



ANG

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Tribute to Comrade Mario "Ka Ped" de la Cruz

Ang Bayan is issuing this tribute to Ka Ped on the second anniversary of his death on August 29, 2007.

The Communist Party of the Philippines, New People's Army and the entire revolutionary movement pay the highest tribute to Comrade Mario "Ka Ped" de la Cruz.

He will never be forgotten by those whose lives he touched and by the masses he organized in Isabela and other parts of Cagayan Valley when the revolutionary movement was just taking root. A large part of Ka Ped's personal history is inextricably intertwined with the history of the revolutionary movement in the areas he worked in. It is a history of heroism, of how the revolution prevailed and triumphed amid manifold hardships, sacrifices and trials. It is a history that serves to inspire all revolutionaries.

Ka Ped can neither be forgotten by the other activists, comrades and revolutionary masses and allies that he met, integrated and worked with in his almost 40 years of ceaseless service to the revolutionary movement and the Filipino people, beginning with the

time his consciousness was raised about waging revolution.

Since becoming politically conscious during the First Quarter Storm in the 1970s until he breathed his last, he continuously and wholeheartedly served the revolution. Everyone who knew him looked up to him as a respected veteran cadre and genuine model of the revolutionary movement.

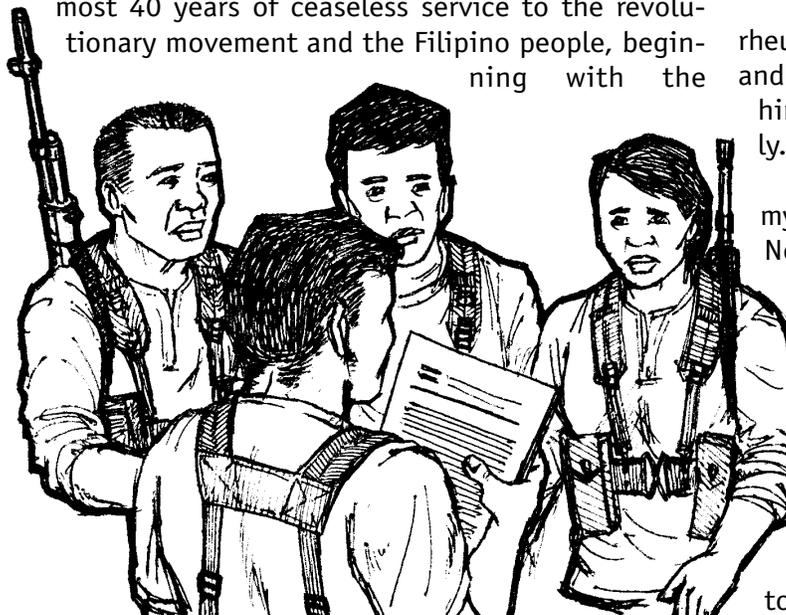
What people remember most about him was his steadfast revolutionary decisiveness. He did not think twice about being directly involved in the difficult field of armed struggle. Despite his serious illness, his determination to wage revolution and serve the people never diminished.

Ka Ped was born in 1949 in Pangasinan. He grew up in South Cotabato where his family resettled. He was raised in a family that was simple, honest and concerned with the welfare of others. His father who was a judge did not enrich himself. His family remained poor and thrifty.

At a young age, Ka Ped was diagnosed to have rheumatic heart disease, aside from an enlarged heart and high blood pressure. Even so, this did not prevent him from pursuing his studies and working diligently.

At the end of the 1960s, Ka Ped took up agronomy at the University of the Philippines in Los Baños. Not long after, he joined the Samahan ng Demokratikong Kabataan and slowly began devoting more time to the revolutionary movement. Though he was only one thesis away from finishing his course, he left the university a few months before he was scheduled to graduate in order to serve full-time in the revolution.

He visited a guerrilla front in Cagayan Valley in the 1970s. In less than a year, he decided to join the people's army. He ignored the doctors'



pronouncement that he only had five years to live due to his heart ailment. He was principled and selfless, ready for sacrifice and wholehearted service to the people.

He was active in Isabela, rooted among the masses and there devoted his heart and mind to their service. It was there that he met Ka Flor, who became his wife and mother of his two children. Because of their full-time service to the people and armed revolution, it was a big sacrifice for them not to be able to be with their children as they were growing.

Ka Ped was active for more than 20 years in the countryside. He faced sacrifices, especially in the midst of an intense encirclement and suppression campaign launched by the reactionary army in the Forest Region of Isabela where he was then deployed. He assiduously joined and led the revolutionary movement and armed struggle. Not once did he complain about his illness. It was his comrades who were more worried about him.

From the start, it was clear that Ka Ped would excel in revolutionary work in the countryside. He was assigned tasks and took on various levels of leadership in the Party and Red army in Isabela. He continued to develop his skills in various aspects of Party work, in political work, military work and mass work. He was humble and patient in studying revolutionary theory, social investigation and military theory, and their application in practice. At all times, he strictly adhered to policies and regulations.

On the other hand, he was a perfectionist during trainings and military actions, which proved to be a weakness. This was especially pronounced at the time when there was a strong tendency towards military adventurism and the espousal of a purely military viewpoint in the people's army. In pushing for high standards in training and military action, he tended to be overly strict. There were cases when he would sharply criticize those who made mistakes, which at times affected the resolve and hurt the feelings of a number of Red fighters, especially those from the youth and national minorities. The comrades were unable to prevent the departure of an entire platoon of Agta warriors who resented Ka Ped's excessive strictness.

In reality, he was humble, readily accepting criticism and reminders and immediately rectified his errors. He was a kind comrade, patient and uncomplaining. But this was most often seen during informal gatherings outside of trainings and military actions, where he would joke around and was good at

relating with the Red fighters. He was also good at forging unity among the ranks of the Red fighters and between the officers and fighters. There were also times when he served as a mediator and conveyor of the sentiments of ordinary fighters and the masses when he became the political officer of a unit led by a commander from the old people's army whose relationship with the Red fighters and masses was not so smooth.

Ka Ped liked military work and he was directly involved in its various aspects—from designing and planning to implementing military actions. He excelled in target shooting even though one of his eyes was defective. He taught many comrades how to shoot. He was also good at leading small or big units. His view regarding military affairs was neither mechanical nor purely military. He was diligent at studying Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and in consciously and thoroughly relating revolutionary theory to other aspects of military work.

He was never precipitate in his actions. He was sharp in analyzing military situations, precise in the planning of military actions, and calm and critical in battle and during difficult military situations. The Red fighters admired his determination and courage in confronting the enemy. Because of this, the military actions he led bore fruit, from small partisan operations to company operations in Isabela.

But because Ka Ped always wanted to be 100% assured of victory, this put a limit on the number and extent of victories that could be achieved. There were times

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when he took too long in weighing various angles and possibilities, leading to a lack of daringness in seizing extraordinary opportunities, especially those that rapidly emerge and disappear.

In mass work, Ka Ped played a big role in propagating mass education and the establishment of mass organizations, organizing committees and barrio revolutionary committees.

He was a delegate to the First Party Conference in Northern Luzon in 1972. It was led by Comrade Amado Guerrero who discussed the Preliminary Report from Northern Luzon. After the conference, Ka Ped was appointed vice political officer of a platoon under the Second Red Company (called "Coy B"), which then operated in the Forest Region covering Echague, Jones, San Agustin and parts of San Guillermo. Eventually, Ka Ped became political officer of the platoon and vice political commissar at the company level.

Under Ka Ped's leadership, the Party Section within his platoon established Party branches in the localities, expanded and consolidated mass organizations and people's local political power, and provided education to local Party members and revolutionary mass organizations. They advanced agrarian revolution and worked hard at reducing criminality, including carabao rustling. Because of the high level of consolidation achieved in the area, it was here that the regional Party leadership established its headquarters.

In the latter part of 1972, Ka Ped replaced Lt. Crispin Tagamolila (a former AFP officer who defected to the NPA) as Party Committee Secretary and Coy B's Political Commissar. At that time, the situation in Ka Ped's area of operation had become increasingly difficult in the

face of the enemy's intensified military campaign. He did not retreat despite the worsening situation. His adherence to Party directives and his determination and bravery in the face of the enemy's onslaughts, various obstacles and his own illness were notable.

When martial law was declared in September 1972, the Forest Region of Isabela was among the areas where the fascist dictatorship focused its severest and most violent attacks. The enemy's concentration and pursuit operations in the area lasted until 1976. More than 7,000 AFP troops were employed by the puppet dictatorship in its relentless military campaign that stretched from Isabela to its boundaries with Nueva Vizcaya.

The enemy mercilessly implemented a policy of base denial, forcing the evacuation of 50,000 people living in the Forest Region and declaring it a "free fire zone" and "no man's land."

The enemy soldiers arbitrarily killed any person they happened to find in the area. Because of the severity of the enemy's fascist attacks, most of those left behind in the area were forced to flee. Ka Ped and his unit tried their best to raise the fighting spirit of the masses and urged them to remain. They diligently convinced the masses to go to the deepest part of the forest, and to live and farm there. Many of those who did stay behind would just hide when the enemy arrived. Others tagged along with the people's army even if they were not counted as Red fighters. Before the end of 1972, up to 80% of the revolutionary mass organizations and organs of political power in the area were destroyed.

Ka Ped's comrades could not forget how close his heart was to the masses. At one time, there were many enemy soldiers near their position. There were also many civilians with Ka Ped and his comrades, including children, elderly folk and the sick. They needed to leave and walk quickly but quietly and stay alert at night and during the early morning. Ka Ped was ill at the time and had difficulty walking, especially when climbing steep mountains. In spite of this, he carried on his shoulders a heavy child who was unable to walk, while still bearing his rifle, pistol and heavy pack. The comrades were very worried about him because the strain caused the veins on his neck to enlarge and pulsate furiously. Even so, he endured it, thus earning the admiration of his comrades.

In the areas they visited, they chanced upon villages deserted by the masses. Ka Ped and his comrades took care of the valuable things left by the evacuees. They harvested the abandoned rice crops and put in a safe place those that they could not bring with them. They also hid the farm animals and pets left by the masses for their safety.

In stark contrast, the enemy forces stole and ate all the masses' animals and crops. What they could not eat or bring with them they destroyed or killed. This resulted in widespread hunger, which became a big problem in the Forest Region. Even salt was scarce. To address this problem, Ka Ped's company spearheaded a campaign to look for food and other basic needs of the masses.

The reactionary forces even utilized bio-chemical warfare in the Forest Region. They propagated

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Japanese mosquitoes, which were carriers of a new strain of malaria. They also poisoned rivers and streams. The entire NPA company and the masses were hit by a malaria epidemic. The masses noticed that this particular type of malaria was different because it did not respond to the usual remedies. Those who drank water from the poisoned rivers and streams had fever, stomach aches and diarrhea. The lack of medicine was a big problem, and was addressed through the use of herbal cures.

Ka Ped was among those afflicted with malaria, which aggravated his heart condition. He was bedridden for more than a month. This happened at a time when the Red army followed certain extreme policies, one of them being that ordinary fighters

must be prioritized in the distribution of medicines and only after they had been taken care of can leading cadres be provided medication. Ka Ped adhered to this "ultra-leftist" policy, as comrades did not hear him complain even if he was the last to receive medication. There were even occasions when even simple antipyretics and analgesics were used up before Ka Ped could avail of them. He, along with other ill comrades and the masses contented themselves with extracts from dita leaves which saved their lives.

The inadequate food supply complicated and worsened their situation. For four years, Ka Ped survived on cassava and acrid-tasting bananas. This sorry plight, however, did not dishearten the comrades, even if there was no coffee, sugar, salt and rice. Ka Ped even learned to smoke *pidpid* (a type of leaf).

In 1974, Ka Ped took over as company commanding officer. During this time, the military was on a relentless offensive. Many more peasants were forced to evacuate. Many Red fighters died in battle or from illness. The company had been reduced to an undersize platoon. But this did not discourage Ka Ped. He tirelessly persevered in strengthening and raising the fighting spirit of the comrades and the masses.

Ka Ped, along with other leading cadres, addressed a longstanding and unresolved struggle within the Party and the people's army.

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The struggle was in relation to their presence in a thinly populated area. Ka Ped was among the majority of cadres and forces who insisted that they should immediately break free from the enemy's encirclement and trans-

fer to an area where there were more people and where the military situation was more favorable. They were fully aware of the dangers of fighting attritive and decisive battles with attacking enemy forces who were superior in strength. They asserted the need to transfer to an area where expansion work would be easier. This way, they could strengthen and rebuild mass bases while the enemy forces focused their efforts on the forests of Isabela. They could return to the area once the situation eased up.

The most glaring error at that time lay in maintaining a "base area" that was dogmatically copied from the experience of people's war in China and was prematurely built in the Forest Region of Isabela. In the face of unrelenting and intense enemy attacks, the revolutionary movement's areas of operation became constricted. Most of these areas were mere physical bases espe-

cially since the remaining villagers had either sought refuge in the forest or accompanied the people's army.

The Party Central Committee had earlier called the attention of the regional leadership regarding this matter. The Central Committee pointed out the need for the Red fighters to transfer to the more expansive and populated plains of Cagayan province. The problem then was that the regional center could not effectively lead after suffering a number of setbacks and several breakdowns in communication both with the Central Committee and the revolutionary forces they led. Instead, what prevailed was the excessive power of the Regional Operational Command (ROC), which adamantly pushed the erroneous line of defending the physical base no matter how difficult the situation was and despite the absence of the masses in the area.

The purely military viewpoint had become extremely untenable with the lack of mass support. The number of NPA commanders and fighters as well as their firepower had dwindled by 70%. The casualties included over 300 killed in combat. Most of those who remained, however, persevered despite the challenges of having to face large enemy forces in the guerrilla zone. Nevertheless, a significant number of comrades had become demoralized. The lack of an effective organ to lead the region resulted in disunity over what should be done in the face of such a dire situation.

A number of comrades failed to overcome this situation and eventually dropped out. Ka Ped drew his strength from his revolutionary commitment and the belief that the Party would be able to come up with immediate and strategic solutions to the problems at hand. Not

once did Ka Ped waver in his belief in the Party and the correctness of the revolution he was waging.

The first Party conference in Northeastern Luzon in the third quarter of 1977 was a big help to them. Led by the Central Committee, the eight-year revolutionary experience in the region was thoroughly discussed and summed up. Ka Ped was one of the delegates to this conference.

This conference was closely and sharply guided by a message from Chairperson Amado Guerrero and by the document "Our Urgent Tasks" that he had also authored. Unity was forged among the Central Committee, the Party cadres and NPA regional commanders in criticizing the errors, primarily the purely military conduct and the premature establishment of base areas.

It was clear from the conference outcome that the major part of an NPA platoon's duty was to conduct mass work. Another resolution set the primary direction of expanding and consolidating guerrilla zones and bases towards the thickly populated plains of Cagayan. Some heavily populated areas in Isabela would also be recovered. The ROC was temporarily abolished to rectify the top-heavy organizational structure and deploy the majority of cadres to mass work. The conference's thoroughgoing analysis, its sharp delineation of policies and adoption of appropriate resolutions raised the comrades' faith in the revolution and the cadres and forces' fighting spirit.

Prior to the conference, revolutionary forces were already gradually moving north and south, most of them towards Far North Isabela and Cagayan. After the conference, most of the Red fighters decisively broke through their encirclement in the forests of Isabela. The majority

were deployed to Cagayan. Ka Ped continued his work in Isabela to help maintain and recover the mass base. He was appointed second deputy secretary of the Party district committee covering the Forest Region and surrounding towns. Before long, he became the first deputy secretary. Recovery work was difficult because the areas were severely affected by intense enemy encirclement and attacks. The errors, which were only decisively rectified after the conference of 1977, made it even more difficult. Ka Ped played a huge role in the successful recovery work in these areas.

In 1979, Ka Ped was assigned to take over Party education work in the region and was transferred to Cagayan. He later became the region's lead instructor for Party education. He was a diligent and effective instructor of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist works and Party courses. He spearheaded an education campaign on the Basic Party Course among Party members and candidate members in the region.

During a regional committee meeting in 1982, he was appointed head of the Regional Military Commission, pursuant to the growing importance of military work amid the call to raise the level of revolutionary struggle nationwide. In the latter part of 1983, he was deployed back to Isabela to serve as deputy secretary of the Party Provincial Committee until 1986. He initiated recovery work in vast areas and mass bases in Isabela that were lost during the intensified enemy attacks in the latter part of 1970s. Along with the Party leadership in

the region, they waged the victorious struggle against widespread landgrabbing and fascist brutality in Hacienda San Antonio-Sta. Isabel. In 1984, he was among those who attended the First Expanded Meeting of the Northern Luzon Commission.

He was temporarily relieved of his leadership position from 1985 to 1986 as a disciplinary measure due to his violation of the Party's rules on marriage. He humbly and honestly admitted his mistakes, rectified his errors and submitted himself to disciplinary action. Except for this one violation, he was a faithful husband and adept at building a revolutionary marriage and family.

Ka Ped played a significant role in his wife's fine performance as a revolutionary. His complete trust and love for Ka Flor remained just as Ka Flor's total love for her comrade husband prevailed. Ka Flor was instrumental in maintaining Ka Ped's health and good condition. Until his last breath, Ka Flor took good care of Ka Ped.

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In 1986, Ka Ped was among the first comrades to attend military training abroad. He set a good example for being very patient, even in the most difficult aspects of the

training. Even though he had previous knowledge and had already undergone most of the basic military training, such as crawling on muddy and rocky trails, he persevered in the training despite his illness and age. He was complimented for his expertise in sharpshooting. His group was hailed as the most diligent during the training.

He came back after a year. Soon after, he was appointed vice commander of the reconstituted Northern Luzon Operational Command (NLOC) after the launching of the Second Great Rectification Movement (SGRM). He spearheaded the politico-military training in Isabela of military cadres from various regions in Northern Luzon.

When the Party launched the SGRM in 1992, he loyally and humbly submitted to its conclusions, especially those pertaining to the continuing errors of espousing a purely military viewpoint, military adventurism and the premature regularization and verticalization of the people's army. He was sharp in recognizing deviations in the building of guerrilla fronts and in military work especially since he himself witnessed and experienced the grave setbacks wrought by these errors in the Forest Region of Isabela. He enthusiastically saw that the rectification advanced by the SGRM was consistent with the rectification set out by the Northeast Luzon Party conference in 1977.

On the other hand, he was saddened upon realizing that he was part of the leadership that

propagated military adventurism, which caused the deaths of many comrades and masses. With his loyalty to the Party and the revolutionary movement and his humility in acknowledging correct theories and data, it did not take long before he accepted the correctness of the rectification movement. His enlightenment strengthened his resolve to tread the correct path of people's war in the Philippines. Guided by the SGRM, he led the summing up and redistribution of the prematurely formed Red army battalion in Northern Luzon.

He also led in drafting the summing-up of Isabela's experiences in the same period. This summing-up document was incorporated into the summing-up of Nueva Vizcaya-Isabela-Quirino for the period 1988 to 1994. He likewise actively participated and contributed in the comprehensive 20-year summing up of revolutionary experience in Northern Luzon held in 1993-94.

Sometime in 1996, his heart condition worsened. His heart had further enlarged up to his ninth rib. He also developed lung

complications and had to undergo a delicate operation. Contrary to his fervent hope of staying in the field of armed struggle, the Party assigned him equally important revolutionary tasks so he could live and be of service to the revolution and the people longer.

The tasks assigned him were still in support of armed struggle: he conducted military research, developed military training courses and helped build the underground movement in the cities—all under the aegis of the National Military Staff. Not once did he request that he be relieved of his work or that his tasks be reduced. Retirement never occurred to him. Instead, he wholeheartedly accepted any task given to him amid his failing health condition.

Even up to his last days, Ka Ped dedicated his remaining strength and abilities to waging revolution. He was with his comrade wife and collective, and was still performing revolutionary work when he was rushed to the intensive care unit of a hospital.

Ka Ped died a great hero of the revolution on August 29, 2007. **AB**