

Gabi Fechtner, 22 December 2022

**Speech for the Memorial Event for
Joma Sison on 23 December 2022**
(presented in shortened version)

Dear Julieta de Lima,
Dear family,
Dear comrades,

With the death of José Maria Sison
a close friend leaves us,
one of the greatest revolutionaries and
Marxist-Leninists of our time,
a theoretician
and practical leader
of the new-democratic revolution and
the international revolutionary movement.

Mao Zedong once said:
*“All men must die, but
death can vary in its significance. ...*

*To die for the people
is weightier than Mount Tai,
but to ... die for the exploiters and oppressors
is lighter than a feather.”¹*

¹ “Serve the People” (8 September 1944), Selected Works of
Mao Tse-tung, Vol. III

The death of Joma Sison is weightier than Mount Tai.

Death is irreversible.

But at the same time, a life like the one led by Joma leaves indelible marks that have and will enter into our life and our work if we process his death correctly.

Joma Sison devoted more than 60 years of his life to the anti-imperialist struggle and the struggle for socialism.

Anticommunist persecution, torture, prison, exile – all this neither broke him nor daunted him.

We knew him, into old age, as a man of unwavering optimism and thirst for action, who in his whole person was inextricably linked with the revolutionary liberation struggle.

Joma was 17 years old when, in 1956, the revisionist betrayal turned the Soviet Union, the former bastion of socialism,

into the bastion of modern revisionism and of the international counterrevolution.

Joma was not to be dissuaded from scientific socialism by this historic disaster for the working-class movement.

On the contrary.

The founding of the CPP in 1968, with him as Founding Chairman, was a declaration of war on modern revisionism and a significant contribution to the rebuilding of the international Marxist-Leninist movement.

Joma Sison was an advocate of the national-democratic revolution of the Philippines and the Philippines' liberation from neocolonial exploitation and oppression.

However, he did not regard this as an isolated process.

He integrated the anti-imperialist liberation struggle into the international socialist revolution.

Thus the Second Party Congress of the CPP adopted a program in which *“proletarian internationalism*

as the highest principle guiding all levels of foreign relations” is upheld and the task is set to:

... “together develop the international movement against imperialism and all reaction.”

Jose Maria Sison set great store by cooperation with Marxist-Leninist parties in the imperialist heartlands.

For that he worked since the beginning of the 1990s for many years in a leading position, closely together with the MLPD and Stefan Engel – who is today's head of the theoretical organ of MLPD.

Like in building and leading the International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations.

During this period, close ties of our party members with the liberation struggle in the Philippines developed, and also personally with Joma.

There were a number of solidarity campaigns.

For my generation I can say that in the children's organization Red Foxes or in the youth league *Rebell*, many of us already grew up with Joma; he simply was part of our work and our struggle.

Thus it is important für us that on the day of the cremation, the 27 December, we will hold several rallies (and assemblies) to commemorate Joma.

As revolutionary he was not only a man of practice.

He was aware how important it is that the Marxist-Leninists do theoretical work in order to analyze and qualify new phenomena and essential changes.

The proletarian world outlook must provide the workers and broad masses convincing answers to the problems of our time at all times.

With his many books and writings he made important theoretical contributions for the struggle against revisionism and for the creative application of Mao Zedong Thought.

I well remember the bilateral talks with him:

He always had a specific assessment not only of the situation in the Philippines, but also of entire imperialist world system, of the development of the balance of forces among the imperialists.

With great interest he concerned himself with the ideological-political line of the MLPD and appreciated the doctrine of the mode of thinking as conclusion from the revisionist betrayal of socialism.

In 2002 Joma Sison became the target of a coordinated Europe-wide anticommunist campaign of the EU.

It was intended to demonize the freedom ideology of communism and make it into the “root of terrorism.”

However, the reactionaries in the EU and worldwide found Joma to be a very hard nut they could not crack.

He enjoyed the support of a global solidarity movement, and the EU had to delete his name from its terror list.

The day after his death many of the world's biggest news agencies already carried reports.

In acknowledgement CNN quotes the CPP:

“The entire Communist Party of the Philippines gives the highest possible tribute to its founding chairman, great Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thinker, patriot, internationalist and revolutionary leader.”

Reuters, in contrast, rails in anticommunist fashion, citing the “joy” of the Philippine Department of Defense of the ultrareactionary Marcos government over Joma’s death.

This underscores the “political issue Joma Sison,” his global significance, but also that, to the very end, he was a thorn in the flesh of the imperialist world system.

Don’t give anticommunism a chance! –
That too is part of the legacy of Joma Sison.

The call of the Philippine government to renounce the liberation struggle now that Joma is dead

will backfire and hit the government like a boomerang.

We are proud of the decades of close personal cooperation with Joma.

But we do not want to withhold that there were both unity **and** contradiction.

We succeeded also in overcoming more difficult phases in our cooperation.

It was mutual respect,
the willingness to learn from one another,
and the sense of responsibility
for the liberation struggle
of the working class and the broad masses,
with which Joma, too, was infused,
that enabled us to achieve this positive
process.

This experience is of great importance
for today's urgently necessary, and at the
same time complicated process of the
unification, coordination and cooperation of
the international Marxist-Leninist and
working-class movement!

It is being attacked today by a

veritable flood of petty-bourgeois interpretations of the extensive changes in the accelerated destabilization of the imperialist world system.

Contrary to the confusion that social-chauvinism, revisionism, opportunism and postmodernism are stirring up, it is important to strengthen our Marxist-Leninist course.

The compass is Marxism-Leninism, dialectical materialism, and the proletarian class standpoint.

To his life's end Joma was a convinced, and convincing, Marxist-Leninist, an unbroken Marxist-Leninist, and thus an impressive model for the youth.

I bow before this lifework.

We will miss Joma.

We cannot replace him, but in the spirit of proletarian internationalism can continue to carefully cultivate the close friendship between our two parties.

José Maria Sison's death
is an obligation to us
to carry on, with all our might,
both the anti-imperialist united front
and the cooperation and coordination of
revolutionary parties and organizations
for preparing and carrying out the
international socialist revolution.

His death is an obligation to us
to continue his lifework!