

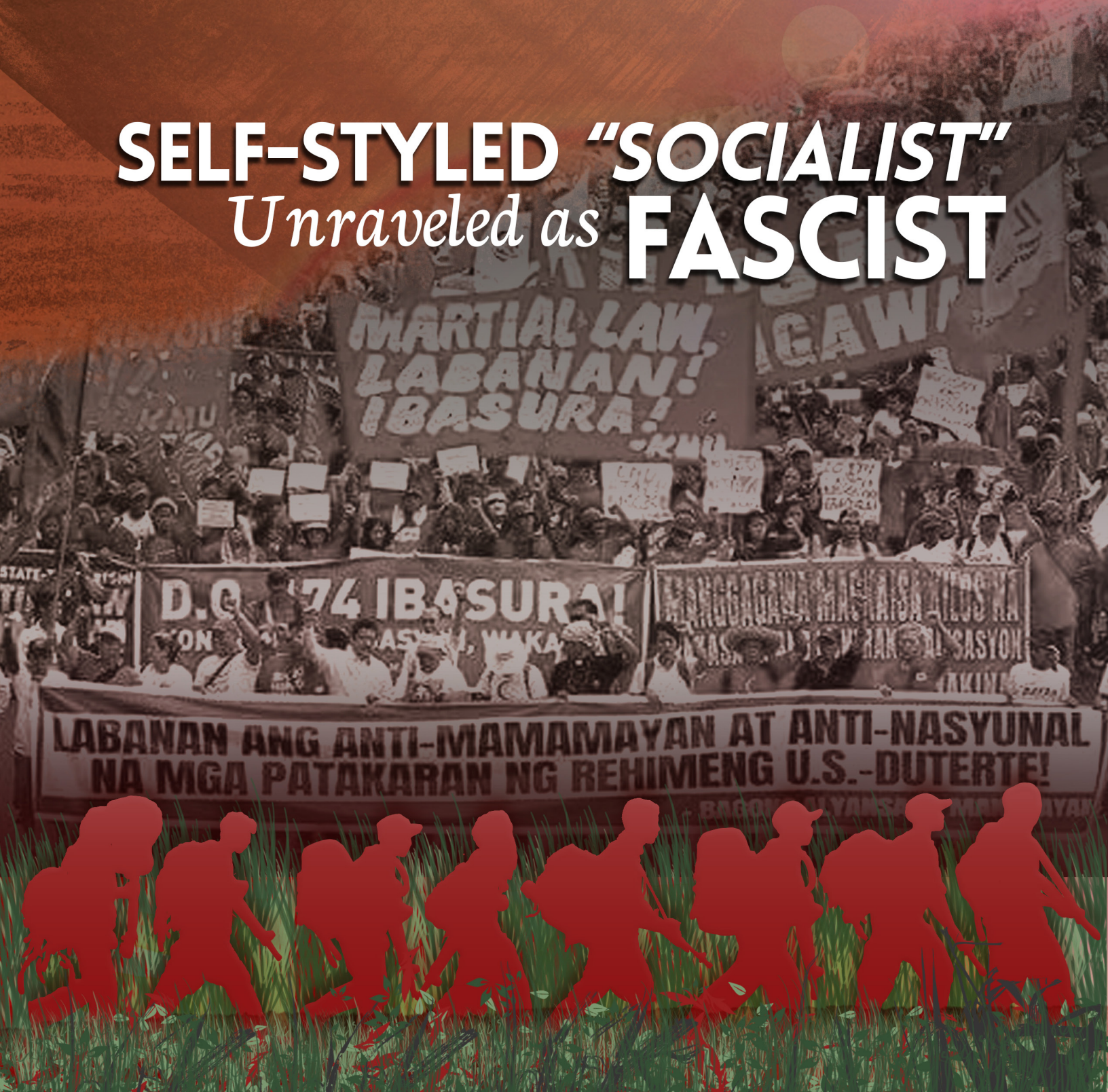
# LIBERATION

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## SELF-STYLED "SOCIALIST" *Unraveled as* FASCIST





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Artwork/Illustration by

Ka Bam, Ka Jay-jay, Pulang Bagani Battalion, Bicol Region, and North East Mindanao Region

# SELF-STYLED “Socialist” UNRAVELED AS FASCIST

Into his second year in office, Rodrigo Roa Duterte has blown away his publicly declared wish to be the first “Left” president of the Philippines and unraveled himself as a fascist — a fascist compliant to US imperialism.

Still he flaunts his claim of being a “socialist”. Remonstrating against the Left revolutionary forces’ tagging him as fake, Duterte has drawn a line differentiating himself from them: he would not resort to armed struggle to attain fundamental or revolutionary social change. But he wages wars and kills wantonly.

So what sort of socialist is he?

As though responding to that question, Dante C. Simbulan, a political-social scientist, graduate and former professor of the Philippine Military Academy who became a political prisoner of the Marcos dictatorship, recently wrote in the social media:

“Hitler called himself a ‘socialist’, a national socialist, that is. Nazi Germany’s ideology was National Socialism or Fascism. Duterte also calls himself a ‘socialist’ but the fascist type. Like Hitler, he developed his reliance on the military and police to back up his regime.”



The NDFP is the revolutionary united front organization of the Filipino people fighting for national freedom and for the democratic rights of the people. Established on April 24, 1973, the NDFP seeks to develop and coordinate all progressive classes, sectors and forces in the Filipino people’s struggle to end the rule of US imperialism and its local allies, and attain national and social liberation.

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“To fool the marginalized poor,” Simbulan added, “Duterte even had [when he was mayor of Davao City] a radio program called “From the masses to the masses.” Appointing Left-wing personalities [to his Cabinet] was a façade, while at the same time he was consolidating his control of the police and military, the ruling class and the people he fooled — the Dutertards.”

Simbulan caps his insightful comment with this indictment: “A devilish man, Duterte is. But the oppressed and exploited Filipinos will rise up and bring him down like his idol, FERDINAND MARCOS.”

Jose Ma. Sison, the NDFP chief political consultant in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations, has provided a broader and deeper view of Duterte’s unraveling. “The people must realize,” he recently remarked, “that Duterte is well on the way to establishing his fascist dictatorship.” The latter’s

proclamation of martial law in Mindanao in May and its extension till the end of this year, he warned, is in preparation for a nationwide martial law.

The founding chairman of the reestablished Communist Party of the Philippines cited the following factors in support of his prognosis: Duterte’s capture of the majority in Congress and in the Supreme Court through corruption and blackmail; the filing of an impeachment case against the Chief Justice to tighten his control of the highest court; the allocation of huge intelligence and other discretionary funds to the Office of the President; the corruption of the

AFP and PNP and their conversion to Duterte’s private armies; the use of public funds to build Kilusang Pagbabago-Masid Masa as propaganda machinery and spy network; the usurpation of the power to appoint barangay officials; the relentless propaganda for mass murder against drug suspects, social activists and revolutionaries; the plot for charter change by the “supermajority” in Congress; and his pursuit of pseudo-federalism under a unitary fascist dictatorship.

Specifically, Sison accuses the Duterte regime of carrying out a policy of mass murder and bombing of communities. Spurning national and international protests and condemnations, he points out, the regime unrelentingly uses its “war” on illegal drugs to





project an image of “a strongman with an iron fist” in order to intimidate the people and political opponents and to popularize extrajudicial killings as a device for building a fascist dictatorship.

The mass-murder policy is likewise applied in the military campaigns of suppression against social activists, national minorities, and the revolutionary forces. Meantime, aerial bombings, artillery and mortar firing have become *de rigueur* in attacking hinterland communities to force the people to evacuate en masse. The objective is to grab the fertile land and other natural resources for the benefit of foreign and domestic corporations engaged in mining, logging, and plantations for export.

In Marawi, Duterte has bared himself as an incorrigible puppet of US imperialism. He has allowed the latter's military intervention and adopted with alacrity the US military doctrine – used in Iraq, Libya, and Syria—of “saving a community by destroying it.” Thus the aerial bombings and artillery barrages have devastated Marawi.

Duterte's posturing as a Leftist who offered to amnesty and free all political prisoners as an act of justice and to negotiate peace with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) based on social, economic and political reforms to improve the lives of the poor has been exposed as simply that: posturing. His excuse for not issuing

an amnesty proclamation and not freeing all the political prisoners—because the military opposes such actions—betrays his real standpoint. He has taken the side of the oppressors, not the oppressed.

Similarly, he has put obstacles to the formal negotiations on social and economic reforms when these were positively moving forward. He has backstopped his national security cluster's insistence that a bilateral indefinite ceasefire agreement (a scheme for pacification and capitulation) must precede negotiations and agreement on

**“Duterte also calls himself a ‘socialist’ but the fascist type. Like Hitler, he developed his reliance on the military and police to back up his regime.”**

social and economic reforms. Likewise, he has adopted the stance of his neoliberal economic team that's pushing policies and programs starkly opposed to the NDFP-proposed reforms.

In effect, Duterte has encouraged these two pro-imperialist groups in his Cabinet to sabotage the peace negotiations. No self-respecting Leftist would do that.

Given these facts and circumstances, Sison told a recent gathering in Utrecht, The Netherlands:

“Forewarned by the repeated threats of Duterte to declare martial law nationwide, the people and the revolutionary forces represented by the NDFP have come to the consensus that it would be easier to oust Duterte from power than to conclude a peace agreement with him. **LIB**

On Duterte Government's First Year

## FALTERINGS & Turnarounds

by Angel Balen

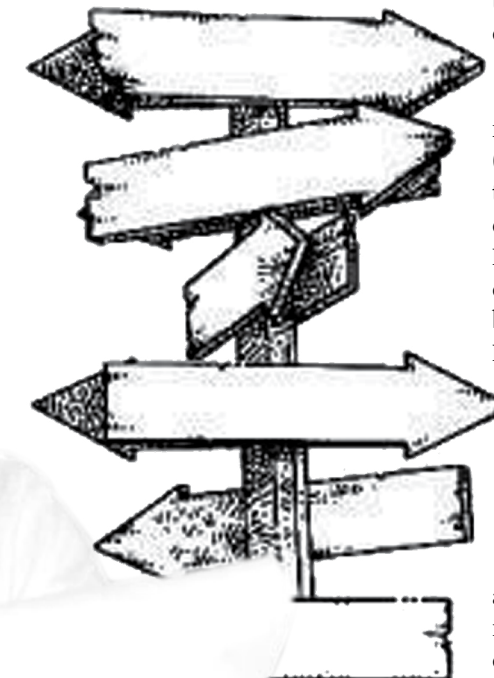
Rodrigo R. Duterte was swept into the presidency by a landslide win in the May elections last year on the campaign cry, **“Change is coming!”** He began his six-year term by taking bold, dramatic moves and making pronouncements in pursuance of his electoral campaign promises.

1. He launched his administration's campaign to eradicate illegal drugs, criminality, and corruption, setting a six-month target to win the “war on drugs”. From the outset it has been a bloody campaign that targeted mainly the poor, who are in fact victims of the drug menace and deserved not death but rehabilitation. He's emboldened by survey results that say while many acquiesce with the killings, they at the same time express fear they may be the next victims.
2. Affirming his declared commitment to end labor contractualization, that for decades has been a bane to the workers and trade unions, Duterte directed his labor secretary to issue the required implementing order. But when the order came out, it was a big letdown. It smashed the high expectations of workers unions and federations of varied persuasions. Alas, the order deviously retains the abominable practice.

3. Even before assuming office, Duterte struck an understanding with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) that his government would resume — and complete — the long-stalled GRP-NDFP peace talks aimed at ending the nearly 50 years of armed conflict and attaining “just and lasting peace”. He also offered to free the 400 political prisoners listed by the NDFP through his issuance of an amnesty proclamation as the most expeditious means of releasing them from prison and from the trumped-up common-crime charges filed against them under previous administrations.

He did cause the release, through bail, of 21 NDFP consultants and staff to enable them to participate in the peace talks, and freed a few others later. But he has reneged on his amnesty offer.

4. Invoking the historical injustices that US imperialism had inflicted on the Filipino people for over a century, Duterte vowed to pursue an “independent foreign policy”. This purportedly aims to veer the nation from long subservience to US foreign policy and dependence on American military aid and protection. On various occasions, he threatened to abrogate the unequal treaties with the US, such as the Visiting Forces Agreement, and to boot out American troops from Mindanao. He began to develop close ties with China and Russia, America's geopolitical power rivals in Asia and Europe, respectively, hoping to extract from both financial and military aid.



Later, Duterte welcomed and gladly accepted US military aid, troop presence, and interventionist activities in the country.

Duterte has held fast to his “war on drugs,” vowing to carry on the drive till the end of his term. He justifies his bloody methods as the best means to save the lives of Filipino youths from getting ruined. Rejecting, disparaging local and international criticisms and advices on the mounting human rights violations with the arbitrary killings of thousands of suspected drug users and pushers, he has gone as far as threatening to go after human rights advocates.

However, on his commitments to resume and complete the peace talks and to pursue an independent foreign policy — two potentially historic legacies of his government — Duterte has failed to push these onward. The momentum towards change first faltered; now it is being even reversed.

As earlier noted, the peace talks resumed in amity and euphoria. Despite aversion to a prolonged ceasefire, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the NDFP agreed to declare an indefinite unilateral ceasefire as a goodwill response to Duterte's unilateral ceasefire declaration. The ceasefire held for five months, with the New People's Army (NPA) exercising restraint vis-a-vis the aggressive incursions into and occupation by troops of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) of communities within the revolutionary base areas. On the negotiating table, the NDFP panel raised the AFP's actions as ceasefire violations.

Despite this, significant gains were achieved in the next two rounds of formal negotiations (in October 2016 and January 2017) on the substantive issues of economic and social reforms and on the initial discussions on political and constitutional reforms.



A sharp turn happened in early February. Duterte angrily reacted to the killing of three state soldiers intercepted by the Red fighters, after the CPP had announced the withdrawal of its unilateral ceasefire declaration. He cancelled the peace talks and his defense secretary ordered an “all-out-war” against the NPA. Since then the AFP has intensified its offensives using aerial bombings and artillery barrages on upland communities and forested areas, driving away and displacing thousands of civilians.

Although Duterte initiated the continuation of the peace talks in April, he didn't order to stop the “all-out war”. Worse, his Cabinet security cluster has thrown the proverbial monkey wrench into the formal negotiations: through the GRP panel, it has insisted that negotiations on and signing of a bilateral indefinite ceasefire agreement must come before those for a comprehensive agreement on social and economic reforms. The NDFP absolutely rejects this proposal as it violates The

Hague Joint Declaration. Worse, it's a devious militarist scheme to obtain the capitulation and pacification of the revolutionary forces.

By endorsing his security advisers' scheme, Duterte has undermined his own commitment to accelerate the negotiations: to forge, sign and approve the comprehensive agreements on social and economic reforms and on political and constitutional reforms and implement them within his term. Thus, he's forsaking a potential valuable legacy to the Filipino people.

In a similar vein, Duterte has reneged on his pronouncements to do away with US military presence and interventionism. He has allowed the Americans to build military facilities in six military camps and to provide “technical” assistance in the air bombings of Marawi City targeting the Maute group. He has warmly received the US Secretary of State and prepares to welcome President Donald Trump to the country in November.

What explains the faltering and the turnarounds?

Despite his protestations he's a “socialist” itching to shake up the status quo, he's revealing his real persona and politics by his actions. As he trucks with his neoliberal economic managers to keep social, economic and political conditions essentially as they have been for decades, he eggs on his pro-US militarist advisers and troops in the counterinsurgency drive “to flatten the hills” through air and ground bombardments. His quickness to adopt militaristic and authoritarian measures — such as declaring martial law and suspending the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus in the whole of Mindanao, with intimation of extending these to cover the entire country — is veritable evidence of what he wishes to be and to do.

It's fine that within a short period Duterte has unraveled his true self. The revolutionary movement need no longer seriously try to play

along with his posturing for change and for peace. Unequivocally, the movement and the organized masses will engage him as what he says he has become. Brandishing his mantle as commander-in-chief of all the reactionary state's armed forces, he tells his erstwhile friends: “I am your enemy!”

LIB



## Peace Talks in Duterte's First Year FLAGGING POLITICAL WILL and CONSISTENCY

by Angel Balen



As he began his six-year term in July 2016, President Rodrigo R. Duterte set off a momentum for change by taking bold, dramatic moves and making definitive pronouncements in pursuance of his campaign cry, “Change is coming!”

However, towards the latter part of his first year in power the momentum for change has faltered. He has tended more and more to backslide towards the Right. Dragged and rendered as casualty in that flow and ebb were the peace talks of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines-National Democratic Front of the Philippines (GRP-NDFP), which Duterte had vowed to resume, and to complete and begin implementing the substantive agreements (on social, economic and political reforms) within his term.

The formal negotiations resumed on August 22 in an atmosphere of amity and euphoria: the new president had caused the release of 21 NDFP consultants and staff, enabling them to participate in the talks. As regards the other 400 political prisoners, he had offered

(in May before he took office) to issue an amnesty proclamation to expedite their release.

The two parties reaffirmed the 12 previously signed agreements (from 1992 to 2004) and “resolved to conduct formal talks and consultations in accordance with said agreements” (Joint Statement, August 26, 2016). They reconstituted the list of NDFP consultants given safety and immunity guarantees under the JASIG (Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees) and completed the requisite guidelines to implement the CARHRIHL (Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law).

Furthermore, they have agreed to accelerate the pace of the negotiations, setting up the necessary mechanisms and procedures, and made significant gains in three successive rounds of formal negotiations until the end of January 2017. Then something happened that rudely interrupted the good things going on so well, as acknowledged by both negotiating panels.

“Moving the Peace Talks Forward,” the lead article of *Liberation*, January-March issue, pointed out the main factor that has since impeded the relatively smooth flow of the peace negotiations. “War hawks in the administration, led by pro-US defense and military officials,” the article said, “soon began undermining the strides made in three rounds of formal peace talks in the first six months of the new government.”

The war hawks avidly exploited to their advantage an initiative by President Duterte (which they had probably suggested) that has turned into a problematic and troublesome element in the peace talks: his declaration on August 21 of an indefinite unilateral ceasefire.

In May 2016, when as president-elect he met with then NDFP emissary Fidel Agcaoili and committed to resume the long-suspended peace talks, Duterte did not at all speak of a ceasefire. Neither was a ceasefire declaration discussed during the June preliminary bilateral talks between his emissaries and the NDFP negotiating panel held in Oslo,



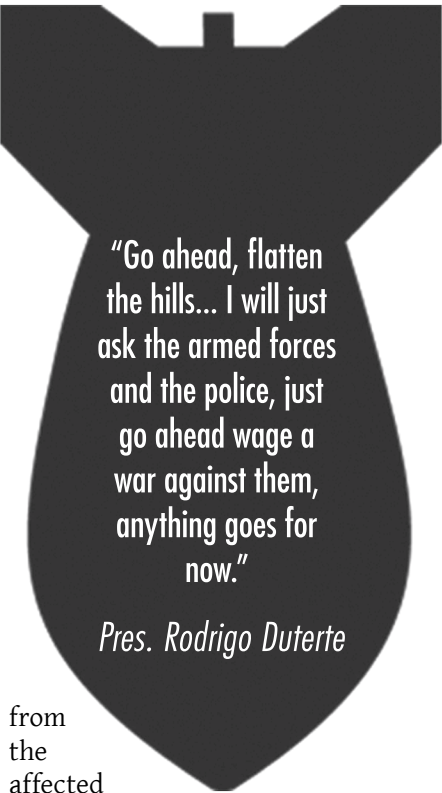
Norway. But when he delivered his first state-of-the-nation address in July, he announced a unilateral ceasefire, which he hastily withdrew because the NDFP did not immediately reciprocate with a similar ceasefire declaration. It was explained to him later that the NDFP had waited for details on how the ceasefire would be implemented before issuing its reciprocal unilateral ceasefire declaration.

A day before the formal resumption of the peace talks, Duterte again declared an indefinite unilateral ceasefire. This time the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the NDFP responded by declaring their reciprocal indefinite unilateral ceasefire.

Devious plan

Absent mutually-agreed guidelines for implementing the reciprocal unilateral ceasefires, the war hawks moved fast to carry out their devious plan: aggressively they pushed Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) counterinsurgency operations, misrepresented as assistance to government “peace and development” programs, in hinterland and rural communities under the control or influence of the CPP and the New People’s Army (NPA). Over five months, AFP intruded into and occupied

500 barangays nationwide, spurring complaints



from the affected communities that the state security forces subjected them to threats, harassments, and other forms of abuses and human rights violations. The violations have been duly documented by the human rights monitoring organization, Karapatan (whose Secretary General is an independent observer in the Joint Monitoring Committee [JMC] under the CARHRIHL), and submitted to the NDFP panel. Through those five months, the ceasefire held as the NPA consistently evaded engaging the intruding state forces in combat, thus evincing sincere adherence to its own unilateral

ceasefire declaration. However, the CPP raised to the NDFP panel its complaints against the AFP’s persistent deceitful violations of the ceasefire. On two occasions — Nov. 4, 2016 and Jan. 4, 2017 — the NDFP panel handed over the documented complaints to the GRP panel.

Having observed no change in the AFP’s actions, the CPP served notice to the NDFP panel that the situation on the ground was becoming untenable, and that soon it would withdraw its ceasefire declaration. During the third round of formal talks (held in Rome in late January), the NDFP panel relayed that notice to its government counterpart, warning that the AFP violations were already endangering the peace talks. On February 1, 2017, the CPP announced its ceasefire withdrawal.

Although he was apprised by the NDFP panel of the reason for the withdrawal, President Duterte angrily reacted to the maliciously distorted information fed to him by the war hawks about the NPA allegedly violating its own ceasefire. Peremptorily he cancelled the peace talks and in his characteristic blustering called the NPA “terrorists”. Picking up from there, his defense secretary declared an “all-out war” against the NPA, egregiously tagging the NPA as “terrorists no different from the Abu Sayyaf”.



DILG Secretary Eduardo Año

DND Secretary Delfin Lorenzana

NSC Director General Hermogenes Esperon

Back-channel talks

Within three weeks Duterte walked back on his cancellation of the peace talks, taking recourse in back-channel talks towards continuing the formal negotiations. Perplexingly, he didn’t rescind the Defense Department’s all-out war declaration. He even egged on the AFP and Philippine National Police (PNP) to use all their assets and “flatten the hills” (the presumed redoubts of the NPA) through aerial bombings and artillery bombardments.

That was not all he failed or opted not to do before the fourth round of negotiations began in April. During the March 11 back-channel talks, the two parties agreed that upon resuming the cancelled negotiations each side would issue simultaneous and reciprocal unilateral ceasefire declarations. But according to his defense secretary, Duterte didn’t order the issuance of the GRP declaration. Hence the NPA had no choice but to engage in self-defense and counter-offensives.

Thus the all-out war has continued to this day. And aerial bombings plus ground artillery barrages have become a feature of the state counterinsurgency forces’ mode of combat. This has caused recurrent large-scale evacuations of rural communities targeted by the bombings in Mindanao and other parts of the country. (Daily air bombings have also punctuated the AFP operations against the Maute group in Marawi City for more than three months now.)

We know who are the war hawks and main peace saboteurs: Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr., AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Eduardo Ano, and other government officials in the Duterte Cabinet so-called security cluster. They have sustained black propaganda, aimed at discrediting the Red Fighters, casting doubt on the sincerity of the revolutionary forces in the peace negotiations, and impugning the credentials of the NDFP panel.

Fourth round of talks

The cabinet security cluster’s intervention delayed for two days the opening ceremonies of the fourth round of negotiations, held in The Netherlands. There being no ceasefire in place, they pressed the GRP panel to insist on placing in the agenda the negotiation and signing of a prolonged indefinite bilateral or joint ceasefire agreement **ahead** of the scheduled negotiations on a Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER). The NDFP panel rejected the proposal, saying it violates the previously signed agreements both panels had reaffirmed and agreed to comply with, foremost the four-point agenda set by The Hague Joint Declaration (1992), and the Joint Agreement on the Sequence, Formation and Operationalization of the Reciprocal Working Committees (1995).

Nonetheless, the fourth round of negotiations concluded with positive results.



ABS-CBN News | September 2016



The two panels skirted the threatening impasse by crafting and signing an Agreement on an Interim Joint Ceasefire, which provides that the guidelines and ground rules for implementation will be worked on by the panels' respective ceasefire committees "in-between formal talks". No ceasefire can take effect until after the guidelines and implementing rules have been finalized, signed by the panels and approved by the principals of both parties.

Peace  
is not the  
absence of War.  
  
It is its  
outcome.

Meantime, the reciprocal working committees on the CASER firmed up their agreement that distribution of land to landless farmers and farm workers for free is "the basic principle of agrarian reform". (Agreement in principle on this matter was arrived at in the third round of talks.)

For the records, presidential peace adviser Jesus G. Dureza hailed the fourth round as "the farthest point we have already achieved in our negotiations with the CPP-NPA-NDF". And he stated that in his formal statement at the opening ceremonies.

But the cabinet security cluster didn't find the agreement on an interim ceasefire suitable to them. At the scheduled fifth round of negotiations in May, they pressed on with their original proposal that the NDFP definitively had rejected.

Not only that. They demanded that the CPP recall its order to the NPA for intensified tactical offensives against state security forces to manifest its opposition to Duterte's May 23 declaration of martial law and suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus in the whole of Mindanao — which targeted the "dismantling" of the NPA.

### GRP pulls out

Buckling to such pressure, the GRP panel announced it would not participate in the fifth round. That was a bad move—made worse by Duterte's warning the NDFP consultants then in The Netherlands not to return to Manila as he would have them incarcerated. For a number of days both the GRP and NDFP delegations were stuck at the hotel venue, holding ad-hoc unilateral meetings, and taking walks

in between free meals courtesy of the Royal Norwegian Government. Third party facilitator Ambassador Elisabeth Slattum tried, in vain, various means to get the two panels, or the reciprocal working committees, to sit down together even informally and discuss matters of mutual concern.

Of course, the peace saboteurs succeeded in obstructing the progress of the negotiations on the CASER because President Duterte permitted their scheming. He wanted to assuage the war hawks bent on wangling a prolonged bilateral ceasefire as a means to stanch the sustained growth in strength of the revolutionary forces, dreaming of pushing the latter ultimately into capitulation and pacification, as has happened in the cases of many peace agreements in other parts of the world.

The NDFP has made it clear it's fully aware of the war hawks' capitulation-pacification trap and does not wish to fall into it. Besides, putting in place a prolonged and indefinite ceasefire agreement before there are substantive agreements on social, economic, political and constitutional reforms, it emphasizes, will betray the trust of the oppressed and exploited masses, the intended prime beneficiaries of such reforms.

Similarly, Duterte wanted to placate the neoliberal clique composing his economic managers and the pro-imperialists in various government offices. They make no bones about their opposition to the social and economic reforms that are moving towards adoption in the peace negotiations—particularly the basic concepts and ramifications of a genuine agrarian reform program and rural development (ARRD) and of national industrialization and economic development (NIED).

Duterte made the hollow excuse that he has to consult many advisers, particularly the military — which he has been pampering with financial and other incentives. He claimed that he has no control on everything within his vast sphere of authority. Thus he has become mum on his publicly-repeated commitment to accelerate and complete the peace negotiations on substantive reforms. Worse, he has reneged on his offer of amnesty for the 400 political prisoners identified in a list submitted by the NDFP panel.

Ironically, the President hems and haws just as the talks are beginning to produce results that open up opportunities for his "government of change" and the NDFP to work together in improving the dire living conditions of the people, particularly of the majority poor, which he has vowed to ameliorate.

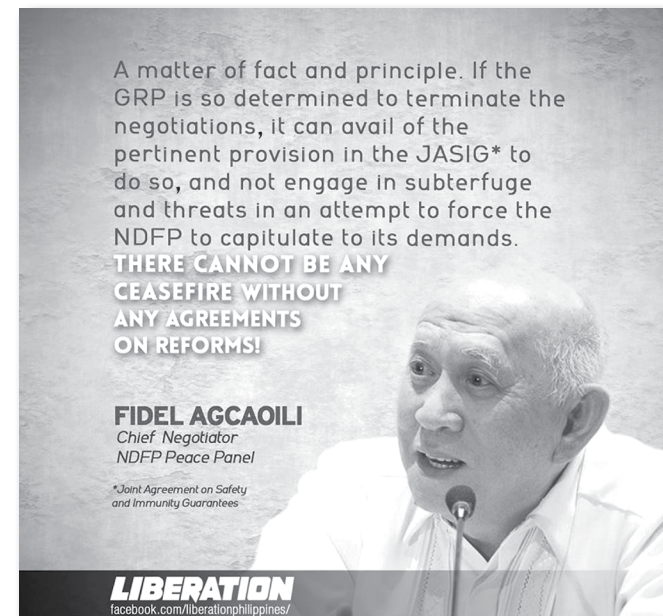
In July, President Duterte had cancelled the back-channel talks between the two panel heads and their working teams on what should be in the agenda of the fifth round of formal negotiations, tentatively set in the latter part of August.

### No mood for talks

In a long adlib portion of his second state-of-the-nation address, Duterte said he was no longer in the mood to talk peace with the Left. He let out his recrimination over the NPA's continued attacks on government forces and installations after he had declared martial law in Mindanao. Exaggerating an incident in Arakan, North Cotabato on July 20, he publicly claims the NPA planned to ambush him in one of his land travels through the region. "How can we talk when you're ambushing me!" he blustered.

Of course, there was no such plan to ambush the President. What actually happened was that the NPA had set up a checkpoint in Arakan to deliver a message: that under martial law, the NPA can set a checkpoint in an area it chooses along the highway, as it has been doing for years.

Coincidentally, two unmarked vehicles that the sentries had stopped to check on turned out to belong to the Presidential Security Group. When the driver of the first car sensed the odd situation, he sped through the checkpoint. In quick reaction, the Red fighters shot its rear wheels stopping the vehicle. The second car also sped past the checkpoint. Although it managed to get away, it met with a



volley of gunfire that wounded four of the men on board. After a while, the NPA unit left the area without harming the men who locked themselves inside the stalled PSG vehicle.

### Will the peace talks continue?

Thus far the GRP has not made a formal written notification to the NDFP terminating the JASIG, which in effect would also terminate the peace talks. The protocol calls for the NDFP to acknowledge the notice of termination, which would take effect 30 days after the acknowledgment.

Meantime, all the NDFP consultants "stranded" in The Netherlands to evade arrest have safely returned to the Philippines. However, the gung-ho solicitor general (the government's chief lawyer) has filed a court petition calling for the cancellation of their bail to enable the police to re-arrest them. Thus far no further legal action has been announced.

Just before the solgen's precipitate move, another small window was opened. Ten of 19 convicted

political prisoners were freed via conditional presidential pardon, including one of three NDFP consultants. The 19 had been convicted of trumped-up common crime charges and were already recommended for conditional pardon. Peace advocates are pushing for the release of more political prisoners to improve the chances of continuing the peace talks.

During the waiting period, bilateral discussions on the CASER have continued in Manila. The bilateral teams formed to help reconcile contentious provisions in the GRP and the NDFP drafts of the CASER recently held a three-day working meeting. The meeting has achieved consensus on many aspects of agrarian reform and rural development (ARRD), including the scope and coverage, disposition of land, and modes of compensation to landowners. They are expected to submit recommendations to their respective reciprocal working committees, which can help accelerate the formal negotiations on the CASER.

As matters stand, it's obvious that the interruptions of the peace negotiations caused by the ceasefire imbroglio since February have put in jeopardy the mutually-targeted completion of the CASER negotiations before the end of 2017. At best, in the next formal negotiation rounds the panels can target the completion of a partial agreement on agrarian reform and rural development.

But that can happen only if the GRP relents on pushing ahead negotiations on a prolonged bilateral or joint ceasefire. **LIB**



Given the copious bloodshed and massive destruction, the Marawi siege has more than amply shown that President Rodrigo Duterte has no compunction about running this country with an iron-fist.

No sooner had the Daulah Islamiyah (formed by the Maute group, Abu Sayyaf, Khalifa Philippines) staged its violent attack in Marawi on May 23 than President Duterte declared martial law and suspended the writ of habeas corpus not just in Marawi but in the entire island of Mindanao. Sixty days were deemed not enough to contain the “invasion or rebellion”. With the concurrence of Congress in joint session, he extended martial law for another 150 days to last until the end of this year. There’s a lurking fear that martial law would be extended nationwide.

But hark, the martial law declaration has also targetted “other armed groups” in Mindanao apart from the Maute and Abu Sayyaf groups. “Dismantling” of the New People’s Army has specifically been added. The military first denied this, but later events proved that the NPA is indeed its main target not just in Mindanao but in the other parts of the country.

Cries to lift martial law because of baseless claims — “Acts of terrorism are not necessarily equivalent to actual rebellion,” averred Congressman Edcel Lagman in his petition to the Supreme Court; “[Martial law] is unwarranted, unjustified and wholly out of proportion to the threat posed by the Maute and Abu Sayyaf groups,” stated the Makabayan solons in another petition—fell on deaf ears.

Neither have the heart-rending appeals by over four hundred thousand evacuees—Stop the daily airstrikes (which have cost hundreds of lives and vast properties leveled to the ground)!

Allow us to return home! — could move the military to accede to their demand.

President Duterte has repeatedly said that he would rely on the military in deciding to lift or extend martial law. Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, once a Scout Ranger battalion commander and counterinsurgency expert, admitted recommending to the President the martial law declaration and its extension. However, Duterte was quick to add: “I and I alone am responsible.”

## Marawi Siege: Duterte and the US

by Vida Gracias

### Enter the US

Duterte’s dread of “terrorism” engulfing Mindanao made him completely dependent on the military and, consequently, on the United States. Increasingly his anti-US stance has seemed to melt down whenever he finds common ground on the “war on terror” with the American imperialists—much to the latter’s delight.

On many occasions, he dropped his blusters and acidic rhetoric against the US. He found himself saying “thank you” for the US advisers’ support in the aerial bombings and intelligence guidance for ground troop assaults against Daulah Islamiyah. Not raising hell, he acknowledged that the military proceeded to invite the Americans without his knowledge. He was also grateful that the US had lifted its ban to sell weapons and munitions to the AFP-PNP, and donated two surveillance planes to boost the government’s counter-terrorism efforts. He was silent when the US Embassy boasted that since 2004 it has delivered and programmed



more than P7.4 billion worth of military equipment to enhance the AFP’s capabilities.

As matters stand, the war on terror is turning the President not only into an imperialist lackey but also into a fascist. His complete reliance on the military makes him putty in the hands of the US. Where the military gains control the US is not far behind.

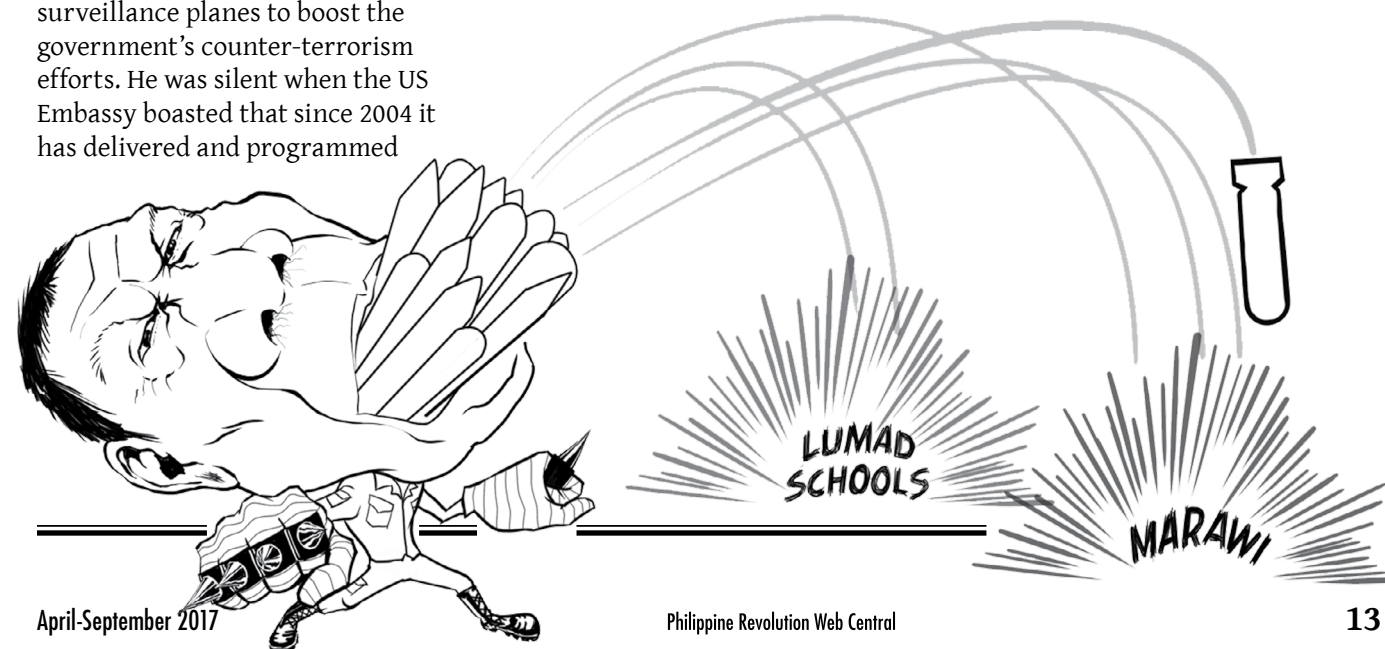
Far from being nationalist or patriotic, the Philippine military has for long been incorrigibly pro-American. Duterte himself has publicly affirmed this. AFP courses and training are patterned after those of the US military,

particularly its counterinsurgency programs. Top guns of the AFP/PNP get elite tutelage from US military schools. American advisers oversee combat and non-combat training of Philippine troops. The notorious Central Intelligence Agency or CIA also directly recruits

agents from among Philippine military and civilian forces.

### US and terrorism

The US has prided itself for leading the coalition of nations in the fight against terrorism, specially against militant Islam since 9/11. But rather than put terrorism to rout, its war has fanned the flames of radical Islam into many corners of the globe. By enlarging the war, the US has made billions of profit in war materiel, oil concessions, and infrastructure contracts in such war ravaged countries as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya.





The US has a history of backing terrorist groups, including those in the Philippines'. The website Global Research points to Al Qaeda and ISIS as "made-in-the-USA, an instrument of terror designed to divide and conquer the oil-rich Middle East and to counter Iran's growing influence in the region." Likewise the CIA gave birth to Osama Bin Laden as mujahedin in Afghanistan and allowed his organization to grow during the 1980's, extending even to far-away shores as in the Philippines.

In his book *The War on Truth: 9/11, Disinformation and the Anatomy of Terrorism*, Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed wrote lengthily about the US-sponsored AFP-Abu Sayyaf-Al Qaeda nexus. As early as 2000, even then Senator Aquilino Pimentel Jr. disclosed, in a speech in the Senate, the joint US-Philippine government role in the emergence and activities of Abu Sayyaf. Yet no investigation was made. He said: "My information is that the Abu Sayyaf partisans were given military intelligence services, IDs, safe-houses,

safe-conduct passes, firearms, cell phones and various sorts of financial support." He also said that Philippine military officers involved held very high posts.

As mayor of Davao City, Duterte himself had claimed that the killing of suspected-terrorist Marwan was a CIA operation that led to the killing of 44 Special Action Forces, including MILF fighters too, in Mamasapano.

No fact has yet been established but the botched operation to bag Isnilon Hapilon, a senior leader of the Abu Sayyaf, that led to the Marawi siege and the declaration of martial law could be a secret plan hatched by the Americans. Hapilon, like Marwan, has a \$5 million bounty offered by the US government.

A purely military solution to the Marawi crisis, and to the country's Left and Moro insurgencies, certainly gives the US the upperhand in deciding the course of the Duterte presidency. The "war on terror" has become a convenient excuse for the US to intervene in the internal affairs of countries and, in this case, gain further military and economic foothold in the Philippines.

LIB

## MORE MILITARY MEN IN

## THE US-DUTERTE REGIME

by Leon Castro

The US-Duterte regime may be the most militarized bureaucracy in the country's history.

Among all the presidents since the 1986 ouster of the Marcos dictatorship, Rodrigo Duterte has appointed the most number of former soldiers and police officers to top and key positions in his government -- a move in line with its unraveling character as a repressive and tyrannical regime. Not even former chief martial law implementer and Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief Fidel Ramos had as many ex-military and police officers at any given time in his six-year term as president.

Duterte initially tried to mask his militarist nature by bandying his past links with the Kabataang Makabayan (KM) in his youth and with the New People's Army (NPA) in Davao City and elsewhere in Mindanao when he was mayor. In his first year as president, however, he populated his regime with ex-AFP and Philippine National Police brass, many of whom had been assigned in Davao and served during his murderous reign in that southern city.

To date, Duterte has 60 former military and police officers in powerful and juicy posts across the bureaucracy. And he will appoint current AFP chief Eduardo Año, he has said, as secretary of interior and

local government once the latter retires in October. By surrounding himself with proven military and police bloodhounds, Duterte is also protecting himself from other rightist political cliques such as the putschist Magdalo group led by Senator Antonio Trillanes IV.

In less than a year and a half, the US-Duterte regime has completely unraveled as a tyrannical militarist regime. On May 10 he facetiously said he was ready to form a junta with the appointment of retired former AFP chief Gen. Roy Cima to replace the maverick Gina Lopez as environment and natural resources secretary.

### Peace saboteurs

Duterte's security cluster appointees showed no qualms in admitting they had deliberately sabotaged the GRP-NDFP formal peace negotiations. Defense secretary Delfin Lorenzana, national security adviser Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. and the notorious human rights violator, AFP chief Eduardo Año, have been responsible for the current "total-war" policy against the NPA as well as the ongoing militarization of indigenous and peasant communities through Oplan Kapayapaan.

Lorenzana, Esperon and Año directly contravened efforts to advance the peace process with the NDFFP by ordering its troops to attack NPA camps and civilian communities during the six-month unilateral ceasefire from August 2016 to February 2017. They also have caused the killing, abduction, and illegal arrest of activists, most notably peasant leaders, and indigenous peoples.

Last January 20, when the NDFFP and the GRP were negotiating in Rome on free land distribution to peasants, 39th IBPA troopers attacked a NPA camp in Makilala, North Cotabato that nearly succeeded in derailing the talks pronto.





In a press briefing, NDFP negotiating panel chairperson Fidel Agcaoili said there appeared to be a deliberate and systematic sabotage of the ongoing formal peace talks in that city. “What is happening is similar to what happened in 2005 to 2006 where many activists were killed, presided by the very same people (Esperon and Año),” Agcaoili said.

Before capitalists in Makati last August 24, Lorenzana admitted it was he who convinced President Duterte to stop peace negotiations with the NDFP. He said he was against any peace process “that is clearly stacked against the government and favorable only to the CPP-NPA-NDF.” The Marcosian martial law relic added that the terms of the Comprehensive Agreement for Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) being discussed by the NDFP and GRP peace panels were “completely unacceptable.”

Lorenzana, Esperon and Año also staged the failed attempt to arrest Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon last May 23 in Marawi City. When the operation failed, they persuaded Duterte to declare martial law over the entire Mindanao. Martial law spawned the greatest military and humanitarian disaster in his year-old government, with nearly half-a-million internally displaced persons. Without provocation Lorenzana declared that the NPA was among the targets of the martial law declaration. Along with Esperon and Ano, he plotted the cancellation

of the scheduled fifth round of the NDFP-GRP talks by pressuring the GRP negotiators to insist that the CPP recall its defensive order to step up military offensives against the rampaging AFP troops.

Human rights violators

Other recent Duterte appointments were equally notorious human rights violators as AFP officers.

New national irrigation administrator Ricardo Visaya was the main implementer, as AFP chief, of the Aquino regime’s Oplan Bayanihan that resulted in the extrajudicial killing of many peasants and indigenous peoples. He was army ground commander during the November 2004 Hacienda Luisita Massacre in Tarlac, likewise the commander of troops in Central Luzon and

Metro Manila involved in rights violations during Arroyo’s reign of terror under the counterinsurgency program Oplan Bantay Laya. Among his known victims in Central Luzon were Raymond and Reynaldo Manalo, two farmers who were abducted and tortured. In Metro Manila, Visaya’s stint was marked by military encampments in urban poor communities in 2006-2007, in time for the 2007 elections.

Former AFP chief Emmanuel Bautista, Duterte’s current executive director on security, justice and peace cluster, was the self-proclaimed brains behind the Aquino regime’s Oplan Bayanihan. Human rights group Karapatan recorded 229 victims of extrajudicial killings, 26 enforced disappearances, 700 illegally arrested and detained, and over 46,000 victims of forced evacuations under the insidious counterinsurgency plan.

Presumptive interior and local government secretary and current AFP chief Año was accused of masterminding the abduction and disappearance of activist Jonas

Burgos on April 28, 2007. Año was also said to be responsible for the killing spree against the Lumad and the illegal arrest and filing of trumped-up charges against activists, among other atrocities, when he was the commanding officer of the Philippine Army’s 10th Infantry Division in Mindanao.

Meanwhile, Cimatu, current environment and natural resources secretary, headed the AFP Southern Command when civilians who came to be known as the “Basilan 72” were arrested based on wrongful

accusations that they were Abu Sayyaf members. During his brief stint as AFP chief (May to September 2002), Cimatu led the implementation of the bloody counterinsurgency program Oplan Bantay Laya. He was also accused of accumulating ill-gotten wealth from the conversion of military funds during the Gloria Arroyo regime, for which the Department of Justice filed plunder cases against him and other high-ranking AFP officials in 2011. The case, though later dismissed, demonstrated how rampant was corruption within the military, implicating no less than its top officers.

Many other former AFP and PNP officers who are now high-ranking officials of the Duterte government faced complaints of human rights violations during their military and police careers.

Juicy civilian positions

A February 24 to March 6, 2011 Pulse Asia survey showed that 48.9 percent of Filipinos believed that the military was the most corrupt government agency in the country. The survey was conducted at the height of the congressional hearings on the military’s “pasalubong” and “pabaon” controversy involving the former AFP comptroller, retired Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia, and the alleged corruption involving former high-ranking military officials, per the testimonies of former AFP budget officer, retired Lt. Col. George Rabusa, and former state auditor Heidi Mendoza.

In November that year, *Newsbreak* journalists Glenda Gloria, Aries Rufo, and Gemma Bagayaua-Mendoza published the book *The Enemy Within* that narrated massive corruption in the military, such as the fraudulent conversion of its budget to allow for tens of millions of pesos to be given as gifts to both incoming (pasalubong) and outgoing top commanders (pabaon). AFP corruption is still believed to be rampant from top to bottom to this day. Duterte’s appointment of an inordinate number of ex-military officers to juicy directorships and trusteeships in Government-Owned and Controlled-Corporations (GOCCs) can only be likened to letting insatiable foxes guard the chicken coop.

Apologists claim former military and police officers have the competencies to be managers and policy directors of the government’s money-making agencies. Thus, Duterte named former coup plotter Nicanor Faeldon to the Bureau of Customs commissioner, and other ex-military officers as directors and trustees of the Philippine National Oil Co. (PNOC), PNOC-Exploration Corp., Government Service Insurance System, Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA), Phillippine Sugar Corp. and others. However, there is no shortage of qualified civilian experts who can be appointed to these clearly civilian offices.

APPOINTEE	DESIGNATION	AGENCY
Roberto Lastimoso	Chair	Philippine National Railways (PNA)
Miguel dela Cruz Abaya	Director	Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP)
Delfin Lorenzana	Secretary	Department of National Defense (DND)
Francisco Villaroman	Director	Clark Development Corp. (CDC)
Alex Monteagudo	Director General	National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA)
Hermogenes Esperon Jr.	Director General	National Security Council (NSC)
Roy Cimatu	Secretary	Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)
Benjamin Defensor	Director	Clark Development Corp. (CDC)
Ricardo David	Undersecretary	Department of National Defense (DND)
Emmanuel Bautista	Executive Director	Office of the Executive Director on Security, Justice and Peace Cluster
Ricardo Visaya	Administrator	National Irrigation Administration (NIA)
Jason Aquino	Administrator	National Food Authority (NFA)
Nicanor Faeldon	Commissioner	Bureau of Customs (BoC)
Danilo Lim	Chair	Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA)
Eduardo “Red” Kapunan	Ambassador to Myanmar	
Catalino Cuy	Officer-in-Charge and Undersecretary for Peace and Order	Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG)
Nestor Quinsay Jr.	Assistant Secretary	Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG)
Arthur Tabaquero	Undersecretary	Presidential Adviser on Military Affairs
Rufino Lopez	Deputy Director General	National Security Council
Cardozo Luna	Undersecretary	Department of National Defense (DND)
Eduardo del Rosario	Undersecretary for Civil, Veterans and Retiree Affairs	Department of National Defense (DND)
Raymundo Elefante	Undersecretary for Finance and Materiel	Department of National Defense (DND)
Cesar Yano	Undersecretary for Defense Operations	Department of National Defense (DND)



Esperon, Lorenzana, and Año



APPOINTEE	DESIGNATION	AGENCY
Ricardo Jalad	Administrator and Executive Director, respectively	Office of Civil Defense (OCD) and National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council
Marciano Paynor Jr.	Undersecretary	Office of the President (OP)
Ernesto Carolina	Administrator	Philippine Veterans Affairs Office (PVAO)
Raul Caballes	Deputy Administrator	Philippine Veterans Affairs Office (PVAO)
Rodolfo Demosthenes Santillan	Deputy Administrator for Operations	Office of Civil Defense
Jonathan Martir	Government Arsenal Director	Department of National Defense (DND)
Anselmo Simeon Pinili	Special Envoy on Transnational Crime	Office of the President (OP)
Allan Guisihan	Executive Director	Philippine Center on Transnational Crime
Dickson Hermoso	Assistant Secretary for Peace and Security Affairs	Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP)
Edgar Galvante	Assistant Secretary	Land Transportation Office (LTO)
Isidro Lapeña	Director General	Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA)
Jesus Fajardo	Deputy Director General for Administration	Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA)
Jaime Morente	Commissioner	Bureau of Immigration (BoI)
Eduardo Gongona	National Director	Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)
Jose Jorge Corpuz	Chair	Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO)
Alexander Balutan	General Manager	Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO)
Reynaldo Berroya	Administrator	Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA)
Rodolfo J. Garcia	General Manager	Metro Rail Transit 3 (MRT 3)

APPOINTEE	DESIGNATION	AGENCY
Reuben Lista	President and CEO	Philippine National Oil Co. (PNOC)
Oscar Rabena	Director	PNOC-Exploration Corp.
Bruce Concepcion	Director	Philippine National Oil Co. (PNOC)
Adolf Borje	Director	Philippine National Oil Co. (PNOC)
Alan Luga	Trustee	Government Service Insurance System
Ferdinand Golez	Director	Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA)
Romeo Poquiz	Director	Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA)
Raul Urgello	Director	Philippine Sugar Corp.
Abraham Bagasin	Director	John Hay Management Corp. (JHMC)
Reynald Mapagu	Director	North Luzon Railway Corp.
Michael Mellijor Tulen	Director	Philippine National Railways (PNR)
Roberto Estioko	President	National Defense College of the Philippines (NDCP)
Rolando Jungco	Executive Vice President	National Defense College of the Philippines (NDCP)
Jessie Cardona	Technical Assistant	Office of the Executive Secretary-Anti-Terrorism Council-Program Management Center
Jim Sydiongco	Director General	Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP)
Manuel Antonio Tamayo	Deputy Director General	Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP)
Eduardo Davalan	Director	John Hay Management Corp. (JHMC)
Eduardo Año	Secretary	Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG)
Eduardo del Rosario	Head	Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC)

Source: <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/908958/duterte-hires-59-former-afp-pnp-men-to-cabinet-agencies> (updated)

US stooges

It is no secret the AFP implements US-designed counterinsurgency plans such as Oplan Bantay Laya I and II, Oplan Bayanihan and the current Oplan Kapayapaan. In fact, the 2006 US Quadrennial Defense Review called the AFP its “surrogate army”, a long-term junior partner of the US Armed Forces. Among the major influences in the development of US counterinsurgency strategy were the Philippine-American War of 1901 and the Huk pacification campaign during the 1950s.

US’s counterinsurgency operations in the Philippines are most rabidly implemented by high ranking officers who are trained by the US Armed Forces in its School of the Americas in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. They are taught how to wage low-intensity conflicts that aim to drain the waters where the fish swim. This usually means attacking civilian communities perceived to be supportive of the NPA. In turn, this leads to countless human rights violations.

Top AFP generals, many of whom are now posing as civil servants in the US-Duterte regime are experts in the US counterinsurgency “whole-of-nation” concept. The program, a US Army magazine says, is the approach adopted for the AFP’s Internal and Security Plan with the “advice and assistance of the Joint Special Operations Task Force (of the US Armed Forces).”

“Although authored by the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the plan encompasses a whole-of-nation



approach, with a focus on coordinating all efforts under the broad direction of a national internal-security strategy,” explains the article, written by a Col. Fran Beaudette of the Special Warfare Magazine published in Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Based on assessments of who among them are able to carry out US-designed and directed counterinsurgency plans, officers are promoted to generals.

Duterte feigned ignorance when US military presence was revealed immediately after the Marawi crisis broke out last May. In a press conference in Cagayan de Oro last June 11, Duterte acknowledged it was the defense department that decided to seek help from

the US armed forces. “I am not aware of that until they arrived. When I declared martial law, I gave the power to the defense department,” he said, gesturing at defense secretary Delfin Lorenzana then standing beside him. He had tapped Lorenzana as martial law administrator shortly after he declared martial law in the entire Mindanao on May 23, 2017.

Despite his rhetorics, it has become clear that Duterte is a US puppet who wreaks havoc on the Filipino people not only through the AFP but also through the former AFP officers in the civilian bureaucracy. “All of them, most of them, *nag-schooling sa America*. So, *talaga, ang siyentimiyento nito*, pro-American. Pro-American *talaga ang mga sundalo natin*. That I cannot deny,” Duterte said. (All of them, most of them, were schooled in America. So, really, their sentiment is pro-American. Our soldiers are pro-American. That I cannot deny.)

Even in their current civilian capacities, these former generals are still known to champion US military interests in the Philippines. Lorenzana, Esperon and Año in fact were instrumental in pushing the servile Congress to vote overwhelmingly to extend martial law in Mindanao by five more months until the end of this year.

The true character of Duterte’s regime is now on open display with human rights violators, putschists, US-trained wardogs, and peace saboteurs teeming in his government. **LIB**



**The national minorities are among the most impoverished in the countryside. They are the last to receive social services from the government. Most of them die without seeing a doctor, and most of them die without having a day in school.**

# The National Minorities and the National Democratic Revolution

by Iliya Makalipay

The national minorities — the Bangsamoro and the various groups of indigenous peoples — currently bear the brunt of the fascist attacks by the US-Duterte regime.

The Marawi City siege — a campaign of suppression against two disgruntled armed groups that used to belong to the Bangsamoro liberation movement — and its consequent displacement of 40,000 Maranaos is only the proverbial tip of the iceberg. Prior to the declaration of martial law on May 23, there were already at least 40,000 documented Moro evacuees affected by the regime's "anti-terrorism" campaign.

On a nationwide scale, the US-Duterte regime pursues the nearly five-decade counterinsurgency war, now tagged as an "all-out war" through Oplan Kapayapaan, against the national democratic revolutionary movement which has included as targets the various national minorities.

From July 2016 to June 2017, at least 60,000 indigenous peoples have fallen victims of the counterinsurgency war. This is because the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has tagged large sections of the national minorities as supporters and mass base of the New People's Army (NPA) and considered them as "legitimate" targets of armed attacks.

Those targeted as "terrorists" in Mindanao are members and families of several armed groups that have emerged from the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) which had negotiated and signed separate peace agreements with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) — the MNLF in 1998, the MILF in 2014.

These former members of the MNLF and MILF have rejected the peace process that has failed to address their fundamental demands for reforms urgently needed to realize their right to self-determination. Even the leaderships of the MNLF and MILF feel aggrieved by the failure, mainly on the part of the reactionary government, to implement the signed peace agreements.

A year ago, Duterte spoke with umbrage about the long history of injustice committed against the Bangsamoro by the American imperialist invader-colonizers and the successive neocolonial Philippine governments. He swore to obtain redress for the injustices. But redress, through the implementation of the signed peace agreements however flawed and inadequate these may be, have yet to find fulfillment.

As regards the non-Moro national minorities, the fascist attacks on their communities combined with the schemes to seize their communal lands and natural resources for exploitation by big foreign and domestic corporations threaten to displace them from their ancestral domains and destroy their indigenous cultures.

## The NDFP program

Rectification of the national minorities' exploitation and oppression cannot come from the oppressive and exploitative classes. Neither can it be expected from the reactionary state, which these ruling classes have controlled. Government after government has largely been indifferent to their interest and welfare, and in many instances has aided in perpetuating their national oppression and exploitation.

Recognizing this fact, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) has committed to undertake the task of rectification in close cooperation with the Bangsamoro, the Cordillera peoples, and other indigenous peoples in the country. Certain provisions in its 12-point program, which takes off from the Communist Party of the Philippines' (CPP)

Program for a People's Democratic Revolution (PPDR), uphold the right of the national minorities to self-determination and democracy.

## Historical injustice and national oppression

By their formidable instinct for survival, the national minorities fought both the Spanish colonialists and the American imperialist plunderers. They resisted the attempts of the colonizing powers to get them integrated into the "larger" society, fearing they would lose their ancestral lands and their distinct identities, cultures and traditions.

Their instinct has proved them right. The colonizers and their native subalterns and, as already mentioned, the succession of neocolonial governments continually tried to dispossess them of their ancestral lands and territories. They were deceitfully enjoined to sacrifice for the "national interest" or in the name of the "majority Filipinos". Armed terror was used to subdue them. Divide-and-rule tactics was used to pit them against one another and against the majority of the Filipinos. Their traditional institutions were undermined.

Throughout history, the national minorities persisted in preserving their





distinct cultures. But, they became victims of cultural discrimination, Christian chauvinism, and Islamophobia that have been deeply inculcated into the minds of the majority Filipinos by the State through the use of mass media and the educational system.

Today, like the rest of the Filipino people, the national minorities are confronted with the problems brought about by US-imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism. But in addition to these, national oppression perpetrated by the State, in collaboration with the landlords and comprador bourgeoisie, weighs down on them. The State has become the main violator of the rights of the national minorities to chart their own economic and cultural development and their own systems of governance.

The national minorities are among the most impoverished in the countryside. They are the last to receive social services from the government. Most of them die without seeing a doctor, and most of them die without having a day in school. Their organized efforts, aided by missionaries and other support groups, to build facilities for self-determining communities are targetted for fascist attacks by the State. These include their schools and literacy-numeracy programs, their agricultural cooperatives, and other economic endeavors aimed at lifting them from endemic poverty.

In defense of corporate interests, the State has bastardized the indigenous peoples' social and political systems, for instance, by transforming the traditional community defense system into paramilitary groups to be used against them. These groups act as the AFP's "force multipliers" and frontliners in its campaigns of suppression. Military officials are bestowed with the title of "datu" or chieftain to deodorize and legitimize their authoritarian presence in the ancestral lands and territories.

Attempts by the post-Marcos regimes to placate the Bangsamoro and indigenous peoples proved to be futile. The supposed regional autonomous governments granted to the Bangsamoro and the Cordillera peoples were led and mismanaged by the elites and corrupt bureaucrats. The same is true with the various peace and ceasefire agreements between the government and the MNLF and later with the MILF and the

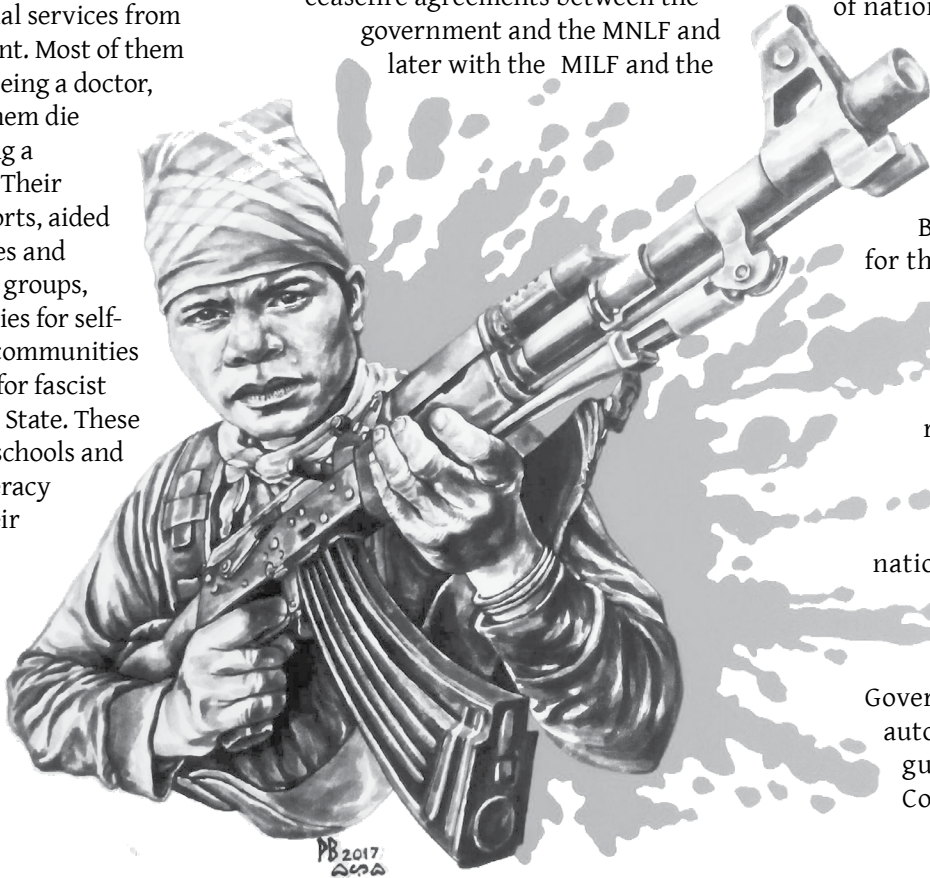
Cordillera Peoples Liberation Army (CPLA). All have failed to respond to the basic needs of the national minorities, to protect their rights to their ancestral lands and territories, and uphold their right to self-determination. These have only fueled more frustrations, anger, and armed resistance.

**The right to self-determination**

The right of the Bangsamoro, the Cordillera peoples, and other indigenous peoples to self-determination, from the NDFP's viewpoint, means the right to "decide their own destiny; to free themselves from national exploitation, chauvinism and discrimination; to achieve democracy; to rule themselves and to pursue social progress in an all-round way and in accordance with their specific conditions." Under conditions

of national oppression, this right extends to the right to secede.

All efforts must be exerted, therefore, to encourage the Bangsamoro to opt for the more valid and viable option of a genuine autonomous political rule within the framework of "equality of all peoples and nationalities" under the prospective People's Democratic Government. Genuine autonomy is also guaranteed to the Cordillera peoples.



Self-governance within the People's Democratic Government is key to genuine autonomy. Through this government structure, the full participation of the national minorities to decide on all matters affecting their lives is ensured. The autonomous regions shall be responsible for the concerns on the right to ancestral land, respect for tradition and culture, employment and economic opportunities, and how the economic development in the ancestral lands and territories can benefit the national minorities and hasten their social progress.

For the national minorities outside of the autonomous areas, they shall be accorded with meaningful and proportional representation in the organs of political power at various levels and in the National People's Congress.

While encouraging active interaction among the diverse cultures in the country, the Bangsamoro, Cordillera, and other indigenous peoples' social, religious, cultural, legal and customary laws shall be respected. Specifically for the Moro people, the "historical, social and religious ties with their Islamic brethren abroad shall likewise be respected."

The NDFP believes that the national minorities, given their particular history and current situation, should get all the necessary support to enable them to "advance and progress with the rest of the nation." Thus, its program explicitly provides that the central government of the new republic shall extend all help to the autonomous areas and peoples to develop according to their "decisions and specific conditions."



Through the autonomous regions and the representation of the national minorities in all levels of governance, "equal political, economic and social rights as well as respect for their way of life shall be guaranteed."

**Advancing the revolution**

Among the NDFP's 18 allied organizations are the revolutionary formations of national minorities such as the Moro Resistance and Liberation Organization (MRLO), the Cordillera People's Democratic Front (CPDF) and the Revolutionary Organization of Lumad (ROL). Other national minorities are part of the CPP-NPA structures in the guerrilla zones in various parts the country.

These revolutionary organizations are waging armed resistance which is integrated in the national democratic struggle led by the Communist Party of the Philippines, New People's Army and

the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (CPP-NPA-NDFP).

Outside of these revolutionary organizations, particularly among the Bangsamoro, the armed resistance is growing. Absent viable channels for redressing their historical grievances, extremism such as what the ISIS advances becomes an attractive alternative. But an end to national oppression cannot be achieved in that direction, neither can it be ended within the existing social order.

To this day, the national democratic revolution remains as the most viable road towards a sovereign, democratic and progressive Philippine society. Within it the national minorities constitute a potent force in fighting the common enemy. Its advance and total victory, and the establishment of the People's Democratic Republic remain the best guarantee for the national minorities to fully exercise their right to self-determination. **LIB**



# Peace (Talking) Heads

An Interview with SATUR OCAMPO,  
LUIS JALANDONI, and FIDEL AGCAOILI

by the Liberation Staff

Through the decades of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) engagement with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) across the negotiating table, its peace panel has been successively headed by three of the movement's comrades of unquestionable integrity and reliability—Satur Ocampo, who headed the first negotiating panel in 1986; Luis “Louie” Jalandoni who was chief negotiator from 1994 up to 2016; and, its current chief, Fidel Agcaoili who took over in 2016 when Jalandoni resigned. The three comrades, along with the other members of the peace panel, have become the personification of the NDFP through the highs and lows of the peace negotiations.

The peace negotiating panel serves as the channel and articulator of the positions defined by the leadership of the revolutionary movement. The panel members, especially the chief negotiator, are the face and the voice of the movement.

*Liberation* sought the three comrades to get their views on the regimes they have dealt with either as panel heads, panel member or as an “observer”.

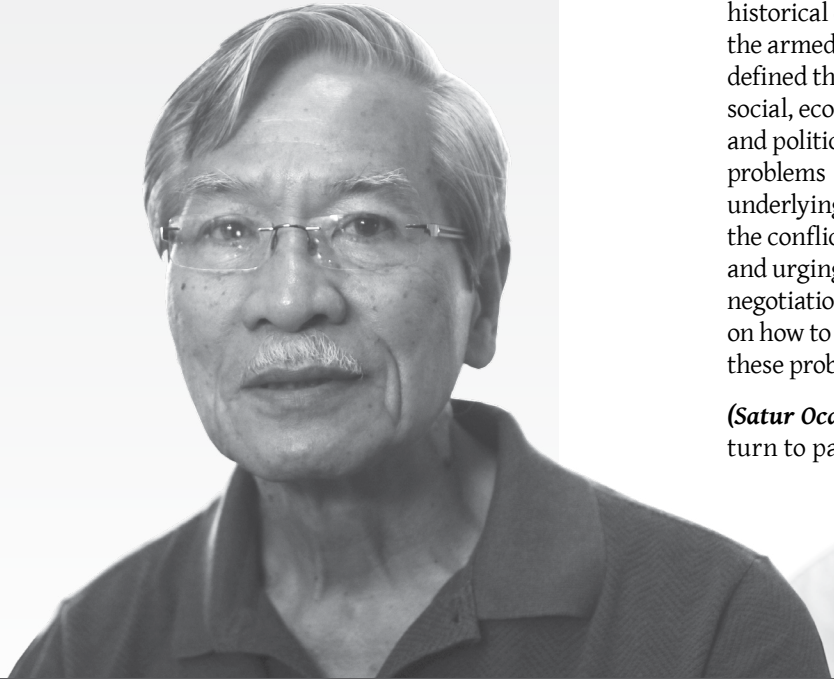
Ka Louie Jalandoni and Ka Fidel Agcaoili were interviewed two weeks before the scheduled fifth round of talks, which the GRP cancelled in May 2017. Ka Satur Ocampo was interviewed in June, a week after the fifth round of talks was cancelled. The interview dates should be noted as they provide the context of their responses.

Since the interview, several events have already transpired. These events include the cancellation of the back-channel talks scheduled in July before Duterte's second State of the Nation Address (SONA), the consequent threat to terminate the peace talks and the withdrawal of bail granted to former political prisoners who are participating in the talks as consultants, the extension of martial law in Mindanao, and the threat to bomb Lumad schools, among others. (Louie Jalandoni added his comments on these events in his interview.)

During their separate interviews, the three recalled what each thought was a historic moment in the talks, their frustrations and hopes, lessons and insights in dealing with the various GRP regimes, which also reflected the shifts in the peace negotiations.

*From the point of view of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), the peace negotiations with the reactionary government are deemed as part of the total conduct of the revolutionary struggle – which essentially is “a struggle for just and lasting peace because it strives to solve the fundamental problems of the people”. Which is why, since 1986, the mutually agreed starting point of the GRP-NDFP peace talks has been to “address the root causes of the armed conflict”.*

*Satur Ocampo, first NDFP Peace Panel Chairperson, 1986*



» Satur Ocampo  
continued on page 26

*Liberation (L): How was your experience during the first peace negotiations in 1986?*

**Satur Ocampo (SO):** In the 1986 peace negotiations, the revolutionary movement was at its peak strength. The overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship and the popularity of the Cory Aquino regime served as the impetus for talking peace. Cory Aquino initiated the talks. In a speech at the University of the Philippines, she declared she was ready to end the prolonged internal war by addressing the roots of the armed conflict through peace negotiations.

As the NDFP spokesperson at the time, I responded that, in representation of the entire revolutionary forces, the NDFP was prepared to talk on the basis of addressing the roots of the armed conflict. Thus, at the initial meeting, the NDFP panel—consisting of myself, the late Antonio Zumel, and Carolina “Bobbie” Malay—submitted a comprehensive proposal which gave a brief discussion of the historical context of the armed conflict, defined the social, economic, and political problems underlying the conflict, and urging negotiation points on how to resolve these problems.

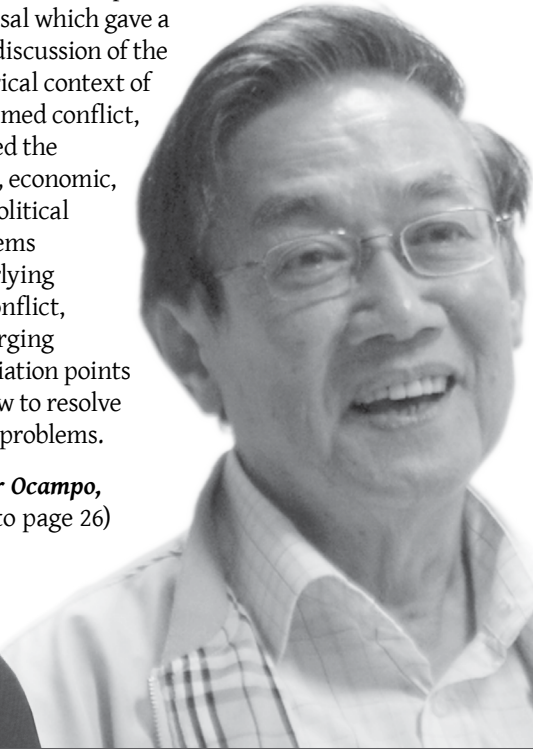
*(Satur Ocampo, turn to page 26)*

*Liberation: How are you after the NDFP peace panel accepted your resignation as chairperson?*

**Luis Jalandoni (LJ):** I’m okay, (laughs). I am more relaxed because comrade Fidel Agcaoili, the new chairperson of the negotiating panel, now takes care of the many details involved in the peace talks. But I am still very active. I am invited in a number of forums and interviews by the media if they want to know the latest developments in the peace talks. We are now preparing for the fifth round of talks so I have to attend a number of preparatory meetings.

I am still very active, but with less responsibilities (laughs). Ka Fidel is doing a very good job, he is very well qualified.

*(Luis Jalandoni, turn to page 32)*



» Luis Jalandoni  
continued on page 32

*Liberation: What are your thoughts as the new Chair of the NDFP peace panel?*

**Fidel Agcaoili (FA):** Ay, naku! (Laughs). Additional work. Oo, talaga. I never expected this. In fact, when the idea was broached to me, I said no. I am actually more comfortable doing side negotiations or talks, what has come to be known as the cigarette breaks.

Now, I face them (the GRP panel) across the table as chief negotiator but still do the shuttling between the GRP and the NDFP panels to thresh things out. But, it’s good that other panel members and consultants are there to help guide me. Also, as panel chair, I am able to mobilize the peace panel staff fully, and they are all performing well. It’s good, di ba, to see your second generation doing their tasks well.

*(Fidel Agcaoili, turn to page 38)*



» Fidel Agcaoili  
continued on page 38



**L:** What happened to the proposal?

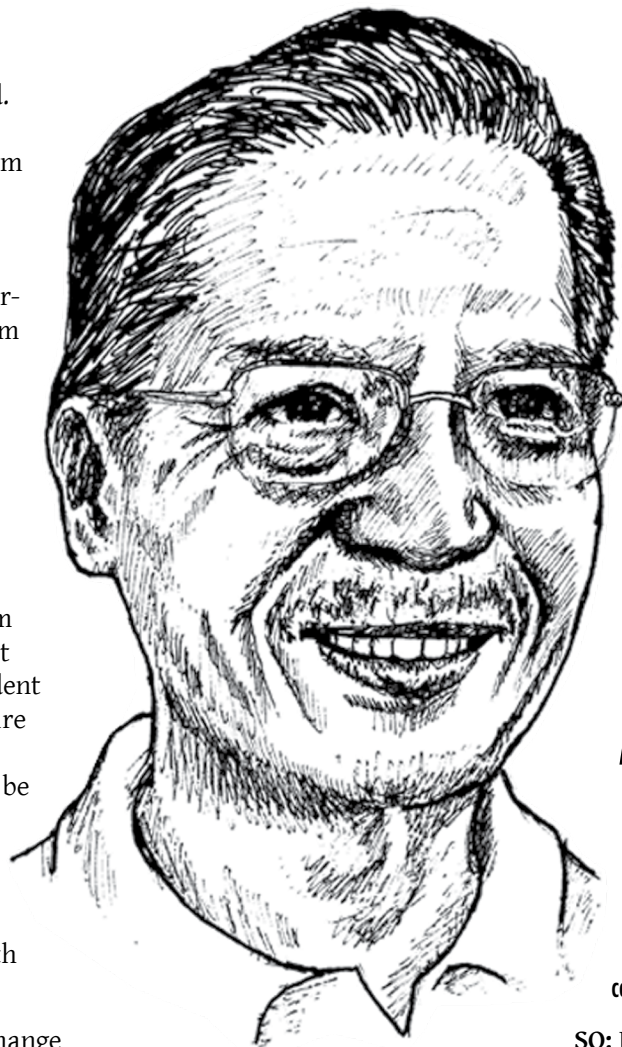
**SO:** It appeared that the new government was not prepared. The GRP panel first counter-offered a six-year medium-term development plan, which the NDFP deemed as inadequate. The problems we wanted to tackle were deep-going and far-reaching, well beyond the term of any single administration.

We were unable to agree on a substantive agenda for negotiations, due to intervening events that cut short the peace talks. We were only able to formally negotiate and sign an interim (60 days) ceasefire agreement upon the insistence of President Cory Aquino. But the ceasefire did not work out well due to differences on how it should be implemented. Our formal panel meetings got bogged down in discussing the cascade of complaints of ceasefire violations from both sides.

But that initial, informal exchange of documents set the norm for the future peace talks. With every regime, the NDFP has pushed comprehensive proposals that would address the economic, social, political, and cultural demands of the people, and the GRP has had to respond to these. In effect, the NDFP set the agenda of the peace negotiations.

**L:** Since 1986 up to the present, the issue of a ceasefire has taken the center stage of the GRP-NDFP negotiations despite the proposals for reforms.

**SO:** Ah, that's the spoiler. The peace talks are now in peril because of the ceasefire issue.



*Satur Ocampo*  
Former NDFP Peace Panel  
Chairperson, 1986

**L:** How was your experience during the 1986 negotiations when there was a ceasefire?

**SO:** First, we should understand the context of the 1986 negotiations. It should be noted that the underground revolutionary movement, and the open democratic mass movement that developed in the 80s onward, played a big role in politically isolating and weakening the Marcos dictatorship. But, when the dictatorship was overthrown, the former implementers of martial law—Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and AFP Vice Chief of Staff Fidel Ramos, who joined the so-called people power uprising and were hailed as heroes—were appointed by Cory as defense minister and AFP chief, respectively. The duo virulently, publicly opposed the peace negotiations.

When we examined peace agreements between revolutionary movements and reactionary governments in other parts of the world, we noted that reactionary governments have invariably adopted a common position: use the ceasefire accord to first demobilize the revolutionary army, then pressure or convince the revolutionary movement to pare down its proposals on the negotiating table, finally drive it towards capitulation. The usual consequence was that the revolutionary movements ended up shortchanged on their demands for basic reforms.

There was thus the issue of security for the NDFP panel and all those assisting us. At the time, the revolutionary movement had no solid international network yet. It didn't cross our minds to hold the negotiations abroad to ensure our physical safety. When the negotiations started the panels agreed, in principle, to alternately hold the talks in the revolutionary base areas and in the venues chosen by the GRP. But even on the side of the revolutionary forces, there was difficulty in implementing this arrangement.

We ended up holding the talks in the Metro Manila area, without the safety guarantees, now provided by the JASIG (Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees). We only had a government-issued safe conduct pass.

Before we could start the formal talks, Cory insisted on first forging a ceasefire agreement ahead of the discussions on the agenda. We opposed, but the pressure was strong. Certain allies in the anti-dictatorship movement who were in the new government supported the call for a ceasefire. We had to accede to the call.

The ceasefire began on December 10, 1986. It was also the start of the peace talks. On

the part of the NDFP, a kick-off ceremony was held in one of the barangays within a guerrilla zone in Bataan, adjacent to the town center. When we got off our bus, the NPA had assembled an oversized squad of honor guards right at the plaza. Because



**“Were it not for the ceasefire imbroglio, the negotiations on social and economic reforms could have advanced much further...”**

the ceasefire agreement had a provision that no NPA Red fighter should enter such public place, the GRP ceasefire team accused the NDFP of violating the agreement.

**L:** What happened to the substantive agenda?

**SO:** The ceasefire implementing guidelines were not clearly defined. The only thing explicitly stated was that there should be no armed clashes between the two sides. The NPA fighters would hold on to their arms, but stay within their usual areas. However, Ramos issued guidelines that stated all areas in the country were under the jurisdiction of the GRP and its

security forces had the right to patrol these areas. The guidelines also said the state forces were the only ones authorized to hold firearms. Thus, when the military entered the guerrilla zones and encountered the armed NPA units, they demanded that the latter surrender their arms. The NPA resisted, which resulted in many firefights between the NPA and the AFP.

The negotiating panels never had the opportunity to start discussions on the substantive agenda because of these ceasefire violations. Even after these had been passed on to the bilateral ceasefire teams, discussions on the substantive issues could not take off. There arose threats to the security and lives of both panels, reportedly from the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) loyal to Enrile.



When an opportunity came for the panels to discuss the NDFP proposed agenda and the one drawn up by former Sen Jose W. Diokno (the original GRP panel chair who was stricken with and not long after died of cancer), with the theme “Food and freedom, jobs and justice”, the Mendiola massacre happened and disrupted the ongoing talks.

With the uncertain security situation, the panels agreed to suspend the talks and attend to each other’s safety. The NDFP panel went back to the countryside. We issued a statement urging continuation of the peace talks but got no response whatsoever from the GRP.

**L:** That was the end of it?

**SO:** From 1987 to 1989, I remained the NDFP spokesperson. Bobbie and I continued to work for the resumption of the peace negotiations through our allies in the different churches, both Catholic and Protestant. Meantime, Tony Zumel slipped out of the country and joined the NDFP delegation in The Netherlands. In one such mission, on August 29, 1989, Bobbie and I were intercepted by a police intelligence team in Makati. We were arrested, detained and charged with three trumped-up, nonbailable criminal offenses: murder, kidnapping, and illegal possession of firearms.

President Cory Aquino did try to resume the peace talks, sending the late Congressman Jose “Mang Apeng” V. Yap as emissary twice to the NDFP leaders in exile in The Netherlands. The latter welcomed the initiative and expressed readiness to resume the talk should the

Cory government junk the extension of the US-RP military bases agreement, which at the time was being discussed in the Senate. But those efforts went to naught as Ramos, then defense secretary, and the military opposed the continuation of the talks.

**L:** Until Fidel Ramos became president?

**SO:** Surprisingly when Ramos became president, he sent Congressman Yap to be his emissary to the NDFP. Yap’s mission led to the signing of The Hague Joint Declaration (THJD) on September 1, 1992. Coincidentally on that same day I was released from military detention at Fort Bonifacio.

To his credit, Pres. Ramos did not insist on a ceasefire. The talks progressed as fighting on the ground continued. Despite

**When an opportunity came for the panels to discuss the NDFP proposed agenda... the Mendiola massacre happened and disrupted the ongoing talks.**

repeated suspensions, the panels produced 10 signed agreements including the JASIG and the CARHRIHL (Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law). The ceasefire issue was resurrected under the Duterte presidency. It has remained a troublesome issue up to now.

**L:** So you were still in jail when Ramos became president?

**SO:** Yes. Ramos’ changed attitude towards pursuing the peace talks and the Congress repeal of the anti-subversion law upon his initiative, in some way, helped in my release. But the key factor was that the courts cleared us of the trumped-up charges. Bobbie was released ahead of me in November 1991.

I joined the open democratic mass movement and partly went back to journalism after my release and had not been officially involved in the peace negotiations. But the media often sought my views on the developments of the peace negotiations, probably because I have been indelibly identified with the NDFP as its national spokesperson and first chief peace negotiator. The image of being “the face of the NDFP” has stuck. I was also often invited to speak at public forums on the peace talks.

**L:** From someone who is outside the negotiating panel, which regime do you think did the NDFP had the most difficulty?

**SO:** *Ang pinakamaganit* (most difficult) was the P-Noy government. Not only was P-Noy laid-back and hands-off, unlike Ramos, he was also was adversarial. And he appointed a



social democrat, who harbored a bitterly anti-communist position, as his peace adviser and overseer of GRP panel in the peace negotiations.

The second Aquino regime opted to focus on and complete the peace negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). But when Aquino was pressured to stand by his electoral promise to resume the peace talks with the NDFP, he appointed Alex Padilla to head the GRP negotiating panel. Formerly associated with the progressive mass movement, Alex consulted me about P-Noy’s offer before accepting it. He said he was interested because he wanted to help.

I advised Alex to talk with P-Noy, to level off with him on what to do regarding the peace talks. “If you don’t agree, there’s no point in accepting the offer,” I said. Should he accept, I pointed out that as chief negotiator, he would be the President’s plenipotentiary representative and ought to directly report to and consult with the latter and not go through any intermediary,

such as the presidential peace adviser. But, P-Noy decided to leave matters entirely in the hands of Ging Deles, such that she became Alex’s “boss”. *Patay na.*

When the talks formally resumed in February 2011, the two panels reaffirmed the previously signed agreements but the GRP panel did so “with reservations”. Deles (with Alex seconding) called The Hague Joint Declaration as a “document of perpetual division”, labelled the CARHRIHL as “CPP propaganda”, and declared the JASIG “inoperative”. Thus the peace negotiations were abandoned by the GRP — but not formally terminated.

Ging Delez also used the OPAPP (Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process) for counterinsurgency, fully buttressing Oplan Bayanihan with her own program liberally funded with billions of pesos. Apparently some policies and the programs that were instituted during her time are being carried out by Duterte’s peace adviser, Jesus Dureza.

**L:** How influential is OPAPP in the talks?

**SO:** OPAPP, during the time of Ramos, had no role in direct negotiations. It implemented programs for rebel returnees. It became powerful during the second Aquino government. Under Duterte, OPAPP chief Jess Dureza works in tandem with GRP panel chair Bebot Bello, but clearly asserts a louder voice than the chief negotiator.

Both are Duterte’s close friends. But I observed that they had been amiss, particularly at critical junctures of the peace negotiations, for failing to immediately brief the President on the status or results of each round of negotiations. Such shortcoming on their part has resulted in Duterte blustering and making pronouncements that created problems and disrupted the negotiations — such as what happened in February — and he needed to walk back on his blusterings to put things aright later.

In light of the present impasse, I would suggest that Jess and Bebot, who both have invested so much time and efforts in the peace talks since Ramos’ watch, to persuade



and convince the President to continue and complete the formal negotiations on CASER and CAPCR (Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms) the soonest possible time, as they had committed to do. There are those within the government who want to sabotage the negotiations. Jess and Bebot should assert that completing the negotiations, and more importantly implementing them would give great credit to the Duterte government. Wasn't Bebot saying until recently that the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations could be the best legacy of Pres. Duterte to the Filipino people? And hadn't Jess been repeatedly hailing Duterte's "deep passion for peace"?

**L:** While you were not part of the negotiating panel, what support do you give them?

**SO:** I continue to monitor the peace negotiations, and make myself available to assist in whatever way I can. As a weekly columnist for a major daily, I have written several pieces reporting on the peace talks, analyzing and explaining what I deemed to be important points the readers needed

to know. And I continue to speak at various forums providing updates, analysis and explanations on critical issues.

**L:** What can you say about the talks with the Duterte government, where is this heading?

**SO:** Cooperation between the two panels is important. They should both be strong and maintain principled stand against the countervailing pressures and maneuvers of those who want to derail the progress of the negotiations on social and economic reforms by insisting on giving primacy to a prolonged bilateral ceasefire. But the GRP panel, led by the OPAPP, tends to go soft on the issue.

Midway through the rounds of talks, the NDFP registered clearly it was open to signing an interim ceasefire agreement immediately after the CASER is signed, not before. The GRP panel agreed but later gave the feedback that those in the cabinet security cluster were insistent on the signing of a ceasefire ahead of the CASER. Clearly there's a tug of war within the cabinet, and Duterte has tended to go along his security advisers.

The insistence on a joint ceasefire disturbed the relatively smooth flow of the first to the fourth rounds of talks, and led to the cancellation of the fifth round. The fourth round already began somewhat rocky. Were it not for the ceasefire imbroglio, the negotiations on social and economic reforms could have advanced much further and President Duterte could have presented a positive report on the peace talks in his second SONA, rather than go blustering that he no longer wanted to talk peace with the Left.

**L:** What is the role of the mass movement in the peace talks?

**SO:** The open democratic mass movement, along with the various peace advocacy groups supporting the agenda for fundamental reforms, has played a significant role in the peace talks. It has helped a lot in justifying the need for peace talks and in popularizing the vital issues being discussed and negotiated on that affect the lives and the future of our people, especially the poor. And whenever there occurs a breakdown or impasse, the mass movement has largely

provided the needed pressure on the two sides—particularly on the government that has always caused the breakdown or impasse—to resume negotiations and to stick to the agreed-on substantive agenda.

**L:** What have we gained from the peace talks?

**SO:** The signing and repeated reaffirmation of previous agreements have ensured the sustained path of the peace talks, no matter the interruptions. Also a perusal of all the signed agreements, foremost of which is the CARHRIHL, will show how serious, responsible, diligent and far-seeing has been the NDFP and all the revolutionary forces it represents, in their pursuit of a just and lasting peace. And all through the ups and downs of the peace talks the NDFP has shown durability and perseverance in taking and fighting for the correct positions.

Much of these we owe to the dedication of the panel members who have grown old on the job. We also owe these to the consultants, staff, and researchers, everybody working with the panel to formulate well crafted proposals and to link directly with the masses and explain the issues to them, solicit their inputs, thus involving them in the negotiations.

**L:** Are you still "enjoying" the talks? Aren't you exhausted?

**SO:** We shouldn't get tired in the pursuit of peace. We already have a good grasp of the dynamics of both parties, of the reactionary governments we've had negotiated with. The most important thing is that we are able to adjust our negotiating

tactics to changing conditions or sudden twists, how to give and take without sacrificing our principles—ever upholding the people's interests and welfare.

For a while we thought this government is the best among all previous administrations to work with in pushing for basic reforms, given how Duterte evinced such willingness to take the Left as its partner for change. It's mainly up to him now what to do with the stalled peace negotiations as vehicle for such partnership. He knows he has very limited time, five years. He wants a change in the Constitution to shift to a federal form of government. Despite questions on some aspects of federalism, the NDFP offered to co-found the federal government he envisions, provided it does away with political dynasties, warlords and other exploitative, oppressive, anti-people elements.

If Duterte is looking for an ally, with a capacity to consistently think of what's best for the country, then he should look to the Left, not to the traditional politicians who are only after their personal interests. From his decades-long experience, he knows that the Left is the only force the people can rely on to consistently fight for their interests and welfare. There have been many sacrifices in the almost 50 years of the people's war and the leaders of the movement have been proven to be devoid of personal ambitions. Many have spent their whole lives in the movement and the movement has systematically ensured capable replacements. Eventually, the turning point of our development as a nation will be attained with the Left. **LIB**

**"...all the signed agreements will show how serious, responsible, diligent and far-seeing has been the NDFP and all the revolutionary forces it represents, in their pursuit of a just and lasting peace... all through the ups and downs of the peace talks the NDFP has shown durability and perseverance in taking and fighting for the correct positions."**





**L:** What exactly is the role of the peace panel chair?

**LJ:** The chairperson of the panel plays a significant role as he directly negotiates with the chair and the whole panel of the GRP. He also provides guidance for the whole delegation of the NDFP, which is now more than 50 persons. The delegation is composed of the panel members and staff, the lawyers, the panel consultants and the other working committees.

The working group of the NDFP CASER (Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms) has the

biggest delegation, around 25-30 people because this agreement will constitute the meat of the peace talks. The issues tackled in the CASER are what we call the roots of the armed conflict.

The panel chair is also involved in media work. It is his task to talk to the members of the media before, during, and after every round of the talks. The consultants assist the chairperson, like Ka Joma (Jose Maria Sison), who is deeply involved in the talks as chief political consultant. But the whole delegation and the team are the responsibility of the panel chairperson.

**L:** What does a "senior adviser" do?

**LJ:** As senior adviser, I participate in the preparation of the talks. I help in the preparation of the statements issued by the negotiating panel and take part in the discussions of the GRP-NDFP joint statements. I also talk to the media. Or, the panel includes me in the discussions and deliberations on proposals from the GRP, like for example the Trust Fund for Development similar to the Bangsa Moro Development Agency. So, the NDFP still

avails of my more than 20 years of experience as chair of the negotiating panel.

**L:** How long was your stint as NDFP panel chair?

**LJ:** I was appointed chairperson of the NDFP panel when it was constituted in 1994. So, from 1994 to October 2016, that makes it 22 years. But if you include our involvement, Ka Joma and I, also with Mang Apeng Yap (deceased Rep. Jose Yap of Tarlac), when we were still exploring the possibilities of a peace talks in 1989 to 1992 during the time of Corazon Aquino, that would be 27 years.

During those years, I was involved in the crafting of The Hague Joint Declaration (THJD), and was a signatory too, with Mang Apeng. But, of course, Ka Joma and the late Atty. Romy Capulong and many others helped in drafting the framework agreement (THJD). The agreement spells out the four substantive agenda of the peace process to address the roots of the armed conflict.

**L:** You have negotiated with five to six regimes, from Presidents Ramos to Aquino. How would you differentiate negotiating with each?

**LJ:** There were 10 agreements signed under the regime of Fidel Ramos. The GRP and NDFP panels also signed the Comprehensive Agreement on the Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), the first of the four substantive agreements. Although Ramos was not able to sign or approve it.

It was President Joseph Estrada who signed the CARHRIHL.

*Luis Galandoni*  
Senior Adviser  
NDFP Peace Panel

But it was also he, who scuttled the peace talks on May 31, 1999 after the NDFP condemned the approval of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA). Peace consultant Vic Ladlad was arrested and detained almost a month later on June 21, which was in violation of the JASIG.

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (GMA) for her part took a positive step when she resumed the peace talks and reinstated all the agreements cancelled by the previous regime. She also agreed with the participation of the Royal Norwegian Government (RNG) as third party facilitator. In 2001, the peace talks resumed in Norway. In 2004, two Oslo Joint Statements were signed by the GRP and NDFP. So, give credit to GMA for these. But we also saw the worst human rights situation under GMA—more than 1,200 victims of extrajudicial killings and more than 200 victims of enforced disappearances and other cases of human rights violations. This was the time when Gen. Jovito Palparan was running wild with violations, but he was praised and promoted by Pres. Arroyo.

Ay, nothing happened during the time of Noynoy Aquino! We met in 2011 but President Aquino, Alex Padilla (then head of the GRP panel) and Teresita Deles (presidential peace adviser) attacked the framework agreement—The Hague Joint Declaration—as a “document of perpetual division”, also essentially attacking the agreement on the substantive agenda and the principle of reciprocity and non-capitulation, no surrender. They attacked the JASIG and declared it “inoperative”. They also called the CARHRIHL as an

**“The (Duterte) government is only interested in the bilateral ceasefire. How can we have a ceasefire if they keep putting aside the most essential part of the talks, the implementation of CARHRIHL?”**

NDFP propaganda document. So, nothing really happened during the time, except for the GRP attacks on the previously signed and reaffirmed documents.

And then came the Duterte administration. Pres. Duterte at the start pushed for the peace talks; he was willing to release the NDFP jailed consultants who had been highly wanted by the military—the likes of Benito Tiamzon, Wilma Tiamzon, Tirso Alcantara, Alan Jazmines. All of them were released. There were 19 of them released so they could participate in the talks. But there are still others who are still in jail like Ed Sarmiento, Leopoldo Caloz, all NDFP consultants who were convicted to life imprisonment. Up to now they are still in jail. A third one, Emeterio Antalan was recently released.

A week after his election, on May 16, 2016, Pres. Duterte even told Fidel Agcaoili that the best way to release the more than 400 political prisoners is through a general amnesty. Now, that’s taken as very important. The release of the more than 400 political prisoners also means respecting and implementing the CARHRIHL that says all political prisoners—who had been charged, arrested or convicted of common crimes like murder, arson, robbery in contravention of the political offense doctrine—should be released.

So, that’s basic, because the first substantive agreement between the GRP and the NDFP, the CARHRIHL states that political prisoners charged with trumped up criminal charges should be immediately released. That’s one important issue that the NDFP should strongly demand from the GRP. It is very important for the NDFP to put this on the front part of the agenda of the talks.

Anyway, there is a potential for achieving a just peace within the time of the President Duterte. But we also see that there are problems and obstacles that we have to overcome—the mass movement, armed struggle, people’s war and the whole of the revolutionary movement. We need to be guided and stand firm on the demands of the people in the course of the peace talks.

Since July 19, 2017 there has been a very rapid deterioration in Duterte’s stand on the peace talks with the NDFP. He abruptly cancelled the scheduled back-channel talks, declared once more that he no longer wants to talk with the NDFP. He has repeatedly



attacked the revolutionary movement. He has also been personally attacking Prof. Jose Maria Sison. The NDFP National Executive Committee has exposed in August 2017 an assassination plot against Prof. Jose Maria Sison. On the ground, numerous human rights violations are committed by the AFP, PNP and paramilitary groups.

However, Secretary Silvestre Bello, GRP Panel Chair, says that President Duterte has not issued a written notice of termination of the JASIG and therefore the peace negotiations are not terminated and the JASIG remains valid and effective. This is a remaining possible opening for the resumption of peace talks.

**L: Which of the regimes you negotiated with is your personal "favorite"?**

**LJ:** (Laughs). Well, during the time of President Ramos, he had committed many negative things against the people. But as far as the peace talks went, we were able to sign 10 agreements. So, in terms of peace negotiations, there was undeniably an advance under his term. Even the panel members he appointed moved the talks forward. In a sense, we were able to show that signed agreements are possible between the GRP and the NDFP.

*Pero ngayon, siguro* the most exciting would be negotiating with the Duterte regime because there are direct connections and negotiations. Very interesting, 'no? There are exciting potentials, but at the same time, there are dangers and problems and negative points that have come up like what I stated above.

We can't allow the human rights violations to continue. The CPP had earlier said that more than 500 barangay throughout the country are under attack by the military in violation of its own ceasefire. We have submitted a list of these violations to the GRP peace panel in April but no concrete action has been undertaken.

As a matter of fact, after President Duterte emotionally reacted and cancelled the talks, Defense Secretary Lorenzana seized the moment to declare an all-out war against the revolutionary movement. He even insulted, called us criminals and thugs. President Duterte did not stop the all-out war, it still continues—the bombardment, killing of leaders.

The GRP has put aside the most essential issues and the respect and implementation of the

{MLA-3} MANILA, Philippines Dec.22 (AP)--REBELS PREPARE FOR TALKS--Luis Jalandoni (right) a former priest and now head of the foreign department of the rebel National Democratic Front, appears Monday at a press conference with National Democratic Front spokesman Antonio Zumel. Jalandoni returned last week from the Netherlands, where he has been working to win support for the N.D.F. from leftist groups in Europe. (AP WIREPHOTO) (RR21650stf-joseph capellan) 1986



CARHRIHL. The government is only interested in the bilateral ceasefire. But how can we have a ceasefire if they keep putting aside the most essential part of the talks, the implementation and respect of CARHRIHL? The masses are demanding to stop these violations, otherwise the talks can not continue. We should bring back the focus of the talks on the implementation of CARHRIHL.

It is important to bring out the reports on the experiences of the masses, not only in Mindanao but all over the country, and to give proper attention and concrete actions on these violations. 'Yan, I think that's the most important now.

**L: Which regime was the most difficult to deal with?**

**LJ:** I had the most negative experience with the Noyoy Aquino regime. At the start, it seemed positive. In 2011, we had a ceasefire during the talks itself, 'no? But during that round, the Aquino regime attacked the whole framework of the peace

negotiations. So, from the very start, on the first day, they already said "we reaffirm the previous agreements with reservation". Then they said that The Hague Joint Declaration is a "document of perpetual division". So we had to go and counter this effectively because they were attacking the framework agreement. That took a lot of time during the peace talks. The GRP kept insisting to put this on record. So, we also had to put on record our counter to that.

Second, they later attacked the JASIG and declared it inoperative. It was Alex Padilla (then GRP panel head) who declared it, taking away the basic protection, including protection from arrest, of all those participating in the peace talks.

Then they called the landmark agreement, the first substantive agenda that was signed in 1998, the CARHRIHL as simply a propaganda document of the NDFP, like it was not a valid and effective agreement between the GRP and the NDFP.

On the ground, the Noyoy

Aquino regime also dispensed with the rights of the farmers, like those in Hacienda Luisita, as though the massacre did not happen. It also violated its own ceasefire and claimed that the military operation was for "peace and development".

We demanded that there should be an expressed prohibition of civil-military operations, but Alex Padilla gave explicit permission to continue the civil and military operations on the ground.

Our comrades in the field said "alkansi kami dyan" (we are at the losing end) because these so-called civil-military operations are actually offensives.

**L: What are your insights in negotiating with the GRP?**

**LJ:** At the time of Ramos, in 1996, we already had a draft agreement on CARHRIHL. The committee had three members from the GRP and three from the NDFP. When the GRP submitted the draft to their principal, it did not come back till a few months after. And when we





saw the draft, it was cannibalized—almost 80 to 85 percent of the original draft agreement was gone. Drafting CARHRIHL’s preamble already took us a week. I said, “*kung ganito ang ginagawa nila, pwede nang ibasura itong talks. Oo.*” (laughs). (if they continue doing this, then we can just dump the talks.)

But, Ka Joma and Atty. Romy Capulong were a big help in crafting an acceptable agreement to both panels, reformulating content, but with the same substance that both sides could agree on. That was an achievement. There I realized that both sides could agree despite the difference in standpoint and viewpoint.

And so we can say that with persistence, perseverance and using all our capabilities, we did it. Also, to a certain extent, our counterparts, Mang Apeng Yap,

Bebot Bello, and Rene Sarmiento were also open and willing to concur. So the draft was done and later signed into a formal agreement.

Ako, on my own, “*nasabi ko napaka-walanghiya naman nitong nasa GRP side dahil meron nang agreement na-cannibalize pa.*”

They did the same thing with the drafting of JASIG. We talked about it lengthily. We formed a committee composed of three members from each side. The committee discussed the draft from evening to dawn. Then when they returned, they said they already had an agreement. We were all so happy. One of us said, “It’s too good to be true, usually it is not true.”

The draft was going to be presented in the morning, but Amb. Howard Dee, the former

GRP panel head, postponed it twice. When we finally met late in the afternoon, Dee stood up and declared the talks collapsed. (laughs) We can’t do anything. *E, di babay na.* This was October 1994. The following day, early in the morning, Mang Apeng (Yap) called for a breakfast meeting with Bebot Bello. They said they didn’t know that Amb. Howard Dee would collapse the talks (laughs). Later, we learned that Pres. Ramos reprimanded Amb. Dee for what he did, saying Dee had no authority to collapse the talks. After that, the drafting of JASIG proceeded and for more than a month, we produced 24 drafts and counter-drafts. By February 1995, JASIG was approved.

Well, there were many instances that we could overcome obstacles as long as we persisted.

**L:** What personal lessons did you pass on to the new peace panel chairperson?

**LJ:** We often have meetings. So, that’s one venue for us to talk about things and I make suggestions. Fidel (Agcaoili) is good, he is good at delegating tasks, which is necessary at this time because compared to the previous talks, this one is more complicated. The delegation of both panels is bigger than the previous talks. So there are so many committee meetings.

It is always a challenge for the chair to organize his time, to give sufficient time for collective discussions when important things come up and to listen to many views and opinions. I think Ka Fidel has the capability, he has been with the peace talks for a long time and he has a sharp mind.

**L:** During the announcement of your retirement as Chair of the NDFP peace panel, there were jokes, especially from the GRP panel, comparing you and Fidel—you as “diplomatic” and Fidel as “hardline”. What do you say to this?

**LJ:** As a matter of fact, Fidel has very good rapport with GRP panel members— with Bebot Bello, with Nani Braganza, with Jess Dureza. He is actually more effective in dealing with people because he easily establishes rapport. He has remained cool and calm during all these negotiations. *Pero*, of course, it’s very hard for the chair to give time to everyone. He has to deal with the time pressure during the peace negotiations on top of everything and everyone needing his attention.

[Ka Fidel as “hardline”] It’s just a perception, which probably was a result of his heated exchange with then GRP panel chair Alex Padilla during the time of Noynoy Aquino.

**L:** How would you describe your 22 years as panel chair?

**LJ:** *Sa tingin ko naman*, I enjoyed the challenge.

Considering all, I felt assured and confident with the support of the other *kasamas* (comrades)—Ka Joma was there, Atty. Romy Capulong, Fidel, the other members of the panel. Plus of course, ahh, when you meet Ka Satur (Ocampo) you always feel his support borne out of his experience.

At the same time, I would say that the most essential part for me was my integration with the masses, say in Paquibato. My visits in some guerrilla fronts and in the picketlines of workers were valuable to me. The visits keep me grounded on the people’s demands and to always have in mind their welfare and their best interest. My integration with them and seeing that the revolution continues to advance give me the strength and confidence in my work as a negotiator.

So, collective work. I don’t think I will survive the work without the collective. There is my immediate collective and the bigger collective, which is the grassroots. They were my source of strength.

**“I don’t think I will survive the work without the collective. There is my immediate collective and the bigger collective, which is the grassroots. They were my source of strength.”**

Together, we were able to overcome hurdles. The comrades were there, easy to consult, easy to contact. So, 22 years... *ewan ko, parang ganun ang nakikita ko* (that’s how I see it).

**L:** What did you enjoy most in those 22 years?

**LJ:** *Ay, yung sa* peace negotiations? Probably when The Hague Joint Declaration and the CARHRIHL were signed, when JASIG was signed.

During those 22 years I also had the chance to visit the countryside, which provided me inspiration, strength, ‘no? When you’re with the masses you feel the dynamism of the revolutionary struggle, of the revolutionary movement and it gives you confidence, especially when you’re in the guerrilla fronts. I also enjoyed attending forum of various sectors or joining mass actions.

When Ka Coni (Ledesma) and I attended the 48th anniversary of the CPP and the Peace Summit last December 26 in Davao, certain thoughts occurred to me amidst the masses. There were around 15,000 of them. And being with the NPA members, the members of the Pulang Bagani Battalion, it became very clear that we need to continue to fight for the rights of the workers and peasants, to assert the essential role of the NPA in building organs of political power, and that the NPA should never surrender and instead defend the masses and fight for their demands. So, *napakahalaga ngayon na mapakinggan yung sinasabi ng masa na kailangan na ipagpatuloy ang pakikipaglaban.* (It’s very important to listen to the masses to pursue the struggle.) **LIB**



**L:** How are you after several months of being the Chair?

**FA:** Ay, talaga, pagod (Tired). Sometimes, I wonder where I get my energy. *Siguro*, adrenalin. The thought that the work should be done, that work should not stop until it's done.

**L:** How did you feel when Ka Louie (Jalandoni) brought up the idea of resigning as chief negotiator?

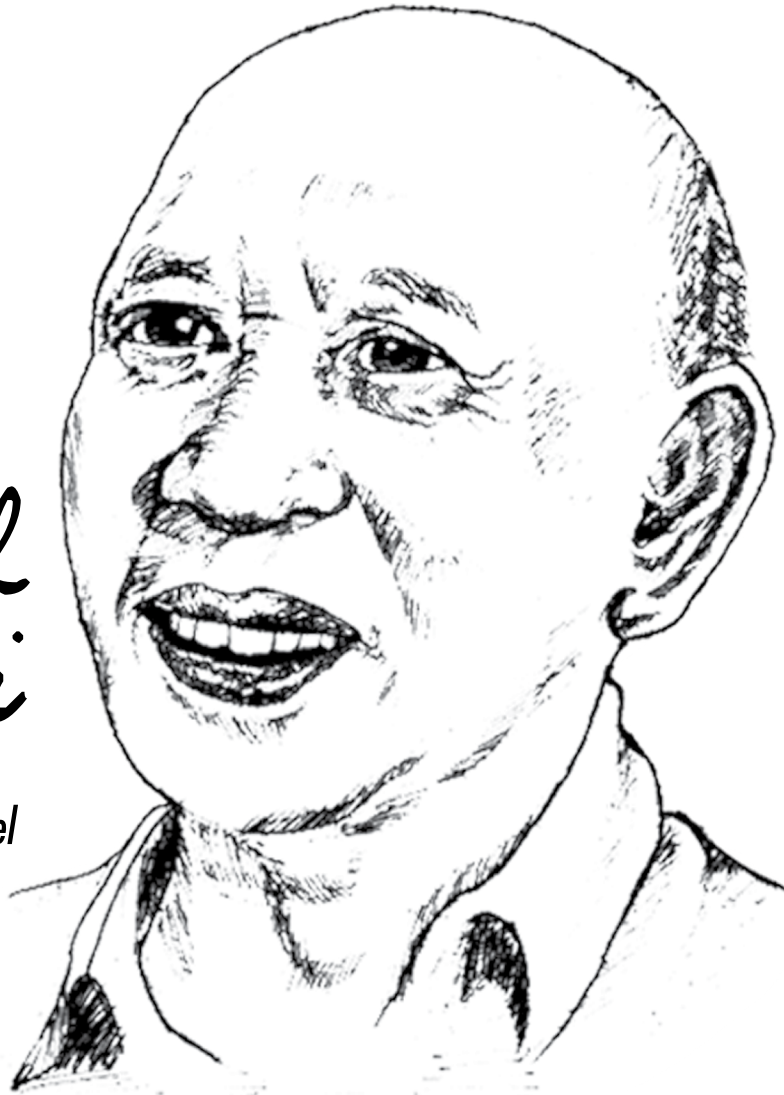
**FA:** Oo. Yun na talaga. It was the third time he brought up his resignation as panel chair. After three tries (laughs) we needed to finally decide on Ka Louie's request. Ka Louie was firm.

And there was no way that he would want another extension. He is already 81, although he is still very sharp. The question is 'why me?' *Bakit ako?* But I guess it's because I am the most senior among the remaining panel members.

**L:** Going back to the moment when it was finally decided that you would replace Ka Louie as chair...?

Overwhelmed, overwhelmed *talaga*. I know it was going to be a lot of work. I was also concerned with how I could balance the role of talking with the GRP panel as chief negotiator and at the same time serve as the bridge between two panels outside of the formal negotiations to reach mutually satisfactory points of agreements. Eventually, with practice, I'll achieve that balance. But as of now, it's difficult.

**Fidel Agcasili**  
Chairperson  
NDFP Peace Panel



**L:** How long have you been a panel member?

**FA:** Officially? I started in 1994. Louie was with the panel right from the start. Although in 1992, I was present in the deliberations on The Hague Joint Declaration, but I had no direct participation. I joined in 1994, when the talks resumed after two years of hibernation. After the signing of The Hague Joint Declaration, Pres. Ramos pushed for the NUC (National Unification Commission) headed by the late Atty. Haydee Yorac. But when the NUC had made no progress, Ramos decided to resume the peace talks. That was the time I joined the panel.

The discussions then were first on the Breukelen Joint Statement, then on the JASIG (Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees).

**L:** Did you foresee that you would eventually be the revolutionary movement's chief negotiator?

**FA:** No. But I was the NDFP emissary in initiating the 1986 talks. I was designated to talk with then Executive Secretary Joker Arroyo on how to start the peace negotiations and how to compose both panels. I went to Malacañang twice. I also talked with Ka Pepe (Diokno) who was the first GRP panel negotiator.

**L:** How would you characterize each regime you dealt with in the peace negotiation?

**FA:** In the case of the Cory Aquino regime, when she initiated the peace talks she was not in full control of the government. Her heart might have been in the right place in wanting to engage in peace talks with the movement, but the military and her economic advisers were against it. So, she demanded a ceasefire before negotiations and agreements on substantive issues. And the movement acceded despite the arrest of Rodolfo Salas and the killing of Ka Lando Olalia and Ka Leonor Alay-ay. A ceasefire was put in place even before any substantive agreement could be forged.

With Fidel Ramos, *ah*, that was surprising. He was, together with the military, the spoiler during the time of Aquino. Yet, in less than four months after taking power, he sent an emissary (a team actually) to The Netherlands to negotiate and sign the framework agreement for the peace negotiations which came to be known as The Hague Joint Declaration. Two years later, he formed his counterpart negotiating panel that worked out the other agreements on safety and immunity (JASIG), on ground rules for the formal talks, and on the sequence and operationalization of the reciprocal working committees. We even finished the negotiations and signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), the first item in the substantive agenda.

With Estrada, *ah*, the peace talks were short lived. He terminated the negotiations and declared all-out war against the revolutionary movement. But this came after he had approved the CARHRIHL, as the principal of the GRP panel,

together with Mariano Orosa, the principal of the NDFP panel.

Despite recognizing the role of the Left in putting her in power, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo eventually became a hostage of the military, which carried out the brutal and bloody Oplan Bantay Laya 1 and 2 that resulted in hundreds of extrajudicial killings, disappearances, forcible displacements of communities, arrests, torture and detention of activists and suspected NPA supporters and sympathizers.

But to Arroyo's credit, she gave life to the CARHRIHL by approving the establishment of the offices of the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) to monitor the implementation of the Agreement. Together with human rights and lawyers groups, the NDFP section in the JMC was instrumental in opposing and exposing the campaign of extrajudicial killings and disappearances by the Arroyo regime.

Under Noynoy Aquino, there was nothing, no movement at all in the peace talks. *Cacique kasi, walang alam kundi ang mag-video*

**"We went into a ceasefire as a sign of goodwill. But it was unilateral... In a unilateral ceasefire, both sides have separate premises and you can decide anytime to terminate your declaration, especially when the people are on the receiving end of repression."**

game at pangalagaan ang class interests ng kanyang pamilya (he knows nothing except playing video games and protecting his family's class interests). Also, the social democrats were most influential on him, ideologically. His regime tried to undermine the major agreements signed during the Ramos regime: considering The Hague Joint Declaration as a document of perpetual division; the JASIG as a one-sided agreement and therefore inoperative; and the CARHRIHL as an NDFP document which has been superseded by the GRP's laws. But it backedpedalled on the CARHRIHL because the AFP had received funding from the European Union for trainings on the implementation of the CARHRIHL.

Now, with Digong (Duterte), there have been advances in the socio-economic reforms like the free distribution of land to the farmers. He promised to stand by it, *panindigan ko yan*, he said.

**L:** Which regime was the most difficult to deal with?

**FA:** *Eh syempre*, the most difficult to deal with was the Noynoy Aquino regime. At times, I wanted to tell them "*putris kayo*", hahaha. Yes, I used the term *balasubas* (double-faced, cheat). *Talagang ganun eh, balasubas*. The Aquino regime wanted to negate the Hague Declaration, the JASIG. As concrete example, they committed to release political prisoners, in the presence of the Norwegian ambassador. Atty. Alex Padilla (then head of GRP peace panel) said they would release Tirso Alcantara, Alan Jazmines, and three more to get us back to the negotiating table. But, nothing happened. The political prisoners were not released. *Eh, balasubas talaga, di ba?*



**L:** Which regime is the most challenging?

**FA:** Challenging? This government (Duterte). Because we don't know where Duterte is heading. It is mixed up and confused. But we need to push while always being prepared and vigilant. We need to push for maximum reforms and see how far we can go. Let's see. That's why it's challenging. We need to get the necessary reforms for the benefit of the people, for the country to develop and advance. But we are also aware that he has his own interests, his class interests. Hence, the need for vigilance and preparedness.

**L:** The issue of ceasefire has always been an obstacle in the peace talks and you have consistently refused going into it before any social and economic reforms for the people are secured. Why did you entertain it this time?

**FA:** We went into a ceasefire as a sign of goodwill. But it was unilateral, that's why it lasted up to six months. In a unilateral ceasefire, both sides have separate premises and you can decide anytime to terminate your declaration, especially when the people are on the receiving end of repression.

But a joint ceasefire is difficult because it binds you unnecessarily. Although we are not closed to considering this. The ceasefire the government wants could be the truce after the CASER and CAPCR were signed.

Until the fourth round of formal negotiations, we exercised flexibility, especially on the issue of ceasefire. But we cannot allow that to go on. I have told my counterpart in the GRP, Sec. Bebot Bello that they won't get a joint ceasefire until

the discussions on the social and economic reforms move forward. The GRP has been dribbling the discussions on the socio-economic reforms. One moment they would agree to a discussion on the ARRD (agrarian reform and rural development) then in an instant they would renege; the same with the discussions on NIED (national industrialization and economic development). They kept delaying the discussions on these two important parts of the social and economic reforms at the same time insisting on a ceasefire. I frankly told Bebot that we want agreements on reforms first.

**L:** Did Louie give you advice when you assumed the chairmanship?

**FA:** Ah, he said "try to moderate..." you know, there are times when I flare up even across the table. Eh, I am not really a diplomat. I am more, like I shoot from the hip, without thinking. Well, not really without thinking because there's a wealth of knowledge gained from the many years in the movement, you know the principles, the policies and what's happening on the ground. So you know when one is saying or doing something wrong. But I know, I just can't shoot from the hip. Louie's advice was helpful. I need to be a little more circumspect, which I am not. I thanked Louie. Of course, I am the chief negotiator now.

**"We want reforms for the people."**

**L:** What qualities of Louie would you want to carry on as chief negotiator?

**FA:** Patience, patience, and his eloquence, *di ba?* I would really want to acquire those qualities. (Laughs).

**L:** Where do you think the peace talk is heading? What are your personal wishes?

**FA:** My wish is that we could sign an agreement within the year. We've already agreed on the framework of free distribution of land to the landless farmers. The GRP will have to give that through their own mechanisms, like legislation. Any such agreement is welcome. Then we can push this and fight for this on the streets, in the countryside and show it can be done.

That should also be the case on national industrialization so we can turn our mineral resources into finished products and then transform our economy. That's what we are after. Let's see.

But whatever happens, the NDFP should be ready with its own version of the CASER which we can circulate—our program in banking and finance, all the reforms we are proposing so the country can get out of the neoliberal paradigm. **LIB**

# REVOLUTIONARY TAXATION

SERVES THE

*Masses,* ADVANCES THE  
Revolution

by Pat Gambao



**T**axation is an essential function of the State as it correlates with its ability to exercise power and to carry out its programs and policies in a sustained way.

In a State dominated by the reactionary ruling classes, the revenues generated from taxation are intended primarily to boost its power to control and exploit, not to serve the people. Such a State saps the lifeblood of the working class, the peasantry and the middle bourgeoisie for revenues to maintain the grandiose lifestyle of its rulers and finance its fascist instruments of suppression and oppression—the armed military and police, the courts, the jails. Its public service is a pittance. It only aims to make its subjects beholden to it and create a culture of passivity and surreal contentment.

Whereas taxation is a legitimate and an inherent right of the State, this is abused by the reactionary governments at the expense of the destitute masses and continuously impoverished masses.

This is what happens in the Philippines. Revenues from taxes are appropriated in favor of the ruling classes who sit at the helm of power, as well as of their oligarch

allies, their US imperialist master with its neoliberal impositions and, of course, the State security forces who protect and defend them to ensure their perpetual rule.

## Bureaucrat capitalism

A big chunk of revenues coming from the blood and sweat of the people ends up in the pockets of bureaucrat capitalists for personal aggrandizement and for squandering in their luxurious living and debased habits. Though it has long been an open secret where lawmakers' pork barrels for public service projects go, it was only after a whistle blower in trouble came out that the scandal exploded into their very faces and shook the foundation of the supposedly august chambers of Congress.

The "pork barrel scam", involving lawmakers and government officials, confirms how deeply entrenched corruption is in the bureaucracy and the legislature. No less than the President Noynoy Aquino figured in the controversy



because of his administration's manipulation of savings from budget appropriations—the so-called Disbursement Acceleration Program (DAP)—to fuel its political patronage and to pamper the State's war-making and killing machine. Bureaucrat capitalism is indeed an abominable malady ravaging the Philippine society.

Taxes are also earmarked for the payment of foreign debts from imperialist banks and financial institutions that have never really served the interests and welfare of the people. Such debts only bury the people deep in misery as they are the ones who shoulder the brunt—not only of the repayment but also the pernicious impacts of loan conditionalities.

Worse, most of the revenues from the people's taxes are gobbled up by the coercive apparatuses of the State that train their fascist attacks on people fighting for social justice and their rights.

The current administration's proposed bill on taxation, the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN), will supposedly correct existing inequities in the present tax law.

However, while the range of tax exemptions have been expanded to include the middle income group, many provisions in the bill will eventually take away whatever little relief the tax reform bill offers. Indirect taxes for instance, the increase in excise tax on petroleum products such as diesel and LPG, and taxes on sugar



sweetened products, such as 3-in-1 coffee, soft drinks and juices will surely have adverse repercussion that will hurt the poor most. Expected as consequences are transport fare increases and the domino-effect of price boosts on commodities and utilities.

The government promises safety nets, in the form of discounts and cash dole-outs, to counter such new burden. But as has been proven many times before, no safety net can match the knack for profiteering of wily capitalists.

### Revenues for the people

Meanwhile, the People's Democratic Government has imposed its own taxes on big foreign and local comprador business corporations and landlords whose properties and operations are within its territories. Taxes are levied on the occupancy of the land and the exploitation of the natural resources in these areas which truly belong to the people and which should primarily benefit them. Businesses are required to secure permits to operate in the guerrilla fronts.

Although the revolution draws strength primarily from the masses' support and obtains its

weapons, mainly from the enemy through victorious encounters or through raids and tactical offensives, revenues from revolutionary taxation subsidize the operations of the organs of political power of the revolutionary movement led by the Communist Party of the

Philippines (CPP), the New People's Army (NPA) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). But most importantly, revolutionary taxes are allotted for the development of the communities to uplift the life of the masses, filling up a vacuum created by long government neglect. These revenues are used to put up schools, including those for adult literacy and numeracy program; to provide health and medical services, as well as training of paramedics; to finance the projects of the revolutionary organizations to increase food production, livelihood development, formation of cooperatives and relief and rehabilitation in times of calamities.

### Role of NPA

The NPA is primarily responsible for the collection of revolutionary taxes. The amount of tax to be collected depends on the resources of the corporations.

Revolutionary taxation through the NPA has been going on for a long time. In fact, President Duterte during his 20-plus years as Mayor of Davao City, was long aware of, and not adverse, to it. Addressing the delegates of the

Davao Trade Expo in October 2013, the then mayor of Davao City advised his audience to factor in their investment payments for the revolutionary taxes to the revolutionary movement. Citing the "historical injustice committed on the people" as rationale for revolutionary tax, he urged the businessmen: "If you pay to the BIR, you prepare also for the NPA." However, on April 2, 2017, the emotionally volatile Duterte retracted this advice after he visited some wounded soldiers from an encounter with the NPA. In fact, he has since demanded from the revolutionary forces to cease collecting revolutionary tax, including such demand among the conditions he peremptorily set for the resumption of peace negotiations with the NDFP that he cancelled on February 4, 2017.

Subsequently, the Cabinet Security cluster wanted to include the stopping of revolutionary taxation, which it called "extortion", among the provisions of a bilateral or joint interim ceasefire agreement it tried to push during the 4th round of formal GRP-NDFP negotiation in April.

The NDFP negotiating panel effectively dealt with the issue by placing in one part of the "Agreement on An Interim Ceasefire" this paragraph: "Matters regarding a single government authority and taxation shall be discussed and resolved in forging the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms within the framework of the proposed Federal Republic of the Philippines."

### Neither terrorism nor extortion

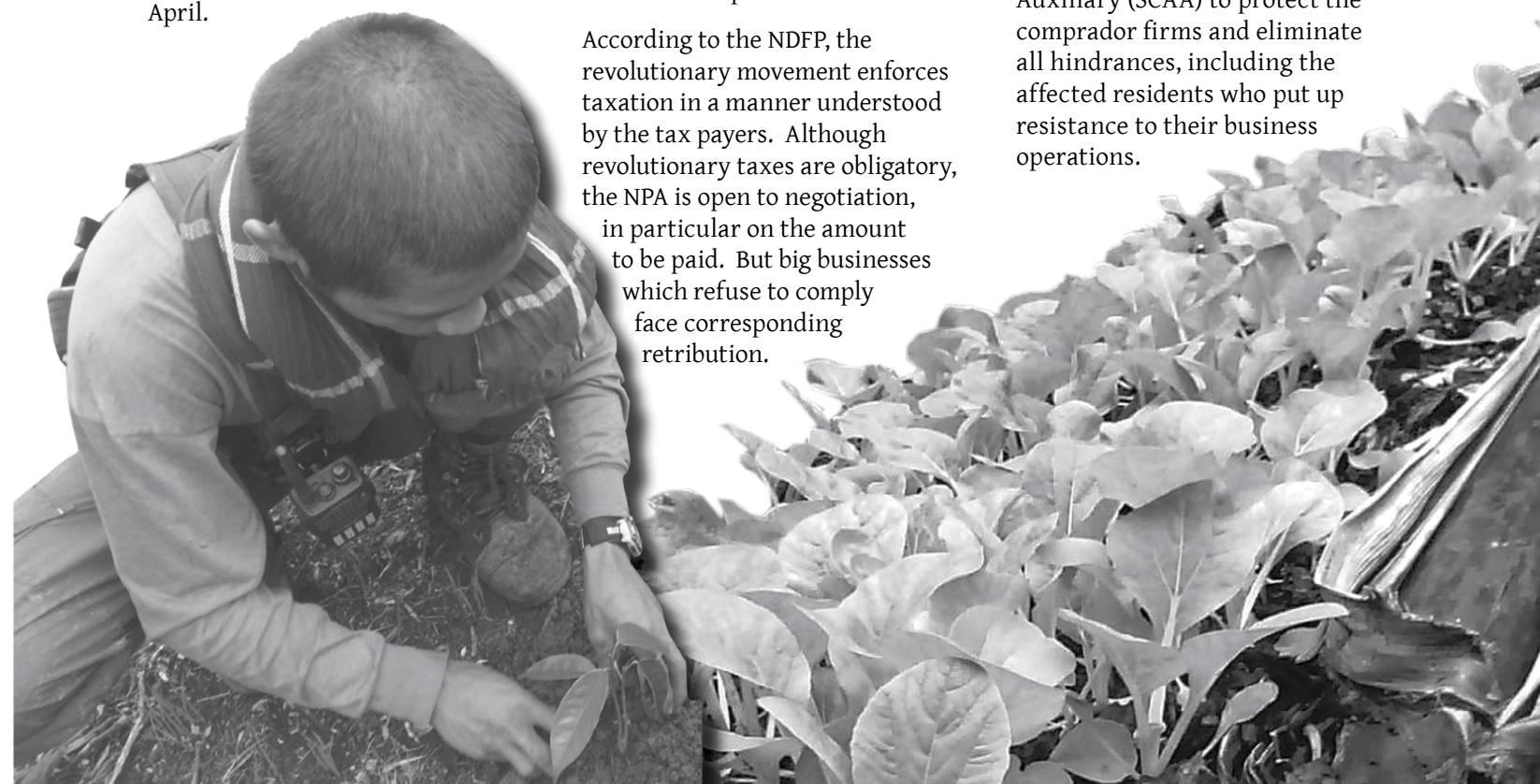
The ruling classes, who never want a dent on their wealth, attempt to discredit the revolutionary movement by labelling revolutionary taxation as acts of extortion and terrorism. DND Secretary Delfin Lorenzana echoed these sentiments. He even issued a statement a day before the start of the fourth round of peace talks and upon the declaration of an all-out war, accusing the revolutionary movement of being anti-development, anti-progress and anti-poor, as if the development and progress he crows about ever benefited the poor.

According to the NDFP, the revolutionary movement enforces taxation in a manner understood by the tax payers. Although revolutionary taxes are obligatory, the NPA is open to negotiation, in particular on the amount to be paid. But big businesses which refuse to comply face corresponding retribution.

The "element of class coercion" is applied when entities of the exploiting classes refuse to pay their tax obligations, as well as when they disobey or disregard the laws and regulations being enforced in the guerrilla zones.

Chief NDFP peace negotiator Fidel Agcaoili explained that since the NDFP, unlike the GRP, can neither expropriate properties, nor confiscate equipment of these corporations because it does not have the means to keep or dispose of these, the NPA resorts to incinerating the equipment. He has suggested that instead of setting them on fire to just disable the equipment and temporarily halt business operation.

Unfortunately, the reactionary government has connived with these transnational and local comprador corporations. It has sanctioned the formation of an Investment Defense Forces composed of the Philippine Army, the Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU), the Investment Defense Force (IDF), and the Special Civilian Armed Auxiliary (SCAA) to protect the comprador firms and eliminate all hindrances, including the affected residents who put up resistance to their business operations.







Living witness is the way they rose up from the devastating super typhoon Pablo/Bopha that hit Davao Oriental, Compostela Valley and parts of the Caraga region in December 2012. Volunteers from all over the place, including students and professors, campaigned to

There are also some bad elements—syndicates or pawns of the Armed Forces of the Philippines-Philippine National Police-Citizens' Armed Forces Geographical Unit (AFP-PNP-CAFGU)—who misrepresent the NPA, intimidate big corporations and businesses to extort "protection money". These people put to bad light the reputation of the revolutionary movement. The movement is coming up with measures to counter the practice.

### People's interest

In the implementation of revolutionary taxation, the NDFP

upholds foremost the interest of the people and the environment. According to the NDFP, payment of taxes is not a license to destroy the environment, to deplete the natural resources and national patrimony, to harm the people's livelihood; nor to compromise the struggles of the peasants for land or lower land rent and the workers for a living wage, better working conditions and right to unionize.

In consonance with the NDFP policy on environmental protection and ecological conservation, the people work towards its attainment while vehemently protesting the activities of these mining and logging corporations.

reforest the damaged mountain environs.

The NDFP treats small and medium enterprises differently. They are encouraged to develop and prosper as this is mutually beneficial to them and the communities.

Some nationalist businessmen, enlightened gentry—friends who believe in the justness and the exigency of the Philippine revolution contribute financially in support of the democratic struggle.

The compliance with revolutionary taxation, as well as with the laws and rules prevailing in the guerrilla

zones, is in recognition of the growing strength of the red political power. The implementation of the revolutionary taxation also ushers in the masses' capacity for self-reliance as they put to productive use the revenues collected. **LIB**



The CNL 8th National Congress

# Faith & STRUGGLE

by Pat Gambao and Markus del Pilar

After 14 years, church people assembled for the most awaited occasion—the 8th Congress of the Christians for National Liberation (CNL), an allied organization of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). Everyone was excited to share experiences and lessons from more than a decade of revolutionary work since the 7th Congress in 2003. Although the members occasionally bumped into each other during church activities in the urban areas or in the countryside, nothing much transpired beyond exchanges of warm smiles, handshakes and embraces and some brief pleasantries.

Site of the CNL 8th Congress was a guerrilla zone in the Southern Philippines. A company of red fighters ushered the more than 50 official delegates, together with some visitors and CNL staff into the bastion of the guerrilla front. The regional delegates



came from Ilocos and Cordillera, Central Luzon, Southern Tagalog, Bicol, Panay, Negros, Central Visayas and the five regions of Mindanao. Full of excitement and with high morale, unmindful of the backpack-full of personal belongings and documents, the bishops, priests, pastors, nuns, deacons and laity, untiringly trekked the long path to the venue.

The 8th Congress was significant as it ended the 14-year gap in assembling its members. It was doubly significant because it was held months after the historic Second Congress of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

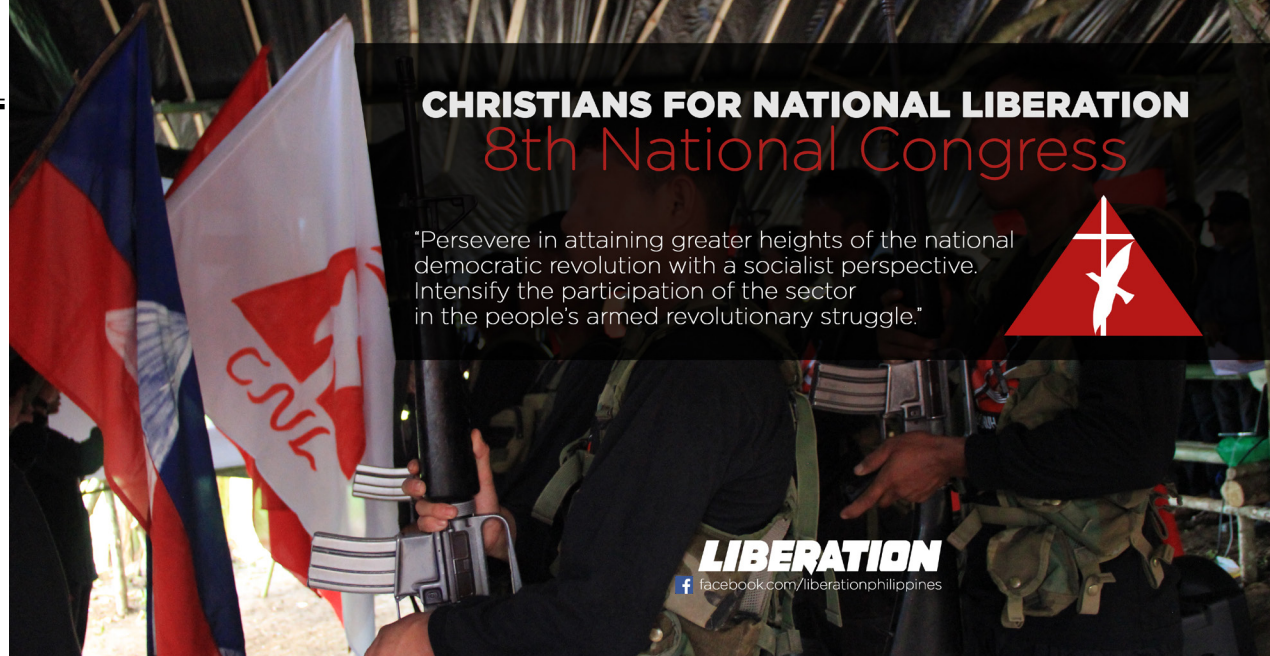
*"Persevere in attaining greater heights of the national democratic revolution with a socialist perspective. Intensify the participation of the sector in the people's armed revolutionary struggle."* Thus, declared the 8th Congress theme. It was a response to the call to attain the advance substage of the strategic defensive laid down during the Second

Congress of the CPP. It also paid homage to the 44th anniversary of the NDFP.

The Congress aimed to unite the delegates in the understanding and analysis of the current situation in relation to the strategy and policy of the united front, as well as to reap lessons from the

revolutionary practice of the organization in the past 14 years. Its particular objectives were: (1) to review the documents that guided its work, such as its orientation, program, tasks, and Constitution and to come up with proposals, resolutions and amendments to refine and affirm these documents; (2) to elect its new set of officers; and, (3) to celebrate its 45th founding





anniversary and pay tribute to the martyrs who offered their lives to the people's democratic revolution.

CNL was one of the pillars of the NDFP which was formally organized on April 24, 1973 as the revolutionary united front organization that gathers together all progressive classes, sectors and forces struggling to attain national and social liberation of the Filipino people. The CNL's orientation and program was patterned after the initial 10-point program of the NDFP.

The assembly reflected on the 14 years of experiences and achievements of the organization. These included the involvement in major mass campaigns against corruption, human rights violations, large-scale mining, public services privatization and for the resumption of peace negotiations between the NDFP and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP). The CNL also supports the struggles of the peasantry, workers, urban poor, migrants, and the national minorities. These efforts have resulted in the expansion of the organization's reach to middle forces and allies and strengthened the support to the revolutionary fronts. The CNL also took up the Cherish the Army campaign and

encouraged the integration of its members in the guerrilla zones.

The participants also delved into the weaknesses of the organization in carrying out its tasks. Among those noted were conservatism, bureaucratism, liberalism, individualism, sectarianism and sluggishness in their method of revolutionary work. Like true Marxists, they graciously accepted their shortcomings after profound discussions and resolved to rectify and overcome these weaknesses.

**Moro and christians**

It's significant to point out that the CNL 8<sup>th</sup> Congress was held in a guerrilla front where the residents are predominantly Moro. They enthusiastically welcomed the CNL delegates. The delegates' integration with the Moro masses has given them a clear insight on the Moro situation and struggle for self-determination and against national oppression. Meanwhile, the Moro masses were delighted with their interaction with the delegates. They arrived at a common understanding that the problem in Mindanao is not about religion, but about the worsening exploitation and poverty, both of the Moro and Christians. They also

shared the common experience that despite the peace talks and agreements between the GRP and the MILF, and between the GRP and NDFP, attacks by government forces on the communities continue and that grave abuses, harassments and destruction of the environment by big foreign corporations and mining companies have adversely affected their livelihood.

One Congress participant noted: "Our brother Moro were grateful that the Congress was held in their place. They were greatly honored that this historic chapter in the revolutionary movement happened here and that they appreciated being given a glimpse of the expanse—from Luzon and Visayas to Mindanao—of the revolutionary forces who like them are waging a revolution to attain real freedom and just peace."

For the preparations, the red army of the two guerrilla fronts that hosted the event acknowledged the big help by the masses of their areas and some from the city. They took care of the transportation needs, ensured the security of the participants, as well as the venue and its surroundings. They prepared the meals and even set up cultural productions.

**The new CNL leadership**

Just as historic was the election for the first time of a nun to chair the CNL. In her acceptance speech, Sister Puah said, "I know the tasks entrusted to us are not easy. But I am confident that with our collective efforts, we will better enhance our work to meaningfully contribute to the people's democratic revolution."

Sister Puah's involvement in ecclesiastical work has been long and vibrant. "Pope Francis is my idol. He said 'Get out. Get messy in the mud.' Literally, my back got muddy on my way here" she jested, adding proudly:

"I felt I was restricted in the passion for justice, peace, gospel imperative and church teachings that was why I didn't just stay in the confines of the convent. I defied my superiors. As a religious, I knew that the CNL was the right place for me to be able to truly serve God and the people."

"I have been listening to various sectors of Philippine society," she disclosed. After several years as a

religious, I do not believe anymore in the institutional church, but, rather, the church as a people of God. The voice of the people is the voice of God."

**Congress resolutions**

To help in the recruitment, expansion and alliance work of its leadership bodies, the Congress resolved to conduct a deeper study of the system of other church institutions. It also resolved to develop a curriculum for CNL activists and conduct continued trainings and mass work to equip the members in organizing work; and also to develop a staunch solidarity with the basic sectors and to deploy members to basic sector organizations both in the urban areas and in the countryside.

Other resolutions adopted called for the continuation of the GRP-NDFP peace talks and a principled engagement with the Duterte administration regarding the issues of extrajudicial killing and human rights violations due to the anti-drug campaign and the military counterinsurgency operations.

**Birth and burgeoning of CNL**

The Christians for National Liberation (CNL) was organized on February 17, 1972 before Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law. The date was chosen to coincide with the centennial of the martyrdom of the three Filipino priests—Fathers Gomez, Burgos and Zamora—who fought for secularization and Filipinization of the Church during the Spanish colonial rule. Progressive and nationalist clergies and laity came out of the confines of their churches into the world of their parishioners, who were burdened with nagging societal problems, to organize the CNL.

In August 1972, the CNL held its founding assembly in Manila. But just a month after, on September 21, Marcos declared martial law—stripped the citizenry of their rights and held them captive to the grim control of the military implementers. CNL was declared illegal and most of its members went underground. However, CNL has left a revolutionary legacy







Bp. Elmer Bolocon

among the religious and they continued to serve the people, not only through the customary prayers but through palpable deeds. The church institutions served as sanctuary for victims of oppression. The CNL members offered their lives in the service of the poor, the oppressed, the disadvantaged and the marginalized. Some even left their convents, parishes, and their congregations to join the revolutionary armed struggle.

The CNL played a significant role in the historic La Tondeña workers strike for wage increase and better working conditions in 1975. Although church people had been initiated into the mass actions of workers at the picket lines long before the declaration of Martial Law, this time it was different—the fangs of state fascism were most lethal. Yet they bravely faced the police and military who attempted to break the picket line. To stand up for justice was paramount to them that no form of harassment or assault could cow them. That successful La Tondena strike broke the silence of the labor movement. From that time on, workers' strikes in factories and establishments mushroomed, rendering the law banning strikes useless.

of Marcos and the end of the dictatorial rule. The CNL's most significant contribution to the revolution is a reservoir of cadres and red fighters.

### Tribute to Heroes and Martyrs

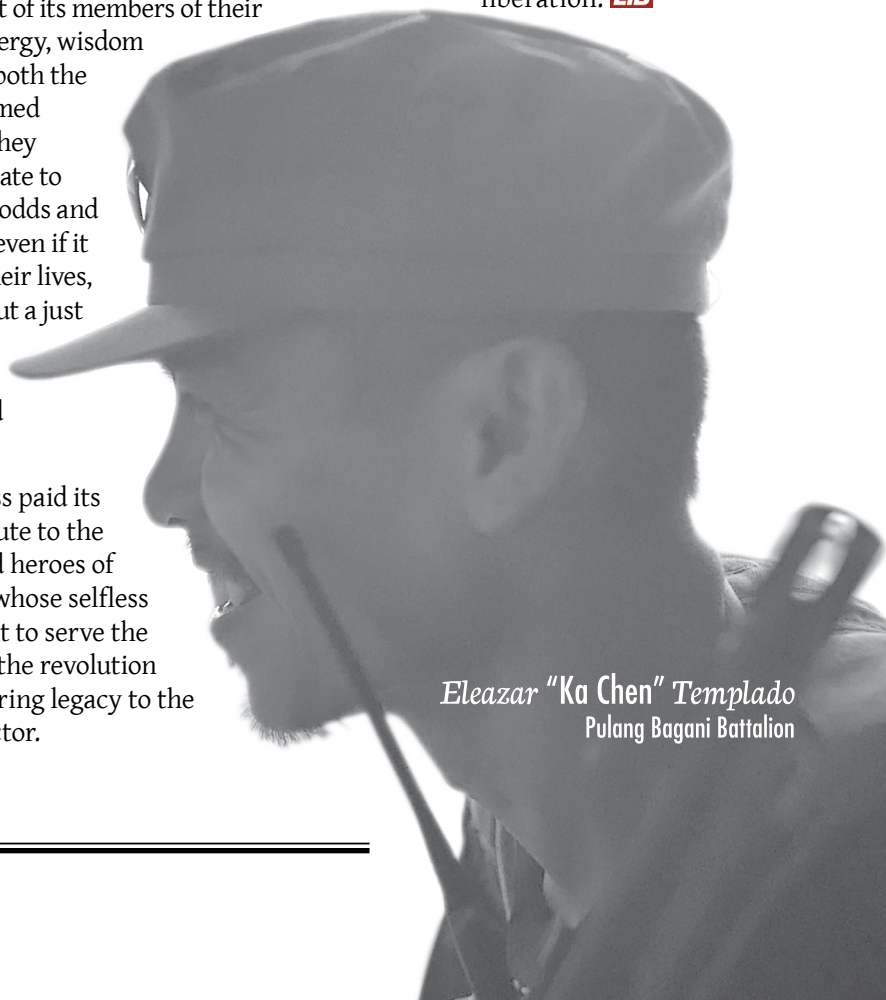
Whatever the CNL attained in the past 45 years of revolutionary work is attributed to the unabridged commitment of its members of their strength, energy, wisdom and lives to both the legal and armed struggles. They did not hesitate to confront all odds and difficulties, even if it cost them their lives, to bring about a just society, enjoying freedom and democracy.

The Congress paid its highest tribute to the martyrs and heroes of the church whose selfless commitment to serve the masses and the revolution left an inspiring legacy to the religious sector.

The same unwavering courage was shown by the religious sector during the people power uprising in 1986 that led to the fall

A video presentation was shown of the heroes' and martyrs' lives and work. It mentioned that a martyred CNL member had been a political commissar of the red army battalion of the very region that hosted the Congress. He was honored, together with a church leader who just died while the delegation was on its way to the Congress.

The Bible abounds with hope. It bespeaks of rights, of justice. It attests to Christ's advocacy for the oppressed, his standing up to them against the Empire. It affirms the morality of waging armed struggle. It showed how Gideon, the best commander in the Old Testament, led the Israelites to fight the oppressors. It also bared the many prophets who took up the cause of the exploited basic sectors of society and spread the Good News about people's liberation. **LIB**

Eleazar "Ka Chen" Templado  
Pulang Bagani Battalion

The cold wind, sturdy pine trees and the scenic mountain ranges of the Cordilleras in Northern Luzon set the perfect mood for the wedding of two guerrilla fighters of the New People's Army (NPA). The ceremony was held March 29, 2017, right after the Cordillera NPA Regional Command, the Chadli Molintas Command, celebrated the NPA's 48<sup>th</sup> founding anniversary.

## Love a REVOLUTIONARY, Love the **REVOLUTION**

by Trisha Sarmiento

It was everything a wedding should be. The bride held a bouquet and wildflowers adorned the aisle for the bridal march. There was the exchange of marriage vows and the signing of the marriage contract issued by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The couple also had the NPA's version of the saber arch, counseling from the members of their collectives, and tips and advice from the wedding sponsors. The much-awaited first kiss of Ka Guillen and Ka Nancy as husband and wife sealed the promise of liberating love.

### No ordinary love

Comrade Nancy joined the revolutionary armed movement in May 2014. Ka Guillen was her squad leader. The attraction between the two slowly developed as they carried out their political

tasks in the NPA. They started to know each other really well. Later, Guillen would convince Nancy to become a full-time member of the NPA. Even when they were assigned to separate units, their attachment to each other grew stronger. Three months later, they







And so, after one-and-a half years in the urban center and, after undergoing assessment and criticism and self-criticism sessions with their collectives, Ka Guill

er and Nancy found themselves in an “informal” relationship, meaning that their respective units or collectives had yet to approve of their relationship as required by the Party and NPA processes.

As part of NPA discipline, new recruits are dissuaded from entering into a relationship for at least a year to give them time to fully adjust to their tasks in the people’s army. But Guill

er and Nancy pursued their relationship despite the restriction and caution from their respective units. This led to conflicts between them and between their units such that they decided to temporarily leave the people’s army. Both went back to the city, and for more than a year, Ka Guill

er and Ka Nancy decided to return to Cordillera to take part in the struggle they both truly love: to serve the revolution as full-time NPA fighters.

Months later, Ka Nancy and Ka Guill

er exchanged vows in the presence of the Red fighters, their friends, and the rural masses. *“Marahas ang digma, pero mas marahas ang mga pinag-uugatan nito. Kapasyahan natin ang pagtahak sa landas na ito. Ang ating pagpili ay siyang ating pagtindig. Ang ating pagtindig ay atin ding panata. Panata, hindi lamang sa iyo, mahal, higit lalo sa bayan nating minamahal. Ang mga kabundukan ang ating paraisiong tirahan, at sa piling ng minumutyang masa tayo ay napapanday.*

*Hanggang sa pagkakapatas, Hanggang sa pagpula ng silangan, Hanggang sa ganap na tagumpay. Sa kahuli-hulihan, ikaw ay mananatili, Ang aking katiwasayan sa gitna ng marahas na digmaan.”*

(“War is cruel, but its roots are more violent. It is our choice to take this path. Our choice is our stand. Our stand is our commitment; a commitment, not only for

you, my love, but most of all, for the people who we truly love. The mountains are our haven and with the masses, we are tempered.

Through stalemate, When the east turns red, To complete victory, In the end, you remain, My calm in a violent war.”)

*“Nagmahal. Nagwasto. Nagtagumpay.”* (We have loved. We have rectified. We have triumphed.). These words sum up the love story of Guill

### Revolutionary love

er and Nancy. Like all revolutionary couples, Ka Guill

er and Ka Nancy adhere to the CPP policy on marriage and relationships laid down in the document “On Proletarian Relationship of Sexes” observed and followed since the 70s. In 1998, the policy was revised to include same-sex relationship and marriage apart from further discussions on courtship, marriage, divorce, and disciplinary actions. The NPA has its own guidelines based on the principles stated in the Party policy.

Without doubt, revolutionaries, like other individuals, do fall in love. The difference is that revolutionaries express their love for each other in the context of the revolutionary interests of the people. While there is “sex love,” there is also “class love,” and the latter in fact is considered the principal aspect that defines the essence of their love. In the service of the revolution love springs, blooms and grows, hence love relationships cannot but serve and uphold the revolutionary aspirations of the Party and the proletariat. For revolutionaries, love is an integral part and a great expression of their revolutionary commitment.

Revolutionaries maintain the right to freely choose whom to love, but there are restrictions as well as responsibilities. “Free love”, “sexual freedom” or anarchy in relationships are strictly prohibited as this can lead to the violation of the rights of others, irresponsibility in the relationship, and breach of organizational discipline.

In short anarchism in love contradicts the revolution’s objective to establish a just society and the real equality of the sexes. Hence revolutionaries find the rationale behind the guiding principles of the Party on love, relationship and sex. Such principles draw a line between freedom and discipline, between rights and responsibilities, and between emotions and principles.

These principles aim to secure the interest of the Party and the revolution at all cost, protect the rights of every revolutionary and other individuals who may be involved, and advance a healthy proletarian relationship between couples inside the revolutionary movement.



### Love a revolutionary

The dominant kind of love today is just a mere reflection of the existing social order and culture. In a semi-colonial and semi-feudal system, love can be oppressive, patriarchal and decadent in character, vulnerable to abuses and violations of the rights of others.

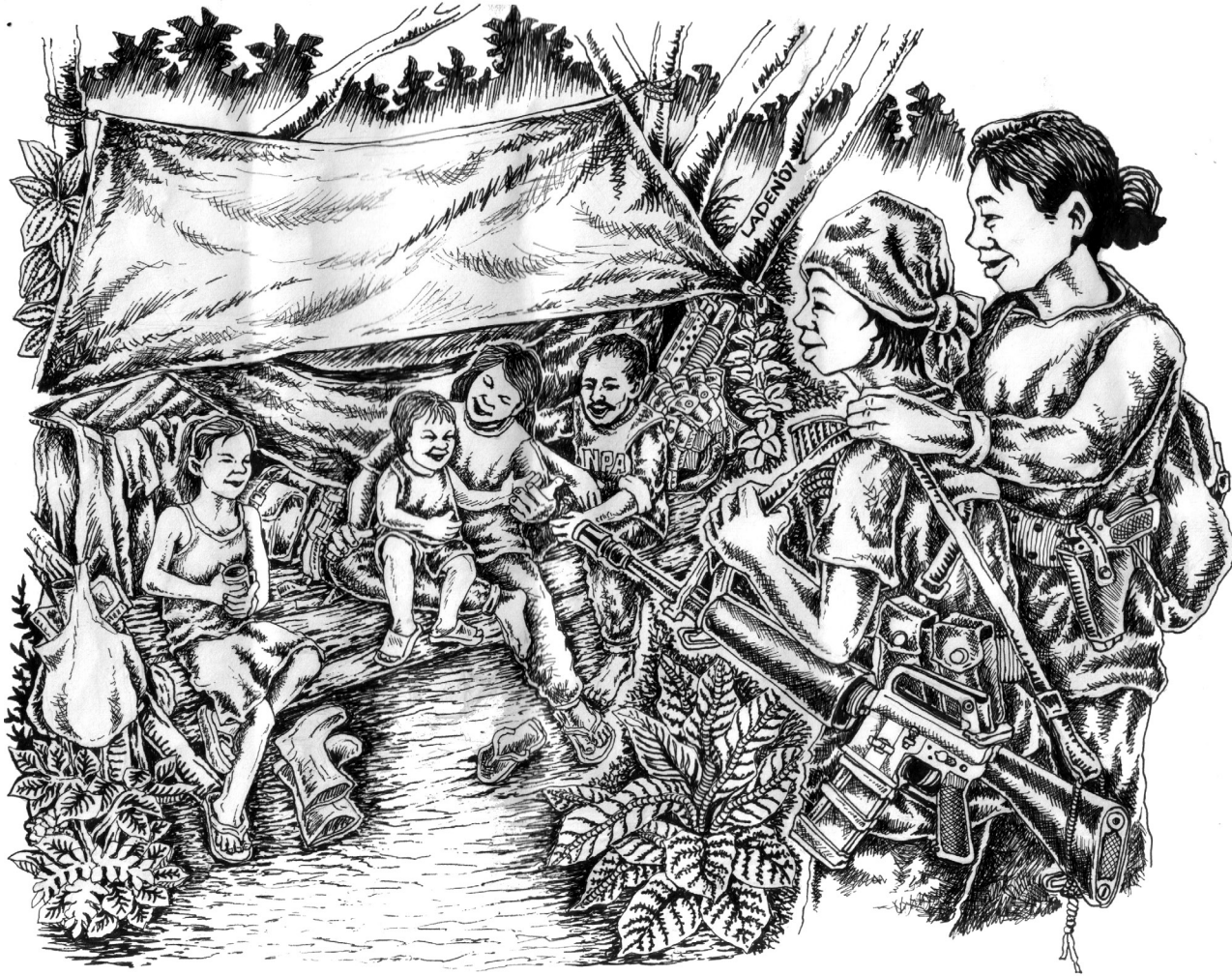
Revolutionaries know that to liberate love from oppression one must strive harder to revolutionize and liberate the entire unjust society. This is what the love story of Ka Guill

er and Ka Nancy has shown. And they are not alone. Revolutionary love blossoms in many NPA camps, farms, workplaces, campuses, communities and institutions where the national democratic revolution has taken its roots. Indeed, no love is sweeter and nobler than revolutionizing society in the company of one you truly love and want to share the rest of your life with. Hence loving a revolutionary is experiencing a kind of love that is selfless and liberating, guided and grounded so that it genuinely serves the people. **LIB**

War is cruel, but its roots are more violent. It is our choice to take this path. Our choice is our stand. Our stand is our commitment; a commitment, not only for you, my love, but most of all, for the people who we truly love. The mountains are our haven and with the masses, we are tempered.

Through stalemate, When the east turns red, To complete victory, In the end, you remain, My calm in a violent war.





## BUILDING A *Revolutionary* Family

by Pat Gambao

In a society divided into social classes, the family, its smallest unit, is prime and sacred. Its interest and concern, next to self, is foremost. One's goal and aspirations are usually directed towards the welfare and good of this small band of people. One has to depart from convention to realize and embrace the whole society as one's family.

"In my early days with the New People's Army (NPA), I felt lonely. I longed for home, for my family. But comrades were quick to console me and their advice was enlightening and heartening. Likewise, I found solace from my immersion with the masses of Lumad people. I felt they were my family. Everyone is my brother, my sister, my mother, my father. I realized that the society I wanted to serve and change is the family in itself," narrated Ka Roberto.

As Ka Roberto stayed longer in the people's army, the greater demands of work and the fruitful results of their efforts which benefited the masses left him no time to brood, to long for home.

Home is where Ka Roberto and his siblings were guided during their formative years. Exposure to the harsh realities of the unjust social structures tempered them in life.

Ka Roberto's parents were young activists in the 80s, later becoming full-fledged members of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). They had been emphatic about the many things that need to be done and that time was of the essence. They made the children understand their hectic schedules and that all the things that they were doing were not necessarily for their own good only, but also for the many downtrodden, as well as for the total liberation of the country; that to succeed in this formidable task, profound commitment, selfless sacrifice and tremendous effort are required.

Like most couples in the movement, Ka Roberto's parents strove to raise their children according to revolutionary principles, virtues, and discipline.

The family was accustomed to simple living—simple home, simple food on the table, simple clothes, and simple other needs. The children were given their needs, but not everything they fancied. Whatever little luxuries they enjoyed at times came from their grandparents, uncles or aunts who were quite well off. Their mother referred to their kin as their support system as

they were the ones they ran to in times of need. Through all these, the siblings felt a need to act on something that only dawned on them slowly, persistently, as they were introduced to the circle that their parents moved in.

Often, the siblings had been brought along to meetings and rallies where the country's situation was discussed and varied issues and problems were brought up. Though their young minds could not fully comprehend them, they became familiar with slogans and calls that defined the issues. They mingled and played with children of other activists whom they found out were also familiar with the chants. Later, the siblings attended workshops with their playmates and friends and learned more. Gradually, they came to understand more—why and how poverty, injustice, and revolution arise.

Their parents' openness about their activities and the rationale behind these had great impact and influence on Ka Roberto and his siblings.

In grade school, the young Roberto was the typical boy on the go—inquisitive, naughty, and dogged. Together with some classmates, he at times figured in petty brawls that prompted his teachers to call on his parents. In class, he busied himself doodling and drawing. But later, his skills in illustration would

come in handy when he himself would lecture on Philippine society and revolution.

In high school, Ka Roberto and his siblings were active in progressive youth organizations. They became adept at organizing and instruction work.

Never did their parents restrain them from their activism, but continued to give them advice and shared lessons from their own experiences. They also encouraged them to integrate with the peasants in the countryside and the urban workers in the factories. Exposure to the life and struggles of the poor peasants and workers further kindled the siblings' revolutionary spirit. Soon, they too were initiated into the Party.

When Ka Roberto dropped out of school and decided to work full time in the movement, his parents respected his decision, no matter how much they wanted him to finish his studies to enhance his capabilities in fulfilling revolutionary tasks. He gave up the opportunity to enroll at the UP College of Fine Arts and a scholarship in another state university. Upon reaching 18, he opted to join the New People's Army, convincing his parents that whatever skills were available in school, he could also learn from his work with the masses in the revolution. His parents fully understood him. In fact, they were

**"Everyone felt that every single addition to the people's army is a valued reinforcement, a multiplier-factor for the growth and strength of the revolution."**



elated over his decision, which inspired and made the whole family proud. Everyone felt that every single addition to the people's army is a valued reinforcement, a multiplier-factor for the growth and strength of the revolution.

Providing deeper insight into his decision, Ka Roberto explained: "I had been with the urban movement for a long time before I decided to join the revolutionary army. The current situation of the Philippine society and the growing demand of the revolution spurred me to take a new course in my life. I don't want to waste my time on trivial things, like engrossing in senseless games and chats on the internet. I prefer to offer the vigor and sinew of my youth for the revolution. We are young only once. I do not want to squander the time of my youth and forever regret it."

For a moment he was pensive, then shared what had preoccupied his

mind. "Have we pondered why the farmers who till the soil and produce the food have nothing to eat?"

In Mindanao, the land of promise, Ka Roberto found his niche among the Lumad people. He mastered not only their different spoken languages — Visayan, Ilonggo, Mandaya, Bagobo, Manobo — but also their way of life which he imbibed. For two years now he has been assigned in different guerilla fronts under the Pulang Bagani Battalion (PBB) of the Southern Mindanao Region.

Last year, Ka Roberto got married to his comrade-in-arms. He is now a proud father to a child who will be raised the way he and his siblings were brought up. This child and those who will come after him will be nurtured by—and, in turn, will manifest selfless love for—the revolution and the masses. **LIB**

**"Like most couples in the movement, Ka Roberto's parents strove to raise their children according to revolutionary principles, virtues, and discipline."**



“Ang hamon ko sa lahat ng mga kabataan, lalo na ‘yung mga nakakaintindi na sa rebolusyon: isang beses lang tayo mabubuhay sa mundo, isang beses lang dadaan ‘tong yugto ng pagiging kabataan natin. ‘Wag nating sayangin. ‘Wag nating sayangin yung lakas natin, yung kaya nating iambag. Yung kabataan natin, dito natin igugugol sa pag-abante ng rebolusyon, ng armadong pakikibaka.

**Ka Roberto, 24  
Pulang Bagani Battalion  
NEW PEOPLE'S ARMY**

## NEWSITEM: *Body Found in Dumpsite*

We read inserted in the back pages someone we did not know then and had not missed but whom they had given name to and a capital charge was found dead just like that.

We learned after the back pages the corpse was found at a place not far from where it happened but with nothing that can stand in court.

Its eyes were no longer there but the sockets stared at us like a pair of question marks deep-set in the grim filling. The mouth was stuffed with grease rags which would otherwise have been incendiary. But the rest of the corpse which were still there even if not in their proper places as if twinged at the odor of the place told us everything. We learned, by the deeds the person had been very close to us. After a simple burial with furrowed brows we took last glances and kept thinking the mound looked like a huge scar.

16 January 1984

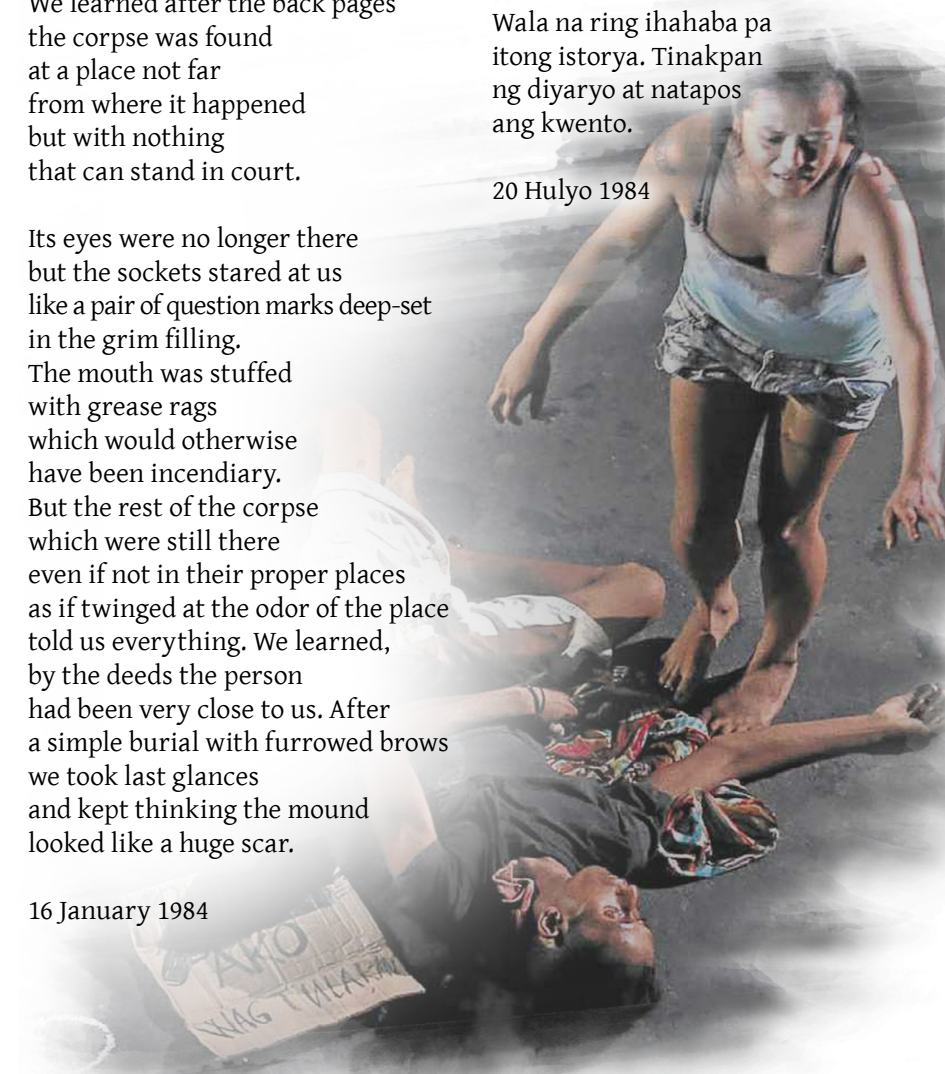
## OBITUARYO

Kumakaripas raw ng takbo. Pinaikli ang biyahe. Ang higpit pa ng kapit sa limang piso, sabi ng nagsusuksuk ng kwarenta y cinco sa baywang.

Walang sinabing pangalan. Ngayong panahon pa naman ng bulagtaan, ang daming naghahanap nang hindi masabi kung sino'ng hinahanap.

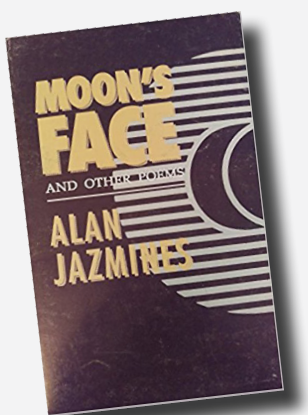
Wala na ring ihahaba pa itong istorya. Tinakpan ng diyaryo at natapos ang kwento.

20 Hulyo 1984



Alan Jazmines is a former political prisoner, professor, and a cultural worker. He was illegally arrested and detained during the martial rule of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. and was released in 1986. His second arrest was on February 2011 and was released on bail last August 2016 for the resumption of the peace talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines.

He is now the Vice Chairperson of the Reciprocal Working Committee on Socio-Economic Reforms of the NDFP.



"News Item: Body Found in Dumpsite" and "Obituaryo" were first published on Alan Jazmines's book *Moon's Face and other poems*, 1991





EDCA  
MINING  
ALL-OUT WAR  
OPLAN KAPAYAPAAN  
PEACE TALKS  
MARTIAL LAW  
OPLAN TOKHANG  
CONTRACTUALIZATION  
TAX REFORM BILL  
MARCOS BURIAL  
INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY  
WAR ON DRUGS  
MARAWI SIEGE  
MILITARY VOLUNTEERS  
AGRICULTURAL REFORM  
HOUSING PROBLEM  
FOREIGN DEBT

Labanan ang Makawakang  
Kontrol ng Pagsasanyon ng

ITIGIL ANG PANG-AATAKE NG MILITAR SA AM  
KOMUNIDAD AT

BAGSAK ANG IMPERYALISMO, PYUDALISMO AT BURAKRATA KAPITALISMO  
MAKIBAKA PARA SA PAMBANSANG DEMOKRASYA

