Article

A Symbol of Anti-Marcos Resistance: The 1971 Diliman Commune in the Philippine's Global Sixties

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Abstract: From February 1 to 9, 1971, students, faculty, staff, and residents at University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman took over the campus and defended what they called the "Diliman Commune" from brutal police incursions. This article ties together insights from key participants of the barricades with archival accounts and media reports to recover the lessons of the 1971 Diliman Commune from its dominant anti-communist framing as a radical destabilization plot to foment anarchy. Highlighting the voices of the barricades' participants, this article reclaims the Diliman Commune as a symbol of resistance to the Marcos regime in a period of heightened anti-systemic contestation around the world described by social movement scholars as the Global Sixties.

Keywords: Diliman Commune, University of the Philippines, Strikes, Barricades, Global Sixties

I. Introduction

On February 1, 1971, students barricaded the main entrances to the University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman campus in response to calls by the UP student council (UPSC) and national democratic (ND) youth organizations to support striking transport workers protesting a 10-centavo oil price hike. But the shooting of a student by a university professor and violent incursions by the police to destroy the barricades led to a spontaneous escalation of the initial barricades towards the dramatic 9-day takeover by students, faculty, staff, and campus residents of the country's premier state university's flagship campus. Thus, was born the "Diliman Commune."

The Commune's 50th anniversary has served as an occasion for those who took part in the barricades to share their reminisces and weigh in on the legacy of the wave of social struggles in the 1960s and 1970s engulfing not only the Philippines but the rest of the world that historians call the "Global Sixties." One effort to bring together these recollections is the Engkwentro: Barikada Singkwenta (Encounters: Barricades at 50) commemoration organized by the UP Diliman Office for the Initiatives on the Cultural and the Arts on behalf of the UP Diliman Office of the Chancellor, for which the authors served as researchers.

This commemoration took place amidst efforts by the Rodrigo Duterte administration to normalize police and military presence in the University of the Philippines and other higher education institutions (Mongaya 2021), with the Department of National Defense (DND) unilaterally terminating a 1989 accord that prohibits the military from freely entering UP without prior coordination with the school administration (Talabong 2021). These intrusions drew comparisons with the events of 1971, with the iconic commemorative barricade installation art in the Diliman campus serving as backdrop to protest actions against the steady slide towards full-blown authoritarian rule under Duterte.

Yet the commemoration of the barricades is contested by state apologists who largely belittle the legacy of the Diliman Commune as a destabilization plot against the Marcos government (Tiglao 2021). Meanwhile, earlier scholarship largely drew on archival materials in analyzing the Diliman Commune. Michael Pante (2018) focuses on the spatial politics of UP's relative geographical isolation and status as the premier state university serving as conditions of possibility for the rise of the barricades. On another account, Joseph Scalice (2018) constructs a Trotskyite polemic that ironically dovetails with conservative accounts of the Commune, emphasizing the barricades' purported "planned and coordinated" origins, as a conspiracy by radical youth groups and the bourgeois opposition to embarrass Marcos.

Guiding the writing of this article is thus an awareness of the way memories and the production of the histories of social struggles like that of the Commune are objects of contestation while at the same time exercising weight in wider conflicts between struggling social forces. We thus give more credence to the veterans of the Commune, especially those who persisted in the anti-Marcos struggle, as opposed to revisionist accounts like that of Scalice, which for its Marxist posturing, crudely reduces a multifaceted historical episode and the aspirations of its actors to the predetermined schema of a "Stalinist betrayal" of the working class, thereby replacing conspiracy theory for actual historical materialist analysis.

Recognizing the way dominant historical narratives have tend to downplay the impact of popular struggles, we follow Walter Rodney (2019) in taking an active position in ideological struggles in the academic terrain as part of broader struggles

for the transformation of social structures that are grounded in the anti-imperialist and democratic movements of the Filipino masses. The writers of this article have all been involved at one point in the student movement and continue to do activist work in different fields. Ryan is a labor organizer with the militant labor center Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU), Josh writes for leftwing independent media outlet *Pinoy Weekly*, Orly is a volunteer worker for the Ecumenical Institute for Labor Education and Research (EILER), while Karlo is an active member of the Congress of Teachers and Educators for Nationalism and Democracy (CONTEND).

A researcher possessing a particular political affinity is often pictured as the tainting of truth-telling and objectivity. Yet, we contend that it is rather this owning of a particular vantage point that allows the ethical question on the relation between the researcher, her research subjects, and her political commitment to emerge more starkly. Thus, rather than basing simply on what Alain Badiou (2001, 5) criticizes as an "ethical ideology" rooted in the purely negative sanction against all positive political commitments painted a priori as evil, we locate, following Renato Constantino (1970a), the ethical injunction of avoiding harm as a necessity for the advancement of one's commitment to the struggle to avert contradictions between one's ends and practice.

From this grounding, we critically engage with the oral testimony of key participants to recover their understanding of the events surrounding the Diliman Commune and its value for a generation of activists as a symbol of resistance to the Ferdinand Marcos regime. Working from an unrepentant historical materialist framework allows us to tie together their personal experience with archival material and media reports to locate the event in the intersection of global structures and local conditions as embedded in the complex dynamics of contradictory class interests and political conflicts. This moreover enriches existing accounts of the 1971 barricades found in scattered journalistic pieces, short recollections, and commemorative essays, many of which only touch on the barricades to substantiate the way experiences before the imposition of martial rule proved to be formative in subsequent involvement in the underground struggle.

II. The Philippine Global Sixties

The global order established by US imperialism at the end of the Second World War gave it a hegemonic position among the monopoly bourgeoisie of the capitalist centers. The comprador bourgeoisies of the periphery were propped up in exchange for control over cheap labor and the plunder of agricultural, mineral, and energy resources by monopoly capital (Amin 1982). And yet by the 1960s, this "Pax Americana" was threatened by a crisis of overproduction brought on by steady increase of global production since 1945 and increasing resistance in the Third World as epitomized by the US entanglement in the Vietnam War.

The building of a self-reliant economy in the Philippines through genuine agrarian reform and national industrialization was blocked by United States (US) imperialist domination imposing an economic model oriented towards on low-value basic exports and dependent on foreign direct investments and imported manufactures leading to a trade deficit of $302 million in 1969 (Fast 1973). By 1971, social contradictions in the Philippines have sharpened as majority of dispossessed peasants and workers found themselves at the losing end of a peripheral economy that only benefitted a parasitic comprador ruling class and their foreign monopoly capital partners (San Juan 2016).

So, while the Cold War rivalry between the US-led capitalist powers and the former Soviet Union is usually overstated as the main axis around which 20th Century historical developments revolved, we see from this formulation of an anti-imperialist nationalism and its translation into a material force in the Philippines and other peripheral countries as forming what Moyo and Yeros (2011) diagnosed as the main motive forces that challenged the capitalist world system.

The global rise of the youth population and the entry of more young people into universities amidst economic and political crisis turned this social actor into one of the main drivers of protest across the world in a period that social movement scholars describe as the Global Sixties (Mohandesi, Risager, and Cox 2018). The national liberation struggles, especially the heroic armed resistance in Indochina, played an important role in this radicalization by inspiring the development of anti-war and anti-imperialist movements in imperialist countries as well as the development of "theoretical positions and movements that were either inspired, guided, or otherwise affected by anti-colonial struggles" (Mais 2016, 809).

The intersection of international and national conditions of crisis and the upsurge of militant struggles thus served as fertile ground for the spread of a Marxist-inspired anti-imperialist nationalism in the Philippines in the 1960s. Buoyed by lively campus-based struggles to defend academic freedom against "clerico-fascist" conservatism and anti-communist witch-hunting, radicalized university students asserted the necessity for educated youth to link up with the masses of workers and peasants who, as a political force, are aware of their class interests, are the real decisive forces for overturning unjust social structures of "imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat capitalism" (Raymundo & Mongaya 2020, 230).

The victory of the protracted people's war in China in 1949, the flurry of guerrilla wars across what was then called the "Third World" composed of "underdeveloped countries," and the intensification of the Vietnam War with increased US military intervention throughout the 1960s inspired the idea of the global peripheries as the "storm centers" of world revolution. The American adventure in Indochina had a particular import in heightening anti-US sentiment

among the youth in the Philippines where military bases in Subic and Clark were a jump-off point for the deployment for troops and arsenal in the region.

The founding of Kabataang Makabayan (Patriotic Youth) or KM by Jose Ma. Sison on November 30, 1964 proved to be a qualitative milestone in clarifying the ideological basis and organizational platform for the growing activism and militancy of this period.

Forwarding "national democracy" (ND) as a transitional program towards a socialist future, these young radicals called for the continuation of the "unfinished revolution" of the Katipunan whose victory against Spanish colonialism was stolen by the invasion of American imperialism. Taking cue from Marxist-Leninist theory that provided the discourse of the wave of anti-colonial struggles then spreading across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, they posited the proletarian classes as the bearer of the task of attaining national liberation against imperialism and fulfilling the people's democratic aspirations for agrarian revolution and national industrialization in the peripheries of global capitalism (Sison 1972).

The ND analysis and alternative was forged in line struggles against the Soviet line of peaceful coexistence by socialist forces with western capitalism then carried by the old Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) as well as the reformism of Christian Humanists who called themselves "social democrats." Reformist elements aligned with the PKP, alarmed at KM's militancy and taking a dim view of the prospects of revolution after the defeat of the PKP-led *Huk*[1] rebellion in the 1950s, broke away from KM in 1967 to form the Malayang Pagkakaisa ng Kabataang Pilipino or MPKP (Saulo 1990).

In January 1968, another section of KM members split over organizational issues to establish the Samahang Demokratiko ng Kabataan (SDK). The two groups eventually reconciled under the anti-Marcos multi-sectoral alliance, the Movement for a Democratic Philippines (MDP).

Sison went underground to re-establish a new Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in December 1968 and launch a "protracted people's war" a year later with the founding of its armed wing the New People's Army (NPA). This revolutionary movement shared the same ideological commitments but was organizationally distinct from the open and legal ND mass movement that acted within the limits of bourgeois legality.

[1] The Huk rebellion, led by the PKP, originally referred to the anti-Japanese resistance of the Hukbong Bayan Laban sa Hapon in the 1940s. With the return of the US imperialists, the PKP transformed the army into Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan.

Thus, was formed a definite ND movement whose painstaking activist work would lead it to transcend its origins in the youth movement to strike roots among the toiling masses. These organizations would be key actors in the eruption of the First Quarter Storm (FQS) of 1970, when tens of thousands of youth deluged the streets of the national capital and major urban centers, and subsequent massive protests that would only be ended by the Marcos imposition of martial law on September 1972.

It is this wave of radicalization and militant resistance in conditions of national and global capitalist crisis that set the stage for the Diliman Commune.

III. The February 1971 Strike

When a slew of oil price hikes opened the year 1971, ND-led organizations that had rode the wave of protest in the previous year took the occasion to mobilize the support of students and the academic community for a public transport strike initiated by the Pasang-Masda and the Malayang Pagkakaisa ng Samahan ng Tsuper (MAPAGSAT).

Edwin Lopez, then a national council member of the SDK in a Zoom interview on January 16, 2021, remembered how the domino effect spurred by soaring oil prices on other commodities like rice and public transportation rallied the wider public beyond the circle of public transport drivers.

The SDK was holding its national congress at the Asian Labor Education Center (now the School of Labor and Industrial Relations) in the UP Diliman Campus on January 30-31, 1971 as the public was gearing for the strike. Elected to the SDK national council in this gathering, E. Lopez recalls the impact of nationalist-oriented history classes that he took upon entering UP Diliman in shaping his activism. He quickly moved from reading the anti-colonial writings of Teodoro Agoncillo and Constantino for class to action by joining the UP Nationalist Corps, a program under the UP student council. The January 30, 1970 “Battle of Mendiola” that helped spark the FQS spurred him to join SDK.

Broad support for the strike spurred the formation of a coordinating council between the public transport associations and sympathetic youth groups (Castillo & Florida 1971). This council included radical ND groups like the KM, SDK, MDP, and Malayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan (MAKIBAKA) as well as the more moderate social democratic organizations like the Kapulungan ng mga Sandigan ng Pilipinas (KASAPI) and Hasik-Kalayaan. Even the student council alliance National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP) led by then moderate Ateneo student leader Edgar Jopson announced that it was leading a nationwide boycott of classes

in support of the jeepney drivers. Meanwhile, the UPSC shared plans to form symbolic barricades in the Diliman campus (Castillo and Florida 1971).

On the morning of February 1, 1971, the arrest of Pasang-Masda president Lupino Lazaro for "suspicions of creating disorder" caused disarray among the ranks of the strikers (Fox 1971, 1). This did not prevent the strike from continuing even as some reports downplayed the strike by showing that 60 percent of public vehicle continued to ply the streets. The strike persisted contrary to false claims by Scalice (2018) that the strike already fizzled and was thus only used by ND activists as a mere pretext to foment chaos and senseless violence.

By the afternoon, *The Manila Times* (Castillo 1971a) reported that particular roads in Manila were already paralyzed by the strike, namely jeepneys travelling the Sta. Mesa, Legarda, and Recto route: 80 percent of jeepneys and 60 percent of buses along Taft Avenue and 90 percent of jeepneys in Malabon and Navotas, Rizal and Caloocan City stopped working. The next day, *The Manila Times* (Castillo & Parale 1971) wrote that more public utility vehicles quit the roads and made the strike more felt across the national capital region while other reports observed that only a few vehicles plied the streets of Manila with most stores all boarded up (Coles & Soriano 1971a).

Even 8 big fishing organizations stopped fishing operations in support for the strike representing 500 fishing boats, 40,000 small fishermen, and 30,000 crew members (Castillo 1971a). The 200-strong Bulacan Jeepney Drivers Association meanwhile crippled transportation from Meycauayan, Bulacan to Monumento (Castillo 1971a). By Wednesday, *The Manila Times* (1971b) reported that "80 percent of jeepneys quit the streets."

Amidst all these, youth activists proceeded to organize protest centers along roads beside major universities and colleges in the national capital to support the strike. Violent reprisals by local police and the Philippine Constabulary (PC) against the youth-led strike support actions would lead to injuries and arrests, with the first day alone resulting in 16 mostly students getting hit by bullets or injured around the university belt in Manila (Galang 1971a).

In the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) in Laguna, students also began class boycotts on February 2 and two days later erected a barricade along the main entrance of the UPLB campus. This stopped classes for a few days and paralyzed transportation (The Philippine Collegian 1971c), including the Calamba-College jeepney route (The Manila Times 1971d).

IV. Up with the Barricades

News reports on the strike show that youth-led solidarity actions for the drivers were indeed planned and coordinated. This fact is erroneously stretched by Scalice (2018) as proof that the Diliman Commune was in-itself premeditated to foment mayhem and "anarchy." In truth, none of the organizers of these actions could have guessed that the turn of events would spontaneously transform the initial protests in support of the strike into a full-blown occupation of the UP Diliman campus in Quezon City (Ilagan 2021). "People were caught off guard, even us," quips Temario Rivera of the UP-based activist teacher's organization Samahan ng mga Guro sa Pamantasan (SAGUPA) in a January 12, 2021 Zoom interview.

As planned, the UPSC pushed through with its plans of erecting barricades in the University's main entry points on February 1, 1971, Monday. Bonifacio Ilagan, in a December 14, 2020 Zoom interview, shared how students barricaded the University Avenue and the rear entrance at Lopez Jaena Street effectively cutting off traffic from the campus. He said fellow activists were using loudspeakers and entering classrooms to encourage more students to join the mass actions and reinforce the barricades they were manning.

Ilagan was then the chairperson of the KM chapter in UP Diliman. The chapter had just been revived after its virtual disappearance from the campus at the tail-end of 1969 when its previous members were deployed to organize outside the university (Abreu 2009).

Armando Malay (1982a, 6), then UP Dean of Students, shared that he actually thought the events that day would simply repeat the conduct of previous student-led protests which were generally peaceful: "Barricades were also set up last January and, after all, then as now, the UP students had expressed sympathy with the striking jeepney drivers."

But things took a turn for the worse by 12:30 PM of February 1, 1971, when Inocente Campos, a professor from the Math department of UP Diliman notorious for his strong anti-communist sentiments, returned to the University Avenue riding another car after being asked earlier by students in the morning to turn back because of the barricades. Ilagan remembers Campos speeding towards the students who were manning the barricades, refusing their calls to slow down and stop. Campos then alighted his car and indiscriminately fired at the crowd, instantly killing Pastor "Sonny" Mesina, a chemistry freshman and new SDK member, who was hit by a bullet on the forehead. Rolando Soncuya (2015), an SDK member, offers a vivid eyewitness account of this incident.

Pastor was driven to the university infirmary but died four days later on February 4, 1971, at the Veterans Memorial Medical Center in Quezon City. Pastor

was honored by the Bantayog ng mga Bayani (2015b) as "UP Diliman's first martyr." Campos was meanwhile arrested by the UP security forces who promptly turned him over to the Quezon City Police. His car was burned by angry students later in the afternoon (Galang 1971b).

The shooting incident inevitably infuriated the students who marched towards the administration office in Quezon Hall to confront UP President Salvador Lopez who they wrongly blamed for allowing violence in the campus. Many had lost their cool, shouting curses, and breaking "the wood lattice-work, windowpanes, and oil portraits" (Committee of Inquiry 1971, 2). But through the intervention of more cool-headed student leaders like UPSC chairperson Ericson Baculinao, the meeting ended peacefully with S. Lopez promising an investigation on the shooting.

The killing of Mesina spurred more students to strengthen and add more barricades around the campus, including the moving of the main barricade further to the campus exterior to the intersection at Commonwealth. Yet by 4:15 PM of February 1, 1971, they were immediately confronted by the arrival of 8 jeeps from the Quezon City police, 15 trucks from the METROCOM, and 2 fire trucks led by Quezon City Police Department (QCPD) chief Col. Tomas Karingal (Galang 1971b).

Fresh from a meeting of the Peace and Order Council at Camp Aguinaldo where S. Lopez was invited to discuss the situation in the UP campus with other officials such as Department of Justice Secretary Vicente Abad Santos, Executive Secretary Alejandro Melchor, Defense Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile, and General Eduardo Garcia of the PC (Committee of Inquiry 1971, 3), Col. Karingal was carrying out the council's plan of forced entry of the police into the UP campus to dismantle the barricades.

The police immediately set about dispersing the 300 students with truncheons and tear gas. The students scampered back to the direction of the campus, but six of their comrades were arrested by the authorities (Galang 1971b). News reports said 18 more students were arrested while 19 were injured in the violent dispersals.

The violence of the first day of the strike in UP Diliman was a turning point that shifted the issue away from the oil price hike to that of police brutality and campus militarization. This also roused the students to subsequently spontaneously raise the level of action from sympathy barricades for striking drivers to a wider campus takeover to defend the campus against police intrusions. This sentiment would be immortalized in the call "Raise high the barricades!" of the February 4, 1971 editorial of the Diliman student publication *Philippine Collegian* published amidst the ongoing barricades (Philippine Collegian 1971b, 6).

V. Liberated Zone

On February 2, 1971, youth activists again reinforced the barricades inside the campus (Malay 1982b), again erecting the main barricade at the intersection of the Commonwealth and University Avenues. But by 11AM, a motorized column of the QCPD and the PC's Metropolitan Command (METROCOM) arrived with the intention of forcibly clearing the barricades.

The students fell back in front of Quezon Hall after state forces lobbed teargas at their initial defense lines. By 1 PM, police forces charged at the students who scampered to different directions despite efforts by S. Lopez and some faculty members to negotiate their withdrawal (Committee of Inquiry 1971). The Manila Times (1971a) reported the arrest of 52 individuals.

The MPKP made a curious appearance in this melee as a jeepney bearing its members arrived alongside the ranks of the police (Philippine Collegian 1971a). During the duration of the barricades, the group consistently criticized the barricades' organizers as CIA agents and exponents of "radical fascism" (Vea 1971a, 10).

Later in the afternoon, the QCPD and METROCOM assembling at Katipunan attacked the barricades around Vinzons Hall, injuring 14 students. Chasing retreating activists, the marauding state forces led by Maj. Elpidio Clemente headed towards the two female residence halls, Camia and Sampaguita. By early evening, the police forces completely surrounded the area and barked orders for activists to surrender using bullhorns before firing shots and throwing tear gas at the dormitories to force them out (Committee of Inquiry 1971).

The day ended with 50 students brought to the police headquarters and one student, Reynaldo Bello from the College of Veterinary Medicine, getting injured from gunfire (The Manila Times 1971a).

Yet far from breaking the students, these police incursions further steeled their resolve to defend the campus by erecting new lines of defenses: "Line upon line of newly-erected barricades rose in strategic places such as the roads leading to dormitories and those in front of Vinzons Hall, the arts and sciences building, and engineering building" (The Manila Times 1971a, 7).

Jose Dalisay, then an SDK member, in a February 16, 2021 Zoom interview recalls this violent encounter:

> At a certain point when negotiations broke down we saw the police and military surge in, breaking through the barricades. They were riding jeeps then. It seemed to me that

> they were firing guns. I was hearing shots. We ran towards the campus to avoid the police and hid in a closet in one of the buildings as we heard the military vehicles around the campus. We waited for things to quiet before we went out then we regrouped and built up the barricades.

They regrouped, occupied the main buildings, and even successfully seized the campus radio station DZUP. They also forced open the chemistry department, which was instrumental in making the molotov cocktails and pillboxes. Flying a red flag over Palma Hall, students by 2 PM declared UP Diliman to be a "liberated area" (Ibid).

Michael Pante (2018, 522) argues that the Diliman's relative geographical isolation as well as UP's status as an autonomous space were some of the conditions of the possibility for the students' quick embrace of the idea of a full-blown campus takeover:

> On the one hand, in a city as busy as Manila, the communards would have found it difficult to block streets and sustain a self-contained enclave for days. On the other hand, UP's status as the state university enabled the communards and [Salvador] Lopez to assert their freedom from police interference.

In a December 15, 2020 Zoom interview, Judy Taguiwalo who was then an SDK member credited the deepening of the ND activists' organizing work in UP – with the establishment of college-level chapters and formation of influenced traditional organizations – for the ease with which spontaneous elements embraced the barricades:

> The Samahan ng Progresibong Propagandista at the College of Mass Communication. There was the Makabayang Mangangalakal at the Business Administration. There was the Pambansang Samahan sa Inhinerya at Agham… You have the Nagkakaisang Progresibong Artista't Arkitekto. It really blossomed. There was a different level of organizing in UP.

Faculty under SAGUPA not only supported but also helped man the barricades. Soon, ND activists outside UP also joined the barricades in Diliman to replace the UP students who had gone home. SDK member Nilo Ocampo, in a January 11, 2021 Zoom interview, recalled mobilizing the SDK chapters he helped organize in Caloocan and Malabon to bring warm bodies to the Commune.

Even residents inside the campus and adjacent communities were drawn to the action. Julian Santos, an SDK member who we interviewed in his residence in Barangay Krus Na Ligas in December 21, 2020, recalled the participation of his fellow residents in the barricades. Organizational work in the communities secured broad mass support. These areas protected and fed the students manning the barricades, as SDK member Indai Sajor in a January 3, 2021 interview explains:

> They were the pipeline. They were really the pipeline of information where the military is positioning. They had their boys and daughters sending us the information. They were the ones who knew where the military were positioning in Ateneo. They were the ones who tell us the numbers. And they were also giving us food. They were the ones who organized pan de sal and coffee, any food they can put together.

On the morning of February 3, 1971, the rapidly escalating situation in the campus prodded S. Lopez to call for an assembly of the academic community and campus residents. Dean of Students Malay (1982d) recalled KM's Ilagan giving the first speech in front of the body that massed up in front of the Palma Hall steps by 11 AM and S. Lopez following up with a speech expressing support with the barricades. Another violent dispersal averted through negotiation of UP officials with the police force (Committee of Inquiry 1971).

Opposition senators led by Benigno Ninoy Aquino also visited the barricades to show solidarity for the students. Some of these senators pleading on behalf of S. Lopez and the UP administration nudged President Marcos to issue a stand back order for the police to avert a generalized assault on the campus (Malay 1982c). The remaining days of the barricades in Diliman would be relatively peaceful as opposed to its more spectacular first three days, with student leaders now taking the initiative to form what they called a "provisional directorate" that coordinated the defense and organization of the campus occupation.

The provisional directorate included Ericson Baculinao, Reynaldo Vea, and Fred Tirante of the UPSC, Mario Taguiwalo of the SDK, Bonifacio Ilagan of KM, Vicky Lopez of the *Progresibong* UP Women's Club, Lilia Quindoza of Student Cultural Association of the Philippines (SCAUP), Cindy Mercado of the Kamia Residence Hall, Vicente Samahan of the Samahan ng Inhinyero at *Agham*, Temario Rivera representing the UP Diliman Faculty, and Marilyn Reyes Faulan representing non-academic personnel (The Manila Times 1971f).

When the barricades started, the idea of a full campus takeover was furthest from the minds of the organizers, explained UPSC chairperson Baculinao, but the shooting of Mesina and the violent dispersals sparked an unprecedented takeover

of the campus. Then already a College of Law freshman, Baculinao entered UP as a political science major in 1966 but became politicized in his third year in college when he joined the SCAUP and eventually KM.

While unplanned, Baculinao said the idea of a Commune quickly became the consensus among participants in reaction to state violence such that when the first meeting of the directorate took place on February 4, 1971, they were then only formalizing the reality that has taken shape on the ground.

Inspired by the centenary of the Paris Commune of 1871, which was being celebrated in 1971, the students began to call their "liberated zone" the Diliman Commune, a name that immediately resonated (Aguilar 1971). Yet precisely given the spontaneous nature of the campus uprising, this reference was more symbolic rather than a deliberate choice based on any deeper theoretical understanding of the revolutionary example of the Paris Commune.

VI. Propaganda Coup

While many accounts would focus on these sensational events of the first three days of the barricades, what happened in the next few days were not in any way less important. In fact, it was precisely in these days of relative tranquility that important steps were taken by organized forces to consolidate and raise the consciousness of the participants of the spontaneous uprising.

Gary Olivar, then SDK national spokesperson (who later turned his back on his radical convictions), said in a January 9, 2021 Zoom interview that while the Diliman Commune was unplanned, the fact that it already happened was an opportunity seized by ND activists to air issues and radicalize more students.

On February 4, 1971, students seized the UP Press, then located in the basement of the University Main Library, with the aim of using this resource for propaganda work. According to Ericson Baculinao, the UP Press served as one of the main meeting areas of the provisional directorate given its strategic location at the heart of the Diliman campus. Malay (1982e, 7) recalls sending over three to four UP Press employees out of concern that the students may break the printing press: "one or two linotypists, a makeup man, and others you might need."

The students used the press facilities to make copies of manifestos and newsletter. They printed *Bandilang Pula* (1971a), which describes itself as the publication of the liberated zone of Diliman, documented events inside the barricades and featured the perspectives of the participants of the Commune.

Activists were staffers and editors of the *Philippine Collegian* and other campus publications and were thus able to utilize its pages to raise political awareness during pivotal events like the Commune. The *Collegian* released one issue in the middle of the barricades on February 4, 1971 with the banner story "Sinalakay ang UP!" [UP under attack] (Philippine Collegian 1971a) and editorial "Up with the Barricades!"

The DZUP radio station, already occupied by activists since the second day of the barricades, was christened the "Radyo Diliman Libre" or Radio Free Diliman and utilized to aid the coordination of maneuvers behind the barricades (Bandilang Pula 1971c).

Phone calls from sympathizing residents effectively checkmated every move of plainclothes troopers who roamed the campus. And food poured generously from far-flung areas as a result of direct appeals by the rebel announcers. To cap it all, a public service portion assured worried parents their activist kids were still up and kicking (Gonzalez 1971).

DZUP's role in the barricades had been overshadowed in mainstream accounts by its broadcast of bedroom conversations between American actress Dovie Beams and Marcos. Beams had starred in the film *Maharlika* (Hopper 1969) for Marcos' 1969 second presidential run and had a love affair with Marcos from 1968 until its discovery by Imelda Marcos and Beams subsequent deportation in 1970 (Hau 2019).

This episode had been exploited by critics like Scalice (2018, 299) to make the spurious claim that DZUP did little to provide a political perspective to its listeners during the Commune, contenting itself with "broadcasting explicit sexual recordings in an attempt to embarrass Marcos on behalf of a rival section of the bourgeoisie." In fact, Malay (1982f, 6) cites the playing of the Dovie Beams scandal as one of the students' errors that they subsequently rectified: "After one replay, the DZUP stopped the Dovie Beams recording, for good."

Yet the impact of the broadcasts in DZUP to the overall success of the Diliman Commune was significant as it served as a propaganda center and an avenue to build unity not only among students, but among various sectors inside and outside the university. It helped dispel disinformation perpetuated by the state forces against the Commune and facilitated an outpouring of support from nearby communities and from other sectors.

Of course, UP constituents were divided on the barricades with irate residents and faculty inconvenienced by the disruptions it caused as well as conservative-minded students demanding S. Lopez to end the Commune (Committee of Inquiry 1971) and even coming up with a pamphlet entitled "Down

with the barricades" (Concerned Families of Area Two and SDS 1971). The campus was a site of contestation.

While the last days of the barricades were generally peaceful, the police still made several incursions into the campus as attested by the report compiled by the UP administration after the Commune (Committee of Inquiry 1971). One such incident took place on February 6, 1971, when the police forcibly dismantled barricades along Katipunan Avenue with bulldozers backed by armed men.

The clash with students resulted in the shooting of Danilo Delfin, 19 years old, a UP Vanguard lieutenant who actively took part in the defense of the barricades. The Manila Times (1971f, 1) reported that Delfin fell victim to "a group of unidentified armed men in civilian clothes [who] fired at the barricaders." Ilagan and E. Lopez, who were manning the barricades alongside Delfin, recalled how the latter braved the charging bulldozer and hurled pillboxes towards its direction. He was shot by between Narra and Vinzons Hall while trying to dodge the riddling bullets fired by the state forces.

Delfin (1972), in an open letter, later blamed the activists for the shooting that led to the paralysis of the lower half of his body. Scalice (2018, 496) endorses this view, expressing his opinion that praise from KM and SDK turned into denunciation when they later found out he was "a Vanguard member who had been shot in the back." And yet activists, including some of our interviewees, were acquainted with Delfin.

Indeed, while the UP Vanguard is linked to the military's Reserved Officer Training Corps for college students, some of its members did join the barricades and even sponsored practical self-defense lessons at the Ilang-Ilang Residence Hall (Committee of Inquiry 1971). This further demonstrates the spontaneous sense of solidarity by different sectors of the UP community in response to violent state intervention.

The Diliman Commune was thus, emphasized historian Zeus Salazar in a Zoom interview on January 13, 2021, significant as "a propaganda coup" by the student activists who he once linked arms with during the barricades as a faculty member at the UP Department of History.

VII. Dismantling the Barricades

Back in the university belt, violent attempts by the police to disperse youth-led protest centers continued day by day. Five clashes were reported on February 2, 1971 seesawing along Dapitan and España streets between policemen of the Manila

Police District (MPD) and activists who installed barricades along the University of Santo Tomas (UST).

These police incursions resulted in the death of Danilo Rabaja, a 19-year-old commerce graduate, Renato Abrenica, a 24-year-old UST student who sustained 4 bullet wounds, and Robert Tolosa, a 12-year-old boy believed to be a lottery vendor who was found with a bullet wound in the back. Twenty-eight individuals were wounded while several students were arrested (Coles & Soriano 1971a).

A number of student activists from UST were already organized in ND organizations during the latter years of the 1960s, with traditional student organizations like the religious Pax Romana, the theatre guild, Artistang Artlets, and campus publications *The Flame* and *The Varsitarian* being also drawn to the militant spirit of the times (Santos 2008).

Clashes across Manila continued on February 3, with 7 students barricading Governor Forbes Street and España Avenue getting bullet wounds from the police (The Manila Times 1971b). At around 3PM, 200 students who manned a barricade in front of the Ateneo de Manila University at Katipunan Avenue fled inside the campus when police opened fire on them. Nine Ateneo students were injured and 27 arrested. Barricades were also erected in several other schools in Manila (Coles & Soriano 1971b).

The next day, February 4, Fernando Duque, a 19-year-old UST Arts student was killed by an explosion while fleeing into the UST campus from policemen violently dispersing activists and striking drivers in Dapitan Street (Coles & Soriano 1971b). Seven more students in the university belt were wounded on February 5, as authorities fired guns on students' strike centers (The Manila Times 1971c).

The weekend of February 6 and 7 saw the waning of the momentum of the jeepney strike. Monday, February 8, again saw hundreds of students taking to the streets again in various points of the university belt yet some jeepney operators already announcing resumption of their routes (The Manila Times 1971e). Thus, while still reiterating the need to persist with the strike's fundamental demand against oil price increases, ND groups were now shifting efforts into gearing for a People's Congress set on February 9 (The Manila Times 1971g).

As the strike winded down towards its inevitable end, the provisional directorate also began to ponder the barricades' sustainability. According to Baculinao, it was clear for his fellow activists that the Commune was not the decisive battle, nor was it to serve as the spark for an insurrection.

At the same time, S. Lopez negotiated with members of the directorate for the ending of the barricades to pave the way for the resumption of classes. He

proposed to resign to avoid being held responsible for whatever bloodshed resulting from an imminent police assault on the campus (Malay 1982g). S. Lopez (1971) publicized his stand in a press statement circulated in mainstream media and spoke in a late night DZUP broadcast with student leaders (Committee of Inquiry 1971; The Manila Times 1971h).

Taking stock of the propaganda and educational achievements of the barricades, concrete gains conceded by the university administration, the settling in of fatigue and stretching thin of resources, and further threats of repression from besieging state forces, Diliman Commune's leadership decided to dismantle the barricades, said Baculinao.

This perspective is put into writing in the article "Commune 'normalized' to consolidate gains" in *Bandilang Pula* (1971b, 7), which reiterates how the decision was "aimed at depriving the fascist military of any excuse to enter" the campus and thereby "securing the best conditions possible for the deepening of the national democratic revolution" in the campus.

Among the communards' seven demands, two were achieved: student use of the DZUP and the UP Press (Philippine Collegian 1971d; Taguiwalo 2011). ND activists called on their fellow students to continue to press for the other demands, including the rollback of oil prices, an assurance against military and police invasion of the campus, justice for the victims of state violence during the barricades, prosecution and dismissal of Campos, and an investigation of UP security police and officials who collaborated with the police during the barricades.

Finally, on February 9, 1971, over 10,000 drivers, workers, and youth joined the People's Congress which snaked through residential areas before holding a program in Plaza Jose de Figueras in Bustillos, Manila that ended by 9 in the evening (Galang 1971b). By the next day, February 10, strike organizers officially announced the end of the strike (Castillo 1971b).

All the barricades were lifted on February 9, 1971, as the communards proceeded with a clean-up drive all over the campus. Indai Sajor remembers crying from a mix of sadness and joy when the end of the Commune came:

> I remembered crying while we were taking down the barricades. We felt somewhat sad but we also won. Those tears were a mix of sadness, a mix of relief, a mix of victory. It was that feeling that we made it. It was really an achievement in itself that a group of students was able to hold the Diliman campus for nine days.

VIII. Contested Aftermath

The key participants we interviewed located the Diliman Commune squarely in the context of the years of ideological clarification, political organizing, and militant mobilization of the 1960s which steeled a generation that would subsequently lead the anti-dictatorship struggle. Indeed, the spectacular image of young students defending barricades in the country's top university against the police would be immortalized by its participants, in the words of Salazar in our January 13 2021 interview, as "a symbol of student resistance to the Marcos dictatorship."

In the aftermath of the Diliman Commune, the production in April 1971 of a play entitled *Barikada* (Barricade) would further solidify this appraisal of the Commune by highlighting the heroic defence of the barricades. In-itself deserving a separate article, *Barikada* was directed by Behn Cervantes for "Gintong Silahis" (Golden Rays) which was the cultural arm organized by the SDK. The play was formally staged in September of the same year in UP Theatre and was later toured in various stages within and outside Metro Manila.

Two resolutions issued by the UPSC also sought to memorialize this memory of the Diliman Commune. The first is a "resolution commending the revolutionary courage of the heroic defenders of the Diliman commune against the fascist state and its campus collaborators" (Coloma 1971). The second is "'Barricades are fine': Resolution endorsing the barricades as a form of protest" (Vea 1971b).

The two resolutions' sponsorship demonstrated the broad unity forged during the barricades, with the former being sponsored by then moderate student leader Herminio Coloma. Even moderate UPSC members Gigi Ugto, Babes Gamboa, June Pagaduan, Bimbo Salazar then spoke against Ramon Puno who opposed the resolutions on conservative grounds as an alienation from mass action (Philippine Collegian 1971e).

Yet it also showed the way UP, the country's premier state university, and the memory of the barricades, would continue to be a locus of contestation. The UPSC elections on August 1971 would serve as another flashpoint with state forces intervening to prevent the radical student party Sandigang Makabansa (SM) from winning student council seats in favor of the more moderate Katipunan ng Malayang Pagkakaisa (KMP).

Based mainly on stilted interpretation of archival material, the account of Scalice (2018) downplays the role of military intervention in these campus elections to build-up his argument that SM's defeat represents a tacit condemnation by the student population of the Diliman Commune. This thesis overstates the electoral loss given that KMP's standard bearer Manuel "Manny" Ortega, a law student and

fraternity brother of President Marcos, only won over SM candidate Reynaldo "Rey" Vea by little under 400 votes. KMP also occupied half of the UPSC seats (Reyes, et al 2021).

According to Miguel Paolo Reyes, Joel Ariate, and Larah Vinda Del Mundo (2021), among papers left by Marcos in Malacañang after his overthrow was a August 10, 1971 letter to Marcos by Jose Crisol, Marcos' then Undersecretary of National Defense in 1971. The letter "stated that to ensure Ortega and KMP's win, a total of P17,600 – a considerable sum in 1971 – was spent by various agencies." This gives credence to accusations of military black propaganda and "red scare" tactics against SM in the UPSC elections:

> According to Crisol, a total of P10,000 was given directly to Ortega by Malacañang (via then assistant executive secretary Roberto Reyes); P2,500 came from General Headquarters (GHQ)-AFP [Armed Forces of the Philippines]; P2,500 came from NICA [National Intelligence Coordinating Agency]; P1,000 came from the Office of Community Relations (OCR) GHQ (via "Col. Pecache"); and another P1,600 from NICA (via "Col. de la Fuente").

June Pagaduan-Lopez, then a moderate UPSC member who was interviewed via Zoom in January 19, 2021, said that on the eve of the election, chairs and tables were smashed and thrown from buildings, and slogans spray-painted along the stairs of arts and sciences building. Roberto "Beto" Reyes (2012) in his blog "Memoirs of an Anti-Martial Law Activist in the Philippines" recalls:

> On the night before the elections, unidentified persons surreptitiously painted leftist slogans like "Mabuhay si Mao," "Mabuhay ang CPP," and "Mabuhay si Dante" all over the campus, especially the walls and blackboards of the CAS [College of Arts and Sciences], where the bulk of the voters came.

Reviewing his old photographs of the graffiti from 1971, Nori Palarca, *The Philippine Collegian's* photographer during the Commune whom we interviewed through Zoom in January 12, 2021, said that these were not made by students at all but by state agents.

Bibeth Orteza (2018), who was running under the slate of the moderate Lakas Diwa as representative for the UP CAS, also recalls this incident in detail. Pagaduan-Lopez corroborated the role of "rightist-military types" in this "false flag operation": "They made it appear that radicals were behind it. I was a member of the Corps

Sponsors so all the Vanguards involved were my friends. I'm so mad at them, which added to my radicalization because I felt so enraged."

SDK's Jack Teotico (2012) recalls how radicals in the campus learned from the loss in terms of improving propaganda tactics and strengthening alliance work. And indeed, the opposing party's victory was only short-lived. In the following year, the progressives prevailed once again. SM's standard-bearer, Jaime Galvez Tan, won the student council elections. The 1972 slate was the last standing student council prior to the prohibition of student-formed councils and organizations under the Martial Law declared by Marcos.

The gradual constriction of democratic spaces pushed many activists to look beyond the legal arena in the cities as avenues for struggle. The suspension of the writ of habeas corpus in the wake of the August 21, 1971 bombing of the Liberal Party's miting de avance at Plaza Miranda and the September 21, 1972 imposition of martial law compelled many veterans of the militant struggles of the Philippine Global Sixties to join the underground resistance.

VIX. Lessons from the Commune

In conclusion, what particular lessons can we glean from the 1971 Diliman Commune and the Philippine's Global Sixties?

First is the importance of theory in nurturing the critical energy in the Global 1960s. Inspired by objective conditions of crisis and heightened resistance especially in the Third World, youth across the globe turned to Marxist critiques of the capitalist world system (rather than just bad individuals or wrong policies) as the root cause of social ills such as war, inequality, poverty, racism, sexism, and various forms of oppression (Mohandesi, Risager, Cox 2018). In the Philippines, anti-systemic critique was framed along the lines of a struggle for national democracy with a socialist perspective.

Second, students, faculty, and the academic community have the power to enact change at the societal level only if a critical mass unite to express solidarity with the toiling masses of workers. Given the predominantly peripheral capitalist or semi-feudal character of the Philippine social formation, the university-based petty bourgeois intelligentsia are a relatively small mass and "cannot be relied upon to carry the sole or main burden in a revolutionary transformation" (Sison 1972, 21). From February 1 to 9, 1971, this unity came in the form of the youth-led solidarity with the public transport drivers and other sectors inside the campus from faculty, academic employees, to community residents.

Third, exploitative relations and repression inevitably spark spontaneous struggles among different sectors. But militant organization, following Lenin (2021), is necessary to consolidate the spontaneous elements to address both urgent issues and give a more long-term perspective for transformation. We see this in the way state violence during the first day of the strike roused the spontaneous action of a wide mass of students and people. ND activists saw the organizing of the Commune as an opportunity to address people's issues while raising the political consciousness and militancy.

Fourth, spontaneous action does not arise out of a vacuum but emerges from earlier lineages of struggle and organizing that makes the taking up of militant action an option open to the majority of the populace. The climate of politicization in the UP Diliman campus in the preceding decade since the establishment of the SCAUP and the KM up to the 1969 strike, the deepening of the presence of activist groups up to the college level, dormitories, and surrounding communities, particularly made the campus a fertile ground for the spontaneous explosion of the Commune in February 1971, as the interview with Judy Taguiwalo underlined.

Fifth, militant actions like the barricades are themselves cultural and educational processes wherein a radical subjectivity that foregrounds an understanding of social conditions and the need to change it can be forged among participants (Choudry 2015). The Commune forged participants in the crucible of actual confrontation with state forces, an experience that organizers framed from a radical perspective through discussion groups, teach-ins, newspapers like the *Bandilang Pula* and *The Philippine Collegian*, broadcasts from the DZUP, and other forms of political education and propaganda.

Finally, victory or defeat of mass struggles and movements is gauged primarily by, to cite radical historian David Austin (2013, 13), "the degree to which society's most marginalized and dispossessed are part of and genuinely reflected in the social vision proposed by the movement." In other words, its validity is measured by the extent that it is linked to the struggles of the basic masses and contributes to the longer-term project of building counter-hegemonic forces that challenge the status quo.

From this purview, the Diliman Commune was an important victory by forging greater unity between different sectors in the University, especially the campus residents, linking the academic community with striking jeepney drivers, and radicalizing a generation of students who would leave the confines of the campus to partake in militant struggles in the factories, urban poor, and rural communities.

The Diliman Commune's relevance then cannot be discounted because of particular concrete demands that were not granted or repressive actions by the

authorities. Evaluating its success mainly by this yardstick, as Robin Kelley (2002, ix) points out, is to diminish the power of their vision:

> By such a measure, virtually every radical movement failed because the basic power relations they sought to change remained pretty much intact. And yet it is precisely these alternative visions and dreams that inspire new generations to continue to struggle for change.

Bonifacio Ilagan shares that one of the reasons why the case against Inocente Campos for the killing of Pastor Mesina did not prosper was because he and others were compelled by circumstances to abandon their post as witnesses. After the Commune, he – along with many others – were forced to go underground. Some of the well-known names of heroes of the anti-dictatorship struggle memorialized in the Bantayog ng mga Bayani (2015a) were participants of the Commune: Antonio Tagamolila, Manuel Dorotan, Leo Alto, Alexander Belone, Cecilio Reyes.

Many of our interviewees disclosed having been involved, in one way or another, with the revolutionary underground during the martial law years. In their own accounts, the experience of the FQS and the Diliman Commune was formative in their growth as activists and revolutionaries.

Many have settled back into the mainstream but some of their comrades like Concha Araneta and Vic Ladlad would dedicate the rest of their lives to the revolution.

This generation of subjective forces that fought the Marcos fascist regime for us constitutes the most important contribution of the Diliman Commune and the radical sequence before the 1972 martial law imposition.

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