma. On the one hand, there is a need for a kind of grand theorizing of the world today. And Marxism offers a grand theory of history which attempts to explain major contradictions and developments in society in the past and possibly even in the contemporary situation. On the other hand, as the experience of Russia and China reveals, there were options and experimentations explored by the revolutionary parties other than what Marx offered which suggests limitations to Marxism as a theory and practice. Today, there seems to be a series of fetters, but there are no new productive forces emerging for the level of economic development. Given its limitations, what then is the relevance of Marxism in contemporary times?

Prof. Rivera conceded that Marxism is a grand narrative. And like any other grand narrative, it provides some subjects and working concepts. What is different about Marxism, however, is that it is one of the very few grand narratives that has captured the imagination of men and women who actually used it to try to engage society. No sophisticated theory will be able to capture the complexities of any historical reality. But Marx also assumes that when workers become more conscious actors, they create a new dynamic that will enable them to first understand and analyze the problems better. And then on the basis of that, they initiate projects which allow them to coalesce with others and to create conditions that further develop the productive forces. For Marx, the human productive power is the basis for the level of success of the pattern of development. In fact, if we follow that schema, it makes sense for example to support progressive members of a capitalist class to the extent that they can provide the conditions for the further development of productive forces, especially if the working class is still relatively weak.

**Another unidentified member of the audience** asked, given the experiences of Russia and China, is Marx history? In addition, he posed a counterfactual. Could the revolutionary parties have been better off if they did not take the socialist transition?

Prof. Rivera believes that counterfactual situations are difficult to resolve. But for him one cannot deny the fact that the advance of productive forces in China has been tremendous by any kind of economic indicator. Whether that would have been possible if China did not undergo a socialist transition is difficult to conclusively answer. In the case of Russia in 1927 up to 1975 (this was the time when Lenin was dead and Stalin already took over), studies show that the level of industrialization achieved during that period was quite impressive. There were certain decades when the former Soviet Union was actually producing better outputs than the United States. It is not also easy to dismiss that.

**Dr. Eduardo T. Gonzalez (former Dean, UP Asian Center)** asked Prof. Rivera to expound on what he said about the proletariat. Studies showed that despite their small number, the working class in Russia really became the dominant bearer of the proletariat ideology. Perhaps, this was one of the factors why Russia leaped to become one of the industrial giants even by today's standards. In other words, its small number was no deterrent to the formation of the proletarian predominance. But that did not seem to happen in China because it was the Chinese revolution which actually created the Chinese proletariat which was almost non-existent during the Chinese revolution.

Prof. Rivera maintained that the point is not so much the numbers of the working class that is crucial. Although he did not have the data, he stressed that what he was trying to point out in his lecture is that there are other factors that could account for the success of a relatively small revolutionary group, factors which are not easy to integrate into Marx's framework. The first was the revolutionary strategy adopted by the working class movement. This is where the debate between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks is relevant where Lenin pointed out the importance of a small but professional revolutionaries as against

the Mensheviks who are in favor of a mass party. The second factor would be the role of the external factors which are hard to discount; both the Russian revolution and the Chinese revolution took place and eventually succeeded in the midst of a world war. Marx did not really discuss revolutionary strategy. It was Lenin and Mao who were the major theoreticians for that.

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# The Politics of a Middle-Class-Led Left Movement in the Philippines<sup>1</sup>

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This essay examines how the middle-class composition of the leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), its military arm, the New People's Army (NPA) and its political vehicle, the National Democratic Front (NDF) defined the direction which the revolutionary movement took during the martial law period whereby the armed struggle was complemented with strategies which needed middle class skills and acumen. These included the establishment of united fronts against the dictatorship on non-class issues such as the environment, women's concerns, indigenous peoples' rights, and the Moro people's struggles. Internal Party debates, however, emerged which led to the 1992 split within the Party. In the post-martial law period, those who left the Party continued their advocacies through the establishment of left movements and civil society organizations (CSOs). Middle classoriented strategies by the Left have helped push the democratization process forward but there are also major limitations to the extent to which a middle-class-led Left movement are able to undertake the needed radical structural changes in society.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The post-martial law (1986–present) section of this paper draws from the author's book chapter, "The Middle-Class-Led Left Movement in Civil Society's Role in the Philippines' Democratization Process," in Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao. ed., *Middle Class, Civil Society and Democracy in Asia* (2019). London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 81–101.

### Introduction

The Philippine middle class has generally been viewed as a crucial component in the country's democratization process foremost of which was the part it played in the 1986 People Power Revolution which overthrew the Marcos dictatorship. It has continued to pursue this role in the post-martial law period in challenging oligarchical rule that has perpetuated poverty and the widening of socio-economic inequalities in the country. An important venue by which the middle class has expressed its opposition to the status quo is through the Philippine Left movement, i.e., the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), its military arm the New People's Army (NPA), and its political vehicle the National Democratic Front (NDF) or the CPP-NPA-NDF. There have been a lack of studies, however, in examining the role of the middle class in the CPP-NPA-NDF.

The first part of this paper will, therefore, examine the role which the middle class played in the emergence and evolution of the CPP-NPA-NDF. It will focus on how a middle-class led CPP-NPA-NDF defined the direction which the revolutionary movement would take during the martial law period (1972-1986) whereby it complemented the armed struggle with strategies which needed middle class skills and acumen. These included the establishment of united fronts with both the marginalized as well as the elite sectors of society against the dictatorship through various formations such as through sectoral coalitions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The second part, on the other hand, will focus on the left movement led by the middle-class left faction, which split from the CPP-NPA-NDF, i.e., the "RJs" or "rejectionists" during the post-martial law period, 1986 onwards. Examination will be placed on this left movement's middle class strategies in the civil society arena mainly through NGO development work, the creation of civil society networks to push for their advocacies at the local and global levels, government engagement, collaboration and participation in electoral politics to further the democratization process in the country.

**Defining the middle class.** The middle class has generally been defined as the old middle class (OMC) and the new middle class (NMC). "C. Wright Mills describes the old middle-class of small businessmen, shopkeepers, farmers and professionals, as independent from economic and political control. These small entrepreneurs answered to no one—they were their own bosses and dealt with their own customers" (Glassman 1995, 161). As for the new middle class, for C. Wright Mills, the new middle-class emerged after World War II with the new technocratic-bureaucrat industrial capitalist economy (Glassman 1995, 161). This was the time for Mills whereby "the ranks of the professionals began to swell with the enormous increase in the number of school teachers and academics, scientists, doctors, nurses, psychologists etc." (Glassman 1995, 163).

As for the middle class in the Third World like in the Philippines, this was viewed largely as "new middle class." That is, "it is composed of salaried employees of large corporations and government bureaucrats— managers, technicians and service workers" (Glassman 1995, 350). "Along with the new middle-class many developing nations also have an expanding commercial middle class of small businessmen and shopkeepers. The commercial middle class is often linked into the foreign corporations economy as middlemen or merchandisers" (Glassman 1995, 351).

Giddens, on the other hand, differentiates the middle-class from the bourgeoisie on the basis of market capacity: ownership of property vs. possession of qualifications (Robison and Goodman 1996, 8-9). The middle-class composition of the CPP-NPA-NDF leadership were, thus, mainly students and professionals whose family backgrounds could be identified with the old middle class or the new middle class; and they were educated. They were not peasants or workers.

### The middle class in Left politics during the pre-Martial Law period (1972-1986)

The middle-class background of the CPP-NPA-NDF leadership can thus be juxtaposed with the Philippine politics ruling elite during the pre-martial law period whose basis of wealth is the control of vast lands generally described as *haciendas*. This provided the foundation for its oligarchy-building as best exemplified by the dominance of political dynasties. A result of this was the emergence of a state apparatus which is prey to a powerful oligarchic class that "enjoys an independent economic base outside the state with its political machinery as the major avenue for private accumulation" (Hutchcroft 1998, 12, cited in Tadem 2019a, 82).

Such a situation brought about agrarian unrest in the countryside which led to the rise of the Marxist-Leninist *Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas* (PKP) or the Communist Party of the Philippines on November 7, 1930. An important constituency of the PKP was its predominantly middle-class youth sector which it consolidated when it organized the *Kabataang Makabayan* (KM – Youth for Nationalism) in 1964. Because of ideological differences with the PKP leadership, the KM split from the PKP and formed the new Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) which was founded in 1968. The "reestablished" or new CPP was Marxist-Leninist-Maoist inspired. As for the middle-class origins of the founding members of the new CPP, its founding chair Jose Ma. Sison came from a small landed clan. Of the 13 founding members of the new communist party, 10 came from the middle-class families. (Daroy 1988, 19 as cited in Tadem 2019a, 82)

Given the economic crisis of the 1970s, the anti-nationalist and anti-imperialist rhetoric of the new CPP attracted an initial core of cadres during its incipient years, the overwhelming majority of whom were university students and intellectuals from middle-class families who were mainly from the University of the Philippines (UP) (Rivera 2001, 234-235 as cited in Tadem 2019a, 82).

For Ricardo Reyes (2016), a former CPP leader, although the founders of the new CPP mainly came from the upper- and middle-class, the members of the First Founding Congress of the CPP which took place on December 26, 1968, were predominantly workers and peasants. A reason for this was Sison was able to attract the workers and peasants who were disenchanted and had left the PKP. (Reyes 2016, cited in Tadem 2019a, 82)

With the declaration of martial law by President Ferdinand E. Marcos on September 21, 1972, the KM's middle- and upper class members went underground and assumed the leadership of the CPP's regional organizations. By the time a CPP-CC Plenum was convened in 1978, it was already predominantly composed of members from the middle-class (Reyes 2016). The leadership of the CPP-NPA-NDF are one and the same (Reyes 2016).

This development for Reyes brought about the shift in the membership, in the 1968–1971 CPP Central Committee (CPP-CC) when this became predominantly middle class. He noted that of the CPP-CC members during this period, only three were from the peasantry, i.e., Bernabe "Dante" Buscayno, the founder of the New People's Army (NPA), and there were two from peasant families. For Reyes, a number of these middle class CPP members, who ultimately became members of the CPP-CC, were small landowners. He observed, however, that land was not really their source of wealth as they were more of professionals. For Reyes, there were also students from the peasant and working class who came

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> This could be similar to the current phenomenon of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) coming from the lower and middle classes and going abroad as domestics, entertariners, garment factor workers, engineers, hotel workers, nurses etc. who are

from UP who joined the CPP during this period. Their entry into UP, he observed, was facilitated by the university's policy of allowing the top 5 of each public high school graduate to enter UP which enabled those from the peasant or working class the social mobility to become middle class.

The new CPP highlighted the three issues of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism as a comprehensive framework for the analysis of the Philippine situation. There was also a strong nationalist ferment which was able to influence the formulation of economic policies, "Filipinization." (Daroy 1988, 11–13 & 20 as cited in Tadem 2019a, 82)

# Middle class strategies and the CPP-NPA-NDF during the Martial Law period (1972–1986)

With the declaration of martial law by President Ferdinand E. Marcos on September 21, 1972, the CPP-NPA-NDF employed middle class strategies in forging alliances with various sectors of Philippine society which shared its concerns and issues to complement the armed struggle. This was officially launched in April 1973, when the CPP formally organized the *Preparatory Commission of the National Democratic Front*, "which would take the lead in developing a broad alliance of all forces opposing the dictatorship" (Tiglao 1988, 62). This effort coupled with continuing efforts to organize the marginalized sectors of society.

These included organizing united front alliances with the following: One was with the marginalized sectors of society, e.g., peasant and workers which culminated with the establishment of national federations. An example was seen in June 1985 with the establishment of the national-based peasant movement, the *Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas* (KMP) or the National Peasant Union. These national federations were used as a bargaining leverage with the formation of organizing united front alliances with the "middle forces" which constituted the anti-dictatorship struggle. These consisted of students, professionals, and members of the business community. A third united front alliance was with the oppositionist traditional politicians and landed elites. This alliance was greatly facilitated with the issue of crony capitalism, i.e., the monopoly of corruption in the hands of Marcos, his cronies and relatives. Corruption coupled with the failure of the Marcos technocrats to come up with economic policies to address the problem of poverty and underdevelopment and the ballooning debt of the country made for an easy united front with disgruntled members of the country's business community and other sectors of the middle classes (Tadem 2006b, 28).

The various dimensions of the middle-class-led united front alliances

The CPP-NPA-NDF also established middle-class led united front alliances along the following issues:

**Human rights.** An issue which emerged during the martial law regime which the CPP raised was that of human rights violations. This was a result of the increasing militarization in the countryside and the number of death-squad assassinations of peasants and labor activists (Tadem 2006b, 29). The fight against human rights also appealed to the elite and middle class players in society who also suffered

able to send their children to the elite private schools. The American colonial policy of mass public education also enabled the children of the lower- and middle-class to go to very public high schools as the elites went to elite private schools. Jose Ma. Sison studied at the Ateneo de Manila College. The other elite school was La Salle and University of Sto. Tomas (UST). The Americans' establishment of UP in 1908 as a secular university to produce professionals for the business sector and the government also provided an entry point for children coming from the lower and middle classes to avail of good quality education. UP encouraged intellectual growth and thinking being a secular school which was not run by religious orders as with the Jesuit-run Ateneo, the LaSalle Brothers of LaSalle and the Dominican order of UST.

from the repression of the martial law regime, particularly members of the elite political opposition who were imprisoned by the dictator. CPP cadres were also active in the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) National Secretariat for Social Action (NASSA) and its regional counterparts such as the Luzon Secretariat for Social Action (LUSSA), one of whose major advocacies was the fight against human rights. The NDF also worked with the Task Force on Detainees of the Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP) to report on incidents of violation of human rights in general and incidents of torture in particular (Wurfel 1988, 126).

The struggle against anti-imperialism. The NDF also formed alliances with members of the traditional opposition and sectors of the business community who were opposed to U.S. domination of the Philippine economy in collusion with the government and local elites, i.e., the Marcos cronies, who formed joint ventures with multinational corporations (MNCs). The NDF alliance with the local elites was also formed due to a common opposition against IMF/World Bank support to the Marcos dictatorship. This was facilitated by members in the business community who viewed the financial assistance extended by the IMF/World Bank to the government as propping up a repressive regime.

Furthermore, these businessmen also saw the IMF/World Bank as favoring MNCs over local businesses particularly the medium- and small-enterprises. The NDF was thus able to tap this spirit of nationalism of opposition civil society members which it equated with the anti-dictatorship struggle. Such a struggle also found expression against the removal of the U.S. military bases in the country, particularly Clark Air Base in San Fernando, Pampanga and the Subic Naval Base in Olongapo, Zambales. The view was that the dictatorship was using these military bases as a negotiating leverage to gain military and economic assistance from the U.S. Moreover, stalwarts of the nationalist opposition, e.g., Jovito Salonga and Jose Diokno also viewed the American bases as an assault to Philippine sovereignty, an accusation which fitted well into the views of the CPP.

The Moro struggle. The CPP-NPA-NDF also attempted to forge a united front with the Moro National Liberation Front or the MNLF which was established in 1974. Both the CPP and the MNLF "anticipated that Marcos was out to extend his regime and that military force was necessary to oppose it" (Tiglao 1988, 67). Because of this, in the mid-1970s, the MNLF and its army, the *Bangsa Moro Army* were organized under the leadership of former radical student leader Nur Misuari. Misuari was a UP political science graduate who was a member of the *Kabataang Makabayan*, the CPP's youth arm. It was while he was in UP that he forged a friendship with Sison. Up to the declaration of martial law in 1972, the MNLF had quietly built up its armed strength (Tiglao 1988, 67). The MNLF portrayed its resistance as a political, socio-economic, and religious one and the martial law period provided a venue whereby the MNLF and the CPP could forge a unity.

The rights of indigenous peoples. A united front was also forged with indigenous peoples who were driven away from their ancestral land to pave the way for MNCs, e.g., those engaged in agribusiness. A celebrated case of resistance was the Chico River Dam project in Kalinga Apayao, Northern Luzon which was funded by a World Bank loan. The project was deemed to provide electrification and irrigation in the area to attract foreign investments. The venture, however, was implemented without consultation with the Kalinga tribal community. A result was stiff resistance from the indigenous peoples leading to death of their chieftain Macli-ing Dulag (de Dios 1988, 125). It is incidents like this which enabled the NPA to recruit the aggrieved members of the tribal communities into their fold.

**The religious sector.** The CPP also sought to strengthen the role of the religious sector in its fight against the dictatorship. One of their primary endeavors was the formation of the Christians for National Liberation, then headed by Edicio de la Torre, SVD. The CNL argued for the need for Marxist-Christian cooperation (Bolasco 1994, 125).

The rights of women. The NDF during the martial law period also pursued the organizing of the

women's movement which began during the pre-martial law period. As noted "... feminist discourses began to be more sharply articulated with the emergence of women's formations..." These included organizations such as the Malayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan (Free Movement of New Women) or MAKIBAKA (1970), Katipunan ng Kababaihan para sa Kalayaan (Women's League for Liberation) and GABRIELA (originally stood for General Assembly for the Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership and Action) (Santos 2010, 117).

Forging alliances through the establishment of development NGOs. The NDF's establishment of development NGOs in the rural areas also enabled the Party to not only form alliances with the peasantry and fisher folks but also to recruit them into the movement. The marginalized sectors of society gravitated towards these development NGOs as it aimed to alleviate poverty in the areas where the NDs were organizing. This endeavor was greatly aided by development assistance from donor countries and foreign agencies and NGOs. Such an assistance was also made possible through the progressive networks of middle class players in the Left movement in Europe, the U.S., and Japan, among others.

Tensions and debates in the pursuit of united front alliances

Tensions and debates however emerged in the process of pursuing united front alliances among which were the following:

Tension between NDF and non-ND members. One was the tension between the NDF and non-ND members in the united front alliances because of differences in viewpoints. This was seen in the formation of a broad anti-dictatorship movement alliance where here emerged differences in viewpoints concerning the nature of the transition government which such an alliance was calling for. For example, in the Justice for All, Justice for Aquino (JAJA) movement, which was formed in 1984 in the aftermath of the assassination of ex-Senator Benigno Aquino, members of the business community did not agree to the ND position to resist all forms of foreign intervention in the country (Diokno 1988, 135).

Another major and last attempt to organize a broad opposition spectrum which the NDF was very much part of was the formation of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan or BAYAN. Its major function was "to unify and consolidate the leadership of popular organizations... and to adopt a broad and comprehensive strategy for struggle that will integrate all forms of non-violent actions (Diokno 1988, 158). Such an effort also failed "because of differing concepts of a truly united effort in which the spirit of democracy, and not the exercise of mere mechanical majority, would prevail" (Diokno 1988, 161). One view which emerged was that the NDs, also referred to as the NatDems (representing the CPP-NPA-NDF), was just too strong a force in numbers as opposed to the other ideological blocs such as the social democrats (SocDems), and the liberal democrats (LibDems), and even independent spirits (Diokno 1988, 160).

Tension within the NDF with regards to non-class issues. The engagement of the NDF in united front efforts which focused on non-class issues also brought about tensions similar to that of the stance of the CPP on NGO development work. This is best summarized in the manner in which Marxism has been viewed by the party as narrated by a CPP cadre engaged in the organizing of women's movement.

My understanding of Marxism consisted of several things, some of which were: One that, class struggle and particularly the struggle of the working class is primary for any radical social transformation to happen; two, that the working class would have to lead the revolution toward socialism; three, that the ruling class, i.e., the bourgeoisie needs to be overthrown along with its lackeys and minions; four, that capitalism would reach a point of decay, and that its overthrow is the only way for the masses to be liberated from the different yokes of oppression; five, that the way to explain the word is to use

"dialectical materialism" based on concrete social conditions; and six, that women's emancipation would follow the emancipation of the working class. I also learned that we have to pass through the national democratic struggle to attain socialism and eventually communism. (Santos 2010, 113)

Given this interpretation of Marxism by the CPP, non-class issues such as ethnicity as epitomized in the Moro insurgency and the plight of the indigenous peoples, religion, and the women's issues are secondary to the class struggle. This was the reason why the CPP could not fully support the Moro struggle. Thus, although the CPP and the MNLF found unity in their fight against the Marcos dictatorship, they parted ways in the manner by which they would pursue this through the armed struggle. Further, divisions emerged when the MNLF agreed to the Tripoli Agreement of 1976 which facilitated a peace agreement between the MNLF and the Philippine government. The agreement was brokered by Moammar Khaddafy of Libya (See Tadem 2006a). As for the indigenous peoples who were repressed by the Marcos dictatorship, they found themselves as drawn to the armed struggle for national liberation rather than for their own particular emancipation.

For the CNL, this CPP Marxist interpretation which undermines religion as a primary issue in the struggle against the dictatorship is blamed on the "underdevelopment" of Marxist categories for analyzing the Church. As further pointed out,

Marxist thinking on the Church has swung from viewing the Church as a feudal institution directly reflective of the landlord interests to explaining the emergence of the Church into oppositionist politics by the fact that church people come from classes also oppressed by "imperialism, feudalism and bureaurcrat-capitalism." (Bolasco 1994, 127)

The CPP leadership in general believed that the non-class issues such as ethnicity, as epitomized in the Moro insurgency, and the plight of the indigenous peoples and the women's and environmental issues should be treated as secondary to the class struggle while other Party members disagreed.

As for NGO development work, it was also treated as secondary to the political struggle against the dictatorship. In this climate, socio-economic work, particularly concrete livelihood-generating projects, were often mistrusted because they diverted time and energy away from the anti-fascist, i.e., the U.S.-Marcos dictatorship struggle.

The nature of the middle class and Party debates

For Reyes (2016), the nature of these debates were also spawned by the changing composition of the CPP Central Committee (CPP-CC) which became dominantly middle class, i.e., educated as well as intellectuals. These middle class players also came to assume CPP leadership responsibilities as they headed CPP regional organizations which in the 1980s have already stabilized and consolidated. Reyes saw such middle class consolidation of leadership in the Party, the turning point of which was the 1980 Central Committee Meeting. During this period, the CPP leadership was with Rodolfo Salas as Sison was arrested in 1974. As part of the Party policy, once a party member is arrested, he is no longer considered as part of the CPP for security reasons. Once the detained party member is released from detention, the party member undergoes a Party de-briefing before he/she can join the Party again. Thus, even if Sison was issuing out orders from prison not only to the heads of the CPP regional organizations and even to the public, this was not considered as an "official" Party line. Such a situation, therefore, provided the middle class leadership of the CPP space to discuss and debate policies and concerns which they felt strongly for. What also stood out in the Party leadership was they were dominantly from UP and although those from UP were conscious not to highlight this "UP elitism" which might sow some tensions, this fact still stood out (Reyes 2016).

The role of non-CPP left intellectuals. According to Reyes (2016), non-CPP left intellectuals also contributed to the debates which ensued in the Party. Among these non-CPP left intellectuals were those who were with, as well as took part of, in the activities of the Third World Studies Program (TWSP). TWSP is a research center which was established in 1976 and is based at the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), University of the Philippines. The TWSP which later on became a Center in 1999, was founded by then CAS Dean Francisco Nemenzo who earlier on left the PKP when it split in 1972 into two factions, i.e., those who surrendered to the Marcos dictatorship and those who were not for this. Nemenzo belonged to the second faction which also led to his imprisonment for a year under the Marcos dictatorship. The other TWSP non-CPP left intellectual was the Program's first director, Randolf "Randy" David. David was not ideologically aligned with any of the left-wing political blocs. Nemenzo and David were acceptable to CPP and non-CPP left-wing intellectuals as well as activists which included CPP renegades. TWSP provided a space where debates could ensue through forums, lecture-discussions as well as publications. Such debates, for example, were captured in two TWSP publications, Marxism in the Philippines: Marx Centennial Lectures (1984) and Marxism in the Philippines (1988), as well as in its quarterly journal, Kasarinlan: Journal of Third World Studies, which would also publish articles written by CPP members using their pseudonyms, concerning debates which were ensuing in the Party. An example of this is Nathan Quimpo's article arguing for urban guerrilla warfare vs. the protracted people's war (PPW) as was seen in the left strategy in El Salvador during the 1970-80s. The TWSP also provided an "academic space" for CPP members who were released from detention like former left leader Ralf Baylosis who became its research assistant in the late 1970s.

Reyes (2016) also pointed to the role of left-wing intellectuals in church establishments in the country as contributing in deepening the debates which went on in the CPP. Among these were the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines' (CBCP) NASSA and its regional institution LUSSA. There were also a number of priests and nuns from Europe and the United States who provided an intellectual as well as logistical network of support for members of the CPP in the countryside.<sup>3</sup>

A sense of wasted professional qualifications, skills, and training. Adding to the debate concerning the Party line was also the dilemmas which emerged among middle class revolutionaries who also carried with them their professional qualifications. There were middle class revolutionaries who were trained as professionals, for example, as medical doctors but their revolutionary work did not make use of their medical skills and training. It came to a point when these professional middle class revolutionaries would question what would be the best way to serve the revolution, i.e., through the "armed" or "legal" struggle, giving equal priority to the latter concerning the former (See Tadem 2014).

This is also a dilemma confronted by middle class Party cadres involved in NGO development work or advocacies. They believed that the "legal" struggle they are carrying out which benefits greatly from their middle class qualifications, skills, and training is as important as engaging in the armed struggle. Thus, a tension which emerged in the CPP concerning NGO development work was that it was treated as secondary to the political struggle against the dictatorship.

Such a tension was also exemplified in members of the CPP who viewed non-class issues associated with the "middle class" such as the struggle of women, the Moros, indigenous peoples as well as environmental advocacies as subordinate to the armed struggle.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> See Tadem 2014 on how the church networks in the Philippines facilitated the grassroots organizing of health activists during the martial law period.

### The middle class and the Left movement in civil society struggles during the post-Martial Law period (1986–present)

The transitioning from authoritarianism to democracy in the advent of the 1986 People Power Revolution which ousted the Marcos dictatorship offered a widening space for united front activities in the civil society arena for the CPP to further pursue its goals. The country's political transition, however, also intensified the tensions which were brewing in the Party and ultimately led to its split in 1992 between the Reaffirmists or "RAs," those who continued to adhere to the Maoist orthodoxy, e.g., the armed struggle, and those who "rejected" it or the "RJs." For the latter, they looked at the middle class strategies which they employed during the martial law period, e.g., development work, as the priority.

The split in the CPP and the consequent shift from the armed to the legal struggle saw the emergence of civil society as not only an arena of contention but also as a primary social force in society to bring about change. This was within the context of the need to strengthen people empowerment which is viewed as the "process of building up 'parallel power' in 'civil society'" (Tadem 2019a, 85).

Thus, civil society became the primary arena of struggle for the middle-class-led left movement during the 1990s and the emergence of civil society organizations (CSOs). "Civil society" as a term is therefore used to include all non-state actors which challenge the state. Thus, it was in the 1990s whereby the term "civil society organizations" (CSOs) was popularly used by the Left movement." The post-martial law period thus witnessed the rise of left-wing CSOs (Serrano 2016, cited in Tadem 2019a, 85).

Forging alliances with civil society players and civil society as an arena of primary and secondary contention for the RJs and RAs respectively would characterize the manner in which the Left would pursue its push for the democratization process during the post-martial law period. In relation to this, NGO/CSO advocacies and strategies thus generally remained as middle class based. As noted by Reyes (2016), this is because the strength of these NGOs/CSOs are generally knowledge-based, i.e., they need to educate people on its advocacies, formulate and apply for funding proposals, pursue alliance building among others which are generally identified with the middle class (Reyes 2016).

### The middle-class-led Popdems

Among the national democrats (NDs or natdems), which later on became a faction of the rejectionists or the "RJs," which split from the CPP, were the popular democrats (popdems) whose main concern was to work for a broad left front. Spearheading the popdems was former NDF head Horacio "Boy" Morales together with former CPP stalwarts Isagani Serrano and Edicio de la Torre. The popdem expressions had three important dimensions which required middle class strategies and qualifications of which were the following (Serrano 2016, cited in Tadem 2019a).

NGO development work, which was exemplified with the establishment of the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM) and its sister organization, the Cooperative Foundation of the Philippines Inc. (CFPI). With regards to the former, the revitalized PRRM was one of the biggest NGOs which prospered during the first decades of the post-martial law period. This was a popdem initiative which provides for education and resources in its aim to strenghten "civil society" (Tornquist 1993, 42). Second, a popdem "thinktank" was seen in the formation of the Institute for Popular Democracy (IPD). The IPD focused on the issues of governance and electoral reforms as well as popular democracy and participation. And third, a social movement, the Movement for Popular Democracy (MPD). This

movement would link the lower- middle- and upper classes in society at the local and national levels of governance.

PRRM/CFPI and rural development. The PRRM focused on empowering rural communities and this was through rural development and reconstruction. It established around 12 regional chapters all over the country. One of its showcases was Nueva Vizcaya where it helped to bring down the poverty levels in cooperation with other civil society organizations (CSOs) and the local government unit from 45% to 4%. Another example is the CFPI which joined forces with other CSOs, and focused mainly on the following: (1) organizing the farmers into cooperatives in order to empower them and in providing them with assistance, e.g., technical as well as legal; and, (2) campaigning to enact national laws to promote cooperative development in the country as seen in the promulgation of the following laws on March 10, 1990: (1) Republic Act (R.A.) 6938 known as the Cooperative Code of the Philippines, creating an organic law for cooperatives; and, (2) R.A. 6939 establishing the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) as the government agency to implement the Cooperative Code.

The popdems and the creation of other civil society networks. The PRRM, as well as the MPD, also helped in the establishment of broad left united front alliances. This included the support it gave to the formation of the Freedom From Debt Coalition (FDC) in 1988 which called for a debt moratorium, among others, of the USD26 billion debt left by the Marcos dictatorship. FDC is considered as the broadest coalition of left-wing political blocs. Among its major strategies is to intervene in government policy-making (Tadem 2019a, 88). In the current Duterte Administration, under the initiative of FDC, the 2017 government budget provided for a debt audit of questionable loans incurred by the Philippine government.

CSOs emerging from CSOs. "A reality of left-wing CSOs during the post-martial law period was the splintering of its organizations given the debates which would ensue as brought about the growing complexity of issues and new developments. This has generally been brought about by vicissitudes in the political dispensation" (Tadem 2019a, 89). This was seen in the FDC. As this CSO network began to take on other issues such as structural adjustment programs and privatization, issues which were no longer as black and white as the debt issue, debates emerged within the FDC in the 1990s of the direction in which the CSO network was heading towards (Tadem 2019a, 89).

Moreover, there was also the issue of strategy. One faction wanted it to give priority to research on pertinent economic issues needing more middle class skills. The other faction, led by the FDC's mass base, however, wanted to focus the FDC resources on political action, e.g., mass mobilizations and demonstrations. The former, which was led by FDC President Leonor Briones, then a UP Professor of Public Administration and its Secretary General Filomeno Sta. Ana, ultimately left the FDC (Tadem 2019a, 89).

Briones would later on become the National Treasurer of the Estrada Administration (1998-2001) and is currently the Secretary of the Department of Education of the Duterte Administration (2016 to the present). Sta. Ana, on the other hand, established the Action for Economic Reforms (AER) in 1996. The AER took a more nuanced position on the government's Comprehensive Tax Reform Package than its other counterparts in FDC. It became a major force behind the reform coalition which successfully lobbied for the enactment of the Sin Tax Law officially known as Republic Act No. 10351 which imposed higher excise tax on alcohol and tobacco products (Tadem 2019a, 89).

### Global level of governance and democratization

Another prominent feature of left-movement led CSOs during the post-martial law period was the emergence of global CSOs which was made possible because of their middle class character. By the

1990s, the internationalization of CSO activities has become the norm given the advent of globalization. In the case of the FDC which started out as a local NGO, this has morphed into a transnational CSO. Together with other global civil society groups, FDC is credited for playing a vital role in advocating for multilateral financial institutions (MFIs) to enact the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) (Tadem 2019a, 90).

### The shift to electoral politics as the arena of struggle

Despite the headway which these left-led CSOs have attained with their advocacies, which was made possible by their middle class acumen and strategies, the reality which remains is that the country's elites continue to dominate in the political and economic spheres of society. The realization therefore is that under an "oligarchical" democracy, there are limitations to the reforms which left-wing CSOs can push for, thus the impetus for capturing state power through electoral politics. Given its middle class character, they were able to embark on establishing political parties.

The Akbayan Citizens' Action Party. An example of this is the Akbayan Citizens' Action Party or Akbayan which, aside from the popdems, consists of two other left-wing political blocs, the democratic socialists or demsocs and the socialist group BISIG (Bukluran sa Ikauunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa or the Advancement of Socialist Thought and Action) (Tadem 2019a, 93). The window for left-wing movements to enter electoral politics was through the system of party-list representation as mandated by the 1987 Constitution. The purpose of the party-list system was to remedy the problem of underrepresentation by the lower echelons of society by allowing them as much as three seats if they win 6% of the votes cast in the party-list system. A major limit to this system though is that traditional politicians have began to form their own party-list parties which made it difficult for these left-wing parties to win seats in Congress (Tadem 2019a, 93).

Because of this, left-wing CSOs which have established their own political parties are forced to ally with these traditional politicians to win seats in the party-list representation system. This has led to the watering down of CSO advocacies and worst the dissolution of the CSO itself due to debates which ensued on whether to pursue such a strategy of elite alliance or not given its adverse effects (Tadem 2019a, 93). Another strategy is to support the presidential candidacy of a traditional politician. This was the case of Akbayan whereby during the 2010 election, it campaigned for the presidential candidacy of Benigno S. Aquino Jr. When Aquino won, a number of Akbayan leaders were awarded with government positions (Tadem 2019a, 94).

Such a strategy has also created tensions and divisions in Akbayan as some of its leaders as well as members did not agree with several policies of the Aquino Administration, particularly its neo-liberal development agenda. This ultimately led to a number of them leaving this left-wing movement and political party. What was clearly evident was the failure of Akbayan to bring in its left-wing agenda or alternative while in government (Tadem 2019a, 95).

The fate of left-wing personalities in government. The fate of Akbayan is reminiscent of the experiences of previous Left personalities who were recruited into government but who could not make any substantive difference. An example was PRRM's Morales who was appointed by President Estrada as Secretary of Agrarian Reform. Morales, however, could not make much of a difference because of the strong influence of the landed elites. In the case of the current Duterte Administration, he appointed three leading left-wing personalities identified with the CPP to Cabinet positions. These were: Judy Taguiwalo, then a University of the Philippines Professor, as Secretary of the Department of Social Work and Development; Liza Maza as the head of the National Anti-Poverty Commission and a peasant leader, Rafael Mariano as Secretary of Agrarian Reform. Mariano was the first ever peasant to be appointed to a government cabinet position. He was also formely a member of the Philippine Congress House

of Representatives. But together with Taguiwalo, he failed to get the confirmation of the Philippine Congress which remains to be dominated by politico-economic elites and big business interests (See Tadem 2019b).

### Conclusion

The Philippine left experience thus shows that the middle class has played a crucial role in the pursuit of middle class strategies through the Left movement. Increments have been gained such as the organization and popular empowerment of the marginalized sectors of society, the translation of their advocacies into legislation and international policies as well as participation in and appointment to government cabinet positons. There are, however, also limitations to the extent to which this left faction is able to push for democratic change particularly through electoral politics and government appointments. This is mainly attributed to the continuing dominance of oligarchical interests in the country and the absence of a feasible left alternative to this status quo.

### **Open Forum**

The forum started with two of the participants seeking clarification on the category of the "middle class." Given the spectrum of the middle class as "leftist middle class," "professional middle class," and "rightist middle class," Bella Lucas (UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies) asked which strand of the middle class can really swing the pendulum from one pole of power to the other. Prof. Josephine Dionisio (UP Department of Sociology) was interested in the choice of using the term "middle class" instead of "petite bourgeoisie." She asked, "Is there a difference?"

In response, **Dr. Teresa S. Encarnacion Tadem** agreed that the middle class can either swing to the left or to the right and vice versa. In this sense, the middle class is not static. Further, Dr. Tadem shared that she had to problematize the category of the "middle class" in her study. She referred to the work of Anthony Giddens, who classifies the middle class not in terms of market capacity but in terms of qualifications, e.g., education.

In the Philippines, this is exemplified in the case of the students who joined the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). They may be children of shopkeepers and landed elites, but they were joining not because of their market capacity but because of their qualifications, their skills, among other things. Dr. Tadem also mentioned a study conducted by Dr. Temario Rivera and Dr. Cynthia Bautista, where one salient question they had to deal with was the need to identify the values that set the middle class apart from the other classes. This complexity, Dr. Tadem stated, also figures prominently in her studies on technocracy, where she observed that the technocrats can come from the lower class, like Manuel Alba, and the upper class, like Placido Mapa. The technocrats are also shown to be related to the new middle class.

Loreta Ann "Etta" P. Rosales (former representative, Akbayan Citizens' Action Party) asked Dr. Tadem if she sees the possibility of the left establishing its relevance once again—if not the possibility of directly coming together—under President Rodrigo Duterte. Dr. Tadem replied that she believes everything has already been tried by the left, and it is time to build an independent movement and national party. Dr. Tadem added: "The whole left ideological spectrum has already been covered. Under Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos, we had the socdems (social democrats). Under Joseph Ejercito Estrada, we had Boy Morales, formerly with the CPP-NPA-NDF. Under Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, you had people who were from the left, but they were not coming as left. Under Benigno Aquino III, we had



the Akbayan. And finally, under Rodrigo Duterte, the CPP [was coopted]" when its members joined government. But they ultimately also left.

Dr. Tadem expressed her belief that the problem is that people cannot see the distinct economic policies. Whoever is the president, economic policies are very hegemonic. In the case of the Workers' Party in Latin America and of Bernie Sanders in the United States, it is very clear that they are socialist because of their economic policies. In the Philippines, once the left allies with traditional politicians, they can raise issues of poverty and corruption but not inequality. Raising the issue of inequality requires redistribution, which means addressing economic policies. And traditional politicians do not accept that. Dr. Tadem mentioned that the first one to bring up class inequality was Estrada, with his Erap para sa Mahirap (Erap for the Poor) rhetoric. But his economic policies remained the same. Related here is the use of "good governance" as a discourse, which, Dr. Tadem argued, is elitist. Drawing from Walden Bello's work, Dr. Tadem pointed out that good governance only covers corruption, but it does not address inequality. Addressing genuine representation of the marginalized sectors would have been the work of the party-list system, but that system was also bastardized, Dr. Tadem added.

From a Marxist-Leninist standpoint, Rasti Delizo (Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino and Laban ng Masa) drew attention to the idea that leadership structures have to be collectives, making sure that the full leadership is not given away to one single individual, whether a member of the proletariat or otherwise. Given the negative tendencies that emanate from petite bourgeois-led collectives, he wanted to know the possible positive outcomes of a collective which is led by the ones from a proletarian class background who have always quantitatively dominated revolutionary movements.

In a related question, Mario Guzman (Block Marcos Coalition) raised the notion that it is the proletariat that is believed to be the primary and natural agent of the revolution, according to the theories of Marx and Lenin. Yet, experience shows that the middle class has played a pivotal role in this endeavor. Mr. Guzman asked what would have happened if the proletariat was given the chance to be the major character in the revolutionary movement. What lessons has the left learned in having a middle-class led revolutionary movement?

In response, Dr. Tadem said she believes that if the revolutionary movement was led by the proletariat, things would have been different. She suggested that revolutionaries from the middle class have more options compared to those from the lower class; this has an advantage as well as a limitation. First, the middle class are more likely to relate to the lower class and to the upper class, thereby opening themselves more to united front alliances, which the lower class would not be able to do. This openness of the middle class is seen in the University of the Philippines (UP) as a socializing process of mixing the left and the right. Dr. Tadem shared that Vicente Paterno was friends with the Lavas and the Lansangs, and Paterno did not even know that they were members of the Communist Party. In an interview, Paterno shared that he could relate to them because they were in the same school. When asked about his opinion on alleged CPP members being part of the Duterte cabinet, Ramon Ang of San Miguel Corporation replied, "But aren't they also Filipinos? Aren't they just from UP? They are like us."

The flexibility available to the middle class is also reflected in a situation where revolutionaries had to figure out where to go after the revolution. Dr. Tadem cited the work of Rosanne Rutten, who has been studying the New People's Army (NPA) in Negros after the 1986 People Power Revolution. Rutten revealed that it was more difficult for somebody from the peasantry and the working class to leave the movement. The tendency was to look for a patron to help them. The classic case was Dante Buscayno, who had to look for a patron, and that was Corazon Aquino. He was able to establish one of the biggest cooperatives for a time. But Dr. Tadem expressed her belief that, on his own, Buscayno would not really have been able to do what Boy Morales did, which was getting funding from other countries.

In contrast, according to Dr. Tadem's interview with a member of the CPP Committee, the middle class could easily go back to their homes, such as in Dasmariñas, Cavite, etc. Dr. Tadem also mentioned an interview done by Dr. Eduardo Tadem with Ka Bart Pasion, who was a former Politburo member. Pasion asked those who left PKP: "Why can't you be full-time revolutionaries like us?"

Dr. Teresa Tadem highlighted that the middle class always have an option to join government, academe, or a civil society organization. In other words, there are more options available to them. She further shared that, even before the 1986 People Power Revolution, there were already simmering tensions between the middle and the working class revolutionaries within the movement. Some members of the CPP once said that they dress like peasants, they look like peasants. There was also a running joke that the middle class revolutionaries know how to revolt but do not know how to clean and cook (*marunong makibaka pero hindi marunong maglinis at magluto*). But these tensions were not as obvious as after the People Power Revolution.

On the historical development of the left presented by Dr. Tadem, **Fe Manapat (WomanHealth)** remarked that the development of the account seemed to focus on the split within the PKP. She wanted to clarify what happened to the PKP members after the 1930s, specifically whether or not they remained on the path taken by the CPP. In response, Dr. Tadem pointed out once again that those who came from the middle class had an easier time leaving the revolution and going back to mainstream society. In her study, she also saw that the other PKP members on the left still had the revolutionary aspects. Those who left PKP established *Bukluran sa Ikauunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa* (BISIG). Some became religious charismatic leaders and pursued other different occupations.

Ryan Martinez (Student, UP Department of Sociology) wanted to get the reaction of Dr. Tadem on foreign capital that enters the country via funding agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to funnel neoliberal developmental agenda. Dr. Tadem said that it is true that funding agencies can significantly determine the activities of civil society organizations. She cited various examples. When the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM) was revitalized, the main source of funding was Oxfam Novib, a liberal NGO from Europe which was in tune with what Boy Morales wanted. As for the UP Third World Studies Program, it did not want to get money from Ford Foundation and USAID, as these were considered counterrevolution funds. Another case was the Program on Alternative Development of the UP CIDS, whose objective was to counter an ASEAN elite establishment by building alternative practices. The Convenor, Dr. Eduardo Tadem, said that the ASEAN

civil society, even the liberal or left-wing groups, did not really like the idea because the funding agency wanted the research project to engage government.

Ana Maria "Princess" Nemenzo (WomanHealth) commented that, apart from the party rule that one is no longer considered a member of the party if he or she has been imprisoned, there were also those who actively decided to leave the revolutionary movement. For these former members, it was a challenge to show that development work is a legitimate area of struggle. Upon reflecting on her own involvement in development NGO work, Mrs. Nemenzo also expressed her frustration with the limitations of the role of development NGO work in challenging the political power structure. Although NGO work is advancing reforms which are equally necessary, she expressed her belief that it falls short in terms of tying up the struggle for concrete gains with a tighter political program for change. As such, she acknowledged that development work is not really part of the revolutionary left movement. Also, Mrs. Nemenzo wanted to make clear that Kalayaan was not an initiative of the National Democratic Front (NDF); it was precisely because the party did not take on women's issues that Kalayaan was founded to be the first feminist group to put forward the autonomy of the women's movements.

Dr. Tadem thanked Mrs. Nemenzo for her clarification that Kalayaan was not formed by the NDF but was more of feminist discourses beginning to be more sharply articulated with the emergence of women's formation. Second, Dr. Tadem said she sees development work as a process, especially after the 1986 People Power Revolution. Based on her study of Dante Buscayno's cooperative, Buscayno was saying that it was difficult to tell people to engage in revolution, given the nature of cooperatives as a different kind of political dispensation. He said that he would push and push people to be involved in a cooperative until they could see its limitations, and that was when it would be easier to tell people to take up arms. At that point, Dr. Tadem saw an opening. Development work and its drive for reforms have been there for 30 years, but it has reached its limitations, necessitating a bigger step to be taken.

Finally, Dr. Tadem commented on the nature of participation of left personalities in government. She said that they are pulled into government as individuals; they are not bringing the movement and the ideas with them. It was Akbayan that was the first to bring in its agenda, but it was not able to push this due to the marginalized government posts given to it. Left personalities are usually placed in the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) or in the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). She said Boy Morales was assigned to the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), which was crucial, but an undersecretary position was allegedly reserved for someone who was affiliated with Peping Cojuangco's Hacienda Luisita. Overall, left personalities were not put in the main economic agencies—namely, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the Department of Finance (DOF), and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA)—which significantly hampered their capacity to advance crucial economic reforms.

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# Universal

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