

Beat Back the Attacks on José-Maria Sison!

4 November 2002

By the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement

The Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement strongly condemns the attacks directed against José-Maria Sison, a long-standing leader of the communist movement in the Philippines. After years of struggle, Comrade Sison was recognised as a political refugee by the authorities of the Netherlands. Now the government of the United States has declared the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), of which Comrade Sison was the founding chairman, a “terrorist” organisation because the CPP, with the support of millions of workers, peasants, intellectuals and middle-class city dwellers, has been leading armed resistance against the US-backed reactionary Filipino state for more than three decades. Having placed the “terrorist” label on this esteemed communist leader, the US has threatened to raise a formal demand that the Netherlands government turn Comrade Sison over to the US.

In their frenzy to carve out their “new world order”, the US imperialists must not be allowed to overthrow the system of political asylum that has been built up on the basis of struggle and formalised in international treaties in Europe and elsewhere. The right to asylum, like other democratic rights now under assault, must be defended.

But there are other, even more far-reaching reasons why it is crucial that these attacks against Comrade Sison be defeated. Not only do these attacks represent yet another attempt by the US overlord to protect its grip over its Filipino neo-colony, they are also a direct menace to the whole international communist movement and all other revolutionary and progressive forces. It is further proof that the ultimate target of the so-called “war on terrorism” is anyone who refuses to buckle under to the imperialists’ dictates.

The Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement calls upon all communist and progressive organisations to rally to the support of Comrade Sison and the Communist Party of the Philippines, who are currently in the crosshairs of the US imperialist crusade against the peoples of the world. ■



Guerrilla
fighters in the
Philippines.

José-Maria Sison: Filipino Revolutionary Leader in US Crosshairs

In August 2002, as an extension of its "war on terrorism", the US government outrageously aimed its fire at José-Maria Sison, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the New People's Army (NPA) and designated them "foreign terrorists". José-Maria Sison, the founder of the CPP (1968-69) and Chairman until his capture (1977), has played the role of chief political consultant to the National Democratic Front in the Philippines (NDFP) during the 14 years he has spent in the Netherlands as a political refugee.

The US rulers approached the Netherlands government, which quickly agreed to do the US's bidding by freezing the assets of anyone associated with the Philippine revolutionary movement living in the Netherlands. Moving to the US baton, the Dutch government froze José-Maria Sison's bank account and took away his housing, health and social benefits. Most ominously, the US is pushing for the extradition of Sison for the murder of Colonel John Rowe, the chief of a Joint US Military Advisory Group, who was killed 13 years ago in Manila, the Philippine capital. This US group trained the Philippines armed forces in counter-insurgency techniques and worked with the CIA on a strategy to infiltrate the CPP and the NPA. Rowe appears to have been the control officer of those infiltrators. While some people have been charged with Rowe's killing and are already being held in a Philippine prison, the US is using this as a pretext to extradite Comrade Sison to wherever they want.

The Netherlands' collaboration in this ambush on Comrade Sison represents a counter-revolutionary attack on all those fighting for revolution or against imperialist domination of the Third World nations. It also represents the ugly face of "fortress Europe" that is turning against the immigrants and political refugees who are fleeing repressive regimes. After the CIA coup that brought Pinochet to power, Chileans sought refuge in France; Arabs fleeing the repressive Saudi government were admitted into the

UK; after Lumumba was killed in the Congo, and during the Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines, revolutionaries and other liberation fighters escaping persecution went to the Netherlands. The attack on José-Maria Sison is another episode in the accelerating reversal of this long-standing tradition in Europe of providing political asylum.

GROWING SUPPORT

In response to the US-orchestrated attack, widespread support has come in from revolutionaries and democratic organisations, and religious leaders in the Netherlands and parliamentarians in Sweden have spoken out on his behalf. This outrageous attack on Sison is an effort to silence a leader who has devoted his life to opposing imperialism and uprooting the semi-feudal and semi-colonial system that has kept the Philippines backward and prey to US domination.

Despite the high-profile involvement of US military forces against the Abu Sayyaf group in the Philippines, the National Security Council and military consider the CPP-NPA the "number one threat to national security". That is because after declaring the Maoist insurgency dead in the 1990s – a period when guerrilla activity had weakened considerably – military leaders have grudgingly acknowledged that it has bounced back and is growing with a vengeance. An *Asia Times* article describes the recent growth of the People's War in the Philippines' countryside: "From a low of 2,000 armed guerrillas in the mid-1990s, it has grown to 12,000, says the National Security Council. It was present in 445 *barangay* or villages in 1995, but this grew to 1,671 *barangay* in 2000." The *Asia Times* recounts "the steady growth as having been fueled by poverty and landlessness in the rural areas as well as the 'rectification' campaign initiated by Party leaders...."

The historical role of the US in the Philippines is as long as it is insidious. According to a study by a group of scholars and researchers in the

History Department of the University of the Philippines, between 1899 and 1914 the US military killed more than 1,400,000 Filipinos! After the Philippines gained formal independence in 1946, it became a US neo-colony and a strategic staging ground for US military "projection" in Asia. In the 1950s, the US government joined forces with the Philippine army to crush the revolutionary movement. During the 1960s and 1970s, US bombers loaded up in the Philippines to go attack Vietnam. It was during that period of the US-Marcos dictatorship that young revolutionaries, influenced by the then-revolutionary China led by Mao Tsetung, formed the CPP and NPA and launched people's war in the Philippines.

The Philippines has long been a source of cheap labour and natural resources for the US imperialists. In the Sulu Sea area, US corporations are exploring for major oil, gold and deuterium (used in nuclear production). Militarily the United States needs the Philippines as a forward base, as a second front in its "war on terrorism". It has been pushing for a Mutual Logistics Support Agreement with the Philippines, which would allow the construction of supply depots and the other more permanent structures that they deem necessary for controlling South-east Asia. The US has also been pumping new money into equipping the Philippine military with state-of-the-art equipment and war-fighting techniques and troop training.

Comrade Sison has responded to US threats by saying, "The CPP, NPA and NDFP cannot be intimidated. They dared to fight the Marcos fascist dictatorship and in the process grew in strength even while the US military bases were still in the Philippines and were used for delivering war materiel and training Filipino puppet troops.... I will continue to use the freedom of expression to speak for national liberation and democracy. And it is the word liberation that the US hates most, because it means freedom from its imperialist system of exploitation." ■