

# **LIBERATION**

VOLUME XL NO. 1 | Published by the National Democratic Front of the Philippines | February 2023

# **REWARD**



**U.S. IMPERIALISTS  
No. 1 TERRORISTS**



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.



P.O. Box 19195  
3501 DD Utrecht  
The Netherlands



+31 30 231 04 31



[www.ndfp.org](http://www.ndfp.org)



[admin@ndfp.org](mailto:admin@ndfp.org)

**LIBERATION**

is the official publication of the NDFP  
[liberationph@gmail.com](mailto:liberationph@gmail.com) | [liberation.ndfp.org](http://liberation.ndfp.org)

# CONTENTS

**01** Is Joma dead?



**06** Imperialist US heightens intervention, dirty war in the Philippines



**13** In puppetry US-Marcos Jr shaping up worse than US-Duterte



**18** Learning is a collective endeavour



**23** Meet the graduates

**26** Pure joy with the Masses



**32** The Awakening of a Devotee



**37** A people's victory vs Marcos Sr's monstrous legacy



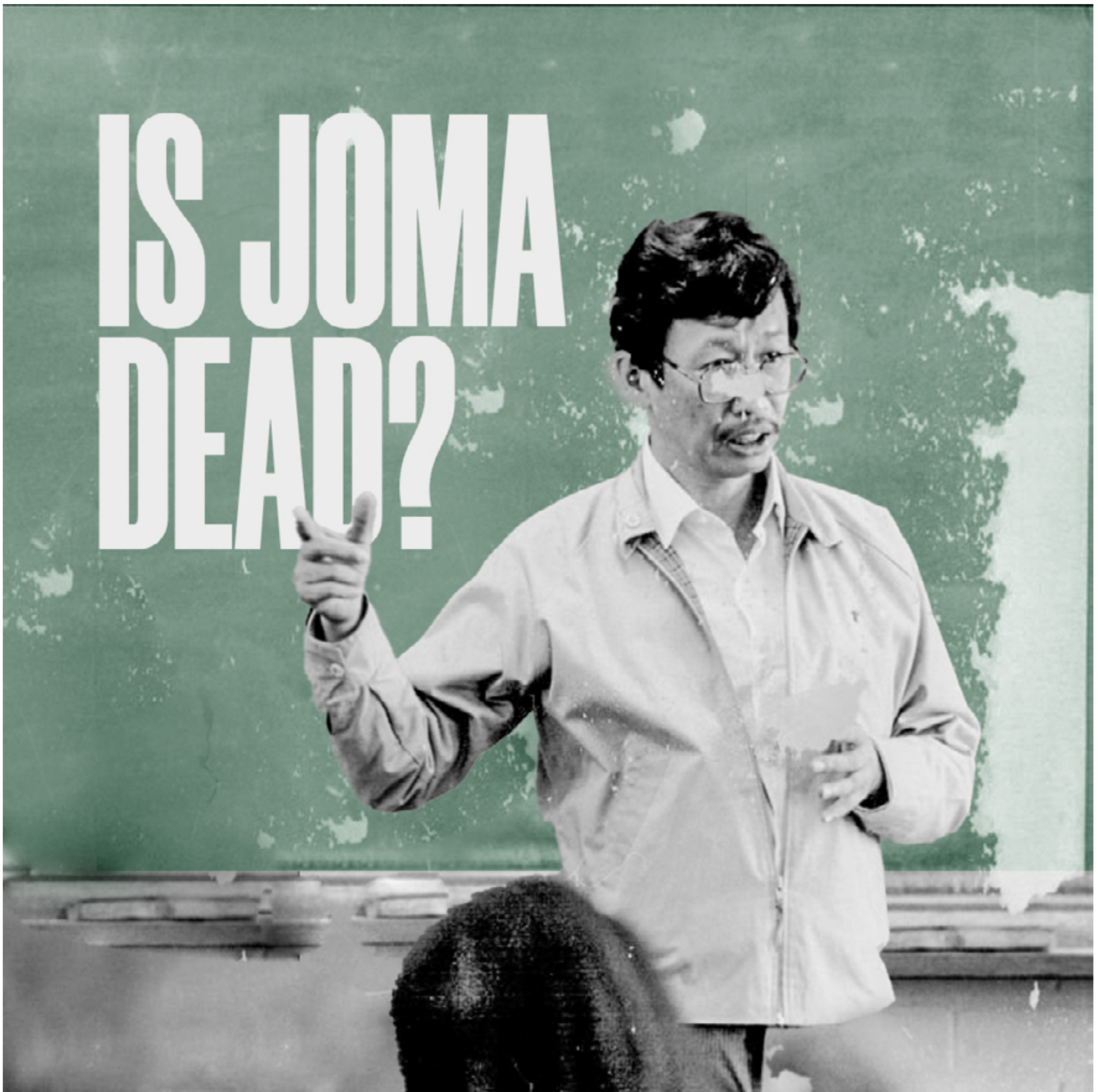
**42** Corruption in the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant

**47** Rachelle Mae Palang, press freedom fighter and health worker



**51** Artista ng digmang bayan





**N**o,  
Joma  
lives!

He lives in every revolutionary who perseveringly carries forward the national democratic revolution with a socialist perspective in every day of struggle.

Not many people knew or met Ka Joma—Jose Maria Sison—in person. For reactionaries, his death may be a cause for jubilation. But to their chagrin, his passing only burns even more the flame of revolution in the hearts of the revolutionaries.



Whether or not you had met Ka Joma, he was veritably bigger than life. His works, his writings, his ideals, his perseverance, his sacrifices, his love for the country, and his faith in the masses especially the working class, have inspired generations of revolutionaries—many of whom have not even seen a shadow of his persona.

Now, to put in perspective what certain quarters say about his passing:

### ***The end of an era, the end of armed struggle?***

Tell that to every activist-turned-revolutionary who fully understands the meaning of concrete analysis of concrete conditions. For as long as the unjust socio-economic conditions in the country persist—as long as the semifeudal and semicolonial system remains—armed struggle will never see its end. This compelling reason made Ka Joma turn his back on his landlord-class origin and became one with the masses, subsequently taking the challenging leadership

role in 1968 as the founding chairperson of the re-established Communist Party of the Philippines. From thereon, waging a protracted people's war in an archipelagic country has produced countless revolutionaries nationwide for over half a century. A stark reality that has haunted and sent shivers down the spines of the cabals of reactionaries and imperialist flunkies, who took turns as the country's ruling regimes, and the entire reactionary class.

### ***Is there a vacuum in revolutionary leadership?***

A people's war is never wanting in leadership. Leaders arise in the course of the people's struggles. And lucky is the Philippine revolution to have been bequeathed Ka Joma's voluminous written works to serve as guide for current and future leaders of the revolution. As Ka Joma said, moments before he passed away: "The people's democratic revolution is invincible".

As earlier stated, both in his life and passing his

unwavering faith in the people stays rock solid. Even while in prison for nearly a decade—held in solitary confinement, chained to his bed, tortured by his captors, and mocked in vain by the regime—Ka Joma's faith in the masses never wavered. And rightly so, probably nameless, faceless, leaders unknown to the enemy have followed his indomitable spirit, wholeheartedly committing themselves to advance the revolution to victory.

### ***The greatest stumbling block to peace?***

Derisively, the enemy called him a disciple of violence, or worse as instigator of violence. Fact is Ka Joma was the most desirous of a just and lasting peace.

Time and again he would say that solving the root causes of the armed conflict was the only way to attain peace. But it should be peace based on justice, never the surrender or unconditional laying down of arms by the revolutionaries. He stood for an assiduous pursuit of peace

negotiations between the NDFP and the GRP.

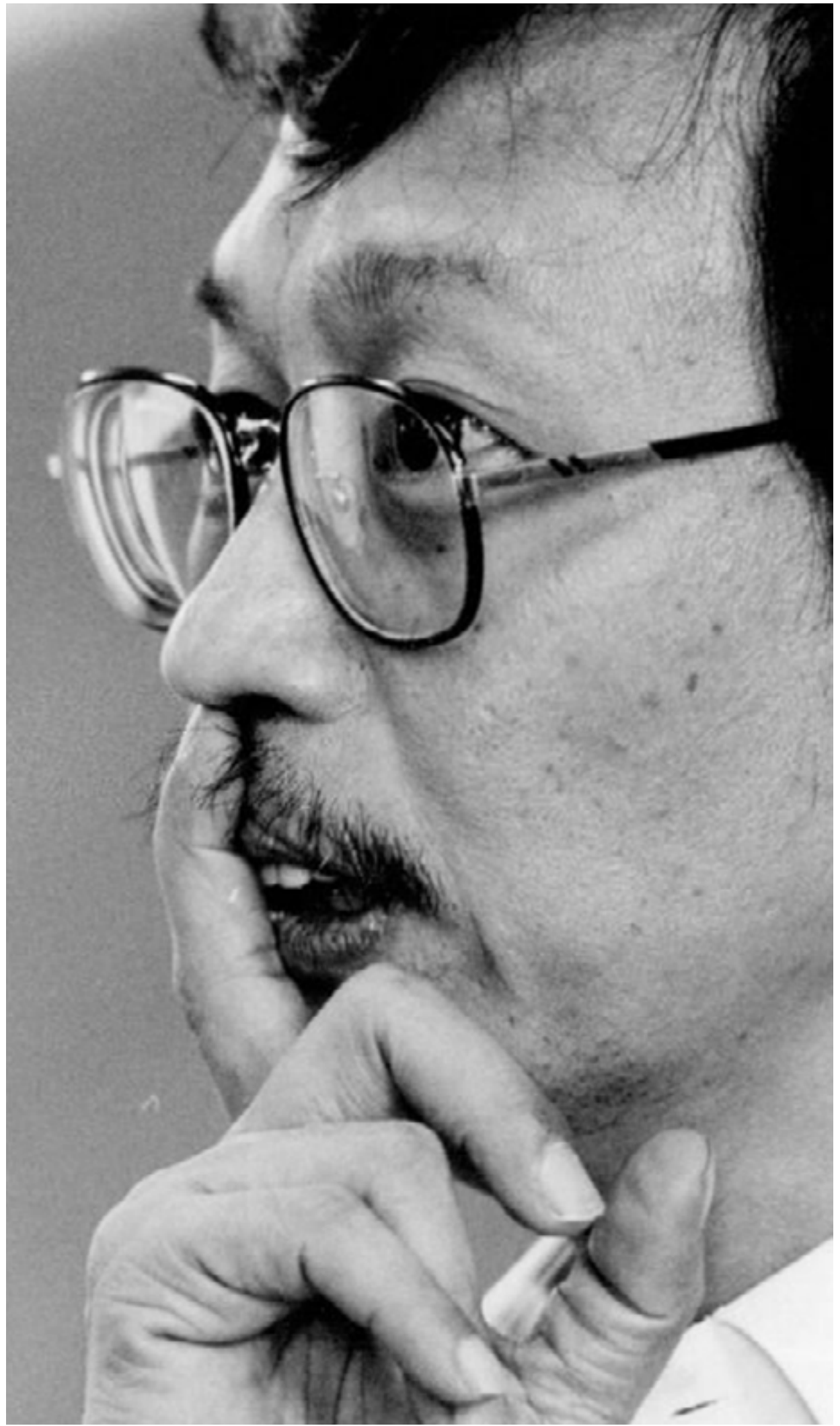
As the chief political consultant of the NDFP peace negotiating panel, he would invariably be the one to come up with formulations that surmounted every impasse arising during the negotiations between the two panels. Inversely, it was always the GRP side's deceitfulness and arrogance that either stalled, suspended or unilaterally terminated the peace talks.



The GRP stonewalled the implementation of the landmark bilateral agreement signed and approved in 1998—the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL).

Implementing it would have benefited the people immensely, reduced the incidence of human rights violations in the course of the armed conflict, and spurred sustained peace negotiations towards other substantive accords and political settlement of the civil war.

The GRP violated other signed agreements—and under the Duterte regime—arrested and detained, or killed several NDFP peace consultants, and arbitrarily declared the CPP, the NPA, and later the NDFP as “terrorists.” But the real terrorists—the peace saboteurs—have already been unmasked as the combined fascist forces of the AFP and the PNP unrelentingly pursue their dirty war in the countryside and attempt to suppress the open democratic mass movement in the cities.



### ***A demon, satan, a terrorist?***


Decades of demonizing Ka Joma have failed to draw the masses away from the revolution. If the people’s enemies had failed to bring him down throughout his lifetime, so did they fail at the time of his death and even in its aftermath. His theoretical and practical guidance of the revolution will remain long after reactionary regimes come one after another, and until final victory is won by the Filipino people. And, surely, such victory would help spur the world’s working class to fulfill its historic mission of class emancipation.



The outpouring of love, respect, and praise for Ka Joma has reverberated in open and underground circles, even from supposedly political enemies. From different sectors of Philippine society and from the international community, Ka Joma has been hailed as a great revolutionary thinker and teacher, a proletarian leader. And for many who were fortunate to have known him, he will be remembered as a relatable individual for his wit and humor, openness, and being downright approachable.



### ***So, what now, detractors?***

Rare are the times when leaders of such caliber like Ka Joma walk the path of revolution. But nothing becomes rare when the masses in their millions follow the trail and carry the revolution forward—inspired, in life or in death, by their leader. 







*by Pinky Ang*

In a recent collated report, the Philippine Revolution Web Central traced a disturbing *modus operandi* of the Armed Forces of the Philippines—that of conducting summary execution of captured combatants or *hors de combat* of the New People’s Army (NPA), in violation of international war protocols. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has been killing in brutal rubouts senior or veteran revolutionaries aged 60 and up, captured Red fighters, unarmed peace consultants of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), and abducted civilians who were suspected to have connections with the revolutionary movement.

The AFP and its paramilitary groups have strafed and bombed civilian communities, hamletted if not encamped in civilian communities, threatened residents by their presence, corrupted minors and women, forcibly held “meetings” and ordered people to present themselves to the military to “clear” their names and be “informed” on the activities of the revolutionaries. While doing these, the AFP attached fabricated stories of armed encounters or “pursuit operations,” fake surrender, and various labels slandering the revolutionaries to spread disinformation.

Although the reactionary government through the AFP and the national police are the main implementers of various “counterinsurgency” Oplans, the justification and guide on “counterinsurgency” and “anti-terrorism”, the supplies of arms, equipment, and intelligence, the myriad of cooperation and trainings for “interoperability” of US and Philippine troops are all from the imperialist US. That a foreign power is directly arming and instigating the

local reactionary government of a sovereign country to shoot, kill, and maim the Filipino people is actually done openly. And they euphemistically call the master-puppet setup as a “treaty partnership,” or a relationship of “treaty allies.”

History shows the U.S. imperialist through military aid and cooperation has been directly behind every thieving regime of puppet Philippine presidents, dictators and tyrants. They waged war on Philippine soil and repressed civilian dissent to defend their narrow interests—a resource-rich, strategically located neocolony.

Given the bloody history of US imperialist’s “pacification” campaign at the turn of 20th century, followed by the deceitful neocolonial control they have imposed since 1946 to placate the patriotic Filipinos, the war against today’s progressive and revolutionary Filipinos is not a throwback but an increasingly more insidious, brutal continuation of imperialist US’ bloody subjugation of peoples in these shores.



Their latest crimes and attacks on the people and their revolutionary vanguards wreaked losses to the Filipino people. Every revolutionary and supporters killed, every community bombed and threatened, represent more room for the narrow alliance of big landlords, bourgeois compradors, and monopoly corporations to continue plundering the riches of not only the Philippines but also of the neighboring countries which the imperialist US seeks to control by forward deployment in “treaty allies” such as the Philippines.



## **US imperialist most eager to crush national liberation movements like in Ph**

Imperialist US is most interested to crush the Philippine national democratic revolution with a socialist perspective because its very existence is another threat to imperialism. When the national democratic revolution gains victory, the US imperialist risks losing a neocolony and social base of local oligarchs and puppet government, thus depriving them of a geopolitically strategic military outpost, a parrot in regional formations as ASEAN, a dumping ground for surplus products and capital, source of cheap labor and resources.

The national democratic revolution is an assertion of the Filipino people's right to self-determination against the domination of US imperialism and towards genuine national independence.

Since 1968, the CPP-led national democratic revolution has been a threat to the US imperialist's global cultural offensive. Because here is a self-reliant army of revolutionaries belying all the imperialists' cunning and unfounded claims for people to rely only on individual superheroes and myths, serve only themselves and not the masses, and believe that the good old Uncle Sam's imperialism is the end of history.

With the experiences and lessons gained by the CPP, the NPA, and the NDFP in mass work, learning from and working with the masses to change their situation, using the Marxist, Leninist and Maoist theories in revolution on the concrete conditions in the Philippines, using it to guide the Filipino revolutionaries' war of national liberation, they are already helping other revolutionaries and liberation movements all over the world.

The imperialist US itches to shut down sources of revolutionary counter-cultures and messaging that threatens its full-spectrum dominance in economic, military, political, and cultural spheres around the world.





## US “war on terror” and terrorist tagging

As Juliet de Lima, interim peace panel head for NDFP, noted in a speech on imperialist cultural offensive, since the US launched its “war on terror,” all sort of “terrorists” have appeared all over the globe. They are none other than enemies of imperialism who opposed the US push for neoliberalism (monopolies) and globalization (monopoly profit-taking). The US has arrogated to itself the self-serving task to launch war against “terrorists” wherever they are. Since then their troops and their cultural offensives have invaded countries, overthrown governments, and killed people whom they accuse of breeding, supporting

or fronting for “terrorists.”

In the Philippines, then US puppet administration Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo swiftly embraced the “war on terror” through Oplan Bantay Laya I and II. The US-Arroyo regime’s bloodbath against the people—personified by the likes of notorious butcher general Jovito Palparan—justified its reign of terror by blurring the distinction between unarmed legal democratic activists and armed revolutionaries. Everyone became a target.

The US-led war against the Philippine liberation movement was continued by the

next US puppet regimes. After so many years, under the cover of COVID19 pandemic, the US-Duterte regime finally managed to upgrade the fangs of the Anti-Terror Act. That was amid a harrowing war on drugs that killed tens of thousands of victims among the poor; war against the Bangsa Moro that became an excuse for pounding Marawi and imposing the first martial law after Marcos Sr; and amid a “counterinsurgency” war against revolutionaries in the countryside.

Duterte failed in his ambitions to be the first US puppet president who can sign a peace accord with the CPP, where

he aimed to follow the US guide to disarm and force the revolutionaries to capitulate. He then unleashed an all-out war (not that they stopped during peace talks), but with additional vigor at being brutal and deceitful. By the time he exited Malacanang, Duterte can lay claim to the notoriety of forcing the terrorist-labeling on revolutionaries in the most abrasive, shameless and big-budgeted way through the NTF-ELCAC and so-called whole-of-nation approach.

Now his successor Marcos Jr and daughter Sara Duterte are continuing the US-instigated “counterinsurgency” war against Filipinos, following the same track that failed.

The official website of US Defence Department in September 2022 did not even hide it, saying “The United States and the Philippines have a **robust** (underscoring ours) counterterrorism program. The United States has counterinsurgency efforts in Mindanao, the country’s largest island, since 2000.”

Current US President Joe Biden said in Fact Sheet: Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States that they are **extending and modernizing their “defense presence” and enhancing their capabilities (in the Philippines) to defend their interest** and to deter aggression against U.S. territory and against their allies and partners (underscoring ours).

IBON Foundation cited the Philippines as the biggest recipient of US military aid among Southeast Asian countries, with an average of US\$ 54 million annually since 2019, mostly military equipment.





The military equipment will make the AFP “more capacitated,” the Philippine News Agency quoted Gen. Cirilito Sobejana when he received the equipment from US. Every year, the US forces and reactionary Philippine troops conduct 300 military exercises, thus helping them gain interoperability, make the local reactionary troops “capacitated” to use surplus US equipment, among others.

All these US imperialist contributions strengthen the local reactionary troops and embolden the puppet government, at the expense of the people and their human rights.

The long-term effects of the intensifying US-instigated “counterinsurgency” war include not just the growing list of gross abuses and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law with utter impunity. It also includes the obstacles generated by relentless cultural offensives against the revolutionaries raised by the psywar guide of US imperialists’ war on terror: the distribution for example of fake news to deceive the masses and mislabel the revolutionaries and liberation fighters as “terrorist.”

The masses know the opposite is true and that in words and deeds the US imperialism is the real terrorist. The progressives and revolutionary forces are challenged to develop unity, cooperation, and coordination of all peoples in the Philippines and abroad, to raise the level of struggle against imperialism and reaction, in particular against imperialist plunder and war led by US and applied hook line and sinker by the puppet government currently led by Ferdinand Marcos Jr. 🇵🇭





*by Pinky Ang*

**T**o deceive the usually patriotic Filipinos that he is not that repugnantly a US puppet, President Marcos Jr mouths “friends to all, enemy to none” as his supposed guiding foreign policy. But, like the previous US-Duterte (who followed the track of mouthing tirades against US while opening up the country wider for continued US intervention), Marcos Jr’s bluster is also belied by his action.

As soon as his incredibly and quickly tallied electronic votes made him the new Philippine president in 2022, Marcos Jr met with US President Joe Biden in September 2022. Soon after, the US and Philippine military leaders continued holding “bilateral” meetings. Their emerging deals show that not only were they taking off from where US puppet Duterte left off, but also they were already expanding and deepening their ties. US military and government officials gleefully said they look forward to more long-term plans to expand their use of the country.



In practice, Marcos Jr's declared policy of "friends to everyone, enemy to none," is military and economic subservience to both the US and China, which makes the country a target for all, the Communist Party of the Philippines said in a statement November 2022.

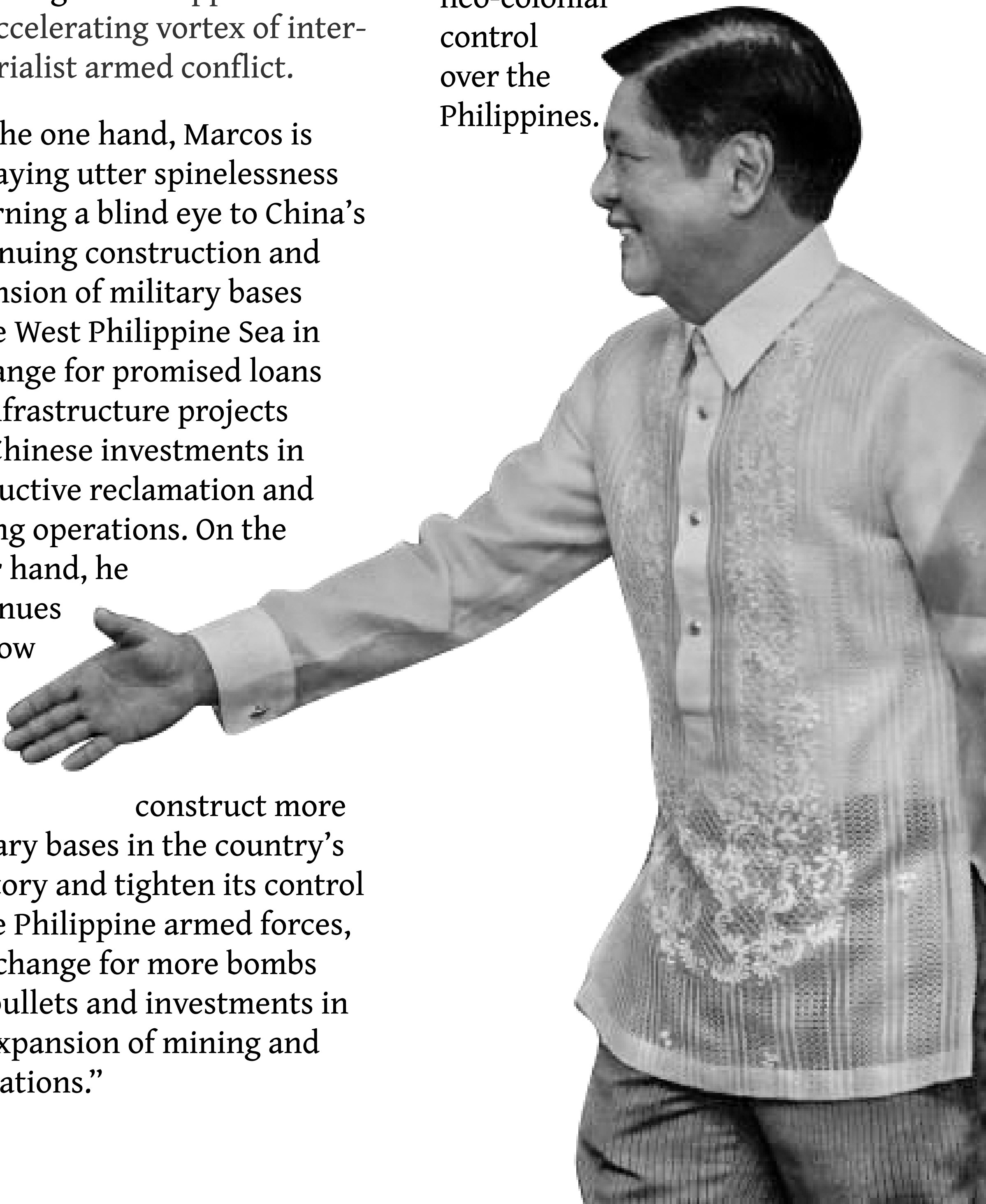
The CPP warned that Marcos Jr is pushing the Philippines into the accelerating vortex of inter-imperialist armed conflict.

"On the one hand, Marcos is displaying utter spinelessness in turning a blind eye to China's continuing construction and expansion of military bases in the West Philippine Sea in exchange for promised loans for infrastructure projects and Chinese investments in destructive reclamation and mining operations. On the other hand, he continues to allow the US to

construct more military bases in the country's territory and tighten its control of the Philippine armed forces, in exchange for more bombs and bullets and investments in the expansion of mining and plantations."

## Un-"Mutual" Defense Treaty

The Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) between the Republic of the Philippines and the United States of America, signed 72 years ago (in 1951), serves as the core legal excuse of imperialist US in exerting neo-colonial control over the Philippines.





Through the years, it has gained and lost military basing in the country with the termination of the Military Bases Agreement in 1991, thanks to people's protest actions. But the US continually sought to maintain its military presence and dominance here through other unequal "agreements" that "enhanced" the MDT.

These include in 1998 the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) and in 2014 the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). The VFA provides the legal basis and status protections for U.S. military and defense civilian personnel in the Philippines on official business. EDCA allows U.S. forces to use military camps in the Philippines, for military exercises, joint and combined military training activities, and to make themselves look good, for example, by claiming they are supposedly into humanitarian assistance and disaster relief activities. The Mutual Logistics Support Agreement was renewed in 2017 and is the legal

mechanism to access locally sourced resources.

Together these "agreements" bestow US the license to, as they say, provide "critical U.S. military support," presence, and interoperability. Indeed, they give that to their puppet administration and troops to shore up the repressive, exploitative system. In practice, it puts the imperialist US in position to intervene not only in the Philippines but in the Asia-Pacific (what they call as Indo-Pacific) region.

What's up with all these "agreements" that many describe as mere executive deals between presidents?

With the lives of the Filipino people and revolutionaries on the line, there is much to watch out for under the US-Marcos 2 regime. In just a few months of Marcos Jr as president, he had already met twice with the US president, parroted all US calls in back-to-back regional summits held before yearend, and is scheduled in 2023 to have more "friendly" security meetings in the US.

Looming over Filipinos' heads now are threats that the military deals tying the country to US imperialist dictates would even be further enhanced.

- One, the MDT is up for review. “More concrete” updates on MDT “evolution” are hoped for by Marcos Jr in early 2023. Marcos Jr said MDT was “continuously under negotiations and under evolution.” This echoes the US imperialist drive to increase its power projection and control in the Indo-Pacific, augmenting and enhancing whatever “alliances” and “partnerships” it already has like in the Philippines. It includes plans to move massive naval, air and missile assets to the region.
- Two, the VFA has been expanded rather than retracted under the criminal regime of Rodrigo Duterte, and Marcos Jr’s pronouncements even more clearly approved and seemed all for expanding it. As of this writing, local reactionary troops are preparing for more and bigger joint military exercises with US and other US partner forces. (*Salaknib, Balikatan = 300 military exercises annually*)
- Three, EDCA is set to expire in April 2024, but Filipino and US leaders and military officials are talking as if there is no such thing in the horizon. Instead, early into Marcos Jr’s term, US and Philippine military officials declared that US forces would get 10 bases in total. From five locations currently undergoing upgrading and reconstruction to the tune of \$66m, five more locations are to be added. At present, American bases in the country under the EDCA are located in Antonio Bautista Air Base (Palawan), Basa Air Base (Pampanga), Fort Magsaysay (Nueva Ecija), Lumbia Airport (Cagayan de Oro) and Benito Ebuena Air Base (Mactan, Cebu).

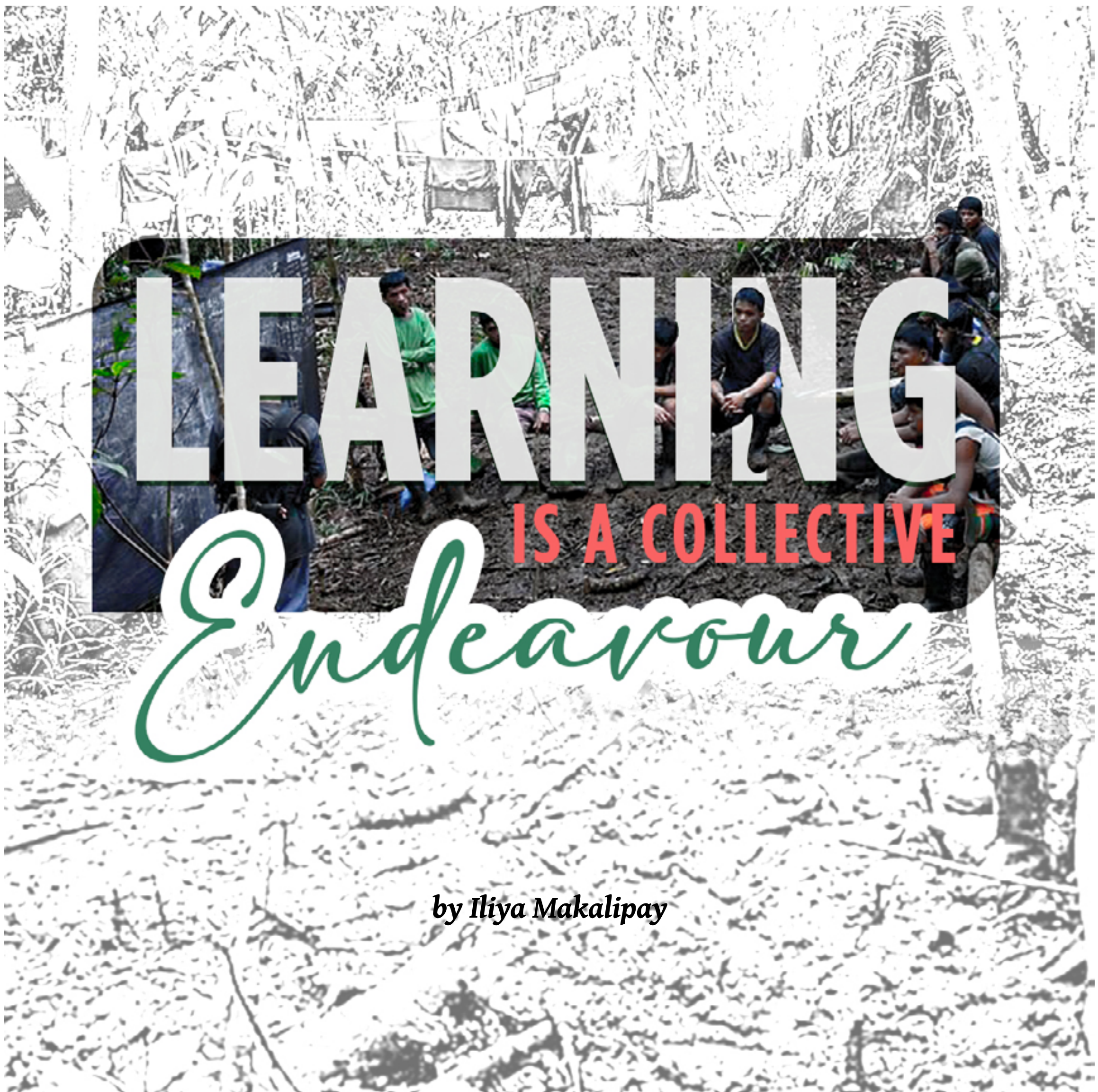
Worse, US-Marcos Jr is cooking up a deal for US exports of nuclear equipment and materiel to the Philippines.



A few months before Duterte exited Malacañang, the Philippines and US signed a memorandum of understanding seeking to “enhance” nuclear cooperation between the two countries. Marcos Jr seems bent on continuing it, starting talks with the US on a civil nuclear cooperation agreement that will provide a “legal basis” for US exports of nuclear equipment and material to the Philippines.

As the CPP described Marcos Jr in unwelcoming Harris last September 2022, “Like Duterte before him, Marcos completely lacks any sense of national dignity and is willing to allow the US and China to turn the Philippines into their military outpost, and is only interested how much money he and his ilk can pocket from grants, loans, aid that come from either imperialist power.” 🇵🇭





*by Iliya Makalipay*

**A** not so typical classroom is found usually deep in the forest. It is a regular feature whenever the red fighters are encamped. At the center of the “classroom,” nestled among trees, is a canvas or black tarpaulin or manila paper that serves as “blackboard.” Around it, members of the people’s army gather—sitting on rocks or on the ground—as they intently listen on their facilitator. At times, the seriousness is interrupted by laughter when they fumble in identifying letters or numbers.

With pens and paper, the Red fighters learn the alphabet—the vowels and consonants—as they read and write the lesson for the day. A member of the red army who had gone to school usually acts as facilitator as he/she also learns how to adapt to the students’ needs and to fashion creatively the teaching method to ease the learning process. Teaching literacy and numeracy has to be woven into the daily lives and experiences of the members of the people’s army. It makes learning easier and retention of lessons faster.

Thus, even as the sound of A-BA-KA-DA reverberates in the forests, it is not the usual “A is for apple” but “A is for *Ambus* (ambush), B is for *baseng masa*

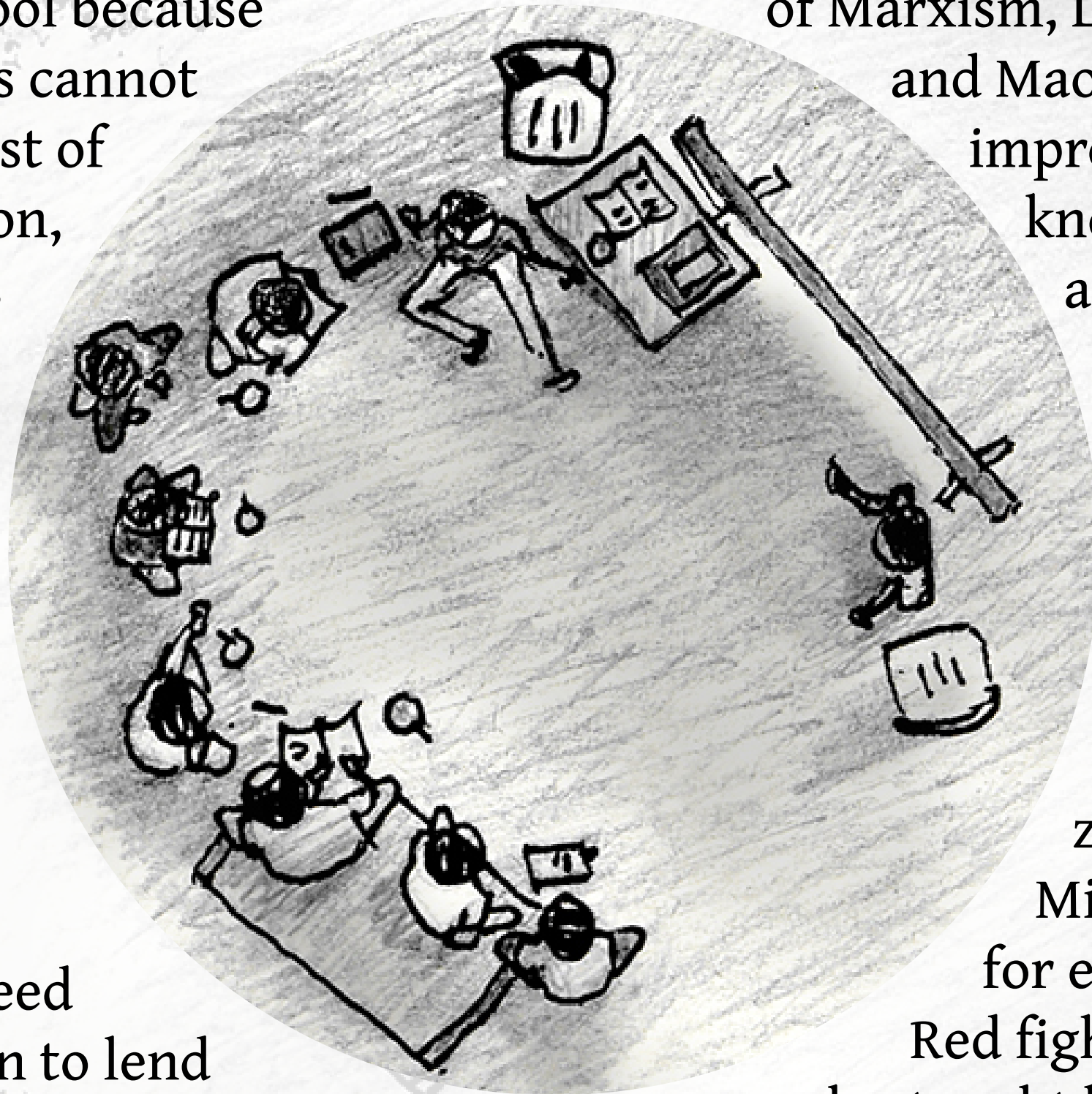
(mass base), K is for *kasama* (comrade), and D is for *digmang bayan* (people’s war).

These classrooms, like the NPA units, are mobile, too. Wherever and whenever the situation allows, the Red fighters always find time to study—literacy, numeracy, and theoretical studies. Learning is a collective practice, too. Tutorials are practiced among students, with the more advance learner assisting those who have difficulties with their lessons. The more determined students, and those who want to keep pace with their classmates, continue to study in the evenings, making do with whatever light is available or allowed in camp sites.



## Making up for government neglect in education

Majority of the Red fighters came from the peasantry; many of them have not gone to school or had stopped schooling at an early age. Despite the free tuition in public schools, children stop going to school because their families cannot afford the cost of transportation, the expenses for school projects, and a host of other expenses, even snacks. Other families who survive on a daily basis need their children to lend a hand in household or farm chores, or to do odd jobs as in the case of urban poor dwellers. Illiteracy has been a cause of discrimination as well as exploitation especially for peasants and indigenous peoples when they trade with other sections of the population.



Hence, literacy and numeracy become part of the daily lives of the people's army. It strengthens the Red fighters' confidence when they know how to read and write. It also facilitates their study and grasp of Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism. This improves the knowledge and skills they impart to the masses.


In some guerrilla zones in Mindanao, for example, Red fighters were also taught basic science before they attend the Basic Party Course. These basic science concepts aid the members of the people's army in understanding the core concepts of dialectical and historical materialism.

---

# LEARNING IS A COLLECTIVE PROCESS

---





## The revolutionary movement's education program

Literacy and Numeracy is only among the many courses offered by the Party to its members, the Red army, and the masses.

As part of its cultural revolution, and guided by nationalist, scientific, and mass-based principles, the Party consolidates its membership and the masses through its education program. The various courses also prepare the NPA and the masses in establishing and administrating the revolutionary organizations and the organs of political power in the countryside.

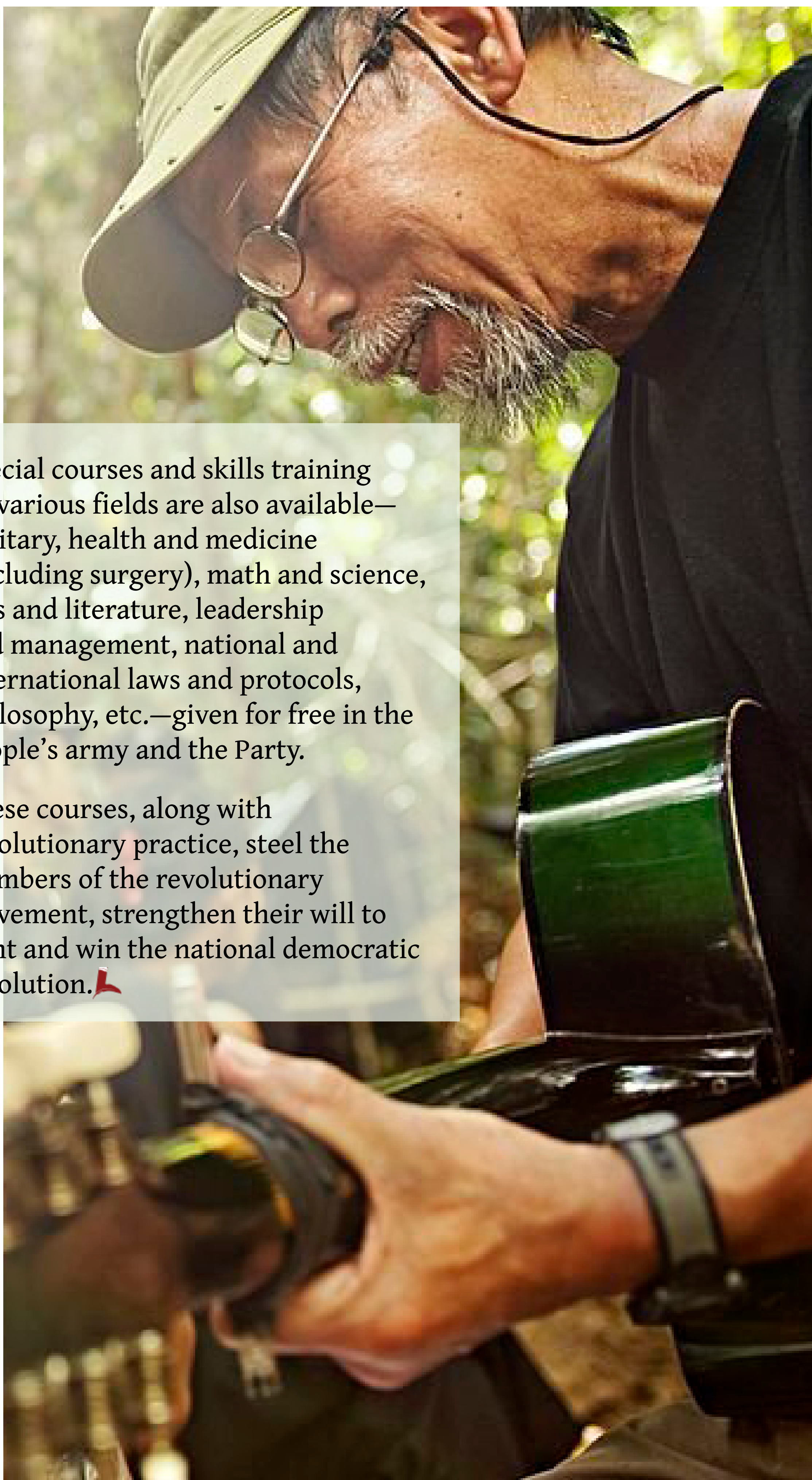
The three-level education in the Party—basic, intermediate, and advance—

aims to deepen the members' understanding of Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism, and how they are applied to Philippine society and revolution.


Activists also learn from various courses on national democracy through the *Pambansang Demokratikong Paaralan* (PADEPA) or the national democratic school. Subjects on Philippine society, the national democratic revolution, revolutionary perspective and attitude, special courses on women, indigenous peoples, peasants, and workers, and analyses on various national issues such as the peace negotiations are among those taught in the PADEPA.

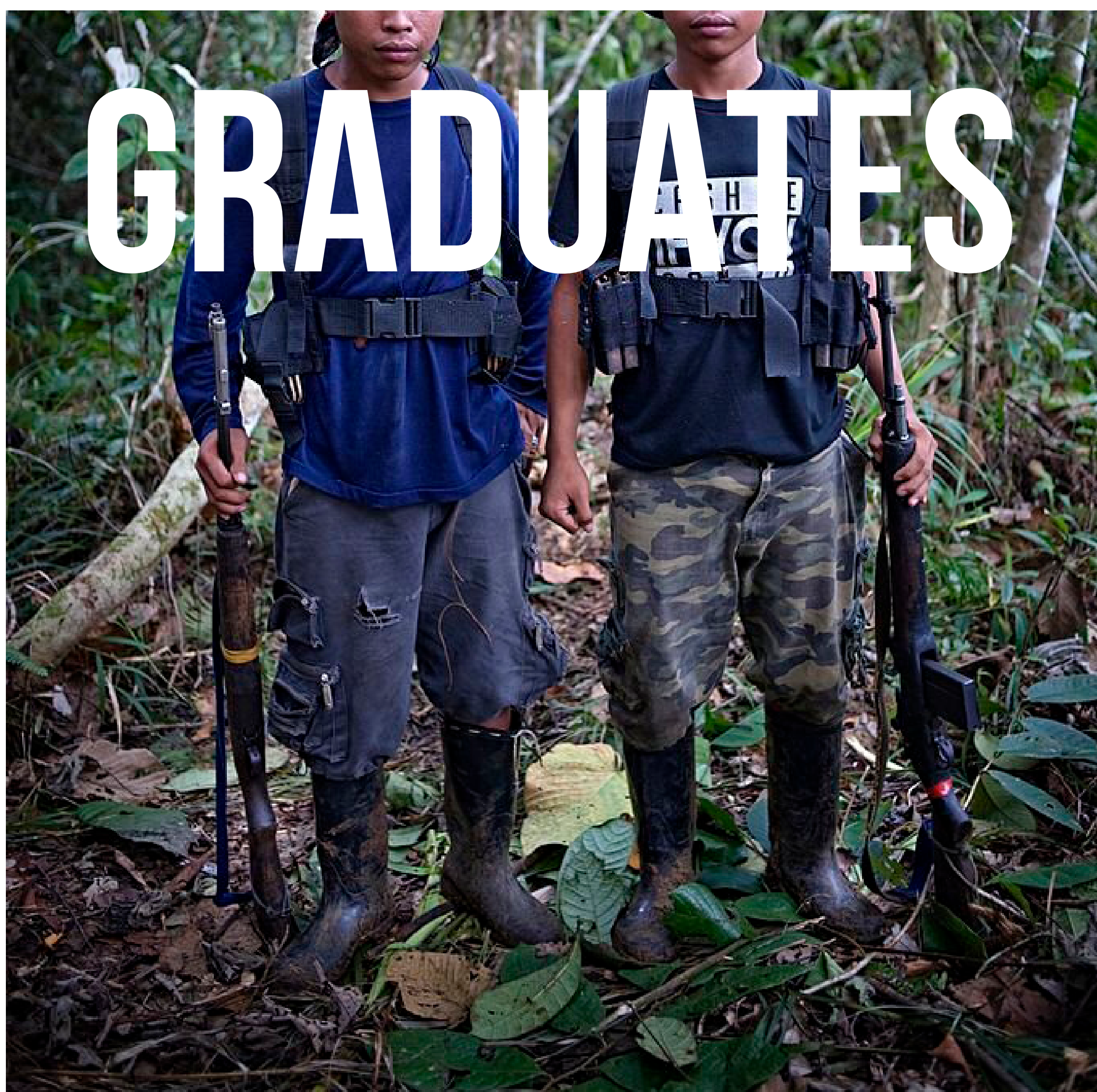






Special courses and skills training on various fields are also available—military, health and medicine (including surgery), math and science, arts and literature, leadership and management, national and international laws and protocols, philosophy, etc.—given for free in the people’s army and the Party.

These courses, along with revolutionary practice, steel the members of the revolutionary movement, strengthen their will to fight and win the national democratic revolution. 



Adapted from *“Mandirigmang mag-aaral, gerilyang paaralan”* Bigwas, February 2022 issue, official publication of West-Central Luzon

## Ka Dyun, a red fighter from the Aeta indigenous group

One of his teachers called him *bobo* (stupid) because he was unable to read a word written on the board. He was shut in a room until he filled the board with that one word, which surprisingly he couldn't remember anymore. Ka Dyun was traumatized by the experience, he lost his confidence that he decided to leave school at an early age. He only finished grade one. Little did he know that when he joined the red army he would attend school again, this time, in the *pulang paaralan* (red school.)

Ka Dyun was motivated by his desire not just to serve the people, but to serve them the best he could. He learned how to read and write to gain confidence and to hone himself as a capable and skilful Red fighter. With the help of his comrades in the people's army, he diligently studied writing and reading during classes and in the evenings, when their schedule allowed.

Bit by bit, he learned to write his name, then the letters of the alphabet; write and read words related to their situation and surrounding until he was able to construct and read sentences.

The daily accounting of his platoon's supplies and resources was his practical exam in addition, subtraction and multiplication. How to determine the rate of exploitation of traders and landlords among the peasants and indigenous peoples where they operate became a higher learning in arithmetic.

Slowly but progressively, he and his collective succeeded in Ka Dyun's schooling. Ka Dyun was especially grateful to Ka Islaw, a martyred comrade who used his drawing skills to facilitate Ka Dyun's learning. To Ka Dyun, Ka Islaw's inspiration will continue to propel him to learn and hone his skills and become a well-rounded revolutionary for the victory of the revolution and the masses.



## Ka Baytan, Ayta from Zambales

It took him and his brother two hours to reach their school, alternately crossing river tributaries and lahar several times. At school, Ka Baytan and all the other pupils were cramped in two small rooms. One room is shared by those in Grades 1 to 3; the other room for pupils in Grades 4 to 6.

In a room, a teacher segregates the pupils by row per grade level but they are either seated side-by-side or back-to-back; each grade level doing their own activity simultaneously. One grade level may be reading, the other writing, and the other reciting. This is what the Department of Education calls the “multi-grade system” which is implemented in far-flung communities because of lack of teachers and school facilities. The set-up discouraged Ka Baytan to continue studying such that when he reached Grade 3 he stopped.

Because a Red fighter is also a cultural worker, Ka Baytan’s

interest in music and learning to read and write converged. He did not only sing during cultural activities but copying lyrics of revolutionary songs to his notebook taught him writing and eventually reading.

His interest in studying was definitely revived when he joined the people’s army. For one, he had 10 Red fighters who alternately taught him to read, write, and count. He was also encouraged to continue learning because he realized that his lack of education from the bourgeois school system did not hinder him to learn Marxism-Leninism, and Maoism.

When he finished the Basic Party course, Ka Baytan was in high spirits, having experienced for the first time to graduate. “*Dito lang ako sa hukbo nakaranas na grumadweyt*”, he said during the graduation rites held by his unit of the people’s army. 📖





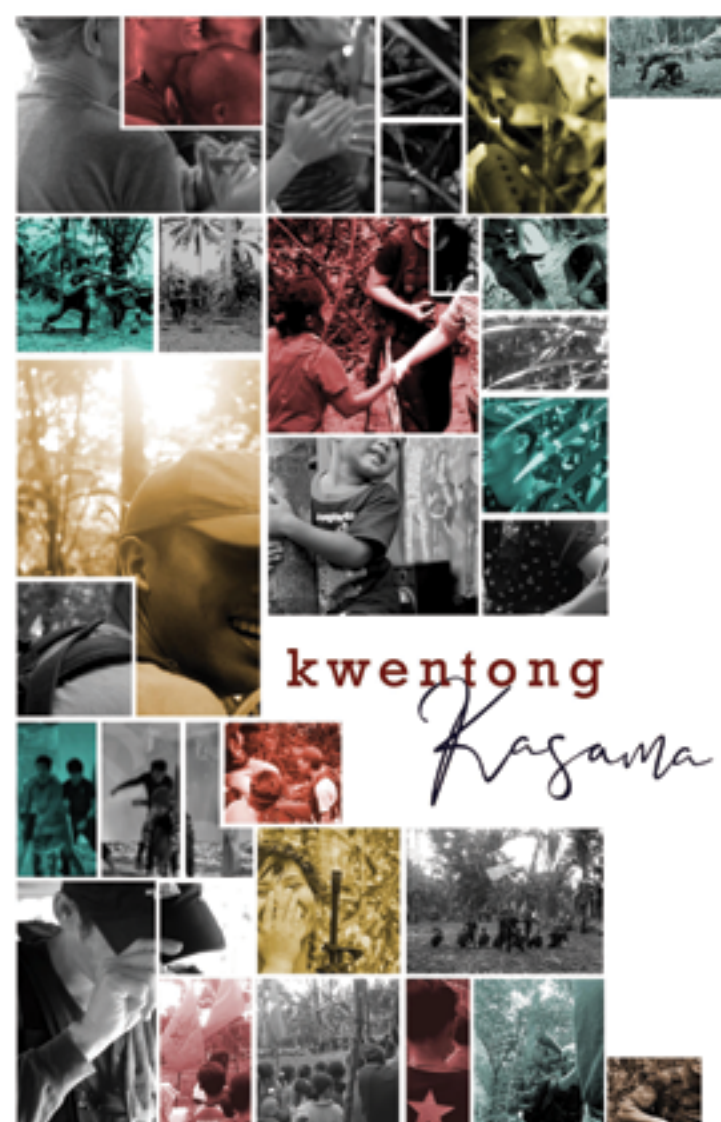
**by Pat Gambao**

Adapted from [Mga Kwentong Kasama](#),  
published by the Gintong Silahis Platung Pangkultura BHB-Bikol, 2022

**T**he start of the “ber” months signals the most celebrated holiday of the year in the Philippines. Jose Mari Chan’s song, “Christmas in Our Hearts” fills the airwaves. It is the season of hope in everyone’s heart, a season to rejoice. In the cities, malls and parks compete for the highest Christmas tree built. Dancing lights dazzle as people rush to buy gifts and *noche buena* items to feast on.

But it's a different story in the countryside. Ka Ponsoy, a member of the NPA, in his account in *Mga Kwentong Kasama*, described what it's like in the countryside and in the guerrilla zones:

*Only a few communities celebrate Christmas as festive as in the cities. Some hang lanterns and Christmas lights where electric power is available, still full of hope. They also prepare special meals for the children who will come home for the holidays. However, to most people in the barrios, Christmas is just another day as their stomachs grumble no matter how arduous they toil the whole year round. Worst, typhoons usually lash in the last quarter of the year or some other unforeseen bane comes, depriving the farmers and fisherfolk their source of livelihood.*



In the guerrilla zone, Ka Ponsoy found no difference. Sometimes they do cook for the occasion or the masses bring them some food. But most of the time, like most of the masses, they just sleep on Christmas' eve.



## A different kind of Christmas



During Ka Ponsoy's first year in the people's army, he would miss the "joyous" Christmas he was used to when he was still a civilian. But he would soon find out that December is not entirely cold and gloomy in a guerrilla zone. There was another reason to celebrate. Comrades and the masses are full of excitement over the most awaited day of the year—the commemoration of the founding anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The celebration is remarkable not because of its pomp. In fact, most of the time, it stands out in its simplicity. There are even occasions when the only food is *camote* (sweet potato) and *balinghoy* (cassava). Although when situation allows, allies from the urban centers would send *lechon* or ham.

Through all these, there is no

comparison to the warmth and happiness one will experience in the guerrilla zone. The smiles are real, the laughter profound even amid constant threat of military attacks. Everyone knows that the celebration is a testimony of another year of success and yearning. Another year to frustrate the enemies as the masses secure themselves, their dreams, and their future. This gives Ka Ponsoy a queasy twinge in his heart. They also pledged, that no matter what, they will continue the fight. This is the most exhilarating and memorable experience for Ka Ponsoy. Everyone is confident to face the new year with heaps of challenges to surmount, obstacles to surpass and problems to overcome. Since the anniversary celebration is the culmination of a year-long struggle, all are excited.

## Preparing for D-day

Should the loads of work allow preparation for the anniversary celebration starts early, around October or November. Discussions on the composition of the steering committee and the plans for the program commence. What will be the cultural presentations and who will perform? Who are the speakers, including those representing the different organizations? Likewise, who will participate in the drill?

By December, actual preparations begin. Rehearsals for the cultural presentations and the drill are done. Technical requirements are ensured—flags, the stage, mural or backdrop, sound system, food, invitations. The masses are never left out in the invitation. No matter how simple the celebration is, be it in the dense forest or in a dilapidated structure in the coconut grove, whether there is special food, sound system, mural on stage or none, inviting the masses should not be missed out. Otherwise, they will feel offended and will nag the program organizers to no end.



## On the Actual Day

The early hours of the actual day are already filled with excitement. During the opening salvo, all are jittery as the drill with the accompaniment

of the *Internationale* pushed on. The speakers and the cultural performers are all agog in the last minute of their practice.



The excitement of the masses are double than that of the comrades. They make sure to come early to the venue. At times, some even spend the night at the NPA camp so they won't be late for the activities. They come in their best dress, no matter how simple. Even when it rains, and the path becomes muddy and the trek difficult, they would come. They even bring food to share.

During the program speakers are nervous, despite their having delivered the messages for the Party, the New People's Army (NPA) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) so many times before a huge crowd and the media. However, upon gaining composure, the intensity of the emotion and agitation they impart is inspiring and inciting. The speakers from the different organizations could not be outdone. In some occasions, comrades seize the opportunity to gather the masses for short discussions on the stand and principles of the revolutionary movement.

The performers in the program are a mix of people from the army, the masses, the elderly, the children and the youth. The lack of gracefulness does not hinder the performances of revolutionary dance. Off key and out of synch singing are not an issue as they render their songs with revolutionary spirit. Volunteers, or those not in the program, are given the chance to speak or perform. Cultural performances to celebrate the Party anniversary live up to what the Great Leader Mao Zedong had said: *An army without culture is a dull-witted army, and a dull-witted army cannot defeat the enemy.*

It is a delight that the celebration for this occasion is neither bound by time nor form. Even in militarized areas, comrades find unique ways to celebrate: a simple greeting to one another as they walk along, a warm smile or an embrace for the masses they meet.





## Realization

In the cities, Jose Mari Chan’s song goes on.

*“Let’s light our Christmas trees*


*For a bright tomorrow*

*Where nations are at peace”*

But how could there be peace, in a screwed up world with its rotten system, where the oppressors and exploiters rule and tyranny and greed persist? The oppressed and exploited will rise. To rebel is right and just.

Through time, Ka Ponsoy came to understand that there is no need for a lot of things—fiesta food, Christmas decors, money—to be happy. It is a different

joy to know that comrades and the masses are united by one goal: to serve the people. Nothing compares to the jubilation seeing comrades and the masses who had been with through numerous tribulations and life’s storms, alive and smiling. Hope springs eternal where everyone loves the Party and the revolution.

Although at times, Ka Ponsoy still misses the Christmas he used to know, he will never exchange the happiness and the liberating spirit that he feels with every anniversary celebration of the Party, as well as those of the NPA and the NDFP, and other events and celebrations in the revolutionary movement. 





by Pat Gambao

*(Adapted from Kwentong Kasama: Isang Koleksyon, Unang Edisyon 2022, Published by Gintong Silahis Platung Pangkultura NPA-Bicol Region)*

She could have been a nun. But Ka Agnes' journey made her realize that being a Catholic and being a revolutionary is not irreconcilable.

Born into a devout Catholic family, Ka Agnes was raised to embrace the ecclesiastical teachings of the church and observe its practices. She faithfully adhered to the Ten Commandments which had instilled in her the love and compassion for others.

In her college days, Ka Agnes was initiated into a larger and real world. Her course allowed her to live with the impoverished sectors in society—peasants and urban poor. Witnessing their stark conditions as they eked out a living and coped with their problems, she was disturbed at their forbearance while they clung on to their faith and pinned on it their hopes for deliverance. Fazed and disheartened, she sought for explanations. Her professor assured her that religion and the belief in God is not the central discourse in a class society but that of “who are being exploited and who are exploiting them.” Further discussions with activists in their school reinforced her professor's words. Works of great philosophers and revolutionaries further enlightened her.



Karl Marx said:

“Religion is the opium of the people.” Religion in the hands of the exploiting class has become a “dose of opium” that numbs the senses of those they exploit to make them accept their authority and whims. On the other hand, Lenin also said: “religious beliefs, in certain circumstances, may become a powerful revolutionary force” in the class struggle.

The church teachings that Ka Agnes has imbibed—“love your neighbour,” be compassionate, help the needy, “the least of Jesus brethren”—took her to a new path. Ka Agnes still goes from house-to-house but this time she arouses the masses from their stupor and enjoins them to wield the power in their hands to reverse their plight, wipe out class society, and change the world.

“Religion is the opium of the people”

## Active life in church

Ka Agnes’ whole family is active in church. Her father is a leader in their parish. Her siblings are either members of the church choir or acolytes during mass. Ka Agnes was in a group that spreads the words of God in communities. Saturdays are for other Church activities, such as Bible study. She diligently observed church rituals, such as visiting churches during Lent and attending midnight masses during Advent. By her strong faith in God, she believed that problems are well-taken cared of because God has always a good plan for everyone. She lived by the teachings of the Ten Commandments. As a show of love and compassion for others, she gave alms to beggars. Had Ka Agnes not awakened to the harsh reality of life and the role religion played, she could have been a nun two decades ago.

“religious beliefs, in certain circumstances, may become a powerful revolutionary force”



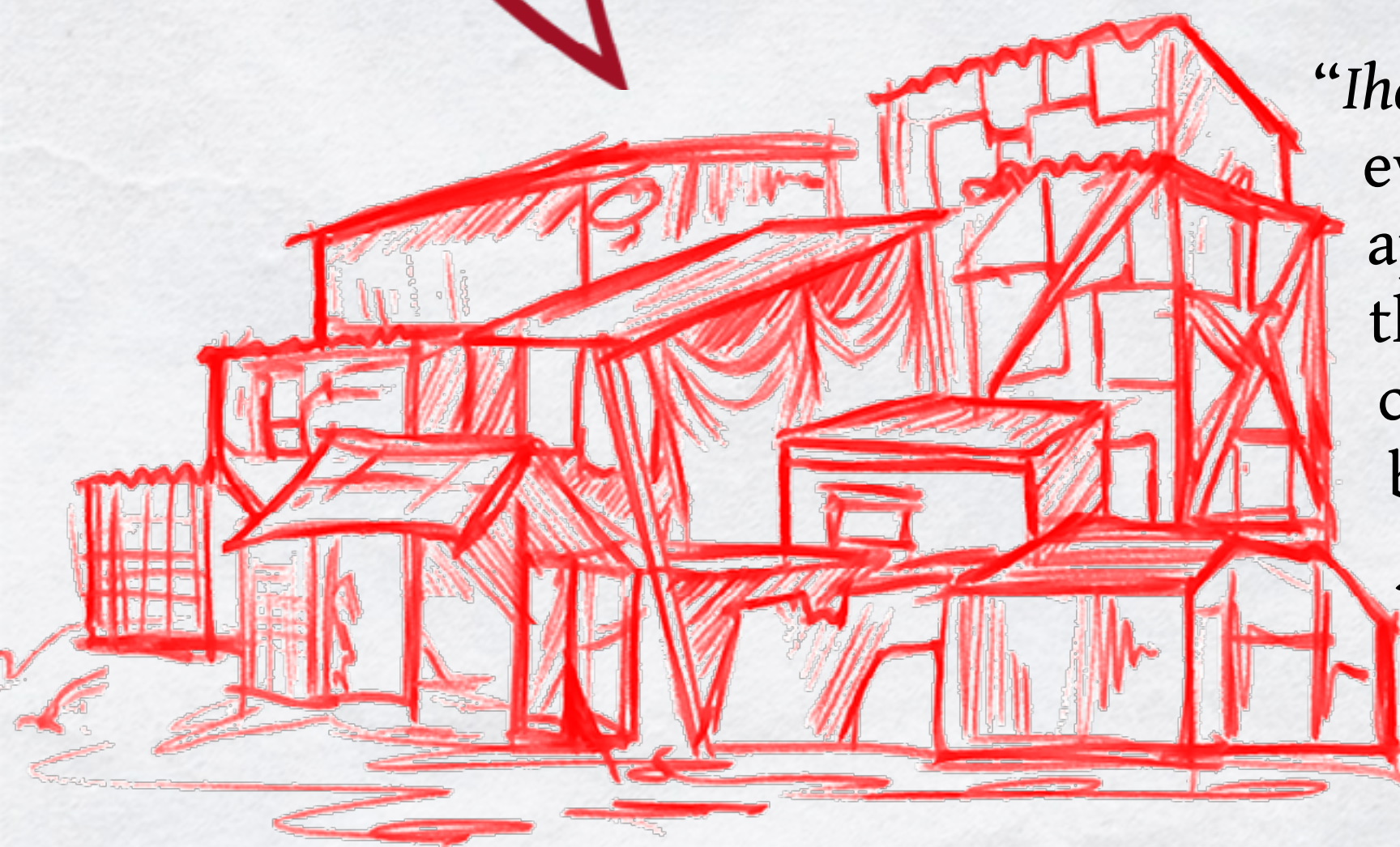
## Fresh vision

Awareness and conscientiousness dawned on Ka Agnes during her college days. Akin to her interest to help people, she took up Social Work. The course curriculum required visiting depressed communities, frequently those of peasants and urban poor. The students stayed in these villages for days to gain deeper insight on the people's situation.

*"Iha,  
we  
have done  
everything.  
We had  
approached  
the DSWD, the  
municipality,  
congressmen, and  
our bosses at work.  
Yearly, we join the  
feast of Our Lady  
of Peñafrancia  
in the hope that  
heaven will  
answer our  
prayers."*

Once, she came upon a family with eight children. The family head was a construction worker. The wife was a store helper. Their house of dilapidated materials and corroded roofing stood on a dingy corner of the community. Every day they dined on a humble meal that their paltry income could afford. Ka Agnes' conversations with the family head revealed a more miserable condition. The family subsisted on a meagre daily income, with no spare for other needs. They had never received any help from the government. They were not members of the Social Security System. They relied on loans to make both ends meet, but often, still wanting. When asked how the students could help, the answer broke Ka Agnes' heart.

*"Iha, we have done  
everything. We had  
approached the DSWD,  
the municipality,  
congressmen, and our  
bosses at work. Yearly, we  
join the feast of Our Lady  
of Peñafrancia in the  
hope that heaven will  
answer our prayers."*



What could Ka Agnes say to assuage this man? Trust God for he has good plans for you? Would this console him? Ka Agnes was lost for words.

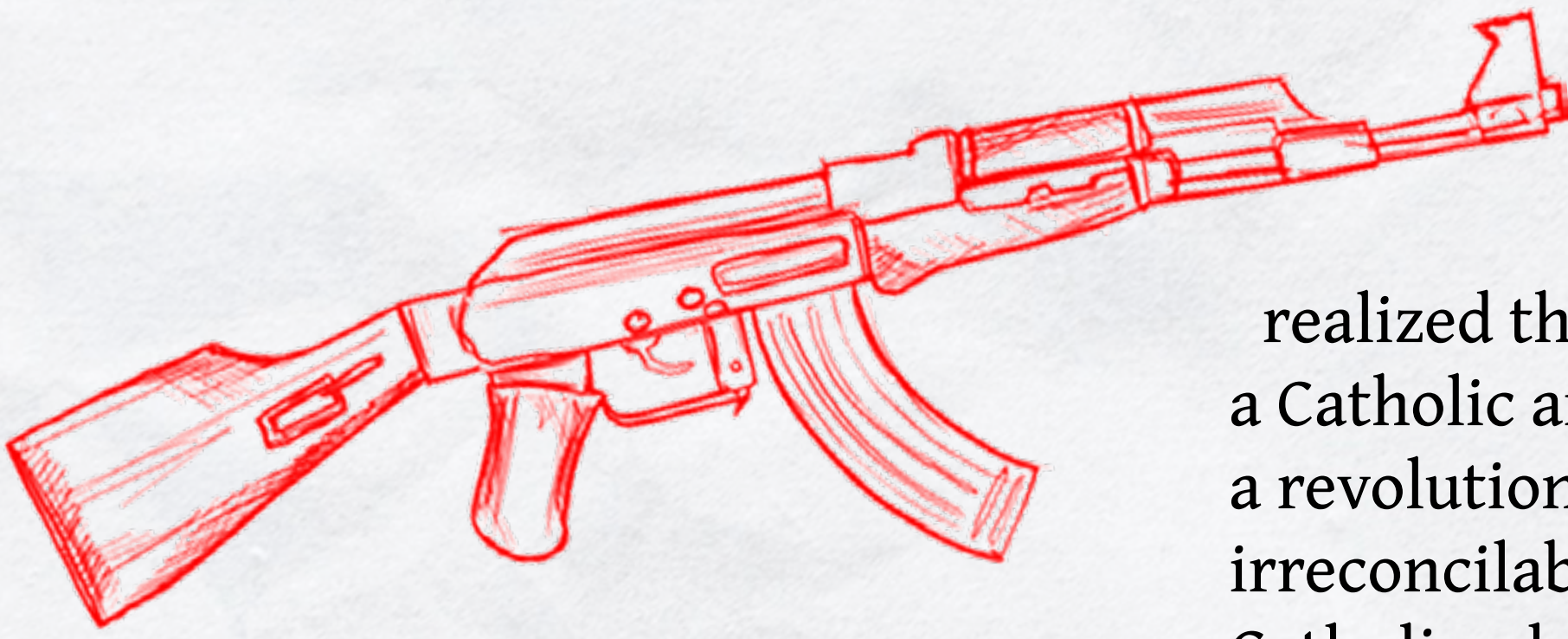
That man was not the last one whom she met who had hoped for answers through their prayers, who had entrusted their fate to the Divine Providence. Ka Agnes' world crumbled, her faith shaken. She did not dare consult her father lest he might think she was beginning to doubt God. Ka Agnes approached her professor instead to find some answers. "In a class society, many of those impoverished and suffering held on to their faith for salvation. But the central discourse is not in the belief of God but on who are the exploited and who are exploiting them."



"In a class society, many of those impoverished and suffering held on to their faith for salvation. But the central discourse is not in the belief of God but on who are the exploited and who are exploiting them."



Further discussions with her professor and activists in their campus enlightened her—one's faith should not impede the desire for liberation and justice. Such desire is unattainable through prayers alone. She must stand with the oppressed and exploited against the oppressors and exploiters. But the ruling class will not easily relinquish their power and possessions. They are armed and they use brute force against the people to protect their interests. Thus, she realized armed struggle is inevitable.



In an exposure trip to the red army's camp, Ka Agnes met people from all walks of life. There was a religious layman, a former deaconess, a former priest, and a youth who decided to let go of his childhood dream of self-fulfilment to serve the masses.

When Ka Agnes informed her parents of her plan to go on full-time organizing, they were furious. Determined, she proceeded hoping they will understand her in due time. She still counselled those who were troubled and weary but this time she encouraged them not just to pray and leave everything to God but to confront their problems and fight for their rights.

Ka Agnes met a lot of devotees in the barrios and she was glad to be a part of their journey in realizing they have the power in their hands to change their plight.

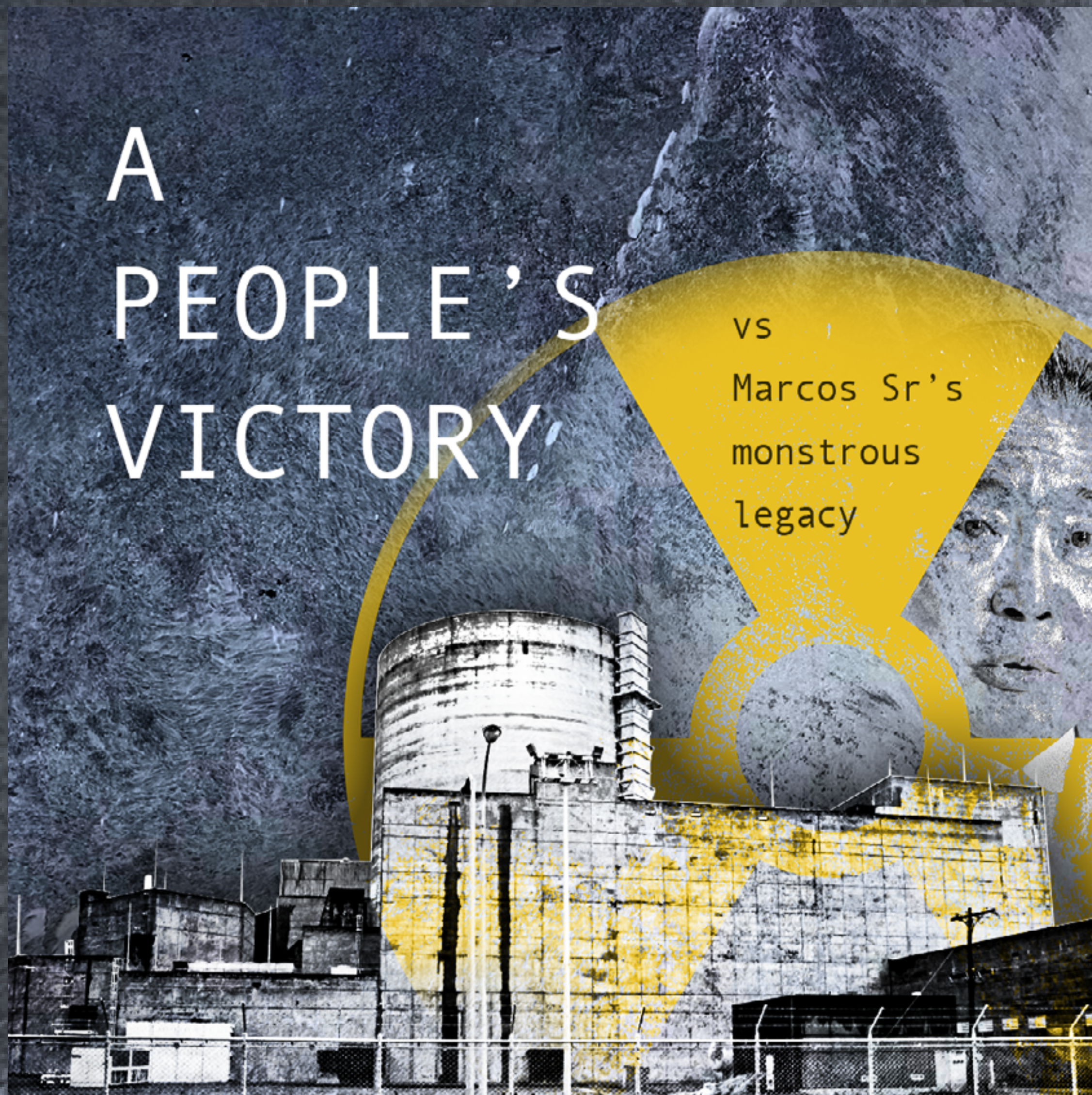
Ka Agnes realized that being a Catholic and being a revolutionary is not irreconcilable. As a Catholic, she was taught compassion but as a revolutionary she was taught how she could truly serve the masses and change the world.

“Whether I am in the convent or in the revolutionary army, there is only one goal—to liberate the oppressed and exploited, to ensure their welfare. The only difference is that I no longer look up to the red fighters like angels and wait for the consummation of God's plan. I have joined them.”



# A PEOPLE'S VICTORY

vs  
Marcos Sr's  
monstrous  
legacy



---

*by Pat Gambao*

If there is a most fitting monument for the Dictator Ferdinand Marcos, it is no other than the mothballed Bataan Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP). The monolith bust of Marcos in the mountain of Tuba, Benguet, which the New People's Army-Chadli Molintas Command blasted years ago, played a mere second fiddle.



The BNPP is the face of tyranny, corruption, and greed that depicted the Marcos monstrous regime. But it is also a reminder of the valiant invincible resistance of a people who would not be cowed nor suppressed by any diabolic force. The historic *welgang bayan* or people's strike during martial law left an inspiring prelude to the EDSA people power uprising in 1986. It also did not stop there. The strength and resolve of the people's struggle against the BNPP broadened into an anti-nuclear movement and extended to the fight against the US military bases. It continued beyond EDSA into the newly installed government of Corazon Aquino compelling it to mothball the plant. It is in the same vein that the people's power mothballed the ambition of Dictator Marcos to perpetuate his rule.

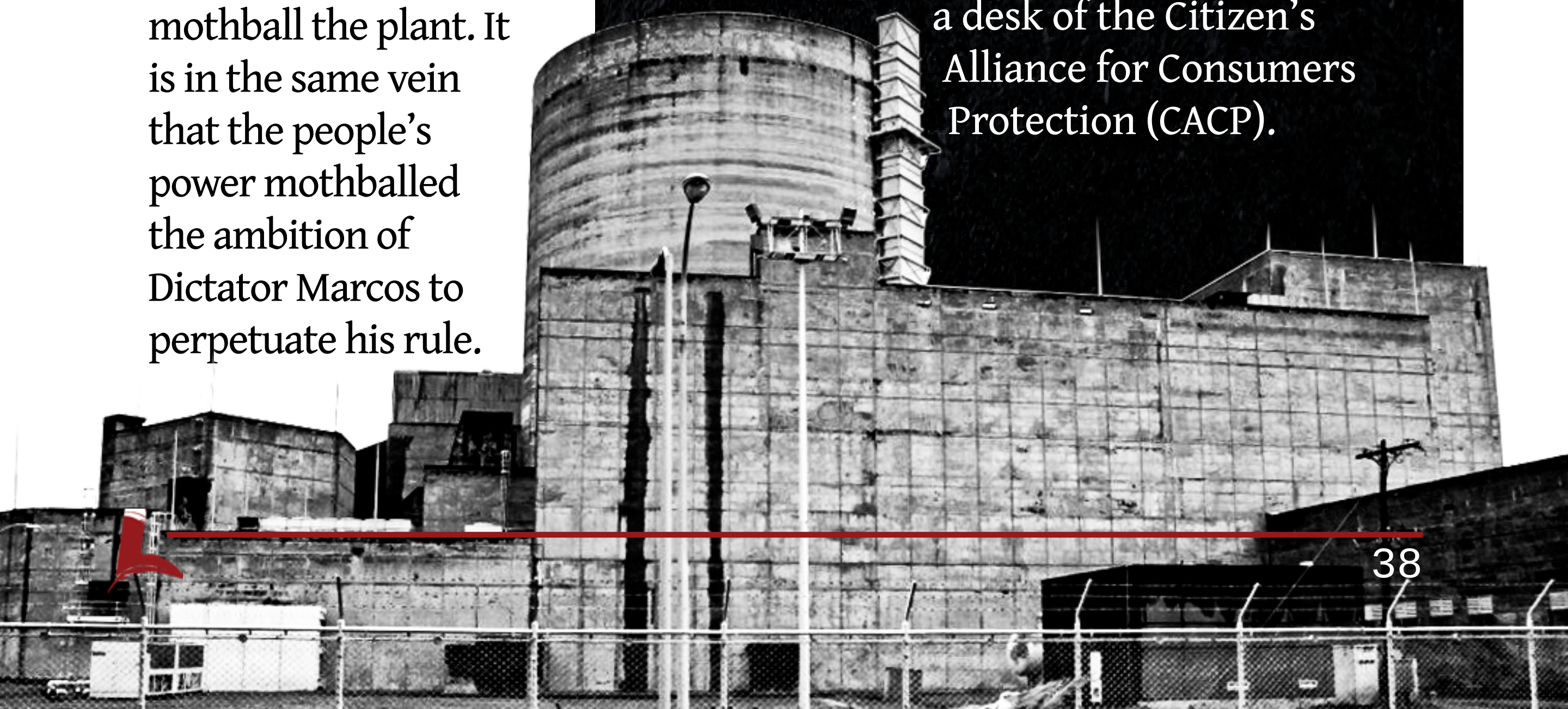
## Nuclear Power in the Philippines

The oil crunch in the 70s drove the Marcos dictatorship to look for other source for electric power supply and towards the direction of building a nuclear power plant.

In 1973, immediately after Marcos Sr announced the building of BNPP, the people of Bataan were startled by the swarm of strangers, including foreigners, coming and going to their province. Later, truckloads of construction materials were brought in. The construction of a nuclear power plant in the government reservation at Napot Point in Morong began after the Philippine nuclear regulatory agency, the Philippine Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC), now Philippine Nuclear Research Institute (PNRI), had finally granted the Construction Permit in April 1979.

At the onset, residents of Morong, mostly farmers and workers at the Export Processing Zone, expressed opposition to the project. Assisted by a local Methodist Minister and a Benedictine nun, Sr. Aida Velasquez, who is also a chemist inquired about the project but were instead threatened by the military.

Sister Aida from Saint Scholastica's College was part of an anti-nuke program, a desk of the Citizen's Alliance for Consumers Protection (CACP).



Not giving up on their investigation, Sister Aida and others sought the help of technical specialists and Filipino groups in the US. Msgr. Antonio Dumauual, parish priest of Morong, confirmed they were armed with documents when they launched the campaign against the BNPP. They raised the question of choice of site as Napot Point sits on a fault line. Also, there were two volcanoes, Natib and Pinatubo, nearby which at the time were declared inactive. It is also surrounded by a rich fishing ground. There were other considerations such as the plant's old design, faulty construction, safety of the people and the environment, as well as corruption. The BNPP advocates' fanfare that the plant was "safe, clean and economical" was rebuffed. The most important question was: would the 620 megawatt electric power the plant would produce for the Luzon Grid worth the people's lives and livelihood and the ill effects to the environment?

## From BNPP to anti-nukes movement

The people's opposition to the BNPP was a major national issue against the dictatorial and fascist regime of Marcos—from a local issue into a national concern.

Organized information and education campaign per barangay was launched led by teachers and leaders of

communities, and parishes. A module on "What is a Nuclear Power Plant? (*Ano ang Plantang Nukleyar?*)" was prepared and distributed. Posters on the ill effects of a nuclear power plant were conspicuously displayed in schools. It was ensured that no person in Bataan was left uninformed.



In 1981, the anti-nuclear movement desk of the CACP was transformed into a coalition of 129 member organizations—the Nuclear Free Philippines Coalition (NFPC) with Senator Lorenzo Tañada as founding chair and Rev. Jose Cunanan as secretary general. This signalled the transformation of the campaign against the BNPP to an anti-nuclear, anti-US Bases struggle towards a nuclear-free Philippines.

The NFPC ramped up the campaign. Rallies and demonstrations were complemented with songs, poems, and theatre productions to further popularize the issue. Aside from protest actions, lobbying, media campaign, and mobilization of support from the international community were employed. A case against the BNPP was also brought to the Supreme Court. The campaign snowballed as national and international support on the issue added pressure on the government.

Benedictine Sister and GABRIELA chairperson emerita Mary John Mananzan said GABRIELA had adopted the BNPP issue as an important advocacy. She shared how, at the height of the protests, they staged a die-in at the Philippine Senate grounds, (with some of them even garbed

in white) to stop the operation of the plant.

To appease the mounting opposition, fired up by the nuclear accident in the Three Mile Island power plant in Pennsylvania, USA, Marcos temporarily suspended the BNPP construction in 1979 and formed a three-man commission headed by Ricardo Puno (who later became his Justice Minister) to investigate the BNPP project and to update the terms of contract with Westinghouse. Finding defects on the plant, the commission recommended additional safety features to meet the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission standards. In September 1980, Marcos Sr ordered the resumption of the construction. The renegotiated contract, a higher inflation and interests rates and penalty for delay, resulted to the escalation of the plant cost from the original US\$ 500 million to US\$2.2 billion.

Financed by loans from the US Export Import Bank, American Express, and Bank of Tokyo, the Filipino people had to shoulder for years the payment for this odious “single, largest loan” on a Philippine government project. The foreign debt incurred was paid fully only in 2007. “On average from 1987–2007, the Philippine government paid \$246,000 a day for the project.”



**What a waste of the taxpayers money that otherwise should have gone to the much needed yet neglected social services for the people!**

## Welgang Bayan

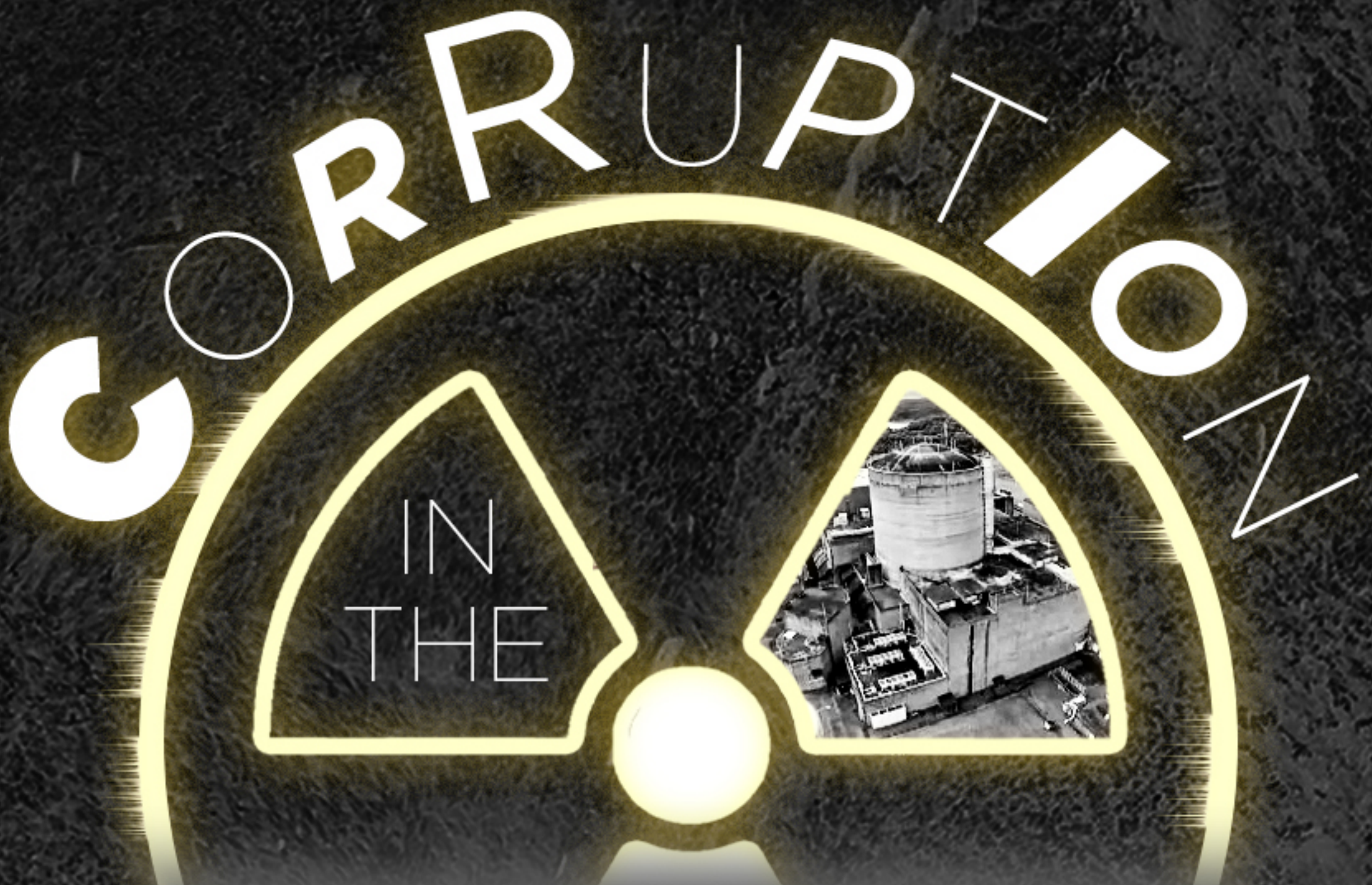
By 1984, the BNPP was completed and ready for operation with the loading of the uranium fuel. However, the scheduled start of the operation was stopped by a 30,000 strong three-day people's strike (*Welgang Bayan*) on June 18-20, 1985 in Bataan. Threats from Marcos fascist forces were boldly ignored. Transportation was paralyzed, many business establishments were closed, work was halted, classes were suspended, and students were out on the street in protest. Marches were held. National support poured in from Metro Manila, Pampanga and Tarlac. Some 22 organizations participated in the *Welgang Bayan*.

National papers carried the news for a week. The strike was victorious, a prelude to the 1986 EDSA People Power Uprising. Yet, one victory was not enough.

The struggle against the BNPP and the anti-nukes movement/Anti-US military bases continued beyond the EDSA uprising to the newly installed government of

President Corazon Aquino. The strength and resolve of the people's struggle was great. The 1986 accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in Europe reinforced its rationale. President Aquino was compelled to mothball the BNPP, and end the Bases Treaty with the US. It was in the same vein that people's power mothballed Dictator Marcos' wild dream to perpetuate his rule. 🇵🇭





## **BATAAN NUCLEAR POWER PLANT**

**W**hen Dictator Ferdinand Marcos embarked on nuclear energy for power generation, it was not only due to the oil crisis (bunker oil runs power plants) but also to boost his delusion for grandeur. Nuclear power at that time had become a status symbol. Whatever his primary reason was, Marcos Sr reaped more for this decision not only in term of prestige but also in monetary bounty.

## The Choice for the BNPP builder

The National Power Corporation (NPC), would-be owner and operator of the BNPP, initially negotiated with the General Electric Company, a US firm. But an order from Malacanang came to negotiate with Westinghouse Electric Company. A crony of Marcos, Herminio Disini, brokered Westinghouse to Marcos. Disini was a golf partner of Marcos Sr who was married to Paciencia Escolin, a cousin of Imelda Marcos and the family physician.

According to a *New York Times* report, the award was made to Westinghouse despite a “more thoroughly documented proposal by General Electric” and “despite calculations by the Philippine Computer Center that the Westinghouse plant was overpriced by at least U\$75 million.”

1986 article in *Fortune Magazine* said Westinghouse used its connection to Marcos to obtain the contract to build the plant. Westinghouse acknowledged the payment of commission to Herdis Management and Investment Corporation owned by Disini “for assistance in obtaining the contract and for implementation services.” Disini was not only a golf buddy to Marcos but a kin through the relationship of their respective wives. This perfectly fitted him for a loyal stooge. The same article also reported that Marcos received kickbacks from Westinghouse.

Marcos, trying to divorce himself from the corruption charges, threatened to cancel the contract with Westinghouse. He told *Times* in the interview he would investigate the matter and study if he would divest Disini of businesses he had made with the government. A much-favoured crony, Disini had won lucrative businesses from the government since martial law was declared. For theatrics, Disini was made a sacrificial lamb. Marcos did divest three of Disini's firms, but these were the “least profitable.”

A



Herminio Disini





## The Pressure on the Philippine Nuclear Regulatory Agency

In December 1976, the Philippine Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC), now Philippine Nuclear Research Institute, issued a provisional permit for the construction of the plant's foundation. By October 1977 about a third of the foundation was completed. With the recommendation of the UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to further test the site, the late Dr. Librado Ibe, then PAEC commissioner, withheld the construction permit while Ebasco, a US firm engaged in design and construction of nuclear power infrastructure, and the NPC conducted further tests. The absence of permit prevented Westinghouse from starting the construction of the reactors.

From an interview with Dr. Ibe by *Fortune Magazine*, he divulged the arm twisting he received from the Energy Minister, NPC,

and Westinghouse executives in Manila. Westinghouse hinted to him that "the president is very much involved in the project." Dr. Ibe revealed how Westinghouse cajoled him into issuing the permit. He and employees of PAEC and NPC were treated to dinners at Peninsula Hotel by Westinghouse and its Filipino agents. The Filipino agents even offered him the services of prostitutes. Such practice is common "business entertainment." Aghast, Dr. Ibe strongly felt "it was out of line to offer to the country's top regulator."

In the late 1978 and early 1979, the constant nagging and intense pressure had been unbearable. Although Dr. Ibe still had doubts on the safety of the site and wanted Ebasco and NPC to conduct more tests, he felt it was no longer safe to resist further. He issued the construction permit in April 1979. Days later, he resigned as PAEC commissioner and left the country.

## The BNPP Corruption Case in Court

The graft and bribery case was brought before the Sandiganbayan, a special court that has jurisdiction over such cases committed by public officials and employees. The court found a \$50 million pay-offs received by companies owned by Marcos and Disini. Said pay-offs contributed to the bloated cost of the BNPP. The \$50 million kickbacks came from Westinghouse and Burns and Roe, a US engineering firm that prepared the specifications of one of the two reactors of the plant. Despite Marcos' denial, the Office of the Solicitor General asserted during the trial that Marcos "would not have gotten into deals with

Disini if there were nothing in it for him." However, Marcos managed to get off the hook.

In July 2004, the Sandiganbayan ordered the arrest of Disini. Disini posted bail of Php 54,000 and flew to Austria "where he reportedly bought a castle and a noble title." He died of organ failure in 2014. The Supreme Court (SC) affirmed the Sandiganbayan decision finding corruption and for "unduly enriching himself at the expense of the people and the Republic." The SC directed Disini's estate to pay the government Php 1 billion in exemplary damages.






## Reviving the BNPP or Nuclear Power

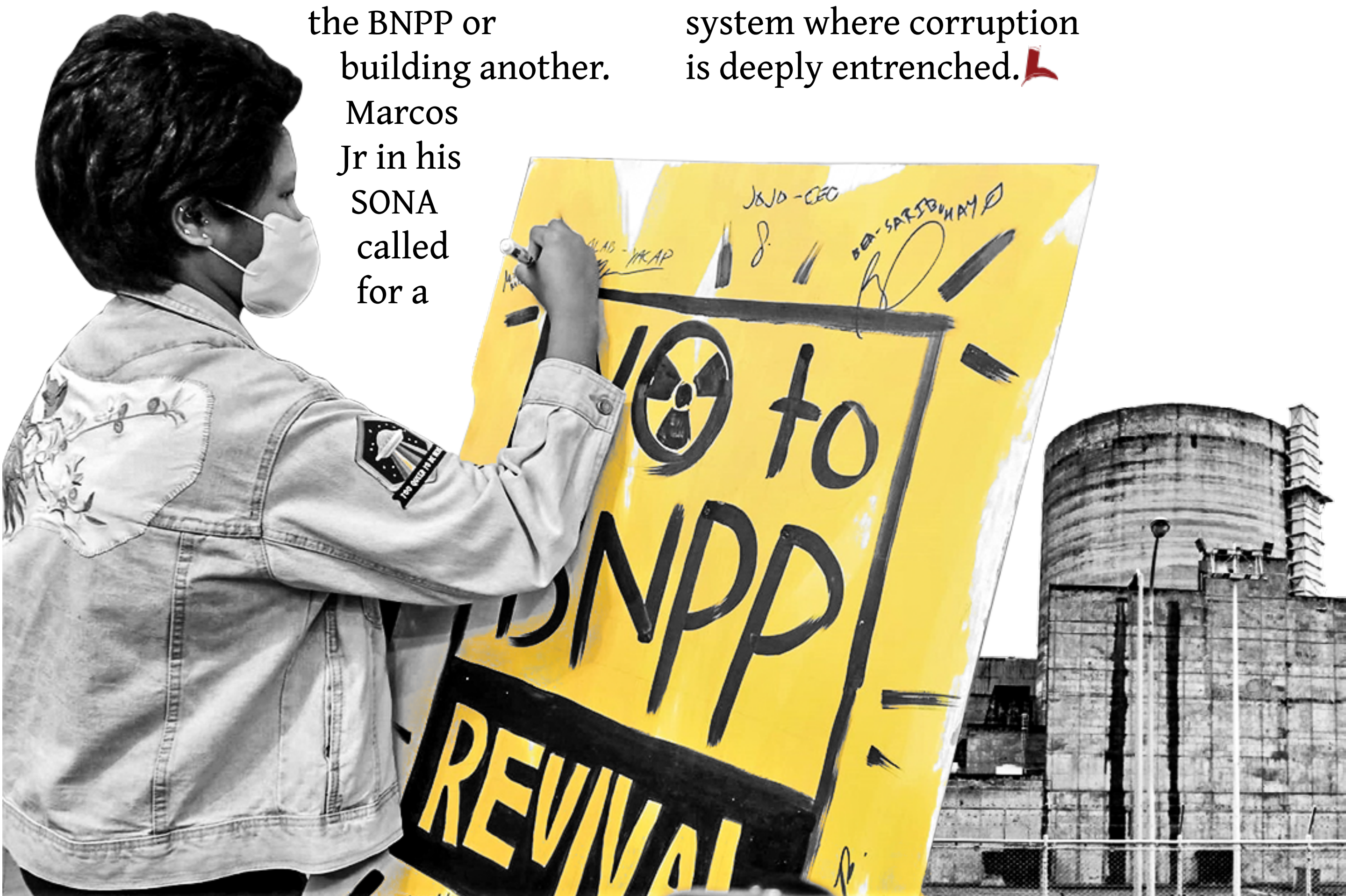
In his last few months in office, on February 28, 2022, President Duterte signed E.O. 164 “Adopting a National Position for Nuclear Energy Programs and for Other Purposes.”

During the campaign, presidential candidate Ferdinand Marcos Jr and his running mate, Sara Duterte, promised they will “expedite the adoption of the nuclear plant” if they win. A number of lawmakers are eager beaver in reviving the BNPP or building another.

Marcos Jr in his SONA called for a

review of the government strategy on nuclear power, short of extolling his father's “effort” to build one for the country.

It was during the reign of Marcos Sr that the corruption-fraught, now white elephant BNPP was built. Do new plans to revive nuclear power plants bode of another greedy corruption binge? The insatiable appetite for corruption breeds and grows in this rotten semifeudal, semicolonial system where corruption is deeply entrenched. 



A portrait of a young woman with dark hair, smiling, wearing a blue shirt. She is surrounded by several large, vibrant hibiscus flowers in shades of pink, red, and white. The background is a light pink gradient.

# Rachelle Mae Palang

## PRESS FREEDOM FIGHTER AND HEALTH WORKER

*by Patrocinio del Rosario*

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.

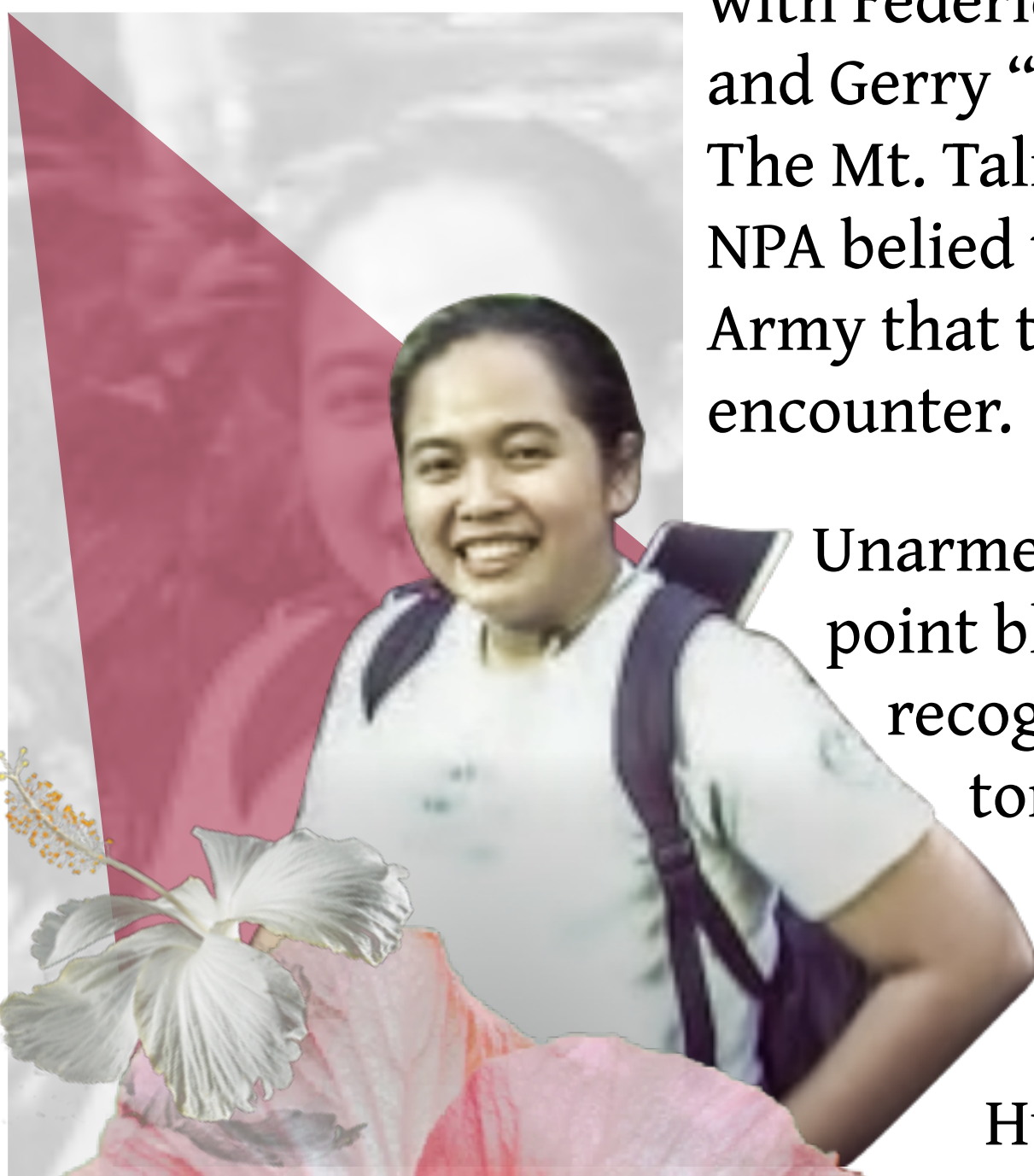
## Healthcare for the people

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 79<sup>th</sup> 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. 🇵🇭



by Juan Monumento

**E**ricson 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*

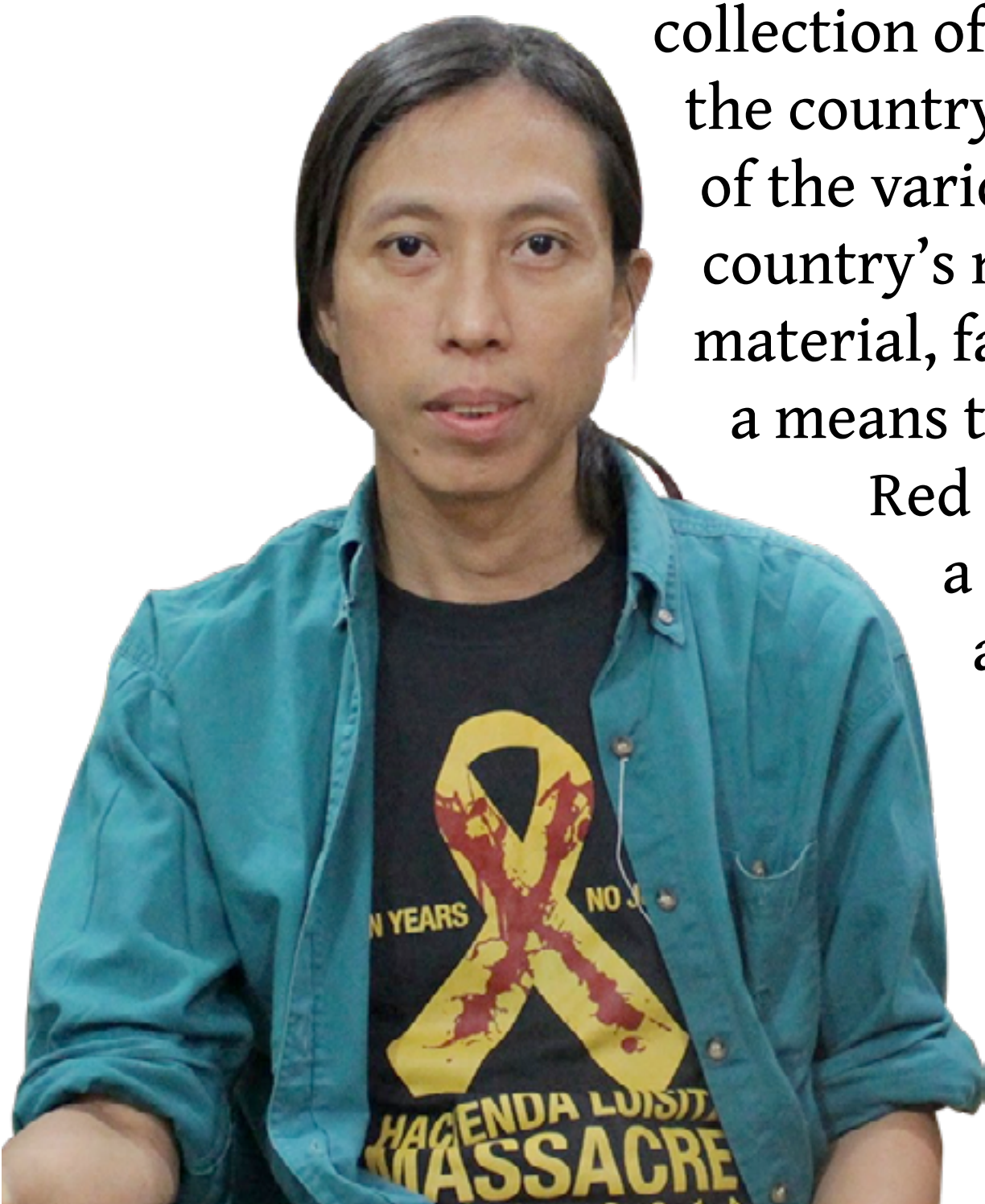


*aralan ang kasaysayan, iwasto ang pagkakamali*” went the song *Awit ng Kasaysayan*. And as if foreshadowing his transition from student activist to the peasant organizer in the countryside, many of his songs spoke of the decision to embrace the revolutionary struggle full-time. “*Ang paalam, ko’y iyong 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 “sing-able” 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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. 🇵🇭

# PRISON SESSIONS



**LISTEN NOW!**

---

**Session  
1**

<https://t.ly/llgd>

**Session  
2**

<https://t.ly/ZrAt>

**Session  
3**

[https://t.ly/qXm\\_](https://t.ly/qXm_)



# *La Joma Lives*



"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."

**#KAJOMALIVES | #CPP54 | REV054**



**LIBERATION**