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## **Red Revolution, by Jones**

Review Author: John J. Carroll, S.J.

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## Book Reviews

RED REVOLUTION: INSIDE THE PHILIPPINE GUERRILLA MOVEMENT. By Gregg R. Jones. Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1989. xxiii + 360 pages.

It is unfortunate for all concerned that, even before it reached the bookstores of Manila, *Red Revolution* was already a storm-center of controversy. In one chapter out of the twenty-six which comprise the book, Gregg Jones had painstakingly assembled a body of interview-data which pointed to Jose Maria Sison, founding father of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) as the mastermind of the 1971 bombing of a Liberal Party rally at Plaza Miranda which killed ten people and wounded more than 100. Pre-publication commentaries in the Manila press focused on that chapter; Sison responded with howls of rage, threats of lawsuits, the accusation that the author is an agent of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) out to discredit the CPP, and attacks on high-ranking CPP personalities known to be friends of Jones.

This was, I happen to know, a very painful experience for Jones. Over the years he had developed warm friendships with CPP/NPA members, as is evident in the sympathetic vignettes about many of them which he presents in the book. It pained him to think that his former hosts, guides, and bodyguards who had looked after him in "Barangay Rose" and other guerilla zones would now be led to believe that he had abused their hospitality.

Sison's reaction may well have been unfortunate for the CPP also, since it had the effect of identifying the whole Party with the Plaza Miranda attack and thereby presenting it as a band of terrorists. That was certainly not the author's intention; his account suggests that the attack was conceived and carried out under Sison's direct orders and with minimal consultation of other Central Committee members, in an attempt to polarize the political situation and speed up recruitment for the New People's Army (NPA). Had Sison's vanity permitted him to remain silent, the story might have done less damage to the Party.

The controversy was unfortunate, finally, for the general public in that it focused attention on the Plaza Miranda affair, passing over the other twenty-five chapters which are gold mines of information on dozens of other aspects of the CPP/NPA.

However that may be, Jones' credibility as an investigative journalist is crucial to an evaluation of the book, and on this the present reviewer would

tend to give him high grades. There is no consistent bias evident in the book; he paints a basically sympathetic picture of the dedication and commitment of many CPP/NPA members without glossing over the fact that they are Marxists out for power, ruthless and ready to kill to advance their cause. There is little attempt to justify or to condemn. There is, on the other hand, a consistent effort to *understand*, from the point of view of the participant, "the inner workings of one of the most successful communist revolutionary movements existing in the world today."

The Preface describes Jones's methodology, the most important element of which was interviews with present and past members of the CPP/NPA, including five of the eleven founding members of the CPP Central Committee who are still alive. He also talked with many scores of lower-ranking members on eight Party-organized forays to the countryside in 1987 and 1988, plus individuals contacted in Manila or on his own reporting trips. In addition, he had an eight-hour session with Sison in Amsterdam. For this it was necessary to obtain high-level clearance from the Party. All of which tends to make Sison's later "discovery" that Jones was a CIA agent seem a bit too facile.

Skillful interviewing of a large number of high-level participants does seem to have been a most fruitful approach to understanding the inner workings of the CPP/NPA. Jones remarked to me that once he had picked up a bit of information from one informant and indicated to others that he knew about it, the others would often fill out the story—sometimes for the purpose of getting "their side" of an event on the record. As a result, I am told that one of the highest-ranking CPP leaders now in prison claims to have learned from the book things that he had not known before—for Jones had pieced together details of events which had simply been floating in the Movement as rumors.

The author organizes his material topically, but arranges the topics in roughly chronological order, from the primitive beginnings and early failures, to the development of new approaches, the martial law period and the urban underground, success and then failure in Davao, the 1986 election boycott and the internal debates which it provoked, the failed cease-fire and beyond to early 1989. In this framework he has chapters not only on the Plaza Miranda affair but on the story, sad but at times humorous, and hitherto very hush-hush, of the China delegation which was responsible for the *Karagatan* episode and a second failed arms shipment; on the "rebellion" of the Manila-Rizal Party Committee over the issue of participation in the 1978 election, leading to a tense confrontation and Edgar Jopson's being imposed on the rebellious section as the Central Committee's "enforcer"; on united front efforts, the Church and the NPA's land reform; on life with the NPA in the field and in a secure NPA barangay; on the deep penetration agent affair in Mindanao and the havoc which it caused (the Quezon Province "killing fields" were discovered after the book went to press); on the personalities behind the movement; on the CPP's vision of the future and the factors which might influence it in the event of an NPA victory, and prospects for the more immediate future.

Since the book is "contemporary history" and deals in large part with events at the national level, familiar names keep turning up, but often in unexpected contexts which add to the interest of the book.

What does it all mean? Jones is an investigative journalist and a good one in my estimation; he is neither an ideologue nor a prophet. But from the mass of detail which he presents, certain conclusions emerge. One is the extent to which the movement has sunk roots in Philippine society. He sees this not only in remote villages where it has eliminated cattle rustlers, imposed land reform and provided rudimentary social services which the people never knew before; and not only in the urban labor movement. He sees large numbers of the urban middle and upper classes making their accommodations with it, whether out of conviction or of convenience: landowners, professionals, journalists, clergy and religious, "some bishops," and many, many politicians. Thus he suggests that, as the Spanish and American colonizers coopted the Filipino elite "from above," many are now in the process of being coopted "from below."

Although he sees the NPA fighter as better disciplined and more committed than the Philippine soldier, ultimate military victory will not come for the NPA, he believes, without access to heavy weapons; and it is not clear whether its efforts to obtain such weapons will succeed. If not, and the war drags on, morale and recruitment could suffer. Yet, he feels, without fundamental social reform—which is nowhere on the horizon—the movement could sputter on for decades.

Here he overlooks, in my estimation, the conclusion of other students of revolution who find that ultimate success often does not come from the military strength of the insurgents but from divisions among the elite and a loss of the will to fight among the military. This point of view would underline the importance of the process of cooptation noted above.

His final thoughts are arresting and sobering: that whatever happens to the CPP/NPA as we know it, it has set the agenda on major issues for Philippine society; and it has raised the expectations and the hopes of hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of Filipinos who have hitherto known only poverty, ignorance, misery. Thus, he concludes: "Even if the CPP and its forces never triumph, and the New People's Army fades into oblivion, in these heightened expectations lie the seeds of future unrest and revolution."

*John J. Carroll, S.J.  
Loyola School of Theology  
Ateneo de Manila University*

THE U.S. ARMY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY IN THE PHILIPPINE WAR, 1899-1902. By Brian McAllister Linn. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989. xv + 258 pages. Maps.

In this detailed study of the American military response to the struggle of the Filipinos to rid themselves of their new colonial rulers, Brian Linn shows he knows the literature, primary and secondary, pertinent to his subject. His conclusions, summarized in chapter six, are a sober restatement of what has