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Editorial

Surface Comrade Leo Velasco!



It has been more than six months since military operatives of the Arroyo regime brazenly abducted Comrade Leo Velasco in Cagayan de Oro City. In full view of the public, he was forced into a van by military men who introduced themselves as security forces and threatened others against intervening.

Ka Leo is a leading member of the Central Committee and an officer of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines Central Committee. He is also a consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) in peace talks with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines. Military officials have admitted that it has long had standing orders to capture and kill Ka Leo.

The CPP and the entire revolutionary movement vigorously condemn Ka Leo's cowardly abduction, the unbridled violation of his rights and the reactionary government and military's continued refusal to surface him. Fascist violence is rampant under the Arroyo regime against anyone who consistently resists the rotten and reactionary government, state and social system.

Who is Ka Leo?

Comrade Leo Velasco is among tens of thousands of valiant Filipino fighters who have emerged in the struggle for national freedom, justice, democracy, peace and genuine development. He is one of the fine leaders of the Philippine revolution.

Ka Leo was born 56 years ago today in Olongapo, Zambales. At a young age, he became aware of the discrimination suffered by Filipino workers vis a vis privileged Americans at the Subic Naval Base where his father worked. Desiring to become a doctor, he entered the University of the Philippines College of Medicine in 1970 and joined the Progresibong Kilusang Medikal (PKM). Inspired by the First Quarter Storm of 1970, he enthusiastically joined the armed struggle for the people's national-democratic rights and interests.

Even as a medical student, he had an ardent desire to serve the people by healing the sick. He joined medical missions in depressed communities, where he saw that the ailments commonly suffered by the people were but symptoms of the deep-seated ills of the entire social system.

Through in-depth analysis, he saw that these ills were rooted in the basic problems of US imperialism, widespread feudalism and grave bureaucrat capitalism that had culminated in fascism. He decided to devote his entire life to waging all-out struggle for the interests and aspirations of the people, especially the toiling masses.

Revolutionary life

He went to the countryside, worked with and joined the struggles of the poor peasant masses. There, he continued to practice and develop the skills he had initially learned as a medical student. He became an expert in acupuncture and other means of healing. He became a leading trainer, teaching other medics who served the masses.

At the same time, he was a fine political instructor and made major contributions to arousing and organizing the masses and waging mass struggles. He was assiduous in political studies and was sharp in grasping and explaining basic revolutionary principles, strategy and tactics. He was zealous in discovering knowledge and teaching what he had learned. In other lines of work, in conferences and meetings, he was always active in clarifying key links in undertaking tasks and presenting new ideas and tactics in addressing various issues, especially when it came to their practical implementation.

He consciously confronted and overcame all hardships and sacrifices—hunger, lack of sleep, sickness, long and difficult treks or steep climbs, intense military operations in the countryside, enemy pursuit operations in the cities and separation from his parents, wife and child. His only weapon was his tight embrace of the just and humanitarian goals of the nationaldemocratic and proletarian revolution.

Ka Leo was known for being a good and loving husband and father. Amid hardships, full-time work and devoting his whole life to the revolution, his infrequent reunions with his wife and child were always happy, relevant and fruitful occasions.

He was loving and thoughtful to comrades. He liked giving away what possessions he had. He was always quick to help comrades in need and address problems. Comrades and the masses have many stories to tell about how he tirelessly attended to the sick, how simple a person and how approachable he was. He easily won the confidence of comrades and the masses.



Leo Velasco, 1998 But he was also strict when it came to organizational discipline and the implementation of tasks. Many other comrades have learned from his fine attitude, style of work and style of leadership.

On all occasions, Ka Leo has shown steadfastness even in the face of severe hardships. He was among the Red fighters who hiked along the Sierra Madre's mountains and forests in the 1980s during intense suppression and encirclement campaigns by the enemy. At that time, he showed creativity in overcoming the problems they encountered, such as food blockades.

His confidence that the revolution will triumph has never wavered. He was among the many who reaffirmed and thoroughly advanced the Party's basic principles in the face of attempts by a few traitors to distort them and inflict serious damage on the Party and the revolutionary movement. He made major contributions to the success of the Second Great Rectification Movement and in the bigger advances achieved by the Party and the entire revolutionary movement.

Revolutionary leadership

Ka Leo spent the most number of years working in Cagayan Valley where he was part of the revolutionary leadership. It was then that Cagayan Valley achieved the distinction of being the region where mass organizing was most widespread and intensive, where agrarian struggles were most extensively waged and the revolutionary movement widely organized.

Most prominent among the massive agrarian struggles he led was that in Hacienda San Antonio and Hacienda Sta. Isabel in Ilagan, Isabela in 1981-82 where thousands of peasants fought against landgrabbing. It was then when he and other comrades popularized the resounding slogans "Fight Poverty!" and "Land for the Peasantry, not bombs!" that signalled the culmination of the struggle of tens of thousands of farmers against oppression and poverty across Cagayan Valley. The struggle roused hopes among the peasantry of having their own land to till amid more than a century of being virtual tenants of big landlords.

He assiduously and patiently discovered and taught creative ways of waging struggle. He tirelessly led breakthroughs in advancing the people's human rights amid intense militarization in Cagayan Valley, at a time when the open and legal antifascist mass movement was badly needed but could not gain momentum.

Among the breakthroughs he led were operations where anti-militarization streamers and posters were quickly and safely put up right in front of military camps, on electric posts along the highway and on buildings and walls in town centers.

Most notable was a huge people's march in Baggao in 1979 to protest the military's execution of local peasant leader Renato Diasan. Among those who joined the protest was former Sen. Jose "Pepe" Diokno, then one of the leading human rights lawyers and advocates. After that, successive mass actions were waged in town centers and even in front of military detachments to protest fascist violence and military abuses and demand the pullout of military camps.

Ka Leo is known for his assiduousness and expertise in systematizing and making in-depth studies of the military's movements and deployment, especially at the level of strategy and large-scale planning and disposition, and in presenting ideas on how to counter this. He studied in detail the enemy's various internal security operation plans and how these could be defeated.

He last made an in-depth study of Oplan Bantay Laya (OBL). As soon as he obtained a copy of the overall plan and details on OBL's extension (OBL 2), he immediately presented proposals on how to frustrate it, just as the revolutionary movement thwarted its previous version and other earlier enemy oplans.

The Arroyo regime's fascist violence

A number of NDFP peace consultants have been abducted and may have already been executed by intelligence and military operatives under the Arroyo regime. Ka Leo's abduction is an outright violation by the regime of agreements between the reactionary government and the NDFP, as well as international laws on respect for human rights and other civil and political rights and of international laws on the civilized conduct of war. Among the agreements violated by the regime are the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) that guarantees the security and immunity from arrest of NDF consultants and staff involved in the peace talks, and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). In the mere span of six years, more than a thousand activists and critics of the Arroyo regime have been abducted and killed by military and paramilitary forces in a desperate attempt to suppress the Filipino people's struggle. The regime implements a policy of "taking no prisoners" and other vile policies that violate human rights and international laws of war.

Among the NDFP consultants abducted by the enemy are Comrade Rogelio Calubad and his son Gabriel, Comrade Prudencio Calubid and his wife Celina Palma, Comrade Cesar Batralo and Gloria Soco, a civilian. They have also abducted NDFP staff members Philip Limjoco, Leopoldo Ancheta, Federico Intise and his wife Nelly.

The NDFP has filed cases at the United Nations Working Group on Enforced Disappearances. It holds Gloria Arroyo accountable as AFP commander in chief for the abduction of Ka Leo and other NDFP consultants and staff in the peace talks. Various legal organizations and personalities have likewise filed cases, complaints and reports at the Permanent People's Tribunal, United Nations High Commission For Human Rights (UNHCHR) and other international agencies.

One of the UNCHR's special rapporteurs has also drafted a report on the extensive extrajudicial killings, abductions and other acts of violence against activists, consistent oppositionists and even innocent civilians. International courts and agencies have come up with definitive judgments and conclusions on the Arroyo regime and the AFP's guilt.

These constitute concrete proof of the terrorist regime and its military forces' trampling of the peace process and contempt for all entities calling and working for the resumption of the peace talks.

Everyone who loves freedom, democracy and peace must resist the abductions, killings and other violent and oppressive acts as well as the overall fascist mode of the Arroyo regime and its armed forces.

The people and the revolutionary movement will hold the Arroyo regime accountable for its criminal abduction of Leo Velasco and for all its other fascist crimes.

We must go all-out in relentlessly intensifying both the armed revolutionary struggle and open and legal mass protest actions against the rotten and brutal puppet and reactionary Arroyo regime. We must do all we can to overthrow the regime and replace it with a free, democratic, just and pro-people government and state. **AB**

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