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CHERISH THE PEOPLE'S ARMY

SERVE THE PEOPLE



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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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A compilation of *Liberation's* past
articles on the revolutionary
movement's heroes and martyrs

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I N T R O

Here is a gathering of some unforgettable names. They are among our cherished crop of revolutionaries. They are our beloved comrades who marched before us. They bequeathed us an abundance of examples, lessons, and stories in waging armed struggle to advance the national democratic revolution with socialist perspective.

We are proud and humbled to present this compilation. Proud because we gathered tributes to some of our most remembered Red fighters; humbled because this compilation gives a mere sketch of their revolutionary contributions. They represent far more stories to share and, also, with them should have been more revolutionaries to honor but they are not yet included here.

The names of some revolutionaries here, you may have often heard because the regional or provincial commands of the New People's Army are named after them: *Crispin Tagamolila*, *Efren Martires*, *Romulo Jallores*, *Coronacion "Waling waling" Chiva*, *Jennifer Cariño*, and *Melito Glor*, for example. Some names you have heard because they were also noted artists as much as they were liberation fighters—*Parts Bagani*, who was a visual artist, spouses *Kerima Tariman* and *Ericson Acosta* who were poets, musicians, theater artists. Some names you have heard because they served the people for decades and were so loved and made famous by the masses such as *Ka Roger Rosal* who was the CPP's sharp yet witty spox and *Leoncio "Ka Parago" Pitao* who was a great NPA commander.

They give us stories of how troop commanders share day-to-day chores and joys with the masses. How they overrun enemies—blocking not only attacks of reactionary AFP but also rendering them panicked to the point they made glaring errors such as misencounters.

The revolutionaries in these pages joined the NPA as youths or in their prime while others were veterans of *Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan* against the Japanese colonizers in World War II. Some

were with youths who commandeered a truck to ram the gates of Malacanang in a rally on January 30, 1970, inevitably signalling the First Quarter Storm of 1970s. Some pioneered the work of building the revolutionary mass bases in the countryside. One was a licensed nurse who appreciated much the work of people's army integrating with the masses. One was a student activist and Church layworker who believed that joining the NPA is the most concrete expression of our faith in God. Some were honor students and scholars. One was a defector from the Armed Forces of the Philippines, after having seen its role as mere killing tool of the selfish and few ruling classes of big landlords and comprador bourgeoisie.

Here are some of our revolutionaries who surmounted difficulties and helped the masses win significant gains in various levels of agrarian struggles.

With their choices in life they represent our happiest news, instances of victories toward uplifting the lives of the masses, daring raids into reactionary camps, and leadership at building the revolutionary political power. They represent joys and pains in breaking the oppression, village by village, of the landlord and comprador enemies. Their courageous defense and acts in the face of daunting challenges lend them a legendary status in the memory and oral history of the masses. Let us continue to tap into that memory, keep sharing it while we build on what they gave us.

With this, we hope more of their and other comrades' stories will make it to our future sharing. 🇷🇵

Melito Glor

A DEATH HEAVIER THAN A MOUNTAIN

Not a few people have turned their backs on their social class, became proletarian revolutionaries and opted to trade their comfortable status for a simple, arduous life with the poor and oppressed masses. Melito Tierra Glor was among them. The only son of an affluent family in Atimonan, Quezon Province, Mel left the University of the Philippines to join the national democratic revolution with a socialist goal. He was killed in an armed encounter with the fascist state forces and buried in a nameless grave in a public cemetery. With the help of his fraternity brothers, his grave was found and his body was retrieved by his family to be reinterred in their home town.

Melito Glor, a martyr of the people's revolution, does not need a name on his tomb to be remembered. He is enshrined in the hearts of the masses he earnestly and valiantly

served. His name is emblazoned in every volley of fire released by the New People's Army (NPA) Command in Southern Tagalog that had assumed his name in his honor.



Upsilon Batch '69,
the "original Melito Glor Command"

The Melito Glor Command is one of the best known Commands of the NPA that had dealt great blows to the fascist army through intensive successful tactical offensives. The Melito Glor Command was also Ka Roger Rosal's base for many years as its spokesperson before 1993, when he became the voice of the Philippine revolution as spokesperson of the Communist Party of the Philippines and head of its Information Bureau.

Early Life and Exploits

Mel grew up and studied in his home town in Quezon. One of his teachers referred to him as a thinker and one of the best students. Mel's High School Yearbook described him as one "with polished manners but bold and daring and had an aura of danger and mystery." Said description somehow projected the life he later embraced. He immersed with the oppressed and exploited masses and fought with them to be liberated from the shackles of the semicolonial and semifeudal system that US imperialism and its local lackeys have imposed on the Filipino people.

Although Mel professed in his High School Yearbook that he wanted to be a soldier, he enrolled in the University of the Philippines (UP) after graduation for a pre-med degree, his ticket to UP's College of Medicine. In his second year in UP, Mel joined the Upsilon Sigma Phi fraternity known as a burgis fraternity where the upper social strata blend—counting among its members the dictator Ferdinand Marcos, opposition leader Benigno Aquino, street parliamentarian and artist Behn Cervantes and another NPA commander Medardo Arce, from whom a command of the NPA in Southern Mindanao was named.

A fraternity brother, Chibu Lagman, wrote in a blog (<http://www.positivelyfilipino.com/magazine/melito-glor-whose-death-was-heavier-than-a-mountain>) that as early as Mel's initiation into the fraternity, his frat masters and fellow neophytes already recognized his "strong sense of empathy." *Malakas ang malasakit sa kapwa*, they said, especially after he saved a fellow neophyte from more "acquainting blows" from a fraternity master. "*Ako na lang, po*," Mel offered.

Apart from this, he was "a regular fellow"—who learned the ways of his fraternity like affixing the year they entered the frat (Mel '67), their manner of dressing, etc. He spent most of his time attending classes and fraternity activities and socials until the harsh and bloody dispersal of student rallies during the First Quarter Storm of 1970 and the Diliman Commune of 1971 which became Mel's baptism of fire. From that time on, he started to read more books and materials on history,

politics, and revolution, which were prevalent in UP in those days. He attended discussion groups and joined protest actions which further raised his political consciousness.

During a vacation in his hometown, he witnessed the extreme inequality and repression of the rural poor, a thing that had escaped his attention for a long time.



When martial law was declared Mel returned to Quezon province and joined the armed struggle. He became an organizer and later, one of the leading political officers

and commanders of the NPA in Southern Tagalog, covering several provinces including Bicol.

Once in a while, Mel would go to Manila to solicit logistical support for his guerrilla unit. In the city, he would seek haven in the homes in exclusive subdivisions of his fraternity brothers, who would safely keep and attend to him.

The Martyrdom

In December 1973, he got married to Flor in Manila, in a church wedding complete with a reception, where his fraternity brothers stood as groomsmen and sponsors. He promised his bride that “he would be a good husband but that the life they would build together would not be easy.”

Mel returned to Quezon in March the following year. His wife later followed him to join the NPA.

On that fateful day of December 1974, mercenary soldiers swooped on the house in Capalonga town in Camarines Norte where Mel, his wife who was then nine-month pregnant, and two comrades were staying. Mel was killed instantly. While one of his comrades managed to escape, the other one and his wife were arrested and jailed.

Refusing to cooperate during the interrogation his comrade was executed. Meanwhile, his wife gave birth in a military hospital but was informed by the military that her baby was born dead.

“*Wala na si Tangkad*, (the tall guy is gone),” spread around the UP campus. Later, on a bulletin board at the UP College of Arts and Sciences, a new post on a white sheet of paper with a black band at the corner read: “Melito Tierra Glor '67—a death heavier than a mountain.”

A younger batch of the Upsilon fraternity (Batch '69) would later call itself as the “original Melito Glor command.” 🚩



Highschool, tagged as “the campus James Dean”



Coronacion "Waling-waling" Chiva VALOR AND TENACITY

Waling-waling is a beautiful orchid that blooms in the deep recesses of the forests of Panay contending for sunlight with intertwining vines and branches. In analogy, the Coronacion "Waling-waling" Chiva Regional Command of the New People's Army in Panay continues its struggle amid class contradiction for liberation from the oppressive semifeudal and semicolonial social order.

The Command was named after a woman, whose husband's recognition of her valor and tenacity accorded her the *nom de guerre* Waling-waling.

Coronacion "Waling-waling" Chiva and her husband, Andres Togonon or Amang Ali, were members of the old Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the *Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan* (HMB) in Panay, which waged an armed struggle against the Japanese invaders and later against the ruling US-puppet government. Andres

was the political officer of the HMB while Corning became a commander of an HMB unit. They gallantly fought the armed forces of the reactionary government until the incorrect political line and adventurist stance of the Lava leadership, in its frantic dash for power, permeated the HMB in Panay causing its decline and eventual collapse. Commander Waling-waling led the platoon that made the last stand against the enemy in Nalbugan, Bingawan, Iloilo. Eighteen of them were surrounded by 80 soldiers of the Expeditionary Force of the

Philippine Army. Waling-waling's will to fight to the end was doused by the sight of



her men who were skeptical of the wisdom to continue the fight. She reluctantly ordered to put down their arms. For the first time in her guerrilla life, she cried. It was difficult to accept that the armed struggle of the HMB and the Party in Panay had ended.

Corning was arrested and joined her husband, Andres, in detention. Andres was earlier on arrested while teaching cadres and commanders of the old CPP and HMB at the Stalin University in the forested area of Taroytoy, Libacao, Aklan. Andres was among the five survivors of the Toroytoy massacre that took the lives of 36 leading HMB members. In collusion with Pablo Hipana, one of the students, the Battalion Combat Team of the enemy managed to encircle and attack the school.

Upon release from prison, Andres and Corning continued their organizing

work among the workers in Davao. When they returned to Barangay Alibunan, Calinog in Panay, the national democratic revolution with a correct political line has advanced. A team of the New People's Army (NPA) was deployed in Panay in 1971. The team, which got in touch with Corning and Andres, received a warm and cordial welcome. The resurgence of the revolution in Panay was a dream come true for the couple. For despite the dismantling of the HMB, the revolutionary fire in their hearts was never extinguished and the hope and the will to see the struggling masses and the country free from oppression and exploitation never dwindled.

Corning, like a mother to her children on their first stride, guided the team. She was a leader who never lost the mien

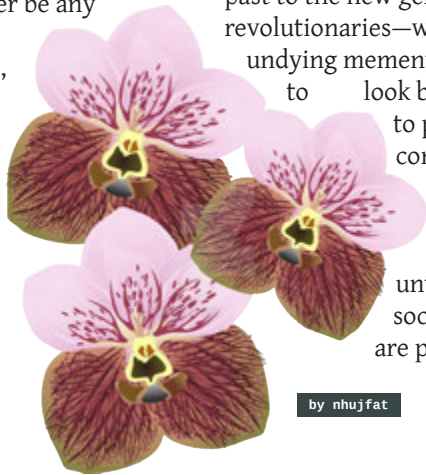
of Commander Waling-waling whose every command was firm, respected, and obeyed. She helped the team take roots among the Jalaur tribes in Calinog, Tapaz, and Libacao. She linked them to the families of former colleagues in the defunct HMB. The couple also welcomed their eldest son, Dax, join the NPA. He was martyred in 1975. Despite the ferocity of Martial Law, Corning's family relentlessly assisted the NPA.

Corning was an inspiration to the young batch of revolutionaries. When one of the ladies in the team was contemplating on a name to use in battle, Corning suggested her nom de guerre—Waling-waling. Humbled, the young lady declined as she believed there was only one Waling-waling, there could never be any other. But like a true communist, who never rested on her laurels and who believed that the young generations should carry the torch of the continuing

revolution, Corning insisted. Thus, the young warrior came to be known as her Junior.

Commander Waling-waling was killed in August 1977 by a military agent under the Central Command of the AFP in Cebu. Upon her death her husband, Andres, despite his advanced age, joined the NPA. Together with his whole family, he continued the fight against the US-Marcos dictatorship.

In honor and memory of Coronacion “Waling-waling” Chiva, the Panay Regional Command was named after her. Her valuable contribution to the revolution—the best years of her life spent in the service to the revolutionary movement and the efforts to link the patriotic revolutionaries of the past to the new generation of revolutionaries—will remain an undying memento not just to look back to but to propel the continuing advance of the people's revolution until the unjust social structures are put to rest. 🇷🇵



by nhujfat

Jennifer Cariño

A BELOVED KAILIAN

In 2017, the New People's Army (NPA) in Benguet province launched a successful raid in a police outpost in the town of Buguias. Aside from confiscating firearms and ammunition and radio sets, the action was "punitive" because of the illegal and anti-social activities of the Buguias policemen, among them: extortion activities from vegetable farmers, drug trafficking, and operation of bars. The raid was led by the Jennifer Cariño Command-NPA.

Long before Jennifer Cariño became a command, she was Jingjing, born on March 4, 1950 in Baguio City to a well-to-do and respected Ibaloy family. Her mother hails from Cebu. She was bequeathed the beautiful features of an Ibaloy-Cebuano blend. Her grandfather was the first Igorot Mayor of Baguio City where the family owned the land now occupied by the Camp John Hay.

Why would a young woman gifted with beauty and brains leave behind

her affluent family and all the opportunities for a comfortable life and distinguished place in the professional arena for a risky and difficult life in a guerrilla zone, among the most impoverished masses, her *kailian*?

In Jingjing's veins ran the blood of a fighter. Her grandfather, Mateo Cariño, filed a suit in the US court against the American intrusion into their land. In high school, Jingjing wrote an article in their school organ in

protest of the remark of then Foreign Affairs Secretary Carlos P. Romulo that Igorots are not Filipinos.

Jingjing was a conscientious student. She was often seen alone in the campus grounds pensively poring over a book. In the classroom, she was never satisfied with mere statement of facts. She would dig deeper, posing no nonsense questions to her professors. She wanted more—realities and truths. She was indeed a no-nonsense student. She was an A-1 student especially in Physics and Math courses at the University

of the Philippines-Baguio.

But it was not all cerebral work for Jingjing. The music in her soul brought her to folk houses around the city, singing with the strum of her guitar. She idolized the Beatles.

In her junior year, Jingjing ran for the student council under the Progressive Party taking up the issues of lower tuition fees and removal of the Spanish course. That probably started her activism years.

In 1969, she became a member of the Kabataang Makabayan-Baguio Chapter. She led student actions supporting market vendors in their fight against demolition and striking workers in their demand for higher wages and better working conditions. Later, she dropped out of school and became full time activist. The music in her soul was shared with activists as they sang protest songs and staged cultural presentations in rallies.



In 1972, Jingjing married Gilbert Pimentel, an activist from the Lyceum of the Philippines University Manila who

was organizing Benguet farmers at that time. Gilbert also hailed from the Cordilleras. They had a meeting of the minds on many political issues, particularly the national minority question. It was also on the same year when their house was raided but she eluded arrest. Later, she left Baguio disguised as a nun.

When Gilbert was arrested, Jingjing left her baby with her family with the fervent request that Malaya, her daughter, be apprised when she grew up of what her parents had fought for. She joined the NPA and lived in Ifugao serving the most impoverished masses in the Kalanguya territory. Ka Maria, as she became known in the guerrilla zone, taught the masses how to read and write. She also served as medical staff. And she

did what she loved most, wrote revolutionary songs and taught these to the masses.

Her enlightenment from the campus DGs (discussion groups) on Marxism, Leninism and Maoism, the truth and realities she found from her integration with the masses, the oppression and exploitation doubly experienced by the national minorities of which she belonged and the invincible aspiration of the revolutionary movement to dismantle the unjust structures and end man's inhumanity amplified her resolve to serve the revolution. And this resolve warranted yielding all her privileges and giving all her endowments for the revolution.

Ka Maria, the beloved comrade of the tribe, died in 1976 in Hungduan, Ifugao. 🇷🇵



Jennifer Cariño Command-New People's Army-Benguet

Eduardo Olbara

A REVOLUTIONARY HAS BLOSSOMED

Adapted from Punla, the revolutionary literary publication of Bicol

The good sons and daughters of the country immerse with the masses, join them in their struggle and devote their lives in changing the unjust social order for a future devoid of oppression and exploitation. They do not only master the art of war but they rise above human frailties of ambition, grandeur and self-aggrandizement. They observe organizational discipline and practice simplicity and collective life.

The person behind the Eduardo Olbara Command of the New People's Army in Camarines Sur, Eduardo Olbara or Ka Andoy was one among the flock. Born to a poor peasant family, he left

grade school to help the family. They own a piece of land but its paltry produce was not enough to sustain their needs. Even if they worked in the abaca plantation to augment their revenue, it was never enough.

His father was among the first persons that Romulo Jallores (Ka Che) got in touch with when the latter returned to Camarines Sur, his hometown. Ka Che's group was the first to start mass work and organizing in Bicol and later formed the first unit of the New People's Army (NPA) in the region.

Every time Ka Andoy came home from his work in Laguna, he had fruitful discussions with the group. These raised his awareness and understanding of the

problems plaguing society. From there dawned the realization of the need for revolution.

In 1973, after coming home from work, he decided to go fulltime with the group. His elder brother had gone fulltime before him. July of that year, he joined the group in its mass work in the boundary of Buhi, Camarines Sur and Polangui, Albay. That was the time when state armed forces were in full deployment in Camarines Sur.



Nip in the bud

Earlier on in 1972, enemy forces began their massive and coordinated military campaigns against the very first guerrilla zone in the province in an attempt to snuff out the burgeoning revolution. The revolutionary forces in Camarines Sur confronted the rampaging Task Force Isarog of the enemy. They tried to skirt the patrols and strike operations of the battalion-strong Philippine Constabulary. But the intensive military operations resulted in the shrinking of the mass base. In December 1973, the NPA unit was left with only three barrios to operate in.

To preserve the forces, the NPA unit decided to transfer from Camarines Sur to Albay. Ka Andoy was part of the remaining squad that retreated and became the first Armed Propaganda Unit in Albay. There, they seized the opportunity to consolidate and strengthen the forces. From there, they managed to expand to other places and return to the guerrilla zone they left behind.

Branching out

In 1974, Ka Andoy was assigned to communication work with the Bicol Technical and Liaison Staff (BTLs) based in the city. However, in December of that year, a series of arrests took place. When Ka Andoy eluded arrest, he was immediately deployed to the countryside.

Thus, from 1975 to 1980, Ka Andoy was one of the cadres in Albay assigned to the armed propaganda unit (*Sandatahang Yunit Pampropaganda, SYP*) for expansion work. Here, he honed his teaching and propaganda skills, as well as his ability to mobilize the peasant masses. He also effectively initiated the agrarian revolution by leading the campaigns for lowering of rentals in the haciendas.

Through earnest assessment and summing up of his rich experience in warfare, Ka Andoy enhanced his skills in military work. He became one of the best military cadres in the revolutionary movement.

During an encounter in 1979, his left hand was hit by a bullet that caused a deformity—as if his hand was holding the hand guard of an armalite. This had been his hallmark since then, a sign of readiness for battle.

In the first Party regional conference in 1981, Ka Andoy was elected member of the CPP- Bicol Regional Committee. He was assigned to oversee the front committee in Albay. He headed the work of the first district. He also guided the District Guerrilla Unit covering the towns of Oas, Libon, Ligao and Guinobatan.

In 1982, he led an ambush which became one of the most remarkable tactical offensives that gained military and political victory. He led the NPA unit's ambush of the 564th Engineering and Construction Battalion operating in the boundary of Camarines Sur and Albay. This battalion had just replaced the former 52nd Philippine Constabulary Battalion. The head of the Battalion, Col. Laberinto, was killed.

Simultaneous with tactical offensives, agrarian revolution was launched. The campaign to decrease land rent in the first district of Albay in 1982, called Oplan Pakyaw, became a provincial mass campaign in 1983.

In 1985, from the Front Committee, Ka Andoy was transferred to the new full company formation in Albay. He was designated as the first commander of the company formation deployed in Southern Bicol (Albay and Sorsogon).

After a political-military training in Brgy. Mabayawas, Libon, Albay in June 1985, the company was put on a defensive when attacked by the enemy. However, due to the superb tactics and maneuver

of the revolutionary force, it managed to fend off the enemy's advance. The enemy was overrun and suffered tremendous loss of lives, especially because it even had a misencounter with its own reinforcement troops.

The entire NPA company was able to maneuver safely without any one killed nor wounded. This encounter, which lasted for six hours, was the first recorded longest battle in Bicol between the revolutionary forces and the state forces.

The following year, Ka Andoy led two successive ambushes in Brgy. Banao, Oas and Brgy. Binogsacan in Guinobatan. The ambushes were notable for their effective application of guerrilla warfare.

In 1986, Ka Andoy was designated the first vice regional commander of the Regional Operational Command. He participated in the planning of military campaigns and assisted in the conduct of political-military trainings in the region. Despite his diverse activities as troop commander, Ka Andoy shared in the day-to-day chores. He gathered supplies. He cooked. He also spent time socializing with the troops in their light moments. This established his closeness with his comrades.

Ka Andoy valued the welfare of his comrades highly but he never expected any special treatment. He was also fully aware of the role each red fighter had to take on their collective tasks, that was why he could lead effectively. Ka Andoy's comrades and the masses did not hesitate to approach him. He was truly concerned with their wellbeing. He was easy to deal with. One would readily feel at ease with him. He was gentle and courteous.

He was quick to notice if a comrade had a problem. He personally talked to them and gave advice. He always tried to help his comrades find solutions to their problems. Former comrades also sought him for consultation.

Ka Andoy abided strictly to the policies of the revolutionary movement. If he had reservations regarding certain issues and policies, he registered his reservation but he complied with what was decided or voted upon by the majority of the collective.

Ka Andoy was adept with techniques and tactics. He competently led big tactical offensives. He joined actual intelligence work. In actual encounters, he advanced with his

troops but he assured that he was in full control of the entire fight. During tight situations, he never left his comrades.

Ka Andoy was a good and loving father and husband. He was solicitous to his three daughters. Yet he was open to sacrifice. He would endure being separated from them for a long time. He never dilly-dallied to entrust his children to the masses. He had full trust that they will take good care of them.

Even before the Second Great Rectification Movement, Ka Andoy was one of those who had reacted to the ill-effects of the untimely regularization of the troops as he witnessed the dwindling of the mass base.

Ka Andoy was killed in a defensive battle in Brgy. Alanao, Lupi, Camarines Sur on April 14, 1989. He was supposed to attend a meeting when the house where they stayed was encircled by the enemy.

In honor of his valiant and meritorious contributions to the struggle, the provincial command of the New People's Army in Camarines Sur was named after Eduardo Olbara, Ka Andoy in the revolutionary movement. 🇵🇭

Romulo Jallores

ROLE MODEL FOR THE YOUTH

With the upsurge of youth activism in the early 70s, Romulo Jallores, a third-year high school dropout who did odd jobs for a living in the periphery of the university belt, was drawn to the youth organization *Samahang Demokratiko ng Kabataan* (SDK). He attended teach-ins and discussions of the group in reading rooms of the University of the East. He marched with them in demonstrations and protest rallies, his tall built towering over the throng.

Courageous and aggressive, Romulo joined a band of youth in commandeering a truck to ram the gates of Malacañang. That demonstration of January 30, 1970 signalled the start of the First Quarter Storm (FQS). *The Nation* carried an article on the event entitled “Siege of Malacanang.” In the photo, among the youth on top of the truck, was Romulo wearing

a beret like Che Guevara. Ernesto Che Guevara was the Argentinian expeditionary revolutionary whose name created waves not only in Latin America but also across the globe after the victory of the Cuban revolution led Fidel Castro with his help. From then on, Romulo came to be known in the activists’ circle as Che.

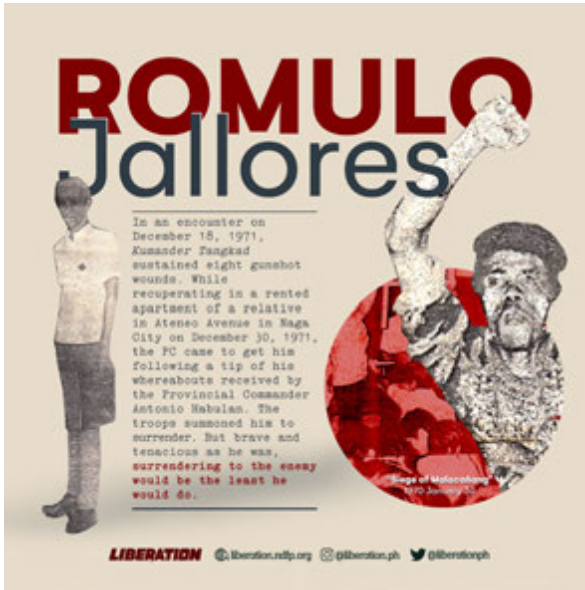
Further studies and discussions during his stint in the SDK headquarters in Taytay, Rizal deepened his understanding of the fundamental problems of the Philippine society—of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism. Their relation to stark realities dawned on him: the impecunious situation of their family, a brood of 10 raised solely by their mother; the discrimination he experienced in school because he was not moneyed like his other classmates; the wretched plight of the landless farmers and *parahagot* in the abaca fields in Tigaon, a town in Camarines Sur.

Concern and compassion for the poor and the oppressed were inherent with Romulo. From boyhood, he had always sided with the underdog—the bullied playmate or the losing one in a game. Selfless, the welfare of others was prime to him. Thus, it was never difficult for him to abide by the call to serve the people.

The high idealism and aspiration of the youth stir them to pursue the path to change, meaningful change that will uplift people's lives, especially those of the disadvantaged and marginalized. Heeding the words of Mao Zedong, the youth set out to integrate with the

masses of peasants and workers—learning from them, consolidating their ideas and experiences, arousing and organizing them, helping them achieve their emancipation.

Romulo, with his elder brother Ruben and student-comrades in the movement, went back to his hometown in Tigaon, Camarines Sur. Initially, they joined in organizing a people's movement—the *Bagong Katipunan* which had been short-lived. Later, they proceeded to the rural areas to immerse with the farmers and abaca workers. They helped them plant their food as they enlightened them on issues and as they organized them.



Kumander Tangkad for his over six-foot height. His brother Ruben took the name *Kumander Benjie*. *Kumander Tangkad* believed, as he had learned in the past, that only an

armed revolution can liberate the people from the fetters of the semifeudal structure that US imperialism with its local cohorts of landlord/comprador and bureaucrat capitalist foster. Resting on the creativity and strength of the masses, the people's war erupted in the hinterlands of Tigaon.

When the writ of habeas corpus was suspended in August 1971, Romulo and Ruben visited their mother to bade her farewell. That was the last time she talked and saw them.

The people rejoiced and fully supported the New People's Army, their protector from the abusive Philippine Constabulary (PC) and bad

At age 24, the country kid, who had ventured to Manila to earn for a living from odd jobs in garage and machine shop, who had become an activist thirsting for knowledge and hungering for change, had turned into a red fighter, gaining the moniker


The people rejoiced and fully supported the New People's Army, their protector from the abusive Philippine Constabulary (PC) and bad

armed revolution can liberate the people from the fetters of the semifeudal structure that US imperialism with its local cohorts of landlord/comprador and bureaucrat capitalist foster. Resting on the creativity and strength of the masses, the people's war erupted in the hinterlands of Tigaon.

elements who stole their carabaos. Making a dent on the control of the fascist troops in the area, the NPA was pursued like mad by the PC.

In an encounter on December 18, 1971, Kumander Tangkad sustained eight gunshot wounds. While recuperating in a rented apartment of a relative in Ateneo Avenue in Naga City on December 30, 1971, the PC came to get him following a tip of his whereabouts received by the Provincial Commander Antonio Habulan. The troops summoned him to surrender. But brave and tenacious as he was, surrendering to the enemy would be the least he would do. Mao's quotes were ingrained in his mind, "Wherever there is struggle, there is sacrifice, and death is a common occurrence." "Dying for the interests of the people is a worthy death."

Using his wounds as pretext, Jallores urged them to come and get him. But as soon as the troops entered the room, they were met with fire from a .45 caliber felling PC Lt. Segundino Agahan dead. Retaliating, the PC riddled Jallores with a volley of shots. Twenty-two bullets on his body snuffed out the life of Kumander Tangkad.

But the legend of Kumander Tangkad lived on and thousands took up the rifle he dropped. The flames of the revolution kindled in Tigaon raged into a conflagration that engulfed and spread throughout the region. In due time, organs of political power were also set up in guerrilla zones. 

Efren Martires

REVOLUTIONARY TRAILBLAZER

The advance of the national democratic revolution has been drenched with the blood of valiant revolutionary martyrs who aspired and persevered for national and social liberation. They contributed in the efforts to dismantle the rotten semifeudal and semicolonial system that has been sustained by the ruling landlords and big compradors, coddled by US imperialism for its own rapacious interest.

To honor their contributions and immortalize their memory, their names are lent to the various regional operational commands and combat units of the New People's Army (NPA).

Efren was a student activist who could not be deterred by prison walls to grow and bloom through the teachings of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin. He developed into an exemplary cadre of the

Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and a commander of the NPA. He confronted and overcame revolutionary morass to lay the foundation of a strong, indomitable revolutionary spirit and citadel of the revolution in the Eastern Visayas and in the whole country. Up to now the revolutionary zones in the region he took part in establishing persist.

Efren became a student activist and leader in a university in Samar at the height of the mass protest actions against US imperialism and the reactionary government from 1970 to 1972. The protests began in Manila and soon spread out in other parts of the country.

He confronted and overcame revolutionary morass to lay the foundation of a strong, indomitable revolutionary spirit and citadel of the revolution in the Eastern Visayas and in the whole country.

On September 21, 1972, President Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law. He sought not only to thwart the growing opposition and nip in the bud a burgeoning armed revolution as he plotted to perpetuate his rule, which was supposed to end in 1973.

With absolute power, Marcos tried his utmost to deceive the people with a promised “New Society” utopia while he plundered the national coffers and buried the nation in debts. He wielded his fascist might against perceived enemies through his combined military and police forces and paramilitary units. He caused

thousands to be illegally arrested and imprisoned, tortured, forcibly disappeared and killed. They included political opponents, student leaders and activists, civil libertarians, and media people.

Efren’s university campus was not spared from the onslaught of the fascist rule. He and three other activists were arrested and detained.

Meanwhile, the huge mass actions serially launched prior to the martial law declaration, capped by the First Quarter Storm in 1970, had gained traction. People were awakened to the fundamental issues badgering the country. People’s organizations proliferated, garnering popular support from the broad masses. The mass movement engendered the rise of militant activists and cadres. Many of them went to the countryside to pursue a higher level of resistance.

As Marcos, his family and cronies relished their extended stay in power, the people’s resistance and the armed struggle advanced. From the 65 red fighters with 35 firearms, of which only nine were automatic rifles when the NPA started in Capas, Tarlac, they

increased by leaps and bounds. The spark of the revolution ignited in Central Luzon spread like wildfire across the archipelago.

In just five years after the declaration of Martial Law, the NPA possessed a thousand strong armaments, including armalite, carbines, and garrands. Guerrilla zones were established in strategic war zones in 10 regions of the country. Their mass base reached one million.

In Eastern Visayas alone, particularly in Samar, the revolutionary forces' mass base had significantly grown since 1974. Their armaments increased with every successful tactical offensive.

Martires' life and heroism

Efren was in his 5th year in Veterinary Medicine at the University of Eastern Philippines when the wave of activism reached their shore. He joined the *Kabataang Makabayan* and became a student leader. After the declaration of Martial Law he was arrested with three other activists.

Initially detained at the Catarman Provincial Philippine Constabulary (PC) Command, the four were later transferred to the Cebu Detention Center at Camp Lapulapu. There they met other political prisoners from the Visayas. Resolved to frustrate the authorities' attempt to weaken their determination to fight the dictatorship, they organized themselves and turned the prison cells into a school for Marxist-Leninist writings. It was there where Ka Popong joined the CPP.

Upon their release in 1973, he and comrades immediately trekked to the mountains to join the brewing armed struggle. Ka Popong was deployed to Eastern Samar. The pioneering work of building a revolutionary movement proved arduous and difficult. They encountered mammoth burdens and challenges—limitation in communications, infantile application of revolutionary theories and practices, and numerous other practical problems.

Yet through more than 50 years, the foundations laid down by the trailblazers like Martires still benefit the poor peasants in the region. In a statement issued on the 53th anniversary celebration of the NPA, the Samar Regional Command noted:

“The people cherish their army because the revolution is deeply entrenched in their land. They reap the harvest of agrarian revolution over the past decades such as lowering of land rent and significant reduction of prices of basic



commodities, among other antifeudal victories.”

The NPA in Samar also fought against a paramilitary group, called “Lost Command,” which protected then Defense Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile’s illegal logging activities.

Ka Popong proved to be a model Party leader and NPA commander. His keenness in analyzing issues and situations impressed his comrades; his revolutionary optimism inspired them. He passionately served the people and resolutely fought with them against their oppressors.

At one time, due to enemy harassment, his unit’s communication with the regional leadership was cut off and they lost guidance. But they managed to survive. Surmounting all adversities is a strong point of the NPA, ever resolved to deepen its roots among the masses and defend and promote their interests.

Ka Popong was born to a lower middle-class family on July 21, 1951 in Barobaybay, Lavezares,

Northern Samar. Being the eldest in a brood of 11, he was tempered with responsibilities at an early age. To augment the family income, he toiled as a shoeshine boy, peddled bread, and engaged in fishing and farming. These experiences honed his skills and innate leadership capability.

On November 25, 1975, enemy forces raided their camp. Ka Popong ordered the immediate retreat of Red fighters. With both legs rendered infirmed by an accident, he opted to stay behind. He fought it out with the attacking enemy forces to cover the withdrawal of the NPA unit. Before his Thompson machine gun ran out of ammunition, he was able to kill three fascist soldiers. He even dismantled his gun and threw the pieces away so that the enemy could not use it.

Up to his last breath, he continued to challenge and taunt the enemy. Ka Efren Martires died living up to his name: a martyr and a hero to the oppressed masses he loved so much, and for whom he fervently served and died. 🇵🇭

Rachelle Mae Palang

PRESS FREEDOM FIGHTER AND HEALTH WORKER

If Rachelle Mae Palang's name is familiar, it is because the Southeast Negros command of the New People's Army (NPA) was named after her. Rachelle Mae died at age 22, on September 18, 2008, in the hands of the fascist troops while on a medical mission. Naming the Southeast Negros Command of the NPA after her memorialized her life—a patriotic youth, another best of the best who chose to serve the poorest of the poor.

She was an outstanding nursing student, a leader, and a campus journalist. These gave her a keen grasp of issues and awakened her to the ills of society. As an avid advocate of press freedom, she assiduously fought against violations of the rights of people to information and free expression as well as campus repression.

After obtaining her degree in nursing and passing the licensure exam, she

immediately volunteered to go to the hinterlands of Negros to serve the peasant communities where health care system has long been neglected by the government. She dreamt to be a doctor after passing the national medical admission test so she could better serve the downtrodden and disadvantaged. However, that dream perished with her untimely death.

Rachelle as press freedom fighter

Mae Mae, as she was fondly called by her closest friends at the Veluz College in Cebu City, was endeared to many for her bubbly, zany demeanor as well as her generosity to help. She stood out as a conscientious and indefatigable student leader. She fought not only for press freedom but also for the students' democratic rights and welfare.

While Editor-in-Chief of the *Vital Signs*, the official publication of Veluz College, she was elected Vice President for the Visayas of the College Editors Guild of the Philippines (CEGP) and

served for three years. During her term, she helped reopen campus publications and establish student papers in colleges and universities that had none.

Having campus papers is a democratic right of the students. Mae Mae was aware that campus press is an important platform for students to express their ideas, develop critical thinking skills, and in presenting the people's point of view on various issues and concerns.

Even after her term with the CEGP, Mae Mae continued to contribute to the organization by documenting cases of press freedom violations in Visayas.

Healthcare for the people

After passing the nurses board, Rachelle opted to go to the countryside to serve the most oppressed and neglected sector of the country—the peasants and farm workers. She refused to go abroad, the goal of many of those who chose the nursing profession. During her brief but meaningful medical mission, she discovered the integrative work of the people's army among the peasantry.





The red army—while persevering to satisfy the basic demand of the poor peasants and farm workers for their rights to the land they till, achieving minimum and maximum gains—also provided health care for the masses through education, planting and production of herbal medicines, improvised medical kits, and other alternative treatment.

The martyrdom

Barely had Ka Hannah finished her medical mission when a composite unit of the 79th Infantry Battalion and elements of the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) chanced upon them at the border of Dauin and Zamboanguita Villages, in Negros Oriental. Ka Hannah and her companions were on a break from a meeting. That was September 2008 when Ka Hannah was killed along with Federico “Ka Val” Villalongha and Gerry “Ka Regan” Cabungcag. The Mt. Talinis Front Command of the NPA belied the claim of the Philippine Army that there was an armed encounter.

Unarmed, Ka Hannah was shot point blank, her face hardly recognizable, while

signs of torture were evident all over her body, a violation of the rules of engagement under the International Humanitarian Law.

Ka Hannah’s martyrdom, as well as those of the other patriotic youth before her who had aspired to change the world, is a constant inspiration. Their bold and selfless sacrifice is a challenge to the youth to take the noble path to national and social liberation. ♣



Crispin S. Tagamolila

THE AFP IS NOT THE PLACE TO SERVE THE PEOPLE

On March 29, 1971, on the 2nd anniversary of the NPA, a 26-year old lieutenant, Crispin S. Tagamolila, defected to the NPA.

On the 50th anniversary of the founding of the New People's Army (NPA) on March 29, 2019, the revered memory of a martyr of the revolution comes to mind. On the same day in 1971, the second anniversary of the NPA, the 26-year-old Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Lt. Crispin S. Tagamolila defected to the revolutionary people's army. In his statement, he cited, "I have realized that the (AFP) is the primary instrument of oppression of the righteous dissent of the suffering masses."

Born on January 7, 1945 in Tubungan, Iloilo, Crispin spent his early years of education in the La Paz Elementary School and the Iloilo High School. He was the third of five children of Manuel Tagamolila and Casiana Sandoval. One of

his siblings, his younger brother Antonio, a former *Philippine Collegian* editor and national president of the College Editor's Guild of the Philippines, was also killed in an encounter in the mountains of Panay, two years after Crispin's death.

After finishing his bachelor's degree in Business Administration at the University of the Philippines in 1966, he enrolled at the Philippine Military Academy. Upon graduation in 1967, he was commissioned as a regular officer in the AFP. While serving in the army he took up law at the Philippine Constabulary Law School while at the same time taught nationalism, Philippine History and Philippine heroes. As a law student, he excelled in his studies, always landing among the five top students of his class. However, due to his radical views on politico-social issues, the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP) put him under surveillance. In an attempt to restrain his activities, the ISAFP offered to bribe him with a promotion that he readily declined.

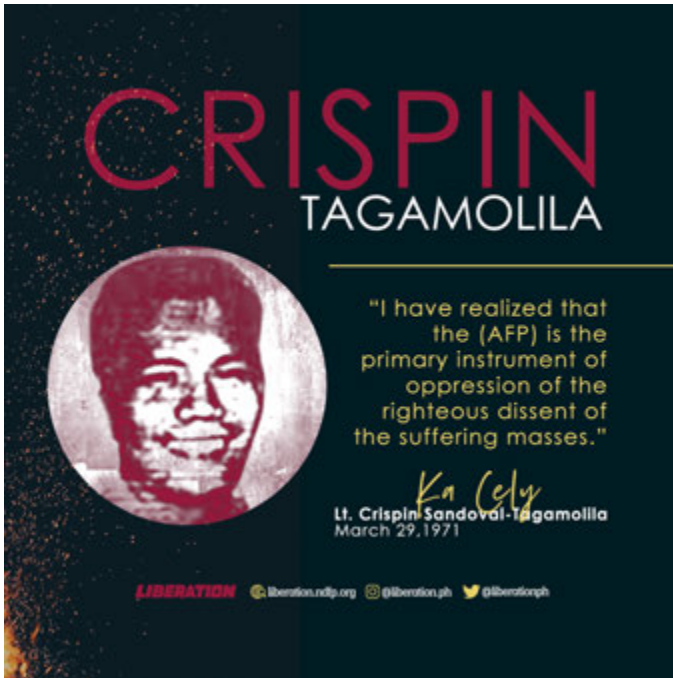
While in the service, he witnessed the control of US imperialism on the AFP through the Joint US Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG)—the aid and training it gave the Philippine army and police personnel on “counterinsurgency” techniques, crowd control and gangsterism. He was also immensely disgusted with how Marcos used the

military to suppress his critics and perpetuate his rule while he tolerated the rampant corruption of his anointed generals.

Tagamolila's realization sealed his decision to leave the puppet armed forces and join the people's revolutionary army. “It is indeed only through armed struggle by the people and the army against the exploiters that the masses can hope for a just and progressive society,” he expounded in his statement.

In the people's army, Crispin was known by his *nom de guerre* “Ka Cely.” His political and military knowledge has contributed much to the masses and his comrades. From 1969 to 1972, the expansion of the organized mass base in Isabela reached 150,000.

Ka Cely was killed in an encounter on April 16, 1972 in Echague, Isabela while covering the retreat of his comrades. Upon his death, his family came up with a statement: “We are crying, we are saddened because he is no longer with us, but most of all we are grieving because he can no longer serve the people and the country he loved so much.”



Much as Crispin Tagamolila's death is a loss to the revolution, it is not all in vain. It has inspired and steeled the resolve of the revolutionary movement to advance the people's struggle. The seed he had sown has bloomed to fruition as the flames of the revolution engulfed the archipelago; as the revolution advances, much stronger, more adept and more determined to attain national and social liberation, thwarting all Oplans hatched by US imperialism and its puppet regimes in the past 50 years. 🇷🇵

Antonio S. Tagamolila

SPREAD THE WORD TO LIBERATION

Campus journalists play a vital role in the unfolding of society. After all, the school is a microcosm of a larger intricate world where the youth, the hope of the future, can contribute to change. Antonio (“Tony”) Sandoval Tagamolila was Editor-in-Chief of the *Philippine Collegian*, the campus publication of the University of the Philippines. He was also national president of the College Editors Guild of the Philippines (CEGP) in 1970, a time of the culmination of the 1960s political awakening and the heightening of inspiring activism.

Conveniently using his writings and those of fellow student journalists brought to light the real situation of the country and the yokes of US imperialism, domestic feudalism, and bureaucrat capitalism that fettered the broad

masses to abject poverty and exploitation. They elucidated on the principles and programs of the national democratic movement and the imperative and decisive solution to the ills of Philippine society.

Cognizant of the need to involve the broad masses for the pursuit of change, Tony and other students and

youth immersed with workers in factories and eventually with farmers in the countryside. When Martial Law was declared, Tony and many activists and cadres in Metro Manila went back to their respective provinces to



continue the goal to attain social and national liberation. Tony or Ka Del left for Western Visayas, the region of his birth, to pursue his propaganda

work as Party cadre of the National Press Bureau (NPrB). Soon after, he joined the National People's Army (NPA). It was there where he was martyred in a lopsided battle with the instruments of the fascist State.

Humble beginnings and lofty aspirations

Born to Manuel Tagamolila and Casiana Sandoval on January 17, 1950, Tony hailed from Iloilo City where he spent his childhood until his elementary years. His father had no stable job but that did not hinder Tony and older brother Crispin to pursue their education. Intelligent as they were, the siblings enjoyed government scholarships.

In high school, Tony was a scholar at the UP High School where he was literary editor of the school publication *UP Highlights*. He graduated First Honor. Called "Tony Taga," by his high school classmates, he was known to be "quiet, calm, self-assured, and super *talino* (intelligent)," wrote a high school *barkada*, Dr. Sonny Siasoco, MD in his article "[Remembrance of Times Past with Tony Tagamolila](https://bit.ly/3CcKvxB)" (<https://bit.ly/3CcKvxB>).

He was a “regular guy,” said Dr. Siasoco. “In high school, we did the usual high school things that teenagers do. We climbed the 200-plus circular steps to the wings of the angels in the Quezon Memorial Circle and tossed paper airplanes, and cigarette butts at our nervous buddies on the ground.” But upon learning of his involvement in the revolutionary movement and later Tony’s death as a Red fighter of the NPA, Siasoco remarked, “Growing up with the guy, and knowing him as I did, I do not doubt these allegations.”

Tony and older brother Crispin again earned scholarship grants in college. Crispin went to the Philippine Military Academy while Tony enrolled in engineering at the University of the Philippines. He later shifted to economics and graduated in 1971 with a Bachelor’s Degree in Economics.

At the UP, Dr. Siasoco and Tony joined the *Philippine Collegian*. They also became Fraternity brothers when they joined the Alpha Sigma Fraternity with another high school buddy, Doy Vea.

As a student, Tony also became a member of progressive organizations such as the *Kabataang Makabayan* (KM, Patriotic Youth) in 1966 and later in the *Samahan ng Demokratikong Kabataan* (SDK, *Organization of Democratic Youth*). His membership in these organization and immersion with workers in factories and farmers in the countryside molded Tony into a committed proletarian revolutionary.

Tony married his college sweetheart and comrade in SDK, Victoria Segui. At the time, Vicki was also a leader of the *Malayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan* (MAKIBAKA, Free Movement of the New Women) before it was banned when martial law was declared. Before Tony finally left for his deployment in Western Visayas to fulfill his tasks as Party cadre of the NPRB, he had spent some time to cuddle and care for his newborn son. He left in November 1972, after Martial Law was imposed.



An article posted in *Bantayog ng mga Bayani* (<https://www.bantayog.org/tagamolila-antonio-s/>), Tony's wife Vicki was quoted, "He wanted to go back to his roots...He was going to give back everything that he had learned...it was his obsession."

Earlier, on March 29, 1971, his brother Crispin, then a 26-year-old lieutenant of the Philippine Army had already defected to the NPA. (Read Crispin Tagamolila's journey: <https://liberation.ndfp.org/main-stream/rise-up-for-country-and-people-pt-1-of-2/>)

Campus journalist

Starting out as a columnist in the *Philippine Collegian*, Tony later became Editor-in-Chief. It was during his time as editor-in-chief that Amado Guerrero's *Philippine Society and Revolution* was serialized in the *Philippine Collegian*. He also played an important role in organizing the League of Editors for the Advancement of a Democratic Society (LEADS), which developed progressive campus editors.

Their weekly presswork at the Liwayway Printing Press in Manila gave them the opportunity to meet

fellow campus activists and writers from various campus publications from the University Belt, "which led to the revival of the College Editors Guild (CEG), which had been inactive for a while," recalled Dr. Siasoco. This ushered in militancy in the CEGP as they won the leadership. CEGP began issuing statements and press releases that undauntedly exposed and condemned the Marcos regime's incompetence and negligence. CEGP even came out with a poster that said, *Isulong and Ikalawang Kilusang Propaganda* (Advance the Second Propaganda Movement).



A CEGP colleague interviewed by *Liberation* remembers Tony as the soft-spoken Ilonggo. “As a speaker, Tony brought with him his journalist’s grounding—brief, clear, and concise,” said Ka Sophia. Tony also took efforts to lighten up discussions on serious issues to hold interest. And to ensure that the issues were imbibed, he painstakingly continued elaborating on them during informal discussions. “It was his way, too to convince those who might still have doubts,” continued Ka Sophia.

Onward to fulfilling his aspirations

Tony excelled not only in propaganda but also in united front work. This had exposed him to the prying eyes of the enemy. Twice, he gingerly evaded being caught. With his urban job getting risky, he requested deployment to the countryside with the NPA. Their team settled in a forested area in Panay where life was so impoverished. The land, mostly stones and rocks made planting rice impossible. The people there thrived on roots and tubers. Isolated, they sewed their own clothes from hand woven abaca fibers. An ideal place for guerrilla warfare, it was also the base of the

Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon (HUKBLAHAP) in the 1940s.

On that fateful day of February 18, 1974, government military forces raided their hut located on the common border of Aklan and Capiz provinces. Despite being outnumbered, they put up a valiant fight against the far superior weapons of state forces. Killed with Tony/Ka Del were student leaders from Manila, Babes Calixto of the *Samahan ng mga Progresibong Propagandista* (SPP, Association of Progressive Propagandists) and Antonio Hilario (Tony Hil) of SDK.



In the obituary carried by a national newspaper, Antonio Tagamolila's death was described as heavier than a mountain. It reminds of the Great Leader Mao Zedong's quote in tribute to people's martyrs: "All men must die, but death can vary in its significance. The ancient Chinese writer Szuma Chien said, 'Though death befalls all men alike, it may be weightier than Mount Tai or lighter than a feather.' To die for the people is weightier than Mount Tai, but to work for the fascists and die for the exploiters and oppressors is lighter than a feather."

In 1991, at the 25th year homecoming reunion of Tony Taga's high school batch, a Scholarship Fund named after him was started "to commemorate his legacy and ultimate sacrifice." Dr. Siasoco remembered how he felt when he saw Tony's eldest son Crispin (named after his brother who was also martyred). "Cris is the spitting image of his dad, and I have to admit, for a few moments during the ceremony, yours truly went *verklemt*." 🇷🇵

Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal
Leoncio "Ka Parago" Pitao

UNFADING INSPIRATIONS TO REVOLUTIONARIES AND THE MASSES

In life and in death, they remain an unfading inspiration to the entire revolutionary forces and the masses.

Their selfless commitment to serve the exploited and oppressed, their unflinching sacrifices and their relentless perseverance and valor bespeak of the communist spirit. Their significant contributions to the revolutionary movement and the people's democratic revolution for national liberation and social transformation cannot be ignored. For these they have been loved, revered, and emulated.

Their mastery of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist (MLM) principles was manifested in the excellence of their practice.

Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal was born to a peasant family and worked his way to school by peddling mosquito nets and as a landowner's help. He became a member of *Kabataang Makabayan* and later an organizer of farm workers at Batangas Sugar Central in Balayan, Batangas. He was arrested and jailed in Camp Vicente Lim in Canlubang, Laguna during the Martial Law years but was able to escape prison. He then joined the armed struggle in the countryside, building, consolidating and expanding guerrilla bases in Southern Tagalog Region and Quezon-Bicol Zone. But the task he loved most was propaganda work where he truly excelled.



As Spokesperson of the CPP, Ka Roger Rosal's voice reverberated throughout the archipelago to awaken the masses with his sharp analysis of their situation and issues as he exposed the causes and refuted the lies peddled by the reactionaries. He used a language so simple but its truthfulness and closeness to the experience of the masses makes it understandable. His honest concern for the interest of the oppressed pierced their feelings and bolstered their courage to take the same revolutionary path that Ka Roger put to challenge. Meanwhile, his acerbic attacks on the puppet government, on imperialism, on the landlords and compradors not only intimidated them, not only enraged them, but also crippled them.

Leoncio "Commander Parago" Pitao joined the New People's Army in 1978. He had applied the theory and practice of MLM successfully. He held on to the correct political line as he built organs of political power and mass organizations. He pursued land reform while advancing the struggle. He also developed close ties with the masses and the peasants, workers, and indigenous people, as well as built relations with allies. A brilliant strategist and tactician in guerrilla warfare, he led the First *Pulang Bagani* Company in the Southern Mindanao Region to many victorious offensives against the state military forces. Commander Parago was the most famous commander of his time. As he was recognized both nationally and internationally, the local reactionary forces dreaded and hated him.





Commander Parago was captured by enemy forces in 1999 but was released on recognizance in 2001, a confidence and goodwill measure for the resumption of the peace talks between the GRP and the NDFP. Upon release, he went back to the countryside to continue with the struggle.

Both Ka Roger and Commander Parago had lived with the masses for decades, zealously serving them, protecting them and helping them with their problems. They loved the masses so much and they in turn were dearly loved by them. The huge marches attended by the masses showed the outpouring support and love for them.

Ka Roger suffered his first major heart attack in 1997 but he chose to stay in the countryside, climbing mountains, crossing rivers and seacoasts and facing dangers of enemy assaults. He died on June 22, 2011 at 64. His body were buried in a secret

grave among the masses to hide it from the enemy. It was only in March 2016, upon the request of his family, that his urn of ashes was interred in his hometown in Ibaan, Batangas.

For some time also, Commander Parago had been sick with diabetes, hyperthyroidism, hepatitis and hypertension. His comrades advised him to take a leave for medical treatment and rest outside the area of his command but he opted to stay and live with the masses. On June 28, 2015, an enemy team raided Purok 9 of Barangay Panalum in the Paquibato District of Davao City where Parago was undergoing medical treatment by medic Vanessa Limpag, Ka Kyle. The enemy immediately riddled Commander Parago with bullets upon sight of him. Vanessa, who had raised her hand and made known that she was a medic was also gunned down. Leoncio Pitao passed away at 57.

In contrast to the lenient and humane treatment that Commander Parago rendered to captured enemies and prisoners of war, he was summarily killed in stark violation of International Humanitarian Law.

Ka Roger and Commander Parago might have fallen and gone but the legacy they left will live on. It will continue to inspire the education and training of so many revolutionaries who will carry and pass on the torch until the victory of the Philippine revolution. It will prevail in the burning desire they sowed in the hearts of the masses to be freed from the bondage of exploitation and oppression. Every revolutionary will strive to emulate the exemplary lives they lived, the paragon of communist virtues in their being.

Contrary to the reactionary Armed Forces of the Philippines' belief that the revolution would weaken with the death of Ka Roger and Commander Parago, it even grew stronger delivering fatal blows to the enemy. The First Pulang Bagani Company has since become a battalion.

The successors to Ka Roger and Commander Parago have become more determined to advance the revolution to victory.

The grief over the loss of our beloved comrades and valiant heroes has turned into revolutionary courage as a lasting tribute to their treasured memory. 🇷🇵



Eleazar "Ka Chen" Templado

LIVING THE FAITH

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 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.

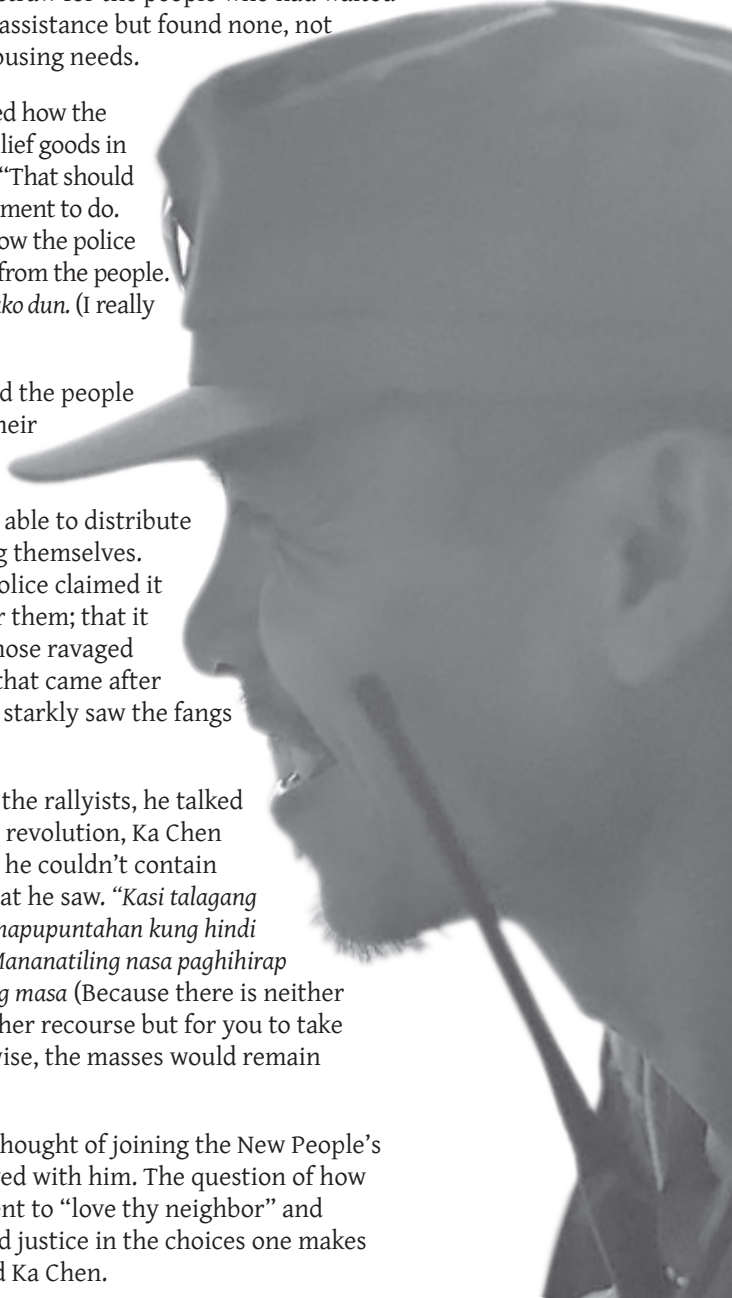
In February 2013, a violent dispersal of their protests became the last straw for the people who had waited for government assistance but found none, not even for their housing needs.

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.)”

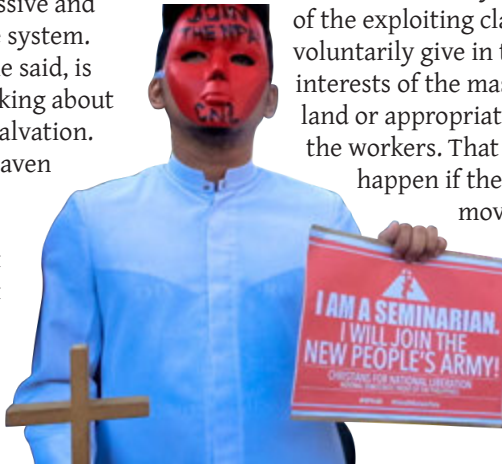
Since then, the thought of joining the New People’s Army (NPA) stayed with him. The question of how one’s commitment to “love thy neighbor” and pursue peace and justice in the choices one makes everyday nagged Ka Chen.



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 why the masses appreciate and love the Party because they get it that it is really the Party that serves their interest) said Ka Chen, beaming. That, to you, is people's democratic revolution, he said.

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/siyensya 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.)"



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 Churchpeople 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. They masses are members of our Churches. Let us banish the demons. Let us not be cowed down by the enemy’s terror. Be more afraid of the masses turning their backs on us.” 📌

“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.”

*Kerima Lorena Tariman
Ernie Peñaranda*

ARTS, DEATH, & REVOLUTION

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 dry 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: end to landlessness, provision of decent jobs and wages, adequate nutritious food on their tables, 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 Ekonomiyang 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 "*Biyaha*" ("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.

For 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.”¹



PAG-AARAL SA GRAS

KERIMA LORINA TARIMAN



Ericson Acosta

ARTISTA NG DIGMANG BAYAN

Ericson Acosta was a gifted writer and performer who could have landed a comfortable gig on any mainstream publication or production outfit. He was already writing for a major broadsheet—rubbing elbows with rising bands such as the Eraserheads and Yano—when his life would take a detour during the mid-90's.

Despite the proverbial rock n'roll lifestyle he was enjoying as an up and coming writer, there was still something missing in his life. During his early years in UP, he dabbled in theater productions and became involved in the human rights organization *Amnesty International*. His life was colorful and somewhat wild. He did

not figure in any of the activist organizations like the LFS (League of Filipino Students).

He did however become an editor of the *Kultura* section of the *Philippine Collegian*. It is here where he became exposed to UP activists from a cultural group who were about to mount a mini-production.

Ericson would engage with the activists and would find himself helping

out in the cultural production and then later, joining discussions and protest actions. It was in the summer of 1995 when he would join a cultural integration in the countryside of Southern Tagalog. There in the peasant communities, his understanding of the problems of society and the need for revolutionary struggle would deepen.

The encounter with the poor peasants and the revolutionary forces who were organizing had such a great impact on Ericson that he returned to Manila a full-time activist. He became even more active in the militant student movement and took on leading roles in various organizations. It was during this



time that he would start composing original songs and later on, write an original play for a

multi-media production.

Ericson's early music—heavily influenced by blues, folk and rock—attempted to capture the feel of the times, including the rectification movement that was sweeping the entire mass movement. "*Balik aralan ang kasaysayan, iwasto ang pagkakamali*" went the song *Awit ng Kasaysayan*. And as if foreshadowing his transition from student activist to the peasant organizer in the countryside, many of his songs spoke of the decision to embrace the revolutionary struggle full-time. "*Ang paalam, ko'y iyong tanggapin, paglisan ko'y iyong salubungin*" went the first line of the song "*Paalam*".

In his years as a UP activist, Ericson was able to mount plays, compose songs, perform in various gigs, and compile an impressive body of work as a young writer. But it was in the countryside, far from the limelight and literary circles, where his full potential as an artist in the service of the people would be realized.

Immersed in the communities of peasants and farm workers, he would create epic songs that highlighted class oppression and resistance. They would mirror the daily struggles of the workers and peasants. Under the *nom de guerre* Sonya Gerilya, and in collaboration with wife Kerima Tariman who went by the *nom de guerre* Marijoe Monumento, they released the literary booklet *Anahaw*. It was a collection of songs and poems of life in the countryside. The song *Anahaw* told of the various practical uses of the country's national leaf, from roofing

material, fan, head cover, and later on, a means to conceal the guns of the Red fighters. The song *Duyan* is a metaphor for the distance apart of guerrillas and their loved ones, with a witty reprise of the national anthem's "*duyan ka ng magiting*".

Even the form or style of his songs would evolve and would now be more in line with popularization among the people, even as he sought to raise lyrical and musical standards. Whereas his songs during his UP days would require a degree of technical skill, his later songs would be more "singable" for ordinary folk. A still "unreleased" song called *Ating Paaralan* is literally a PADEPA (*Pambansa Demokratikong Paaralan*) hymn that could be sung before educational discussions are held.

*"Sa abang barong-barong ni Inay
at ni Tatay. Sa lihim na lilim
ng punong malabay. Ay laging
bukas, bukas na, bukas na
ang ating paaralan.
Pambansa
demokratikong
paaralan!"*





He would journey with Kerima from the mountains of Bicol region to the rugged hills of Samar, where he would be arrested by the military on trumped-up charges.

It was in prison that Ericson would find a new perspective on waging revolutionary struggle. He needed to fight even behind bars, overcoming the limits of physical confinement through his words and songs. Everyday as he looked out the window of the Calbayog Sub-Provincial Jail, he would see soldiers camped outside the facility. The soldiers were there to make sure he wouldn't escape. But as in the song "Usok", where smoke would escape between the steel bars of a prison cell, so did his poetry reach beyond the prison walls.

Ericson's two years in the Calbayog jail would result in an even more powerful body of work that included "*Isang Minutong Katahimikan, Astig, Kosa, Usok, Palad*," and what would be the title of his book, *Mula Tarima Hanggang*.

The song "*Palad*" tells of the tragic conditions of toilers whose calloused hands would transform into clenched fists and the hands that would take up arms against the oppressor.

Having been released from jail, Ericson would again be part of the legal democratic movement and would maximize the relative freedom he enjoyed to perform, give workshops, write, and most importantly, organize. Upon his release, he rejoined the peasant movement. In his time helping the farm workers of Hacienda Luisita, he would write the song “*Sampung Taon*”, to mark the 10th year of the Luisita Massacre.

Ericson's class origin was from the lower petty bourgeoisie but having enormous talent and skill, he could have easily moved up the social ladder. However, throughout his activist life, he sought to remold his outlook to become a proletarian revolutionary. He accomplished this by working and living with the poor peasants of Bicol, Samar, Tarlac and Negros. And it was this period of intense revolutionary struggle that brought out the best in Ericson as an artist for the people.

Ericson and Kerima quietly left for Negros Island in 2018 to continue their revolutionary work among the peasant masses and *sakadas*. Kerima would be martyred in a firefight in August 2021, while Ericson would be summarily executed by the military on November 30, 2022, in Kabankalan, Negros. Their legacy would remain even after their untimely passing, as these reflect not just artistic excellence but more importantly, the great cause of freedom and democracy. 🇷🇵





"I am basically satisfied with what I have so far contributed to the Philippine revolution. But I still hope to be able to do more in the remaining years of my life. At any rate, the important thing is that I always try to do my best. I have no regrets in devoting my life to revolutionary work. **The only regret that I have is not being able to do more work for the revolutionary cause.**"

Jose Maria Sison

#KaJomaLives

CHERISH THE PEOPLE'S ARMY

SERVE THE PEOPLE



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