

August 26 online lecture: “First as tragedy, second as farce: Marcos, Duterte, and the Communist Parties of the Philippines.”

Philippine Stalinists slander academic Joseph Scalice ahead of August 26 lecture

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On August 26, Joseph Scalice, a leading scholar of the history of the Philippines, will give an online lecture entitled “First as tragedy, second as farce: Marcos, Duterte, and the Communist Parties of the Philippines.” The event is at 3 p.m. Singapore time (same time in Philippines, 3 a.m. New York, 9 a.m. Berlin, 12:30 p.m. Colombo, 5 p.m. Sydney).

Scalice is a postdoctoral researcher at Nanyang Technological University with a PhD in Southeast Asian Studies from the University of California, Berkeley. He is a contributor for the *World Socialist Web Site* and specializes in the history of politics and revolutionary movements in the postcolonial Philippines.

The event, which will be hosted by Nanyang Technological University’s College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences, is free and available to the international public. It will address why the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), as well as various political groups associated with the party’s political line, endorsed Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte upon his election in 2016. Before that year’s election, the CPP had denounced Duterte as a “fascist,” but endorsed his presidency after his election.

The lecture will explore the historical parallels between the CPP’s enthusiasm for Duterte and the earlier Communist Party’s (PKP) endorsement of the anticommunist dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos, who led the country from 1965 to 1986, and who imposed martial law in 1972. While the founders of the present CPP broke with the PKP in 1967, the underlying programmatic continuity between the rival parties is expressed in the CPP’s support for Duterte. This

lecture will explore the class logic that led the PKP to support the Marcos dictatorship and justified the CPP’s embrace of Duterte.

The event has come under attack from the Stalinist party. On August 18, the founder and ideological leader of the Communist Party of the Philippines, Jose Maria Sison, published comments on Facebook threatening and slandering Joseph Scalice, a leading scholar of the history of the Philippines.

Looking to stem public interest in the lecture, but unable to respond to the historical criticisms, Sison publicly labeled Scalice “a pathologically rabid anti-communist and CIA psywar agent posing as an academic Trotskyite.” In several other posts he repeated similar accusations.

Sison’s unhinged attack on a leading historian is motivated by his desire to cover up the party’s role in facilitating the rise to power of Duterte. The CPP and the “national democratic” organizations tied to its political perspective gave support to Duterte as mayor of Davao City over the course of decades. During this time, in which they campaigned on his party platform, Duterte built an international reputation as the head of death squads that exercised a reign of terror in his city.

When Duterte took office in 2016, the various “national democratic” organizations enthusiastically supported his presidency. They took up cabinet posts and promoted him in their rallies and speeches. The CPP wrote in their official paper, *Ang Bayan*, welcoming the president’s war on drugs and called on the “revolutionary forces” to cooperate with it. That war on drugs became a campaign of mass murder that has seen over thirty thousand people killed in the past

four years by police and paramilitary forces.

In response to Sison, Scalice told the *World Socialist Web Site*:

“I will not be intimidated by the leader of a party whose politics are so bankrupt that he resorts immediately to threats. In this, Sison and the CPP are following the well-worn tradition of Stalinist reaction. The truth is stronger than threats and slander.

“It is telling that Sison and his party call me a liar for pointing to their public support for Duterte while adopting the same bullying methods of their political bedmate. I have every right to give this lecture and I intend to do so. In response to the threats against me, I have received an outpouring of support from my colleagues internationally and a burst of interest in the August 26 lecture, which I welcome all readers to attend.”

We urge our readers to register and attend the lecture, which will be held via zoom. Registration will close soon so please register as soon as possible.

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