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In Memory

Mindanao (Philippines) - Revolutionary Life and Struggle of Comrade Tripon

“Ka Tripon: A Revolutionary Soldier of, for with the People Forever...”

Wednesday 12 January 2022, by [Tripon's Comrades](#) (Date first published: 1 January 2022).

On that fateful dawn of 18 December 2021, the enemy, in an extraordinary large number from the Police and Military including the elite and mechanized units, launched an assassination attack against a lone Comrade Tripon in a remote village somewhere in Kapatagan, Lanao del Norte, in blatant violation of the signed ceasefire agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa - Mindanao (RPM-M).

Always living the guerilla life, the amiable and fatherly comrade had been moving from village to village within his zone of operations during unholy hours to evade the constant yet treacherous pursuits of the enemy. During that dawn, Comrade Tripon was already able to leave the house where he spent the night before the enemy with their guides of traitors and Party policy offenders executed the raid. He was navigating through the darkness in the boundary of Cabongbongan of Sultan Naga Dimaporo and Pulang Yuta of Kapatagan, both of Lanao del Norte with his ever-faithful carabao [1], when a unit of the blocking forces of the enemy, who lie in ambush position, spotted him. The large volume of fire from the fascists proved overwhelming even for a resolute and veteran fighter that he is. Tripon breath his last without seeing the dawn break. His almost 40 years of revolutionary service has come to an end.



Like many other guerillas, Comrade Tripon was known by different names. He was also very popular as “Jojo”, and assumed the name “Zandro” in the later years of his clandestine life. Like a good cadre, he was assigned to various areas of works: in the migrant settler communities, in the Moro Communities and in the communities of the Indigenous Peoples. He also served the movement in various capacities in different instances: as a full-time element of the regular unit, a squad leader, a vice commanding officer (CO) of the platoon, a CO of the platoon, a vice CO of the Company, a CO of the Company, and as a political officer of the Platoon, the Company, and of the Partisan units in the

urban areas. He once served as personnel of the Front in Lanao, and became a member of the Regional Committee of the Party. He also served as a respected personnel of the National Operations Command (NOC) of the Revolutionary Peoples' Army (RPA).

Tripon joined the revolutionary struggle when he was 18 years old. However, his awakening started way before that. He was raised in a typical remote village of small farmers and farm workers. At a young age, he experienced the hardships of life's daily struggles first-hand. His village eventually became a mass base of the revolution, and it was there that he started to gain his political education from the senior comrades.

He eventually joined the armed wing of the old Maoist party as a regular. In his formative years, he was regarded as a comrade who was responsible and mindful of Party policies. His unassuming nature earned him good relationships with the communities he served and with the comrades from the urban areas. Until the time of his demise, senior comrades could not remember an instance where a complaint from the mass base or from comrades was lodged against him.

When he became a full-timer of the regular armed unit, he developed a romantic relationship with a woman comrade from the University of an Urban Area who later on had joined full-time with the guerilla unit in Lanao. However, the relationship was short-lived and became the early test for Comrade Tripon's commitment to the revolution. Along with another woman comrade, Tripon's first partner was killed in an ambush by the enemy troops somewhere between the boundaries of the municipalities of Kapatagan and Sultan Naga Dimaporo, both of Lanao del Norte Province. Though devastated, Tripon still held on his commitments as a member of the armed unit. He soldiered on and considered the death of his partner as an added motivation in continuing his revolutionary works.

When the State, during the regime of Cory Aquino, implemented the Low-Intensity Conflict (LIC) program against the insurgency, the strategy of gradual constriction highlighted its Oplan Lambat-Bitag (Operation Plan Net Trap) purposely to suppress and debase the guerillas. The implementation of this strategy entailed the massive mobilization and deployment of a large size, at least a brigade, of composite enemy troops. Tripon was among the main protagonists in repealing these massive military operations of the enemy. The enemy also deployed guerilla-surrendered as guides in hunting down the comrades. The armed encounters during those years were fierce and frequent that there were instances that the guerillas and the enemy would have armed encounters of up to three (3) times in a day. During those times, apart from his active military tasks and engagements, Tripon had an important role of helping ensure that the political commitment of the comrades remains firm and that their morale is high. Needless to say, he was very instrumental in frustrating the enemy's OpLan in the second district of Lanao del Norte.

Comrade Tripon was among the comrades of the armed unit who participated in the implementation of the planned expansion of the mass base in the Bangsamoro areas in Lanao del Sur in the latter part of 1991. He was one of the squad leaders of a company-size advance unit which was sent to Lanao del Sur to establish a base camp, which later on was called Camp Ariel [2]. He participated in the organizing and consolidation of the Camp's surrounding villages and was ever mindful and sensitive to the unique culture and practices of the said Moro communities. During his time in Camp Ariel, he assisted in the Party's efforts of settling numerous local feuds, called rido, among Moro clans.

Another major test of Tripon's fortitude was during the Great Debate of the Philippine Left which exploded into the public during the years 1992 to 1994. In 1994, he took an active part in the formation of the pre-Party structure of the Central Mindanao Region (CMR), the Peoples' Communist Party (PCP). Whilst, not a few comrades from all-over the country and from all lines of work became

disillusioned and disheartened because of the debate, Tripon was among those who critically thought, studied, listened, and eventually took a side. He participated in the Summing-Up of the Region's Front A (encompassing the second district of Lanao del Norte) which then historically took the Rejectionist position.

After the summing up, Tripon was active in consolidating the various units and militias of the Front towards the Rejectionist Position. He was also among the comrades who were in-charged in securing the various visitors of Camp Ariel from Luzon and Visayas, as well as from the international, during the period of the debate, and towards the formation of a new Party. It was in Camp Ariel where the First and Founding Congress of the Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa ng Pilipinas (RPMP) was held.



With his increasing leadership role within the armed unit, Comrade Tripon on many occasions, either participated or led various defensive and offensive military actions against the enemy. Most of these military actions took place within Front A. Almost all actions were so successful that they became the "talk of the Front" and gained the ire of local despotic personalities and the fascist military.

When a new national Party was being formed, the CO of the armed component, Ka Ariel, the overall Commander of the Regional armed unit of the Party who later on also became a martyr took a more active and floating role. During this time, Ka Tripon became the de facto CO of the armed units in the two (2) provinces of Lanao. In one of his stories in a session break during a Basic Party Course in the countryside, Comrade Tripon recalled that during the time when a new national Party was formed after the split with the Maoists, they shipped Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPG) to the Visayas and Luzon comrades in exchange for an M30 machine gun from the Visayas.

The military and political works of Comrade Tripon were not only confined in the provinces and cities of Lanao. In the late 1990s, he was among the comrades who led a company-sized armed contingent that was sent to another province by boat (local revolutionary peoples navy) to respond to a request for assistance from the ancestral Defense Forces of an indigenous people's tribe. The assignment lasted for almost a year, which involved an immersion in the culture and practices of the tribe, the military training of its Defense Forces, and culminating in the dismantling of private armed groups and "lost-commands" that hounded the various communities of the tribes, and the consequent consolidation of military power of the Defense Forces in their communities and strengthening of their traditional Government.

Among the tasks that Ka Tripon had performed was being an RPA organizer in the communities. In the areas where he performed organizing works, he became the "go-to" person of the masses. They went to him for help in various problems especially agrarian disputes, local peace and order problems, and even personal and family problems. It is very common to find zero to very minimal case of robbery, thief, cattle rustling, among others, in areas where the guerrilla comrades have been organizing. In fact, local authorities and the police were pissed off because the village people would usually go to Comrade Tripon and other comrades first for help. This speaks a lot of the trust of the masses to them, and the effectiveness and relevance of their works in the communities.

Comrade Tripon's strong relationship with the community was the reason why it took the enemy countless attempts in decades to liquidate him.

In the latter years of his life, he was among the veteran comrades within the pool of instructors of the RPA's Politico-Militar Academy (PMA). His usual topics during the training is on Military Tactics and simulation of armed encounters and ambushes. During the session breaks and at night-time, Comrade Tripon oftentimes shared his colorful experiences in organizing and in military combat. But he was not the type of person who would overwhelm his listeners. Despite his vast and colorful experience, he always listens to what the others have to say, even to the young and budding comrades.

Comrade Tripon's Life had already taken a "new life" in the veins of multitudes of young comrades. His experience in the armed revolutionary movement has already molded hundreds if not thousands of succeeding guerrilla fighters. His selfless service to the various communities shall forever be in the consciousness and hearts of the masses that he had served and lived with. His Life may have ended, but it was not killed by the death of his body. Comrade Tripon Lives on. A good Comrade lives on forever. The Socialist Revolution lives on.

Tripon left a wife and a young child, and thousands of comrades-in-arms that shall forever look up to his example.

From the collective memory of the comrades in the RPM-M and the RPA, put into words by Inteng Tarusan. This piece does not claim to be a comprehensive account of the life and struggle of Comrade Tripon. So much remains untold, unwritten.

January 1, 2022

Footnotes

[1] His ever-faithful carabao has survived the ambush and is now serving other comrades.

[2] Camp Ariel was named in honour and memory of Comrade Ariel, Regional Commander of the Party Armed Unit - RPA