

# ***LIBERATION***

**VOLUME XXXIX NO. 1** | Published by the National Democratic Front of the Philippines | **April 2022**







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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***LIBERATION***

is the official publication of the NDFP  
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## ABOUT THE COVER

The army that wields the pen is indispensable. Literature and art are powerful weapons as they unite and educate the people, and defeat the enemy.

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# PROPAGANDA



## in the Time of Elections

Elections have always been occasions for candidates to use reactionary propaganda to spread lies, fakery, and deceit.

The 2022 national elections is no different. As the campaign heated up, candidates at various levels also sped up their propaganda machinery to woo the electorate through timetested and worn-out promises. Spoken like a mantra, each candidate repeated the buzz words they think would earn them the people’s trust: a better life. Such narrative also became the source of people’s frustrations and loss of trust not just in traditional politicians but also in the electoral process itself.

But reactionary propaganda took a new turn for the worse with the increasing dependence of people on social media. The use of trolls and social media influencers became a must to ensure the victory of Duterte in the 2016 presidential election. But for this election, it has become more pronounced and massive.



The fakery and disinformation were spread like virus in all social media platforms to prop up not only the image of the Dictator Marcos and his family but also absolve them of their crimes of murder and plunder. This historical revisionism, such as hailing the martial law years as the “golden era” in Philippine history, attempts to overturn all efforts throughout the decades to hold the Marcoses accountable. The “propaganda” machinery of the Marcoses has been milling disinformation for decades now. By this time, “Marites” (slang for rumor mongering) has gone normal and facts stubbornly resisted.

Likewise fanaticism and fatalism proliferated—“*bahala na, makikita natin pag nakaupo na* (we will know their real intentions once they’re in power),” respect my opinion and “respect my choice”—which played well with Marcos lies and false claims.

In support of the Marcos narrative the regime red-tagged the growing anti-Marcos/Duterte forces and candidates to derail its campaign momentum.

But as usual, the cacophony of false claims, campaign

promises, and questionable narratives drowned out the people’s issues. Even if carried by candidates for sheer hypocrisy the people’s issues were devoid of content or substance. Only a few progressive candidates have a grip of the country’s issue: the dominance of foreign interests in the economy, sell-out of sovereignty, landlessness and plunder, low wages, import liberalization, lack of national industries, corruption, political dynasties, and human rights.

What is even disconcerting is that today’s dominant narratives have served to sharpen the division among Filipinos: the *masa* versus the elite. Supporters of contending candidates bickered and “unfriended” each other both virtually and in real life. While they called each other names: *bobo* (stupid), uneducated, and *bayaran* (paid hacks), the ruling classes could just “peacefully” settle their differences through the electoral process. Divide and rule has been successfully used by the ruling classes as far back as the era of the Spanish conquistadores. It still works well today.



It is unfortunate because despite the bickering and fanaticism by supporters, the people all share the same frustrations and disgust not just over the rotten electoral system but also over the country's semicolonial and semifeudal system. They also share the same love, common hopes and dreams for a better life, and a government that genuinely serves the people.

Hence progressives and revolutionaries must muster all they've got to counter reactionary propaganda and spread revolutionary propaganda in all its forms, in the election period and beyond. The battle lines have been drawn on and off social media, in mainstream media, and on the ground. The entire national democratic movement is a propaganda army, with open and underground networks, that though less in means is superior in passion and dedication. When you have the people, nothing is impossible.

The national-democratic narrative—expose the ruling system, unite all the anti-Marcos/Duterte forces, the elections is basically a farce, national democracy is the road to real change—these and all, must be pursued vigorously in propaganda work until in time it becomes the dominant narrative. Every revolutionary can do no less.

Every activist must learn to become a keyboard warrior and master guerrilla tactics in propaganda work to defeat the enemy trolls and influencers. However, nothing beats having ground troops doing propaganda and organizing work among the masses. The virtues of mass work and mass line have never failed propagandists to become experts in their fields.

Arousing, organizing, and mobilizing the masses is the best way to counter all lies, disinformation, and fakery. It is the same tactic that will deliver victory to the national democratic movement and its allies, in this election and beyond. **LIB**





*by Pinky Ang and Priscilla Guzman*

Because it does not, cannot, and may never speak the truth, the Duterte regime is engaged in a losing “propaganda war” against the revolutionary forces, the progressives, and other government critics. It cannot win against the revolutionaries because revolutionaries speak of a shared belief and common aspirations with the masses—the twin source of every revolutionary’s truth.





The NTF-ELCAC (National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines don’t mind that their “propagandists” wrote *52TH* instead of 52nd on anti-CPP tarpaulins posted in strategic locations all over Metro Manila; or “*babe*” instead of *babae* (women) in a hastily produced supposed poster of Gabriela Women’s Party they planted among the things they allegedly found in the possession of arrested “members of the New People’s Army;” or, if those photos of NPA “surrenderers” float like ghosts as these were transported from place to place through Photoshop.

That’s the least of their concern. All they want is to prepare the ground—through lies, disinformation, and red-tagging—for the “final kill” of their targeted victims.

This despicable act is a futile attempt to hit two birds with one stone: demonize the revolutionaries and progressives and get away with their crimes, topped by murder.



Neither the people’s concerns over its bungled pandemic response, nor the ballooning debt it has incurred in their name disturb the regime. It doesn’t care about China or the US trampling on our sovereignty; or the peasants’ continuing landlessness; or the workers losing their jobs or earning a non-living daily wage. The regime will never take serious attention to the people’s basic interests and rights. Its prime concern is how to prop up the crumbling semicolonial and semifeudal system and safeguard the lot and loot of the ruling elite.



Much has been said about the NTF-ELCAC and the AFP—the Duterte regime’s vaunted “prop war” instruments. About how vainly they have tried to discredit and demonize the revolutionaries and other concerned Filipinos who perseveringly have served the people and amplified their voices of protest and life-struggle. To the NTF-ELCAC top echelon and its cabal of “spokespersons” anyone who serves the people and questions those who do the people harm is deemed an “enemy of the state”—and worse, a “terrorist”.

And they call this practice as “propaganda” to justify their multi-billion peso budget for fabricating and spreading lies in an “all-out war” against the revolutionary movement and the Filipino people.

“Ignorant twaddle,” that’s how Mao Tse Tung would have dismissed such practice.



**BABAE AKO, HINDI "BABE"!**

Para sa kaalaman ng NTF-ELCAC at ng AFP, ang motto ng Gabriela Women's Party ay: "Para sa babae, bata, at bayan". Hindi "para sa BABE". **Sobrang desperasyon at kainutilan na, ispelang lang, di pa magawa?** O talagang sadyang mga sundalong manyak na mahilig mang-catcall ng "BABE" ang nagprint kaya yun ang na-print na poster para siraan ang kababaihang lumalaban?

#LabanGabriela

#AbolishNTFELCAC



## “No social investigation, no right to speak”—Mao Tse Tung

To the revolutionaries, a basic tenet of propaganda is that it should be based on facts, or what objectively exists. But it doesn't stop there. One seeks truth from facts—where the interrelation of events is established by a thorough investigation of the actual conditions and movements in society, within the country and elsewhere.

“We should find the internal relations of the events occurring around us,” Mao Tse Tung advised. “And in order to do that we must rely not on subjective imagination, not on momentary enthusiasm, not on lifeless books, but on facts that exist objectively; we must appropriate the material in detail and, guided by the general principles of Marxism-Leninism, draw correct conclusions from it.”

For Mao, anything not based on thorough investigation is nothing but ignorant twaddle.

Admittedly, this is an extremely difficult task for the lazybones in Duterte's NTF-ELCAC. After all, their only concern is to red-tag those whom they consider as “enemies of the state,” oftentimes using twisted logic and visualized through crass and sloppy memes and posters. It's an easy way out of the crimes they committed; no need to study to substantiate their arguments.

Unlike the reactionary government, the revolutionaries have no huge budget for intelligence work, for personnel and production, and a rare space in the corporate mass media. But it is in every revolutionary and activist's heart to propagate the people's struggle and their dreams to have food on their tables, to send their children to school, to be treated by a doctor when ill, a house to live in, a farm to till, a job with a decent wage, and a government that would ensure that these interests are fostered and protected.





What comes out from the mouth of every revolutionary reflects the poor people’s actual situation—

their struggles and triumphs and their aspirations for a better life. Propaganda comes from a never-ending study of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist theories applied in the realities of the country and through integration with, and learning from, the masses. From this, the revolutionary movement continues to study Philippine society—the classes and their interests—and advance the theory and practice of the national democratic revolution towards its socialist future.



Every revolutionary speaks of the people’s interests and aspirations, their struggles and their

triumphs and how they are empowered and charting their own course through their collectives, their revolutionary mass organizations, and through the organs of political power established in the villages.

However, every reactionary regime and its “propagandists” hate to admit there exist two governments in the country today—the rotten reactionary government which they try to deodorize, on the one hand, and the revolutionary government that steadily spreads in most parts of the country, on the other.



## Ignorant twaddle

The ruling class(es)’[big landlords, big comprador bourgeoisie] “propaganda war” is based on lies hatched and propagated mostly by a billion-peso funded task force, namely the NTF-ELCAC, (including the PCOO and the troll farms). It scanned the revolutionary propaganda materials but, after it declared a “propaganda” war, instead of directly countering the truths of the revolutionary messaging—as one would reasonably expect—its “strategic communication thrust” has prioritized attacking the messengers of the revolutionary and progressive propaganda.



Yes, the “prop” war launched by the reactionaries lacks courage to face head-on the meatiest issues of the new national democratic revolution. For example, it has not responded to the revolutionary or even to the legal, unarmed progressive movement’s calls for land reform.

As everyone knows, the agricultural Philippines’ most pressing problem that’s also at the root of restiveness remains the extreme deprivation of its hardworking yet landless farmers. Most agree there

must be a genuine land reform program. The New People’s Army has been gaining fighters and mass support because of its land reform program, among others.

In contrast, the AFP—in the service of the big landlords and bourgeois compradors expanding mining concessions, plantations, and land-use conversion projects—has been bombing and strafing the farming communities demanding land reform or defending their ancestral lands.





Edited photo of “surrenderers” published by 9th ID, PA

Meanwhile, the NTF-ELCAC has been fart-bombing the same farming communities with red-tagging and brutal censorship. It has resorted to threats and intimidation and its money-making venture of staging fake surrenders of supposed revolutionaries and supporters.

The AFP and the NTF-ELCAC have plagued even unarmed community members and supporters resisting semifeudal exploitation with all sort of baseless accusations to justify its attacks against said communities.

Note that all reactionary stock “propaganda” spiels revolve around attacking the messengers (the revolutionaries and their unarmed activists and supporters) rather than the revolutionary or progressive analyses and demands they articulate. Hence, it appears the reactionary “prop” centerpiece is its noisy red-tagging and baseless “terrorist”-labeling.

However, the AFP and the NTF-ELCAC’s joint efforts to mislabel and demonize the revolutionaries, the open progressive mass movement, and critical members of society, have no factual grounding. No new offering or promised illusion of development or peace; and on top of that, it’s even costing the public a lot of money. This “propaganda” war runs counter to the Filipino people’s demand for genuine solutions to their unending crises.



## The role of US imperialism

Demonizing groups without factual basis, and worse, proceeding with it even when the manufactured “bases” have repeatedly been proven and exposed as false, are the hallmarks of the US-led borderless “war on terror.” It demonizes as “rouge states” and enemies those who would resist the US global hegemony.

It is no surprise that the AFP, which was organized, ideologically trained, armed, and even funded to this day by the US, kills and maims our people in line with the US global “war on terror.” Since 1946, the US has maintained the Philippines as its neocolony, with the Philippine government functioning as the imperialist’s puppet and agent. The more the local puppet government adheres to US imperialist dictates to advance the latter’s interests here and in the region, the more it enriches its dynasty and cliques, and the more it holds on to power.





In the end

Although the reactionary “propaganda” war led by militarist clowns or spokespersons may seem loud and all over the place, ultimately it can’t help but turn off the masses rather than win their hearts and minds. Cowardly evading the issues propelling protests and civil war is one glaring weakness of the reactionary “propaganda” war. Thus, Filipinos would typically dismiss it as “*puro kwento, walang kwenta*, (all talk no substance),” or judge it as “*malayo ang tapal sa sugat*” (the solution is way off the problem).

Another characteristic of the reactionary “propaganda” war is traitorous deceit. It aggrandizes its terror-tagging drive as “propaganda;” covers up its hawkish stance with affectation for seeking peaceful means. Yet, it’s nothing but provocation and justification for armed brutality against the Left.

Every baseless terror-tagging and provocation sets up the targets for censorship, killing, illegal arrest, arbitrary freezing of bank accounts, and other state bullying and acts of violence.

READ

A Propaganda War with Dire Consequences





This “propaganda” war directed by NTF-ELCAC and its “whole-of-nation approach” against the revolutionaries is cruder and more bankrupt than their “propaganda” in the past. Back then, they cobbled some pseudo-theories for change or development myths in a vain attempt to counter the revolutionary calls for social, political and economic changes. This time there is neither new land reform program nor push for industrialization that the ruling classes could use to counter the popular programs for social and economic reforms that the national democratic revolutionaries are implementing in the guerrilla zones.

Even so, Antonio Parlade Jr, Lorraine Badoy and their ilk of “spokespersons” and their “propaganda” war of “terrorist” mislabeling must be exposed—and frustrated—for its utter lies and dogged pursuit of a dirty war against the broad masses of the people.

After all, the reactionary “propaganda” is nothing but the ruling class(es) flinching over being described (with tons of evidences) as butchers, landgrabbers, exploiters, oppressors, puppets of foreign imperialists, corrupt, inutile (in the face of

disasters, epidemics, people’s needs), human rights violators, among other heinous crimes. All these accurately describe what the ruling class(es) actually do. Not only the revolutionaries

and supporters in urban areas and countryside say so, the criticisms reverberate even in other countries and international agencies. **LIB**







# HOW FILIPINO CHRISTIANS TURN REVOLUTIONARY IN THE NAME OF THE LORD

B O O K R E V I E W

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*by Pinky Ang*

A year before they celebrated their golden anniversary, the Christians for National Liberation (CNL) put out a book, “A Commentary on the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,” published by the International Network for Philippine Studies in 2021. Consisting of 377 pages and bearing such a serious and plainly basic title, the book hopefully is neither overwhelming nor uninteresting sounding as to hinder from reading it those who may be curious about the Philippines’ revolutionary Christians.

Some may find the phrase “revolutionary Christians” a contradiction in terms. But the commentary helped clear up the CNL’s position on many issues plaguing the Christians and non-Christians: a Christian can’t help but become revolutionary in pursuing God’s Kingdom as the Reign of truth, justice, peace, love, equality, and liberation.



The CNL was established on February 17, 1972 by revolutionary Christians and Marxists (bishops, priests, pastors, nuns, deacons and deaconesses, novices, postulants, seminarians and the laity). An underground revolutionary mass organization of Christians, it is one of the pillars of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), whose founders include the former priest Luis Jalandoni, who headed the NDFP's peace panel for more than two decades.

In the past 50 years, the CNL has educated its ranks and shown by its practice, “the principled and revolutionary complementariness of Christianity and Marxism in the revolutionary process of fighting the basic problems of US imperialism, domestic feudalism, and bureaucrat capitalism, that are safeguarded by the fascist state and its reactionary army and police.”

“The CNL has come a long way since the 1970s, when priests, pastors and religious men and women gathered regularly to share and discuss their growing politicalization and their conviction that the National Democratic movement was the way towards the liberation of the Filipino people,” said Coni Ledesma, also a CNL founding member. Ledesma recalled that it was in the process of integrating and struggling with the masses—responding to Pope John XXIII's call for such integration—that the pastors, priests, and religious became revolutionaries.

Christian believers compose 94% of the Philippine population, 84% of them are Roman Catholic and 10% belong to other denominations. Noting a lot of significant insights in the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, the CNL believes that if reinterpreted well in the context of Philippine realities and experiences, these insights can inspire the Filipino people to understand their history, root out the basic problems in Philippine society, and unite on how such basic problems could be resolved.

Jose Maria Sison, founding chair of the Communist Party of the Philippines and chief political consultant of the NDFP peace panel, said the CNL is “excellently qualified to put forward its commentary on the basis of its long experience, sustained work, sacrifices and achievements in working with other revolutionary forces within the NDFP and with the broad masses of the people since 1972.”



## Revolutionary religious commentary

A peek at its contents, one gets the impression that the book aspires to be a friendly and helpful read. It has an unusually generous table of contents—with almost a summary of the topics discussed. Each topic is grounded not just in history but also in the realities and concrete situation of the people. The groundbreaking book divides into eight topics the revolutionary Filipino Christians’ views and actions on the social doctrine of the Church. This is no easy feat.



### A Preliminary Overview

makes clear the tools for analysis (the revolutionary ideology) and the historical context used to guide the readers on to the next topics. The Overview lays down in readable language the historical and present contexts of the social doctrine of the

Roman Catholic Church and offers a reinterpretation and contextualizing of the prophets’ and Jesus Christ’s teachings and mission.

These reinterpretations and contextualization processes serve as the overall spirit of the book.



From the Marxist viewpoint, they unflinchingly survey the Church history and teachings vis-a-vis the realities on the ground and from there, show how, for example, atheism has become a plain justification of the Christian Churches' partiality for capitalism.

In the overview, the CNL counsels that "the Christian Churches must be vigilant so that the two aspects of the Church's Social Doctrine would not become the spiritual cloak for capitalism." It also deals with the rise of modern revisionism and the restoration of capitalism in socialist states. The preliminary overview is capped with CNL's "contextualized reinterpretations towards the socialist path."

The second topic, **"On Poverty and Inequality, and What Can Be Done,"** provides a look into the "social pyramid and poverty," the contradiction between rich and poor, and the tack of both conservative and radicalized Christian faith on poverty. It delves into the root causes of poverty and how it can be resolved. Particularly for the Filipino people, it proposed four inter-related mass movements in the struggle against poverty and inequality.

Substantial discussions are included in the succeeding topics: **On the common goods, the universal destination of goods, and private property; On the contradiction between capital and labour, and how it can be resolved; On monopoly capitalist globalization—quo vadis humankind; On terrorism, war, violence, and worldwide peace.** In the 7th topic, CNL boldly declares that "Only when monopoly capitalism, the ideology of imperialism, would be replaced by scientific socialism could the global environment fully recover and be safeguarded."

Throughout the discussion, the book emphasizes the evils of monopoly capitalism that has caused the "dramatic material poverty of billions of people in the world" and the need for radical change to pursue genuine development for the oppressed and exploited peoples of the world.

In its concluding remarks, which is also the 8th topic, CNL discusses God's kingdom as the reign of truth, justice, peace, love, equality, and liberation.





More than a commentary on the social doctrine of the Church, the book explains why Filipino

Christians can and do embrace Marxism and the national democratic revolution with a socialist perspective, despite the oft-repeated vilification of communists eschewing religion. It explains how the Filipino revolutionary Christians actually kept the faith in Church, Jesus Christ, and the Lord God—and showed why the communists are in fact, as Pope Francis once said, true Christians.

The CNL observes: “Particularly here in the Philippines, developing the complementarity between Christianity and Marxism can have different forms. Like the stance of most of the Philippine bishops in both the Catholic and Protestant Churches, there is no more place to be silent or to take the middle road of not being identified as “rightist” or “leftist” but to speak out and act to radically change the situation of the Filipino people especially the toiling masses of workers, peasants, and national minorities.”

The CNL also urges the Christian Churches to “be more open-minded” to understand Karl Marx’s maxim, “religion is the opium of the people”. It is not a negative view of religion, CNL clarifies, because Marx’s assertion was “Religious suffering is at one at the same time the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature.”



## Unity of Christians

Showing how a revolutionary Christian analyzes the world, its issues and problems, and how best to tackle it in keeping with Jesus Christ’s teachings and mission is the book’s main message. It explains why a group such as the CNL can come into being, live and work, and continue to grow despite the harrowing vilification and violence against the revolutionary forces. It emphasizes that a Marxist revolutionary organization of Christians can work alongside other revolutionary groups.

As the Catholic Church and its influence stretches broadly across the globe and throughout world history, the commentaries in the book naturally traverse

the same vast areas and historical experiences. The Church’s compendium presents its catechism, teachings and policies and papal encyclicals on economic, political, cultural, military, peace, war, globalization, relations among peoples and nations. It works towards promoting “an integral and solidarity humanism” that would be “capable of creating a new social, economic and political order... to be brought about in peace, justice and solidarity.” These are actually the same things the CNL and the entire revolutionary movement in the Philippines want to achieve through the national democratic revolution with a socialist perspective.





An added value brought to the table through this book is its application of scientific socialism/communism or Marxism on the collected teachings and statements of the Church, and from the historical and global perspective it's applied to the Philippine situation. "The Commentary weaves the history of Christianity in its discussion of historical materialism," Ledesma said in a statement on the CNL's 50th anniversary.

The Catholic Church has been around for thousands of years; Imperialism and Marxism for barely two hundred years; and the Philippines' new national democratic revolution for 53 years. The commentaries on the Church's doctrine clearly appreciates and fuses with the Church's call for developing "a generation of new men and women, the moulders of new humanity." But they also took note of class differences and how the exploiters and oppressors can block the rise of such a generation of new men and women.



Coni Ledesma & Luis Jalandoni

As Ledesma summarized, "From being a persecuted Church, it took the side of the rulers and became a ruling Church. The teachings and pronouncement of the Church have been mostly influenced from this position. Pope John XXIII and now Pope Francis have had positions that took the oppressed into consideration. In contrast, CNL members have always taken the preferential option for the poor, deprived and oppressed."



On the question of exploiters and oppressors, one can appreciate more the particular workings of the CNL being Christian and revolutionaries at the same time. Again, the CNL presents as a point of unity the desire for moulders of new humanity to “live together, dialogue, and work in partnership for the people’s common good especially that of the toiling masses of workers, peasants and national minorities.”

As he commended the CNL for responding to the calls and proposals stated in the

Compendium, Prof. Sison also called on all Christians to participate in the transformation of social realities in the new millennium. He proposed “an integral and solidary humanism” capable of creating a new social, economic and political order founded on the dignity and freedom of every human person. “It is just for the CNL to heed the demand of the masses and call for the end of the system of exploitation and oppression that cause poverty and the violation of human rights,” Sison wrote in the book’s postscript.

Much have been said and will likely be said about the book “A Commentary on the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church.” As of this writing when the CNL has just celebrated its 50th anniversary, it is both being commended and challenged.



CNL founding member Luis Jalandoni said, “It is indeed commendable that CNL leaders and members are involved in studying the history of the Church, the Papal Encyclicals and other pronouncements of the Roman Catholic Church as part of their commitment to the liberation of the people.”

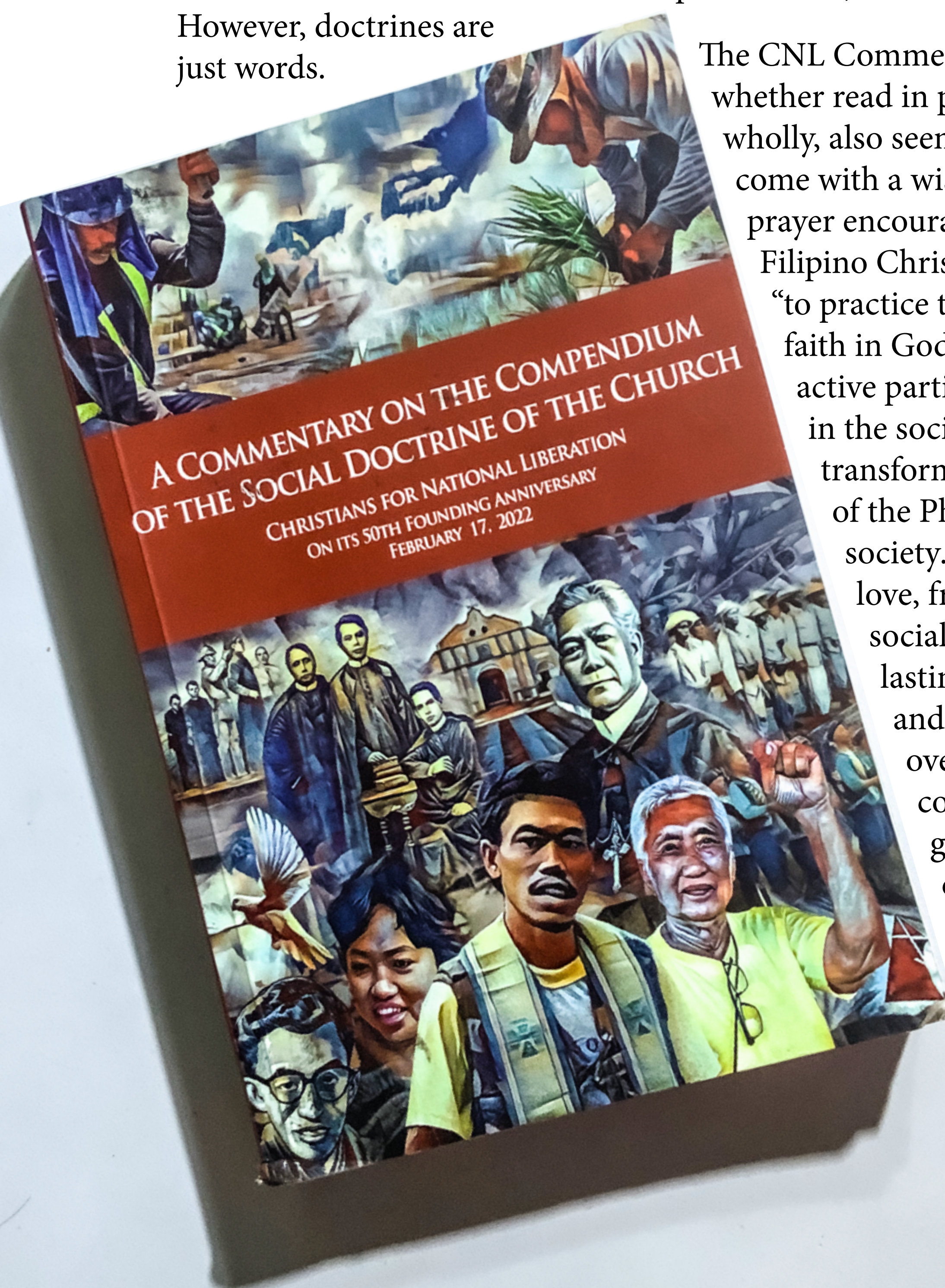
However, doctrines are just words.

In the end, to be relevant, the lessons learned must guide or inspire action. In other words, ‘Practice what you preach.’

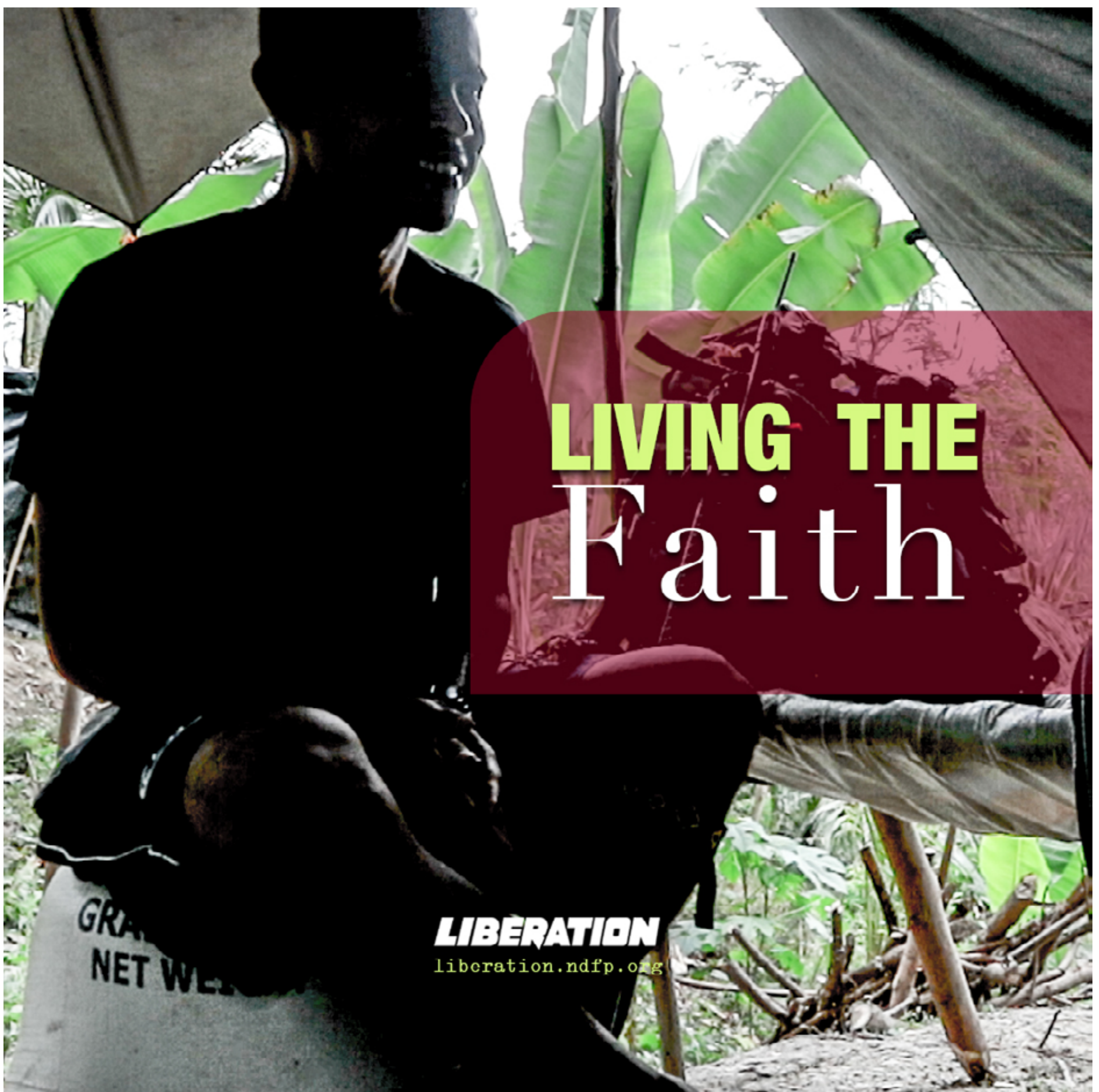
“My own experience and that of so many others attest to the fact it is in the midst of the struggle against the most cruel exploitation and oppression that many of us became politicized,” Jalandoni said.

The CNL Commentary, whether read in parts or wholly, also seems to come with a wish or prayer encouraging Filipino Christians “to practice their faith in God by their active participation in the social transformation of the Philippine society... for love, freedom, social justice, lasting peace and the overall common good of the Filipino people.”

**LIB**







*by Iliya Makalipay*  
*(also from the interview of*  
*Ka Porong, CNL)*

Fair and frail, Ka Chen (Eleazar Templado) didn't fit a city dwellers' typical image of a red fighter. He was soft-spoken but swift to act on requests of guests, such as media interviews, while discreetly coordinating the various committees—food, accommodation, transportation, security, among others—in charge of the grand event scheduled for the day. He was all over the barrio yet low-key.





That was in December 2016, the 48th anniversary celebration of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). Thousands of supporters and friends from all over the country, including government officials and members of the peace panels of both the GRP and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), crowded a barrio in Davao City to witness and participate in the commemoration.

Many were astonished when hundreds of red fighters from the Pulang Bagani Battalion (PBB) of the Southern Mindanao region presented themselves in a parade-in-review. He was there, Ka Chen, marching alongside the company commander as the political officer of the 1st company of the PBB. For years the PBB was headed by Leoncio “Ka Parago” Pitao until he was killed, not without a fight, by the military in 2015.

Five months later, in May 2017, Ka Chen died a hero in a gunfight with the military. Ka Chen sacrificed his own life so the other red fighters may live.

He had spent his last four years with the New People’s Army (NPA) but he had a long, purposeful journey.



## Spiritual rebirth

A simple churchgoer who spent extra time taking part in the Bible studies after hearing Sunday masses: this was how Ka Chen described his beginnings in the revolution. The more he studied the Bible, the more he found himself increasingly conscious of what was happening in his surroundings. It reached a point where they became too hard to ignore. “*Yung tanong sa isipan mo, parang naghahanap ka rin ng kasagutan.*” (The question in your mind is, ‘why are such things happening,’ and you’re also searching for answers.)

In 2000, during the Arroyo-Macapagal regime, he witnessed the persecution of church people—the arrests and killings of pastors and bishops and lay persons. That was when he started to ask, why? Then he realized, all these were politically-motivated. “They were the pastors,



bishops who were anti-mining, pro-Lumad, as such, protectors of the environment.”

To Ka Chen, it was an awakening. It urged him to express prayers through his solidarity with the poor. It was, to him, the highest expression of faith. He then became more active in joining actions to protect the environment, to protest church persecution, and advocate for many other people’s issues. He started to proclaim the Gospel beyond the Church and into the daily lives of the people.

As the situation worsened, Ka Chen immersed himself in

campaigns and organizing—in churches, among the pastors, deaconess, evangelists, and also among the youth in schools. In 2003, he became president of a church-based youth organization.

The more he immersed himself in the communities of church goers—the peasants and workers, for example, the more he realized the immensity of the problems. The question of how faith translates into concrete actions and solutions nagged at him. He realized the issues needed a systematic and unified response.



## Choosing the right path

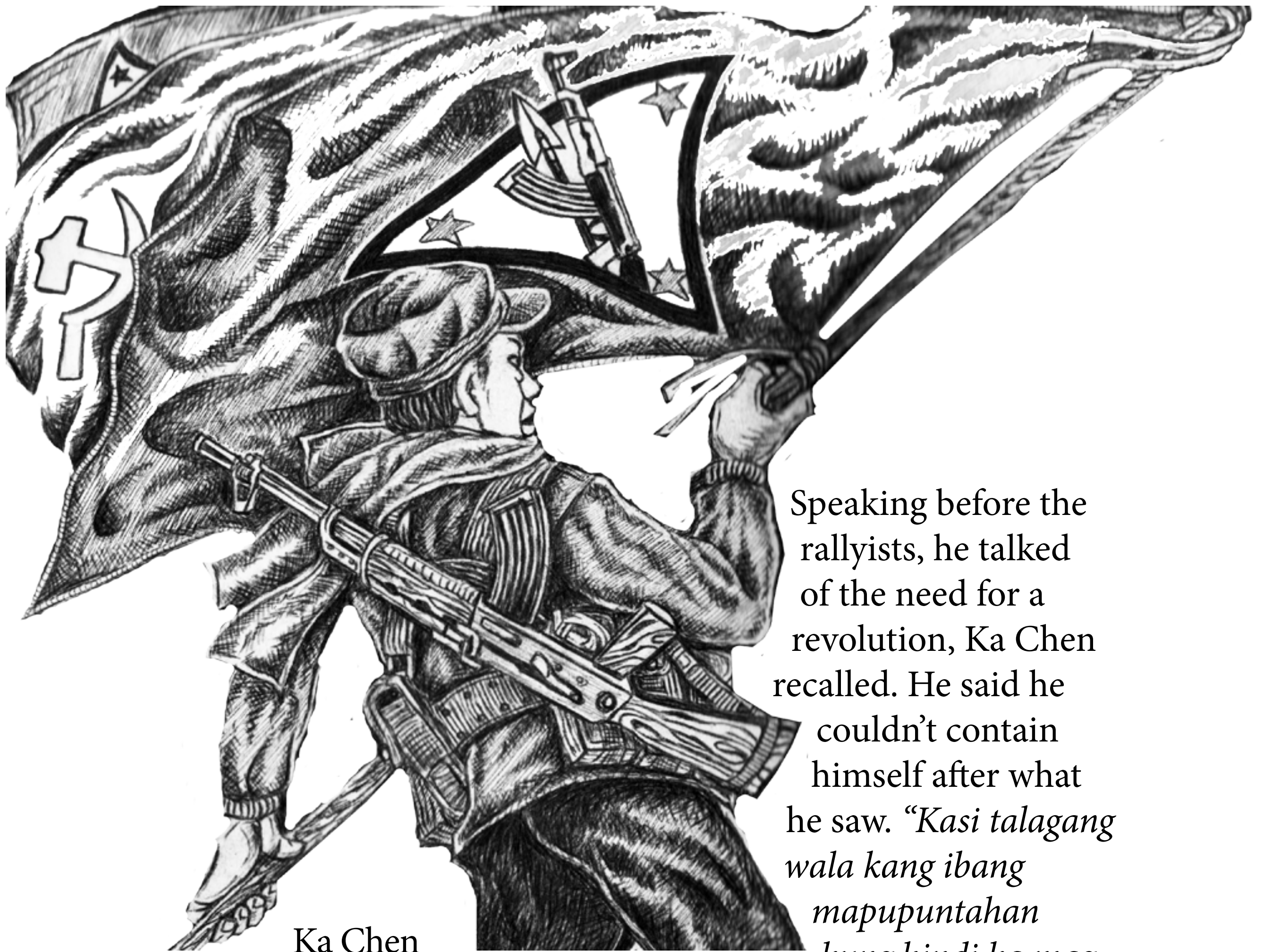
But from being active in the mass movement in 2003 to 2007, Ka Chen, who temporarily stopped schooling, decided to go back to the university. He also started work in a company. In the workplace, however, Ka Chen could not escape from the problems that beset the workers. At school, he witnessed a gamut of issues confronting the students. As an activist, he cannot turn his back on these. He cannot keep his eyes shut. He got involved once more. When he was elected president of the student council in 2010, he decided to go full-time again, into youth organizing this time.

As part of the bigger community, the youth groups from which Ka Chen belonged also found themselves among the victims of typhoon Pablo (Bopha) which hit hard the villages in the province of Davao in 2012.

It would be recalled that more than a thousand survivors of super-typhoon Pablo took upon themselves to appropriate and distribute the relief goods stockpiled at the Department of Social Work and Development (DSWD) regional office. This was an organized protest prompted by hunger among the people due to the slow response of the government to the needs of the disaster victims. This was preceded by a series of protests and dialogues until the survivors have had enough with government redtape and violence against their protests. In February 2013, a violent dispersal of their protests became the last straw for the people who had waited for government assistance but found none, not even for their housing needs.







Ka Chen

witnessed

how the masses got the relief goods in order to survive. “That should be for the government to do. Instead we saw how the police seized the goods from the people. *Talagang umiyak ako dun.* (I really cried over that.)”

The police barred the people but because of their number and determination, the masses were able to distribute the goods among themselves. “Of course the police claimed it wasn’t meant for them; that it was meant for those ravaged by the typhoon that came after Pablo. So there I starkly saw the fangs of the state.”

Speaking before the rallyists, he talked of the need for a revolution, Ka Chen recalled. He said he couldn’t contain himself after what he saw. “*Kasi talagang wala kang ibang mapupuntahan kung hindi ka mag-*

*aarmas. Mananatiling nasa paghihirap yung kalagayan ng masa* (Because there is neither relief nor any other recourse but for you to take up arms. Otherwise, the masses would remain impoverished.)”

Since then, the thought of joining the New People’s Army (NPA) stayed with him. The question of how one’s commitment to “love thy neighbor” and pursue peace and justice in the choices one makes everyday haunted Ka Chen.



## Standing up for the values of the Church

Eventually joining the revolution and the people's army, Ka Chen had this to say: *“Mas nare-relate ko yung totoong pananampalataya sa Diyos... kasi ang nakikita lang ng iba ay yung pagkabayolente ng rebolusyon, pero mas bayolente yung ginagawa ng nagsasamantalang uri dahil dahan-dahan nyang pinapatay yung masa,* (For me, the revolution is more connected with the genuine faith in God. Others only see the violence of the revolution, but what the exploiting classes are doing is even more violent because they are slowly killing the masses), he explained.

As a Christian, Ka Chen believed it was his mission to bring good news to the poor and to be with them in their efforts to free themselves from being captives of an oppressive and exploitative system. The Bible, he said, is not only talking about individual salvation. “And the heaven it mentions is not the heaven that will present itself to you

when you wake up from sleep. Because the heaven we want to enjoy is the heaven here on earth, where there is no hunger, where every child goes to school, where everyone is equal.”

And the Church people should choose this path, “the most correct path,” he said.

But standing up with the poor, protecting lives and livelihood, working for peace and human dignity do not come easy. Ka Chen knew it was not an individual task. “For me, God's good news is to teach the masses how to fight. And only the Communist Party teaches the masses how to fight.”

Historically, Ka Chen expounded, no landlord or any member of the exploiting class would voluntarily give in to the interests of the masses—like land or appropriate profit to the workers. That can only happen if there is a mass movement and of course, armed struggle.



## Commitment to faith and justice

To someone who is used to a petty bourgeois lifestyle, and as such molded to be an individualist, as he described himself, Ka Chen had many considerations before he finally made up his mind. He was a “private individual” who prioritized his personal needs and comfort. The same weighed down most activists from a petty bourgeois origin, taking them away from the most essential task of joining the people’s army. Going out of his comfort zone was a major leap for him.

His concerns were his family, his child. “I was afraid my child would, one day, no longer recognize me.”

It had been a long process. But he knew he would be able to adjust once he decided to stand firm on what he saw was the real solution to the problems

that have long plagued our society. “*Pero lahat naman ng bagay ay nagsisimula talaga na mahirap. So bahagi yan ng isang proseso.* But it’s a sin to know the problem and the solution but do nothing about it,” he said as he recalled how he was when at the cusp of making the decision to join the armed revolution.

He reasoned as he convinced himself, “*E, di parang wala ring kalutasan yung problema. Kasi ang dami nating iniisip na puro personal. Na kung minsan yun yung humahatak sa atin* (Then, it’s like saying there’d be no solution to the problem. The many personal considerations, those hold us back.)”

His first few months in the countryside were a difficult adjustment, but he took it as part of the process. “Of course the lifestyle is new to you.







Of course you'd been used to life near a mall, dining at fastfood restaurants, going to Church on Sundays. So, when you're here, it is really different.)”

There were times he entertained thoughts of going back to the city. But he didn't. Studying revolutionary theories helped him. His experience told him one can overcome his individual crisis by losing one's self in mass work—organizing, mobilizing, and educating the masses. Immersed, he did, with the daily lives of the masses whose problems were definitely graver than his own. It helped him persist. He had seen many comrades who, like him, left but rejoined the revolution because it was the most logical thing to do to end exploitation and oppression.

Like any one whose vision is beyond his individual experience and goes beyond the present, Ka Chen committed to change the world with its current structures and processes. He was convinced and firm that “there is no other way but to pursue armed struggle, to be in the people's army.”

Committing to the solution is an essential act of a believer, to quench his thirst for justice, to be a peacemaker—to stand with the poor in seeking for the common good. To Ka Chen, it was exemplified in his decision to join and stay with the NPA until his death.



## Renewing the earth and building up the kingdom of justice and peace

The 48th anniversary of the CPP, when Ka Chen appeared before the huge crowd, had the theme “People’s War is for People’s Peace”— a theme that aptly summed up Ka Chen’s reason for joining the people’s army in 2012.

Contrary to the common belief that the NPA only engages the enemy forces, Ka Chen explained that they have three interrelated tasks as members of the people’s army— armed struggle, agrarian revolution, and mass base-building which entail organizing the masses into revolutionary organizations and later into organs of political power.

One cannot truly advance without each of the other

two components. At this stage, no one can deny that there exist two governments in the Philippines. The organs of political power are the expression of the power of the people in the countryside. The people hold their own elections, establish their rules and regulations, community projects, and guided by the Party and the people’s army, deal with the landlords, for example, concerning the people’s problems with land, land rent and production share, and usury.

*“Kaya nga na-a-appreciate at minamahal ng mga masa yung Partido kasi naiintindihan nila na yung Partido talaga yung nagdadala ng kanilang interes,”* (That’s why the masses appreciate and love the Party because they know the Party truly serves their interests) said Ka Chen, beaming. That, to you, is people’s democratic revolution, he said.



For me, the revolution is more connected with the genuine faith in God. Others only see the violence of the revolution, but what the exploiting classes are doing is even more violent because they are slowly killing the masses.

All these made Ka Chen joyful and feeling fulfilled. “*Masasabi ko talagang nandito yung kasiyahan ko* (I can say that here is where my happiness lies.) Being a revolutionary gave his life meaning. “*Kasi para sa akin, kung hindi ka nagrerebolusyon isang tao ka lang. Ano bang esensya ng buhay? Isinilang ka. Lumaki ka. Mag-asawa ka. Magtrabaho. Pagkatapos no’n, ano na?* (For me, if you’re not engaged in revolution, you’re just an earth dweller. But what is your life’s essence? Is it enough that you were born and that you grew up? You find a job, get married. What, then?)”

Speaking like a pastor and brimming with faith, he said, “What separates us from the rest of the living beings is our capacity to give love to others. *At ang Partido lang ang nagturo sa atin nyan.* (And only the Party taught me that.) Being in the revolution concretized love for others, love for the poor, especially,” he added.

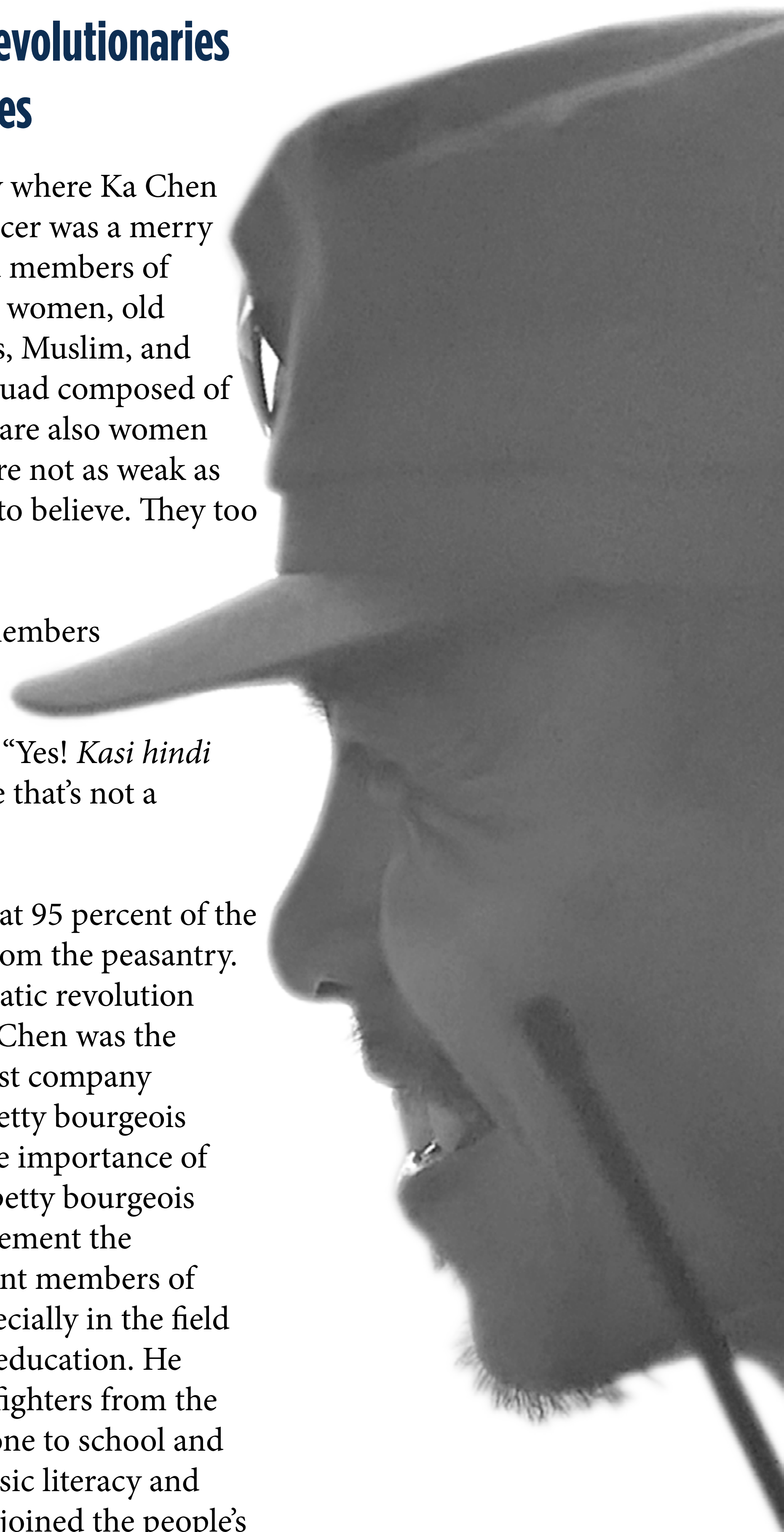


## Surge of strength from complementing revolutionaries of exploited classes

The 1st PBB company where Ka Chen served as political officer was a merry mix of people—it had members of the LGBTQ, men and women, old and young, Christians, Muslim, and Lumad. “There is a squad composed of all women; and there are also women squad leaders. They are not as weak as society would like us to believe. They too can carry M16 rifles.”

Asked if there were members of the people’s army who pray, he resoundingly replied, “Yes! *Kasi hindi ‘yon hadlang* (Because that’s not a hindrance.)”

But he emphasized that 95 percent of the people’s army came from the peasantry. After all, “the democratic revolution is a peasant war.” Ka Chen was the only member of the 1st company who came from the petty bourgeois origin. He stressed the importance of revolutionaries with petty bourgeois background to complement the strengths of the peasant members of the people’s army especially in the field of basic and political education. He said that most of red fighters from the peasantry have not gone to school and many only learned basic literacy and numeracy when they joined the people’s army. Many of these peasant fighters would later become education officers.





Ka Chen had seen in action how the strengths of those from the petty bourgeoisie were indeed well complemented by the strengths of those from other class origins, especially the workers and peasants. They helped each other to overcome their weaknesses. “Because as it’s been said, in people’s war, all the exploited classes play significant roles in waging the revolution.”

The gathering for the CPP anniversary celebration in December 2016 showcased how approachable Ka Chen was and how the people can easily “drag” him to assist them in various tasks. He even pitched in as guitarist in the rehearsal of the choir slated to perform during the celebration.

In the people’s army, Ka Chen expressed immense appreciation of how there is so much respect for each other as a person and as comrades, regardless of each other’s rank and position. Unlike in the enemy forces, any member of the people’s army may criticize their commanders and political

officers and point out their weaknesses during assessments and criticism and self-criticism sessions. The commanders and the political officers are not always right, after all. The same is true with the red fighters’ relation with the masses.

The people’s army practices what is called “Three Democracies”—in the field of politics, military and economy or resources. Everyone has the right to express their point of view on matters being discussed. In the field of military, no one is exempted from the policies, whether one is a cadre or a new recruit. In the field of economy, everyone, as far as the resources allow, is accorded equally. “If our policy states you can have 15 sachets of coffee, that’s also as much the commander can get.” But Ka Chen cautioned that there is no such thing as absolute equality, “*May mga bagay na hindi na talaga pwedeng hatiin. Pero lahat ay pinagkakasunduan kung saan mapupunta* (There were things that you can’t really divide equally. But we unite on how these are to be apportioned.)”



In people's war, all the exploited classes play significant roles in waging the revolution.

## The Role of the Church

Progressives in the Church believe the Church and the masses are one—that the masses are part of the Church and the Church serves the masses. But, should the Church be part of the revolution? Ka Chen's replies came quick and bolstered by his direct experience. "First of all, the church people should take part in the struggle of the workers and peasants. One's faith is empty if it does not connect with the lives of the masses."

In a curious cross (pun intended) between a political officer and a religious disciple, Ka Chen expounded that if one, indeed, wants to live up to Christ's teachings and to serve the interest of the masses, one must take part in the entire process of waging a revolution. "Yes, join the people's army," Ka Chen said, "because this is the most concrete expression of our faith."

Ka Chen believed that, in the first place, the Church should speak of the truth. He said that when the Church says the people should not join the revolution, the Church no longer speaks the truth. "Let us not hide the truth. When we speak of the current situation, we know for a fact that it calls for a revolution."



Indeed, in the prevailing situation, as Ka Chen explained, “if you’re prophesying the good news, then you must live up to it.” Ka Chen said that should be the Church people’s motivation; the Church should make a stand on the issues affecting the masses. He asked the Church people and the religious serving the masses not be afraid of the enemy.

Overcoming the fear of being red-tagged or of being associated with the

revolutionary movement, or even with activists is a step forward. “Stick to the truth and to the teachings of God. Let us preach the good news, the truth and be part of the struggle of the masses to unearth the truth—the roots of injustice and its perpetrators. The masses are members of our Churches. Let us banish the demons. Let us not be cowed by the enemy’s terror. Be more afraid of the masses turning their backs on us.” **LIB**







## Cultural Revolutionary

*by Pat Gambao*

The great revolutionary leader Mao Zedong, in his speech at the Yen'an Forum on Literature and Art, said that the fronts of the pen and the gun—the cultural and the military—are most important in the struggle for liberation. While maintaining the primacy of the armed struggle, Mao Zedong emphasized that it is not enough.





The army that wields the pen is indispensable. Literature and art are powerful weapons as they unite and educate the people, and defeat the enemy. It was in such a cultural army that Comrade Gelacio Guillermo belonged.

Comrade Gelacio was 79 when he passed away in 2019. As poet and essayist, critic, editor, and translator, he left behind a rich body of literary works about and for the masses and the national democratic revolution.

Ka Gelas, as he was fondly called, emphasized the importance of integration with the masses. How can one write about and for them, he was wont to ask, if one is blind to their life, ways, and aspirations? He also underscored that while writers strive to make good on their language, form, and style, it is imperative to ensure that the readers understand their works. Simplicity is the key. Writers should also be keen to the situation and the problems of society.





## Roots and burgeoning

Born to a modest family on March 10, 1940 in Barangay Central, Hacienda Luisita, San Miguel, Tarlac, Ka Gelas grew up with the peasants and farm workers of the Central Azucarera de Tarlac. At a young age, he became a worker at the Hacienda. Much of his experience in the sugar mill would be reflected in his book of poems, *“Azucarera: Mga Tula sa Pilipino at Ingles”* published in 1994.

In the 1960s when students began to be aware of the country’s situation from their studies of Marxism-Leninism and the Philippine Revolution, Ka Gelas became a member of the Student Cultural Association of the University of the Philippines (SCAUP). Zealous and aspiring as the youth were then, they dreamed of a better world aimed at

“accomplishing national and social liberation, this time under the class leadership of the working class” in unity with progressive liberals.

While studying Marxist-Leninist theories, they organized among the youth and students, workers and peasants. Through such exposure they deepened their grasp of the Philippine realities and the need for a revolutionary change.

Ka Gelas, who would later on use the pen name Kris Montañez (among many others), also expressed his knowledge of Marxist theories and his experience in mass work through his writings. He wrote literary pieces for the UP Philippine Collegian; and in 1963, when the Progressive Review was published, he became its literary editor.



Akin to today's red-tagging, Ka Gelas and the students in the late '50s and early '60s experienced "red scare" because of their organizing work. Patterned after the US Senate, a House Committee on Un-Filipino Activities (CUFA), later renamed Committee on Anti-Filipino Activities (CAFA), was established to investigate so-called communist activities in the country. This started the witch-hunt campaign against perceived communists. Professors and students from the UP were among those persecuted because of their "leftist" publications. The CAFA's witch-hunt campaign spurred 5,000 students to rally before Congress, Ka Gelas among them. Asserting academic freedom, the students successfully halted the witch-hunt.

November 1964 saw the founding of the militant Kabataang Makabayan (KM, Patriotic Youth), with Ka Gelas among the charter members. The protest action against CAFA, the founding of Kabataang Makabayan, the sprouting of several other national democratic organizations, and the series of huge protest actions ushered in the First Quarter Storm of 1970.

When he became a faculty member of the English Department of UP Los Baños, Ka Gelas formed a KM Chapter there. Linking it with it with other KM chapters in Manila, they conducted mass work among peasant communities in Laguna and adjacent provinces. His KM activities caused his dismissal from UP Los Baños.





He transferred to the Mapua Institute of Technology and taught English for three years. Again, he was dismissed from his job after being accused, together with other teachers, of recruiting students into the KM. He managed to return to teaching at UP Diliman, upon the invitation by Prof. Elmer Ordonez, who headed the English Department at that time. He taught in UP until the declaration of Martial Law on September 21, 1972.

Ka Gelas continued to hone his writing skills while teaching and organizing. From 1969 to 1970, he was the Philippine representative to the International Writing

Program of the University of Iowa. After returning to the country, he resumed organizing work and consolidated writers in the Humanist League of the Philippines, which he headed. The league was composed of progressive Filipino writers in English. In 1971, the Panulat para sa Kaunlaran ng Sambayanan (PAKSA or Writers for the Advancement of the People) was organized. As a national organization of activist writers, it aimed to create and disseminate literary works that depict, engage, and raise the aspiration of the oppressed masses and to popularize the national democratic goal.



Katha, Mount Makiling



## Life in the underground

When then President Ferdinand Marcos imposed martial law, he outlawed PAKSA, among several progressive organizations. Ka Gelas, who even as a student was already marked, went underground with other writers and artists. Many of his colleagues were arrested, detained, killed or forcibly disappeared. He was fortunate he never got arrested and detained. He

held in high respect and was greatly grateful to comrades (like Bonifacio Ilagan who was asked by the military about him) for being brave and steadfast not to betray comrades despite all the torture they underwent immediately after arrest and in detention. For them he dedicated many of his literary works such as his poem, “*Wala Akong Binitiwang Salita na di Pabor sa Mamamayan.*”

While in the underground, Ka Gelas edited the cultural journal, “Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win,” with poet Romulo Sandoval, among others. In 1974, he continued the publication of the cultural magazine *Ulos*, the organ of ARMAS, an organization of writers and cultural workers affiliated with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. In 1976 and 1977, he was with the editorial staff of Ang Bayan with Antonio Zumel as editor.



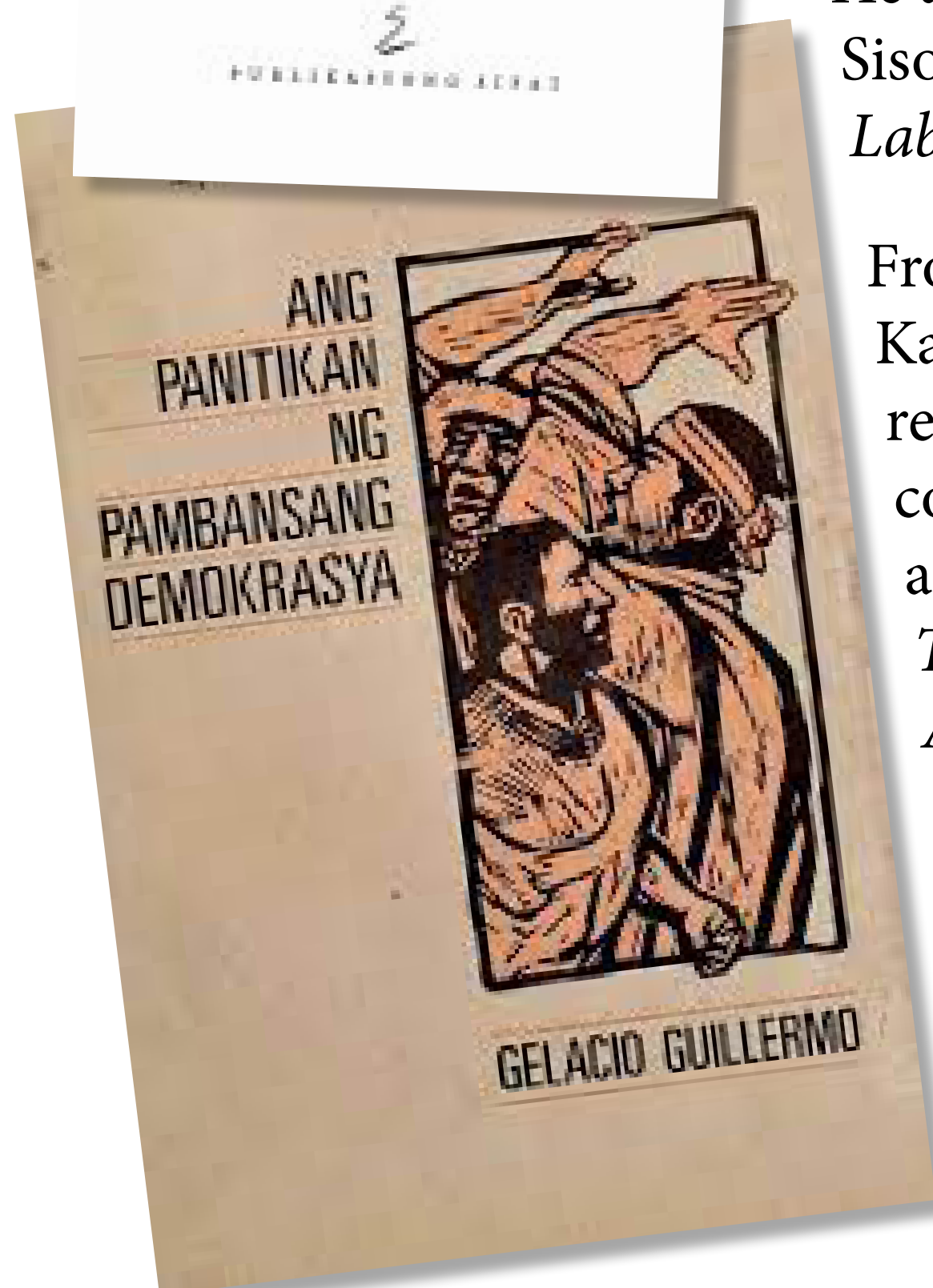
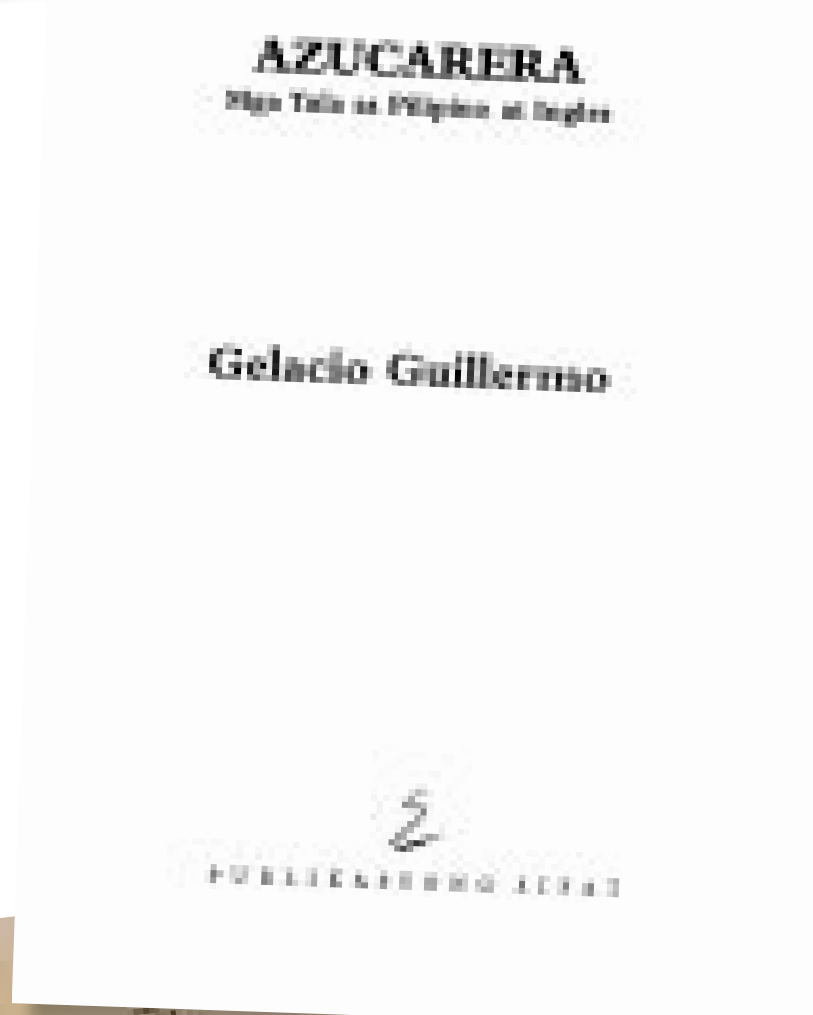


From the city-based propaganda group, Ka Gelas integrated with the peasant masses in a number of guerrilla fronts in the countryside. He scaled mountains, combed coasts, trod fields, lived with the masses, imbibed their feel, listened to their stories, shared them his knowledge.

Inspired by his integration with the masses and the lessons he learned from them, Ka Gelas came up with literary pieces in rhyme and prose, some of them under his nom de guerre Kris Montañez. Among his works were series of books of poetry collections: *Selected 17 Poems* (1968), *Azucarera* (2005), and *Mga Tula* (2013). He also published his collection of short stories: *Kabanbanuagan: Mga Kwento ng Sonang Gerilya* and *Kung Kami'y Magkakapit-bisig*. As literary critic, he came up with the books: *The New Mass Art* and *Ang Panitikan ng Pambansang Demokrasya*. He also translated into Filipino Jose Maria Sison's *Prison and Beyond* (*Sa Loob at Labas ng Piitan*).

From his immersion with the masses, Ka Gelas was able to collect many revolutionary works from the countryside and published them in a series of books in 1980: *STR -Mga Tula ng Digmang Bayan*, *Magsasaka*, *Ang Bayaning Di Kilala*, *Ipasa Bibliography* and *Muog* (*Ang Naratibo ng Kanayunan sa Matagalang Digmang Bayan sa Pilipinas*), considered as one of the most outstanding collections of literary narratives and poems in the countryside from various regions from 1972 to the

1990s. These anthologies showcased the creativity of revolutionary writers and cultural workers in using all literary forms to advance the national democratic goals.





## The most fitting award

Ka Gelas never intended to write for recognition nor award but nonetheless his literary peers, fellow teachers, organizations, and the people in general highly appreciated his works. He received the Marcelo del Pilar Award (2006) from the College Editors Guild of the Philippines, *Makata ng Bayan ng KM 64* (2007), and the *Makabayang Guro Award* (2013) from the Congress of Teachers and Educators for Nationalism and Democracy. Jose Maria Sison, founding chair of the Communist Party of the Philippines, a poet and writer himself, cited Ka Gelas as one of his favorite Filipino poets along with Amado V. Hernandez and Nick Joaquin.

In the message during the tribute given for his parents Gelacio and Alice, Prof. Bomen Guillermo implored the audience to just read their literary works. “*Sa ating pagbabasa ng mga akda nina Alice at Gelacio, sila’y magiging bahagi ng ating kamalayan at laman. At*



*tayo ang magpapatuloy ng kanilang pag-iral sa daigdig na ito na kailangan nating baguhin upang mas maging makatao. (By reading the works of Alice and Gelacio, they will become a part of our consciousness and flesh. And we will maintain their presence in this world, which we need to change into a more humane one.)”*

Indeed, the significance of the writings of Ka Gelacio Guillermo is their vital contribution in advancing the people’s struggle for national and social liberation toward a more humane world. **LIB**





# ARTS, DEATH, & REVOLUTION

*by Pat Gambao and Priscilla Guzman*

The lives of artists Kerima Lorena Tariman and Parts Bagani, both freedom fighters of the New People's Army (NPA), might have been snuffed out by the fascists' bullets. They might have left idle their pens and brushes, but others shall pick them up before the ink and the paint shall have dried up.

They would write poetry and stories about the plight of the disadvantaged; or paint the richness of the vast fields that the two artists were deprived of. They would portray the people up in arms, the mountains and forests where the Red fighters nestle, all to inspire and impel the revolution farther.



Some of them who may have imbibed and internalized the noble cause for which Kerima and Parts had fought and died shall embrace the latter's battles, now that they understand the importance and value of the two artist-revolutionaries' sacrifices and death. They shall pick up the pen and gun to continue the struggle for national and social liberation.

“Whenever death may surprise us, let it be welcome if our battlecry has reached even one receptive ear and another hand reaches out to take up arms,” said Che Guevarra.

The arts transcend the aesthetic and become more meaningful when they serve the broad masses of peasants and workers and their struggles. They inspire, arouse, and unite the masses to liberate themselves from the rut of the oppressive and exploitative world they are in. The arts constitute an indispensable component of the revolutionary cause. In Lenin's words, they are the “cogs and wheels” in the whole revolutionary machine.

Writers and artists who have immersed themselves among the masses have learned much from the latter's daily grind, including the life-long struggle for their fundamental rights and for freedom and democracy. Their craft is honed as they become passionately involved in the people's struggle.



## The best and the brightest

Many artists and writers who have crossed the path trod by Kerima and Parts have come to understand not only their arts but also the cause they had lived with and fought for.

In some way, the death of Kerima and Parts bared to the public the realities of Philippine society: *the exploitation and oppression by the few rich and powerful of the vast number of the poor, as well as the necessity of armed struggle to eradicate the rotten semicolonial and semifeudal system and create a new world that is just and humane.*

Creatively and painstakingly, the two artists collaborated with the revolutionary movement and the masses to strengthen the power of the people in the countryside.



Some may regret the loss of the “best and the brightest” in this class struggle. Still they call Kerima and Parts their heroes and exalt their courage. And they understand the compelling reason for the two artists to become freedom fighters in order to pursue the dream for a more humane world. Moreover, they believe that until “the government truly serves the poor, more will be martyred for the cause.” Many nurture the hope that the seeds that Kerima and

Parts had planted will burgeon to a better life tomorrow.

For instance, budding artists at the UP College of Fine Arts Student Council have highlighted the view that the martyrdom of people’s artist like Parts prove that art will never bow to the vested interests of those in power. That it reflects the plight of the oppressed, and ultimately is liberating to the people. “The most beautiful forms of art are made through integrating with the masses,” they stressed.



“I didn’t realize she was feared as much as she was respected,” wrote Kerima’s father, Pablo, referring to his daughter. Pablo Tariman is an artist himself, a musical impresario, and a multi-awarded poet.

Truly, Kerima and Parts were feared by the people’s enemies because their art did not only speak the truth—the people’s dreams and protracted struggles—but also because they pursued these to their logical conclusion by joining and becoming red fighters of the NPA. And for the same reason they were well-respected by many.

Their works speak of these realities.



## Speaking the people's language

Both artists have been acclaimed for their works. The artistry of Kerima and Parts are hailed because they speak for the aspirations of the people: to end landlessness, provision of decent jobs and wages, adequate nutritious food on their table, education for children, to be treated when sick by doctors in accessible hospitals with affordable health services. Altogether, the attainment of a just and humane society where their basic interests and needs are sufficiently and expeditiously met.

Kerima's second poetry collection, "*Pag-aaral sa Oras: Mga Lumang Tula Tungkol sa Bago*" (A Study on Time: Old Poems about the New") was cited by CNN Philippines as among the best books by Filipinos in 2018. Meanwhile, in 2007 while in the underground, Parts' exhibit of his paintings at the University of the Philippines Faculty Center was extolled by the people, fellow artists, and critics. His body of works was propagated by activists and used over and over by academics in educational discussions.



For Kerima, what was more rewarding was to write poetry to educate the masses. And how well she had done it! In simple and understandable way, she explains Marxist concepts of surplus value and dialectical materialism in her poetry. In “*Aralin sa Ekonomyang Pampulitika*” (“Study on Political Economy”), she expounds on the exploitation of the workers by capital while in “*Pagkilos*” (“Action”) she effectively shows the inevitability of revolution.

Before she graduated from high school, Kerima published her first poetry collection entitled “*Biyahe*” (“Journey”). It was the young girl’s yearning to go beyond her small world and discover more: from the landless *sacadas* (sugarcane workers) earning Php 500 for a month’s harrowing labor under the hot sun; to the jail when she was falsely charged with illegal possession of firearms that was eventually dismissed; to the farm workers in Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac; and, to the comrades and red fighters in Negros Occidental, where she was killed by enemy forces.

Aralin sa Ekonomyang Pampulitika  
ni Kerima Tariman

Nang matuklasan ng isang Aleman  
Ang labis na halaga,  
Ay nakalkula na rin  
Ang lahat-lahat na.

Halaga ng tao  
Halaga ng lupa  
Halaga ng tula  
Halaga ng digma

Kung sa loob pa lamang  
Ng tatlong minutong trabaho  
Ay nalilikha na ng manggagawa  
Ang buong araw niyang suweldo,  
Ang tantos ng pagsasamantala  
Ay ilang porsyento?  
Ay, ang labis na halaga —  
O pagpapahalaga —  
Sa superganansya’t supertubo!

Binibilang ko ang mga bagay  
Na mahalaga sa akin:  
Bubong, saplot, araw-araw na kakanin.  
Binibilang ko ang araw  
At ako’y napapailing:  
Bawat minuto,  
Kinikita ng mga kumpanya ng langis  
Ang katumbas ng walong oras kong pawis.  
Bakit ba napakahalaga  
Ng paghahangad ng labis,  
Kung ang labis-labis,  
Ang katumbas ay krisis?

Tinatantya ko kung kailan:  
1. mapipigtas sa tanikala ng monopolyo ang pinakamahina nitong kawing  
2. aawitin ng kapitalismo ang punebre sa sarili niyang libing.  
Pansamantala lamang ba ang pagsasamantala?  
Anu-ano ang mga pagkakataong  
Dapat nating samantalahin?

Natuklasan din ng Aleman  
Na ang manggagawa ay walang bansa,  
At kanilang pakikibaka  
Ay walang baybayin.

Kaya’t kinakalkula ko muna,  
Samantala, kung ano ang mahalaga  
Para sa araw-araw nating gawain.  
At kung gaano kahalaga,  
Mga kasama, ang pagkakaisa sa atin.



On his part, Ka Parts (John Niebres/Ernie Peñaranda) had always insisted that he owed the development of his craft to the revolutionary movement. As part of a Davao City-based artist group Magenta,

Ka Parts started by producing streamers, banners, posters, and murals for protest actions. Later, as a commander of the NPA, he did not only paint about the life in the people's army but he used his skills, as well, to create maps, sandboxes, and materials for war games they performed to prepare for tactical offensives.

A young artist who met Ka Parts candidly asked him why he chose the people's war as subject of his art. His response: "People's war is not a subject of art. I did not come here as an artist looking for details to paint. I came here to fight oppression. But my paintings are not mine. They belong to the masses, to the movement. I won't be able to create these paintings if I am detached from reality. I wouldn't have learned the lines



and colors of the people's war if I was not a red fighter."

Parts' artworks portrayed the life and struggles of the masses and their army. The hues and tone of his paintings depicted warmth and intensity.

His artworks spoke of his commitment to the revolution and the pursuit for justice and social liberation.

While publicly known for his work as a revolutionary artist, Ka Parts was first and foremost a fighter and a military cadre of the NPA. He had rich experiences in war, from advances and retreats, from leading tactical offensives and studying the art of warfare. He knitted his brows to come up with plans to further raise the capabilities of the NPA and Red fighters in waging armed struggle. Ka Parts "cherished the people's army deeply and would always insist that if he were not in the NPA and in the countryside, his inspiration for his art would dry up," recalled NPA-Southern Mindanao spokesperson Ka Rigoberto Sanchez.



The message is clear



No amount of fascist violence and brutality can extinguish the fire of rebellion. Nothing can vanquish the desire to be free from oppression and exploitation. The death of a revolutionary is not the end of the revolution so long as the cause he had died for is alive.



Many writers and artist have been martyred, but like their arts they never perished. The legacy of their death is the unending birth of many more of their genre.



In praise of the people’s heroes and martyrs, the likes of Kerima and Ka Parts, Mao Zedong said: “Whenever there is struggle there is sacrifice, and death is a common occurrence. But we have the interest of the people and the sufferings of a great majority at heart and when we die for the people it is a worthy death.” **LIB**





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