

LIBERATION

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ON THE NDFP'S 45TH ANNIVERSARY
THE RESOUNDING CALL:

**RESIST TYRANNY, SUSTAIN THE GAINS
OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION!**



ABOUT THE COVER

Agrarian revolution is the main content of the National Democratic Revolution. A real agrarian reform will correct the historical injustice against the most numerous class in Philippine society—the peasantry. But the demand of the peasantry is not only land, not only sustainable food on the dining table, not only food sovereignty, not only social justice but national liberation and an enduring peace. The peasantry has taken up arms and joined the struggle against feudalism and US imperialist domination as the main revolutionary force and—in alliance with the leading force, the workers—a most powerful force has emerged.

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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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YET ANOTHER TURNAROUND ON THE PEACE TALKS

On April 3, speaking at a public gathering in Bongabong, Oriental Mindoro (a known stronghold of the New People's Army), President Rodrigo Duterte made this unexpected statement:

"I'd like to address myself first to the NPAs (sic). You know, **we're not enemies**. Even though I want to fight you, my heart says I could not kill my fellow Filipinos. Let's talk about peace and stop killing... If you really want to negotiate with us, you stop immediately. You and I will have a ceasefire."

"I want to pursue the peace talks with you," he added, with this caution, "But along the way, there will be many obstructions and everything... You must understand that it won't be easy for us."

A sober statement, a welcome departure from the usually bilious outbursts one was prone to expect from the volatile mayor-turned president.

The following day, Duterte directed his Cabinet, specifically his peace adviser Jesus Dureza, to work on resuming the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations he had repeatedly cancelled. "Let's give this another last chance," he said. He set a two-month

period for the two parties to clear the way for the start of formal peace negotiations.

This is yet another Duterte turnaround on his stance vis-à-vis the peace talks and the revolutionary movement in over a year. Recall that after unraveling himself as a fascist he addressed the revolutionary forces—with whom he had avowed a long-running friendship—and curtly declared: "**I am your enemy!**" Thereafter he showed both in words and actions that he meant what he said.

Besides aggressively pursuing an "all-out war" against the CPP-NPA since February 2017 and ordering the AFP to use all its war assets to "flatten the hills," Duterte issued two presidential edicts: one "terminating" the GRP-NDFP peace talks (Proclamation 360, on November 23) and another declaring the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army as "terrorist organizations" (Proclamation 374, on December 5).

Again to show he meant business, Duterte directed his corrupt and incompetent department of justice (DoJ) to secure judicial imprimatur for Proclamation 374, as required by the anti-terrorism law (oddly titled as the Human Security Act of 2007). On February 23 the DoJ filed a "petition for proscription," asking a regional trial court in Manila to declare the CPP and the NPA as "terrorist and outlawed organizations, associations and/or group of persons."

The petition cites the CPP and the NPA as respondents in the civil

procedure specified by the law. However, it includes a list of 470 names and 187 aliases of individuals who it alleges to be "known officers and members" of the CPP-NPA. The listing implies that should the court declare the two organizations as terrorists, those named in the list would similarly be tagged and hounded as terrorists, stripped of their rights and freedoms.

According to the Public Interest Law Center, the Human Security Act treats suspected and judicially-declared terrorists alike. For instance, "both are sanctioned with surveillance, interception and recording of conversations, prolonged arbitrary detention, and examination of bank accounts."

The list includes the names of five members of the NDFP negotiating panel, 30 NDFP consultants and one independent cooperator, at least 50 human rights defenders (including the United Nations special rapporteur on indigenous peoples), leaders of people's organizations and activists, 20 peasant leaders, and 16 political detainees.

With his directive to continue the peace talks, Duterte is logically bound to rescind his Proclamation 374 and to order the withdrawal of the proscription petition from the court. Otherwise, how could the five members of the NDFP negotiating panel, the 30 consultants and the independent cooperator included in the DoJ "terrorist" list freely perform their functions in the peace negotiations?



Photo Credits: BAYAN-NCR

filed the motion to dismiss in behalf of Saturnino C. Ocampo, the independent cooperator invited by the NDFP panel to help in the peace talks. His name is listed in the DoJ petition among those it claims to be “known officers” of the CPP-NPA with known addresses through whom the respondents CPP and NPA “may be served with summons...” In the summons given to him, the court asked Ocampo to answer the allegations in the petition within 15 days.

Filing the motion to dismiss through the PILC was Ocampo’s way of complying with the summons. He puts

forward two arguments: 1) Since the petition does not cite him as a respondent and does not show a cause for action against him, there is no valid basis for the court to acquire jurisdiction over his person. 2) The petition, despite its numerous documentary attachments, fails to present sufficient and convincing proof as required by the Human Security Act, on the basis of which the court can validly declare the CPP and the NPA as terrorist organizations. Therefore the court must dismiss the petition.

At the hearing on the motion to dismiss, on March 23, no DoJ prosecutor appeared before the court, which may indicate a lack of interest or resolve to pursue its petition. The court thus ordered the DoJ to submit a written reply to the motion within 15 days, after which it may either rule on the petition or schedule oral arguments.

Besides this issue, Duterte has set four preconditions that can obstruct the road towards the continuation of the peace negotiations. These are: a ceasefire upfront; “stop attacking my soldiers and policemen;” stop revolutionary taxation; and “don’t demand a coalition government.” Moreover, he has intimated he wants the peace negotiations to be held in the country—not abroad, as has been the agreed arrangement since 1992 to ensure the security of the NDFP panel, consultants, staff and other participants.

Setting such preconditions violates one of the principles set by the Hague Joint Declaration of 1992, which states: “4. The holding of peace negotiations must be in accordance with mutually accepted principles, including national sovereignty, democracy and social justice and

no precondition shall be made to negate the inherent character and purpose of the peace negotiations (emphasis ours).”

Nonetheless, with the view of averting another heated confrontation with Duterte, Sison has responded with an amiable stance. He said all these preconditions can be discussed, and probably settled in principle, between the two parties before agreeing to continue the interrupted formal negotiations.

“The important thing,” he pointed out, “is that the principals, namely President Duterte and the National Council of the NDFP, have given the go-signal to their respective negotiating panels to contact each other in preparation for the formal talks.”

Taking the cue from Sison’s stance, Dureza told the media the GRP has opted for a “quiet” approach to the pre-formal negotiations bilateral talks. GRP peace panel head Silvestre Bello III and he are “in a hurry” to meet with their NDFP counterparts, he said, because Duterte had given a two-month deadline.

“It’s going to be quiet talks in the meantime, so that if there is going to be some big result, then that’s the time when we’re gonna disclose it,” he said.

This mutual cool-headed or non-adversarial approach to tackling the abovesited issues—during the preliminary discreet discussions between the two parties—deserve commendation and encouragement by all peace advocacy

groups, which commendably have unrelentingly called for the continuation of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

First things to settle: **the formal peace negotiations must continue from the status at which Duterte “terminated” them in November 2017; the negotiations must continue in a neutral foreign venue facilitated by the Royal Norwegian Government; and the parties must uphold all previously signed agreements.**

It will help, to a considerable degree in enhancing a favorable atmosphere for continuing the peace talks, if the two parties agree to immediately implement the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). After all, they mutually committed to do so in their joint statement after the fourth round of formal negotiations in April 2017.

More than improving the atmosphere for negotiations and consultations, implementing the CARHRIHL can serve as a veritable test on the sincerity of both sides in carrying out their written commitments.

Over and above that, it will accord justice and provide material compensation to the numerous civilians (individuals, families, communities) who have endured sufferings due to violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, committed by either party, in the course of the almost half a century of internal armed conflict. **LIB**



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ON THE NDFP'S 45TH ANNIVERSARY, THE RESOUNDING CALL: **RESIST TYRANNY, SUSTAIN THE GAINS OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION!**

by Angel Balen

On April 24 the National Democratic Front of the Philippines observes its 45th founding anniversary.

There is every reason for the revolutionary forces, mass base, allies and friends to celebrate the momentous occasion.

Today the NDFP stands justly proud, yet humble, as the veritable embodiment and official political-diplomatic representative of the consolidated national united front of the 18 allied organizations that—in nearly 50 years—have unrelentingly carried on the Filipino people's struggle for national and social liberation.

As envisioned at its founding, the NDFP over the years has endeavored to become the most consolidated organizational expression of the unity of all the anti-imperialist and democratic forces in the country and among progressive Filipinos working/living abroad as well as solidarity groups in various countries. It is through the NDFP that national unity has been “assiduously, perseveringly developed under the class leadership of the proletariat and firmly founded on the basic alliance of the workers and peasants.”

Over almost half a century the struggle has achieved significant gains infused with the selfless martyrdom and immense sacrifices of revolutionary cadres and Red fighters.

Significant strides since the 70s

Three years ago, on the 42nd anniversary of the NDFP, Ka Oris, then the spokesperson of the NDFP-Mindanao, gave a succinct but comprehensive review of the significant developments in the national democratic revolution's advance since 1973, with the NDFP and the New People's Army (NPA) working together closely in 120 guerrilla fronts in strategic areas of the countryside.

Highlighting the interweaving roles of the NDFP and the NPA, under the guidance of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), in building up the revolutionary forces and mass bases

Ka Oris, in a video publicly shown at the anniversary celebration on August 25, 2015 at the University of the Philippines Bahay ng Alumni, declared:

“It is imperative that we remember what history has taught us: that in the advance of the NDFP, the NPA also made strides, and when the NPA and the armed struggle gained strength, the NDFP became more prestigious and its capacity to unite various political forces was amplified. This also showed that the NDFP served as the shield in the armed struggle and the NPA, as the sword to cut down the main pillar of the reactionary state. In addition, this demonstrates the NDFP's role in waging diplomatic struggle as a weapon of [the people's] war.

“History has shown the inseparability of the NDFP and the NPA under the guidance of the Party in advancing the national democratic revolution. The NDFP played a significant role in broadening the field of operations and the wellspring of recruits of the people's army and the armed struggle. The NPA for its part made certain that the NDFP had a wide and deep foundation in the basic masses and that it possessed a weapon to achieve complete victory.

“These victories of the NDFP must be consolidated. Let us glean our positive experiences, hold fast to them and build on them, even as we repudiate our negative experiences. We are hopeful that the revolutionary movement will continue to advance nationwide due to the socio-economic and political crisis besetting the country.

“We pledge our readiness to unite and coordinate with all forces and individuals who stand for genuine liberation, democracy, and peace based on social justice. We pledge and stake our entire strength to advancing the people's war from the strategic defensive to the strategic stalemate and onward to total victory.”

Since Ka Oris reported on the revolution's advances, the NDFP has earnestly been training more cadres for deployment in the ever-widening national united front work, even as it has devoted more efforts in pushing the resumption of the long-stalled GRP-NDFP peace talks under the second Aquino government and the incumbent Duterte regime.

Such work has included organizing various types of campaigns to arouse and mobilize the broad masses of the people for the revolution; promoting and building varied forms of alliances among progressive and patriotic forces towards building the broadest alliance possible against imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat capitalism; and building underground organizations in the urban areas.

The NDFP also has paid more attention to building revolutionary strength among the national minorities for asserting their right to self-determination and defending their ancestral domains, livelihoods, cultures and traditions. Likewise, it has improved and expanded efforts to arouse, organize and mobilize Filipino overseas migrant workers and other compatriots in various countries to contribute more meaningfully to the advancement of the revolution.

Advances in Mindanao and Visayas

On the 49th anniversary of the NPA last March 29, NDFP-Mindanao

provided an update on the advances made by the revolutionary movement in that whole southern part of the country. It lauded the Red commanders, fighters, people's organizations, and members of the People's Militia, local guerrilla and self-defense units for "effectively carr(ying) out their revolutionary tasks of defending the people's welfare by delivering decisive blows against the fascist forces of the US-Duterte regime."

The Mindanao revolutionary movement, the statement noted, "has taken significant strides to bring the people's war to a new and higher level, with the end in view of ushering in the victory of the national democratic revolution towards the country's socialist future."

Citing the revolutionary masses as the "weavers of the fabric of history," the NDFP-Mindanao expressed profound gratitude to them for having "offered their good sons and daughters to take conscious and active part in the undertakings of the true army of the people, the NPA."

With equal fervor towards allies, the NDFP Mindanao said: "We thank all our allies as well, who, throughout the years, despite the all-out vain efforts by the ruling classes and [their] reactionary government to malign and crush the revolutionary movement, have not waived in their support."

Backing up with data the advancement of the people's war in Mindanao, the statement said:

"The NPA in Mindanao continues to surge in an all-round way. Despite the all-out attacks of the US-Duterte regime, the NPA is making headway in 46 guerrilla fronts in Mindanao, where its units are operating in more than 2,500 barrios in over 20 municipalities in 20 provinces

in the island. In these areas, hundreds of thousands are directly organized, while tens of thousands are covered by the people's revolutionary government (PRG) at the barrio level, and a few at municipal levels."

"NPA platoons and companies in Mindanao are now spread all over their base areas, helping the masses to defend themselves from impending attacks of enemy forces, recovering those (areas) relatively disrupted by enemy troops, and reinvigorating revolutionary mass organizations into launching agrarian reform campaigns and participating in meaningful activities that help advance the people's war.

"We encourage NPA units in Mindanao to make their every political and military undertaking this year as a tribute to the 50th anniversary of the reestablished Communist Party of the Philippines."

In the Visayas, the CPP Panay regional committee has reported similar advance in the people's war despite the intensified repressive actions by the US-Duterte regime. Julian Paisano, regional party spokesperson, reported the following:

More youths have joined the NPA, most of them from peasant families who mainly endure the burdens of poverty and class exploitation. In 2017, the NPA in Panay added one oversized platoon to its fighting forces. At the same time, more peasants have joined units of the People's Militia which principally assume responsibility for defense and maintenance of peace and order in their respective communities and provide direct support to the fulltime units of the people's army.

Much-improved ideological, political and organizational work within every unit of the NPA, Paisano noted, has resulted in the enhanced spirit of discipline and capacity of the fighting units in carrying out their primary tasks: base-building (done in tandem with the NDFP), agrarian reform, and launching tactical offensives (TO). Consequently, more than 20 TOs were successfully launched in 2017. These resulted in the confiscation of various-caliber firearms from the enemy, inflicting casualties (10 killed and 20 other enemy troops wounded). Three Red fighters sacrificed their lives in the encounters.

The People's Democratic Government

For the past 32 years, reckoning from the initial GRP-NDFP peace talks in 1986-87, the NDFP has firmly stood for and carried the political authority of the people's democratic government (PDG), constituting of the organs of political power at the barrio level, in some areas at municipal or section level.

The PDG is painstakingly being built to educate the organized masses on the principles, ways and means of collective self-governance, and to enable their democratically elected local leaders to assume responsibility and hone their leadership capabilities through practice for safeguarding and advancing the people's welfare, while helping advance the revolutionary struggle. The perspective is for the PDG to ultimately replace the reactionary, oppressive and exploitative rule of the imperialists, the big landlords, and big bourgeois compradors.

Understandably not one of the post-Marcos dictatorship administrations of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines has shown the courage or political will to explicitly recognize the PDG's political authority—and

consequently recognize the existence of dual political power in the country. They have all been wary of adopting an attitude, much less taking any action that would enhance the prospects of the revolutionary movement attaining a status of belligerency.

Nonetheless, in varying degrees, the administrations of Corazon Aquino, Fidel Ramos, Gloria Arroyo, Benigno Aquino III, and Rodrigo Duterte tacitly acknowledged the political authority of the NDFP when they acceded to sit down with the latter on the negotiating table—based on the principle of parity of status—and hammer out a just and lasting political settlement of the prolonged armed conflict.

Fidel Ramos stands out as the only GRP president who sustained (though with many interruptions) the peace negotiations throughout his term of office. Joseph Estrada (who succeeded Ramos) spurned the peace negotiations and opted for a "total war" policy. Yet he did a signal role (though he didn't seem to have been aware of it at the time). After assuming office in 1998 Estrada, as principal of the

GRP negotiating panel, signed the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law or CARHRIHL. The accord, lauded as a "landmark" document by the European Parliament, was negotiated and completed under the Ramos administration.

Rodrigo Duterte could have done better than Ramos had he been hands-on in the negotiation process—as Ramos was. He came close to signing the most substantive agreement in the peace talks that would have addressed the root causes of the armed conflict: the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER), which could have been followed by the completion and signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms (CAPCR).

However, buckling under the pressure of his militarist advisers, Duterte balked. He completely turned around and arbitrarily "terminated" the GRP-NDFP peace talks in November, through Proclamation 360—although that is not the prescribed

mode of formally ending the peace negotiations. Initially, he tried to justify his decision by accusing the NPA of continually attacking and killing "my soldiers and policemen."

Later Duterte rationalized his action by claiming he couldn't agree to share power through a "coalition government" with another political authority that he said had no mandate from the Filipino electorate. By that stance he showed a narrow, even erroneous, understanding of certain principles in peace negotiations, specifically that the two negotiating parties shall have joint/shared as well as separate responsibilities in the implementation of signed agreements.

(A "coalition government" could probably come into fruition only after a final peace accord should have been signed—which would entail the cessation of hostilities and disposition of the armed forces of both sides—and the political forces under the NDFP should have decided to participate in the elections for a new government that should see after the full implementation of all the peace agreements.)



Proscribing the CPP/NPA as Terrorist

Beyond seeking to terminate the GRP-NDFP peace talks, Duterte also issued Proclamation 374 declaring the CPP and the NPA as “terrorist organizations.” Again, no matter that it carried the president’s authority, the proclamation by itself is not legally binding. The anti-terrorism law (euphemistically titled “The Human Security Act of 2007”) on which the proclamation is based, requires the government, through its department of justice, to petition a regional trial court to declare as terrorists the two revolutionary organizations.

The procedure is called proscription, wherein the judge must hear both the side of the petitioner (DoJ) and those of the respondents (CPP and NPA). The court must find as sufficient and verified to be factual the documentary or testimonial evidence submitted by the DoJ to satisfy the grounds, specified under the Human Security Act, before it can issue a ruling declaring the CPP and NPA as terrorist organizations.

The petition has already been challenged, in a motion filed by Saturnino C. Ocampo, one of the persons whose names are listed in the petition as allegedly the “known officers” of the CPP-NPA with known addresses. Besides refuting the imputation that he is a “terrorist” and the allegation he is an officer of the CPP-NPA, Ocampo urges the court to dismiss the petition because it fails to satisfy the stiff requirements of the Human Security Act in determining if an organization is in fact terrorist.

It is important to note that both in Proclamation 374 and in the judicial petition, the Duterte regime isn’t seeking to tag the NDFP as a terrorist organization along with the CPP and the NPA, which are its two leading affiliate organizations. One can only speculate on the reason(s) behind the exclusion/omission.



Reminiscent of Martial Law

Another important point to note is that the NDFP celebrates its 45th anniversary under political conditions eerily reminiscent of those prevailing at the time it was founded: seven months after Ferdinand E. Marcos had declared martial law nationwide and installed himself as fascist dictator for nearly 14 years.

Martial law has been in effect in the whole of Mindanao for over a year now. It was originally intended to enable the reactionary state’s security forces to quell an alleged rebellion in Marawi City by Muslim militant groups which the US and the Philippine governments associate with the Islamic State. After that was accomplished, largely with aerial bombings guided by American spy planes and drones that destroyed much of Marawi, Duterte had the martial rule extended until the end of 2018, adding the NPA as its target for annihilation. He has threatened, should the NPA further escalate its counteroffensives against the state forces, to declare martial law nationwide.

In this regard, the NDF-Mindanao statement on March 28 described the US-Duterte regime as “seething with fascism, employ(ing) militarism and other draconian measures to suppress any and all forms of opposition and dissent.” Leaders and members of legal and legitimate mass organizations have become targets of brutal attacks, warrantless arrests and filing trumped-up charges, detention and torture, surveillance and profiling of targeted individuals, enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killing.

Moreover, of the more than 600 names and aliases listed as “officers and members” of the CPP-NPA in the proscription petition filed in court by the DoJ, more than half of them are allegedly from Mindanao.

The regime, the statement added, seeks to wipe out the NPA by the end of 2018 through *Oplan Kapayapaan*, which employs “vile military and psywar tactics rehashed from previous failed operation plans.”

To create in the public mind a false perception that these tactics have been succeeding, the AFP/PNP has resorted to “subterfuge, perfidy and black propaganda.” They orchestrate the murder of civilians, make it appear like it was executed by “terrorists” and impute the crime on the NPA. Then through trolls, the statement noted, the US-Duterte regime poisons both the social and mainstream media with such false news.

The AFP has also stage-managed the gathering of hundreds of fake surrenderers in Davao City and flew them to Manila aboard military transport planes, for touring at the Luneta and other urban tourist spots, capped by dinners at Malacanang with President Duterte. Duterte has even offered the women “surrenderers” government-funded tours in Hong Kong and China so they could observe firsthand the economic progress supposedly achieved after the former “socialist China” embraced the capitalist road to development.

Following the issuance of Proclamation 374, the statement pointed out, Duterte has gone further to “almost sociopathic proportion” as to offer P25,000 to P100,000 bounty for every NPA fighter killed and to order that women Red fighters who may be captured be “shot in their vaginas to render them useless.”

Also it must be noted that, against strong popular protests, in November 2017 Duterte rammed the political rehabilitation of the deposed dictator Marcos by facilitating the burial of his remains at the *Libingan ng mga Bayani*. Now he appears to be implacably set to replicate the prolonged Marcos tyrannical rule, using as conveyance, through charter change, a shift in the form of government from the current unitary to a federal type that is yet to be fully defined.

The looming restoration of that reviled fascist dictatorship invests the observance of the NDFP’s 45th anniversary with an urgent popular behest: **Resist the rising tyranny of the US-Duterte regime; sustain the gains of the National Democratic Revolution!** **L/B**

AN EMPOWERED PEASANTRY

by Priscilla de Guzman

“If the end of our struggle is still far away, where we started from is now much farther away. Let’s continue fighting.” —Ka Pidyong

Now 75 years old, Ka Pidyong couldn’t contain his laughter as he recalled the first time he met members of the New People’s Army (NPA) in their community, an upland barrio in Northern Luzon.

“There were seven of them,” he said in Filipino, grinning. “Only one had an armalite rifle, while the others had carbines, a shotgun, and a caliber .38 handgun— all *teka-teka* guns (*teka* literally means “wait” and refers to low-caliber guns). Of the last member of the team, he remembered vividly, “He had no gun, but carried a *kaldero* (a metal pot used to cook rice).”

“Three years later, they were already 16 and fully armed,” Ka Pidyong mused. “We were so happy. Our morale was high because 12 of them were recruited from our village.” Some of the original members had been redeployed elsewhere, he added, remarking enthusiastically, “They continued to grow, so did we.”

Decades after that first contact with the people’s army, the villagers have now established, painstakingly, their own organs of political power: the revolutionary mass organizations of peasants, women, and youth. A revolutionary council has also been elected and now governs their communities. In 2017, members of the mass organizations—representing the unity forged by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), the NPA, and their allies—held their second elections in less than five years.

All these years, despite the continued military onslaughts and even during the Party’s brief period of disorientation, the organized masses did not waiver. Not even for a moment did they lose the faith that the revolution is their only hope, the future of their children, and of their children’s children.

Setting the revolutionary fire

Indeed, it has been a long, arduous, but victorious journey for those who blazed the revolutionary trail in this guerrilla zone—the first batch of peasant men and women who welcomed comrades from the CPP and NPA in 1971, when the twin revolutionary organizations were in the formative stage.

Peasant leader Ka Tonyo, 65, first met the NPA in 1971. “*Na-recruit ako nung 1972, pagbalik nila sa sitio* (But I was recruited only in 1972 when they returned to the village),” he told *Liberation*. As one of the leaders in the barrio, Ka Tonyo went with the NPA to the different mountain villages and those near the town center. They held meetings and talked to the masses. “We held education sessions and explained to them the ills of our society and the proposed long-term solution to our situation.” He said the people, aware of their own condition, readily agreed on the need to change the prevailing system and install their own government.

The peasants in this guerrilla zone are mostly landless, some tilling a hectare or two. The communities are nestled in a public land, where any moneyed individual can claim ownership over

parts or all of it in blatant disregard of existing laws. All too

often, the peasants had been victims of traders who preyed on them by selling farm inputs and implements that were overpriced and buying their farm produce at dirt-cheap prices. The government, too, attempted several times to evict the peasants and give way to so-called development projects, but did not succeed.

Ka Tonyo, along with woman leader Ka Gloria, and several others organized the peasants who would later comprise a chapter of the *Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magsasaka* (PKM, National Association of Peasants), one of the founding affiliate organizations of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). Although there were already a number of organized women, *Makibaka* (*Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan*) would be established in their community much later, Ka Gloria explained.

It was after a decade of organizing work initiated by the NPA and Ka Tonyo’s group that Ka Pidyong, a former barangay council member, was recruited in 1981. Ka Pidyong first learned of the NPA’s off and on presence in villages in the forest area surrounding their barrio in 1971. However, only in 1981 did he come into personal contact with them at the barrio center.

“What truly got me to realize was the fact that the Philippines is a rich country, yet only the foreigners and the local ruling elite benefit from these

riches,” he said. The education session was followed by many more until, “*ang dami ko nang alam* (I learned so much)” Ka Pidyong said, beaming.

In between education sessions, Ka Tonyo, Ka Pidyong, Ka Gloria, and other PKM members continued house-to-house calls to explain to the masses what they had learned. They recruited members for the revolutionary mass organizations and the NPA. “*Madami akong na-recruit, andito pa yung iba* (I had a number of recruits. Some of them are actually still here),” Ka Tonyo proudly stated. Attending the anniversary celebrations of the CPP and the NPA was the most awaited activity by the masses—an occasion likened to a feast.

“There was always something new to do and to improve on,” said Ka Pidyong.

As the organizations expanded, they also thought of ways to tackle their revolutionary tasks more effectively, such as: how to give education to those who are not literate; how to maintain communal farms, form a militia unit in the barrios for their security, and how to efficiently support the various needs of the NPA—the latter task they took to heart most fervently. The welfare of the NPA fighters has always been at the forefront of the masses’ concerns. Even in times of calamities, when there was hardly anything to eat, the masses saw to it that there was food for the Red fighters.

“THERE’S JOY IN OUR HEARTS BECAUSE WE ARE ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEMS OF THE MAJORITY OF THE POOR IN OUR COUNTRY.”

KA GLORIA

“KUNG MALAYO PA ANG PUPUNTAHAN NATIN, MAS MALAYO NA RIN NAMAN ANG ATING PINANGGALINGAN. ITULOY-TULOY NA NATIN.”

KA PIDYONG

On her part, Ka Gloria related, women were organized under the *Makibaka*, which took on other tasks for the revolutionary movement.

Makibaka members took the lead in taking care of the children of fulltime cadres and Red fighters. They looked after their schooling and overall welfare. The women, said Ka Gloria, likewise started the health and sanitation programs, which include production of herbal medicine.

The youth, she added, were organized under the *Huwarang Bata* (Model Youth), which initiated sports programs, among others. Ka Teody, one of the youngest leaders of the PKM, recalled that in those years, when members of the NPA came back from tactical offensives, the youth would welcome them with revolutionary songs.

Red power

Verily, today's gains are a product of the revolutionary masses' perseverance under the guidance of the Party and the NPA. "We have seen, however little, the difference between living under this rotten system and under the revolutionary government we are setting up."

The revolutionary council has formalized the system of governance that was slowly established since the movement started and the masses had been organized, Ka Teody told *Liberation*.

Electing the new members of the revolutionary council last year was another level of consolidation achieved. "There were almost a hundred of us who attended the election, representing the various revolutionary mass organizations and party units in this guerrilla zone," Ka Teody said. "It took us the whole day, from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.," he explained, because "we had to go back

to the orientation and tasks of the revolutionary council and the tasks and responsibilities of the officers."

Also, they voted three times to ensure proportional representation in the council. "On the first round, we voted for eight representatives from the various mass organizations; on the second round, we elected seven representatives from the Party units, and on the last round, four representatives from the middle class in the barrio," Ka Gloria elaborated in Ilokano. Each of the candidates, too, had to cite their individual strengths and weaknesses, thus enabling the electorate to weigh in how they could work collectively.

Through the decades, what has become undeniably visible is the people's unity. "Where before we led our own lives without concern for each other's welfare," remarked Ka Gloria as she enumerated the benefits of such unity: "disputes among us are easily settled, including land

disputes; the people are disciplined; the community is peaceful, there are no petty crimes."

"The communities are drug free," boasted Ka Tonyo. *(See also page 14 —infographic on some of the local laws and regulations.)*

More importantly, "we are able to thwart anti-people projects the government plans to establish here," Ka Teody emphasized. "We now have a voice, we are no longer scared. With the NPA defending us, we can fight the oppressors," he said.

Even the local government officials defer to the revolutionary mass organizations, he expounded. They refer cases they cannot settle to the latter organizations because the revolutionary justice system is "swift, fair, and free of charge." Oftentimes, some local government officials would tell us, "*mas kaya ninyo 'yan* (you can do it better)." *(See also page 19—story on justice system).*

"There's joy in our hearts because we are able to contribute to the resolution of the problems of the majority of the poor in our country," declared Ka Gloria.

Tempered by struggle

Leaders of the PKM identified two most trying moments they had experienced in their almost 50 years in struggle: the Party's disorientation in the late 1980's until the early 1990's and the intense militarization during the same period. But they held the fort, they said, never losing track of the revolution's onward march, much more the will to push it to victory.

With pride, they recalled how they overcame the military presence and operations in their communities— aerial bombings, harassments, arrests, killings and other human rights violations. "Many were killed in the different villages," Ka Tonyo pointed

out. "But even in those difficult times, when we were almost surrounded by the enemy, we put in our hearts and in our minds where we stand—to serve the the Party and the masses."

Ka Gloria related how, to some extent, they were able to overcome and to survive the military presence in the barrio center. "The AFP encamped at the barrio. They stayed for 14 years and in those 14 years, several organizing groups and revolutionary mass organizations were established in the communities surrounding the barrio."

"There was fear but we were not intimidated," proudly remarked Ka Tonyo.

"No one was ever recruited into the AFP's paramilitary unit. There were a few who almost agreed to be recruited but we persuaded them to back out," said Ka Pidyong with a chuckle. Ka Pidyong was arrested by the military but, after his release, went into hiding several times after because of the continuing threats of re-arrest.

At the time, the NPA stayed away from the barrio center since their presence would cause unnecessary confrontation with the government forces that would affect the unarmed civilians.

But such restraint was no longer exercised during the Party's disorientation, recalled Ka Tonyo.

"*Matindi 'yun, kawawa ang masa. Kung saang bundok kami naghahatid ng supplies, pagkain* (The situation then turned intense, pitiful for the masses. We had to bring supplies, food into the remote mountainous areas where the NPA retreated after launching tactical offensives)." He was referring to the period when military adventurism seeped into the NPA ranks and mass work

and agrarian reform tasks took a back seat to tactical offensives that were launched one after another.

Ka Pidyong was among those in the barrio who disapproved the swing to military adventurism, saying it was not time to show off the NPA's military strength in their

guerrilla zone. His memory of how the NPA had shifted its focus and the change in its attitude towards the masses was still fresh. "*Yung mga kasama noon wala na, kapag pinupuna ayaw na* (At that time the comrades didn't want to accept criticisms)."

Sadly, Ka Pidyong was among those who were suspected as military agents within the movement during the anti-infiltration campaign. Although he had ill feelings then, now he shrugs off the whole experience. During the rectification period, the Party and NPA cadres and Red fighters humbly criticized themselves before the masses and members of the revolutionary organizations as they explained to them the rectification process.

"The elders in the community did not mince words in criticizing the Party and NPA members, which the latter wholeheartedly accepted," added Ka Gloria.

"What is important is we have rectified the errors and we have now grown stronger," emphasized Ka Teody. With the revolutionary government now in place, "we can chart our course and defend our gains," he added.

One with the Party and the people's army

A good number of the revolution's trailblazers are now in their 70s, their faces lined with wrinkles and the hair on their heads turning grey or white and thinning. Still they stay in high revolutionary spirit. They have been in the movement for at least 47 years. Some of them were just about 12 years old when introduced to the movement.

"I am happy now. Despite my age and ailment, I am still able to help in whatever way I can," Ka Pidyong remarked. He quickly added, "And, I'm energized to see young people, from our place, from other places, from the cities who come here and stay with us."

It took several probing questions from *Liberation* on how these trailblazers felt about being the bearers of revolutionary power in their communities before they could answer. There was initial silence, a long silence. Tears welled in the eyes of some of them.

Clearing his throat, Ka Pidyong spoke up first. He firmly declared, "Without the Party and the NPA, we have nothing." **L/I/3**

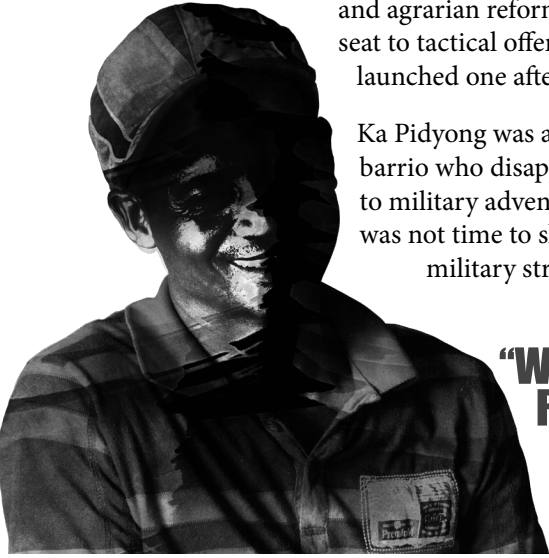
“THERE WAS FEAR BUT WE WERE NOT INTIMIDATED.”

KA TONYO



“WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS WE HAVE RECTIFIED THE ERRORS AND WE HAVE NOW GROWN STRONGER.”

KA TEODY



SOME LAWS AND REGULATIONS IN A GUERRILLA ZONE

Sharing of Resources

- + Resources and equipment and other donations from friends and supporters such as carabaos, threshers are raffled to ensure that these are fairly distributed to the different villages.
- + Landless tillers, poor peasants should be the priority in the distribution of available lands for cultivation.
- + Communal lands and communal fishponds are maintained by and for the use of members of mass organizations.
- + Warehouses are owned by the mass organizations and should be available for the use of all members.

Environment

- + All watershed areas should be protected (This is one of the provisions in the distribution of lands).
- + Cutting down of trees, especially in the virgin forest areas, along river beds and streams, is prohibited.
- + Cutting down of trees for commercial purposes is not allowed. The members of mass organizations may be allowed to cut down trees for housing, to raise funds for medical expenses or when they are not able to harvest their crops.

Taxation among the masses

- + Revolutionary taxation among the masses is applied only when agrarian revolution has been implemented.
- + Among the rich peasants a contribution such as one cavan of rice per harvest is requested.

Peace and order

- + Selling of liquor is allowed only until 8:00 p.m.
- + Drunks who start to make trouble are fined Php 500.00, including those who sold them the liquor.

Justice (covers petty crimes and other domestic concerns such as land disputes)

- + A people's court "*Hukumang Bayan*" is created. The court usually holds hearings in public when security situation allows.
- + Members of the court, usually nine persons, are chosen based on the capability to discern and weigh the merits of the case objectively. They should also be a disinterested party to the case.
- + The court has a chief judge; a prosecutor and the witnesses to the case. The accused has his/her own defense counsel. The accused or the defendant may appeal the ruling on the case.



Artwork from Tilamsik ng Dakilang Apoy

NDFP'S CASER: A CALL FOR ECONOMIC SOVEREIGNTY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

by Tagumpay Felipe

Last February, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines Reciprocal Working Committee on Social and Economic Reforms (NDFP RWC-SER) launched in book form the latest NDFP draft of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER).

The 180-page document is the fifth to be issued by the NDFP since it came out with its first version in 1998.

Every page of this draft bears the Filipino people's imprint, reflecting their aspirations and struggles for economic sovereignty and social justice.

Dated October 23, 2017, the NDFP's draft CASER is the product of in-depth research and dozens of consultations conducted both in the cities and the countryside. Not only did the NDFP RWC-SER seek to update previous drafts by reaching out anew to the organized forces of the national democratic movement. It also touched base with many others who seek reforms like industrialists and national entrepreneurs, landowners and professionals, economists and academics, NGOs and advocates of people's issues, and even officials and personnel of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP).



Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms



Agrarian Reform & Rural Development



National Industrialization & Economic Development



Environmental Protection, Rehabilitation & Compensation



Promoting Patriotic, Progressive & Pro-people Culture



Rights of the Working People



Recognition of Ancestral Lands & Territories of National Minorities



Independent Foreign Economic & Trade Relations



Reorientation of Financial, Monetary & Fiscal Policies for National Development



Social & Economic Planning

Neoliberal policies' impact on the people

The NDFP wanted to reflect in its CASER draft the impact of more than three decades of neoliberal policies on the people's lives, especially the workers and peasants.

When it published its first draft 20 years ago, the NDFP RWC-SER had already warned that the globalization policies then being adopted zealously by the Fidel Ramos government would only worsen the country's semifeudal and semicolonial backwardness.

True enough, the NDFP RWC-SER's newest studies begun in mid-2016 revealed how decades of trade and investment liberalization have destroyed domestic agriculture and manufacturing, thus worsening joblessness and poverty.

Unemployment and underemployment now plague half of the country's work force. Of those employed, up to 60% are hobbled by short-term work contracts and 70% receive less than the mandated minimum wages. Given the economy's inability to create enough employment, up to 20% of the country's work force have been compelled to find jobs overseas.

Poverty remains widespread, with 80% of the poor found in the vast countryside. The continuing backwardness of agriculture has moreover worsened food security.

To top it all, the level of human suffering has heightened due to the effects of devastating natural disasters wrought by climate change.

The NDFP's version of CASER

Mindful of the urgent need for thoroughgoing reforms, the drafters of the NDFP's version of CASER built on current Philippine conditions to come up with provisions that are consistent with, but less radical than its 12-Point Program, and could realistically be implemented even within the existing political and legal processes of the GRP.

They examined the country's natural, human, technological and financial resources as well as the economy's current production capacity. Their finding: aptly harnessed, all of these can be the very material conditions for the self-reliant development of Philippine economy and society.

Among others, our country is the fifth most mineralized country worldwide, possessing the basic metals needed for industrial development. We have a variety of renewable and non-renewable energy sources which can reduce our dependence on fuel imports. In terms of energy sources, we have more than a hundred million barrels in oil reserves, almost 2000 megawatts installed capacity of geothermal energy and renewable energy such as hydro, wind, wave, biomass, and solar. Our population is also a huge prospective productive labor force and domestic market.

With many of these basic resources already available, self-reliant Philippine industrial development is not a radical's pipedream. It is, in fact, the most rational way of dealing with other countries' growing protectionism amid the deleterious effects of decades of neoliberal globalization.

In contrast, the GRP's blind insistence on export-led and foreign-dependent growth despite current global realities has already been shown up to be a recipe for disaster.

The NDFP's envisioned economy is far from being isolationist. Only with a self-reliant economy, the NDFP asserts, can the Philippines confidently take advantage of the opportunities presented by the multipolarity that now characterizes the world and seek arrangements that would propel rather than impede her social and economic development.

There are, however, powerful vested interests that for too long have blocked national economic development and social justice.

About 40-45% of the national wealth is controlled by a tiny bloc of local big businessmen and big landlords

who often squander these resources in support of obscenely luxurious lifestyles rather than channel them to more productive use. The combined net worth of the 10 richest Filipinos (PhP2.2 trillion) is said to be greater than that of the poorest 15 million Filipino families.

In no other area is this inequality more glaringly expressed than in the countryside, where land and other resources are monopolized by a handful of landlord clans and mass poverty is at its worst.

Genuine agrarian reform is therefore imperative to correct this historical injustice against the peasantry. It is the key to ending rural poverty. With rural resources finally unleashed and redirected, genuine agrarian reform becomes the starting point for the rapid development of the countryside.

National industrialization—or industrialization by and for the Filipinos—is likewise essential to create jobs and livelihoods for the growing population, to raise incomes, produce goods to satisfy the people's basic needs, ensure rapid and sustained economic growth, and achieve economic independence from foreign domination.

This cannot be done, however, without breaking the domination of big capitalists who exploit the economy and keep it backward. The NDFP puts special emphasis on nationalizing utilities (electricity, water, telecommunications and transport) and mining, because of their vital and strategic role in the national industrialization effort. It calls for the expropriation and nationalization of foreign monopoly capital in these industries to ensure their availability to the people and for national development.

Big compradors will be called upon to redirect their capital and assets towards national industrialization and rural development, instead of concentrating these in service industries like shopping malls that largely cater to the elite.

Four times in 10 months last year, the Duterte regime unreasonably disrupted the peace negotiations, conspicuously during periods when the two negotiating panels had overcome major hurdles in the forging of a common draft agreement on social and economic reforms.

The NDFP has yet to encounter a regime under the GRP that has mustered enough political will to uphold the people's interests above all and implement this immediate program for social and economic progress.

Economic and social reforms in guerrilla zones

Beyond the negotiating table, however, millions of Filipinos have long been waging the most important struggles on a daily basis to realize the reforms embodied in the NDFP's draft CASER.

The most concrete gains have been achieved in the guerrilla fronts and bases in the countryside where the seeds of revolutionary political power have been sown and are beginning to grow.

In areas influenced or controlled by the revolutionary movement, mass organizations of peasants and farm workers launch campaigns to reduce land rent and usurious interest rates, and to raise farm wages and prices of farm products under the minimum program of land reform. They also promote agricultural production through labor exchange and mutual aid teams and other forms of cooperation.

Wherever it is possible, defensible and sustainable, they carry out the maximum program of land redistribution at no cost to the landless tillers.

The NDFP views land reform as the most substantive democratic reform. In fact it is the main content of the national democratic revolution. Together with building the organs of political power and the mass organizations of peasants, women, and youth in the countryside, land reform is the most potent means to gradually erode landlord power and empower a people long oppressed by feudal rule.

Through leaders honed by revolutionary practice, peasant associations use their collective strength to confront landlords and merchant-usurers, engage them in dialogue and assert the peasantry's just demands. The peasants are most persuasive with enlightened landlords who are amenable to land reform, but they are stinging in their approach to despotic landlords who violently suppress the peasantry.

Along with land reform, medical and health services and sanitation campaigns in the villages are carried out both by medics of the New People's Army (NPA) and the

health committees of the mass organizations. Education committees lead efforts to improve literacy and numeracy, impart information and raise the people's consciousness through political education.

The mass organizations also improve the livelihood of the people by launching campaigns to promote production in an all-round way, generate employment, and exercise price control wherever possible.

Also the revolutionary forces have been at the forefront of campaigns to rehabilitate areas stricken by major natural disasters. While GRP officials were nowhere to be seen in the farflung villages of Mindanao devastated by Typhoon Pablo in 2012, NPA guerrillas and revolutionary mass organizations conducted relief operations and spearheaded campaigns to produce vegetables and other crops to stave off the threat of mass starvation. They also helped rebuild the people's devastated homes and other infrastructure levelled by the storm.

NPA fighters have also been called the "green guerrillas" because they have enforced, since the 1990s, a total ban on commercial logging for export in the guerrilla zones.

In 2011, the Red fighters burned down the equipment and facilities of two foreign-owned nickel companies in Surigao del Norte as penal acts against the firms for destroying the people's livelihoods by dumping their toxic mining waste into the sea.

In their daily activities, the NPA and the mass organizations of peasants, women and youth flesh out the principles of democracy by giving primacy to poor peasants who would otherwise be unrepresented in the elite-dominated arenas of public life. They provide platforms for peasant women whose voices would otherwise be unheard because they suffer doubly the burden of poverty and gender discrimination. They harness the energy of the youth to engage in socially productive and enriching revolutionary activities instead of being sucked into the vortex of illegal drug use, gambling, petty crimes and the like that are harmful to themselves and the community.

The NDFP has been undertaking its revolutionary programs even as its leaders and activists— even ordinary civilians suspected of supporting the revolutionary movement—come under constant attacks from big foreign and local capitalists, big landlords, corrupt bureaucrats and the military, whose interests are threatened by the changes achieved by the revolutionary masses.

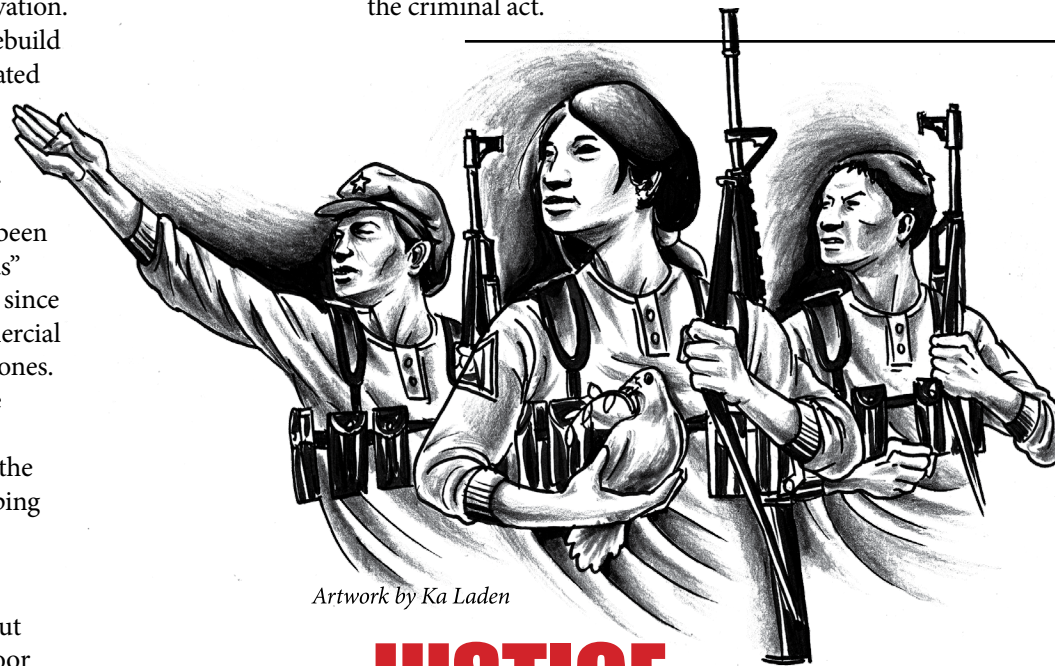
In 1981, for instance, 45 men, women and children from Las Navas, Northern Samar were massacred by paramilitary forces because their community strongly opposed the operations of San Jose Timber Corp., whose sprawling logging concession straddled the boundaries of Samar island's three provinces. San Jose Timber was owned by Marcos' defense chief Juan Ponce Enrile.

In 1999, NPA leader Godofredo Guimbaolibot, who appeared in a documentary being interviewed about the revolutionary movement's programs to protect the environment, was abducted, tortured and killed with four others in Compostela Valley. Executives of mining companies were suspected to be among the masterminds of the criminal act.

NDFP consultant Renato Baleros Sr. and his wife were arrested in 2013 while overseeing the revolutionary movement's relief operations in Samar after the onslaught of Typhoon Yolanda, despite a unilateral ceasefire declared by the AFP in the storm-stricken areas.

For now, the NDFP's gains in the areas reached by the revolution may be modest, but they are real. In very concrete ways, the NDFP is building the foundations of social justice and economic progress. In areas where revolutionary people's governance is at a nascent stage, it is fostering a genuinely just and lasting peace by decisively addressing the roots of the armed conflict.

Away from the negotiating table, the NDFP's draft of the CASER can be used to put the Filipino people's urgent demands for social and economic reforms at the center of public discourse. The people can use it as a basis for organizing and mobilizing themselves in pursuit of these demands. At the same time, they can continue enriching the CASER's content by documenting their experiences as they advance in their revolutionary practice. **LB**



Artwork by Ka Laden

JUSTICE IS THE HEART OF THE REVOLUTION

by Pat Gambao

The reactionary government's rotten justice system has never been so outrageously unmasked as it is now through the Duterte regime's blatant travesty.

In Duterte's controversial "war on drugs", self-confessed and publicly known drug lords get away unscarred while thousands of petty pushers and users, mostly from the poor communities, are summarily executed. In the plunder cases before the Ombudsman involving pork barrel, the regime's department of justice is plotting to transform the most guilty scammer into a state witness.

Chief Justice Sereno's impeachment case exemplifies the crude and desperate way of weeding out perceived obstacles to controlling the judiciary, in Duterte's bid to monopolize power. Twist the laws, disregard the check-and-balance dictum, and get some stupid, ambitious, hopefuls into the plot.

Vilify, force to resign officials (they succeeded with Comelec Chair Andres Bautista) or file a quo warranto case, for good measure. Many retired military officers complicit in human rights violations, such as enforced disappearances, now occupy high positions in the bureaucracy.



“KAGYAT NA PANAGUTIN SA IBA’T IBANG LARANGAN ANG MGA MAY PANANAGUTAN SA TAONG BAYAN AT LANSAGIN ANG MGA SALIK NA NAGBUBUNSOD NG KAWALANG KATARUNGAN.”

Liga ng mga Manananggol para sa Bayan (LUMABAN-NDFP)

The rotten judicial system

Ka Tato, a lawyer from the *Lupon ng mga Manananggol para sa Bayan* (Lumaban), an affiliate organization of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), described the government’s dispensation of justice as muddled, snail-paced, and biased towards the authorities. “This is not surprising because the court is among the instruments of coercion of the ruling class aimed to perpetuate the status quo,” he explained.

He cited Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan, Jr., charged and tried for the kidnapping and disappearance of UP students Karen Empeño and Sherlyn Cadapan and peasant Manuel Merino, as “so far the highest-ranking military official to be criminally indicted for human rights violations in recent history.” However, Palparan enjoys the privilege of being detained in the headquarters of the Philippine Army, to which he belonged, rather than in a regular jail.

The trial of Palparan and his co-accused, Col. Felipe Anotado, M/ Sgt. Rizal Hilario and Staff Sergeant Edgardo Osorio, has dragged on for seven years due to various dilatory tactics of their defense lawyers. The crime happened more than a decade ago, but the trial was concluded on February 15, 2018. How long it will take for the court to promulgate its ruling?

The revolutionary justice system

“The main difference between the justice system of the revolutionary movement and that of the reactionary government lies in each one’s standpoint and viewpoint,” Ka Tato pointed out. The NDFP program, he said, embodies the people’s fundamental rights and freedom and takes into consideration the following: 1) the relations between the broad masses and the exploiting class; 2) the relations among party members; 3) the relations among the masses; and 4) the interests of the sectors. Following are his elaboration on these points:

The People’s Democratic Revolution seeks the social and national liberation of the masses long locked in the yoke of exploitation. Its judicial system thus takes the side of the exploited at all times against the interests of the exploiters.

Friendly relationships among the toiling masses and the progressive forces are ensured by resolving any dispute among them amicably. The interests of every sector are given prime consideration over the interests of the ruling classes.

The revolutionary movement has developed standards for the legal and judicial system at different levels and degrees. These are still being codified according to issues and sectoral interests towards crafting a comprehensive code. The three points of attention and eight basic rules of the New People’s Army (NPA) remain as the standards for military discipline.

There are also rules and guidelines for agrarian reform, children’s rights, relationship between sexes, treatment of prisoners of war (POW), rules on the investigation and prosecution of suspected enemy spies, among others.

The revolutionary forces adhered to human rights and the principles of international humanitarian law in the course of the armed conflict even prior to the signing of the 1998 Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), the first substantive agenda in the peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the NDFP. The NDFP also crafted a Unilateral Declaration of Undertaking to Adhere to the Geneva Conventions and Protocol 1.

All these laws, rules and guides are being observed in the guerrilla fronts by the organs of political power, which create committees or entities to implement them. These are aimed to establish order and dispense justice in the interest, protection, and defense of the masses.

Ka Tato cited the following example:

In March 1999 when the NPA released prisoners of war (POW) AFP Brig. Gen. Victor Obillo, Captain Eduardo Montealto, PNP Major Roberto Bernal and AFP Sergeant Alipio Lozada, the NDFP took the high moral ground as basis—humanitarian grounds and grant of clemency on

the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the NPA. It responded positively to the widespread appeals of well-meaning parties and personages such as Archbishop Fernando R. Capalla, Bishop Wilfredo D. Manlapaz, Msgr. Mario Valle, Atty. Jesus Dureza and Rev. Fr. Pedro Lamata, who composed the Humanitarian Mission; Senator Loren Legarda in a parallel personal initiative; Howard Q. Dee, Chair of the GRP Negotiating Panel; Archbishop Oscar V. Cruz, President of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines; Mrs. Obillo and Mrs. Montealto.

The NDFP negotiating panel ordered the release of the military officers in accordance with the authority vested on it by the NDFP National Executive Committee and the laws and processes of the people’s democratic government (PDG), and in compliance with the CARHRIHL and the NDFP Unilateral Declaration of Undertaking to Apply the Geneva Conventions and Protocol 1.

Observing the Guidelines and Procedure for the safe release of POW, the NPA custodial force turned over the captives to their immediate families through the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Humanitarian Mission, Senator Legarda, and in the presence of some government officials, human rights advocates, and church people.

Punishing a ferocious enemy of the people

The execution of Bernabe “Bantito” Abanilla in February 2016 by the Front Operations Command of the NPA in the provinces of Cotabato and Bukidnon was the punishment for his involvement in the killing of Italian priest Fausto “Pops” Tenorio and former student journalist Benjaline Hernandez, as well as many human rights activists and indigenous peoples who resisted militarization in their ancestral domains. Abanilla was a member of the Citizen’s Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) and the “Bagani Force” paramilitary group in Arakan, North Cotabato.

In October 2011, Tentorio was shot several times inside a parish compound in Arakan Valley,



Artwork by Ka Laden

Cotabato. Four years later, a Special Investigating Team for Unsolved Cases found circumstantial evidence against the Bagani Group. Meanwhile, eight years after Hernandez was attacked by the CAFGU and military in April 2002, in Sitio Bukatol, Barangay Kinayawan, Arakan, the UN Committee, where a complaint of the killing was filed, found the government guilty for violating Hernandez's human rights. Despite these findings, Abanilla continued to enjoy a wicked life in liberty until revolutionary justice finally caught up with him.

The revolutionary movement's people's court

In the Guide to the Establishment of the People's Democratic Government, the justice system is envisioned to have a Supreme People's Court as the highest judicial authority. It may also create special courts if the situation requires. The *Hukumang Bayan* (people's court) is created by the people's government at the provincial, district, municipal and barrio levels. In small and simple cases, the board of judges is composed of three, while in big and complicated cases, especially if death is the imposable penalty, the board is composed of at least nine judges. Judges are chosen based on merit.

The complaints should be detailed and the preliminary investigations thorough before the trial. The people's court will study the sides of both

plaintiff and defendant. Both sides shall be given sufficient time to be heard and can have a lawyer to present witnesses and evidence.

Usually hearings are done in public and any citizen is free to give his/her opinion regarding the case. If necessary, the people's court will request the help of the concerned organ of the PDG to provide insights on the issues confronting the court.

The decision in every case shall be voted upon by the judges. Each judge shall explain before the board his/her vote. Usually, the decision on the case needs a simple majority vote of the board. However, in the case where death is the sentence, the vote should be a clear 2/3 majority. All the decisions shall be read and explained by the presiding judge.

The decision of the lower people's court may be appealed to a higher people's court. However, the people's court may accept a motion for reconsideration of its decision. In cases where death is the sentence, these will automatically be appealed to the highest political and judicial authority of the region and automatically filed with the People's Supreme Court or the standing organ responsible for it.

The people's court on the ground

At this stage of the people's democratic revolution, people's courts are established in the guerrilla fronts. They commonly cover petty crimes

and domestic concerns. Should the situation permit, hearings are done in public.

Arbitration is done by the NPA with local residents to strike a balance in the evaluation of the case. Members of the people's court are chosen based on merit. They should be disinterested parties and not related to the defendants. The people's court is usually composed of nine people. The defense also should undertake careful investigation to ensure that the rights of the defendant are protected. The case undergoes hearings, sentencing, and appeal, as the case may be. The Party section of the NPA is responsible for taking charge of the trial. The Executive Committee of the Regional Committee acts as the review board.

In the case of enemy spies, any tip will be carefully verified before the arrest and trial. Certain political conditions are considered such as the gravity of the offense, the age (minor) and the relationship of the offender with revolutionary forces. Death sentence is the last resort after one is proven guilty beyond reasonable doubt.

Contrary to the claims of its detractors, the NDFP judicial system is no "kangaroo court" because it follows a judicious procedure: investigation, indictment, hearings, sentencing, pardon, and release.

People in the barrios and even the local barangay councils acknowledge that revolutionary justice system is fair, simple, and swift. **LIB**



AN AFTERNOON WITH KA RIO

KABATAANG MAKABAYAN, A PEOPLE'S WARRIOR

by Liberation Staff

Family and school life. Aspirations and life in the struggle. An afternoon with Ka Rio in a guerrilla zone. Listen to this millennial who has defied the norms of a petrified society to bloom and become another hope of the motherland. (The interview was originally published in Filipino.)

Liberation (L): When did you become an activist?

Ka Rio (KR): I first got organized when I was a college sophomore in a local state university. That was at the height of the campaign against tuition fee increase. *Dahil pabibo, e di join-join ako.* (Because I wanted to be everywhere, I joined). You know, the typical adventurous youth. I gathered signatures for the petition against tuition fee increase. The petition helped the students pursue their fight. And we were able to stop the school's plan. But I wasn't consistent then. There were times when I did not join student activities. There was a gap.

But when I joined an environmental investigative mission in one of the provinces beset with a problem on mining, I got agitated. At first, the adventurous me joined because the area was by the seaside. But when I got there, I began to ask questions. Why are the people poor—the peasants, the fisherfolk—when we have these rich resources in the country? From then on there was no stopping. The following Christmas, I went to a community of indigenous people for gift-giving.

L: Were you already a KM (Kabataang Makabayan) member at that time?

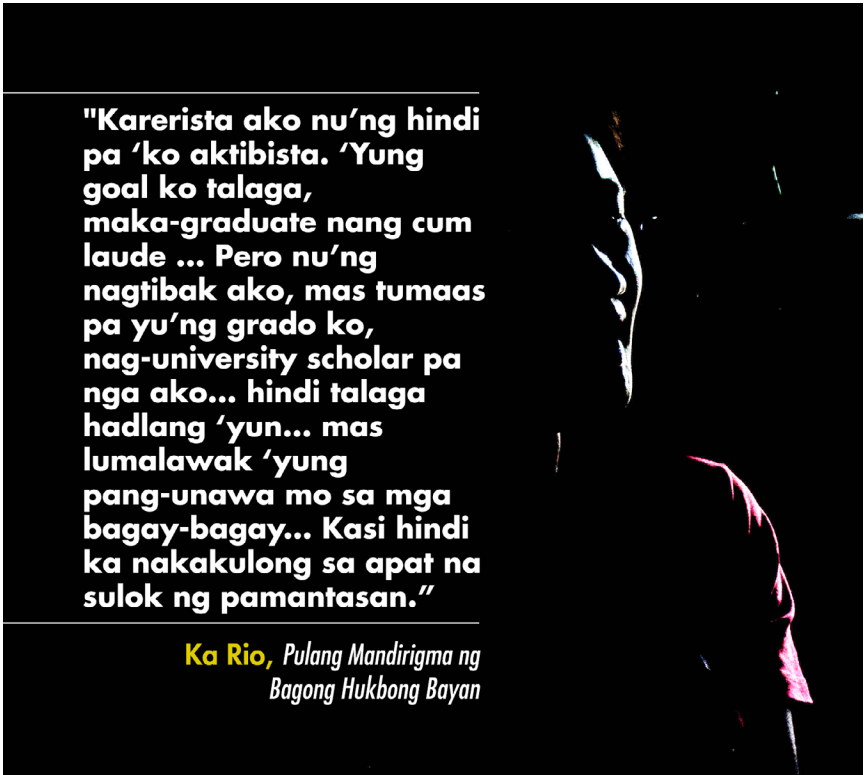
KR: Not yet. (Laughter) I was an eternal KK (*Kandidatong Kontak*, candidate contact, a term used to those who are long-time activists but were not recruited into the KM). It took some more months before I became a KM member. But after I came in, no one could stop me. I joined RTR (room-to-room) recruitment and ED (educational discussions) with the students.

A month after I became a KM member, I attended study sessions in a guerrilla zone. I took up the MKLRP (*Maikling Kurso sa Lipunan at Rebolusyong Pilipino*, a condensed course on Philippine society and revolution).

L: How was your studies after you became an activist?

KR: I attended my classes. Then, the rest of the time, I was in other colleges talking to students, recruiting among them. I did my tasks in the movement simultaneous with my studies. Because I was guided by the principles of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM), I was able to do it. I applied these same principles to my studies, resulting in a much broader and sharper analysis of my school work.

I was a consistent college scholar. I did not pay tuition fees. My mother tolerated my activism because I did not neglect my studies. Even during exams, I continued with my activities outside the school. I went to different provinces. There were times I would ask my professors to excuse me from the exams because I needed to attend to other activities. Since I was a diligent student, they trusted me and granted me permission. I took the exams after the activities. At the time, I was also the president of an academic organization in our school.



L: What course did you take up?

KR: AB Psychology. Once, our academic organization sponsored a “pajama” party which coincided with KM’s study session. Since I was the president of the organization, I could not attend the ED. (Laughter.) I missed the opportunity.

L: Didn’t your teachers or classmates warn you from becoming an activist?

KR: There was a time when many students from our school joined the New People’s Army (NPA), so they assumed my organization was an activist organization and a recruiter for the red army. They did not tell me not to join but only cautioned me, *ingat* (keep safe) they said. OK!

L: You were a scholar. How did you balance your studies and your activism?

KR: I could set aside my studies every now and then and return to it

after the activities. Activism did not keep me from studying. Or should I say my studies did not hinder my activism. Nothing can keep you from fighting if you have the will and commitment to serve the students and the masses.

In my fourth year, I became the chairperson of a university-wide organization. That required much of my time. It was also the time when we had to campaign again against tuition fee increase—explaining to students that the school’s budget should not burden them... *chu chu...* that it was the government’s responsibility. That! So we had another round of petition signing, recruitment, ED, RTR propaganda.

I was able to do all those while studying and working on my thesis and on my OJT (On-the-Job Training, a graduation requirement). My OJT was thrice a week but in between I still

went to school for the campaign, recruitment, and ED. When I think about it, *bongga lang* (top-notch). Tumbling! *Lagare* (literally, a saw; a term used to describe one’s tight schedule and activities).

L: How did activism affect your studies?

KR: Before I became an activist, I was a careerist. My goal was to graduate with laude—cum laude. That! So, I had to maintain my high grades. I had to be a consistent college scholar.

When I became an activist, I got higher grades. I became a university scholar. So, activism is not a hindrance. Actually, it helps you broaden your understanding of things. And you become more intelligent in class, hahaha! It’s true! Because you are no longer confined in just the four walls of the classroom. I applied to my course the theories I learned from the movement, especially because my course is psychology—how society affects the thinking of a person. *Eme!* That!

L: You graduated cum laude, did your parents convince you to work?

KR: After graduation, I did not go home right away. I immediately reported for work in the movement. My mother asked me to come home for a graduation party but I begged off. My high school friends, some of whom also graduated with honors, also wanted a party. But, I only went home months later. The food reserved for me was already spoiled! (Laughter.)

L: What did you do after your graduation? Where did you go?

KR: I went to a community during the school vacation. When classes resumed, I went back

to my school-based activities but I requested my collective not to deploy me in my alma mater because the dean and the professors knew me. Besides, I heard the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) comment that I did not deserve to graduate cum laude because I was an activist *chuva chuva*. That! Bitter! (Laughter.)

L: When did you join the people’s army? How did you prepare for it?

KR: I had spent two years with a youth organization before I went to the countryside. How I joined the NPA was a comedy. I went to a guerrilla zone only to “meet-and-greet” the people’s army. I was just a “joiner”. It wasn’t even for a TOD (tour-of-duty). But when I sat in the orientation on the NPA for the new KM members, I was most affected. So I stayed behind. (Laughter.)

We had an educational festival at the camp that time. One of my companions wanted to join the army. But because he was only 16, he was not qualified. I was touched that at 16 he was ready to join the army while it has never even dawned on me. And I was already 22! I felt ashamed of myself.

Then, there was this military cadre, a peasant, who had difficulty reading. On my way to my tent, I passed by him and he was reading aloud, slowly and in syllables “*Da-pat pag-a-ra-lan* (What need to be learned).” He was in his senior years. “*Ano ba yan!* (What’s this!)” Again, I was touched and told myself, “Stay here, teh! (teh is from the word “*Ate*” used to refer to an elder sister but has now become an expression used among peers). That was it! You see, this man was such a good military cadre

yet he still wanted to read so he could study and hone his tactics in warfare to better serve the people. I told myself, “What are you doing, you’re a college graduate!” (Laughter.)

L: Was it in your plan to join the army?

KR: I didn’t plan to stay behind. It was my companion who was on TOD. I still wanted to study medicine. That was my dream. I had already borrowed a reviewer for the entrance exam in a medical school. My mother knew about it. I also told the people at the camp I wanted to be a doctor. “Then be a doctor here,” they told me. That made sense. Because around seven of 10 sick people in the countryside had not even seen a doctor before they died. It’s such an ordeal for the masses to travel long distance to see a doctor. Some of them die on the road.

I ALSO REALIZED THAT IF I BECAME A DOCTOR I COULD ONLY SERVE THOSE WHO COULD AFFORD IT. SO, I STAYED FOR A MONTH. BUT EVEN BEFORE THE MONTH ENDED, I ALREADY SAID I WANTED TO BE FULLTIME IN THE NPA. ASIDE FROM THE “PRESSURE” FROM COMRADES, HAHHAHA, THE EKLAVU OF COMRADES THAT “GUSTO NGA NATING BAGUHING YUNG CHUVA CHUVA (“WE WANT TO CHANGE), IT WAS MY OWN DECISION TO STAY.

L: *Joining the army is a difficult decision especially for someone like you. But it's even more difficult to persist. How was your more than a year in the NPA?*

KR: Actually, wait, where's my English. Handkerchief, please! (Laughter.)

Well, I am now one year and three months in the army. Of course, life in the NPA is not always fun. It is coupled with sacrifice, loneliness, longing for family, and, yes, for the food out there. Char! (Laughter.) There should always be food in my bag. Even if I don't eat them as long as I see them, it's enough morale booster. It's like go girl, you still have some food here! Hahaha!

The hardest part is not about the long treks but one's morale. Mao has said courage stems from one's consciousness. We have to feed our consciousness, raise our ideological level to overcome hardships. On our consciousness anchors our goal, our principles, our will to fight. I find my strength when I read documents like "I Engage" or the "Diary of Tuy" of Vietnam. You can actually do anything as long as you have the will.

L: *How do you overcome the physical strain, especially for a woman like you?*

KR: Of course, I am capable because... I am big, hahaha! The ascents are indeed back-breaking especially because I have a pack and an armalite. But the comrades will never leave you, they are always there to help. They even carry your backpack if they see you are having a hard time. They help you overcome your difficulties. That's it!

As a woman, it's a hassle during rainy season. Also it's hard not to be able to take a bath. Menstrual period is another burden. But over time, you'll get used to it. Before, I could not even put up a clothesline for my wet clothes. Like, 30 minutes would pass, my shoulder numbed, and I wasn't done with the clothesline yet. After a month, I could easily pitch even my tent.

When I came here, I brought along some wipes (wet tissues, used to cleanse after defecating) for a month's supply. But as days passed, and as the wipes were consumed, I slowly learned to use plant leaves as substitute. Now I know that banana leaves are the softest and the best.

L: *How many women are there in your unit?*

KR: Less than 10; two are married and one of them has a child. If we include the other units, there are 20 in all—an undersized platoon. We are a mix of petty bourgeois from the cities and local folk. Majority are from the youth sector.

L: *What were your other trying moments?*

KR: Perhaps the long walks. I am still adjusting to this, especially when it rains and we pass through muddy paths, where at times the mud is up to my knees. There were also times when we can't turn on our flashlights because the enemy is around.

We had this two weeks of food shortage. We only had galyang (a rootcrop) for rice and another part of galyang for viand. We mashed them together. Even the salt was already wet. I asked myself, "What have I gotten myself into?" Then there was also a time when there was really no rice, no coffee, no sugar. There was really no food supply. The enemies blocked the entry of supplies that even the food of the masses were not allowed. In fact, the soldiers urged the masses to leave the barrios supposedly to prevent them from bringing food to us.

There was a time, too when we were not able to take a bath for 10 days. There were also instances when we were sweating the whole day, then it would rain. Yet, nobody left the army during those trying times.

L: *Have you experienced actual battle? How did you feel?*

KR: The time when we had nothing to eat, that was also my first experience with an actual firefight. I wasn't nervous but the first shot stunned me. At first, we thought a bamboo tree just fell down. But, when we heard the volley of fires, we realized it was no longer just a bamboo tree falling down, hahaha! "*Hindi na 'to kawayan, kaaway na to!*" Hahaha! *Laban na pala 'yun.* (This is no longer a bamboo tree, these are enemies! That was real firefight.)"

Initially, I did not know what to do. I just took my backpack and followed the command. I had a hard time getting to the top of the mountain because of my weight, and the heavy pack and rifle. Presence of mind is important. That's that!

I'll tell you something. It is about food again. (Laughter). That time, we only had two unripened bananas for breakfast. But, the two bananas sustained us to face our enemies in a firefight. *Dalawang saging ka lang* (You're good for just two bananas)! Hahaha! Our two bananas equaled our enemies.

The battle itself was not that difficult. The retreat was more challenging because a helicopter kept hovering over us. We felt it could see us. As first timers our fear was being shot by a machine gun from above. I am energized just by remembering how we overcame those difficulties.

L: *How about when loneliness sneaks in?*

KR: I criticize myself for not sharing my problems. I just stay in my hammock, in my hut and stare blankly at anything. I do try hard to open up to comrades now because it's hard to carry emotional baggages.

MAS MAHIRAP 'YUNG BAGAHE SA ISIP KESA 'YUNG BAGAHE MO NA NAKAPASAN SA LIKOD MO, 'YUNG PACK MO. PAK! (THE BAGGAGE IN YOUR MIND IS HEAVIER THAN YOUR BACK PACK).

Totoo naman, di ba? Mas madaling maglakad na malaya 'yung isip mo. Kahit nga 'yung wala kang dala, kapag may mabigat kang iniisip, ang hirap maglakad, di ba? Mahirap makalayo, mahirap makarating sa gusto mong puntahan. (It's true! It's easier to move around when your mind is free from worries. When your mind is troubled, it's difficult to walk even without a pack, to go far, to reach your destination.)

L: *What experience is your happiest?*

KR: When I witnessed the actual setting up of the people's government — the election of officials, the charting of plans and the one-year program, and the way they govern the barrio. Recently, I got high with the anti-feudal campaign — how it was planned and how the dialogue between the farmers and the traders resulted in the lowering of loan interests. That's it! This was the most successful anti-feudal campaign that the army had launched in recent years.

L: *How did your parents react when you joined the NPA?*

KR: I was home after my graduation, one month before I entered the guerrilla zone and decided to join the red army. After two months in the army, I requested to go home to formally tell my parents that I would go fulltime. The comrades did not allow me. Five months later, I wrote my parents that I had joined the NPA. No reply. (Laughter)

But they later sent word asking me to go home just to dispel people's suspicion that I had joined the NPA. I told them not to mind them; people would eventually grow tired and lose interest in it.

L: Have they visited you here?

KR: Not yet. They are still afraid.

L: How about you? Have you visited them? What was their reaction?

KR: Recently, I went home with my buddy. My mother cried because I had lost weight. Tears of joy! (Laughter). My buddy told me my mother could not stop crying when they talked "because it is only now that Rio has lost weight." My buddy kept on laughing.

When we went to market, my mother remarked, "*Hala, mangongotong kayo.*" ("*Hala*, you are going to extort.") I replied, "*Hala*, is that how you raised me? Did I graduate just to extort? If I wanted to extort, I could have just landed a job. There are more to extort there." (Laughter) She kept silent.

L: Didn't they ever reprimand you? The usual thing parents tell their children: "I sent you to school...!"

KR: I never heard any of that. When I asked my father for some pizza, his reply was: "How much would it cost to put up a pizza store? Come home and just sell pizza." (Laughter) Sell pizza! Haggard! My father knows that food is my weakness. (Laughter). When parents see how decisive and determined their children are in carrying out their work, they eventually support us.

L: How do they support you now?

KR: With food, of course! (Laughter). Once, I "begged" for some groceries. My mother sent me all that I listed down with a note that Papa was waiting for payment. (Laughter). I could not help laughing because now my father no longer asks when I would go home but when I would pay for the groceries. When I went home, my mother and my sister bought me things I needed. My sister even packed my things. Happy! Less worry!

L: How did you prepare them for that?

KR: I did nothing, because I wasn't even prepared myself, hahaha! It was a surprise for all of us!

When I was not yet a KM member, activists would go to our house. They spent Christmas there. My mother asked me if they were activists and I said no. I truly did not know

then if they were activists. I wasn't aware of what an activist was.

L: Did you explain to them what you were doing?

KR: Yes. I told them about our community immersions, the mining, the semi-feudal exploitation, things like those. I told them my experiences in school. They understood of course because they, too, felt the hardships. They see corruption as a cause of poverty. They just need orientation on the correct line. I just need to inject the prime role of imperialism to help them complete their analysis.

L: Did you also share your experiences here in the guerrilla zone? What was their reaction?

KR: Yes. I sent them a letter but when comrades read the letter I was about to send, they said it was not a letter, "This is ED (short for Educational Discussion)."

My parents reaction? E di mayat! (Fine!) (Laughter) But of course, as parents their usual concern is safety. I told them about the land distribution we do. Papa retorted "but the enemies are hunting you." I told him our enemies are those who deprived the farmers of land. My father just lapsed into silence and he simply said, "Take care." They have truly accepted my being here.

L: Love life?

KR: None! (Laughter.)

Once, someone proposed a "program" (a process of courtship within the Party and NPA). I accepted the proposal to see how it will prosper. But, nothing happened. I do not want to enter yet into a relationship. I want to be better in what I do first. Hmm char! But of course, at my age... There was someone I liked. But, *haayyy*. . . he went down (left the revolutionary movement).

L: How do you feel when a comrade leaves?

KR: Of course, I am saddened. I also have buddies who left. Our objective is to sustain their participation, recruit more, expand the army. But then some of those who should be recruiting were those who left for home. *Pero syempre, hindi naman nila iniuwi 'yung rebolusyon* (But of course, they did not take the revolution with them).

L: What are the most valuable things you receive from friends in the city?

KR: What's this, questions in a slumbook? (Laughter). Letters make me happy. But, I am happier when food goes with the letters, hahaha! When there are people coming from another Front or from the city, I always hope, I always ask if there are letters for me. Of course, I miss my friends and comrades in the city. L: What is your most cherished experience?

L: What is your most cherished experience?

KR: Now, this one is really for a slumbook! (Laughter). Plenty, especially in the guerrilla zone.

Like, I told my mother not to worry about me because there are many mothers here who take care of me. You know, when the people's army starts packing our things to leave a barrio, the masses are upset. They did not want us to leave. They wanted the army to stay. Of course, we could not stay in a place forever. We want to go on expanding the movement.

There was also that mother who, because I was single, wanted me to stay and be her daughter-in-law. Another suggested that when I get married, the wedding should be held in their barrio so they could attend. I just smiled when I heard these. Then, there were these simple things they gave voluntarily—shampoo, soap, even a bag. It would be embarrassing not to accept these gifts from them.

We leave a mark among the masses because they feel the warmth in how we relate with them. You know, the masses need not work if the army were there. Somebody from the army cooks, another cleans. The comrades go on shifts in their tasks. That's probably one of the reasons why the masses seem not to want the army to leave, hahaha!

"*Yung kahit gaano kalayo at nakakapagod 'yung lakaran, kapag sinalubong ka nila nang kasing init ng iaalok nilang kape, yun ang pinakamasarap*" (The most gratifying, after a long and tedious hike, is the masses' warm welcome, as warm as the coffee they offer).

L: Have you experienced any difficulty in dealing with the masses?

KR: In the expansion areas in another province, yes. We were also assigned there; just a team. Our task is to hold meetings in the villages and form a GP (*Grupong Pang-organisa*, organizing group). Because it is an expansion area, which had not been visited for decades by the NPA, it was exacting. But since we relentlessly pursued raising their consciousness and explaining the need for a GP, they finally agreed to form one. It seemed difficult to relate with the masses at the

beginning. They were hesitant to put up the GP. But because they looked up to their elders, the most senior in the barrio, we invested on the latter by raising their awareness. So finally, they agreed to put up a GP.

They have issues on the prices of *gabi* (taro root) and ginger. Traders buy these from them at only Php 3.00 per kilo. Then there was also the issue of mining. We explained these issues to them as well as other issues on feudal exploitation.

L: What has changed now that you are with the people's army?

KR: Now, this one is really for Miss Universe! Water, please! (Laughter).

Before, I was shy to face people. Perhaps, this is the breakthrough—I have overcome my shyness. I have also improved on how I deal with people. I can now easily relate with all kinds of people. My perspective broadened. Before, I was full of subjectivism and idealism. "*E bakit ganito? Dapat ganito!*" (Why is it like this? It should be like this!) I had a lot of "should be's" and "why this?" without knowing how things happened. Now, I have become more discerning as I continue to broaden my understanding of things, especially because my tasks include ensuring the high morale of comrades, to help them solve their problems.

Pero syempre, 'yung pinakaimportante du'n, 'yung kapasyahan mo na kapag may gusto ka talagang gawin na pagpapaulad sa sarili mo, syempre ibukas mo 'yung sarili mo sa pag-unlad. Tulungan mo 'yung sarili mo para umunlad ka. Kaya 'yung lahat ng gawain, kung gusto mong matutunan, 'yun 'yung dapat mong maging aktitud. 'Yung gusto mo laging may matututunan. (But of course, the most important thing is your determination to become better, to be open to change, development, and help yourself grow. The right attitude is to learn the different tasks, to crave for new knowledge.) **LIB**

A TREASURED PRIVILEGE

AN INTERVIEW WITH KA GORENG, 75

by Liberation Staff

Her baptism of fire was during the First Quarter Storm of 1970, having been a member of the *Samahang Demokratiko ng Kabataan* (SDK, Democratic Association of Youths). Ka Goreng was then a college student who joined every rally during that momentous period when, she said, a 10-centavo increase in the price of gasoline would send tens of thousands of people protesting in the streets.

Two years after organizing work in the youth sector, she was deployed in trade union organizing where she had the chance to work with the then renowned firebrand labor leader Ka Bert Olalia.

Later on, she was assigned as organizer among the urban poor and other sectors in the urban centers. Her multisectoral organizing experiences have served to hone her skills and steel her resolve to go on serving the revolutionary movement and the masses in whatever task she was assigned to do. Now in her 70s, Ka Goreng has been part of the revolutionary movement for almost five decades.

Liberation (L): How do you feel about the policy that comrades who are in their 70s may now retire?

Ka Goreng (KG): It shows the Party's concern for elderly comrades the way it shows its love and concern for the dispossessed and exploited people it is fighting for. But freedom is something that the Party likewise fights for, thus there's the freedom of choice—of course, a guided choice. As far as I am concerned, I still want to serve the Party and the people through whatever humble contribution I can give for as long as my physical condition allows and I don't become a liability to the revolutionary movement.

L: How do you feel about working with young people, as you are doing again now?

KG: Love it! I never felt I have grown old. I imbibe the youths' vigor and sense of adventure where age might have dulled these. And I do hope I can inspire them and help them grow in my own little way.

L: What qualities do they possess that your generation didn't have?

KG: Perhaps it's not about qualities but about tools. The advance in technology—computer, cellphones, internet, social media, etc.—is to their advantage, an advantage to the advance of the revolution. These should be harnessed to the fullest for the revolution.

L: What qualities do you have that the young cadres don't have?

KG: As far as qualities are concerned I have not much to offer. I can't think of any legacy for them in that respect. Perhaps, I have only some experiences to share. Being young, they are open and malleable. Young cadres' qualities can be honed through consciousness-raising educational discussions, and immersion with the masses to have a feel of the true situation, just the way we were molded before. Again, perhaps we should look into and prepare them for the changes in situations and conditions, on the new qualities of the environment, rather than on personal qualities. Today, the stage for guerrilla warfare has changed—forests have dwindled, US drones are used against the revolutionary forces. Likewise, in the propaganda war the government and its security forces have been fully utilizing the social media for their propaganda as well as vilification blitz.

L: What made you last this long in the revolution?

KG: I believe in the correctness of the revolution, in the justness of the people's war, in what and for whom the struggle is for. These have made me last and wish to continue.

L: Do you have any regrets?

KG: Only that I have so little to give while so many have given their lives. They went to the countryside

to serve the masses and embark on the dangerous but ultimate means to solve the ills of society and liberate the oppressed, to bring about a system where inhumanity will be a thing of the past, where enduring peace will reign at last. I missed that opportunity to be an active participant in the armed struggle, but I do hope that the little things I was able to offer could leave even a shallow mark in the movement.

L: What lessons and insights do you want to impart?

KG: What better lesson and insight can I impart but the quote from the greats: "Workers of all countries unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains and a world to win!"

L: How do you look at the revolution now? Did it change from the time you joined it?

KG: My view of the revolution has not changed since the time I joined the movement. It is still as relevant as it was then. Until and unless the repressive system is smashed, the revolution will have no end.

Of course, the revolution has immensely advanced from the few people and arms it had in the late sixties. The fascist dictatorship was a catalyst. But much of the credit goes to the noble martyrs who have offered their lives to the revolution and to the valiant and determined Red fighters who, with the gracious support of the masses, relentlessly continue waging the people's democratic revolution and reaching an even higher level of advance. This despite the debacle caused by misguided Party elements in the 90s. The Party's second

rectification movement has overcome this and has triumphed over the errors.

L: So far, what was the most enjoyable part of your journey? Difficult? Challenging?

KG: I enjoy every moment of it! It gives me a sense of purpose and a feeling of fulfillment.

Difficult? Answering your questions. It taxed my cerebrum to the max and used up my precious time. Hahaha! Joke lang! If the passion is there, nothing is difficult.

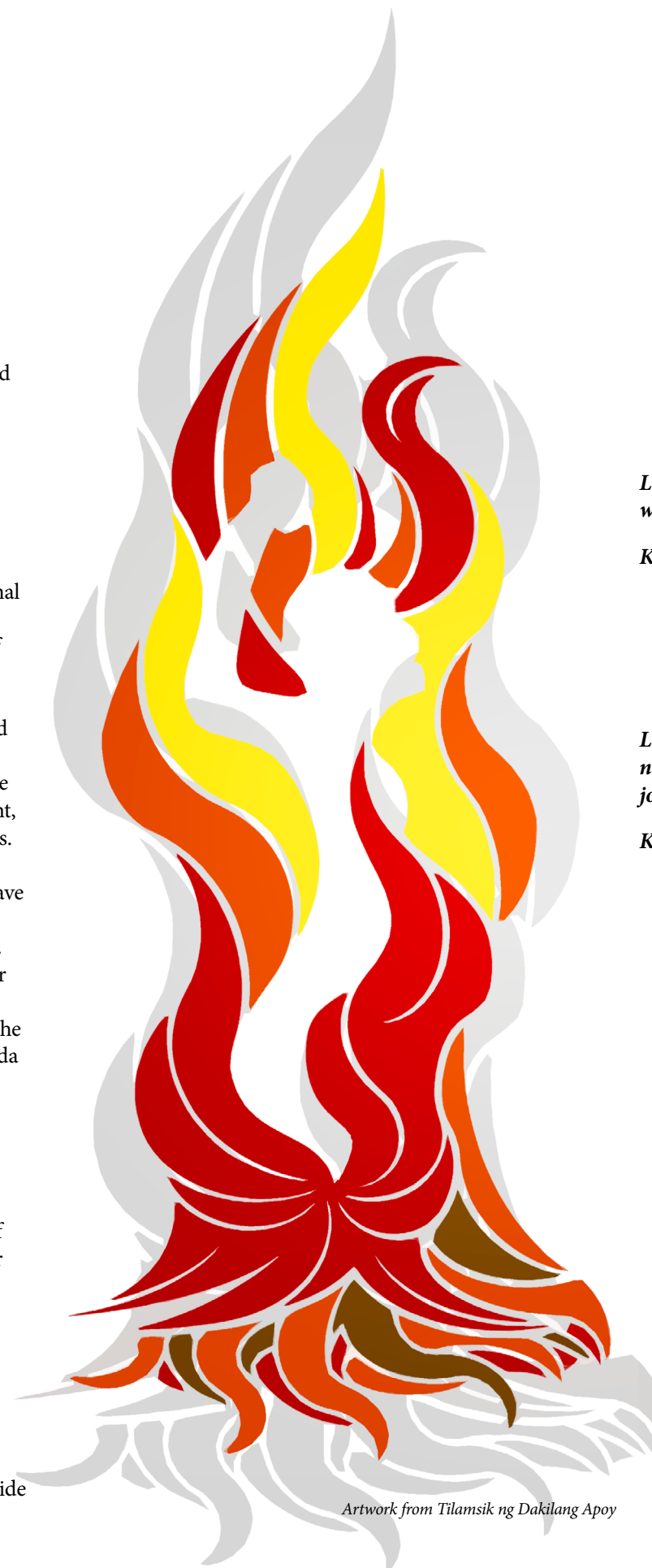
The most challenging tasks I went through, perhaps, were organizing from scratch and grappling with the "rejectionists" to recover from their influence our temporarily disoriented organizations. But these were also the most exciting. There were just a handful of us in the recovery work but we were able to mobilize many to come back into our ranks.

L: How does it feel to be in your 70s and still in the revolution?

KG: Great! It is a treasured privilege!

L: Did you imagine that the struggle would take us this long?

KG: From the beginning, it was made clear to us that this is a protracted struggle and we readily agreed. The ruling classes have all the means to their advantage—the power, resources, the instruments of coercion and repression and the mindset to perpetuate their unjust rule. It is not easy to topple them. It is not easy to dismantle the unjust structures. It is not easy to shake off the attitudes, culture and beliefs that we have been fettered to for a long time to consummate our bondage. Change is not easy to attain. **LIB**



Artwork from Tilamsik ng Dakilang Apoy



Involvement in the
struggle for
socialism
liberates
women

A WOMAN'S STORY: HOW THE REVOLUTION SET HER FREE

by Vida Gracias

She froze. She felt numbed all over her body. That's how Selya instantly reacted when she learned that her daughter, Mina, had been killed. It was in the late nineties.

"*Kubkob*," Selya was told about the incident that cost her daughter's life. But those who brought the sad news to her, Mina's friends, tried to assuage her shock by telling her Mina was unarmed, that she was not a member of the New People's Army (NPA). She was just with a group on an "exposure-integration" stint among the masses in that hinterland area when the incident happened, they said.

But why were guns trained on Mina and her companions, then fired—leaving some of them dead and others wounded? How many bullets shatter Mina's face? Selya's heart ached to its pith as she asked: "*Anong nangyari sa anak ko?* (What happened to my kid?)" Mina was just 22, beautiful, a student leader, and a damn good writer.

A mother lost her daughter

Selya never really had a direct hand in Mina's upbringing, as the latter grew up away from her maternal watch. Of her four children, Mina was the eldest. Though her husband came from a middle-class family he was not a good provider. The couple had to grapple with financial difficulties such that they could

not afford to give their children proper education. Mina's aunt came to the rescue; she took her under her care and sent her to school.

The pain in Selya's heart persisted. She wanted to know fully what happened to her daughter, and why?

She remembered getting a call from Mina telling her, "*Magpu-fulltime na ako*" (I am going fulltime!) What was that about? Selya didn't even understand what "fulltime" meant. Later she learned that Mina was being restricted by her in-laws, slapped a few times, and placed under "house arrest." But Mina persisted in what she had committed to pursue, and found a way to leave the house. Mina said she was going on a one-week

case study of Dolefil Philippines, a pineapple plantation, in South Cotabato.

The last time Selya saw Mina was when she came for a short visit, slept in their house, and bonded with her siblings. Selya noticed that Mina had lost weight and had insect bites on her skin. Her stories hinted of her carrying five kilos of rice on her back and learning how to fire a gun. "*Nagduda na ako* (I became suspicious)," Selya quipped.

Selya went along with Mina's friends to identify her body at a funeral parlor. "*Sa paa pa lang alam ko na* (Merely by seeing her feet, I knew it's her)," said the mother who didn't need to see the whole body to claim it's her daughter's.

Then one by one, people started coming to the wake, sometimes in groups aboard jeeps or trucks. They all came to honor her daughter. Priests, nuns, students, farmers, workers, people from all walks of life. Night after night they shared snippets of stories about Mina. And they were always singing of struggles and of hope. It was through their narratives that Selya came to know more about her daughter's activities, her aspirations, and her deep commitment to serve the people.

It no longer mattered to her that Mina was being tagged as a member of the NPA.

Political awakening

Years later it was Selya herself who was holding a gun. This mother in her fifties took the road that less mothers would have traveled, not just for her daughter's memorial but for all that she had stood for.

Selya felt her bond with Mina becoming closer in her death than in her life. Her love and respect for Mina grew by leaps and bounds. Along with these came Selya's political awakening.

For five years she fought for justice; she went trooping with other mothers and relatives of human rights violations victims to government agencies, demanding state accountability. The

defendants in the case of her daughter's killing were able to post bail on charges for multiple murders—and later were acquitted. She went to almost every rally, every fact-finding mission, and every forum to speak about her daughter's case and those of other victims of human rights violations.

Selya also learned about a lot of things. Having come from humble beginnings, she knew first-hand what poverty was like. But she came to know that poverty was not a matter of fate but a consequence of social and economic inequality, oppression and exploitation by the few ruling classes over the majority over whom they rule. Participating in discussions and forums gave her the knowledge about the class nature of Philippine society. She was convinced about the need for a national democratic revolution to bring about fundamental changes that her daughter Mina and countless others selflessly fought for.

Revolutionary education struck deep. Unknown to many, Selya was a battered housewife. For years she was abused by her husband in more ways than one. She accepted her fate in quiet perseverance. After all she was a devout Christian who as a wife had been made to understand that she must submit to her husband's authority.

As her political consciousness grew deeper and broader, she gradually developed her resolve to break free. Finally, one day she said enough was enough and separated from her husband.

Liberation

It was an act of liberation that her remaining children, in their late teens and early twenties, understood and approved of. But they cried when she told them she was leaving for Mindanao to spend six months in the guerrilla zone. Perhaps they cried even more when she did not return and decided to go "fulltime." On the seventh month of her stint at the guerrilla zone she officially joined the New People's Army.

"*Tama siya. Walang mali sa ginawa niya* (She was correct. There was nothing wrong with what she had done)," Selya declared about Mina. Her own experience in the countryside made her fully understand the choice that Mina had made before her. She put to rest all her questions about Mina's choices that led to her martyrdom at such a young age.

Meanwhile, Selya became an inspiration to her younger comrades. She did not ask for any special treatment, although she was in her fifties. She would do her tasks just like the rest, carrying her own load in long treks and participating in military trainings.

Trusting in her maturity, she was asked to take charge of the NPA prisoners of war (POWs) while in protective custody of her unit, specially a town mayor who was awaiting trial before a people's court. She would see to the POW's daily medical check-up and engage him in discussions about the NDF's 12-point program. Later, after the mayor admitted his sins and asked for forgiveness, he was set free and became an ally of the movement.

"*Pag andon ka, wala ka nang hahanapin pa* (Once you are there, there's nothing more you would wish for)" was how Selya defined her life in the countryside under the governance of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). For sure there are material comforts not available in the guerrilla zones; there are ever-lurking threats of military attacks, but it is here in the ranks of the revolution where ordinary folks become whole and enjoy their newfound freedoms.

And so it is with Selya. With eyes sparkling, she speaks of having found a new love in her life with a comrade in arms. And her children respect her right to such new love. "*Pinalaya ko na ang aking sarili* (I have liberated myself)," declared Selya. And her comrades are only too happy to see her smiling so sweetly. **LIB**

POLA: A WOMAN TOILER TURNED WARRIOR

(Adapted from “Manggagawa, Mandirigma” by Ka Lina published in Ulos 2016)

With the persistent pursuit for gender equality, women have transcended the patriarchal norm that a woman’s place is in the sanctity of home. With the advance of capitalism, women have entered new arena where their capability, vitality and intellect are recognized or rather harnessed. Yet as women toilers in factories and business establishments, they continue to experience the same degree, if not greater, of discrimination and exploitation.

Initiation to the world of the working class

Raised in a poor family who eked out a living from peddling food stuff for snacks in their barrio, Pola managed to finish high school but failed to pursue her dream of a college degree. Instead, she enrolled in a two-year course in a vocational school through the government’s “study-now-pay-later program”. In that so-called dual training, their only claim to being a student was the ID issued to them. They didn’t have a permanent classroom to pursue formal studies. Perhaps there really was no need as all they were taught to familiarize with different materials wires, connectors and how to tape them together to assemble the harness of a vehicle. All they were taught were companies’ business concerns. In a semi-feudal society that served as mere supplier of semi-finished products to transnational corporations, perhaps those were all they need to know.

After three months, Pola and her classmates were sent to a factory for on-the-job training as part of the course. They were supposed to be student trainees yet they were made to work like regular workers as relievers or substitutes to absentees. They received P240 per day’s work, part of which

went to payment of their tuition fees. The remaining one and a half years of the course were spent in the factory with such meager pay and without any benefit, not even the mandatory social security for workers.

Despite the rigor of the job, Pola worked hard, patiently waiting for the training to end in the hope that she would be taken in as apprentice. She got the job, true, but it did not take long before she was laid off.

Travails of a woman toiler

Thus began Pola’s rollercoaster journey into the world of commodity labor, exacerbated by the onslaught of imperialism’s neoliberal globalization as it dashed fumbling for a panacea to its crisis. The woman’s values of good-naturedness, patience and subservience inculcated by a feudal class society were fully taken advantage of.

Pola later applied as a saleslady in a well-known mall in their province. But she resigned after a month. She could not stand the difficult working condition and the ridiculous and repressive policy of the establishment. For a measly wage, she had to remain standing the whole day to reach her quota for the brand of dress apparels she was selling. There was a time when she was reprimanded for bringing her handkerchief inside the store without first registering it. Personal belongings had to be registered before bringing them in lest you would be accused of stealing.

From the job in the mall, Pola worked in an electronics company where she assembled “male” and “female” terminals used in television sets. But after more or less four months, her contract ended. This was the endo (end of contract) they call in the labor lingo.

Pola ended up in a food factory, where she was hired through an agency. With a spoon, she raced after the cups of noodles to determine if the noodles and condiments were of the right quantity or if needed to be reduced, add on, or changed. Also, if the machine that put on the cup lids was out of order, she had to do it manually. They worked by shifts in the factory. There were three shifts in all. But if a worker for the next shift was absent, she was obliged to take over and work up to 16 hours. Then again, it was endo after five months.

Pola also tried working as caddie in a golf course. She was an umbrella girl who trod on the heels of the golfer to shed him from the sunlight. But unable to stand the harassment from her bosses, she left the job after two months.

Through an employment agency in Makati, Pola was back as a factory worker. This time it was in a company manufacturing plastic lids for bottles of lotions, medicines,

etc. Initially, her job was trimming the extra plastic around the lids to even them out; later, she was transferred to the packaging section. Sometimes, she relieved the operator of the machine that molds the lids.

As trimmer her quota was 6,000 plastic lids a day. Due to the thinness of the lids and the absence of a protective devise, her fingers often got wounded. As instant remedy, she would put on some adhesive tapes. But in the long run, her fingers have become numbed that she would not mind at all anymore. If she had not reached her quota, she was obliged to go on “overtime-thank you”, meaning overtime without pay. Again, after five months, endo. But she could continue working there as an “extra” doing the same work, but with lower pay and without a contract.

Since life is difficult for Pola, any job is a welcomed treat just to earn a living.

The dawning of revolutionary consciousness

One day, coming home from an arduous day’s work in the factory, Pola met some students who stayed in their community. She was invited to sit-in to their discussions on the Philippine society and revolution. That awakened her to the stark realities the immense oppression and exploitation of workers like her, as well as of peasants, professionals, youth, women and other sectors in society. She learned that their affliction was not destined. It was designed a sinister scheme of the ruling class to hold on to power and wealth. But the greatest lesson she learned from their discussions was the solution to the people’s problems.

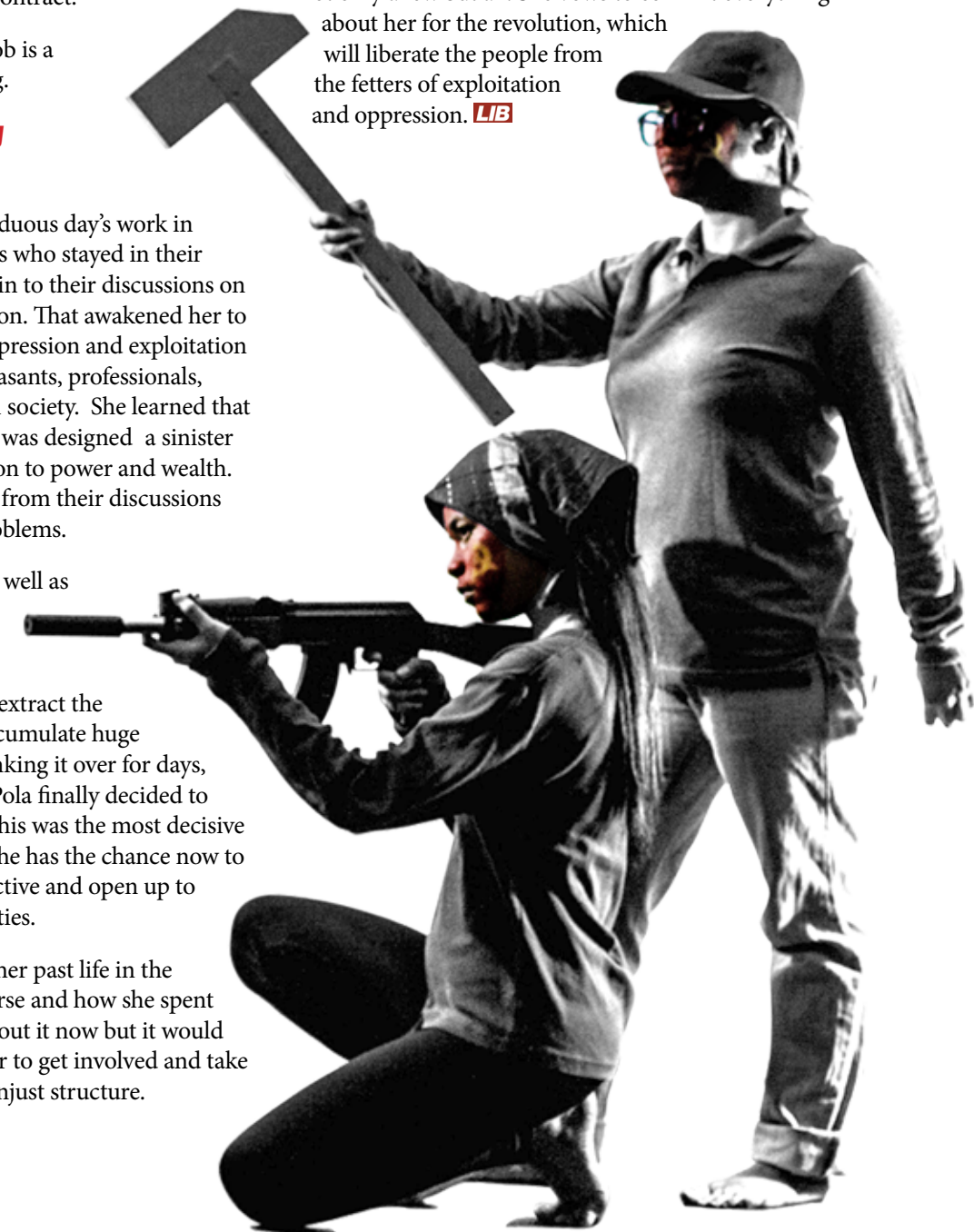
Pola could not contain her rage, as well as anxiety, with that realization. All along she had been entertaining the thought of leaving her job in the factory which did nothing but extract the workers life blood and sinew to accumulate huge profits for the capitalists. After thinking it over for days, weeks, and on to several months, Pola finally decided to work full time in the movement. This was the most decisive action she took in her whole life. She has the chance now to look at life from a different perspective and open up to new opportunities, best opportunities.

Sometimes, she reminisced about her past life in the factory, in the mall, in the golf course and how she spent it in vain. She could do nothing about it now but it would serve as a potent inspiration for her to get involved and take action to change this oppressive, unjust structure.

Smashing the chains

After more than a year of working in an urban center, Pola is now Ka Lina, a red warrior of the New People’s Army. She no longer held spoons, wires, connectors, dresses, umbrellas or plastic lids. She now carries an armalite. The broad countryside is her school and each day they delve into the strategies of the people’s war that will topple the semi-colonial, semi-feudal structures that oppress the people.

She is optimistic about the future, not only hers and her family’s, but also of the coming generations. Although she may not live to see victory, she is confident that time will come when the wealth that the people produce will serve not only a few but all. She vows to commit everything about her for the revolution, which will liberate the people from the fetters of exploitation and oppression. **LIB**



CLEARING

by Jason Montana

Before we go again,
Before the day breaks,
An hour lights my eyes,
Begins as thick fog

All over slowly lifting.
A school on a ridge
Is first to awaken
As yet without children.

We have come as second learners.
The breeze sends an easy chill
To my blood. Below us
A ricefield expertly engineered

Shapes like a bay
Opening to the lure of clouds
And designs of early mountains.
The mists strip further,

And the vision is of peasant
Skill in *kaingin* clearings
And grass huts claiming proud
Paddies, communal waterways

And generous tiered forests.
Step by terrace our tasks
Unfold. The silent movement
Of guerilla levels

Like a rare plateau of time,
A rugged valley at another.
We see hamlets encircling
But incompletely strung together.

Now the old trails have new meanings.
We must open frontiers
And construct aqueducts
From distant springs to village jars;

From the toiling masses
To the Party and the People's Army;
Key links criss-crossing the uneven
Terrain of spiralling dialectics.

This vast space now shines
Facet by facet as time bends
And signals the stir of dogs
And roosters. There is smoke

Rising from a crowd of betel
Nut trees. We are only on a hill
After all, and precisely
Do taller realities stand

Around us, some unpeaked.
The morning is a protracted struggle.
The people are here. We are here.
Already to this mountain

We add the weight of the working class.
How can we not win?
In a matter of minutes
The half-moon surrenders to the sun!

"Clearing" was lifted from the book with the same title by Jason Montana, the revolutionary name used by Fr. Dave Albano, one of the founding members of the Christians for National Liberation (CNL) in 1972. Fr. Dave went underground during the martial law years and worked among the peasants and the red fighters in the Cordillera. Later he went back to priesthood and supported the struggles of the peasants in Cagayan Valley. He passed away in March 2018.

The NDFP salutes Ka Dave Albano.

We add the weight of the working class.
How can we not win?
In a matter of minutes
The half-moon surrenders to the sun!

Jason Montana

