



The Social and Political Philosophy of Pedro Salgado, O.P.

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The social and political endeavors of Fr. Pedro Salgado, O.P., reveals an adeptness at using Marxist analysis as a tool to examine Philippine society. His works unmask the appropriation of power and privileges by the economic and political elite of the Philippines who ally with affluent nations and capitalists to deprive the mass of the Filipino people of their inherent right to participate in the process of decision-making and to partake of the benefits of the country's productive goods. Since the oppressive economic and political elite is well entrenched in the state machinery that may use terroristic tactics to maintain its power and privileges, there is no other way to achieve socialism but through class conflict spearheaded by the workers and peasants themselves and carried out through parliamentary and armed struggle that would eventually result in the dictatorship of the proletariat. The philosophy behind this revolutionary intent is Democratic Socialism where the workers and peasants are the ones to take charge of the economy and allocate society's resources to the benefit of the greatest number of people.

Keywords: *capitalism, state capitalism, communism, socialism, democratic socialism, class struggle, dictatorship of the proletariat, Communist Party of the Philippines, armed revolution*

Fr. Pedro Salgado, O.P. did not write a book on social philosophy but he wrote many books and in a few of these works, he provided traces of his ideas on society. It is from these ideas on society that we can glean vestiges of his social philosophy which we hope to put together in an organized way through this article.

Social philosophy is “about what the principles of social life ought to be and why.”¹ In other words, social philosophy delves on the principles that should govern interrelationships among people and the distribution of the earth’s resources among them. It becomes political philosophy when it touches on the concrete structures that define these interrelationships and the specific manner by which the earth’s resources are to be distributed. Since social philosophy cannot be conceived in a vacuum, that is, it has to arise from specific social conditions that demand concrete structures and specific strategies for distributing the earth’s resources, social philosophy cannot be severed from political philosophy. Thus, in this article, when we synthesize Salgado’s social philosophy, we inevitably also discuss his political philosophy.

Salgado’s Marxist Leanings

In his book, *Social Encyclicals: Commentary and Critique*,² Salgado obviously manifests a certain bias on Marxist and Marxian ideas.³ He has substantial quotations and citations from Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao Zedong and from Marx himself.

Salgado, for example, quotes Lenin’s *Our Program* (1899) regarding the conquest of power by the proletariat and the establishment of a socialist society:

Marxism “made clear the real task of a revolutionary socialist party: not to preach to the capitalists and their hangers-on about improving the lot of the workers, not to hatch conspiracies, but to organize the class struggle of the proletariat and to lead his struggle, the ultimate aim of which is the conquest of political power by the proletariat and the organization of a socialist society.”⁴

¹ Fink, Hans. *Social Philosophy*, (London, 1981), p. 3.

² We base our philosophical construct of Salgado’s Social and Political Philosophy mainly on this book which reveals extensively his ideas on the subject. Another book, *Politico-Economic Essays for the Conscientization of Cagayan Valley*, provides concrete application of the social and political ideas of Salgado.

³ In this article, we distinguish between Marxian and Marxist ideas. By Marxist ideas, we mean those attributed by Lenin, Stalin, Engels and others to Marx but which may not necessarily be truly of Marx but merely an interpretation of him. By Marxian ideas, we mean ideas which can be directly attributed to Marx based on concrete textual evidence. Both the Marxist and Marxian ideas are covered by the generic term ‘Marxism.’

⁴ Salgado, Pedro, O.P. *Social Encyclicals: Commentary and Critique*, (Manila, 1997), p. 128. Henceforth, *SECC*.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is, indeed, a Marxian idea. However, with the influence of Friedrich Engels' dialectics of nature read in a deterministic manner, Plekhanov, Lenin, Trotsky and later on Stalin, gradually introduced a twist to this Marxian idea by investing the vanguard, the Communist Party, specifically the Politburo with political power. Thus, the political power which Marx wanted to wrest from the bourgeois elite and which he envisioned to be vested on the proletariat became a power accorded a new Communist elite. Through the leadership of the Politburo or the vanguard, the Russian brand of Communism which smacks of collective state ownership of the forces of production was designed to spread worldwide through the dogmatization of the Marxian idea of historical materialism.

Historical materialism is a Marxian view that considers history as developing along with the development of matter. This happens through another Marxian idea of 'praxis' which can be described as the interplay of matter and consciousness in the course of historical advancement. Both historical materialism and praxis are succinctly contained in Marx's eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach: "Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."⁵

Historical materialism degenerated into the five stages of history, a schema which was purported to remake the history of countries on which Communism was to be established. Leszek Kolakowski, a noted Marxist scholar, ironically mentions the dismay of Marxist historians for having to 'readjust' the historical facts based on Stalin's pronouncements regarding the past periods of history:

Then comes an account of the five main socio-economic systems: primitive-communal, slave-owning, feudal, capitalist, and socialist. The order in which these succeed one another is described as historically inevitable. Nothing is said about Marx's Asiatic mode of production... The enumeration of the five types of society and their application to the history of every country in the world presented the Soviet historians with a major problem. It was no easy matter to discern the existence of slave or feudal society among population that had never heard of such phenomena. Moreover, as capitalism had been established by a bourgeois revolution and socialism by a socialist one, it was natural to suppose that previous transitions had taken place in a similar way. Stalin indeed wrote (or 'proved') that in Soviet philosophy the two terms mean the same thing where the classics of Marxism-Leninism are concerned that the feudal system emerged from slave-owning as a result of slave revolution. He

⁵ Marx, Karl. *Theses on Feuerbach*, Collected Works, 5.5. For a more detailed exposition of historical materialism which, when read through the prism of determinism, became dialectical materialism and for a discourse on Marxian praxis. See Virgilio Ojoy, *Marxism and Religion: a Fusion of Horizons*, (Manila, 2001), specifically the chapter "From Dialectical Materialism to Philosophy of Praxis: Towards a Marxism with a Human Face", pp. 8-64. Henceforth, *Marxism and Religion*. Also see A. Sanchez Vasquez, *The Philosophy of Praxis*, (London, 1977).

had in fact made the same in an address on February 19, 1933: the slave-owning system was overthrown by slave revolution, as a result of which feudal lords took the place of the old exploiters. This gave historians the additional problem of identifying the 'slave revolution' in every case of transition from slave-owning to feudalism. Stalin's work was greeted by a chorus of ideologists as the supreme achievement of Marxist theory and a milestone in philosophical history. For the next fifteen years, Soviet Philosophy consisted of little but variations on the theme of its superlative merit.⁶

Salgado realizes this delimitation of the dictatorship of the proletariat towards the assumption of political power by the Communist Party during Stalin's reign. After the fall of the Russian Tsar in October 1917, the proletariat filled the vacuum of political power through the *Soviets*, literally Councils, whose membership came from the masses, were empowered through suffrage, and decided over economic and political matters in their localities and regions.⁷ However, when Stalin held the reins of the Communist Party, the Soviets were relegated to become the rubber stamps of Party decisions which may not reflect the thinking of the masses or the proletariat. Salgado says:

The Soviets lost their power under Stalin, who concentrated all power in the Party apparatus, with the Soviets now becoming mere rubber stamps of what the Party decided. Political and economic decisions came from the center, the Politburo, or more specifically, the Chairman, Josef Stalin.⁸

Salgado also quotes Friedrich Engels as one of his sources for the thinking of Marx. One of the important ideas of Marx in his analysis of capitalism is regarding the alienation of labor. Marx views capital as nothing but "labor stocked" and made to accrue in the arms of the capitalist. Salgado writes:

For Karl Marx, on the contrary, the property holdings of capitalists were unjust. The properties of the big people were thefts, stolen from what should have belonged to the workers and peasants. Thus said Friedrich Engels in his commentary on Marx: "Fifty sheets of scholarly writing to show us all the capital of our bankers, merchants, and big landholders is nothing else but the accumulated and unpaid labor of the working class."⁹

Needless to say, Salgado also applies this concept of alienation of labor to the peasants. That capital is "labor stocked" is a pervading idea for Salgado who precisely vouches for the abolition of capitalism in favor of socialism in order to free

⁶ Leszek Kolakowski. *Main Currents of Marxism*, (Oxford, 1978) Vol. III, pp. 98-99. As quoted in Virgilio Ojoy, O.P., *Marxism and Religion*, pp. 28-29.

⁷ Pedro Salgado, O.P. *SECC*, p. 575.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 576.

⁹ *Ibid.*, P. 23.

the laborers and peasants from being alienated from the products of their labor and from their own selves. In a very detailed description of the impoverishment of the Filipino peasant, Salgado writes:

Let us delve more fully on the national situation to see how poor the Filipino people have become with the wealth of the country going into the hands of the big capitalists, especially the foreign. Consider the Filipino farmer. The Filipino farmer has no money, he has only debts, because the laws of the Philippine government have seen to it that the country's wealth goes into the hands of the rich foreign capitalists and their local partners... The farmer goes to the farm, riding on the *kuliglig* the machine of which is *Kubota* bought from Japan. The crude oil for the *Kubota* comes from Caltex, an American company, or from Shell, a British-Dutch firm or from Petron, the majority capital of which is owned by San Miguel Corporation...¹⁰

The Marxian concept of alienation of labor is also the basis of Salgado's scathing remarks on the state which becomes a tool for the advancement of capitalist and landlord interests:

Without going to the extremes of Marxist thought, we admit that the modern capitalist is indeed on the side of the landlords and capitalists, making and implementing laws and policies that are pro-landlord and pro-capitalist. If one looks, for example, at the Philippine State, one immediately sees that the powers therein are landlords and capitalists. All the Mayors, the Congressmen, the Governors, the Senators, the Cabinet Members, the Colonels and the Generals, the Judges and Justices, the Vice-President and the President, all belong to the upper class, being landlords or capitalists, or at the very least professionals serving landlord and capitalist interests.¹¹

Salgado quotes Marx himself regarding this important insight on the alienation of labor. He writes:

Karl Marx called this phenomenon *alienation*, the worker's alienation namely from his work where, instead of finding joy and perfection, finds in it sadness and degradation. Said Marx: "The product of his activity, therefore, is not the aim of his activity. What he produces for himself is not the silk that he weaves, not the gold that he draws up the mining shaft, not the palace that he builds. What he produces for himself is wages; and the silk, the gold, and the palace are resolved for him into a certain quantity of necessities of life, perhaps into a cotton jacket, into copper coins, and into a basement dwelling. And the laborer who, for twelve hours long, weaves, spins, bores, turns, builds, shovels, breaks stone, carries hogs, and so on – is this twelve hours' weaving, spinning, boring, turning, building,

¹⁰ Pedro Salgado, O.P. *Politico-Economic Essays For the Conscientization of Cagayan Valley*, Manila, 2014, pp. 21- 22. Henceforth, *Politico-Economic Essays*.

¹¹ Pedro Salgado, O.P. *SECC*, PP. 27-28.

shoveling, stone-breaking, regarded by him as a manifestation of life, as life? Quite the contrary, life for him begins where this activity ceases, at the table, at the tavern seat, in bed. The twelve hours' work, on the other hand, has no meaning for him as weaving, spinning, boring, and so on, but only as earning, which enable him to sit down at a table, to take his seat in a tavern, and to lie down in bed. If the silk-worm's object in spinning were to prolong its existence as caterpillar, it would be a great example of a wage-worker.¹²

From the foregoing exposition, one can safely say that Salgado is a Marxist. He affirmed this when on a face-to-face interview he said, "I am a Marxist but not 100%." Nevertheless, he cannot be considered a Communist in the sense of having ties with Russian Communism through the Communist Party of the Philippines. Salgado himself explicitly denies his alliance with the Communist group although he avows the influence Communist ideas had on his intellectual and personal formation. At the most, one can consider Salgado as a main player of the Communist movement in his efforts at pursuing the goals of Communism in the Philippines. He writes:

Without being a member of the Party, this writer owes a lot to the Communist Party of the Philippines and to the Communist Movement as a whole, on the issue of knowledge or social awareness.

I reached the highest education capitalist society gives, having become a Doctor of Philosophy in 1963. And yet during all those years of study, I did not learn what imperialism was, nor did I know the *ins* and *outs* of its degradation of the power and wealth of Third World countries. If I know now the intricacies of imperialism, how it victimizes the weak countries of the world, what means to use to counter its power and strength, to a very great extent I owe this to the writings and praxis of the Communists and their supporters.¹³

The next question that needs to be dealt with is, "What is Salgado's understanding of Marxism and how did he use it in his endeavor of transforming Philippine society?"

Salgado's Understanding of Marxism and Its Implications in Philippine Society

Marxist Socialism and Marxism are terminologies which Salgado uses interchangeably. First of all, he says that there are many worthwhile tenets in Marxist Socialism. He criticizes Pope Leo XIII for making "sweeping and total condemnation" of it in *Rerum Novarum*. By doing so, Pope Leo XIII, Salgado says,

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 118. For a more elaborate exposition of Marx's alienated labor, see Virgilio Ojoy, O.P., *Marxism and Religion*, pp. 106-115.

¹³ Pedro Salgado, O.P. *SECC*, pp. 570-571.

is guilty of committing an “injustice not only to Marxist Socialism but to the broad masses in general.”¹⁴

Salgado distinguishes three levels in Marxism:

The first is Marx’s analysis of capitalism. The second are the means Marx proposed for the overthrow of capitalism. The third is the Marxist concept of the future society to be established.

Regarding the first and second levels, I believe Marx made great contributions. Marx was the first to analyze systematically and scientifically the evil that capitalism is, the first to pinpoint the effective steps and means for the struggle and downfall of capitalism. For these, Marxism gained the implacable hatred of capitalism.¹⁵

Salgado extensively used the first two levels of Marxism as he understood it in his analysis of Philippine society and in his struggle for the pursuit of the goals of socialism. He begins with the observation that the Philippine state is under elitist control, meaning that it is under the powerful clutches of the capitalists. The first indication of this control is that the highest offices of the land are in the hands of the powerful elite who are “virtually all landlords and capitalists.”¹⁶ Citing the joint study on the economic and financial status of the Ninth Congress (1992-1998) done by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism and the Institute for Popular Democracy, Salgado noted the intimate link between power and wealth, and the domination of the elite in Philippine society. The following is the text he quoted:

The most prominent legislators are also business tycoons and industry leaders demonstrating that the link between wealth and power remains strong.

Data culled from the statement of assets and liabilities filed by the members of the House show that 132 have interests in land and agriculture, 45 in real estate companies, 50 in trading and retailing companies, 17 in logging, 14 in mining and 18 in construction.¹⁷

Thus, for Salgado, it would not come as a surprise that those at the helm of power in Philippine politics would serve their own interests by enacting laws that favor their class at the expense of the common man, the laborer and the peasant who, as a result of the privileges that the elite accorded themselves, became a deprived class. He writes:

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 78.

¹⁷ E. Gutierrez. *The Ties That Bind: A Guide to Family Business and Other Interests in the Ninth House of Representatives*, (Manila, 1994), pp. 4-5. As quoted in Pedro Salgado, O.P., *SECC*, P. 78.

The powerful are those who control the government, because the government is the source of all power. The government is the legislative, executive, and judicial organ in society. Those who control the government can make laws that – as stated above – channel the wealth of the nation into their hands; judge as guilty those who disobey the above-mentioned pro-wealthy laws, as well as punish with their police and army anyone who disobey the said laws.¹⁸

The capitalists, according to Salgado, tighten their grip over the power and privileges of the state by means of their financial contributions during the elections:

To win an election is no small matter. A candidate spends millions or even billions to win. The Commission on Elections (Comelec) disclosed that, as per statement of expenses presented by the then presidential candidate Fidel Ramos, Ramos spent a total of P117,860,690.00 for his candidacy, while receiving Php118,050,000.00 as campaign contributions. Obviously those millions of campaign contributions do not come from the poor, but from the rich whom politicians repay with political favors when they win.¹⁹

The grip over the state becomes even tighter through the capitalists' influence and power wielded through the mass media which are owned by the same elite. The mass media, by ensuring the victory of the candidate during elections and by rallying public opinion in favor of proposed laws, usually promote the interests of the political and economic elite. Salgado writes:

The Philippine newspapers are owned by the big rich capitalists. The Filipino-Chinese business magnate, Emilio Yap, owns the *Manila Bulletin*, *Panorama*, *Tempo*, *Balita*, *Liwayway*, *Bannawag*, and *Bisaya*. The business magnates Antonio Cojuangco and Roberto Coyuito own the *Manila Chronicle*. The likewise moneyed Yuchengco family controls the *Manila Standard*. The Filipino-Chinese taipan John Gokongwei owns the *Manila Times*, *Bandera-Pm*, *Bandera Sports*, *Showbiz*. The former crony of President Ferdinand Marcos, Eduardo Cojuangco, the Chinese taipan, Lucio Tan, and Amado Macasaet have the *Malaya* and *Abante*. The no less wealthy businessmen Marixi Prieto, Edgardo Espiritu, as well as Eugenia Apostol hold sway over the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. The 'Plastics King' William Gatchalian, the Gos and the Belmontes control the *Star Group* of companies and the *Fookien Times*. The government commands *The Journal*, *People's Journal*, and *People's Tonight* which it sequestered from its former owner, Benjamin Romualdez, the brother-in-law of former President Ferdinand Marcos.²⁰

¹⁸ Pedro Salgado, O.P. *Politico-Economic Essays*, p. 10.

¹⁹ Pedro Salgado, O.P. *SECC*, pp 78-79.

²⁰ IBON Facts and Figures, Vol. 19, no. 11, June 15, 1996, p. 5. As quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 79.

Being wealthy and powerful, the capitalist Philippine state, according to Salgado, becomes terroristic in that it uses “violence and terror” to preserve the privileged situation of the capitalists against the interests of the masses. To prove this point, Salgado quotes Bishop Labayen:

The people whom the military previously vowed to protect against foreign invaders have become the local insurgents whom the military is out to suppress, and even eradicate. Who breaks the picket line of the workers during a strike if not the military? Who forces the evacuation of indigenous people from their ancestral lands and villagers from their farm lands, if not the military under the pretext of wiping out the underground forces of the New People’s Army (NPA) in the area.²¹

Given the overwhelming control of the capitalists wielded through the mechanism of the state in Philippine society, with its terroristic tendencies given vent to when necessary, Salgado indeed sees the need for transformation in order to protect the interests of the laborers and the peasants. Echoing Marx and Lenin, Salgado says that the primary means for such transformation or development is class struggle:

The stormy revolutions which everywhere in Europe, and especially in France, accompanied the fall of feudalism, of serfdom, more and more clearly revealed the struggle of classes as the basis and the motive force of the whole development.

Not a single victory of political freedom over the feudal class was won except against the desperate resistance. Not a single capitalist country evolved on a more or less free and democratic basis except by a life and death struggle between the various classes of capitalist society.

The genius of Marx consists in the fact that he was able before anybody else to draw from this and apply consistently the deduction that world history teaches. This deduction is the doctrine of class struggle.²²

While Leo XIII’s social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, condemned class struggle, John Paul II’s *Centesimus Annus* recognized the fact of social conflict in the course of history and the need for Christians to take sides when it is a question of struggle for social justice. Salgado concurs with *Centesimus Annus* on the limits that must be observed on any conflict, based on morality, but avers that even armed revolution can be seen within the purview of such limits. *Centesimus Annus* declares:

From the same atheistic source, socialism also derives its choice of the means of action condemned in *Rerum Novarum*, namely class struggle.

²¹ J. Labayen, OCD. *Revolution and the Church of the Poor*, Socio-Pastoral Institute, (Quezon City, 1995), p.16. As quoted in Ibid., p. 81.

²² V. I. LENIN. The Three Component Parts of Marxism, in *Introduction to Marx, Engels, Marxism*, (New York, 1987), pp. 45-46. As quoted in Ibid., p. 30.

The Pope does not, of course, intend to condemn every form as social conflict. The Church is well aware that, in the course of history, conflicts of interest between different social groups inevitably arise, and that in the face of such conflicts Christians must often take a position, honestly and decisively. The encyclical *Laborem Exercens* moreover clearly recognized the positive role of conflict when it takes the form of a 'struggle for social justice.' *Quadragesimo Anno* had already stated that 'if the class struggle abstains from enmities and mutual hatred, it gradually changes into an honest discussion of differences founded on a desire for justice.'

However, what is condemned in class struggle is the idea that conflict is not restrained by ethical or juridical considerations, or by respect for the dignity of others (and consequently oneself); a reasonable compromise is thus excluded, and what is pursued is not the general good of society but a partisan interest which replaces the common good and sets out to destroy whatever stands in the way.²³

Salgado's stance on armed revolution is deduced from these pronouncements of John Paul II regarding conflict. Since the purpose of armed revolution is not for the destruction of society but to deter the oppressors from perpetrating injustice thus restoring the common good in such a way that "all may enjoy the fruits of the earth which God has destined for all," it falls within the bounds of morality.²⁴

Applying Marx's class struggle in the Philippine setting, Salgado vouches for both parliamentary and armed struggle. By parliamentary struggle he means the non-bloody kind, the parliament of the streets, making use of rallies, strikes, demonstrations, mass disobedience, among others, to force change in society. In contrast, armed struggle can be a bloody one, which makes use of violence to overthrow the government.²⁵

Salgado criticizes the authorities of the Catholic Church for not believing in armed struggle. He specifically mentions John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* and *Centesimus Annus* as representative of this stance. For example *Centesimus Annus* says,

It is a question of showing that the complex problems faced by those peoples (of the Third World) can be resolved through dialogue and solidarity, rather than be a struggle to destroy the enemy 'through war'

May people learn to fight for justice without violence, renouncing class struggle in their internal disputes, and war in international ones.²⁶

²³ John Paul II. *Centesimus Annus*, no. 14. As quoted in Pedro Salgado, O.P., *SECC*, pp. 442-443.

²⁴ Pedro Salgado, O.P. *SECC*, p. 443.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 553-554.

²⁶ John Paul II. *Centesimus Annus*, nos.22-23. As quoted in Pedro Salgado, O.P., *SECC*, p. 554.

Salgado also laments the fact that the Popes and the local bishops do not see the need even for parliamentary struggle. He perceives no support for the worker and peasant unions from the local Church authorities who “either stick to the purely spiritual apostolate or, if they do involve themselves in the temporal sphere, it is either through dole out projects or, worse, to defend economic policies of the oppressive government, like Cardinal Sin in his support of counter-insurgency and APEC.”²⁷

Salgado minces no words in his rejection of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines’ (PCP II) ‘critical solidarity’ stance in relation to the Philippine government. He writes, “the stance of critical solidarity, far from substantially changing the status quo, enhances and strengthens it. For by criticizing the excesses of the government and the society it rules, without however transforming the power structure in the said society, the unjust society remains.”²⁸

Contrary to the Church authorities’ position, Salgado sees the necessity for both parliamentary and armed struggle. Parliamentary struggle is vital to win a revolution because through it, the cause can gain popular support. However, parliamentary struggle cannot stand alone. It has to be complemented by armed struggle. Otherwise, it cannot overcome the unjust government’s steadily increasing arsenal. Salgado writes:

... parliamentary struggle has to be joined to armed struggle to achieve victory. Alone, it will not effect structural change in the face of a determined enemy equipped with most lethal weapons. Oppressive government multiplies its soldiers, and acquires all sorts of weapons. How are rallies and demonstrations to face the innumerable number of soldiers, armalites, machine guns, bazookas, mortars, tanks, helicopters, gunships, fighter planes? A single burst of machine gun paralyzes a rally here, bursts of armalite fire disperse another demonstration there, bombs from a tora-tora silence inhabitants of recalcitrant barrios.²⁹

Although he appears to be diametrically opposed to some Church authorities regarding his stance on armed struggle, Salgado is, in fact, trying to align with the Church when he said that “one should stick to the traditional doctrine of the Church on the legitimacy, namely, of armed revolution under certain conditions.”³⁰ This traditional doctrine of the Church is echoed by Pope Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio* when he wrote that in the case of “long standing tyranny which would do great damage to fundamental human rights and dangerous harm to the common good of

²⁷ Pedro Salgado, O.P. SECC, p. 554.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 555, Cf. *Acts of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines*, n. 337. Also see Pedro Salgado, O.P., *Economic-Political Essays*, p. 25.

²⁹ Pedro Salgado, O.P. SECC, pp. 555-556.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 556.

the country,” the use of force is not absolutely ruled out.³¹ The Philippine Church, while recognizing this traditional doctrine exhorted against using violence and encouraged that even in situations when one is allowed to use force in self-defense, the option for non-violence must be respected.³²

The reason Salgado cannot concur with the non-violence stance of the local bishops is because he cannot agree with the assessment of the local church authorities regarding the non-existence of the conditions that would warrant a legitimate revolution. Salgado is convinced that the conditions are ripe for a revolution and that when the bishops pronounce that the conditions are not there yet, they are, in fact, contradicting themselves. For example, regarding the second condition which is stated thus: *when it is taken as a last recourse, all other means have been exhausted*, Salgado says that “Again, the bishops contradict themselves. In the very same document that the Bishops say armed revolution is not the only remaining means for substantial reform, the bishops likewise state that the elite controlling political in power in the Philippines have thwarted all means for reform, thereby leaving no other way but the way of armed revolution.”³³

In Karl Marx, class struggle is envisioned to effect the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat.’ However, with the dogmatization of Marxism through the gradual development (or degeneration) of Marxist theory culminating in Stalin’s Russia, the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ became reduced to the ‘dictatorship of the Communist Party’ or the ‘dictatorship of the Politburo.’ Salgado sees this as also happening in the Philippine Communist revolution. He, in fact, decries the decline of the armed struggle in the country:

Can the Philippine armed struggle win? So far it is not winning; in fact, today it is in its lowest ebb. Without counting the armed secessionist group of Muslim Mindanao, the Philippine armed revolution in the various parts of the archipelago is divided, with the Communist Party and New People’s Army split into factions, in conflict with one another. The legal and para-legal organizations are also split into three factions, following the split of the armed groups.³⁴

³¹ Paul VI. *Populorum Progressio*, no. 31. Also cf. Pedro Salgado, O.P., *Economico-Political Essays*, p. 29.

³² CBCP, *Exhortation Against Violence – a Joint Pastoral Letter of the Philippine Hierarchy*, Oct. 7, 1979. Also Cf., Pedro Salgado, O.P., *Economico-Political Essays*, p. 28.

³³ Ibid., pp. 31-32. Salgado quotes no. 25 of PCP II to prove his point: “*The problem is universally accepted, the causes analyzed to death, their solutions known. The Constitution of 1987 itself has set down some prescriptions to respond to the problem, negate its worst aspects. But somehow, every measure, every attempt taken, is blocked at every step. The entrenched few are not willing to give in to reforms (like those touching landed property and taxes) that will redound to the greatest good of the many.*”

³⁴ Pedro Salgado, O.P. SECC, 556.

Salgado attributes this decline, first of all, to the reduction of Marx's 'dictatorship of the proletariat' into the 'dictatorship of the Party,' the Communist Party of the Philippines, headed by Jose Ma. Sison, alias Armando Liwanag. In his analysis, Salgado has demonstrated that in theory and practice, the Party has envisioned itself to hold power in perpetuity. The theory is very clear in Jose Ma. Sison's declaration which thus states:

Proletariat class dictatorship is but another expression for the state power necessary for smashing and replacing the state power or class dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, for carrying out the all-rounded socialist revolution and for preventing the counter revolutionaries from regaining control over society.

The party must never relinquish its leadership over the entire state and the people's army and must retain its Party organization therein until the time comes for the state to wither, after a whole historical epoch of building socialism, defeating imperialism and neocolonialism, and preparing the way for communism.³⁵

This theory was faithfully implemented by the Chairman of the Communist Party and the few members of the Executive Committee i.e., the Politburo who lorded it over the entire organization. Their word became law. They perpetuated themselves in power and merely anointed their successors without the consent of the *plenum* of the Central Committee, much less of a Congress. The Congress was supposedly to meet every five years but since 1974, only one Congress was held. The tenth *plenum* which is considered a bogus *plenum* because it had only a minority of the members of the Central Committee present, ultimately split the membership of the Party.

The dictatorship of the Party resulted into the disintegration of the Communist Party of the Philippines which was split into factions that were in conflict with one another. Adding insult to injury was the anti-DPA (Deep Penetration Agents) policy of the Party that resulted into the death of some 600 people in Mindanao and 100 in Southern Tagalog.³⁶

The trouble is, very few of those killed were proven to be real DPA's. In fact, the anti-DPA campaign in Mindanao yielded only about five people who were proven to be likely enemy agents, and of the five, only three were guilty beyond reasonable

³⁵ A. Liwanag. The CPP's Marxist-Leninist Stand Against Modern Revisionism, January 15, 1992. As quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 557.

³⁶ W. Bello. "The Crisis of the Philippine Progressive Movement: A Preliminary Investigation", *Kasarinlan*, 3rd Quarter, 1992, p. 147. As cited in Pedro Salgado, O.P., *SECC*, p. 561. The anti-DPA policy refers to the purging of the movement with people thought to be Deep Penetration Agents of the government who are tasked to gather information on the whereabouts of the movement.

doubt.³⁷ As a result of this blind purges, people especially in Mindanao withdrew their support for the movement.

The second principal cause of the decline of the Philippine revolutionary movement is the State ownership of all productive goods. This again smacks of the malaise of reductionism i.e., Socialism's ownership and enjoyment of the earth's goods by the people, is reduced into the ownership of the same by the state. Marx's vision is that private property should be replaced by common ownership under the management of the state. However, this vision was supplanted by the state itself owning the goods. Salgado writes:

Now in the brand of "Socialism" advocated by then Communist Russia, Communist Eastern Europe, and by the Communist Party of the Philippines, the people are not the owners, but the State. The people do not own anything; it is the State that owns everything and, by consequence, the Communist bureaucrats who hold the powers of the State. For this reason, the said "Socialism" has been termed *flawed Socialism*, or *State Capitalism* where the State is the only capitalist, owning all productive goods.³⁸

Salgado is quick to point out that, more recently, the Communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe¹ and the Soviet Union discarded the state ownership of the productive goods. China and Vietnam, for their part, diluted the state ownership of the forces of production by allowing private enterprises to prosper.³⁹ It is along these lines that the majority of the Filipino Communists perceive that the collapse of the socialist regimes in Europe was due to the flawed Stalinist view of state ownership of productive goods which should not be replicated in the Philippine setting.

The dictatorship of the Party instead of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the state ownership of productive goods over the ownership and enjoyment of the earth's goods by the people are the same issues that hounded the National Democratic Front, an independent personality created by the CPP with its own dynamism and vitality in order to encompass the divergent views within the Communist movement. At the outset, "the Party agreed that the economic goal would be, not State ownership of all productive goods, but a mixed economy, where the State would own the vital and strategic industries, while individuals would be allowed to engage in small businesses."⁴⁰

However, the Party started to clip the wings of the NDF in March 5, 1992 when it approved Jose Ma. Sison's "Reaffirm our Basic Principles and Rectify the

³⁷ Ibid., p. 150. As cited in Pedro Salgado, O.P., *SECC*, p. 561.

³⁸ Pedro Salgado, O.P. *SECC*, p. 565.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 566.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 567.

Errors,” which put the NDF under the supreme power of the CPP, thereby destroying its juridical personality and independence. Furthermore, it replaced NDF’s goal of a mixed economy with State ownership of productive goods. The dissolution of the NDF dealt a hard blow not only to the CPP but to the whole movement whose membership numbers dwindled and eventually reached rock bottom.⁴¹

Prospects for the Future: Elements of a Successful Revolution

Salgado recognizes the significant contribution of the Communist movement in leading the Filipino masses to struggle against the oppression brought about by the forces of imperialism and feudalism coursed through the mechanism of the State. During the Japanese invasion, the CPP through the Hukbalahap provided the fiercest resistance.⁴² With the defeat of the Japanese and the rise of American power in the country, the military arm of the CPP, the *Hukbong Mapagpalayang Bayan*, was the only group that resisted American imperialism. Lately, the New People’s Army, the armed wing of the Communist movement, is the force that continue the struggle all through the Martial Law years and beyond, consistently opposing the “imperialist-backed powers of Philippine society.”⁴³

Aside from leading the opposition against imperialism and feudalism, Salgado acknowledges the important role of the Communist movement in enhancing the social awareness of the Filipino people, himself included. He writes:

... If I know the intricacies of imperialism, how it victimizes the weak countries of the world, what means to use to counter its power and strength, to a very great extent owe this to the writings and praxis of the Communists and their supporters.

The courage and dedication of the Communists in the struggle against the forces of oppression is incomparable, and is a source of inspiration to all, including this writer. Because of such dedication, so many of them have been killed, so often at the flower of their youth. They left the comforts of capitalist society, to lead lives of hunted men and women, with the mountains as their abode, always on the go across rocks and rivers, under the heat of the sun or the coldness of rain or typhoons, with but little to eat.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 569.

⁴² Hukbalahap, an acronym for “*Hukbong Bayan Laban sa Hapones*,” translated into English as “The Nation’s Army Against the Japanese,” was a guerilla movement formed by the peasant farmers of Central Luzon in the Philippines. Nicknamed “Huks,” they were originally organized to fight the Japanese but extended their fight into a rebellion against the Philippine government circa 1946. It was finally extinguished through a series of reforms and military victories under the leadership of President Ramon Magsaysay.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 570.

As long as imperialism exists, and the masses groan under imperialist oppressions, the Communist Party will be there. The intellectual and practical legacy handed down by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Mao Zedong, as well as other Communist leaders, remains a vital force for analyzing present capitalist society, for pinpointing the forces necessary to counteract oppression, for executing with courage the plan of overthrowing the powers of oppression.⁴⁴

For Salgado, the CPP possesses the great potential to change Philippine Society. However, this potential has not been fully harnessed because of the retrogression of the Communist movement specifically in the reduction of the dictatorship of the proletariat to the dictatorship of the Party and the consequent reduction of the ownership and enjoyment of the forces of production by the people, to state ownership of the same.

To realize the full potential of the Communist movement, Salgado proposes two important changes in the praxis of the CPP: the democratization of the CPP and the debunking of the state ownership of property.

Democratization of the CPP. As far as the democratization of the CPP is concerned, Salgado echoes Michael Gorbachev's statement that the more democracy there is, the more socialism can be achieved. In this regard, Gorbachev writes,

The main idea of the January Plenary Meeting – as regards ways of accomplishing the tasks of perestroika and protecting society from a repetition of the errors of the past – was the development of democracy. It is the principal guarantee of the irreversibility of perestroika. The more socialist democracy there is, the more socialism we will have. This is our firm conviction, and we will not abandon it. We will promote democracy in the economy, in politics and within the Party itself. The creativity of the masses is the decisive force in PERestroika. There is no other more powerful force.⁴⁵

Salgado observes that the CPP's centralization of power is not in accord with the real Marxist view of power that was exemplified in the Paris Commune where "the rulers were the common people themselves, mostly workers, who were elected by universal suffrage, were revocable anytime by the electorate, were paid little, stopped the injustices of the bourgeoisie and removed their privileges."⁴⁶

This democracy in socialism, Salgado also sees in the beginnings of Communist rule in Russia which was governed by the 'Soviets,' "literally councils, whose

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 571.

⁴⁵ M. Gorbachev. *Perestroika: New Thinking for our Country and the World*, (New York, 1987), p. 63. As quoted in Pedro Salgado, O.P., *SECC*, p. 573).

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 574.

membership came from the masses, were elected by universal suffrage, and decided over economic and political matters in their localities and regions.”⁴⁷ The dictatorship of the proletariat realized through the Soviets was, as had been mentioned, reduced to the dictatorship of the Party in Stalin’s time. However, Gorbachev reinstated the Soviets when he was at the helm of the Russian government. He writes:

We are now renewing in full measure the prestige and power of the Soviets, creating prerequisites for fully-fledged, efficient and creative work by them under the conditions of perestroika.

The January 1987 Plenary Meeting called on the Party committees to keep strictly to the line of enhancing the role of the Soviets, avoiding interference in their affairs... They have been vested with extensive rights to coordinate and exercise control over the activity of all enterprises and organizations in their respective areas.⁴⁸

Along with the reinstatement of the Soviets, Gorbachev also rehabilitated the Trade Unions whose officers became mere puppets of Party leaders. The Trade Union officers were advised to take a position of principle and to stand up for the laborers.⁴⁹

However, Salgado observes that the solutions introduced by Gorbachev, although necessary and called for, came rather too late because they did not succeed in reforming the system. The people whose memories were still afresh about the decades of atrocities they suffered from the hands of the Communist dictatorship perceive the system as beyond redemption. Instead of reforming it, the people debunked it altogether.⁵⁰

For the Philippine setting, Salgado proposes some strategies for the democratization of the Communist Party. One strategy is to activate the People’s Organizations (POs) all over the country. These POs established among the peasants, workers, squatters, and fishermen, could very well be organs of mass power in the manner of the Paris Commune. However, they were maneuvered to succumb to the decisions of the Party. Given the power to make decisions and carry them out, the POs could restore the democratic spirit into the revolutionary movement.⁵¹

Another strategy would be to allow *pluralism* i.e., the existence of parties other than the CPP without allowing parties that do not promote the people’s interests like parties that support the interests of imperialism. Salgado writes:

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 575.

⁴⁸ M. Gorbachev. op. cit., pp.112-113.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 114.

⁵⁰ Pedro Salgado, O.P. *SECC*, p. 577.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 577-578.

The Communist Party of the Philippines should also realize that a pluralism of parties actually benefit the nation. With this pluralism the parties will compete with each other to merit the people's support. The CPP should always prove that it is worthy of the people's trust and love, and not arrogate powers to control and force people.⁵²

Reform of State Ownership of Property. Basing his views on the Marxist tenet regarding the social ownership of the means of production, Salgado repudiates the CPP's stance on the state ownership of property. For Salgado, Marx believes in cooperatives in which the common people owns the means of production. Salgado quotes Marx in this regard:

The capitalist mode of production rests on the fact that the material conditions of production are in the hands of non-workers in the form of property in capital and land, while the workers are the only owners of the personal condition of production, of labor power. If the elements of production are so distributed, then the present-day distribution of the means of consumption results automatically. *If the material conditions of production are the co-operative property of the workers themselves*, then there likewise results a distribution of the means of consumption different from the present one.⁵³

Salgado also cites praxis, the change of views and historical reality in many parts of the world where the communist movement was active, as a theoretical basis for repudiating state ownership of property. He writes:

The Communist Party of the Philippines should look to *praxis*, to history, to what happened to the former Communist States of Russia, Eastern and Central Europe, and to what is happening today to the Communist States of China and Vietnam. Will the CPP be so stubborn as to stick to the tenet of State ownership of all productive goods which all have abandoned? If it does, it will only have itself to blame if the people will not be able to win and overcome the imperialist oppression.⁵⁴

However, the most concrete insights of Salgado in his praxis of realizing the Marxian socialist ideas in the Philippine setting are laid down in his "Proposed Program for a Winning Revolution." In this proposal, he envisions the local Church as a main player. The Program has five elements:

1. *The need for organization.* The Church can help form the organizations from among the workers, farmers, fishermen and squatters. Being

⁵² Ibid., pp. 578-579.

⁵³ K, Marx. "Critique of the Gotha Program" in *Marx and Engels*, L. Feuerer [ed.], New York, pp. 362-394 as quoted in Pedro Salgado, O.P., *SECC*, p. 579.

⁵⁴ Pedro Salgado, O.P., *SECC*, p. 58.

oppressed, they are most interested in substantially changing society and, as such, they are the main force of the revolution. In the words of Salgado, “The workers and the farmers are therefore to be organized and taught to struggle and fight, that the wealth of the nation may not be enjoyed by the capitalists and landlords alone, but by all.”⁵⁵ It must be noted that the struggle is not for the peasants and workers to wrest power in order to enjoy the privileges of society for themselves but so that the same privileges can be enjoyed by all. This struggle for social justice is, for Salgado, the same struggle advocated by the Popes. He quotes John Paul II’s *Centesimus Annus* in this regard:

The Church is well aware that in the course of history conflicts of interest between different social groups inevitably arise, and that in the face of such conflicts Christians must often take a position, honestly and decisively. The Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, moreover, clearly recognized the positive role of conflict when it takes the form of a ‘struggle for social justice.’⁵⁶

2. *The capture of State Power.* Since the capitalists have controlled state power and used its mechanism to further and protect their interests, if the revolution is to succeed, the organized masses need to capture state power from the capitalists. For Salgado, this cannot be achieved through parliamentary struggle alone but through armed struggle.⁵⁷
3. *The Need for the Middle Sector.* The revolution cannot be won by the masses alone. For Salgado, the support of the middle sector like the Church and students is important as can be demonstrated by the experience of the revolution in the ’60s and ’70s. Salgado writes:

The importance of the help of the middle sector was shown, among others, by the student activism of the 1970s, in the cities of the Philippines, particularly Metro Manila. The students not only filled the streets with their massive rallies and demonstrations against the capitalist-controlled government; they also were the source of armed cadres in the mountains.

The experience of the revolution in the last decades also showed how crucial the Church’s support was for the revolution’s growth and strength. Church people, especially what we termed above as the Minority Radical Church, both Catholic as well as Protestant, gave all they had, including their lives, for the goals of the armed revolution.

⁵⁵ Pedro Salgado, O.P. *Economico-Political “Essays,”* p. 46.

⁵⁶ Pope John Paul II. *Centesimus Annus*, no. 14.

⁵⁷ Pedro Salgado, O.P. *Economico-Political Essays*, p. 48.

Financial resources, intellectual and moral support, rallies and demonstrations, everything were given to the masses for victory.⁵⁸

4. *Sustain the Masses' Economic Well-being.* The overriding policy of the revolution should be that "the wealth of the nation be for all the people and not only for the capitalist elite." Faithfully implementing this policy would uplift the lives of the poor laborers and farmers and enable them to see that they get something big in return for the sacrifice of their lives and limbs in pursuit of the goals of the revolution. "But if they experience nothing but poverty and deprivations, plus the harassment, imprisonment and death from the forces of the government, how can one expect them to sacrifice themselves for the revolution to the point of death?"⁵⁹
5. *Arm the Masses.* As the main force of the revolution, the masses must be armed. One cannot imagine an army in a war without weapons especially when the opponent which is the state is fully equipped with sophisticated weapons. Salgado writes:

Without arms, the people will be helpless to present, much less implement, economic policies that redound to their well-being. If the masses do not have arms, with the arms reserved only to the armed group of the rebels like the Communists' New People's Army (NPA), the masses will easily be cowed by the armed group into silence and submission. The masses cannot have anything done, unless the armed group agrees. But with arms the masses have the power to oppose bad decisions of the armed group, and have policies implemented that redound to their good. Well defended by arms, the people cannot be oppressed by anybody.⁶⁰

The Significance of Salgado's Social and Political Discourse to Philippine Society

It is clear from the foregoing exposition of Salgado's social and political ideas that he is concerned with the plight of peasants and workers which comprise the vast majority of the Philippine population and yet are pushed to the sidelines as far as decision-making, exercise of power and authority, and the enjoyment of material resources are concerned. Salgado is decidedly a Marxist, nay, a Marxian, inasmuch as he prefers the original insights that can be traced back to Marx himself rather than

⁵⁸ Ibid. pp. 48-49.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 49.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

those that developed beyond what Marx may have intended, as can be gleaned from Marxists like Plekhanov, Lenin and Stalin who contributed to the dogmatization of Marxian ideas. His brand of Marxism has a Maoist leaning inasmuch as like, Marx and Mao, he realizes the important role of the peasants in the quest for a communist revolution and in his many positive citations of Mao Zedong.⁶¹ For him, the communist revolution would not prosper without the active participation of the peasants. This explains Salgado's committed involvement in the affairs of the Federation of Free Farmers of the Philippines.⁶²

Salgado's brand of Marxism is along the lines of Democratic Socialism which agree with other socialists that capitalist regimes need to be eradicated through a revolution carried out with the political participation of the working class whose interest ought to be fought for. In the Democratic Socialist regime, the workers are the ones "to take charge of the economy and allocate society's resources to the benefit of the greatest number of people."⁶³ Democratic Socialism debunks Bolshevism or Dogmatic Marxism, an ideology which rests on the dictatorship of the Party or the Politburo and on the State ownership of the productive goods. This latter ideology was espoused by Stalin in Russia, and by Jose Ma. Sison's Communist faction in the Philippines. Salgado takes the side of the peasants and workers. True Socialism, for him, is one in which the peasants and the workers have participation in the decision-making, the exercise of power and authority in the governance of society and in the enjoyment of the world's goods which are meant for everyone and not only for a few. This was the reason why Salgado, a former Board Member of the *Kilusan ng Magbubukid sa Pilipinas*, sided with those who are against the dictatorial Jose Ma. Sison group when the *Kilusan* split into two. Unfortunately, for Salgado, the Sison group prevailed and, to this day, continue to lord it over the Communist movement in the Philippines.

By using Marxist analysis as a tool to decipher the Philippine economic and political situation, Salgado has exposed the unjust situation perpetrated by feudalism and capitalism in the Philippines. He has likewise unmasked the feudal and capitalist countenance of the State that externally professes the democratic ideals of being a government "of the people, for the people and by the people." Moreover, Salgado has shown that wealthy nations and capitalists have allied with the local elite in order to

⁶¹ See, for example, Pedro Salgado, O.P., *SECC.*, p. 571.

⁶² Salgado used to be a chaplain of the FFFP which became an avenue for him to share his revolutionary ideas with the peasants. However, he severed his ties with the Federation because its President, Jeremias Montemayor, who was influential in bringing him close to the life-situation of the farmers and to the communist movement, expressed his approval of Martial Law during the Marcos regime. Salgado was never in favor of Martial Law.

⁶³ <https://liamchingliu.wordpress.com/2012/12/21/social-democracy-vs-democratic-socialism>.

perpetuate the situation of imperialism and oppression that continue to haunt the vast majority of the Filipinos.

Salgado has seen to it that his social and political insights did not only reverberate in the classrooms and auditoria of the academe, but also in the hearts and minds of the peasants and laborers who, like him, are aflame with the revolutionary fire to stamp out injustice and oppression. He has not only conscientized students and seminarians but also the peasants and laborers whose desire for change is all the more intensified by his lectures and ordinary conversations with him.

In his twilight years, Salgado or *Ka Pete* as he is fondly called by his fellow revolutionaries, would still exert a great effort to be in contact with the peasants and laborers. The flame of his revolutionary lamp, although at times is but a flicker, has not been extinguished. He continues to visit the peasants and laborers to inspire them to dream on, to keep believing that the revolution would eventually happen. For his part, Salgado keeps on dreaming. One night, he recounted tongue in cheek, he dreamed that the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to him and told him, “Ka Pete, don’t die yet. The revolution is not yet completed.” ■

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